Edinburgh Napier UNIVERSITY | Doctoral College

University Research Degrees Framework

2026/2027

Approved October 2026

Contents

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT 6
1.1 REGULATIONS 6
1.2 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE 6
1.3 RESEARCH INTEGRITY 8
1.4 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY 8
1.5 DATA PROTECTION 8
1.6 APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT 8
1.7 CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF RESEARCH DEGREES 9
1.8 STAFF INVOLVED IN RESEARCH DEGREES 11
SECTION TWO: APPLICATIONS, ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION 12
2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES 12
2.2 ENQUIRIES FROM DIRECT APPLICANTS 12
2.3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS 12
2.4 APPLICATION PROCEDURES: GENERAL INFORMATION 14
2.5 PROCEDURES FOR ADVERTISING STUDENTSHIPS 15
2.6 APPLICANTS WISHING TO PROPOSE THEIR OWN RESEARCH PROJECT 16
2.7 TRANSFER FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS 16
2.8 SIMULTANEOUS REGISTRATION 17
2.9 INTERVIEWS 17
2.10 DECISIONS 18
2.11 FORMAL OFFERS 18
2.12 REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION 21
SECTION THREE: CONDITIONS OF STUDY 23
3.1 PRACTICAL RESOURCES 23
3.2 GENERAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION 23
3.3 FINANCIAL AUTHORISATION WITHIN SCHOOLS 23
3.4 TUITION FEES 24
3.5 STUDENTSHIPS AND STIPENDS 25
3.6 REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE 28
3.7 SELF-CARE 29
3.8 STATEMENT ON EQUALITY ASSURANCE FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFYING AS DISABLED 30
3.9 HOLIDAYS 32
3.10 ILLNESS AND ACCIDENT 33
3.11 MATERNITY, MATERNITY SUPPORT (PATERNITY) AND ADOPTION 33
3.12 LEAVE CATEGORIES 33
3.13 PAID WORK 34
3.14 STUDENT EXPERIENCE CONTRACT 36
SECTION FOUR: PROGRESSION AND SUPERVISION 37
4.1 REGISTRATION PERIODS 37
4.2 FORMAL REVIEWS: GENERAL INFORMATION 39
4.3 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD4 – FORMAL PROPOSAL REVIEW 39
4.4 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD5 – CONFIRMATION OF TARGET DEGREE REVIEW 41
4.5 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD6 – REFLECTIVE REVIEWS 43
4.6 SUPERVISION: THE SUPERVISORY TEAM 45
4.7 THE SUPERVISORY TEAM: EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING 48
4.8 THE SUPERVISORY TEAM: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 48
4.9 SUPERVISORY LIMITS/REQUIREMENTS 49
4.10 CHANGES TO THE SUPERVISORY TEAM 50
4.11 DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FOR RESEARCHERS 51
SECTION FIVE: CHANGES AND INTERRUPTIONS TO STUDY 53
5.1 CHANGING MODE OF STUDY 53
5.2 CHANGING SCHOOL (INTERNAL TRANSFER) 53
5.3 CHANGING TARGET DEGREE 54
5.4 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES and SUSPENDED STUDY 56
5.5 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POST-VIVA 59
5.6 EXTENSION TO THE MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION 59
5.7 WITHDRAWAL OF REGISTRATION 60

SECTION SIX: THE RESEARCH THESIS 62
6.1 GENERAL GUIDANCE ON WRITING THE THESIS 62
6.2 WORD COUNT 62
6.3 GUIDANCE FOR WHAT THE THESIS SHOULD LOOK LIKE 63
6.4 SUBMISSION FOR EXAMINATION 65
6.5 POST-VIVA SUBMISSION OF AMENDMENTS/RESUBMISSION OF THESIS 67
6.6 SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS 68
6.7 THESIS EMBARGO 69
6.8 EXAMPLES OF TITLE PAGES and FRONT COVERS 71
SECTION SEVEN: ASSESSMENT 74
7.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES 74
7.2 GUIDANCE ON REMOTE AND HYBRID VIVA EXAMINATIONS 74
7.3 IDENTIFYING AND APPROVING EXAMINERS 75
7.4 REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EXAMINATION TEAM 76
7.5 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS 77
7.6 INTERNAL EXAMINERS 77
7.7 EXAM PANEL CHAIRS 78
7.8 PROCEDURES FOLLOWING FORMAL APPROVAL OF EXAM TEAM 78
7.9 PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION 79
7.10 THE CONDUCT OF THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION and THE CHAIR'S RESPONSIBILITIES 80
7.11 THE OUTCOME OF THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION 81
7.12 SUPERVISION POST-EXAMINATION 83
7.13 THE AMENDED THESIS 83
7.14 FURTHER MINOR AMENDMENTS 84
7.15 FORMAL APPROVAL OF THE EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATION 84
7.16 MASTER BY RESEARCH (MRES) and MASTER of LAWS BY RESEARCH (LLMRes) 84
SECTION EIGHT: COMPLETION AND GRADUATION 86
8.1 FORMAL COMPLETION 86
8.2 ELIGIBILITY TO GRADUATE 86
8.3 APPLYING TO GRADUATE 86
8.4 SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS 87
SECTION 9: DBA, PROF. DOC, GTA and NON-STANDARD ROUTES TO PHD 88
9.1 DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA) 88
9.2 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE (PROF. DOC) 88
9.3 GRADUATE TRAINING ASSISTANTS (GTA) 89
9.4 PHD BY PUBLISHED WORKS 91
9.5 RESEARCH DEGREES BY CREATIVE PRACTICE 96
APPENDIX 1: REMIT AND CONSTITUTION OF THE RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEES 99
APPENDIX 1a: RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE 100
APPENDIX 1b: RESEARCH DEGREES EXAMINATION BOARD 101
APPENDIX 2: LIST OF RESEARCH DEGREE (RD) FORMS 102
APPENDIX 3: REMIT FOR SCHOOL RESEARCH DEGREES LEADERS 103
APPENDIX 4: REMIT FOR DEPUTY SCHOOL RESEARCH DEGREES LEADERS 105
APPENDIX 5: STUDENTS WITH UNMANAGED DEBT (STAFF BRIEFING NOTE) 106
APPENDIX 6: GUIDANCE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREES 109
(PhD, PhD by Published Work, Professional Doctorate and Doctorate in Business Administration) 109
Oral Examination 109
Outcomes: 110
Required Amendments 111
Submission of amended thesis and Resubmission with viva 112
APPENDIX 7: GUIDANCE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF MASTERS BY RESEARCH 113
Preamble 113
Outcomes: 113
Required Amendments 114
Submission of amended thesis/resubmission 116

Introduction to the University Research Degrees Framework

Research lies at the heart of Edinburgh Napier University, and we aim to provide all research degree students with a positive learning experience. Our research degree programmes develop new knowledge, address real-world challenges, and prepare the next generation of researchers, innovators, and leaders. We are committed to ensuring that every research degree student benefits from a rigorous, intellectually stimulating, and well-supported experience within a vibrant and inclusive research community.

This Framework sets out our expectations, structures, and processes for research degrees. It provides guidance for students, supervisors, and staff, and defines the principles and standards that underpin research degree provision at the University. All those involved in research degrees are expected to be familiar with, and adhere to, its requirements.

Research degree students are members of both their academic school and the Doctoral College. Together, these entities provide academic leadership, training, pastoral support, and access to a thriving interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research environment. Supervisors are a critical element of this wider research community and share responsibility for upholding the standards and values outlined in this Framework.

A strong research culture is essential to our research excellence. Edinburgh Napier University fosters an environment that is collaborative, ambitious, innovative, and inclusive. We value diverse perspectives, support an open exchange of ideas, and maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Research students are central to this culture, contributing to and shaping our institutional research through their scholarship, engagement, and innovation.

All research and research activities undertaken within and in the name of the University should be ethically grounded and must adhere to the University Code of Practice for Research Integrity.

Professor Peter Barlow
Dean, Research & Innovation

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This University Research Degrees Framework should be read by all those involved in the supervision of research degrees students, including research students themselves. It contains information and guidance about academic, management and administrative procedures that must be followed. The document represents a quality framework for the admission, supervision and examination of all research degrees students across the University.

This University Research Degrees Framework is reviewed annually, and the 2026/27 version supersedes all previous versions. From time to time, changes may be required during the academic year to reflect updates to legislation, regulations, external requirements, or University policies and procedures. Where this occurs, the Framework will be updated and the latest version made available to students and staff.

1.1 REGULATIONS

This Framework should be used in conjunction with the University's Academic Regulations. Section A of the current Academic Regulations applies to all programmes of study, and specific regulations for research degrees are found in Section D: Research Degree regulations. An archive of regulations for previous academic years is also maintained.

1.2 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Operation of formal Committees

Formal committee meeting dates and deadlines for the submission of papers are available on the intranet. It is essential that all papers pertaining to student matters are submitted in good time. This is particularly important in the case of extension requests and requests for approval of examination teams. In the case of requests for extension, these should be submitted to the Research Degrees Examination Board as early as possible and will not be accepted after the student's end date has passed. In the case of requests for approval of examination arrangements, these should be submitted to the Research Degrees Examination Board at least three months before the thesis is submitted. All papers for the Research Degrees Examination Board should be submitted to doctoralcollegeoffice@napier.ac.uk

University Research Degrees Committee

The purpose of the University Research Degrees Committee is to oversee the academic activities associated with the postgraduate research students ensuring that appropriate and sufficient arrangements are established and maintained for the University's research degrees activity.

The University Research Degrees Committee reports to the University's Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee, which in turn reports to Academic Board. Full details of the University's research degrees committees' structure and remits can be found in Appendix One of this document.

Research Degrees Examination Board

In order to efficiently manage the business of research degrees, certain responsibilities and activities are devolved to sub-groups of the Academic Committee. A formal sub-group is the University Research Degrees Examination Board which is responsible for matters pertaining to the student

lifecycle and student examinations. This will include the consideration and approval of examination arrangements, examination outcomes and requests for extensions. Approval of awards will be noted and formally approved at the Research Degrees Committee.

Informal Research Degrees Working Groups

Other informal groups are convened from time to time to conduct specific business. These have included, as examples, the following: Student Monitoring Group; Training Oversight Group; Recruitment Strategy Oversight Group; and Doctoral Training Partnerships Oversight Group. Such groups are not part of the university's deliberative structures and do not require the formal approval of Academic Board or the University Research and Innovation Committee. These informal groups are only formed when necessary to complete a specific time-limited activity or project.

School Research Degrees Committee

Each school in the University has a School Research Degrees Committee (SRDC). Each SRDC is convened by the relevant School Research Degree Leader (RDL) and comprises of 10 academic members of staff with appropriate experience of research degrees supervision. The school committees are responsible for managing all aspects of research degrees within the relevant School. They are, in this regard, the primary committee responsible for research degrees at the School level. Key amongst their responsibilities are the management of formal progress reviews and the more general monitoring of student experience and provision of appropriate support, including the provision of local level induction and ongoing training.

The School Research Degrees Committee of each school reports formally to the University Research Degrees Committee and to the relevant School Research and Innovation Committee. The SRDC is responsible for communicating and implementing decisions and innovations.

❖ For a list of formal approval processes managed at school level, please *see Appendix Two*.

Committee approval

Formal approval of decisions relating to research student progress is the responsibility of the Doctoral College and lies ultimately with the Research Degree Examination Board, although certain decisions are devolved to School RDCs and Academic Committee Sub-groups. Confirmation of approval ('signing off' forms) is normally the responsibility of the Convenor of the relevant Committee or the School Research Degrees Leader. Where the usual signatory is personally involved in a particular case (for example, as a Director of Studies, a supervisor or an examiner) responsibility should be delegated to an appropriate alternative, such as a Committee Vice-convenor, the Deputy School RDL or the School Associate Dean of Research.

No one can ever approve their own decision, or their own appointment.

1.3 RESEARCH INTEGRITY

All staff and students involved in research at the University have a personal responsibility to ensure that their work meets the highest standards of research integrity and governance and that it does not bring the University's reputation into disrepute.

The ethical dimension of every research project must be considered throughout a student's studies and documented at the main progression points and formal progress review meetings.
The Edinburgh Napier University Code of Practice on Research Integrity defines the research principles and practices to which all students and staff at the University must adhere. The Code should be read by all University staff and registered students who are conducting, or planning to conduct, research of any type. Ethical issues also come into play wherever research involves human participants, personal data, and human tissue. Importantly, the Code applies to any research partners who may be conducting research on university premises. Where any partners are involved in a student's research project, it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to ensure that appropriate permissions are in place.

All research projects require ethical approval before being carried out. Within each school there is a local procedure to grant ethical approval for research projects. The ethical approval procedure is devolved to school level to ensure that it is appropriate for the types of research commonly conducted in each school. Students can only obtain ethical approval to carry out research from the Research Integrity Committee of the school in which they are registered.

The University Research Integrity Committee formally monitors research ethics and governance policies and procedures to ensure consistency across the University.

1.4 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The University owns the Intellectual Property (IP) relating to all work conducted and produced as part of a student's postgraduate research. It is important that both students and supervisors are familiar with the University's Intellectual Property (IP) Policy.

1.5 DATA PROTECTION

All users of personal data at Edinburgh Napier University are required to comply with:

- Data Protection legislation
- the University's Data Protection Code of Practice and our Data Protection Policy Statement
- associated University policies, procedures and guidance on the provisions and practical implementation of UK Data Protection Legislation

1.6 APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT

As a general principle, the University anticipates that appeals and complaints will be dealt with informally and locally in the first instance. Concerns should be raised with the supervisory team, the School Research Degrees Leader, or the School Associate Dean of Research, as soon as possible after any issue is identified. Where this does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, the student may wish to make a formal appeal or complaint.

For serious incidents entailing harassment, discrimination or abuse, please see the University's Report and Support page.

Appeals

Research students are entitled to make academic appeals in accordance with the University's Academic Appeals Regulations.

Complaints

The grounds on which a complaint can be made, and how it will be handled, are set out in the Complaints Handling Procedure guidance.

Conduct

Academic and non-academic misconduct by research students will be dealt with in accordance with the University's Student Conduct Regulations, University Academic Integrity Regulations and the Research Misconduct Policy. Where it is believed a student has committed serious academic or non-academic misconduct which may warrant them being withdrawn from the University, the matter will be referred for consideration by either a University Academic Integrity Panel (in line with A14 of the Academic Integrity Regulations) or University Disciplinary Committee (in line with section SC6 of the Student Conduct Regulations.

School Support Service are responsible for providing guidance on Academic Integrity. Queries should be directed to the Academic Appeals and Integrity Manager.

Governance Services are responsible for providing guidance on Complaints and issues relating to student conduct. Queries should be directed to the Complaints and Conduct Manager.

Advice may also be sought from Edinburgh Napier Students Association and ENSA webpage.

1.7 CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF RESEARCH DEGREES

Master by Research (MRes)

For the award of Master by Research, the student should have successfully completed a programme of scholarly research and produced a thesis which represents an *independent contribution to knowledge*. The thesis should demonstrate the competent investigation and evaluation or critical examination of an approved topic undertaken over a period of normally not less than 12 months of full-time study (or 20 months of part-time study), together with an appreciation of the research approach and literature appropriate for their topic. MRes students will normally be assessed by thesis only. However, if examiners are unable to reach a decision on this basis, they may request that a *viva voce* examination is held.

Master of Laws by Research (LLMRes)

For the award of Master of Laws by Research, the student should have successfully completed a programme of scholarly research and produced a thesis which represents an *independent contribution to knowledge* with a focus on law / legal matters. The thesis should demonstrate the competent investigation and evaluation or critical examination of an approved topic undertaken over a period of normally not less than 12 months of full-time study (or 20 months of part-time study), together with an appreciation of the research approach and literature appropriate for their

topic. MRes students will normally be assessed by thesis only. However, if examiners are unable to reach a decision on this basis, they may request that a *viva voce* examination is held.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

For the award of Doctor of Philosophy, the student should have successfully completed a programme of scholarly research and produced a thesis which represents an *independent, significant, and original contribution to knowledge.* The thesis must be defended through a *viva voce* examination. The thesis should demonstrate a highly competent, well-informed investigation and evaluation or critical examination of an approved topic, undertaken over a period of normally not less than 36 months of full-time study (or 60 months of part-time study), together with advanced understanding of the research approach and literature appropriate for their topic. The thesis should include a contribution to knowledge worthy of publication.

PhD by Published Works (PhD)

This award is made to students who are able to present a body of published work that demonstrates *independence, significance, and originality*. The thesis must be defended through a *viva voce* examination. While there is no firm limit on the age of the published works, the works must still be seen to be significant and original at the time of submission for examination. Material that has already been submitted for the successful award of a research degree or produced during a period when the candidate held a postgraduate studentship, is not eligible.

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

For the award of Doctor of Business Administration, the student should have successfully completed a programme of scholarly research, produced a thesis and defended the thesis through a *viva voce* examination. The thesis must present an *independent, significant, and original contribution to knowledge and professional practice in the field* and should demonstrate a critical investigation and evaluation of the approved topic, undertaken over a period of normally not less than 36 months and not more than 48 months. The thesis should integrate rigorous academic/critical analysis with practical relevance and application, articulate the findings and make meaningful links from the findings to the relevant profession.

Professional Doctorate (Prof. Doc)

For the award of Professional Doctorate, the student should have successfully completed a programme of scholarly research, produced a thesis and defended the thesis through a *viva voce* examination. The thesis must present an *independent*, *significant, and original contribution to knowledge and professional practice in the field* and should demonstrate a critical investigation and evaluation of the approved topic, undertaken over a period of normally not less than 36 months and not more than 48 months. The thesis should integrate rigorous academic/critical analysis with practical relevance and application, articulate the findings and make meaningful links from the findings to the relevant profession.

1.8 STAFF INVOLVED IN RESEARCH DEGREES

Students and supervisory teams are supported in several ways by staff in the Schools and Doctoral College and from across the University.

Convenor of the Doctoral College

The Convenor of the Doctoral College provides academic leadership for research degrees and is responsible for the governance of all matters pertaining to research degrees. Amongst other responsibilities, the Convenor of the College convenes the University Research Degrees Committee. The Convenor reports to the Dean of Research and Innovation and through this role to the Deputy Vice Chancellor.

Doctoral College Operations Team

The Doctoral College Operations Team is responsible for the administrative processes around research degrees and can provide advice, information and support to research students and supervisors. The team has research degrees administrators embedded in each school:

- **School of Applied Science**: SASDoctoralCollege@napier.ac.uk
- **School of Arts & Creative Industrie**s: SACIDoctoralCollege@napier.ac.uk
- **School of Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment**: SCEBEDoctoralCollege@napier.ac.uk
- **The Business School**: TBSDoctoralCollege@napier.ac.uk
- **School of Health & Social Care**: SHSCDoctoralCollege@napier.ac.uk

School Research Degrees Leaders

There is a School Research Degrees Leader (SRDL) based in each school. The SRDL is responsible for oversight of all RESEARCH DEGREES matters within their school and will execute this responsibility through the School Research Degrees Committee, which they convene. Key responsibilities include but are not limited to: the monitoring of the progress of all research degrees students in the school; the supporting of good practice among the community of supervisors within the school; the administration of various formal processes; and the organisation of programmes of development and training for RESEARCH DEGREES students and supervisors in their school.

In addition to their work in their school, SRDLs sit on the University Research Degrees Committee and Research Degrees Examination Board and in such capacity support the performance and monitoring of research degrees across the University.

A Director of Studies or Independent Panel Chair should bring any matter of concern pertaining to research degrees to the SRDL in the first instance.

Deputy SRDL

Each SRDL has a deputy who will provide cover in their absence by dealing with ongoing business and any urgent matters emerging, as well as attending committee meetings on their behalf. Deputy SRDLs have a particular responsibility for training and development and they may also undertake other specific responsibilities determined at a school level.

SECTION TWO: APPLICATIONS, ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION

2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Research degrees offered by Edinburgh Napier University are:

- Master by Research (MRes)
- Master of Laws by Research (LLMRes)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Professional Doctorate (Prof. Doc)

All students register from the outset for one of these five awards.

A **PhD by Published Works** is not a separate degree but a different route to PhD.

❖ *See Section 9.4 for further information about PhD by Published Works.*

Entry points and deadlines for application

❖ *See also under Section 2.11, 'Formal offers'*

Our standard entry points are October and March each year for MRes, LLMRes, PhD or DBA students. For Prof. Doc students there is only one entry point each year, in October.

- Normal deadline for applications for October intake is 31st May
- Normal deadline for applications for March intake is 30th November (of the preceding year).

Applications may be submitted at any time and will be considered for the next available intake.

2.2 ENQUIRIES FROM DIRECT APPLICANTS

Individuals interested in studying for a research degree can approach academic staff informally to discuss their plans and seek advice about their suitability for research. Academics who need support in responding to such requests should contact the relevant School Research Degrees Leader.

Prospective students should make a formal application through the research degrees pages on the University website. This is the case whether a position has been advertised or not.

Enquiries about the application process should be sent to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

2.3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Academic standards

Applicants for any research degree must normally hold at least a second-class honours degree from a UK university or a qualification regarded as equivalent to that. There are standard measures of equivalence which will be used by Edinburgh Napier in assessing alternative academic qualifications.

In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered from individuals with other formal qualifications (i.e., not equivalent to a first- or second-class honours degree from a UK university). Any such cases should be referred to the Doctoral College for advice.

References

All applicants must include two references with their application. Most applicants for most research degrees should submit two academic references. Applicants for the DBA or Professional Doctorate should submit one academic and one professional reference. Applicants who have been out of formal education for more than three years may choose to submit either two academic references or one academic and one professional reference. All references should speak explicitly to the course of study for which the applicant is applying and must be contemporaneous with the application.

Academic references should specifically comment on the applicant's academic abilities and any previous and relevant academic experience. Academic references do not need to be written by someone who has taught the applicant or who is currently employed by a university. They must, however, demonstrate the credentials to uphold their evaluation of the applicant's academic potential.

All references must be written in English and authored by someone who is independent of both the interview panel and the proposed supervisory team.

References must be sent to Doctoral College Admissions directly from the referee's professional e-mail address or on official letter-headed paper with a stamp of authenticity. The University cannot accept references from personal e-mail accounts or non-institutional accounts such as Gmail or Yahoo.

References should be submitted, along with other supporting documents, prior to interview. The interview panel (*see* 2.9 below) is responsible for checking the academic content of references, although Doctoral College Admissions will also check references to ensure that they are official and are of the correct type (academic/professional). Applicants who do not include the requested types of reference will be asked to provide them. Where an applicant is unable to provide the requested type of reference, this will be flagged to the interview panel by Doctoral College Admissions, but should not stop the application process from progressing.

English language

Excellent written and oral communication skills in English are required to write a good research thesis and defend the thesis in an oral examination. The University wants to ensure that all students have the necessary skills to be successful and that no student starts at a disadvantage. Applicants may need to provide evidence of their ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English at an appropriate level. Further details can be found on the University's English Language requirements webpage.

Applicants without the requisite English language skills may be directed to the University's Postgraduate Research English language pre-sessional courses.

Applicants for Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

Entry to the DBA requires a higher level of English language qualification: IELTS with an average of 7.0 and no component below 6.5 (or equivalent qualification: see the English Language requirements webpage as above). In addition to this, and to the other standard entry requirements above (academic and references) applicants for DBA should be employed in a senior management or leadership role and must normally hold an MBA or a Masters qualification in a relevant area.

❖ *See Section 9.1 for further information about the DBA programme.*

❖ *See Section 9.2 for further information about the Professional Doctorate programme.*

Applicants for PhD by Published Works

Admission to the PhD by Published Works is open to any applicant, subject to the following criteria: in addition to the standard entry requirements above (academic, references and English language), all candidates must provide evidence of a significant contribution to research and previous academic attainment.

The application process for PhD by Published Works is significantly different from that for other research degrees and is considered in detail in section 9.4.

2.4 APPLICATION PROCEDURES: GENERAL INFORMATION

There are typically two ways that applications for research degrees come into the University: speculative (unsolicited) and responsive (responding to an advertisement). In both cases the University requires rigorous and consistent selection and admission procedures to be followed by all staff.

Applications for PhD by Published Works are made through the Research Degrees Examination Board. Details of the procedure are included in section 9.4.

All other applications and admissions to research degree programmes are managed by the Doctoral College Admissions team, based within International Operations and Student Recruitment. Enquiries about any aspects of the process should be made to the Doctoral College Admissions team.

All applications from prospective students should be made using the online application system. Supporting documents that should be provided with a typical application are:

- Academic qualifications
- Evidence of English language proficiency (where appropriate)
- Two references (*see Section 2.3 for details*)
- A research proposal (see below)

Applications may be sent out to schools by Doctoral College Admissions for consideration before all these documents have been received.

- Applicants for studentships only need to provide the research proposal before the application is passed to the school, although the other items on the list will all be required before an unconditional offer can be made.
- Applications received without references will be passed to schools for consideration, and conditional offers may be made subject to the references being received.

All applicants must include **a research proposal** as part of their application:

- **Advertised positions (both funded and non-funded)**: In cases where the applicant is responding to an advertised project, they ought to develop what is presented within the advertisement appropriately, demonstrating their grasp of the research area and the potential of the project described.
- **Non-advertised projects**: In cases where there is no project advertised, applicants making a direct application should outline clearly and briefly the project they wish to undertake.

In all cases, the proposal ought not to exceed five pages and ought to be appropriately referenced.

2.5 PROCEDURES FOR ADVERTISING STUDENTSHIPS

Staff members who plan to advertise any research degree position – funded or unfunded - should discuss this with their School Research Degrees Leader before proceeding. A discussion with the line manager is also advisable in terms of capacity and workload to undertake supervision. It is important to make sure from the outset that any new student can be supported by the University.

- The school must be able to support the proposed new student/s financially, practically and in terms of supervision.
- Plans should be in place to handle the administrative aspects of the application process.

Advertising process

All studentships should be advertised through FindAPhD.com. Templates for adverts and guidance on the process are available from the Doctoral College Administrator associated with the school in question. Advertising elsewhere is permitted, providing this is *in addition* to advertising on FindAPhd.com.

- Doctoral College Admissions should be informed of any advert placed, and the closing date for applications.
- All advertisements must indicate when interview will take place.

Staff involved should make sure there is a procedure in place for dealing with the online applications as they are received, and the following basic principles should be adhered to:

- Applications for funded studentships will not be considered if received after the closing date.
- A decision on each application received through eVision should be returned through eVision to Doctoral College Admissions.
- Candidates who are **not** shortlisted will be informed of this by the Doctoral College Administrator associated with the school.
- Schools (particularly interview panel chairs) should be prepared to offer more detailed feedback to unsuccessful candidates who request this.
- Recruitment procedures must actively promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. This includes the collection of anonymised demographic data to monitor diversity and identify areas for improvement in recruitment practices.

Shortlisting

The selection of candidates for interview should be made using explicit criteria and by the same people who will form the interview panel. Although candidates for research degree positions are not potential members of staff, interviewers may find guidance on recruitment from our HR department useful.

2.6 APPLICANTS WISHING TO PROPOSE THEIR OWN RESEARCH PROJECT

Applicants who wish to propose their own research project are welcome to apply through the standard application process (*see* 2.9 - 2.11). It is advisable for such applicants to initiate an informal discussion with potential supervisors prior to completing the application process. Importantly, such applicants must still go through interview and no informal discussion should be understood as a guarantee of an offer of a place. Where discussions have taken place and a member of staff has indicated an interest in supervising the candidate, it is advisable that this is made clear when completing the application, and the member of staff named so that the application can be directed appropriately.

2.7 TRANSFER FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Doctoral students (i.e. PhD, DBA or Prof Doc) who are currently registered with another institution may apply to transfer their registration to Edinburgh Napier, providing they are not more than 24 months full-time equivalent into their studies.

Anyone who has been registered, but is not currently registered, as a doctoral student will not be considered for transfer to Edinburgh Napier. Anyone in this situation would need to apply as a standard applicant and begin a new course of study.

Applications for transfers must be supported by the written approval of the current institution. The application should be made following the standard procedure but, additionally, should include:

1. A letter from the current institution confirming their approval of the transfer.
2. An explanation of the reason(s) for the application to transfer.
3. Written evidence of any stages successfully completed at the previous institution (such as confirmation of target degree).

The written evidence provided in support of the application (items 1-3 above) will be kept on record as part of the application documentation.

Registration period for transferred students

A student who transfers will be given the standard time for their degree and mode of study (see Regulation D5.1) minus the actual amount of registration time at their previous institution. (This does not include any time between withdrawing from the previous institution and registering at Edinburgh Napier). It is the responsibility of the SRDL to calculate the remaining registration time. The documented calculation must be provided to the Doctoral College Operations Team, to be included in the offer letter to the student. Advice on this calculation can be provided by the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Where a school decides to accept an application to transfer registration, the standard procedures outlined in sections 2.9 – 2.11 should be followed.

2.8 SIMULTANEOUS REGISTRATION

A student registered for a research degree at Edinburgh Napier University may not be registered at the same time for another award at Edinburgh Napier, or at any other institution. Exceptions to this are:

- Students who are registered under a formally recognised "joint supervision" programme.
- Students who have completed a programme of study but have not yet graduated.
- GTAs, who will be registered simultaneously for the Edinburgh Napier postgraduate teaching certificate, as part of the GTA programme.
- Students wishing or required to register simultaneously for an Edinburgh Napier postgraduate certificate in research methods.
- Students who have obtained permission from their SRDL to register simultaneously for another short course which supports their research study.

2.9 INTERVIEWS

No applicant (including applicants for transfer) may be offered a place until they have been interviewed to assess their suitability for the programme of study. Interviews may be conducted in person or online. The decision over the mode of the interview should always be made in consideration of the student's needs. Where adjustments to standard interview may be required, this should be discussed with the University's Disability Inclusion Team and the relevant SRDL. It is never acceptable to forego the interview altogether.

Standard interview questions

The questions below are recommended but may be developed or altered for particular circumstances.

1. Tell us about your Bachelors or Masters thesis project. What you did you enjoy most about it? What did you learn from doing it? How did you solve unexpected problems?
2. Why do you want to do a PhD/MRes/DBA/LLMResProfDoc? What do you hope to get out of it?
3. What attracted you to this particular PhD/MRes/DBA/LLMRes/ProfDoc project?
4. What would be the impact of the proposed project?
5. What relevant skills (research, analysis, and study skills) do you bring to the project? What do you think you may still need to learn?
6. Beyond skills, what other qualities do you think are essential to a successful PhD/MRes/DBA/LLMRes/ProfDoc research project?
7. What do you expect from your supervisors?
8. Of all your achievements to date, what are you most proud of and why?
9. Do you have any questions?

All interviews will be chaired by the School Research Degrees Leader (or, when they are unavailable, their representative). The interview panel will consist of the School RDL and the proposed supervisory team.

Interview panel responsibilities:

- Ensuring the applicant's references and qualifications are checked by the panel, whether these are provided before or after the interview.
- Assessing the applicant's suitability for research and their potential for successfully completing the research degree applied for. In the case of self-funding applicants, the interview chair should confirm that the applicant is aware of the financial commitment they would be making (in terms of fees and subsistence).
- Ensuring the interview is fully documented.

Records of interviews

A written record of each interview must be kept. The record for any successful candidate should be held for the duration of their study. The record for unsuccessful candidates should be held for three months and then disposed of as confidential waste.

2.10 DECISIONS

Following the interview, the panel's decision should be communicated to Doctoral College Admissions, following the standard eVision process.

Communication with the applicant

Formal offers to successful applicants may only be issued by the Doctoral College Admissions team. Any internal communication (between departments of the University) about the progress of an application must never be copied to the applicant.

Unsuccessful interviewees

Each unsuccessful interviewee must be notified by email of this decision as soon as possible after the interview.

- **The school** is responsible for sending the email to **applicants for studentships** (whether funded or unfunded)**.**
- **Doctoral College Admissions** are responsible for sending the email to **direct applicants**, after they receive the decision from the school on e-Vision.

Successful interviewees

Formal offers to successful applicants may only be issued by the Doctoral College Admissions team. To initiate the process, a completed, authorised, RD2 should be submitted to the team as soon as possible after the School states on eVision that an offer can be made. Ideally this should be on the same day, as the offer cannot be processed without the RD2.

2.11 FORMAL OFFERS

No offer can be made to an applicant until Doctoral College Admissions receive authorisation on an RD2 form. Once the form has been completed and authorised, a copy should be sent to Doctoral College Admissions.

- **An unconditional offer** may only be made where the applicant has all the necessary qualifications, experience and required documents for entry.
- **A conditional offer** may be made where the applicant currently lacks a necessary qualification or requirement, for example, the completion of a taught programme, a language qualification or submission of references.
- **A reject** decision should include sufficient information to allow the Doctoral College Admissions team to respond appropriately to the applicant.

Form RD2 (Authorisation for research student admission)

The potential Director of Studies should complete an RD2 form for any student to whom an offer is to be made. The RD2 **must** be authorised by two named approvers: the first is for academic authorisation and the second is for resource and financial authorisation. **NB**: named authorities who are members of the supervisory team for a new student cannot approve the RD2. The 'alternative' authority must authorise in such cases.

Academic authorisation: normally this signatory will be the School Research Degrees Leader. They are signing to confirm that:

- The applicant has been interviewed.
- Academic qualifications (or equivalent) have been checked and are satisfactory.
- References have been checked and are satisfactory.
- Where appropriate, English language qualifications have been checked and are satisfactory.
- Appropriate supervisors have been allocated.
- The school is satisfied that the applicant has the potential to complete the relevant research degree successfully.

Resource authorisation: normally this signatory will be the Dean or School Associate Dean of Research. The second signature is required even if the student is self-funded or has an external sponsor, because of the resource implications to the department of taking on a research student. This person is signing to confirm that:

- Resources are available to pay any stipend being offered by the University.
- Resources are available to pay fees if the student is to be funded by the University.
- The School has the physical resources available to support the student.
- The School has the staff resource to support the student. Where a supervisor team comprises of more than two supervisors (DoS plus one other), Deans should be aware that this implies a further allocation of resource.
- The School is satisfied that the project the student will be undertaking is manageable within the realistic limits of the University's support and places neither the student nor the University at any undue risk.

A schedule of current authorised signatories is maintained by the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Timescales – general information

Offers will be sent out no more than five working days after Doctoral College Admissions receive the RD2, providing:

- The RD2 has been fully completed and includes all required information.
- The RD2 has been approved by both school signatories (one academic/one resource).
- Doctoral College Admissions have received all required documentation for the applicant.

In planning for new starts, Schools must consider the time it might take for the offer to be accepted by the student, and for further processing to be done.

Timescales for UK applicants

Offers to UK applicants cannot be sent out any less than two weeks before the proposed start date. The RD2, therefore, cannot be submitted to Doctoral College Admissions any less than **15 working days before the proposed start date.**

Timescales for immigration controlled students (including those already in the UK)

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) For most research degree courses, students who are subject to immigration control are required to obtain an ATAS certificate. Obtaining a certificate takes approximately six weeks.

APPENDIX THREE lists the research course at Edinburgh Napier that require an ATAS certificate. You can find out more about ATAS requirements on the Government's webpages.

Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) All immigration controlled students need a CAS letter from the University to apply for a visa. Where an ATAS certificate is required, the University cannot issue the CAS letter until the ATAS certificate has been received.

Due to the ATAS and CAS requirements a much longer timeframe applies to offers to immigration controlled applicants. Offer letters to immigration controlled students cannot be sent out any less than eight weeks before the proposed start date. The RD2 cannot, therefore, be submitted to Doctoral College Admissions any less than **nine weeks (45 working days) before the proposed start date.**

The University is required to make extensive checks on immigration controlled applicants who are already studying in the UK. The timeframe for such applicants is therefore NOT equivalent to that of non-immigration controlled applicants.

Entry points

- Standard entry points for all research courses - except Prof. Doc - are **October** and **March**.
- Standard entry point for Prof.Doc is October only.

In exceptional circumstances, registration **may** be permitted in other months. Examples of exceptional circumstances might include strict start date requirements from external funding bodies and unforeseeable or unavoidable delays with external permissions. Seasonally dependent research would not usually be considered grounds for an exceptional start date as we would expect in such circumstances that sufficient planning would have been undertaken to account for any seasonal dependency. In legitimately exceptional cases, an additional form (RD2-B) – authorised by the School Associate Dean of Research and the School Research Degrees Leader, - will be required by Admissions before proceeding to offer.

Backdated start dates are not permitted.

If an RD2 is submitted to Doctoral College Admissions for a start date that has already passed, an offer will be made for the following intake. Doctoral College Admissions will confirm any change in start date with the School before processing.

Submitting the RD2 form

Once the form has been completed and authorised, a scanned copy should be sent by provided to the Doctoral College Admissions team or uploaded directly to eVision if returning the decision on the same day.

If the school has received any additional documents relevant to the applicant that were not provided by Doctoral College Admissions (for example, references received directly) these should also be passed on to the Doctoral College Admissions team with the completed RD2.

Start dates

All research degrees students formally commence their studies on the first day of the month of registration as stipulated in their formal offer (normally on 1st October or 1st March). It is the Director of Studies' responsibility to arrange to meet with the student on this day or, when the first of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, as soon as possible after this date. If the first meeting with the student is delayed, this does not affect the student's formal start date. This always remains the 1st of the month and all subsequent dates are calculated from this point.

Start dates for immigration controlled students/visa implications

An immigration controlled student who has been granted a visa to register for a research degree at Edinburgh Napier **must** register by the deadline stated in their CAS letter.

Acceptance of offer

Once an applicant has accepted an offer, responsibility passes from the Doctoral College Admissions team to the Doctoral College Operations Team. The Doctoral College Operations Team will arrange registration, send an initial 'welcome' message to the new student with the information they need about starting their research degree, and liaise with the school and supervisory team.

2.12 REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION

Registration

Every research student must register as a student of the University. This involves going through an online process of checking and confirming the details that the University holds about them and providing some additional information.

Information about the online registration process is sent to the student by the Doctoral College Office before the start date in a 'welcome' message that also includes details of the members of the supervisory team as well as information about Information Services (IS), fees, stipends, student ID card, and induction events.

At first registration, and annually thereafter, students and/or their sponsors become liable for payment of tuition fees to the University.

Induction

All research degree students must attend a series of induction events. There are effectively three levels of induction: induction with the supervisory team, school induction and Doctoral College induction. The Director of Studies should ensure that new students are aware of and attend all relevant induction events.

Induction with the supervisory team

The Director of Studies must arrange to meet with the student on their first day at the University (usually their day of registration). This meeting can take place in person or online, as is appropriate to the student's needs. Where the student will be on campus, an in-person and on-campus meeting is preferable. All members of the supervisory team should attend. This meeting should be used to orient the student and determine their initial focus of work.

School Induction

Each school provides its own local induction for all students in a cohort. This is an opportunity for students to meet others starting at the same time, to receive some orientation to the school and to meet key school staff. School induction may take the form of a hybrid event to include non-campus-based students.

Doctoral College Induction

The Doctoral College Induction is offered in two forms: an in-person induction comprising of two hours a week for eight weeks, and an asynchronous online induction. The induction is mandatory for all new students. In cases where a student has not started at a standard entry point (March or October), the student must attend the next available Induction course. Wherever possible, students should attend the in-person induction. The online induction is intended for distance learning and part-time students for whom campus attendance is not feasible. Induction must be prioritised over all other research degrees activities.

Further details of the Doctoral College Induction will be available on the Doctoral College webpages and Doctoral College Moodle site

SECTION THREE: CONDITIONS OF STUDY

3.1 PRACTICAL RESOURCES

The University will provide each research student with the practical resources necessary to undertake their research. The standard facilities that the student should expect are listed below.

Access to any specialist facilities that are essential to the student's research must be agreed and approved – before an offer is made - by the school in which the student will be registered.

Standard facilities

- All students will be provided with a managed University laptop. The laptop remains the property of the University and must be returned upon completion or termination of studies.
- Each campus of the University has designated research degree student offices. These offices typically operate on a hotdesking basis, although local arrangements may be implemented.
- All students will have access to Multifunctional Device printing and photocopying.

Off campus students

The University has a wide range of online resources for students. You can also find further information about off-campus library support.

Other facilities

Any other reasonable student or study specific resources and facilities can be requested at school level.

3.2 GENERAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The University has a Student Funding Team based within Wellbeing & Inclusion and members of the Team can provide advice on financial matters. During term time a drop-in service operates and the Team can be contacted by email at other times of the year. The Student Funding Team manage a hardship fund specifically for research degrees students.

3.3 FINANCIAL AUTHORISATION WITHIN SCHOOLS

Each School Associate Dean of Research has nominated individuals within their schools who have responsibility for financial decision-making about research student stipends and fees. These will normally comprise of Academic Authority (RDL/DeputyRDL) and Financial Authority (Associate Dean for Research/Dean of School).

Normally, arrangements for sponsorship – payment of **fees** *and/or* **stipends** - are made before a student registers. Information about payment of fees and stipends is included on the RD2 form which must be authorised (and therefore approved) by the correct person.

- Any subsequent changes to the sponsorship arrangements approved on the RD2 must be requested in writing and authorised by the relevant signatory.
- Any new sponsorship arrangements (agreed *after* a student has registered) must be requested in writing and authorised by the relevant signatory.

❖ Templates are available for this purpose from the Doctoral College Operations Team.

3.4 TUITION FEES

Information concerning fee payments, including invoicing, collection of payments and arranging direct debits can be found on the Money pages of the Student Intranet. Fee payments are managed by the University's Finance department who can be contacted directly for further information.

How much is charged and how often?

Tuition fee details can be found here. Rates are reviewed and updated annually.

- **Fees are charged annually**, at the prevailing rate, for each year of standard registration.
- DBA fees are set per programme cohort and pertain to that cohort for the duration of study. Three years full fees are charged plus one year grace period (if required) at the DBA rate.
- Prof. Doc fees are set per programme cohort and pertain to that cohort for the duration of study. Three years full fees are charged plus one year 'grace period' (if required) at the Prof. Doc rate.
- PhD by Published Works students will be charged for one year full-time fees at the rate for PhD by Published Works even if the student completes their studies in less time.

Where a student is granted a **grace period** beyond their standard period of registration, an additional 'grace period fee' will be charged. This fee is always charged as a full annual fee, regardless of how much of the twelve months grace period a student utilises. The grace period fee is the responsibility of the student and will not usually be paid by the University.

An additional grace period fee will be charged following the viva if the outcome is 'Fail Resubmit' and the student has already utilised 12 months of a grace period.

Deposits

Students whose annual fees are above a certain level must pay a non-refundable deposit before enrolment.

How to pay fees

The University does not send invoices to students by post or by email. Students who are responsible for payment of all or part of their tuition fees should check the Paying Your Fees page.

Sponsored students

Edinburgh Napier sponsorship: students whose fees are paid by Edinburgh Napier will have a sponsor record on the University database and the fees will be charged to the appropriate department. This category includes students whose fees are paid by the University using external grant funding. Offer letters will include confirmation of the proportion of the fees that are being paid. Where the University is paying only a proportion of the fees, the student must pay the balance.

'Grace period' fees are normally not covered by University sponsorship. Students granted a grace period should expect to be charged for these at the end of the standard registration period.

***External sponsorship*:** is where fees are charged by the University to an external institution or individual (for example, a government or an employer). Any student who has an external sponsor must provide Finance with written confirmation from the sponsor **each year**, including details of the sponsor's billing address. Without this information, the University will charge the student directly.

Changing mode of study: the effect on tuition fees

Any change from full- to part-time study, or vice versa, will affect the tuition fees charged each year. This will be calculated by Finance at the time of the change.

Changing target degree: the effect on tuition fees

Transfer to a higher target degree will mean the total fees charged will be greater. (*See above,* "How much is charged and how often".)

Transfer to a lower target degree will not result in a refund of any fees already charged.

Formal study break: the effect on tuition fees

The total amount of fees charged will not be affected when a student has been authorised to take a formal study break (previously referred to as 'suspended study'). Adjustments may be made to the due dates for payment.

Extensions: the effect on tuition fees

Another writing up fee will be charged following a successful application for extension to maximum registration time.

Appeals: the effect on tuition fees

No additional charge will follow a successful appeal which results in further registration time being allowed.

Unsatisfactory progress: the effect on tuition fees

Continued payment of University studentships relies on satisfactory progress. If the outcome of a progress review is "Unsatisfactory progress, recommend termination of registration for a research degree", and that decision is ratified by the School Research Degree Committee, the University will not pay any further tuition fees. The stipend will also be terminated (*see Section 3.5 for details*).

Unpaid fees

All fees are due in full at the beginning of each year, unless an arrangement has been made to pay by instalment. Students who have not paid, or arranged to pay, four weeks after the beginning of their programme of study are considered by the University to be in debt. Reminders to pay will be sent to their student email account. If the fees remain unpaid, sanctions will be applied as set out in the University Debt Policy.

❖ *See also* Briefing Note for staff at APPENDIX FOUR

3.5 STUDENTSHIPS AND STIPENDS

Standard studentships

From time-to-time Edinburgh Napier University supports funded places for research students. These

are advertised on FindAPhD.com and are open to competition. A standard University funded studentship will include:

- Payment of tuition fees at the 'UK' rate for three years full-time (PhD) or 12 months full-time (MRes) study.
- Payment of a monthly stipend.

Stipends for part-time students will be paid on a pro-rata basis.

Tax and National Insurance

Payments made as part of University or UKRI funded studentships are training awards and not regarded as income for income tax purposes. Students should be aware that earnings received from sources such as teaching and demonstrating may be taxable and should be aggregated with income from any employment when assessing income tax liability in any tax year – this is particularly relevant for the tax year in which the award ends. It is always the student's responsibility to ensure they understand their own tax liabilities throughout their award. The Doctoral College is not able to provide advice on tax, national insurance, pensions or on benefits issues.

No additional payments will be made for students' National Insurance contributions. Students should be aware that they can, if they wish, pay contributions as non-employed persons. They should consult their local office of the Department for Work and Pensions about their position to determine the impact of non-payment of contributions on any future claims for benefit including the basic State Pension. Students may become liable for contributions in connection with any paid teaching or demonstrating which they undertake.

Rate of payment

The stipend is paid at the national minimum doctoral stipend rate set by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Stipend payments are not liable to deductions for National Insurance (or any other payments) and can only be paid up to the level agreed for that particular academic year.

The **annual stipend rate for 2026/27** has been confirmed as **£21,805 per year**.

Non-standard studentships

The University may occasionally offer partly funded places for research students such as 'fees-only' studentships (where no stipend is paid).

University Fee Waiver Scheme

The University operates a Fee Waiver Scheme. This scheme is managed by each school for projects which will be undertaken within that school and overseen by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (or their nominee) and Convenor of the Doctoral College. Fee Waivers are only available for projects being undertaken on the basis of full-time registration. All projects under the Fee Waiver Scheme must have a regular stipend attached to them.

Availability of studentships

Studentships of any type must be advertised on FindAPhD.com and be open to competition, with the following exceptions:

- Where grant funding to support a research student is made available to a specific research project on which a research student is already working.
- Where a member of staff is funded to undertake a doctoral qualification.

How payments are made

- Stipends are paid monthly in arrears, on the last working Thursday of each month.
- Finance pays the stipend by transfer directly into the student's bank account on the basis of authorisation from the Doctoral College Operations Team.
- Payments will show on the student's bank statement and should be identified as stipend payments from Edinburgh Napier University. Finance does not send remittance advice but any student who needs a letter confirming payment (for example, to provide evidence to a third party) should contact the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Changes to payments

In arranging payments to students, the Doctoral College Operations Team acts on the authority of nominated individuals within each school who have responsibility for financial decision-making about research student stipends (*see* 3.3 above and 'practical considerations' below).

Changes because of suspended study:

Where a school wishes to make a change to the agreed stipend payments for a student when the student has been authorised to take a study break due to extenuating circumstances, this must be recorded and authorised on the RD7 form.

Changes for other reasons:

In any other case, formal authorisation must be obtained by the relevant school resource authority (*see 3.3 above*) and submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

- If payments are to end (temporarily or permanently) the 'stipend-stopper' form should be used.
- For changes or additions to stipends, standard memos are available from the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Practical considerations:

- Responsibility for making these arrangements rests with the **Director of Studies**.
- Formal, authorised, notification of changes to stipend payments must be submitted no later than 12 noon on the Monday prior to the last Thursday of the month in which the payment should change.
- Refer to the School's authorised signatories

Conditions of payment

Continued payment of University studentships (stipends and fees) relies on satisfactory academic progress assessed at progress reviews conducted by the student's school (*see* Sections 4.2-4.5). "Satisfactory progress" includes timely submission by the student of reports *for* each review, and a satisfactory outcome *from* each review. Students should keep their supervisors informed about anything likely to affect their progress (*see Section 5.3 on extenuating circumstances*). Students receiving a full time stipend do so to enable them to study full time, and they should not therefore take on any activity, such as significant paid employment, which might prevent this.

Suspended study and studentship payments

(1) ***Maternity leave, maternity support leave (often referred to as paternity leave), adoption leave, or absence due to ill-health***: payments may continue and additional payments may be made to students in these circumstances (*see Section 3.10*). This category can also be referred to as 'Family Leave'.

(2) Formal study break for other reasons: in all other cases the relevant school will decide – in consultation with the student - whether to stop the stipend for the duration of the formal study break. In these situations, the total number of stipend payments will remain the same. If payments

are to be made be temporarily stopped, the DoS must make the necessary arrangements (*see 'changes to payments', above*).

Circumstances in which payments will be stopped permanently:

- **Where the outcome of a review is "unsatisfactory progress, recommend termination of registration for a research degree"** and that decision is ratified by the School Research Degrees Committee**.** The Director of Studies must arrange for the payments to be stopped (*see* 'changes to payments' above and 'termination of payment' below).
- **If the student takes up full-time employment before the normal 36 payments have been made.** Edinburgh Napier funded students who intend to take up full-time employment before the studentship is due to end must notify their Director of Studies. The DoS must arrange for the payments to be stopped (*see 'changes to payments', above*). The University may request a repayment of any stipend payments made after full-time employment has commenced.
- **If the student decides to withdraw registration.** The DoS must arrange for the payments to be stopped (*see* 'changes to payments', above). The University may request a repayment of any stipend payments made after the effective date of withdrawal.

Termination of stipend payment due to unsatisfactory progress

Where the stipend is to be stopped because of unsatisfactory progress, the recommendation to terminate registration (withdraw the student) must be approved by the appropriate School Research Degrees Committee (*see Section 5.6*). The Director of Studies must inform the student, in writing, that this recommendation has been made and if approved by SRDC, the stipend will be stopped.

A 'stipend–stopper' form must be authorised off by the relevant resource authority and submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team (*see* 'changes to payments' above).

If an appeal is made about the progression decision, the stipend should be suspended pending the outcome of the appeal (using the 'stipend-stopper' form, as above).

Responsibility for making arrangements to end a stipend rests with the Director of Studies.

3.6 REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE

Registration – year one

All research students must register at the beginning of the first year of study. This involves going through an online process of checking and confirming the details that the University holds about them and providing some additional information.

- Immigration controlled students in the UK on a Student Route visa must attend in person to confirm visa details.
- Details about registration are sent to all new students by the Doctoral College Operations Team
- Until registration has been completed it may not be possible to access all University services.
- At first registration, and annually thereafter, students and/or their sponsors become liable for payment of tuition fees to the University.

Annual registration

Subject to satisfactory progress, continuing students are automatically registered each year based on authorisation from schools. This process is managed by the Doctoral College Operations Team working with

the Academic and Student Lifecycle team. Questions about annual registration should be directed to the Doctoral College Team.

Attendance

Full-time research students are expected to spend on average, 36 hours a week on their research studies. Part-time students are expected to spend an average of 21 hours a week.

The precise arrangement of study for a student will depend on their individual circumstances and the nature of the study. Arrangements and expectations should be discussed and agreed with the supervisory team at interview and formally documented in the Supervision Agreement completed at the Reflective Progress Review.

3.7 SELF-CARE

Postgraduate research studies can be demanding, and it is crucial that students prioritise their own well-being.

The University endorses and encourages a proactive approach to self-care which emphasises the importance of the research degree community and mutual support. A formal network of support is established through a number of the mechanisms described in this document. Each student is assigned an Independent Panel Chair (*see 4.6*). Each school has a Research Degrees Leader, Research Degrees Committee and Research Degrees Student Representatives, all of whom are there to support students through their RESEARCH DEGREES journey. Beyond these formal elements of support, the University encourages RESEARCH DEGREES students to engage with each other as a community and supports this aim through the provision of events designed to facilitate conversation, connection and collaborative time away from work. We encourage students to be proactive and stage their own events and will, where necessary and possible, support such activities. In adopting a healthy self-care approach, students may find website beneficial.

All research degree students are entitled to weekends and holidays. It is imperative that they take these.

While we very much emphasise a proactive approach, seeking to reduce the likelihood of students experiencing unproductive stress and anxiety, we acknowledge that this not always possible and that there are circumstances wherein students will require professional and/or independent help or support. In such circumstances, students are encouraged to make use of the following services:

The University's Counselling and Mental Well-being Service

The University's Counselling and Mental Well-being Service is a friendly and approachable service which aims to help students feel supported with their mental health. They can be contacted by email at counselling@napier.ac.uk or by telephone on 0131 455 2459.

togetherall

togetherall provides 24/7 peer-to-peer and professional support from experienced clinicians who are always online to assist and advise in relation to depression, anxiety, and other common mental health issues. They also provide a range of courses and tools to help people self-manage their wellbeing. This service is safe, anonymous and free to students at Edinburgh Napier. If you would

like support, simply go to togetherall.com and sign up under 'organisation' with your university e-mail address.

Nightline

Nightline is a local listening, emotional support and information service, run by students, for students. They are open from 8pm to 8am every night during term time. You can call on 0131 557 4444 or use their instant messaging service. You can also volunteer with Nightline through their website.

Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a confidential phoneline service for anyone in Scotland who is feeling low, anxious, or depressed. You can call for free on 0800 83 85 87.

The Edinburgh Crisis Centre

The Edinburgh Crisis Centre is a service for over 16s who are using or have used mental health services and who are residing in Edinburgh at the time they are experiencing a crisis. This includes people who have seen their GP, used voluntary services as well as people who identify themselves as having a mental health issue. The Crisis Centre is open 24 hours a day 365 days of the year and provides community based, emotional and practical support at times of crisis. You can call for free on 0808 801 0414 or text 0797 442 9075.

Some research degrees projects are such that the nature of the research itself can be potentially trauma inducing or triggering. If we are aware from the outset that your project has the potential to bring a risk of trauma, then you will be assigned an Independent Panel Chair with the skills and insight to support you. We refer to these IPCs as Trauma Informed IPCs. If you feel that you are at risk in this regard and have not been assigned a TIIPC, then you should raise this with your DoS ASAP. You should also identify any such perceived risk on your RD4 proforma.

3.8 STATEMENT ON EQUALITY ASSURANCE FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFYING AS DISABLED

The University works to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in their education and enjoy the full range of benefits, facilities and services provided. Following the Equality Act 2010, the University acknowledges and embraces its anticipatory duty to prepare a supportive and inclusive study environment and commits to making reasonable adjustments to meet individual's needs. This summary presents current arrangements for disabled research students. The University's policy for supporting disabled students aligns with the UKRI's Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) Framework. The University will provide guidance for managing the costs of non-medical personal assistance, specialist equipment, extra travel, and general expenses.

The University recognises that for some disabled students, a part-time mode of study may be a necessary reasonable adjustment. In such cases, the University will consider a change in mode of study in accordance with its statutory obligation to provide reasonable adjustments.

Where a student's disability-related needs require a part-time schedule, the University will work with the student to ensure their study plan and stipend payments (if applicable) are adjusted accordingly. Students should discuss this option with their supervisory team at the earliest opportunity.

Where the University or a project partner has a statutory obligation to provide a reasonable adjustment, it will provide and fund it. This is not dependent on UKRI funding or authorisation. If there is any conflict between a reasonable adjustment and a UKRI provision, the University's

statutory obligation to provide the reasonable adjustment takes precedence. The University will notify UKRI of any such instances.

Support Pre-enrolment

It is beneficial if students can inform the **University** as early as possible of their disability. The Disability Inclusion team will contact all applicants who have disclosed a disability on their application ahead of the main October and March entry points to begin identifying appropriate measures/support.

All students will, in their welcome letter, receive information about the Disability Inclusion Team and how to contact them. New students will also be directed to the guidance materials available on Vitae.

Disabled students are encouraged to contact the Disability Inclusion Team as early as possible, although they can disclose at any point.

Support on Enrolment

All research degree students meet with their supervisors in their first days at the University. Supervisors should outline with all their new students the range of support available across the University, including from the Disability Inclusion team. Supervisors can encourage students to contact the Disability Inclusion Team themselves or offer to make contact on the student's behalf by email. Supervisors can find more guidance on supporting disabled research students from Vitae.

The Disability Inclusion Team will typically respond to student inquiries and referrals within half a working day, assigning an advisor (based on school and the nature of the disability) and asking the student for more information and/or to make an appointment.

The Disability Inclusion Team will work directly with the student to identify reasonable adjustments and additional support, building, as appropriate, on support the student has received previously during their undergraduate studies, taught postgraduate studies or in work. A learning profile outlining reasonable adjustments will be agreed with the student and shared with the supervisors, for them to review and implement. A learning profile may, at the instigation of the student, be reviewed and updated at any point, as deemed necessary.

The Disability Inclusion team's layered privacy notice outlines the commitment to treating students' personal information sensitively and to maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Ongoing Support

The University is committed to making delivery and assessment as inclusive as possible by design. In the context of research degrees, delivery primarily refers to ongoing supervision and reflective progress reviews. Assessment refers to the formal proposal review, confirmation of target degree review and the terminal examination, including viva voce, where required.

The format and conduct of all supervision meetings should be inclusive in themselves, for instance with an agenda and timings agreed with the student in advance, opportunities for the student to pause to review key points in the discussion before moving on. Students may request that supervision meetings are recorded. Where this is not possible, alternative support with note-making should be considered.

Supervisors should consider the student's disability and learning profile when supporting the development of a plan of work, with the aim of ensuring that the anticipated workload remains

appropriate both to the student and to the degree in question. Supervisors and students should discuss any additional adjustments that might be required and seek guidance from the SRDL where necessary.

It is important that any agreed adjustments or particular approaches are suitably documented in the Supervision Agreement form.

Support in Assessment

The University has a duty to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the process of assessment of research degrees. For the formal proposal review (RD4), the student and their supervisors should discuss any reasonable adjustments as early as possible. For the confirmation of target degree review (RD5), the student, supervisors and independent panel chair should discuss any reasonable adjustments during the RD4 meeting while setting expectations for the RD5.

All research degrees other MRes and LLMRes are assessed viva voce examination. Vitae includes guidance on adjustments that can typically be made to the viva format to make it more inclusive for the range of disabled students. Requests for adjustments to the examination format or process, including, but not limited to, the viva, should be submitted alongside the form RD12 (Application for the Approval of Exam Arrangements). Where the need for adjustments is determined after the approval of exam arrangements, then this should be sent for consideration by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

Although a student may already have a learning profile in place, it is important that, if required, specific adjustments pertaining to the examination are authorised by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

Monitoring

The University is committed to the ongoing monitoring of research degree students' needs, both on an individual level and in terms of general policy development. Disability Inclusion are formally represented in the research degree committee structure.

3.9 HOLIDAYS

Full-time students may take up to 40 days holiday each year, including fixed leave days such as Christmas/New Year and Easter holidays. Dates when the University is closed (fixed leave dates) are published each year. See https://intranet.napier.ac.uk/working-here/policies-and-guidance/time-off and https://my.napier.ac.uk/your-studies/term-dates. Studentships are not extended for periods taken as Annual Leave.

The Director of Studies must approve the time and duration of any holiday period. Students are advised to discuss plans for taking time off with their supervisors, before confirming holiday bookings. Students are not required to and should not suspend their studies in order to take a holiday.

Immigration controlled students must obtain formal approval from the University for any period of absence over 5 days outside University holiday periods (periods when the University is closed for fixed holidays, like Christmas). This should be arranged with the Director of Studies using form RD7-AA. Such absences will **not** be treated as suspended study. *(For absences due to illness or accident, see Section 5.3, Extenuating circumstances and suspended study.)*

Part-time students are in a slightly different position. They have no 'entitlement' to specific periods

of leave from study as they are already fitting study time around other commitments. Holidays should form part of the schedule negotiated with the Director of Studies, and the DoS should be kept informed of any lengthy break.

3.10 ILLNESS AND ACCIDENT

(See Section 5.3: Extenuating circumstances and formal study breaks for details of how to apply for suspended study)

Students who are in receipt of a stipend, and are on a formal study break covered by a medical certificate, will continue to receive the stipend for up to 13 weeks within any 12-month period. Stipend payments made during certified sickness absence are paid **in addition** to the standard 36 payments of the original studentship; that is, the studentship will be extended by a commensurate period.

3.11 MATERNITY, MATERNITY SUPPORT (PATERNITY) AND ADOPTION

Students may take up to 52 weeks of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave as a formal study break.

- *See Section 5.3 (Extenuating circumstances and formal study breaks*') for details of how to apply.

Students on maternity leave who are in receipt of a stipend will continue to receive the full stipend for the first 26 weeks. For the next 13 weeks, the stipend will be paid at a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay. No stipend is paid for the final 13 weeks. Stipend payments made during maternity leave are paid **in addition** to the standard 36 payments of the original studentship; that is, the studentship will be extended by a commensurate period.

Partner/Paternity Leave: *A student is entitled to up to 2 weeks of paternity/*maternity support Leave with no break in stipend.
Shared Parental Leave: Students can take up to 50 weeks of shared parental leave and up to 37 weeks of shared parental pay. (Ref: UKRI TGC 8.2.A.1)
Students on adoption leave (as the main adopter) who are in receipt of a stipend will be entitled to the same terms as those on maternity leave.
Special Leave The University will allow up to 10 days of paid leave (pro rata) for bereavement, including the death of a parent, close relative, or child. A student is also entitled to 10 days of paid leave (pro rata) in the event of a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks, regardless of whether they are the person who experiences the loss, the partner, or if the loss occurs via surrogacy. The University may also offer paid leave for other compassionate grounds or domestic emergencies.

3.12 LEAVE CATEGORIES

The University's policy on student leave is aligned with best practice, classifying leave into four types: **Annual Leave, Family Leave, Medical Leave, and Additional Leave**. All students, regardless of funding source, will have their leave and any interruptions to study managed under these categories. This includes, but is not limited to, the university's policies on Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption leave which now fall under the Family Leave category.

3.13 PAID WORK

Paid work: general information

Undertaking paid work while studying for a research degree can bring both benefits and obstacles in relation to academic progress. The amount of work it is sensible to undertake while studying is contingent on each student's circumstances. Regardless of these differences, to remain registered as a research degrees student, study must remain a central focus and appropriate, sustained progress must be demonstrated at each reflective review.

Full-time students thinking of taking up paid work or part-time students thinking of changing their working circumstances are advised to talk this over in advance with their supervisory team and consider the implications for their research study.

Beyond these general considerations, students are advised of the following points:

- Immigration controlled students will have visa restrictions limiting their paid employment. Typically, they cannot work for more than 10 or 20 hours a week (either paid or unpaid). Students must ensure they comply with their visa regulations. As an employer, the University is obliged to notify any breaches to visa restrictions to UKVI.
- Students receiving support from external funders should check the funder's rules applicable in their case before taking on any paid employment.
- Students in receipt of a University stipend who intend to take up full-time employment before their studentship is due to end must notify their Director of Studies. The DoS must arrange for the payments to be stopped (*see Section 3.5 'changes to payments'*). The University may request a repayment of any stipend payments made after full-time employment has commenced.
- Any student with financial problems may seek advice and support from the Student Funding Team (*see Section 3.2*).
- Where a student's financial circumstances require them to take on paid work that is likely to impede their student progress, a period of suspended study is recommended. (*See Section 5.3*).

Paid work for the University

The University is at times able to offer paid work to research students. This work can take a variety of forms, most commonly teaching, demonstrating and working on research projects outwith the student's own research project. The following points refer to all paid work at the University.

While work offered by the University is intended both as a developmental practice and as a source of income, the former takes precedence over the latter. Reflecting this, research students will be contracted under a unique contract named **The Student Experience Contract** and the following rules will apply:

- Students must have the agreement of their Director of Studies before undertaking any work at the University.
- Any student undertaking any work for the University must be paid at the appropriate hourly rate. A stipend is not payment for work and there is no expectation that students in receipt of a stipend should take on work because of this.
- In the interests of maintaining equality of opportunity and focus on study, the University applies a cap to the amount of University work students are permitted to undertake:
    - Full-time students are permitted to work for no more than 6 hours per week.
    - Part-time students are normally permitted to work for no more than 10 hours per week. The primary rationale for this cap on part-time hours is to ensure equality of opportunity. Where schools have ensured that all other students, including suitably qualified students in other schools, have been provided with fair opportunity to work, this cap may be raised. This decision can only be taken by the relevant SRDL.
    - Students who are beyond their standard end date are subject to the same guidance as all other students in relation to the restriction on hours. Where a student is between submission of thesis and examination, caps may be increased but only after the opportunities in question have been opened up to the wider RESEARCH DEGREES community. Any request to increase the cap must be made in writing to the Convenor of the Doctoral College and will be treated on a case by case basis.
    - It should be noted that all contracted teaching time includes a specified allocation for preparation. The caps above refer to the total time, inclusive of preparation time.
    - The impact of any work undertaken on the student's progress must be discussed both in the student's reflective report and during their reflective progress review meeting. Should the review panel consider that the work undertaken is impacting negatively upon the student's progress, then actions should be taken to review the form of the work being undertaken and potentially reduce the number of hours. This must be documented on the form RD6.
- Where a student is offered a permanent contract with the University which falls outside of the Student Experience Contract, evidence of appropriate progress should be provided to the interview panel and the impact of undertaking employment on the student's potential to complete in a timely manner should be discussed at interview.
- Schools should endeavour to give equal opportunities to work to all students. Schools should be mindful of the fact that the students with the requisite background, qualifications or experience may be registered in another school. When opportunities for work arise, these opportunities should be communicated across schools.
- While the University wishes to offer all students opportunities to enhance their experience through work, it is recognised that such opportunities are contingent upon genuine openings in each student's area of expertise. For example, where there are no undergraduate programmes which align with a student's expertise, it is unlikely that there will be opportunities for that student to teach.

Teaching at the University

As many research students will wish to enter a career in academia, the University runs a bespoke **New to teaching in Higher Education** course. The course is comprised of an online survival skills session, covering the basics of learning and teaching and an in-person microteaching session, where students have the opportunity to practice their teaching skills with their peers and receive peer feedback to help improve their practice. These are four hours which are mandatory and paid for all RESEARCH DEGREES students who wish to obtain a student experience contract. In addition, the University offers three voluntary workshops, which embed key pedagogical principles and concepts, including assessment and feedback and reflection of teaching practice. These are sandwiched by online peer-led discussions led by DLTE interns, and offer a safe space to discuss any challenges and ideas RESEARCH DEGREES students may have in their teaching roles. Students will also be introduced to the University's Higher Education Academy Fellowship process, ENRoute, thus beginning the process of developing evidence towards the category of Associate Fellow of the HEA.

Students must complete the initial four hour New to Teaching in Higher Education course before undertaking any teaching work.

3.14 STUDENT EXPERIENCE CONTRACT

The University offers a specific contract for employment for research students. This Student Experience Contract is intended to facilitate the enhancement of students' experience through offering opportunities to undertake teaching, demonstrating and/or research work. The contract ensures students undertaking such work will be paid appropriately and in a timely manner.

All students who wish to teach at the University must complete the New to Teaching at University course run by DLTE. Students should initiate a Student Experience Contract prior to undertaking the course and the contract will only be approved once the student has completed the course. Active attendance of the course is remunerated at Demonstrating level.

- Students wishing to initiate such a contract should raise the matter with their Director of Studies.
- All contracts are initiated through completion of the Student Experience Contract form and the parallel completion of a Staffing Authorisation Form and have final approval before completing a Student Experience Appointment Form ensuring the necessary information is provided to allow for a contract to be initiated. In advance of any work being carried out, a 'Right to Work' check needs to be completed. This can be arranged by contacting peopleteam@napier.ac.uk. There are no exceptions to this, as this is to ensure that we comply with UK Visa & Immigration.
- Once a contract has been initiated, the Director of Studies will function as the student's line-manager in relation to paid activities.
- All students wishing to undertake teaching or demonstrating work at the University must complete the New to Teaching in Higher Education training course prior to undertaking any teaching work.

The Director of Studies is responsible for monitoring the student's development and the impact of paid work on their studies. Directors of Studies ought to liaise with relevant module leaders or research project leaders in order to ascertain students' development and additional training needs as relate to the paid work in question.

❖ V Further information and guidance on the Student Experience Contract can be found here.

SECTION FOUR: PROGRESSION AND SUPERVISION

4.1 REGISTRATION PERIODS

Timeframes

There is a standard amount of study time allowed for undertaking each of the research degrees offered by the University. These are set out in the table below. End dates for each student are calculated based on these timeframes**.**

Award	Mode of Attendance	Standard Period
MRes	Full-time	12 months
	Part-time	20 months
LLMRes	Full-time	12 months
	Part-time	20 months
PhD* (*except Graduate Training Assistants*)	Full-time	36-42 months
	Part-time	60-70 months
PhD by Published Works	Part-time	12 months
PhD (Graduate Training Assistants)	Full-time	48 months
Professional Doctorates	Part-time	36 months

* The standard period of registration for each PhD student will be as stipulated on their formal offer letter.

Grace period

Research Degree can apply for an additional period of time in which to complete their theses. This additional time period is known as a grace period. This period is intended to mitigate for time lost due to unforeseen occurrences or complications in the research process which have resulted in processes or progress taking a little longer than envisaged. A grace period is always granted as a twelve-month period, regardless of how much of this time is practically required.
Additional fees are charged for the grace period and these are the responsibility of the student.

The grace period is intended to allow more time to complete the thesis. It is not intended to provide more time for data gathering or practical research. While a short period of wrapping up data gathering/generation will be tolerated, this cannot exceed eight weeks. It is imperative, then, that the student is able to demonstrate, before being granted a grace period, that they have or are very close to having sufficient data to progress to a full write-up.

A detailed schedule of work to be completed must be submitted with the application for a grace period. This must provide a clear description of the work left to complete. Simply listing chapters to be completed is not sufficient. The student will need to describe the status of all incomplete chapters, the work to be done and the length of time required to realistically complete such work. Students are required to submit their thesis draft to Turnitin at the point of applying for a grace period. The submitted draft will be consistent with the description provided of work to be done.

A grace period ought not be used to complete additional work in parallel to the thesis. That is to say, the grace period ought not to be used to engage in writing papers for publication, writing

conference papers, conducting any research, or conference or seminar organisation (or similar such work). Students in a grace period may still undertake paid work at the University (such as teaching) under the same conditions as students in their standard period of registration.

Students in a grace period cannot hold a role as a student representative.

Awaiting feedback from supervisors or completing amendments in response to feedback will not be accepted as grounds for any application for an extension at the end of grace period. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any work requiring feedback is submitted to supervisors with sufficient time to allow supervisors to provide feedback and for the student to address this feedback. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that students are clear about their timeframes and arrange final feedback carefully with their supervisors.

Not all funders support the use of additional time after the standard period of registration. Students in receipt of funding from funders who do not support submission after the standard period of registration will not be considered for a grace period.

Process

Any student requiring a grace period must submit a Grace Period Application Form (RD19) with the final RD6 of their standard period of registration. The form will document their and their Director of Studies' agreement with the conditions of the grace period and will provide details of work to be completed.

The completed form will be considered and either approved or not by the School Research Degrees Committee. Where, due to an exceptional start date or periods of formal study break, the student's final RD6 is less than three months before the end of their standard period of registration, then they must submit any request for a grace period along with their penultimate RD6.

Please note: For all students (except PhD by Published Works students) who registered prior to March 2025, the grace period will be applied automatically.

Submission date

Students may submit their thesis for examination at any point from one month before the end of their standard period of registration. By the end of this period the research should be finished, and students (supported by their supervisors) should aim for submission as close as possible to this date. In other words, the end of the standard period of registration should always be the target submission date. A grace period, which is never automatic, should always be treated as extra time to accommodate unforeseen circumstances or setbacks.

Early submission

Students who have made exceptionally good progress may be permitted to submit the thesis early. Applications for approval of early submission must be supported by the student's supervisory team and approved by the School Research Degrees Committee. **There is no reduction in fees for early submission and there may be an effect on stipend.**

❖ *For further details see Section 6.4 ('Submission for examination')*

Interruptions to study

Students may apply to take a formal study break for periods when they will be unable to continue to

work on towards their degree. The maximum total period over the course of study should not exceed 12 months. Where a student needs to take study breaks which together will total more 12 months, they must submit a RD7b form to the Research Degrees Examination Board.

❖ *See Section 5.3, 'Extenuating circumstances and formal study breaks' for details of who can apply, how to apply, and the implications of having a period of suspended study.)*

Changing mode of study

Students may apply to change from full-time to part-time study (or vice versa). A change of mode of study will mean a recalculation of the standard end date.

❖ *For further details see section 5.1 ('Changing mode of study')*

Extension to the grace period

Under exceptional circumstances, a student may be granted an extension to their grace period. Applications for extension must be made to the Research Degrees Examination Board before the existing end date. **Students receiving an extension will be charged an additional grace period fee.**

❖ *For further details see section 5.5 ('Extension to the grace period')*

4.2 FORMAL REVIEWS: GENERAL INFORMATION

All research students at Edinburgh Napier University will go through a series of formal reviews as part of their course of study. These formal reviews are of three types, each with distinct purposes. Each of the reviews entails four stages:

1. The student composing and submitting a formal piece of work.

   It is good practice for students to upload their report for each of the reviews to Turnitin. To this end, a Moodle site with designated Turnitin links for the reports is available.

2. A meeting attended by the student and their review panel and chaired by the Independent Panel Chair (IPC).
3. The completion of a formal report by the Independent Panel Chair, which should reflect the agreed recommendations of the panel.
4. The consideration for approval of the review panel's recommendations by the relevant School Research Degrees Committee (SRDC).

In exceptional circumstances, where a DoS is unable to attend a progress review, the other supervisor may act as DoS for the purpose of the review. Similarly, where the assigned IPC is unable to attend, any experienced IPC can stand in for the purpose of the review. Such replacements are not ideal but are preferable to significant delays.

The three types of review are commonly referred to by the form on which the review panel records their recommendation: RD4, RD5 and RD6. The purpose and requirements of each of these are detailed below.

NOTE: There is no requirement for **PhD by Published Works students** to undertake a Formal Proposal Review or a Confirmation of Target Degree Review.

4.3 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD4 – FORMAL PROPOSAL REVIEW

The Formal Proposal Review is the process by which a student formally submits the proposal for

their research project. The student is expected to present a developed research proposal using the standard proforma provided on the My Napier website. All sections of the proforma must be completed.

The main purpose of this process is to satisfy the University that the project being proposed is realistic and completable by the particular student in the timeframe of the degree in question and that the University has the resources, including the supervisory expertise, to support the project. The process also provides the opportunity to highlight reasonable concerns in relation to the project and to ensure that appropriate mitigation for such concerns are in place. This may include, but not be limited to, practical impediments, ethical considerations and the impact the conduct of the research may have on the well-being of the student.

The student's proposal will be presented and discussed at a formal RD4 Proposal Review meeting. It is the Director of Studies' responsibility to arrange this meeting. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their proposal is disseminated to their review panel no less than one week before the scheduled meeting. The review panel is always comprised of the supervisory team and the Independent Panel Chair. These roles are discussed in more detail in section 4.3 below.

The exact format of the meeting will be determined by the supervisory team and must be conveyed to the student in advance. Whatever the format of the meeting, time must be made to discuss the student's forthcoming Confirmation of Target Degree Review (RD5). The panel and student must agree the form, scope and focus for the RD5 report and the form of the RD5 meeting, including any presentation which will be required as part of that meeting. These requirements must be detailed in box six of the RD4 form. Towards the end of the meeting, the IPC will ask the supervisory team to leave the room so that they can talk confidentially with the student and then ask the student to leave so that they can talk confidentially with the supervisory team. Everyone should reconvene to conclude and close the meeting. Meetings may be held in person or online. The mode of the meeting must always be determined with the student's needs in mind.

The outcome of the meeting will be the review panel's recommendation for the student to proceed or not. On the rare occasion that the review panel are not satisfied with the student's proposal or not confident in the student's aptitude for the project, they have the option to recommend a referral and resubmission of the proposal or to recommend termination of registration. The Director of Studies is responsible for the completion and submission of the RD4 form. Where an RD4 review leads to the conclusion that a student ought to be pursuing a different degree, this should be explored and recommended in the documentation. The formal process of changing target degree should then be followed.

The due date for the submission of the completed RD4 paperwork to the school Research Degrees Committee depends on the student's start date, target degree and mode of study. See tables below.

RD4 timeframe

(due date for submission of completed RD4 papers to School RDC)

OCTOBER STARTS	**Full-time**	**Part-time**
MRes/LLMRes	30 November	3 January
PhD	31 January	31 March
Prof. Doc	(part-time only)	31 March
DBA	(part-time only)	31 March

MARCH STARTS	**Full-time**	**Part-time**
MRes/LLMRes	30 April	31 May
PhD	30 June	31 August
DBA	(part-time only)	31 August

Where, in exceptional circumstances, a student's timing is not in line with the tables above, due, for example, to a period of formal study break or an unconventional registration date, the DoS must calculate the submission date and ensure that this is agreed with the School Research Degree Leader.

4.4 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD5 – CONFIRMATION OF TARGET DEGREE REVIEW

The key purpose of the Confirmation of Target Degree Review is to assess whether or not the student is working at the required level for the award at which they are aiming. For this reason, the review centres around a major piece of work produced by the student. It is likely that this piece of work will, *mutatis mutandis*, form part of the student's thesis. The exact form of this piece of work must be discussed and agreed at the Formal Proposal Review meeting and be documented within the RD4 form.

As with the RD4, the due date for the RD5 will vary depending on the start date, target degree and mode of study. In the case of the RD5, the expected length of the work will also vary.

RD5 timeframe

(due date for submission of completed RD5 papers to School RDC)

OCTOBER STARTS	**Full-time**	**Part-time**	**Word number maximum**
MRes	31 January	31 March	4000
PhD	31 July	31 January (of second calendar year of study)	6000
Prof. Doc	(part-time only)	31 January (of second calendar year of study)	6000
DBA	(part-time only)	31 January (of second calendar year of study)	6000

MARCH STARTS	**Full-time**	**Part-time**	**Word number maximum**

MRes	30 June	31 August	4000
PhD	3 January	30 June (of second calendar year of study)	6000
DBA	(part time only)	30 June (of second calendar year of study)	6000

The document produced by the student for their Confirmation of Target Degree Review should consist of an original piece of work, presented within a clear context. The document should provide evidence both of the work completed to date and that this work is of a sufficient standard for the target degree. In particular, the document needs to emphasise the key criteria for the target degree under consideration (*see Section 1.8*). In the case of a PhD, for example, the student will need to demonstrate three criteria: that they can undertake independent research; that their research is significant; and that it is likely to lead to an original contribution to knowledge. The work a student submits for the RD5 will necessarily be a part of a much larger piece of work (i.e. the thesis). The work presented need not, then, be complete but should be topped and tailed to provide sufficient context. The word limits above must be adhered to. A student may, for example, submit part of a literature review as their RD5 document.

In addition to their major piece of writing, the student should present a detailed plan of work for the remainder of their course of study.

The student should submit their document to their review panel no less than one week before the scheduled meeting. The review panel will then meet with the student. The format of this review will have been determined at the Formal Proposal Review meeting. Whether the student is required to deliver a formal presentation or is expected to answer challenging questions relating to their work, the expectations of the meeting should be sufficient that the review panel can assess the student's aptitude for study at the relevant level.

Towards the end of the meeting the IPC will ask the supervisory team to leave the room so that they can talk confidentially with the student and then ask student to leave so that they can talk confidentially with the supervisory team. Everyone should reconvene to conclude and close the meeting.

The outcome of the meeting will subsequently be recorded on form RD5 and submitted for approval by the relevant School Research Degrees Committee.

In reviewing the student's progress the panel will reach one of five recommendations based on the documents produced by the student, the student's progress to date and the discussion in the meeting:

a) Proceed, confirm registration for PhD;
b) Proceed, confirm registration for MRes/LLMRes;
c) Proceed, confirm registration for DBA/ProfDoc;
d) Refer. The student is required to revise the confirmation of target degree report and be reviewed again. This process (revision and submission of report, review and panel decision) must be completed within a maximum of three months for full-time and five months for part-time students);
e) Unsatisfactory progress, recommend termination of registration for a research degree.

In the case of (d) the original panel must review the student's progress again. The possible outcomes of a repeat review are the same as those for a first review excluding (d). A decision to refer may only be made once per Confirmation Review.

Importantly, the RD5 review does not take place in isolation and will always be part of an ongoing process of supervision. It is never then the case that a student who is progressing well, with positive appraisals from their supervisors, will suddenly be in a position to be unsuccessful at the RD5 stage. Any review which concludes that there has been unsatisfactory progress and recommends either a change to lower target degree or termination of registration must be supported with documented evidence that sufficient attempts have been made to put in place the support the student would reasonably require to succeed.

Where a decision is made to alter the target degree, the student will be required to complete a new proposal, which reflects the scope of the new target degree, and undergo a second Formal Proposal Review (RD4).

As with the Formal Proposal Review, the formal decision for how or whether a student should proceed is made by the School Research Degrees Committee on consideration of the review panel's recommendation in the light of the student's work. Timely submission of the paperwork is essential for the student's progress to be considered by the Committee and the decision communicated without delay. The Committee's decision will be communicated to the DoS who is then responsible for disseminating this to the other supervisor(s) and the student.

Where, in exceptional circumstances, a student's timing is not in line with the above, due, for example, to a period of formal study break or an unconventional registration date, the DoS must calculate the appropriate submission date and ensure that this is agreed with the School Research Degree Leader.

4.5 FORMAL REVIEWS: RD6 – REFLECTIVE REVIEWS

In addition to the milestone reviews (RD4 and RD5), all students, regardless of target degree and regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time, must undergo regular Reflective Progress Reviews. For full-time doctoral students these will take place twice a year, in October and March. For part-time students and all MRes/LLMRes students, the Reflective Progress Review will take place in the October or March following their start date (e.g. a part-time or Masters student starting in October will have their first and all subsequent Progress Reviews in March). As with RD4 and RD5, Reflective Progress Review meetings are organised by the DoS, chaired by the IPC, and attended by the student and the review panel (supervisory team plus IPC).

RD6 and formal study breaks

RD6 reviews should continue during any period of formal study break. Although the student is not expected to work while on a study break, it is important that some appropriate contact is maintained. In addition to ascertaining the student's wellbeing, the DoS must confirm that the return to study date is still realistic. Therefore, an RD6 form, with appropriately detailed comments from the DoS, must be submitted. The student is not, however, expected to submit a reflective report.

Where a part-time or Masters students is on a study break during their expected RD6 period, they should undertake a full RD6 upon their return to study.

RD6 at end of standard registration

Where a student is not ready to submit their thesis prior to the end of their standard period of registration, they may apply for a grace period. This application should be made at the point of the last RD6 of their standard period of registration.

RD6 in the grace period

Where a student is granted a grace period, they must continue to complete RD6 reviews throughout this time. Part-time and masters students are expected to revert to the full-time schedule at this point, meaning that all students, regardless of degree or mode of study must complete twice yearly Progress Reviews through the grace period.

RD6 reviews post-submission

RD6 reviews should continue after submission of the thesis. Supervisory responsibility continues post-viva. Corrections/amendments to the thesis, as required by examiners, should be reviewed by supervisors/DoS prior to submission of the amended thesis for approval of examiners. During this time frame, RD6 progress meetings are expected to continue as in the grace period until examiners' amendments have been met to their satisfaction and a letter confirming thesis acceptance has been issued by the Doctoral College Operations Team. The RD6 process is also a helpful opportunity to reflect on the viva/examination experience.

Reflective report

Prior to every RD6 meeting the student will compose and circulate a brief reflective report. After the meeting, as with the RD4 and RD5, a form detailing the discussion and decisions arising from the meeting will be submitted for approval by the School Research Degree Committee. The student's reflective report itself ought not to be sent to the committee. The review panel's report must therefore contain sufficient detail to allow the committee to understand what has transpired, while at the same time respecting the student's privacy.

The student report should be presented in a form which is accessible for the review panel and appropriate for the student. In most cases it will likely be in the form of a written reflection. In such cases, students should aim for between four and five pages, ensuring the report is 1.5 spaced, and in a size twelve sans serif font (such as Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Calibri, or Tahoma). The report should be written in the first person.

Where a student wishes to record their report in an alternative format this is perfectly acceptable. Alternative format reports should be comparable in length to the written report detailed above and must be accessible for the review panel and in a retrievable and storable format.

The purpose of the student's report is two-fold. Firstly, it is designed to encourage students to engage in meaningful reflection on their activities and progress since their last progress review. Secondly, the report should communicate the student's perception of their own progress, concerns and focus.

While research is always going to be central to a research degree, it is important that the progress review attends to all aspects of the student's progress. In addition to noting their progress in terms of research, the reflective report is the student's opportunity to reflect upon and communicate about what they have learned from engaging with their research, how they have developed as a researcher, the gaps they have discerned in their skills or knowledge, how they have approached problems etc., as well as reflecting upon the broader RESEARCH DEGREES experience, such as writing, publishing, presenting, training, teaching, etc.

It is expected that supervisors are in regular contact with students and should always be abreast of the student's research progress and achievements. The formal review is broad in nature and should

very much been seen as parallel to ongoing supervisory checks and not a replacement for them.

For students unfamiliar with engaging in reflection, a simple process to follow is to answer these questions:

a) What happened?
b) How did you feel about it?
c) How would you do things differently in the future?

Students are encouraged to use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to assist with their reflection.

Students should send their report to their review panel at least one week before the scheduled meeting.

Supervision Agreement

All students and their supervisors are required to complete a supervision agreement within the first month of the student's registration. This agreement should be discussed at **each** subsequent reflective progress review meeting and amended as necessary. Where no update to a supervision agreement is submitted to the School RDC, it will be assumed the previous agreement is still current.

RD6 Progress Review meeting

As the focus of the RD6 process is the student themselves and their holistic progress, the meeting will most often comprise of a conversation based on the student's reflective report. The broad intention of the RD6 process is to understand the student's perspective and to ensure that realistic support is in place. It is not an academic review and ought not to presented as such. The outcomes of the RD6 ought to be productive for the student and their continued progress. Where the review process raises issues of concern, these should be explored and advice sought as appropriate. In most cases, the SRDL will be best placed to provide such advice.

The IPC will always chair the meeting. During the meeting, the IPC will ask the supervisors to leave the room so that they can talk to the student alone. They will then ask the student to leave so they can talk to the supervisory team alone. Everyone will then reconvene to close the meeting.

Late or non- submission of RD6 paperwork

While the RD6 is not an assessed piece of work it is an essential element of our auditing processes and a vital aspect of our endeavour to provide the best possible experience for all of our students. Failure to submit RD6 reflective report to the review panel will be understood as an absence of progress and treated accordingly. It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to arrange the RD6 meeting and ensure the submission of required paperwork to the SRDC.

4.6 SUPERVISION: THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

The composition of the supervisory team

Each student must have at least, and not normally more than, two supervisors. In exceptional circumstances a team may comprise of three supervisors. In such cases a clear and convincing rationale for why an additional supervisor is required must be provided. Regardless of the size of the team, at least two of the supervisors, including the Director of Studies, must be Edinburgh Napier members of staff.

All supervisors must have attended the University's Induction to Supervision prior to

undertaking supervision at Edinburgh Napier. They must then subsequently attend the Supervisors Briefing Top-up session every two years. Supervisory Teams should be approved by the RDL on behalf of the Dean of school.

All supervisors are expected to maintain regular contact with the student and contribute meaningfully to the student's supervision throughout the period of study.

Where specialist advice is required on a temporary basis, an additional advisor may be appointed. The title 'additional adviser' should be used to describe someone brought into the team for a specific purpose and for a limited time. An RD11b form is available for such appointments.

The Director of Studies

One supervisor will be appointed Director of Studies and will take responsibility for student progress and welfare throughout the period of study. The Director of Studies must be aware of all the progression points, ensure that all deadlines are met, and all necessary paperwork is submitted. The Director of Studies is also responsible for making examination arrangements for the student. The Director of Studies must be an Edinburgh Napier University staff member.

The Independent Panel Chair (IPC)

An independent panel chair must be assigned – by the School Research Degrees Leader - from the beginning of a candidate's studies and under normal circumstances will remain in post throughout the period of study (although a change of IPC is permitted where necessary). The IPC may also become the exam panel chair for a student's examination (*see Section 7.6, 'Exam panel chairs'*).

The independent panel chair (IPC) will:

- chair all of the student's formal progress reviews
- make themselves available to offer the student independent advice
- make themselves available to discuss with and advise supervisors in relation to the student's progress and other relevant matters
- assume responsibility for and manage procedures around potential student withdrawal (*see Section 5.6*)
- assume responsibility for exam arrangements in the cases where supervisors are unexpectedly unavailable (see below)

The Independent Panel Chair must be an Edinburgh Napier University staff member and must have undertaken the University's Induction to Research Degrees Supervision at Edinburgh Napier. training. All supervisors are required to make themselves available to take on the role of IPC.

The IPC is responsible for ensuring that both supervisors and students follow all necessary processes.

The IPC must not be involved in the student's academic work on a day-to-day basis and is not expected to read the student's ongoing work. They must, however, read the student's formal proposal (RD4), confirmation of target degree sample of writing (RD5) and the reflective reports (RD6) in order to be able to chair and fully participate in those review meetings (*see Sections 4.2-4.5*). The IPC should therefore be familiar with the standards for research degrees as laid out by the QAA's Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees.

It is recommended that the student and the IPC take opportunities to meet independently of the supervisory team.

Some research degrees projects are such that the nature of the research itself can be potentially

trauma inducing or triggering. Students undertaking projects which are considered to have the potential to bring a risk of trauma will be assigned an Independent Panel Chair with the skills and insight to support them. These IPCs are referred to as Trauma Informed IPCs.

External supervisors

An external supervisor may be appointed where required expertise is not available at Edinburgh Napier. Any external supervisor is subject to the same basic expectations as Edinburgh Napier staff, although they are not required to undertake the University's Induction to Research Degrees Supervision at Edinburgh Napier course. It is the Director of Studies' responsibility to ensure that any external supervisor operates in accordance with the required processes and within the University's ethos in relation to research degrees supervision. External persons offering occasional support ought to be considered and recorded as 'additional advisors', not supervisors.

In the case where an existing Edinburgh Napier supervisor leaves the University, they may remain on the supervisory team as an external supervisor.

The school within which the student is registered is responsible for any contractual agreement or fee payment for external supervisors.

An external supervisor may not be appointed as the Director of Studies.

Staff on temporary contracts

Staff who are on a temporary contract with the University are eligible to join supervisory teams. Where the staff member's contract is due to expire before the student is due to complete, the staff member may not be appointed as DoS or IPC. They may be appointed as a second supervisor.

Staff on temporary contracts are, in every other regard, subject to the same criteria as other staff

Staff registered as research students

A member of staff who is currently registered for a research degree at any institution is not eligible to supervise Edinburgh Napier research degree students.

Supervisors leaving the University

❖ *See also Section 4.10*

In the case where a supervisor leaves the employment of the University, they may remain a full and active member of the supervisory team (although they cannot remain as Director of Studies). Alternatively, they may wish to leave the team. Where a former member of staff ceases to contribute meaningfully to the student's supervision, a form RD11 should be completed, and they should be removed from the team.

In the case where a member of staff's departure from the University leaves only one Edinburgh Napier member of staff on the supervisory team, an additional member of staff should be found to join the team. Where the student is sufficiently close to completion that an addition to the team would not be considered helpful, the IPC ought to pay particular attention to processes and the student's progress and ensure that a) the student is not disadvantaged and b) they, the IPC, would be able to manage final processes in the case that the Director of Studies became unexpectedly unavailable. The decision not to add a second member of Edinburgh Napier staff to a team will only be allowed where a student is less than 12 months from expected completion. This decision must

always be taken with the approval of the School Research Degrees Leader.

4.7 THE SUPERVISORY TEAM: EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

- At least one supervisor on any team must have a doctoral award.
- All supervisors must have *either* a doctoral award *or* an established record of research publication *or* an equivalent record of professional practice.
- All supervisors must be equipped to make a significant contribution towards the student's progress, whether this be through expertise in the student's area of study or through methodological expertise which is relevant to the student's project as a whole.
- At least one member of the supervisory team must have experience of supervising one UK research degree candidate to successful completion at the level of the intended target degree or above.
- All members of the supervisory team must have a clear understanding of the key requirements, processes and ethos of supervising research degrees at Edinburgh Napier. To this end all supervisors who are new to supervising at Edinburgh Napier must have undertaken the one-day University Induction to Research Degrees Supervision at Edinburgh Napier course prior to commencing supervision. All supervisors, in order to continue supervising, must attend a Supervision Briefing Update at least every two years. This is to ensure that all supervisors are abreast of changes to processes and regulations.
- Supervisors must have completed designated EDI training, including Supporting Disabled Students.
- The University recognises that supervising research degrees is a pedagogical responsibility with its own demands and characteristics. The University offers a suite of short developmental training sessions on specific aspects of supervision. All supervisors are expected to enrol on these courses on an ongoing basis.
- The University, through the Doctoral College, embraces a community of support approach in relation to supervision. To this end, regular cross-University sessions are run for supervisors to share best practice, raise questions and discuss all aspects of the supervisory experience. All supervisors are expected to attend these sessions on a regular basis.

4.8 THE SUPERVISORY TEAM: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the supervisory team fall into three main areas:

- Advice and guidance on the specific project
- Advice and guidance on the University's research degree procedures
- Monitoring progress

The supervisory team is expected to:

- Establish a framework for supervision, including arrangements for regular supervisory meetings. This should be agreed at the start of the student's study and should include a timetable of stages to be completed by particular times.
- Attend regular and frequent supervisory meetings. Although not all meetings may require the attendance of the full supervisory team it is important, for consistency, that the student do meet with the whole team on a regular basis. Students can usually expect a supervisory meeting no less than once a month (FT) or six weeks (PT). Meeting may take place remotely by mutual agreement.
- Identify development and training needs, including career development.
- Make sure that the project:
    - falls within the supervisors' area of expertise;
    - can be completed with the resources available;

  - can be completed within the prescribed period of study;
  - is suitable for the degree being studied for.
- Discuss any hazards associated with the research work and how they can be dealt with, and ensure that safety procedures are followed.
- Ensure that the student is made fully aware of the research ethics protocols appropriate to their discipline and that the proposed project meets the University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity.
- Ensure that adequate cover is arranged if any member of the supervisory team is absent for a significant period.
- Advise on the contents of any report required for the reflective progress reviews and the 'confirmation of target degree' review, and about the form the review process will take.
- Offer guidance on the content and layout of the thesis and about the standard of scholarship and writing required.
- Respond promptly and constructively to written work, within the schedule agreed in the Supervision Agreement form.
- Ensure that examiners are identified, and approval of the examination team is applied for, at least three months before the student is expected to submit their thesis.

A professional relationship between staff and research students should be maintained at all times, following our institutional Values and Behaviours.

Supervising immigration controlled students

Supervisors of Student Visa holders are required to attend a mandatory training and information session with the Visa and International Support Team prior to the start date of any visa holder. Full details of responsibilities in relation to engagement of the student, and keeping and uploading records of that engagement, are set out in the document provided to the supervisory team by the Doctoral College Operations Team when the student registers.

The IPC role in chairing 'milestone meetings'

The Independent Panel Chair (IPC) is expected to meet formally with the student and supervisors at the major review meetings that are held to consider and report on the student's progress. The meetings where the IPC plays a key role are:

- Formal Proposal Review (RD4).
- Confirmation of Target Degree Review (RD5).
- Formal Reflective Progress Reviews (RD6).
- Other significant meetings (e.g., change of supervisors, suspension of study).

The Chair acts in an advisory capacity to ensure that the student's experience of supervision is satisfactory. At other times, the IPC might be approached by the student or the supervisory team to offer advice.

4.9 SUPERVISORY LIMITS/REQUIREMENTS

The supervision and support of Research Degrees students is a pedagogical domain which requires a specific skill set and familiarity with relevant policy and expectations both from within the University and the wider sector. In recognition of this, the University sets some limits and conditions on the staff in relation to taking on the role of supervisor.

Staff who are new to Research Degree supervision can supervise up to three students. This may either be in the capacity of Director of Studies or second supervisor. Whether the member of staff

who is new to supervision is the Director of Studies or second supervisor, it is expected that a more experienced member of staff will undertake the other role and will, from this position, provide mentorship. A member of staff will be considered as 'new to supervision' until they have supervised a student to completion. A completion will be considered relevant to supervision at or above the level of the degree in question. That is to say, a member of staff who has a completion at MRes will be considered experienced for future MRes supervision but would still be considered 'new to supervision' for doctoral students. A completion at any doctoral level will be considered adequate for supervision of any other doctoral degree (PhD, Prof Doc or DBA).
Staff with a completion may supervise up to seven students (at the relevant level), either as Director of Studies or second supervisor.

Prior to joining a supervision team, all members of staff must have completed the Induction to Supervision briefing sessions.

All supervisors, in order to continue supervising, must attend a Supervisors' Briefing Session at least once every two years.

It is expected that all staff who undertake the role of supervisor also undertake the role of IPC. In addition, staff who are not currently supervising but who have attended the Induction to Supervision or the Supervisors' Briefing Session within two years are also eligible to take on the role of IPC. No one should be acting as IPC for more than 3 students at any one time.

4.10 CHANGES TO THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Under certain circumstances it may be necessary to change the supervisory team originally approved for the student. Examples of such circumstances might be where a member of the team has left the University or is unavailable for a lengthy period due to ill-health, or if the focus of the student's research project has changed substantially.

Where a member of staff is leaving the University

In cases where a member of staff – including the IPC - is leaving the University, the School Research Degrees Leader must arrange the change of supervision/IPC in sufficient time to effect a smooth handover.

Unexpected changes

When the need for change cannot be foreseen, for example in cases of illness or accident, the School Research Degrees Leader is responsible for ensuring that alternative supervision arrangements are organised as soon as possible.

In the unlikely event that **both supervisors leave** suddenly, it is particularly important to make alternative arrangements for the student's supervision and support as soon as possible.

Student request to change supervisors

There could be circumstances in which a student wishes to make a change to the supervisory team. Where appropriate, such a request should be discussed openly with the current supervision team. Where a student's desire to change the composition of a supervisory team is contrary to the wishes of the supervisors, this process can only be progressed through a formal complaint.

Students should be aware that changing supervisors is complex and not always possible.

Any student wishing to change supervisors where there is not agreement with the supervisors should discuss the situation with their Independent Panel Chair.

Formal approval

Once new members of the team have been identified, and all parties – including the student - have given consent, form RD11 must be completed to record and authorise the change. Only the School Research Degrees Leader can authorise a change to the supervisory team. The procedure to be followed (using form RD11) is as above.

Approval of IPC change

A change of IPC may be approved by the School Research Degrees Leader and a shorter version of the form (RD11-IPC) is available for this purpose.

4.11 DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FOR RESEARCHERS

Edinburgh Napier University takes an integrated approach to the development of researchers. Many of its development and training events are open to both staff and students, but we also provide targeted specialist sessions. These not only include specific skills training (for example, in research methods and academic writing), but also 'transferable' skills such as presentation skills.

Personal development record

During their studies all research students are expected to develop both their research skills and knowledge and broader professional and career development skills. All progress reviews should include discussion and assessment of these broader skills. All research students are provided with access to Vitae's Online Researcher Development planner which they and their supervisors should use to plan and report on their personal and professional development.

University-wide events

The University provides and co-ordinates a range of training for both research students and supervisors. Such training involves input from academic staff, the Researcher Development Team, the Department of Learning & Teaching Enhancement, the Academic Skills Team, the English for Academic Purposes Team and Library Services. Training activities are published on the Doctoral College webpages.

It is important that all students and supervisors are aware of these opportunities.

Training for Teaching

As many research students will wish to enter a career in academia, the University runs a bespoke **New to Teaching in Higher Education** course. The course is comprised of an online survival skills session, covering the basics of learning and teaching and an in-person microteaching session, where students have the opportunity to practice their teaching skills with their peers and receive peer feedback to help improve their practice. These four hours are mandatory for all students who wish to obtain a Student Experience Contracts (SEC) and are paid (at Demonstrator rate) under the SEC upon completion.

In addition, the University, through DLTE, offer three voluntary workshops, which embed key pedagogical principles and concepts, including assessment and feedback and reflection of teaching practice. These are sandwiched by online peer-led discussions led by DLTE interns, which offer a safe space to discuss any challenges and ideas research students have in their teaching roles. Students will also be introduced to the University's Higher Education Academy Fellowship process, ENRoute, thus beginning the process of developing evidence towards the category of Associate Fellow of the HEA.

For supervisors

The University runs an **Induction to Research Degree Supervision at Edinburgh Napier** course which all staff must complete before they commence supervision. The course is normally offered three times each year. As the course covers not only principles of the pedagogy of supervision, but also some of the key policies and the particular ethos of research degrees at Edinburgh Napier, the course is mandatory for all staff new to supervising at the University, even if they have experience supervising at other institutions.

All supervisors are required to maintain their supervisory training. This is done both through attending and engaging in ongoing supervisor development events and engaging with the community of supervision which the university facilitates, and through attendance and participation in a two-yearly top-up briefing session. This shorter session is intended to ensure that all supervisors remain abreast of changes to policy and practice and developments within the university.

The University also runs specific training for Exam Panel Chairs. Any staff intending to chair a research degree examination at any level must have attended this training within two years of the examination date (the date of the viva, where there is one, or the date of the meeting with examiners, in the case of master level examinations).

Further training, for examiners, for IPCs and other aspects of supervision are available and staff are encouraged to attend these as appropriate to their roles. Training will be available on People First and the intranet.

SECTION FIVE: CHANGES AND INTERRUPTIONS TO STUDY

5.1 CHANGING MODE OF STUDY

Research students (apart from those listed under, "Students who may not change mode of study" below) may apply to change from full-time to part-time study, or vice versa, at any time before the end of their standard registration period. If a student enters the grace period they can no longer change their mode of study, as the arrangements for the grace period are the same whether the student is full or part-time.

Changing mode of study: the effect on the standard registration period

A change of mode of study will mean a recalculation of the standard end date. This can seem quite complex, because a part-time research degree does not last exactly twice as long as a full-time research degree. Rather, three months of full-time study is equivalent to five months of part-time study. Following any change to the mode of study, the period of registration remaining will be re-calculated on this basis. A new end date will be applied, and the student will be expected to submit the thesis before this date. For example:

- A PhD student completes 24 months of full-time study and then converts to part-time. The 24 months is deemed to be the equivalent of 40 months of part time study (5/3 x 24 = 40). The student would then be expected to complete their PhD in a further 20 months (to a 'normal' total of 60 months standard registration time).
- Another PhD student completes 12 months of part-time study and then converts to full-time. The 12 months is deemed to be the equivalent of 7 months of full-time study (3/5 x 12 = 7.2). The student would then be expected to complete their PhD in a further 29 months (to a 'normal' total of 36 months standard registration time).

Changing mode of study: the effect on tuition fees

Any change from full- to part-time study, or vice versa, will influence the tuition fees charged each year. This will be calculated by Finance at the time of the change.

Students who may not change mode of study

- Students registered for DBA, Prof. Doc, or PhD by Published Works may only study part-time and, therefore, cannot change their mode of study.
- Immigration controlled students in the UK on a Student Visa are not permitted to study part-time.

5.2 CHANGING SCHOOL (INTERNAL TRANSFER)

An internal transfer can only take place in cases where there are no significant changes to the research being undertaken. Any student wishing to move school because of a significant change in the focus or direction of their research should be advised to withdraw, and to re-apply to undertake a new course of research study.

Internal transfer: the exception to the rule

Research students are registered in one of the University's schools. The choice of school (department) must always be the school in which their Director of Studies is based which, in turn, is

determined by the subject matter and academic discipline of their research. This means that research students are not permitted to transfer from one school to another except in one particular circumstance: where the student is part of a cross-university project, with other members of the supervisory team based in other schools, and the Director of Studies becomes permanently unavailable. If there is no suitable alternative DoS within the school of registration, and one of the other supervisors takes over that role, the student's registration should be transferred to the school in which the new DoS is based.

Internal transfer: Immigration controlled students

Because a visa is approved for a particular course of study, an internal transfer may not be possible for a research student on a visa. The student should be referred to the Visa and International Support team for advice before a decision to transfer is approved.

Internal transfer process

The decision to proceed with an internal transfer must be made at a Progress Review meeting (if necessary an exceptional/additional PR meeting) and documented on form RD6-B. This form allows the relevant people from each school to confirm their approval of the transfer and their authorisation of (1) the change in responsibility for the student's progress and wellbeing and (2) the change in responsibility for associated resources.

- Internal transfer will have no effect on the fees charged.
- Internal transfer will have no effect on the registration end dates.
- Given the change of DoS, an RD11 must also be submitted

5.3 CHANGING TARGET DEGREE

Transfer to a PhD

A student registered for MRes or LLMRes may be transferred to a PhD as the result of a progress review decision such as the RD4, RD5 or RD6 review. Such a transfer will mean a recalculation of the student's end date.

Transfer to a higher award: immigration controlled students

A student transferring to a higher award will need a new visa because of the longer duration of the higher award. The student should be referred to the Visa and International Support team for advice before a decision to transfer is approved.

If the decision to transfer to a different award is taken outwith the standard review cycle, a form RD6 should be used to document the decision but does not need to be accompanied by the usual Reflective Progress Review. The form should clearly document the reasons for the change in award.

Transfer to a lower award

A PhD candidate may request a transfer to MRes or LLMRes. Transfer to a lower target degree can also be recommended by the supervisory team as a result of unsatisfactory progress. The decision to transfer may be taken at the RD4 or RD5 review, or at a reflective (RD6) review.

If the decision to transfer to a different award is taken outwith the standard review cycle, the supervisory team should arrange a review meeting to discuss the implications of the change and report their conclusions to the School Research Degree Committee using form RD6. The RD6 should be used to document the decision but does not need to be accompanied by the usual Reflective

Progress Review. The form should clearly document the reasons for the change in award.

Whether the transfer has been requested by the student, or recommended by the supervisory team, the practical implications are the same. The student's end date may be re-calculated, depending on how far into the registration period the change takes place.

- If the change is made before the standard end date for the lower award, the standard date for the lower award will apply.
- If the change is made after the standard end date for the lower award has passed the student will be given twelve months from the date of transfer to complete.
- If the change is made during the grace period, no change will be made to the end dates; the registration period for the original award will continue to apply.

Transfer to a lower award: immigration controlled students

If a PhD student is in the UK on a Student Route visa, the terms of the visa may be affected if the student transfers to MRes or LLMRes. The rules about this are complex, so any student in this position should be referred to the Visa and International Support Team for advice, **before** a decision to transfer is approved.

Changing target degree: the effect on tuition fees

Transfer to a higher target degree will mean the total fees charged will be greater. (*See Section 3.4 for a list of the fees charged for each target degree*)

Transfer to a lower target degree will not result in a refund of any fees already charged.

5.4 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES and SUSPENDED STUDY

If a student's research has been - or is likely to be - significantly interrupted by extenuating circumstances, a period of 'suspended study' should be considered. Such a break in study should never be viewed as a negative response to illness or difficult life events. Rather, supervisors should encourage students - when appropriate - to take time off to recuperate, or deal with personal issues, and return to study when they are in a better position to focus fully on their research again. 'The clock stops ticking' on registration time during suspended study, which may remove one potential area of pressure during a difficult period. Taking a break when necessary is more likely to result in timely completion.

Examples of extenuating circumstances

- Serious illness or injury.
- The death or chronic illness of a family member, dependant and/or friend.
- Domestic, financial and/or personal crises leading to severe stress.
- Unexpected additional professional/employment commitments.
- Unplanned absence arising from circumstances such as jury service, Territorial Army deployment, pregnancy, maternity, paternity or adoption leave, or caring responsibilities.

Examples of circumstances or events that **would not normally** be considered as valid include the following:

- Planned events, such as holidays, house moves or weddings.
- Technical failure, loss, breakage, or theft of an individual computer, printer or storage device preventing submission of work on time.
- Circumstances caused by the withdrawal of information technology services, learning resources or facilities due to debt or non-payment of fees due to the University.

Terms of suspended study

- Suspension of study will be considered for a minimum of one month and a maximum of twelve months across the whole registration period.
- Applications for suspended study cannot be made less than three months before the maximum registration end date (i.e., the end of the grace period). Students with extenuating circumstances within the last three months of registration may apply for an extension. (*See Section 5.5 below*)
- Exceptionally the maximum of twelve months of suspended study may be exceeded, with the permission of the Research Degrees Examination Board. This would apply where there are:
    - multiple instances of exceptional circumstances (eg., an illness followed by pregnancy)
    - single recurring and/or ongoing instances of exception (eg., chronic illness)
- ***Immigration controlled students*** should be aware that **all** absences of **any** type are counted in terms of visa regulations. (See more detailed information below.)

How to apply for a period of suspended study

Research students who wish to suspend study should discuss this at a special meeting of the review panel, at which the Independent Panel Chair must be present. If the panel agrees that a suspension is appropriate, an application should be made on form RD7, and approval sought from the relevant School Research Degrees Leader. Detailed information about illness and personal circumstances

need not be included on the RD7; the Director of Studies may instead provide a statement on the form to confirm that they have satisfied themselves that the circumstances are genuine and that the period of suspended study sought is reasonable. Students should note that medical evidence may be required by the Director of Studies and/or the School Research Degrees Committee.

Applications for suspended study beyond 12 months

Normally only a maximum of 12 months suspended study will be granted across the total period of registration. This figure refers to the total sum of periods of suspension. Applications for suspension which take the student beyond this 12-month total may be considered in exceptional circumstances (*see terms of suspended study*). Such applications must have the support of the School RDC and should be submitted to Research Degrees Examination Board for consideration. A statement from the DoS, supporting the continued relevance of the student's research, must be included.

Students may be granted an approved leave of absence for a specified period. During this period, the student is not entitled to a stipend or tuition fees, except for medical leave or family-related leave. The total period of absence will not exceed 12 months, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Suspended study: immigration controlled students

Specific **additional** procedures apply to immigration controlled students. This is because the University has a particular responsibility for the sponsorship of these students and must comply with Home Office requirements. It is therefore important to ***read and note the information below*** **before** considering a period of suspended study for any immigration controlled student. Further advice on this is available from the Visa and International Support Team.

For a period of absence of more than 5 and up to 28 calendar days ('Authorised Leave')

- The Home Office will not be notified of the absence.
- If the student leaves the UK while on suspended study the existing visa may be used to re-enter.
- The period of absence cannot be extended

For a period of absence of more than 28 and up to 60 calendar days ('Authorised Leave')

- The Home Office will be notified that the student is not in attendance.
- Visa sponsorship will not be withdrawn.
- If the student leaves the UK while on suspended study the existing visa may be used to re-enter.

For a period of absence of more than 60 calendar days ('Suspended Study')

- The Home Office will be informed that the student is not in attendance.
- **Visa sponsorship will be withdrawn.**
- The student will have to leave the UK (by a date specified by the Home Office).
- The student must apply for a new visa to re-enter the UK, before their intended return to Edinburgh Napier.

PLEASE NOTE: Immigration controlled students must obtain formal approval from the University for **any** period of absence over 5 days, including times when a suspended study is not required – for example, a trip to a conference, or a holiday. Such absences must be discussed with and approved by the Director of Studies. The DoS must ensure that form RD7-AA is completed and submitted to the Visa and International Support Team with a copy to the Doctoral College Operations Team for information. Research registration times are not affected by such absences, but it is crucial that they are monitored, approved and recorded by the University.

What is the difference between suspended study and extension?

- If a student has extenuating circumstances that prevents them from working, then the appropriate course of action is to apply for a period of 'suspended study'. **Suspended study** means that registration is 'suspended' – effectively, **the clock stops ticking on the registration time**. The student's end date moves forward by the amount of time for which study has been suspended. No additional time is granted. The understanding is that a student on suspended study will not be working on their research during this period. It is not possible to suspend registration once the registration period has ended; something that no longer 'exists' cannot be 'suspended'.

- An **extension**, on the other hand, means that **additional time is added to the end of the grace period (which would normally be limited to 12 months)**. Such an extension is something that will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances. While suspensions are approved at school level, applications for extensions to the grace period must be submitted to Research Degrees Examination Board. (*See Section 5.5, 'Extension to the maximum end date'*).

- While, normally, an extension would only be considered during the final three months of a student's grace period, in certain circumstances it may be deemed appropriate to apply for an extension early instead of applying to suspend studies. If a student's circumstances are such that their ability to study is impaired but they do wish to continue studying with an expectation of a slower rate of progress, a suspension of studies would not be considered appropriate. In these circumstances, the student should be encouraged to submit an exceptional, early request for extension. It is important that this is considered and acted upon as the peace of mind this affords students in these circumstances is vital.

Effect of suspended study on registration period

The time that elapses during a period of suspended study does not count towards the total registration period. In effect 'the clock is stopped' until the student resumes study and the number of months of suspension is added to the original end date.

Effect of suspended study on payment of fees

The total amount of fees charged (*see Section 3.4*) will not be affected by suspended study. Adjustments may be made to the due dates for payment.

Effect of suspended study on stipend payment: maternity/maternity support/adoption

- Students on suspended study because of maternity, maternity support (paternity) or adoption leave may still receive some or all of the stipend. (*See Section 3.10, 'Maternity, maternity support (paternity) and adoption'*).

Effect of suspended study on stipend payment: certificated sickness absence

- Students are entitled to up to 13 weeks of certificated sickness absence within any 12-month period, during which the stipend will continue to be paid. (*See Section 3.9, 'Illness and accident'*).

Effect of suspended study on stipend payment: all other cases

Stipend payments are normally stopped during a period of suspended study (except in cases of illness, maternity, maternity support, or adoption leave. However, this will depend on the length of

the break in study and should be agreed between the student and supervisory team as part of the discussion of the suspension. (For a very short break in study, suspending the stipend may not be necessary).

- If stipend payments are suspended the DoS must arrange for this (*see Section 3.5, 'changes to payments'*).
- Whether the stipend is stopped or not, the total number of payments will remain the same.

5.5 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POST-VIVA

Extension to deadline for revised thesis

A student with extenuating circumstances that affect their ability to work on post-examination amendments can apply for an **extension to the deadline for submission of the amended thesis.** Any student in this situation should contact their Director of Studies to discuss the problem and consider whether an extension is reasonable. If the DoS supports the need for an extension, a written application should be made to the School Research Degrees Committee, submitted on form RD18. The application must include an indication of the reason why an extension is needed. This need not be detailed if there are personal or medical circumstances involved. It is sufficient to state, for example, "medical reasons" providing the DoS adds a statement confirming their knowledge of the circumstances and their belief that an extension is necessary.

The Committee is expected to make a judgement (in consultation with the exam panel chair) based on the circumstances presented. In considering applications, it may be helpful to refer to the examples of extenuating circumstances described in section 5.3 above.

The maximum additional time a student may be granted is six months.

Where extenuating circumstances continue (in the case of serious illness for example) an additional extension may be approved. Applications for such an additional extension must be made to the Research Degrees Examination Board, but otherwise following the same procedure as above.

In all cases, **the Doctoral College Operations Team must be informed of the decision** and will send formal confirmation to the student.

5.6 EXTENSION TO THE MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION

The University expects all students to submit a thesis for examination by the end of their standard registration period. During the course of the registration period, any circumstances impacting significantly on a student's ability to study or carry out research should have resulted in a period of suspended study. Students are also granted a grace period of 12 months. By the latter stages of the grace period it should be very unusual for a student not to be ready to submit for examination and there should rarely be any need for an extension to the maximum period of registration.

In **exceptional circumstances only**, a student may be granted an extension to the maximum registration end date (i.e. the period marking the end of the grace period). Any application for an extension must be supported with relevant documentary evidence.

Examples of extenuating circumstances

Examples of extenuating circumstances at this stage might include

- Sudden or unexpected serious illness or injury.
- The death or sudden chronic illness of a family member, dependant and/or friend.
- Domestic, financial and/or personal crises leading to severe stress.
- Unexpected additional professional/employment commitments.
- Unplanned absence arising from circumstances such as jury service, Territorial Army deployment, pregnancy, maternity, maternity support (paternity) or adoption leave, or caring responsibilities.

Examples of circumstances or events that **would not** be considered as valid include the following:

- Planned events, such as holidays, house moves or weddings.
- Technical failure, loss, breakage, or theft of an individual computer, printer or storage device preventing submission of work on time.
- Circumstances caused by the withdrawal of information technology services, learning resources or facilities due to debt or non-payment of fees due to the University.

How to apply for an extension to registration

Applications for extension (on form RD10) must be made to the Research Degrees Examination Board before the existing maximum end date and must have the support of the relevant School Research Degrees Committee.

The application must include:

- a detailed summary of the student's progress to date
- a detailed timetable for completion
- a statement of support from the Director of Studies which specifically addresses the need for extension, in the context of the expectations outlined in the introductory paragraph above.

Another writing up fee will be charged following a successful application for extension to maximum registration time.

5.7 WITHDRAWAL OF REGISTRATION

Withdrawal procedure

In a variety of circumstances, it may be necessary to withdraw a student's registration. This may be the choice of the student, the review panel, or a higher authority within the University. To ensure neutrality and adherence to correct procedure, **the Independent Panel Chair should oversee the withdrawal process.**

Wherever possible, **the IPC should conduct an exit interview** with the student and document, in an appropriate level of detail, the reasons for withdrawal.

In all cases of withdrawal, a withdrawal form (RD9) must be completed and submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team. The Office will process the withdrawal on the University systems and will write formally to the student confirming withdrawal of registration.

Withdrawal of registration initiated by student

A student who wants to discontinue their research and withdraw from registration is advised to discuss this first with their IPC, Director of Studies, and/or other members of the supervisory team. If a definite decision to withdraw is reached, the student must notify the School and Doctoral College formally, using form RD9. The IPC is responsible for ensuring that the form is completed and submitted.

Withdrawal due to unsatisfactory progress

Where a student's progress is unsatisfactory the review panel may recommend that registration should be terminated. If this recommendation is approved by the relevant School Research Degrees Committee, the IPC must arrange for withdrawal of registration, using form RD9. As the level of unsatisfactory progress which would result in withdrawal is unlikely to arise suddenly and without appropriate measures of support being put in place, review panels are advised to utilise the Reflective Progress Review process to ensure that the relevant progress issues are discussed and recorded appropriately. Form RD9 must still be completed along with form RD6.

Withdrawal due to academic conduct

A student who fails to abide by the University's Student Conduct Regulations or the Code of Practice for Research Integrity may be withdrawn from study, following a decision made by the University Research Degrees Committee.

Withdrawal due to loss of contact

A student who fails to maintain contact with their supervisory team may be deemed to have made unsatisfactory progress. Before a recommendation to withdraw the student can be approved in such a case, a formal letter must be sent to the student by the IPC (in consultation with the Director of Studies), no later than four weeks prior to the School Research Degrees Committee at which the matter will be considered. This letter should state that a recommendation to withdraw the student will be made on the date on which the SRDC meeting will be held, unless the student makes a firm commitment to regular contact and review. Thereafter, the standard procedure for withdrawal (as above) should be followed.

Withdrawal of a student in receipt of a stipend

When a student in receipt of a stipend withdraws, or is withdrawn, the Director of Studies must ensure that a 'stipend–stopper' form is approved by the relevant financial authority and submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team (*see Section 3.5 for details*).

SECTION SIX: THE RESEARCH THESIS

6.1 GENERAL GUIDANCE ON WRITING THE THESIS

All research degree students are examined on their thesis. Doctoral students will also undergo an oral examination. While the thesis can be understood as the culmination and formal presentation of the student's research, it is important that the writing of the thesis is not left to the end of the research process. Students should produce draft versions of sections and chapters throughout their studies, with appropriate guidance from their supervisors. Students can also avail themselves of support from the Academic Skills Team and the English for Academic Purposes Team, both of which can provide invaluable advice on academic writing and more general study skills.

Students are also encouraged to read other theses in their area. The University library has copies of previous Edinburgh Napier theses and other UK theses are available through the British Library's Electronic Theses Online Service.

The University does not recommend a common approach to the structure and content or to the referencing and citation within theses. There is a range of practices and norms both between and even within disciplines. Students should seek guidance on these matters from their supervisors to ensure that their work meets the expectations in their discipline or subject area. It is important that, whatever practices are used, they are used correctly and consistently. This is particularly important in the case of referencing and citation.

In particular, it is important that students acknowledge all ideas from other writers, even if they are only paraphrasing. Quotation marks should always be used to indicate words taken from someone else. Where others' ideas or words are not acknowledged, the student may be considered to have committed plagiarism, which could mean failing the examination.

Students should also be wary of utilising artificial intelligence tools in the composition of their theses (see University guidance here).

All suspected cases of plagiarism (or other academic misconduct) will be reported to the Research Degrees Examination Board. At the discretion of the Board, cases may be subsequently submitted to a University Academic Integrity Panel.

Confidential and copyrighted material

Students should be aware that all theses will, after a successful examination, be uploaded to the University repository and be submitted to the British Library. As the thesis will become a public document, it is important that it does not contain any personal information or text which could identify individuals other than the author and supervisors (such as email addresses or signatures of participants). Additionally, theses cannot contain copyrighted material such as images or significant chunks of text. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the thesis conforms to these standards, although they would be advised to seek guidance from their supervisors and/or library staff when they are unclear.

6.2 WORD COUNT

As the time given varies for each research degree, so does the expectation of the volume of work produced. The table below provides a general guide in terms of expected word length. In practice,

the length of a thesis will vary according to the candidate's discipline, specific topic and manner of argumentation. A candidate in Engineering, for example, may utilise numerous tables and diagrams which convey ideas more succinctly than written English could. Conversely, a candidate in Literary Studies is likely to require extended arguments which require more words. Regardless of discipline, the candidate's thesis should always be written in a manner which is clear, relevant and appropriately concise. Footnotes and endnotes should be used as appropriate, although the overuse of footnotes and endnotes should be avoided.

Degree	*Normal word count range*
MRes/ LLMRes	20,000 to 30,000
Prof. Doc	50,000 to 60,000
DBA	50,000 to 60,000
PhD	50,000 to 100,000
PhD by Published Works (Conventional)	15,000 to 25,000 (critical appraisal)
PhD by Published Works (Creative Practice & Hybrid)	25,000 to 50,000 (critical appraisal)

What is included in the word count?

The word count only applies to the main body of the thesis. The rule of thumb is that everything from the first word of the introduction to the last word of the conclusion is included in the word count. Therefore, in-text citations count and headings and sub-headings count.

The word count does **not** include acknowledgements, the abstract, tables and diagrams, headings to tables and diagrams, the bibliography or list of references, appendices.

Creative practice

Where the degree is one entailing a significant component of creative practice, the expected length of the contextualising arguments would be significantly shorter than above.

6.3 GUIDANCE FOR WHAT THE THESIS SHOULD LOOK LIKE

The information below provides some guidance as to what a thesis should look like, and particular elements that should be included. This guidance applies both to the thesis submitted for examination and to the final, approved, version of the thesis submitted for the library.

1. The thesis must be presented in English.

2. The thesis must include an internal title page. (see 6.c below).

3. The thesis must include a declaration which:

   a) states that the work has not, in whole or in part, been submitted for any other degree or qualification;

   b) where relevant, makes a clear statement about any published material associated with the work;

   c) states that the thesis is the result of the student's own independent work;

   <u>or</u> where some or all of the research leading to the thesis is part of a collaborative/group project

d) makes a clear statement of the student's individual contribution to the work and the extent of collaboration.

4. An abstract of up to 300 words must be included at the beginning of the thesis. This should provide a synopsis of the nature of the work contained, the main findings, and the contribution that the project has made to the subject area. As one of the purposes of this abstract is that it can be read independently of the thesis, it should not contain references to specific chapters of the thesis.

5. Students may publish material associated with their research (for example journal articles) before the thesis is submitted for examination. If any such material is published, the thesis must include a reference to this, and a copy of the publication must be included with the submitted thesis. This should be included as an appendix to the thesis.

6. The thesis must be presented in the following format:

   a. one and a half line spacing must be used in the main text except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing should be used;

   b. pages must be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages;

   c. the title page must contain the information listed below. (Some examples of title pages are reproduced in section 6.8)

      - the full title of the thesis
      - the full name of the author (the student)
      - the month and year of submission (This may need to be updated in the final version submitted for the library; *see* section 6.6)
      - one of the following statements (*as appropriate to the award*)

PhD	A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy
Prof. Doc	A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Professional Doctorate
DBA	A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Business Administration
LLMRes	A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Master of Laws by Research
MRes	A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Master by Research

Specific rules for non-standard theses

Where a thesis includes material which cannot easily be embedded into the PDF of the thesis, this should be provided separately in an appropriate and accessible manner. Where the additional material can be delivered electronically, it should be delivered as a separate file or files. In the case of large files, these may need to be delivered separately. Where the additional material is physical, these should be delivered to the Doctoral College Operations Team. In all cases, the thesis must include a list of all materials in its contents pages.

6.4 SUBMISSION FOR EXAMINATION

When to submit

In order to be examined, all students must submit a thesis for examination. This can be done at any point from one month before the end of their standard period of registration and must be done before the end of any grace period granted. The University encourages students to submit as close as possible to the end of the standard period and not to assume they will be granted a grace period.

The student is responsible for ensuring that their thesis is completed and submitted in good time, but supervisors also have a responsibility to support and encourage the student in doing this. Supervisors and student should – ideally – agree on when the thesis is ready for submission but if agreement cannot be reached, the final decision always rests with the student. All students are encouraged to upload their draft thesis to Turnitin before final submission. A Moodle site with a designated Turnitin link for theses is available in each school.

The University expects examiners to be given at least six weeks to consider a thesis and write a report on it. This means that copies of the thesis must be submitted *at least eight weeks before the viva is due to be held.* **NB**: Holiday periods should not be included when calculating eight weeks: students planning to submit in December, for example, are advised to do so ten weeks before the planned viva.

Copies of the thesis should not be provided to examiners directly, either by students or by supervisors. There is a formal process which is undertaken by the Doctoral College Operations Team and it is in everyone's interest to abide by this. A thesis provided directly to the examiners risks confusion over version control and seriously undermines the examination process. Any such cases will be referred to the Research Degrees Examination Board and this is likely to delay proceedings and may result in the examination process, including appointment of examiners, having to begin afresh.

No additions or amendments may be made to a thesis after it has been submitted for examination and before the examination has been held.

Early submission

Should a student feel ready to submit their thesis for examination more than one month prior to the end of their standard period of registration, they must discuss this with their supervisors and IPC and must seek formal approval from their School Research Degrees Committee.

While less formal discussion of the decision may occur between the student and their supervisors, in order to proceed to request permission to submit early, a formal meeting must be held which is chaired by the IPC and attended by all supervisors. This meeting should satisfy all parties that the decision to submit early is being made with the student's best interests in mind and that it is, ultimately, the student's decision whether or not they wish to submit.

Under no circumstances should students be pressured to submit early, even in instances where the supervisors believe the thesis is complete. A student may complete their thesis and still benefit from other activities pertinent to research degrees studies prior to submission.

It is important to keep in mind that supervisors' view of the readiness of a thesis for submission can never be taken as a predictor of the exam outcome. Equally, permission to submit early does not predict an outcome.

There is **no reduction in fees** for early submission.

Applications for early submission must be submitted to the appropriate School Research Degrees Committee using form RD-ES (Application for Approval of Early Submission of Thesis).

Late submission

A thesis submitted after a student's agreed end date (whether this is the end of the standard period of registration or the end of any grace period granted) will not be put forward for examination. The situation will be reported to the Research Degrees Examination Board for consideration at the next available meeting and the student and supervisory team will be informed of the Board's decision within five working days of that meeting.

Students in this position are advised to write to the Board explaining the reasons for late submission. The Director of Studies must write a statement of support to accompany this.

The Board would expect a late submission to be due to unexpected circumstances that prevented the student and the supervisory team from making an application for an extension of the student's registration period. Therefore, the Board expects the circumstances leading to the late submission to be presented in detail, along with an explanation of why it was difficult or impossible to address the situation in advance of the student's maximum end date. The supporting statement from the Director of Studies should refer to these circumstances and demonstrate what actions were taken by the supervisory team to support the student.

Written statements regarding late submission must be sent to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

What and where to submit for examination

The following items must be submitted by the student to the Doctoral College Operations Team

- A PDF file of the thesis (and any additional materials for examination: see 6.3 above).
- A completed, authorised Candidate's Declaration form (RD15).

No additions or amendments may be made to a thesis after it has been submitted for examination and before the examination has been held. Students must confirm on the Candidate Declaration form that the version submitted is the version to be put forward for examination.

❖ ***The layout and format of the thesis must conform to the guidance set out in section 6.3 above.***

What happens next?

If the examination team has been formally approved

If the exam team has been approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board, the thesis will be sent to examiners by the Doctoral College Operations Team as soon as possible after submission, along with confirmation of their formal appointment, information about what is expected of them and copies of the pre-viva report forms. The student will also receive formal notification of the appointment of the examination team at this stage. Normally this process will happen within seven days of submission, and these will be sent out in the order in which they are submitted. However, during busy periods

(if a large number are submitted around the same time) the DC Office must prioritise based on upcoming viva dates, so the time period may be slightly longer.

If the examination team has not been formally approved

If examiners have not been approved, the Doctoral College Operations Team will contact the Director of Studies to confirm submission of the thesis and prompt an application for approval of examination team (RD12). Once that has been submitted and approved, the process is the same as above.

6.5 POST-VIVA SUBMISSION OF AMENDMENTS/RESUBMISSION OF THESIS

Following the viva, students may be required to make amendments to their thesis. These must be approved by both examiners. Where a student is given an outcome of Fail: Resubmit, they will need to resubmit a reworked thesis and undergo a second examination, including a second viva for Doctoral students. Detailed information about submitting amendments or about resubmitting the thesis is sent to the student by the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Contact with examiners

Students should not make direct contact with any examiner (including the internal) to discuss the amended thesis. The supervisory team should provide advice, guidance and support to the student where this is needed.

Where it is deemed necessary or helpful for the student to discuss amendments with an examiner, this needs to be arranged by the EPC. A meeting (either in person or online) should be arranged and must be attended by both examiners and chaired by the EPC. In such cases the Exam Panel Chair must include this information as part of the report following the viva, a record of any meetings or correspondence should be kept, and copies of this record must be provided to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

❖ *See also Section 7.11*

When to submit (revised thesis)

The amount of time that is allowed for amendments or revision depends on the outcome decision; there is a maximum amount of time set for each outcome (*see* table below). Doctoral students will be told informally of the outcome on the day of the viva and may be given some guidance at that stage on the amendments required. However, this will be followed up by a formal communication from the Doctoral College Operations Team confirming the outcome decision and the deadline for submission of the amended thesis. Written guidance from the examiners will be provided with this letter.
Students may submit at any point up to that deadline, which is calculated from the date of the letter, rather than from the examination meeting or the viva.

Conditional Pass subject to minor amendments	Six months
Conditional Pass subject to major amendments	Six months
Fail, Resubmit (with second viva)	Twelve months

Late submission of revised thesis

A student with extenuating circumstances that affect their ability to work on post-viva amendments can apply for an **extension to the deadline for submission of the amended thesis.** *See* Section 5.4 for full details.

Where an extension has not been approved, an amended thesis submitted after the deadline, will not be put forward for examination. The situation will be reported to the Research Degrees Examination Board for consideration at the next available meeting and the student and supervisory team will be informed of the Board's decision within five working days of that meeting.

Students in this position are advised to write to the Board explaining the reasons for late submission. The Director of Studies must write a statement of support to accompany this.

The Board would expect a late resubmission to be due to unexpected circumstances that prevented the student and the supervisory team from making an application for an extension to the deadline for resubmission. Therefore, the Board expects the circumstances leading to the late resubmission to be presented in detail, along with an explanation of why it was difficult or impossible to address the situation prior to the deadline. The supporting statement from the Director of Studies should refer to these circumstances and demonstrate what actions have been taken by the supervisory team to support the student.

Written statements regarding late submission must be sent to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Revised thesis: what and where to submit

Details of what to submit will be provided in a formal letter following the viva but in all cases this will include the items below which must be submitted by the student to the Doctoral College Operations Team

- A PDF copy of the revised thesis.
- A separate document detailing how and where in the thesis the examiners' requirements have been addressed. This should include reference to specific chapters and page numbers in the amended version where changes have been made.

6.6 SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS

A digital full-text electronic copy of the final, approved, version of the thesis must be submitted to the University. This will be uploaded to the Research Repository and will therefore be publicly accessible. In addition, the British Library regularly updates its electronic thesis online service (EThOS) - which lists all doctoral theses awarded by UK higher education institutions - by harvesting information from the Repository.

Students must take note of the guidance on research integrity at section 6.1. Students should also be aware that the repository team applies any necessary redactions to thesis files before uploading them, for example, by redacting personal information (such as signatures and email addresses) or copyrighted material which cannot be made publicly available.

When to submit the final version

The final version of the thesis should be submitted after the examiners' recommendation of award has been approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board and **before graduation.**

What and where to submit (final version)

The following items must be submitted by the student to the Doctoral College Operations Team

- A pdf copy of the thesis.
- A thesis submission form (RD20).

Specific rules for non-standard theses

Where a thesis includes material which cannot easily be embedded into the PDF of the thesis, this should be provided separately in an appropriate and accessible manner. Where the additional material can be delivered electronically, it should be delivered as a separate file or files. In the case of large files, these may need to be delivered separately. Where the additional material is physical, these should be delivered to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

In all cases the thesis must include a list of all materials in its contents pages.

6.7 THESIS EMBARGO

Commitment to Open Access

Edinburgh Napier University has an open access policy on research outputs. The University expects researchers to make all forms of research output, including research degree theses, 'open access' by depositing them in the University Research Repository. Research degree theses are available online through our repository and the British Library's Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS).

The University policy implements Author and Institutional Rights Retention to align with funder and sector best practices, such as those of UKRI and Wellcome.

- Copyright: The University confirms that staff members own the copyright to their scholarly works. Upon acceptance of publication, each researcher grants the University a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide license to make manuscripts of their scholarly articles publicly available under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license, or a more permissive license.
- Deposit: Researchers will deposit an electronic copy of the accepted manuscript (AM) of each article into the University research management system (Worktribe) after granting the license. The article's metadata will be available immediately upon deposit, and the AM will be made public on the date of first online publication under a CC BY license.
- Books and Chapters: This policy applies to books and chapters only when there is a funder mandate in effect, such as from UKRI or Wellcome for long-form publications after January 1, 2024. The AM will be made available via the institutional repository after an embargo period, typically 12 months, or sooner if required by funders.
- Opt-out: The University recognises there may be situations outside a researcher's control that make it difficult to follow the policy. In such cases, authors can voluntarily opt out of the immediate open access or the CC BY license requirement by contacting the Repository Team.
- Author's Responsibility: Authors will include the following text in the funding acknowledgement section or cover letter for future submissions: "For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 license to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission". This policy applies to all authors and supersedes any conflicting publisher license terms.

The possibility of embargo

If a candidate, or the University, wishes the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, a written application for approval must be submitted to

the Research Degrees Examination Board **before** submission of the final version of thesis. The length of time for which an embargo may be approved will normally not exceed two years from the date of graduation. An approved embargo will apply to all copies of the thesis.

The grounds on which an embargo may be approved

Commercial sensitivity: an embargo might be necessary because of an agreement with an external sponsor, a request from an external partner, or because the student or the University hopes to commercialise the findings of the thesis. Commercial sensitivity would include pending patent applications.

Sensitivity or security of data: an embargo might be necessary if the thesis contains information of significance for national security, or when release of information to the public would pose a significant risk to the researchers involved, or to Edinburgh Napier staff and students (for example the thesis contains research into terrorism or other illegal activities). Issues of such sensitivity and security must be considered thoroughly at the point of applying for ethical clearance to conduct the research.

Ethical sensitivity: an embargo might be needed to allow time for ethical sensitivities to decrease where the thesis includes material relating to an identifiable individual, or where it contains information collected under the promise of confidentiality. Situations of this type should be avoided as far as possible, through consideration of issues relating to publication of data, when applying for original ethical approval for the research. Candidates should consider anonymising or pseudonymising source of data wherever possible before the thesis is submitted for examination.

Publishing restrictions: it is normal practice for graduates to publish from their thesis and the public availability of the thesis should not prejudice such publication. This is part of the University's commitment to open access of research outputs. An embargo may only be requested on the grounds that it would harm the research student's ability to later publish their work in exceptional circumstances. Such a request must include supporting evidence such as a letter from the potential publisher.

Applying for an embargo

A written application should be made to the Research Degrees Examination Board **before** the final version of the thesis is submitted. The application should state the grounds on which the embargo is sought (sensitivity or security of data, ethical sensitivity, commercial sensitivity, or publishing restrictions) and provide a rationale to justify restricting open access to the contents of the thesis. Where an external sponsor or partner is involved, a letter of support from them must be included with the application. Where there is no external sponsor or partner, a statement of support from the Director of Studies must be included.

Written applications for embargo on public availability of the thesis should be sent to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Breaking embargo conditions

If the Research Degrees Examinations Board grants a thesis embargo, failure to adhere to the embargo conditions is likely to be considered as a form of research misconduct, which would be investigated through the University's Research Misconduct Policy. For example, if the embargo has been granted on the grounds that it contains sensitive information, but the student is found to have published this material elsewhere, this would break the conditions set for the embargo.

6.8 EXAMPLES OF TITLE PAGES and FRONT COVERS

- Some examples of title pages are shown on the next two pages
- Note that the dates that appear on the final version of the thesis should be the date on which the final (amended) version was submitted for consideration by examiners.

Think of an informative title

Sarah Jane Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2024

Think of a title: and perhaps give it a subtitle too

Sarah Jane Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2024

SECTION SEVEN: ASSESSMENT

7.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A viva voce (oral) examination is compulsory for the awards of PhD, DBA and Prof Doc. It is discretionary for the awards of MRes and LLMRes.

- Examiners may request a viva voce examination for an MRes or LLMRes student as a means of helping to determine difficult or borderline cases (Regulation D6.2). *See* Section 7.15 for details about MRes and LLMRes assessment.
- All research degrees other than MRes and LLMREs are assessed by viva voce examination. Vitae includes guidance on adjustments that can typically be made to the viva format to make it more inclusive for the range of disabled students. Requests for adjustments to the examination format or process, including the viva, should be submitted alongside the form RD12 (Application for the Approval of Exam Arrangements). Where the need for adjustments is determined after the approval of exam arrangements, then this should be sent for consideration by the Research Degrees Examination Board.
- Once a student has submitted the thesis for examination for PhD or DBA a viva voce must be held even if the pre-viva reports indicate that the candidate is likely to fail. The student must be given the opportunity to defend their thesis, in person, as part of the examination process. The only exception to this would be in cases where an accusation of academic misconduct has been upheld.

7.2 GUIDANCE ON REMOTE AND HYBRID VIVA EXAMINATIONS

The following viva formats are permitted by the University:

1. **In-person**: all participants are present in the same room.
2. **Remote**: all participants join online from different locations.
3. **Hybrid**: One of the examiners joins remotely. This would most likely be the external examiner, particularly if they are located outside the UK. It may, for exceptional reasons, however, be the internal examiner. If both examiners require to attend remotely, then the whole exam should be conducted as Remote (as above).

- Where a candidate wishes to experience their viva in person, every effort should be made to accommodate this.
- Where the EPC, and only the EPC, is unable to attend in person, an alternative EPC should be appointed.

The candidate must not be disadvantaged by the choice of format, which should be agreed by all participants well in advance of the examination. It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to ensure such agreement is reached. The candidate should be consulted in the first instance before agreement is sought with other members of the panel. All participants are encouraged to read the UK Council for Graduate Education's *Conducting Vivas Online: A Guide for Institutions and Candidates* if adopting format 2 or 3; however, University regulations on vivas must be adhered to if there is conflicting advice.

No prior permission is required to conduct the viva in any of the permitted formats (in-person, remote, or hybrid). However, the EPC should briefly document the format of the examination in their account of the viva in form RD14.

In all formats, the student must show their student identification card at the start of the viva in order to verify their identity. In format 2 the candidate should be asked by the EPC at the start of the viva to prove that they are alone in the room: this might be done by performing a sweep of the room with their camera.

The candidate is not permitted to record the viva.

Non-visual remote connection by any participant is disallowed.

One member of the supervisory team may attend the viva with the candidate's permission (granted on form RD15); whatever the format, the usual rules apply to their attendance at the viva. If joining remotely they should mute their connection and be prepared to drop off the call if that will improve the connection. They are not permitted to record the viva.

Prior testing of online platforms is advised if the viva is to take place either remotely or in a hybrid format, however there is no requirement to prove that such advance testing has taken place. The University's recommended online platform is MS Teams. It is advisable that there is an agreed back-up platform (such as Zoom) should the Teams connection fail. Participants joining remotely should be contactable by phone by the EPC. The EPC has authority to abandon the viva if they or any other participant feels that the quality of communication is sufficiently compromised by a poor internet connection or some other problem; in such cases, a second viva must be arranged. None of the permitted viva formats in themselves constitute grounds for student appeal.

Please note: a right-to-work check must still be carried out for external examiners joining viva voce examinations remotely unless other payment arrangements have been agreed with HR in advance.

7.3 IDENTIFYING AND APPROVING EXAMINERS

The Director of Studies is responsible for identifying suitable examiners and making the formal application for their approval. Examiners should be identified well in advance of the expected date of examination. The University requires formal approval of the examination team by the Research Degrees Examination Board at least three months before the student is expected to submit the thesis. Given the time it can take to identify examiners, it is recommended that the process begins at least six months before the examination is expected to take place.

Once examiners have been identified and have agreed in principle to examine the thesis, the DoS must seek formal approval. The application for approval of examiners comprises:

- Form RD12.
- An Examiner's Brief CV form for each proposed examiner – this should be sent to each examiner by the DoS for completion and return. Full CVs are not acceptable as an alternative to the Brief CV form.
- An abstract of the thesis written by the candidate.

The DoS should ensure that the application (and the accompanying CVs) provide sufficient relevant detail to allow reviewers to reach an informed decision about the suitability of the proposed

examination team to the candidate's thesis. In particular, the complementarity of the examiners should be addressed in the RD12.

Where examiners are unable or unwilling to complete the brief CV form, the DoS must do so on their behalf. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applications are first submitted for scrutiny to the relevant School Research Degrees Committee before going forward to the Research Degrees Examination Board for consideration and approval.

The Director of Studies is responsible for arranging the date and location of the examination. This should only be done after the Examination Board has approved the RD12 and the appointment of the examiners has been confirmed in writing.

7.4 REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EXAMINATION TEAM

All examinations must be undertaken by at least two examiners, guided by an Exam Panel Chair (EPC). There must be at least one external examiner on the team. Together, the examiners must have sufficient expertise in the subject area.

All examiners must have a level of expertise that is appropriate to the degree being examined. Typically, this means that all examiners on a team must be currently researching in an area that is relevant to the subject of the thesis. They must be able to demonstrate this current expertise through appropriate published work. The Director of Studies must provide clear evidence of current and appropriate expertise for all examiners.

Composition of examination team

- The 'standard' exam team comprises one internal and one external examiner.
- The examination team must hold between them experience of examining at least two UK degrees at the level being examined, or higher. Examination of degrees in the Republic of Ireland will be considered equivalent to examination of UK degrees.
- If there is no internal examiner with sufficient expertise in the subject area, then two external examiners may be appointed.
- If the candidate is, or is expected to be, a member of staff at the point of the viva voce examination there must be two external examiners and no internal examiner. Where there is any uncertainty, two external examiners ought to be the default option.
- No examiner should have any connection with the candidate, the research project, the supervisors, or the University, which might impair their ability to make a fair and impartial assessment of the candidate's work. This includes joint publication with the candidate. The DoS must make an appropriate declaration to this effect on the RD12 form.
- In most cases, the student's independent panel chair will be appointed as the exam panel chair. Where this is not an appropriate option the School Research Degrees Leader will propose a suitable alternative.

7.5 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- All examiners must have a level of **expertise** that is appropriate to the degree being examined.
- An external examiner must not be a supervisor of another candidate at Edinburgh Napier.
- Where two external examiners are appointed, they should not be from the same institution.
- Normally, **former members of staff** of Edinburgh Napier will not be approved as external examiners until three years after the termination of their employment with the University. Former members of staff who continue to supervise Edinburgh Napier students will not be approved as external examiners until three years after all supervision formally ends.
- External examiners should not be used excessively: an external examiner cannot examine more than two Edinburgh Napier research degree candidates in any 12-month period. The 12-month period is counted from the date of the viva. In the case of MRes and LLMRes candidates who do not have a viva, the 12 months is counted from the date on which the thesis is provided to the examiners.
- External examiners who have been appointed as programme examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes should not be barred from examining research students. Any calculation of the '12-month limit' above should therefore be made solely in relation to examination of research candidates.
- In cases where a member of the supervisory team has been invited to examine a candidate of a proposed external examiner, the University will not prevent such a reciprocal arrangement. However, all parties must ensure that no conflict of interest arises from any such arrangement and that both examinations are conducted fairly and without prejudice.

Examiners' fees and expenses

The current fee paid to external examiners is:

PhD	£250
DBA	£250
MRes	£150

The relevant School is financially and practically responsible for the payment of fees (and expenses) to external examiners. Schools should ensure that all duties have been fulfilled before approving payment.

7.6 INTERNAL EXAMINERS

Where there is a member of staff with the requisite expertise to examine the student's thesis, and the student is not considered a member of staff, then an internal examiner should be appointed. The internal examiner has an equal status to the external examiner. They are not there to be 'on the student's side', they are not there because they know the University system and they are not there as a supplement to the expert external examiner. They are there as a full examiner and must, therefore, have the expertise to examine the thesis and the student's performance in the viva.

An internal examiner cannot:

- be a current research student (at any institution);
- be the current or former supervisor, Director of Studies or IPC of the student;
- have acted as the advisor at any stage of the student's studies.

Internal examiners leaving the University

Where an internal examiner leaves the University before the examination process has been completed, it is expected that they will continue in their role until the process is complete. To this end, contact details should be provided to the EPC and to the Doctoral College Operations Team. Where they are unable or unwilling to do so, the external examiner should undertake the final approval of any corrections alone.

In the unusual case of both examiners being unable to complete the approval of amendments, the EPC should report the situation to the Research Degrees Examination Board.

7.7 EXAM PANEL CHAIRS

An Exam Panel Chair (EPC) **must** be appointed and this will normally be the student's independent panel chair. Where this is not an appropriate option the School Research Degrees Leader will propose a suitable alternative when the RD12 is submitted for initial scrutiny by the School Research Degrees Committee.

An EPC is required for MRes and LLMRes examinations and has a crucial role to play in these.

❖ *See Section 7.16 for details of MRes and LLMRes examination*

The EPC's role is to ensure that the examination is conducted appropriately and in accordance with regulations, and that standard procedures are followed before, during and after any viva. (*see Section 7.9 and Appendices 5,6 &7 for details*). The EPC is not an examiner and is not expected to have read or to comment on the thesis.

The Exam Panel Chair must have specific knowledge of Edinburgh Napier's regulations and procedures for research degrees. Thus the person appointed **must have attended the Edinburgh Napier EPC training within the two years prior to the examination.** There is no requirement that the EPC have any prior experience as an examiner.

The exam panel chair must be an Edinburgh Napier staff member. If the EPC leaves the University during the examination process (i.e., between the initial examination and the formal approval of any required corrections), the School Research Degrees Leader should step in to act as EPC and complete the process.

7.8 PROCEDURES FOLLOWING FORMAL APPROVAL OF EXAM TEAM

Procedures following approval of exam arrangements will depend on whether the thesis has been submitted.

If the thesis has not been submitted, the Doctoral College Operations Team will inform the Director of Studies that the examination team has been approved, but will not write formally at that stage to any of the examiners. The DoS should tell the examiners informally and may proceed to make practical

arrangements for the viva. Formal confirmation of appointment will be sent with the thesis once that has been submitted.

If the thesis has been submitted, the Doctoral College Operations Team writes to each examiner, the exam panel chair, and to the student, confirming the appointment of the team. Examiners are provided with an electronic copy of the thesis and the Candidate Declaration Form (RD15), copies of the Research Degree Regulations and Guidance for Examination, and a pre-viva report form (RD13), which must be completed and returned to the DC Office in advance of the examination. External examiners are also provided with copies of all forms related to payment of fees and expenses, and guidance on how to submit these.

- Once the thesis has been submitted for examination, it may not be withdrawn by any party for revision or resubmission until the examination process is complete.
- Between the appointment of examiners and the examination, the candidate must have no contact with the examiners that relates in any way to the thesis.

The Doctoral College Operations Team will ensure that pre-viva reports are submitted by each examiner and, once both have been received these will be shared with all members of the exam team prior to the exam. An 'exam panel chair checklist' which lists all the chair's administrative responsibilities, is also provided.

7.9 PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

❖ *See Section 7.16 for details of MRes and LLMRes examination*

The Director of Studies is responsible for arranging the date and location of the examination. This should only be done after the Research Degrees Examination Board has approved the RD12 and the Doctoral College Operations Team has confirmed the appointment of the examiners.

The Director of Studies should liaise with all parties to arrange a mutually suitable date and time for the viva and to ensure that everyone involved has been notified once this has been confirmed. In arranging the date, the DoS should bear in mind that the University expects examiners to be given at least six weeks to consider a thesis and write a report on it. To allow some time for the necessary administration involved, a viva should not be arranged to take place earlier than eight weeks after submission of the thesis or eight weeks after approval of the RD12 (whichever is the later of the two dates).

The Doctoral College Operations Team must be informed of the confirmed viva date as early as possible, so that:

- records can be updated and arrangements made to ensure that pre-viva reports are submitted and shared in good time;
- arrangements for right to work checks can be made before the viva takes place, which is **crucial** to ensure payment to external examiners

The Director of Studies is also responsible for ensuring that practical arrangements for the viva are in place. There may be different approaches to managing this across the University; in some areas the DoS will personally make the arrangements and in others there may be support staff responsible. The relevant School Research Degrees Leader can advise on local procedures. Arrangements should include:

- Advising external examiners on travel and accommodation arrangements.

- Ensuring that external examiners are clear about where to come and how to get there.
- In the case of an on campus or hybrid viva, booking a suitable room for the examination, with a waiting area nearby for the candidate and their supervisors.
- In the case of a remote viva, creating a Teams link and ensuring all parties have access to this.
- In the case where the viva will be taking place on campus, the Director of Studies may wish to book refreshments. These should be charged to the school in question.

7.10 THE CONDUCT OF THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION and THE CHAIR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

❖ *See Section 7.16 for details of MRes and LLMRes examination*

It is recommended that the Exam Panel Chair contacts the examiners in advance of the viva. This is to ensure that the examiners are aware of the EPC's role and to provide a point of contact for any matters that need clarification.

The examiners will hold a private meeting before the viva, convened by the EPC, to discuss the thesis, establish their questions and determine a structure for the examination to allow an exploration of the student's work. Prior to this, the Doctoral College Operations Team will provide copies of each examiner's independent report to all members of the examination team. No member of the candidate's supervisory team may attend this meeting, or receive a copy of the independent reports.

One member of the candidate's supervisory team may attend the viva, but only with the express permission of the candidate, which should be indicated on the 'Candidate Declaration' form (RD15) submitted with the thesis. A supervisor may attend the viva only as an observer and must withdraw during the examiners' post-viva discussion. The supervisor may return with the candidate to hear the outcome of the viva, but again only with the permission of the candidate.

No other person may attend the viva in any capacity.

The Exam Panel Chair is an impartial and independent member of the examination team. The Chair should not engage in any direct questioning of the candidate's work and, therefore, does not need to read – and is not provided with a copy of - the thesis.

During the examination the EPC will ensure that:

- The examination is conducted fairly and reasonably.
- The University's regulations and procedures are followed.
- The student is given enough time to reply to questions, that all questions appear to be understood (and clarification sought where necessary) and that questioning is appropriate.
- Suitable breaks are provided. All students are entitled to as many breaks as they require and need not specify why they need a break. Examiners may also require and are entitled to breaks. In the unlikely event that there are so many breaks that the flow of the examination is disrupted to the extent that it is considered detrimental to the aim of examination, the EPC should halt proceedings and make arrangements for a new viva to be held.

Following the viva, the candidate (and any supervisor present) will withdraw to enable the examiners to make their decision. The EPC should assist in this process to ensure that the outcome fairly represents the examiners' discussion. Examiners at this point should be reminded of the criteria for examination with which they will have been provided. The examiners must record their decision and provide a summary report of the viva (using form RD14), which must be authorised by all

examiners and the chair. This report must be typed – **not handwritten** - and should be completed during the post-viva discussion.

Once the discussion and documentation are complete, the candidate should be invited back to informally hear the outcome. The Chair should ensure that the candidate has a clear understanding of the decision and is advised that formal written notification will be sent out from the Doctoral College Operations Team as soon as possible. Written guidance on required and recommended amendments will be provided at that stage.

At the end of the examination the chair will:

- Ensure that the student is clear about the exam outcome and knows that formal written notification will be provided.
- Assist the examiners in drawing up their joint report and recommendation (RD14).
- Ensure that the examiners provide clear written guidance on any amendments required of the student.
- Ensure that all RD forms are completed, authorised as appropriate, and submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team as soon as possible and **no later than 10 days** after the exam is held. Documents to be submitted are:
  - Examiners' joint report (RD14)
  - Separate written guidance on required and recommended amendments
  - the completed 'exam panel chair checklist'.

7.11 THE OUTCOME OF THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

❖ *See Section 7.16 for details of MRes and LLMRes examination*

Possible outcome decisions

The decisions available to the examiners are set out in Regulation D6.6 as follows:

	Decision	Subsidiary Criteria
i	Pass	The student is awarded the degree unconditionally.
ii	Conditional Pass with minor corrections	The student is required to implement minor corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners.
iii	Conditional Pass with Major corrections	The student is required to implement major corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners.
iv	Fail Resubmit	The student is required to make substantial corrections to their thesis and submit it for re-examination. In all cases except the MRes, this will include a second oral examination.
v	Fail	This decision is available only where the examiners determine that the thesis and/or underpinning research evidence academic misconduct. Any suspected academic misconduct will subsequently be investigated by an Academic Integrity Officer in line with the Student Conduct Regulations. The student is unlikely to be permitted to submit again if they are found, following the academic conduct investigation, to have committed academic misconduct. This decision will be confirmed upon conclusion of the academic conduct procedure.

Should the examiners recommend any outcome apart from an unconditional pass (which requires no changes to the thesis), written guidance for the candidate must be provided to the EPC as soon as possible.

In all cases, the amended thesis must be submitted formally through the Doctoral College Operations Team, and **not** directly to the examiners. The candidate should also provide a separate document detailing how and where in the thesis the examiners' requirements have been addressed. This should include reference to specific chapters and page numbers in the amended version where changes have been made.

The EPC must notify the Doctoral College Operations Team of the outcome, and provide a complete set of documents, as soon as possible after the viva. The documents required are:

- The exam panel chair checklist (which should contain any special instructions to be included in the outcome letter to the student).
- Copies of authorised RD13s if these have been requested by the Doctoral College Operations Team.
- A completed, authorised, RD14 report.
- For outcomes (ii) to (vi) a copy of the written guidance on required amendments.

The Doctoral College Operations Team will send a formal communication to the student confirming the examiners' recommendation as soon as possible after the viva. Where relevant, this will also include details of what the student needs to do to submit an amended thesis or to resubmit. The deadline for submission of amendments/resubmission - which is calculated from the date of the communication - is clearly stated and a copy of the examiners' written guidance on required and recommended amendments is provided.

The time allowed to complete amendments or to revise and re-submit the thesis is set out in regulation D6.9 and is as follows:

- Conditional Pass, Minor corrections — six months maximum
- Conditional Pass, Major corrections — six months maximum
- Fail Resubmit — twelve months maximum

Lack of consensus

Where the examiners are unable to reach consensus on an examination outcome, they should consider whether it is appropriate to reach a majority decision. If this is not appropriate, the Exam Panel Chair must ensure that all relevant documentation regarding the examination and the reasons for the lack of consensus are provided to the Research Degrees Examination Board. This should include copies of all pre-viva reports (RD13) and the report from the viva itself (RD14).

The Research Degrees Examination Board has the authority to decide based on the available evidence and will communicate its decision to the Exam Panel Chair as soon as possible.

The Board may, if necessary, refer to an additional or new examiner before reaching the decision.

Contact with examiners

Students should not make direct contact with any examiner (including the internal) to discuss the amended thesis. The supervisory team should provide advice, guidance and support to the student where this is needed.

Where it is deemed necessary or helpful for the student to discuss amendments with an examiner, this needs to be arranged by the EPC. A meeting (either in person or online) should be arranged and must be attended by both examiners and chaired by the EPC.

In such cases the Exam Panel Chair must include this information as part of the report following the viva, a record of any meetings or correspondence should be kept, and copies of this record must be provided to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

7.12 SUPERVISION POST-EXAMINATION

Supervisory responsibility must continue after examination. Corrections/amendments to the thesis, as required by examiners, should be reviewed by supervisors/DoS prior to submission of the amended thesis for approval of examiners. During this time, RD6 progress meetings are expected to continue until examiners' requirements have been met to their satisfaction and a communication confirming thesis acceptance has been issued by the Doctoral College Operations Team.

7.13 THE AMENDED THESIS

❖ *See also section 6.5 ('Post-viva submission of amendments/resubmission of thesis')*

The amended thesis must be submitted formally through the Doctoral College Operations Team, and **not** directly to the examiners. The candidate should also provide a separate document detailing how and where in the thesis the examiners' requirements have been addressed. This should include reference to specific chapters and page numbers in the amended version where changes have been made.

- The candidate should seek advice from their supervisory team on undertaking any amendments required.
- If necessary, candidates may seek clarification from the Exam Panel Chair about the exam outcome or the amendments required. The EPC may then wish to consult with the examiners.
- Neither the candidate nor supervisors should contact any examiner directly (except in the particular circumstances set out at section 6.5).
- Where a student has extenuating circumstances that will affect their ability to submit by the due date, an application for extension can be made. (*See Section 5.4, 'Extenuating circumstances post-viva' for details*).
- Once the amended thesis has been submitted for consideration, or the thesis resubmitted for examination, it may not be withdrawn by any party for revision or resubmission until the re-examination process is complete.
- In all cases, both examiners will review the submitted amendments and determine whether these are deemed adequate.

Following submission of the amended thesis, copies will be forwarded to each examiner. They will be asked to submit individual reports to the Doctoral College Operations Team within four weeks (for amendments) or six weeks (for a resubmitted thesis). Their individual reports will be provided to the Exam Panel Chair, who will then liaise with the examiners to complete a joint report on the revised thesis which is submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

The student will be advised by the University of the date by which they might expect to hear the outcome but, bearing in mind the process outlined, they are also alerted to the fact that this date is an estimate, rather than a confirmed deadline.

Possible outcome decisions

The decisions available to the examiners at this stage are set out in Regulation D6.10 as follows:

	Decision	Subsidiary Criteria
i	Pass	The candidate is awarded the degree unconditionally
ii	Conditional Pass	The student is required to implement further minor corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners
iii	Fail	The candidate is not permitted to submit again

7.14 FURTHER MINOR AMENDMENTS

❖ *See also section 6.5 ('Post-viva submission of amendments/resubmission of thesis')*

Should further, minor amendments be required, the procedures outlined above *(sections 7.11 to 7.13) are followed for a second time.*

After a second iteration of corrections there will no further reassessment opportunity.

7.15 FORMAL APPROVAL OF THE EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATION

The examiners' final recommendation must be formally approved by Research Degrees Examinations Board before the student is eligible to graduate. It is the responsibility of this Committee, on behalf of Academic Board, to confirm the award of a degree.

The student will receive a letter from the Convenor of the Research Degrees Examination Board confirming the Committee's decision. The award is not conferred, however, until the graduation ceremony. PhD and DBA students may not use the title "Dr" until the award has been conferred (either in person at a graduation ceremony or *in absentia*).

7.16 MASTER BY RESEARCH (MRES) and MASTER of LAWS BY RESEARCH (LLMRes)

MRes and LLMRes students will normally be assessed by thesis only. However, if examiners are unable to reach a decision on this basis, they may request that a viva voce examination is held.

Arrangements for the examination of an MRes or LLMRes student are thus very similar to those for other research students:

- Potential examiners and Exam Panel Chair must be identified.
- An RD12 must be submitted to the Research Degrees Examination Board for approval.
- The student must submit the thesis following the standard procedure.

The information provided to members of the exam team is slightly different to that for other research degrees and the "pre-viva report" (RD13) is replaced by a "thesis report" (RD13.MRES).

Examiners are asked to submit their individual thesis reports to the Doctoral College Operations Team. The Doctoral College Operations Team provides these to the Exam Panel Chair, who must arrange a meeting with

the examiners to discuss their perspectives, determine a joint outcome and produce a joint report with, where required, a combined list of required and recommended amendments.
In summary, the chair's responsibilities are to:

- Convene a meeting with the examiners to facilitate a discussion of their reports and negotiate a consensus position.
- Confirm the joint decision.
- Discuss the examiners' recommendations for amendments, if the outcome decision requires an amended or resubmitted thesis.
- Work with the examiners to produce a joint report on the RD14.MRES form.
- Work with the examiners to produce a document which sets out the requirements and recommendations for any amendments.

Possible outcomes for MRes and LLMRes students are the same as for other students and, unless a viva has been requested, procedures from this point are identical: *see* 'the outcome of the viva voce examination', 'the amended thesis', 'further minor amendments' and 'formal approval of the examiners' recommendations'.

If the examiners request a viva voce examination, the standard procedures for 'practical arrangements for the viva voce' *and for* 'the conduct of the viva voce examination' *should be followed.*

SECTION EIGHT: COMPLETION AND GRADUATION

8.1 FORMAL COMPLETION

Formal completion date

The recommendation of award made by the team of examiners must be considered and formally approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board The date of the ACDC meeting at which the recommendation of award is approved is the date recorded by the University as the student's formal completion date.

Conferment of award

The point at which a student can say that they have been awarded their degree does not come until the award ceremony, when the University's Chancellor makes the legal 'act of conferment'. This formalises the decision made by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

Use of the title "Dr"

The act of conferment means that 'graduands' become 'graduates' and those who have been awarded a PhD, a Prof. Doc or a DBA may legally use the title "Dr".

The title should not be used until the award has been conferred. During the time between completion and graduation, a letter confirming approval of the award can be provided by the University. Any student who needs such a letter should contact the Doctoral College Operations Team.

Parchment (award certificate)

Students who graduate in person receive their parchment on the day of the ceremony. Those who choose to graduate *in absentia* will normally receive their parchment by post between four and six weeks after the ceremony. There are no circumstances in which certificates can be provided earlier than this. During the time between completion and receipt of the parchment, a letter confirming approval of the award can be provided by the Doctoral College. Any student who needs such a letter should contact the Doctoral College Operations Team.

8.2 ELIGIBILITY TO GRADUATE

A research student whose recommendation of award has been approved by the Research Degrees Committee is eligible to graduate at the next ceremony for the conferment of awards, providing they:

- apply to graduate
- submit the final copy of the thesis before the graduation ceremony
- have no outstanding tuition fees or other debts to the University.

8.3 APPLYING TO GRADUATE

Several months before each graduation ceremony, the Doctoral College Operations Team will provide the Student Administration team with the names and relevant details of each research student who *may*

be eligible to graduate at the next ceremony. This list will include students whose awards have been approved by ACDC (and who are therefore eligible to graduate) but also students who are still at the post-exam/working on corrections stage (who **may** be eligible but may not complete in time).

Student Administration will contact these students directly, with an invitation to apply and information about the various aspects of graduation. This information can also be found on the Graduation pages of the Student Intranet.

The invitation to apply does not indicate that the student will definitely complete in time to graduate: students may apply before they know for sure that they will be eligible to graduate at the forthcoming ceremony. Any payment made can be carried over to the next available ceremony.

Note that ***all students must apply to graduate***. This includes those who do not want to attend the ceremony, although there is no fee to 'graduate in absentia'. The University will not issue a parchment (award certificate) to anyone who has not applied to graduate.

8.4 SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS

A digital full-text electronic copy of the final, approved, version of the thesis must be submitted to the University. This will be uploaded to the Research Repository and will therefore be publicly accessible. In addition, the British Library regularly updates its electronic thesis online service (EThOS) - which lists all doctoral theses awarded by UK higher education institutions - by harvesting information from the Repository.

Students must take note of the guidance on research integrity at section 6.1. Students should also be aware that the repository team applies any necessary redactions to thesis files before uploading them, for example, by redacting personal information (such as signatures and email addresses) or copyrighted material which cannot be made publicly available.

When to submit the final version

The final version of the thesis should be submitted after the examiners' recommendation of award has been approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board and **before graduation.**

What and where to submit (final version)

The following items must be submitted by the student to the

- A pdf copy of the thesis.
- A thesis submission form (RD20).

Specific rules for non-standard theses

Where a thesis includes material which cannot easily be embedded into the PDF of the thesis, this should be provided separately in an appropriate and accessible manner. Where the additional material can be delivered electronically, it should be delivered as a separate file or files. In the case of large files, these may need to be delivered separately. Where the additional material is physical, these should be delivered to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

In every case the thesis must include a list of all materials in its contents pages.

SECTION 9: DBA, PROF. DOC, GTA and NON-STANDARD ROUTES TO PHD

9.1 DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA)

The DBA programme is designed to develop applied research into issues that arise from the world of professional practice through the critical review and systematic application of appropriate theories and research to professional and industry-based practice. It seeks to both increase knowledge about practice, and inform and impact on practice, in order to improve professional competence and professional thinking. The DBA is aimed at individuals working in a range of professional capacities who wish to continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of a key issue in their field.

Structure of the programme

The Programme is divided into two stages.

Stage 1 lasts two years and is based on undertaking and completing the PG Cert in Business and Management Research Methods whilst engaged in their main doctoral study.

- In the case of a student not engaging with or completing the PGCert, they will be considered for transfer to standard PhD. Any such transfer will be conditional on the student having made adequate progress to date.
- Students may request exemption from the PGCert on the basis of prior learning. Any such application must be made in advance of registration and will require the student to provide full documentation in demonstration of prior learning having been attained.

Stage 2 lasts a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. During the second stage students complete the main phase of empirical research and the writing of their thesis.

As with a standard doctorate, DBA students are appointed a supervisory team prior to enrolment and will engage in regular supervision throughout **Stage 1** and **Stage 2**. Students will also undertake regular reviews as set out in *Section 4.2* of the University Research Degrees Framework.

All students must submit a doctoral thesis of normally between 50,000 to 60,000 words. The thesis will be examined in line with University regulations for doctoral examination and a viva voce (oral examination) will be held.

- *See Section 6: The research thesis and Section 7: Assessment for full details.*

Students must successfully complete all elements to gain the award of DBA.

9.2 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE (PROF. DOC)

The Professional Doctorate programme is designed to develop applied research into issues that arise from the world of professional practice through the critical review and systematic application of appropriate theories and research to professional and industry-based practice. It seeks to both increase knowledge about practice, and inform and impact on practice, to improve professional competence and professional thinking. The Professional Doctorate is aimed at individuals working in a range of professional capacities who wish to continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of a key issue in their field.

The Professional Doctorate blends theoretical learning with practical experience based on a professional context to create a reflective researcher/practitioner.

Successful completion of the Professional Doctorate provides students with the opportunity to apply and develop the research theories to their own working environment. Students will be able to undertake rigorous research in their own field and develop their understanding of academic and professional issues.

Structure of the programme

The Programme is divided into two stages.

Stage 1 lasts two years and is based on undertaking and completing the Pg Cert in Researcher Skills Development whilst preparing their main doctoral study.

Stage 2 lasts a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. During the second stage participants complete the main phase of empirical research in their organisation, under the guidance of their supervisory team.

Throughout **Stage 1** and **Stage 2**, students will undertake regular reviews as set out in Section 4.2 of the Research Degree Framework.

For the final research project, students must submit a doctoral thesis of normally between 50,000 and 60,000 words.

The thesis will be examined in line with University regulations for doctoral examination and a viva voce (oral examination) will be held.

- *See Section 6: The research thesis and Section 7: Assessment for full details.*

Students must successfully complete all elements to gain the award of Prof. Doc.

Please note that this route is currently under review and therefore not open for applications.

9.3 GRADUATE TRAINING ASSISTANTS (GTA)

The Graduate Training Assistants (GTA) scheme is a four-year, full-time programme leading to the award of PhD, which additionally requires the candidate to undertake formalised higher education teaching training and practice development, leading to the additional award of Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. With some 98,000 HEA fellows worldwide, this is a globally recognised higher education teaching accreditation.

HEA Associate Fellowship requires successful engagement in appropriate teaching, core disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and commitment to relevant professional values and is recommended by the HEA as the correct level for GTA candidates. *Given this additional workload, it is essential that all supervisors and candidates are aware of the requirements of the scheme.*

Only candidates with IELTS averaging 7.0 and no component below 6.5 (or equivalent qualification as listed in the University's English Language entry requirements policy) will be considered for GTA positions.

Supervision in terms of doctoral component will be identical to that required for any other research degree. GTA candidates are students, and thus remain under the terms and conditions as described for PhD students.

Expectations and remuneration

All candidates will receive a full stipend paid at the prevailing UKRI rate. In addition, all candidates will be contracted (0.2FTE, Grade 5, level 29, renewed annually with no spinal point progression) to deliver 6 hours per week teaching activity. This teaching commitment is on a guaranteed hours basis from schools, and whilst there is flexibility in terms of the spread of teaching load (some weeks may have more, others less than 6 hours teaching commitment), the annual (44 weeks) commitment of 264 teaching hours cannot be exceeded under any circumstances.

Note that '6 hours per week' includes all preparation time, delivery of materials, assessment, planning and other related activities. *GTA candidates must be given a clear indication of their workload in writing – i.e., teaching timetable and assessment responsibilities at the beginning of each academic year, and any alterations to this must be by mutual consent of the candidate, supervisory team, and line manager for teaching.*

Balance and timing of teaching and research

Whilst the standard timeframe for a GTA is over 4 years as compared to 3 years for a PhD, the PhD component of a GTA has identical expectations to that of a standard PhD. All progression meetings (RD 4, 5 and 6) occur over the timeframe described for PhD degrees (*see Section 4, 'Progression and Supervision*).

All GTA candidates will have a start date of week 1 Trimester 1. During this first trimester candidates will be expected to undertake the teaching commitment set out above, but will be only expected to assist in teaching and familiarise themselves with teaching formats, regulations and specific requirements of their school. Candidates are expected to engage with their school's peer review and support for teaching programme in this first trimester, as a core part of their support and induction to teaching. This first trimester confers opportunity to manage the PhD component of their studies and ensure that this is delivering in line with expectations prior to commencement of teaching training activity.

At commencement of Trimester 2, all candidates will commence their formal teaching training and development programme. This will be via the experiential route of ENRoute, Edinburgh Napier's scheme to support HEA fellowship applications.

This programme of training will continue for 24 months, with the outcome award of Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. The Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE) will provide a specific learning and teaching induction for GTA students, and GTA candidates will be expected to attend two DLTE-organised workshops, in addition to requirements of the experiential route, whilst engaging peer review and support mechanisms within their school.

During the fourth study year, in order to focus upon PhD completion, no new teaching duties will be expected of the candidate. However, standard teaching duties will continue as in previous years.

Supervisory teams are responsible for keeping track of the student's progress in all areas – teaching, teaching training and development, and the doctoral research project. In addition to RD4, RD5 and RD6 meetings reviewing the doctoral component, these meetings will also be attended by the candidate's line manager for teaching, who will act as a quality assessor for the teaching training and delivery components.

Expectations of the GTA student

GTA students are expected to plan their workloads with the help of key staff responsible for teaching organisation, e.g., programme and module leaders within their school. An action plan is required at the outset of each academic year to ensure that both the teaching and research components of a GTA are being met, and implementation of these must be by mutual agreement between the candidate, supervisory teams, and teaching allocation line manager.

GTA students are expected to complete their teaching training and achieve associate fellowship of the HEA within the first three years of study, and to complete their doctoral degree within the 4 years of the programme. However, in line with all PhD students, GTA students who are not ready to submit may be offered a grace period in which to complete. There will be no stipend paid during any grace period and there will be no teaching contractual obligations from the University.

9.4 PHD BY PUBLISHED WORKS

Introduction

Admission to the PhD by Published Works is open to any applicant, subject to the criteria that follow. In addition to the standard entry requirements above (academic, references and English language), all applicants must provide evidence of a significant contribution to research and previous academic attainment.

The award is made to candidates who are able to present a published body of work that demonstrates an independent, significant, and original contribution to knowledge. However, unlike in a traditional PhD, the research component of the PhD by Published Works has already been completed in the form of the previously published outputs, therefore the only work to be added during the period of registration will comprise the critical appraisal. The thesis must be defended through a *viva voce* examination.

The PhD by Published Works is a part-time only route. It is open to applicants based anywhere. There is no expectation of on-campus attendance for students and all necessary support can be provided remotely. This remote mode of study is compulsory for applicants from outwith the UK and optional for UK-based students.

The University currently offers three models of the degree: the 'conventional' model; the creative practice model; and the hybrid model. In all three cases, there are general criteria that applicants must demonstrate. First, the works presented must meet the three expectations of doctoral level work. In other words, the published work must demonstrate independent research that is of significance within a field or subject area and that demonstrates an original contribution to knowledge. The complete thesis must be coherent and consistent in theme. Co-authored work may be acceptable, but only where the candidate can demonstrate that it meets the expectations of doctoral work in respect of the candidate's own contribution. The previously published work must be accompanied by a critical appraisal that explicitly shows the doctoral nature of the work and how each component of the submission coheres to the research theme. The candidate will be supported by a supervisory team throughout their studies, the members of which will provide guidance to help in the development of the critical appraisal and the coherence and significance of the portfolio as a whole. The work will be examined in the same way as a conventional PhD: through a *viva voce* examination.

Conventional model

This is where original research is published in established forms such as articles in refereed journals or other peer-reviewed sources, chapters in books and research monographs (book-length studies on a specialised topic). This excludes textbooks and similar contributions that typically present

previously published research. In terms of quantity of publications, applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by an expert panel within the university. For example, a single output might be sufficient, for example, in the case of a substantial monograph that explores a topic in equivalent depth to a PhD thesis (or even might exceed it). Lengthy articles (say, 8,000-10,000 words) that similarly explore a topic in depth might only require a portfolio of four, whereas a portfolio of shorter articles (around 5,000 words) might require six or more.

Creative practice model

Creative practice refers to a portfolio of artefacts produced in areas of the arts and the humanities. This might include music (scores, recordings, performances), design artefacts (furniture, clothing, interior design), media artefacts (films, photographs, television programmes, radio programmes). Each artefact in a portfolio, in addition to meeting the tests of doctoral quality, must also meet the test of being the result of a research process (just like 'conventional' outputs). A useful definition of research is that supplied in the REF documentation: 'a process of investigation, leading to new insights, effectively shared.' In the case of creative artefacts it can often be difficult to 'prove' the process of investigation. Ideally each artefact should be accompanied by documentation of the process produced at the time of the research (to avoid any accusations of *post hoc* rationalisation). Where no such documentation is available, the internal panel should be supplied with a narrative that is convincing as to the status of the work as research. The 'effective sharing' of the outputs in this model will tend to be different from those in the conventional model. They are more likely to be through more public means, such as broadcasts and exhibitions. In these cases, evidence of peer review or similar indicators of esteem should be required. As with the conventional model, rather than require even a notional number of outputs, each application should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, though experience suggests that it is less likely that this model will attract a single-artefact submission.

Hybrid model

As its name suggests, this model brings together outputs from the previous two models. As such, criteria and expectations from both models apply. Coherence and consistency are equally relevant here.

Reuse of material from other degrees

Candidates are not permitted to include material which was produced during any degree course of studies which resulted in an award being conferred. Material produced during a period of studies which did not result in an award will be considered. This rule applies equally to all three models.

Continued significance and originality

While there is no firm limit on the age of the published works, the works must still be seen to be significant and original at the time of submission for examination. It will often be the case that older works will have been superseded and either their significance paled or the originality is more difficult to demonstrate. This is likely to affect different disciplines to different degrees. Reviewers, at the point of application (see below), should feel confident that the significance and originality of the work as whole remains intact.

Timescales

The maximum registration period for the award is twelve months. The thesis may be submitted between three and twelve months from the date of registration. All candidates on this route are registered as part-time students.

The PhD by Published Works application process

Stage 1: Application

Applications for PhD by Published Works should be made directly to the school in question on form RD3.

Application deadlines and start dates are as standard for other research degree routes.

Applications should comprise the following:

- a brief CV;
- two references
- candidates should state which 'model' of the degree (conventional, creative practice, or hybrid model) they are applying for, and guidance about the models will be available online on the application page.
- list of publications, with a statement detailing the candidate's unique role in co-authored papers or where the applicant is not the main author. The onus lies with applicants to state clearly and honestly their authorship contribution and they should refer to CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) or other appropriate relevant recognised disciplinary bodies, such as the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors, for details on how to conceptualise their contribution. It should be noted, however, that the application is unlikely to be successful unless the applicant is lead author on the majority of any co-authored publications.
- electronic links should be provided to publications where available; those that are unavailable in this format should be provided to the Research Degrees Leader prior to the Review stage.
- a summary of how the publications cohere as a whole (c. 500 words), plus their overall original contribution to knowledge (c. 250 words); if the research process and/or methodology are not explicit in the publications, as might be the case with creative practice publications, the candidate should make this explicit in their proposal (in an additional c. 250 words);
- a statement outlining whether they have identified and contacted a potential Director of Studies.

Stage 2: Review

As with all research degree applications, the application might be turned down at Stage 1 or it might be referred to another School.

If the application is to be taken further, there should be a **review of publications** conducted by the prospective Director of Studies and a qualified **Independent Reviewer**. *Ideally,* the Independent Reviewer should be internal to the University, if the candidate is not a current Edinburgh Napier University staff member. If the candidate is a current member of staff, the Independent Reviewer should be external to the University *or* a member of university staff in a school other than that of the applicant. (External reviewers should be reimbursed in line with the current policy on payment for examinations.) If not already supplied, publications should be requested by the Research Degrees Leader. In order to be considered fully independent the reviewer cannot be a co-author or collaborator of the applicant. This includes for works submitted for consideration for inclusion in the PhD by Published Works and any other works, published or submitted for publication.

The reviews should assess the quality and originality of the work; the declared contribution to any co- authored publications; and the suitability of the application to the prospective supervisory team's research areas and expertise. Having reviewed the material, the prospective Director of Studies and the Independent Reviewer should each compose a separate report (of around 1000 words) to be sent to the School Research Degrees Leader. These reports should convey their assessment of the publications in light of the stated criteria. The reports may be used to inform questions at the interview stage and will be supplied along with other materials to the Research Degrees Examination Board for consideration of application.

If, after reviewing the publications, it is decided that the application should be taken no further, the Research Degrees Leader will provide brief written feedback from the review report via email to the candidate.

If the School wishes to proceed with the application, an interview should be conducted.

Stage 3: Interview

There should be at least two members of academic staff on the **interview panel**, including the School Research Degrees Leader and the prospective Director of Studies. A written record of the interview must be kept. The purpose of the interview is to establish that the candidate has the potential to be successful. The panel will therefore explore the coherence of the work and its currency. Where work is co-authored, the candidate's contribution to each paper, and how this fits within the coherent body of work, should be established. The panel should ensure that the candidate has the commitment, time and resources to complete within the registration period.

Stage 4: Offer

The decision on whether an offer is made is taken by the Research Degrees Examination Board (RDEB). The School Research Degrees Leader should send the candidate's application papers (listed in Stage 1) plus the joint review written by the prospective Director of Studies and the Independent Reviewer (see Stage 2) to the Doctoral College Operations Team for consideration at the next available meeting of the Examination Board, where it will be reviewed by at least three members of the Committee (two reviewers from outside the applicant's school and the DCEB Convenor); on occasion, the Convenor may ask at their discretion that each member of the Board review the application. If the application is successful, the School Research Degrees Leader should informally email the candidate to let them know, then complete form RD2 and send this to Doctoral College Admissions. If the application is unsuccessful, the School Research Degrees Leader should write to the candidate with feedback provided from the joint review and interview.

Registration and formal progress reviews

The registration period for the PhD by Published Works will last no more than twelve months. The final thesis may be submitted after three months of registration, but no later than twelve months. There is no additional grace period (*see Section 4.1*) beyond the twelve months. This does not affect the candidate's right to suspend studies or apply for an extension.

There is no requirement for candidates to undertake a Proposal Review (RD4) or a Confirmation of Target Degree Review (RD5). However, it is expected that a formal Reflective Progress Review (reported on form RD6) is held at the standard time.

The thesis

The thesis will comprise a portfolio containing copies of all the selected published works, together

with a critical appraisal of no more than 25,000 words or, in the case of creative practice and hybrid submissions, no more than 50,000 words. The critical appraisal will reflect on the body of work, and contextualise and illuminate the research process, significance, and originality of the published works. The critical appraisal may take the form of a single, continuous document which supplements the published works or it may take the form of two documents, one which precedes and one which succeeds, the collected published works.

The critical appraisal must define the aims and objectives of the creative practice, including research questions. In the case of creative practice, this must be contextualised with reference to other relevant creative practices (whether contemporary or historical) and to relevant theoretical writings that deal, for example, with cultural theory, aesthetics and philosophy. The methodology and methods employed in the creative practice must be justified in relation to the research questions. The critical appraisal must also provide a critical, reflective assessment of the creative work and the candidate's working practices. The candidate needs to demonstrate that the work constitutes an original creative contribution to knowledge.

Where a thesis includes material that it is not possible to bind in the same manner as a standard thesis, this material should be submitted in a suitable container. Such material might include examples of creative practice (models, music scores, art works) or published texts included as a submission for PhD by Published Works. In all cases, the final version of the thesis must include a list of these materials in its contents pages.

Assessment

The candidate will undertake a *viva voce* examination. The Director of Studies will submit an application for approval of a proposed examination team according to the University's standard procedures.

In the case of creative practice, candidates may wish to present their work 'on site' as an exhibition or performance for the examiners. In this case, examiners should be informed in advance and sufficient time made on the day of the examination to include visiting the exhibition or performance as well as conducting the viva voce examination. Documentation of the work must still be supplied to the examiners in advance of their visit.

Following the viva, the only decisions available to the examiners for this route are options i, ii, iii and vii set out in Regulation D6.6 (see Section 7.10, 'the outcome of the viva voce examination'). These are:

- Pass, unconditionally
- Conditional Pass with minor corrections
- Conditional Pass with major corrections
- Fail, no resubmission

Given that a substantial amount of the thesis has already been published, and therefore may not be altered, any textual corrections may only be required of the critical appraisal. However, a candidate may be required to replace a published work with another. This requirement should be considered a pass with major corrections. It is not possible to consider the thesis for a lower award of MRes or LLMRes.

Award title

The title of the award is 'PhD by Published Works'.

9.5 RESEARCH DEGREES BY CREATIVE PRACTICE

This type of research degree combines creative practice and conventional academic research equally. The creative practice may include (but is not restricted to) literary texts, music (scores, recordings, performances), design artefacts (furniture, clothing, interior design) and media artefacts (films, photographs, television programmes, radio programmes). Evidence may include sound recordings of musical performances, audiovisual recordings of performances or documentation of exhibitions. As with every research degree the candidate needs to present a research question that the creative practice sets out to answer. The contextualisation will be presented in the form of a critical appraisal that will accompany the work. The REF definition of research is useful here: 'a process of investigation leading to new insights.' The critical appraisal will therefore need to document the research process to show how the research question was developed, how it is located within the wider scholarly context and how the practice-as-research was undertaken. The creative practice will typically be submitted in the form of a portfolio that, in addition to the work itself (or its documentation, as in the case of a performance or an exhibition) may also include documentation of the research process (for example, in the form of sketches, drafts and demo recordings).

The critical appraisal must define the aims and objectives of the creative practice, including the research question. The creative practice must be contextualised with reference to other relevant creative practices (whether contemporary or historical) and to relevant theoretical writings that deal, for example, with cultural theory, aesthetics and philosophy. The practice will need to be contextualised in terms of its sources, history, meaning(s) and intentions. The methodology and methods employed in the creative practice must be justified in relation to the research question. The written text must also provide a critical, reflective assessment of the creative work and the candidate's working practices. In the case of a PhD, the candidate will also need to demonstrate that the work constitutes an original contribution to knowledge. Demonstrating a critical approach to the research process through which the creative practice was achieved is key to the practice-based approach.

This type of degree may lead to one of two broad outcomes, depending on the nature of the research question and the process of investigation. First, the outcome may be to transform practice through discovering innovative ways of making creative work; in the second, the creative practice may lead to new insights about the world beyond the practice. For example, a documentary film may be produced that employs original methods of presenting its subject matter. Alternatively, a documentary film may use conventional methods to present original findings about its subject matter that are comparable to a sociological or ethnographic research project. (It is possible, of course, that the film may do both.)

The creative practice and written components of a creative practice research project should be of equal scale and significance, and be intimately connected. When the School Research Degrees Leader (SRDL) receives an application, it will first be assessed for its potential by the SRDL and at least one member of staff experienced in the supervision of creative practice research degrees. Should the proposal be positively assessed, the applicant will be called to interview following the guidance in *Section 2.9 Interviews*. The number, extent, and/or length of creative practice artefacts are not prescribed. These will be agreed between the candidate and supervisors upon the candidate's registration and will follow precedence from similar projects completed at Edinburgh Napier and other institutions where Edinburgh Napier staff have acted as supervisors or examiners. We may also consult with colleagues from appropriate disciplines and subject areas both within and outwith Edinburgh Napier.

The space and depth expected of the critical appraisal varies for the different research degrees. While there are no prescribed word limits, the general expectation is that the critical appraisal will be around half the length of that expected for the equivalent conventional degree; e.g. where we would expect a PhD in literature to be between 80,000 and 100,000 words, we would expect the critical appraisal component of a literary creative practice PhD to be between 40,000 and 50,000. Such indications of word length are, however, only that: indications. It is important that students and supervisors work closely to determine what is appropriate for the particular piece of work being presented. Key factors to consider here are relevance, concision, depth and rigour. The work must always be conducted in accordance with the University's research integrity requirements, particularly when working with people. Ultimately, the examiners will determine, through the examination process, the extent to which the critical appraisal is suitably detailed, concise, focused and demonstrates appropriate rigour.

For examination, candidates may wish to present their work 'on site' as an exhibition or performance for the examiners. In this case, examiners should be informed in advance and sufficient time made on the day of the examination to include visiting the exhibition or performance as well as conducting the viva voce examination. *Documentation of the work must still be supplied to the examiners in advance of their visit.* Where an on-site event is planned in the case of an examination for the degree of MRes (where there is normally no requirement for examiners to hold a viva voce examination), the Director of Studies should consult with examiners to confirm their attendance.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: REMIT AND CONSTITUTION OF THE RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEES

APPENDIX ONE A: RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

APPENDIX ONE B: RESEARCH DEGREES EXAMINATION BOARD

Note: Working groups may be created to perform specific functions for the Doctoral College on an ad hoc basis, however these are not part of the formal committee structure.

APPENDIX 1a: RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE REMIT & CONSTITUTION

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

Purpose:
The purpose of the Committee is to oversee the academic activities of the Doctoral College, ensuring that appropriate and sufficient arrangements are established and maintained for the University's research postgraduate activity.

The Committee will establish and manage its work through a number of sub-groups, with agreed remits and membership of appropriate colleagues from across the University.

Remit
Working closely with the academic schools:

To monitor and develop the research postgraduate degree provision at the University on behalf of Academic Board and the University R&I Committee.

1. To approve awards of all research degrees of the University.
2. To monitor and seek to enhance research postgraduate students' experience.
3. To provide oversight of the provision of training for research degrees students, supervisors, examiners, and exam panel chairs.
4. To provide oversight of research degrees recruitment, including the development and coordination of recruitment processes and strategy to grow the research degrees student community.
5. To provide oversight of Doctoral Training Partnerships.
6. To monitor and review research degrees quality and provision, ensuring the academic standards of the University's research degrees.
7. To consider, develop and implement appropriate regulations, policies and procedures to support the research degrees student lifecycle.
8. To monitor research postgraduate completion rates and student satisfaction levels for comparison with sector norms.
9. To report routinely through Committee minutes, and formally annually, to the University Research & Innovation Committee on the fulfilment of its remit.

Constitution

Convenor of Doctoral College
Doctoral College Operations Manager *
Research Degrees Student Representatives (x2)
One ENSA Sabbatical Officer (nominated by the President of ENSA)
Convenor of the Research Degrees Examination Board
Convenor of the Training Oversight Group*
Convenor of the Recruitment Group*
Convenor of the Doctoral Training Partnerships Oversight Group*
School Research Degrees Leaders

In attendance: Clerk to the Committee
Vice-Convenor, to be appointed by the Convenor from the membership

*Role under review

Quorum
One-third of the total membership (excluding co-options) which must include either the Convenor or a designated Vice-Convenor

Frequency of Meetings
Six

Reporting Line
The Committee will report to the University Research & Innovation Committee

Minutes
Copies of open minutes will be forwarded to the University R&I Committee.
Open minutes and papers will be held electronically by School Support Services.
Closed minutes will be held by School Support Services.

Equality Issues
Those officers with responsibility for nominating or appointing members to the committee as prescribed by the constitution should, in doing so, have regard to the aim of reflecting the different backgrounds and identity positions that hold in the University as a whole.

APPENDIX 1b: RESEARCH DEGREES EXAMINATION BOARD REMIT & CONSTITUTION

Research Degrees Examination Board

Terms of Reference

Purpose:
The Research Degrees Examination Board will be responsible for matters pertaining to the student lifecycle and student examinations. This will include the consideration and approval of examination arrangements, examination outcomes and requests for extensions. Approval of awards will be noted and formally approved at the Research Degrees Committee.

Remit:

1. To review and manage the lifecycle of research degrees students.
2. consider for approval all applications for appointment of research degrees examination teams (including appointment of examiners and exam panel chairs).
3. To review and consider for approval the outcome of all research degrees examinations.
4. To review and consider for approval all applications for extension to maximum period of registration.
5. To review and consider approval of applications for PhD by Published Work.
6. To review and consider for approval all applications for suspension of studies, where a student has exceeded 12 months of suspended studies over the duration of their degree.
7. To report activities and pertinent observations to the Research Degrees Committee.

Constitution
Convenor of the Research Degrees Examination Board
Convenor of the Doctoral College (vice-Convenor)
Convenor of the Training Oversight Group*
School Research Degrees Leaders (x5)

In attendance: Clerk to the Committee

*role under review

Quorum
One-third of the total membership (excluding co-options) which must include either the Convenor or a designated Vice-Convenor

Frequency of Meetings
Six

Reporting Line
The Board will report to the Research Degrees Committee.

Minutes
Copies of minutes will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Committee and stored by the Doctoral College Operations Team.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF RESEARCH DEGREE (RD) FORMS

		Formally approved by
RD2	Authorisation for research student admission	SRDL + School AdoR/Dean
RD2-B	Authorisation of exceptional entry	ACDC Convenor/Vice-convenor
RD2G	Authorisation for research student admission (GTA)	SRDL + School AdoR/Dean
RD3	Application to register for PhD by Published Works	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD4	Formal Proposal Review	School RDC
RD5	Confirmation of target degree	School RDC
RD6	Progress Review	School RDC
RD6-B	Approval of Internal Transfer	
RD7	Application for formal study break (extenuating circumstances)	School RDC
RD7b	Application for formal study break (extenuating circumstances) in excess of 12 months in total	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD7aa	Request For Authorised Absence (Visa Controlled Students)	School RDC
RD8	Application to change mode of study (full-time/part-time)	School RDC
RD9	Notification of withdrawal of registration	School RDC
RD10	Application for extension to maximum period of registration	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD11	Application for change to approved supervisory team	School RDC
RD11-IPC	Application for change of Independent Panel Chair	School RDC
RD11b	Appointment of temporary advisor	School RDC
RD-ES	Application for approval of early submission of thesis	School RDC
RD12	Application for approval of examination arrangements	School RDC & Research Degrees Examination Board
RD13	Examiner's preliminary report on a research degree candidate	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD14	Examiners' recommendation on a research degree candidate	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD13MRes	Examiner's report on an MRes thesis	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD14MRes	Examiners' joint report and recommendation on a candidate for MRes	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD14B	Examiners' recommendation following amendments to thesis	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD101/101b	Examiners' Outcome Decision and Thesis Amendments	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD16	Research degrees examiners approval of amendments	Research Degrees Examination Board
Note	Final approval of examiners' recommendation of award	Research Degrees Examination Board
RD18	Application for extension to deadline for submission of amended thesis (extenuating circumstances)	School RDC
RD19	Application for Grace Period	School RDC
Stipend-stopper	Research student stipend stopper	School AdoR

APPENDIX 3: REMIT FOR SCHOOL RESEARCH DEGREES LEADERS

The School Research Degree Leader (SRDL) is the key link between the School and the University's Doctoral College, communicating between the two and keeping colleagues informed of research degree matters within their School. They will be responsible for ensuring the School provides an excellent research student experience; overseeing progression and completion and liaising with their Associate Dean Research and Innovation, and Deputy School Research Degree Leader to meet School and University targets for research degree programmes. At university level, they will work closely with the Dean for Research and Innovation to contribute to university initiatives.

Doctoral College Committee Membership (number of meetings per year in brackets)

The SRDL will be a member of the University Research Degrees Committee and the Research Degrees Examination Board

Convenor of School Research Degrees Committee

- The SRDL will chair the School Research Degrees Committee and are responsible, along with the clerk to the committee, for ensuring clear communication of outcomes from the committee to members of the school as appropriate. The SRDC, under the SRDL's leadership, is responsible for approval of research degrees processes at a school level, including progress reviews (see RDF).

- The SRDL may also be a member of the School Research and Innovation Committee, at which they will represent the SRDC and Doctoral College business.

- Support the Dean for Research and Innovation in delivering university-wide initiatives for research degree programmes

- Support the School Associate Dean for Research and other School research leaders in enhancing the research environment within the School, with particular focus on the PGR student experience

- Represent their School on the University Research Degrees Committee and the Doctoral College Examination Board and be responsible for communicating decisions to all colleagues within their School

- Convene the School Research Degrees Committee and any other School working group or committee as agreed with the Dean, being responsible for communicating outcomes to School colleagues

- Act as the point of contact for central admissions in response to enquiries from potential PGR students, guiding applicants to potential supervisors according to agreed allocations and priorities
-
- Oversee the interview, appointment and allocation of PGR students to supervisors in line with School priorities and staff supervisory capacity as approved by the Dean

- Ensure all PGR supervisors in the School are suitably trained and qualified and kept up to date in University Research degree regulations and guidelines by attending appropriate University training.

- Be responsible for monitoring the quality of research degrees and supervision within the School, as measured against School and University KPIs

- Work with the RIO Researcher Developer to ensure research degree students in the School attend the University Research training programme and that local, domain specific research training is provided for the research students without duplicating University-wide activity.

- Liaise with PGR students and supervisors in the School to inform them of advice and guidance available to support them, including from RIE, careers, student support, DLTE, international office etc.

APPENDIX 4: REMIT FOR DEPUTY SCHOOL RESEARCH DEGREES LEADERS

DEPUTY SCHOOL RESEARCH DEGREES LEADERS

The Deputy SRDL will be responsible for supporting the SRDL to provide an excellent research student experience. Their precise duties will be agreed with the SRDL and will depend on the size of the PGR community in the School.

Responsibilities may include:

- Attend the University Research Degrees Committee as an alternate to the SRDL when they are unable to attend.
- Attend the Doctoral College Examination Board as an alternate to the SRDL when they are unable to attend
- Work collaboratively with the SRDL to develop a vibrant research community within the School to enhance the research student experience
- Contribute to student monitoring and reporting
- Participate in interviews of prospective RESEARCH DEGREES students
- In the absence of the SRDL, convene the School Research Degrees Committee.
- To undertake the role of acting SRDL in any periods of prolonged absence or until a replacement is secured.
- Other locally determined work as agreed separately within each school.

APPENDIX 5: STUDENTS WITH UNMANAGED DEBT (STAFF BRIEFING NOTE)

Students with unmanaged debt to the University
Staff briefing note on debt sanctions and RESEARCH DEGREES students.

This briefing note outlines how the University applies debt sanctions to RESEARCH DEGREES students with unmanaged debt to the University and the steps that should be taken by students and staff because of this. The below is a supplement to and does not in any way replace the University's general Student Fees and University Debt Policy. This is the policy that each student agrees to as part of the matriculation process when joining the University.

What are debt sanctions and when are they applied?

Debt Sanctions is a status code that is applied to students who find themselves with unmanaged debt to the University. Typically, these are students who do not have an appropriate repayment plan in place, or who have a payment plan in place but insufficient funds to service their agreed recurring payments.
Debt Sanctions (and the DS status) are only ever placed on a student account once reasonable attempts to contact the student have been carried out:

Initial alert to concerns over debt to the University 2
weeks later – reminder email
1 week later – second reminder email
2 weeks later – final reminder email
1 week later – Debt Sanctions applied

It is absolutely imperative that all students regularly access their student email accounts as this is the account to which any notifications from Finance would be sent. Students will retain access to this account even if debt sanctions are applied.
The University's Finance team follow a standard protocol about when Debt Sanctions may be applied, and this varies depending on whether a student has a payment plan in place or not. This means that a student can move onto - or move back off - DS status at different points within the academic year.

What should students do when receiving communications from Finance about debt sanctions?

It is each student's responsibility to ensure that fee payments are made on time, including ensuring that funds are in place to allow direct debits to be taken.
It is imperative that any student who has received any communication from Finance indicating issues about fee payment act quickly to communicate with the University and seek to have the situation resolved as quickly as possible.
If a student is aware that they may be in difficulty in terms of honouring fee payments, they may benefit from seeking advice and support. Students are encouraged to seek advice from ENSA. It may also be helpful for them to discuss the situation with their DoS and/or IPC. Importantly, academic staff are unable to affect University policy in individual cases. They can, however, offer support and advice.

Communications regarding debt sanctions

As noted above, Finance will make several attempts to contact the student concerning unpaid debt. At the point of the second reminder, Finance will also inform the Doctoral College, who will alert the student's Director of Studies and School Research Degrees Leader. The purpose of this wider communication is to ask these key staff to encourage the student to contact Finance. It is imperative that Directors of Studies, upon notification that a student is at risk of being put under debt Sanctions, contact the student immediately and strongly encourage them to contact Finance.

What do debt sanctions mean in practice for RESEARCH DEGREES students?

Debt Sanctions are intended to impact on a student's ability to engage in their studies, training and, where relevant, their ability to graduate. The imposition of Debt Sanctions is meant as a last resort incentive to encourage students to communicate with the University and work to put in place a payment plan. Failure to address difficulties in honouring payment is likely to lead to increased debt which can become unmanageable for students. The policy regarding the management of debt to the University has been developed in accordance with good credit control practice.

Most of the students who are moved to Debt Sanction status are only on the code for a few days with limited, if any, impact on their studies. For others however the duration and therefore the potential impact can be greater.

Students are given a fixed period (normally 21 days) from the point sanctions are applied to make contact with the University Finance team to make efforts to resolve the issue. The period given to resolve these issues once sanction are applied is necessarily constrained to minimise potential issues in students being able to successfully resume their studies should the sanctions be lifted. The Finance team take individual student circumstances into account when seeking appropriate solutions.

Upon the expiry of the time given for students to seek a resolution to their outstanding debt, steps are taken by the Finance team to withdraw students from their studies.

During the period debt sanctions are applied the Finance team liaise closely with colleagues in the Visa and International Support team, as a student's non-engagement with studies due to sanctions applied by the University may impact on their student visa.

What should staff do when debt sanctions are applied to a RESEARCH DEGREES student?

Directors of Studies and SRDLs should actively encourage all students on DS status to engage with the Finance team at the earliest opportunity to avoid the accrual of unmanageable debt.

The application of DS status will result in the removal of access to University systems. This can include access to the library and swipe-accessed locations, including student offices. It will not include the removal of access to student e-mail accounts.

To support the application of these sanctions, academic and professional service colleagues should not seek workarounds and should not continue with progress reviews (RD4, RD5 and RD6), practical activities or supervision until the student moves back off DS status.

Staff are, however, encouraged to continue to provide pastoral support for students on DS and to encourage students to communicate with Finance to put a realistic payment plan in place.

Progress Reviews

Supervisors should not conduct progress reviews (RD4, RD5 and RD6) with students on DS status. Where a progress review meeting has been held, prior to a student being put on DS status, the paperwork should be completed and submitted as normal. School Research Degrees Committees should consider all submissions as normal but the outcome of the committee's deliberations should not be communicated until the student's DS status has been lifted.

Thesis Submission and Examination

A student on DS status may submit their completed thesis but the thesis will not be sent out for examination until the DS status has been lifted.

Where a student is put on DS status after submitting their thesis but prior to examination, the examination process will be halted. This will usually require the rescheduling of the examination. No viva voce examinations can be held with a student on DS status.

Where a student is put on DS status after the examination has been held, but before results have been communicated formally, these should be withheld.

The examination process will be halted at any further stage, should the student be put on DS status

Debt Sanctions and Suspension of Studies

As students are likely to be on DS status due to financial difficulties, it is understandable that they may need to suspend their studies for a period to earn money. This is not only acceptable but should be encouraged in these circumstances. Students cannot, however, apply to retroactively suspend their studies, so it is imperative that such decisions are made swiftly and with full consideration of the student's well-being.

Debt Sanctions and Requests for Extension

Having had Debt Sanctions applied and the subsequent loss of access to systems, facilities and supervision cannot, in themselves, be cited as grounds for requiring an extension. The circumstances leading to the difficulty in paying fees, however, may still be considered valid grounds for an extension.

Resumption of study after DS status is lifted

When a student is due to have Debt Sanctions lifted after a period of longer than two weeks, or has previously been withdrawn, Finance will notify the Doctoral College who will notify the Director of Studies and SRDL. Supervisors should at this point arrange to meet with the student and work to ensure that the student's progress is back on track as soon as possible. In the case of international students, the DoS should liaise with Visa and Immigration to consider any visa implications.

How should student wellbeing and safeguarding be managed?

For some students having Debt Sanctions imposed is stressful and it is recognised that students in this situation often have financial hardship which is having an impact upon their life.

The University has an ongoing requirement to deliver on its duty of care to all matriculated students. To this end, while a student is under Debt Sanctions they can be contacted by the University using the personal as well as University e-mail and any phone numbers which are held on SITS. This is made clear to students on My Napier.

If anyone in the academic community is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a student who has had debt sanctions applied to them, they should contact the university's safeguarding team who will reach out and seek to support the student.

Wellbeing Support and Inclusion (napier.ac.uk)
Students under debt sanctions may continue to engage with the Student Funding team and if necessary, the Student Safeguarding team, who could be able to help alleviate some issues of financial hardship if appropriate evidence can be provided.

https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/Student-Wellbeing-Inclusion/Pages/Student-Funding.aspx

Has this action always been known as 'Debt Sanctions'?

The Debt Sanctions status flag (DS) was introduced in Academic Year 2023/24, replacing a previous status flag known as Results Withheld (RW). The process continues to be reviewed periodically.

Finance Contacts

Relevant contact details for each school can be found on the student portal here: Who To

Contact (napier.ac.uk)

APPENDIX 6: GUIDANCE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF DOCTORAL DEGREES

(**PhD, PhD by Published Work, Professional Doctorate and Doctorate in Business Administration**)

Preamble

A candidate for examination for a doctoral degree must submit a thesis or, in the case of PhD by Creative Practice, a portfolio, which articulates a clear research question(s) and provides a critical evaluation of the extent to which it has been addressed. This, combined with the candidate's performance in the oral examination, is the point at which a decision is made, initially by the examiners, about whether the candidate should be awarded a doctorate. Formally, the examiners will make recommendations to the University Research Degrees Committee, which holds final responsibility for deciding to award the degree.

All doctoral candidates will undergo the assessment of their thesis followed by a closed oral examination with two examiners[1], at least one of whom will be external to the University. It is essential that both examiners read and follow the guidance below.

After evaluating the candidate's submitted work, the examiners are required to submit separate, independent reports no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled oral examination. The examiners will receive copies of each other's written reports in advance of the pre-examination meeting. Following the oral examination, the examiners will agree a joint report.

Oral Examination

After reading the thesis, examiners will be aware of specific matters they want to take up with the student. However, the general purposes of the viva might be summarised as follows: (a) to check the student's understanding and ability to produce research of doctoral standard; (b) to clarify areas of weakness or ambiguity; (c) to ensure authenticity (i.e. that the thesis is the candidate's own work).

As the candidate is being examined on both their written work (and other work as appropriate) and their performance in the oral examination, the examiners must not reveal the outcome to the candidate in advance of the oral examination.

The examiners will hold a private meeting, convened by the Exam Panel Chair, before the oral examination to discuss the merits of the candidate's output and to plan the conduct of the oral examination, including the questions they wish to ask the candidate and areas pertaining to the submitted work that they wish to explore. Examiners must not discuss the thesis/examination prior to this meeting.

Subsequent to the examination, the examiners will agree on an outcome. There are a number of such potential outcomes and these must be agreed between both examiners on the basis of the content of the candidate's submitted work and their performance in the oral examination. The outcomes are a reflection of the quality of the work and the substance of any amendments required. The outcomes must not be decided on the basis of a subjective assessment of how long the required amendments may take to implement.

Combined feedback and amendments from both examiners must be provided on the form RD101 and returned to DoctoralCollegeOffice@napier.ac.uk In the case where the student passes with no amendments or fails with no opportunity for reassessment, form RD101b should be completed and similarly returned to the Doctoral College Operations Team.

[1] In exceptional circumstances a case may be made for the appointment of a third examiner.

Outcomes:

6.1 PASS - The candidate should be awarded the degree.

A decision of PASS indicates that the candidate has met the standard of a doctoral award through the submission of independent work which clearly constitutes an original and significant contribution to knowledge and that this was supported by a performance in the oral examination which demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of the project, any relevant methodology and the work's potential significance. Where the written work requires the correction of occasional typographical errors, this should not stop the examiners from recommending a straight pass.

6.2 CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS - The candidate should be awarded the degree, subject to the completion of minor amendments being made to the thesis.

A decision of CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS indicates that the candidate has performed well in the oral examination and submitted work which is close to but does not yet meet the standard of a doctoral award. Often this recommendation will suggest that the candidate has been able to supplement the submitted work with further argument or information in the oral examination and that the final written work requires the inclusion of such additional points in order to achieve the standard of a doctorate. Minor Amendments should be understood to entail a small number of substantial insertions or deletions. These may take the form of, for example, the addition of citations, improvement of some graphical/presentational aspects, small textual additions/deletions/rewordings. Importantly, numerous minor corrections do not collectively constitute major corrections. These remain simply as minor, although numerous in nature.

6.3 CONDITIONAL PASS with MAJOR AMENDMENTS - The candidate should be awarded the degree, subject to the completion of major amendments being made to the thesis.

A decision of CONDITIONAL PASS with MAJOR AMENDMENTS indicates that the candidate has performed reasonably well in the oral examination and submitted work which is likely to meet the standard of a doctoral award with some further work. Often this recommendation will suggest that the candidate has indicated some understanding of the shortfall in their thesis during the oral examination and that the final written work will require some further consideration and rewriting in order to achieve the standard of a doctorate. Major Amendments should be understood to entail the inclusion of new material or substantial reconfiguring of existing material in the thesis. Examples constituting major corrections would be where there is; substantial data reanalysis to be undertaken which is then likely to require downstream interpretative amendment; substantial structural alterations; or substantial introduction of new literature sources which in turn alter some aspects of interpretation. Major corrections should not require the candidate to perform any new research. Rather, they are confined to the candidate's interpretation and presentation of the research already undertaken.

6.4 FAIL RESUBMIT - The candidate is required to make substantial amendments to the thesis for re-examination, AND TO UNDERGO A SECOND VIVA.

A decision of FAIL RESUBMIT indicates that the candidate has not produced a thesis which would be considered to be of a doctoral level. This may be due to such factors as a lack of coherence, poorly determined focus, lack of understanding of theory, or confused theoretical and/or methodological perspectives. It may also suggest that through both the written work and oral examination, the student has not been able to explain what the thesis has argued or what the project has achieved. The decision of FAIL RESUBMIT should be understood to indicate that the thesis requires substantial revision, including the writing of new sections/chapters, the

substantial revisiting of lines of argument or engagement in further research to supplement what has been included to date.

6.5 FAIL - The candidate should not be permitted to submit again.

A decision of FAIL, without the option to resubmit should be returned in cases where the examiners determine that the thesis and/or underpinning research evidence academic misconduct. Any suspected academic misconduct will subsequently be investigated by an Academic Integrity Officer in line with the Student Conduct Regulations. The student is unlikely to be permitted to submit again if they are found, following the academic conduct investigation, to have committed academic misconduct. This decision will be confirmed upon conclusion of the academic conduct procedure.

This is the only situation in which an outcome of FAIL should be decided on first submission. Following a resubmission, a decision of FAIL may be agreed where the candidate has failed to implement sufficient improvements to bring the work to the standard of a doctoral award.

Required Amendments

While examiners are encouraged to outline the areas of further work required at the end of the oral examination, it is important that the candidate knows that these are merely that, an adumbration of the required amendments. The formal communication of required amendments must be delivered in writing.

Candidates must be provided with a single set of required amendments, constituting an agreed combination of each examiner's perspective. The list of required amendments must be submitted to the Research Degrees Office as soon as possible after the oral examination and absolutely no later than ten working days after the oral examination.

Examiners should note the following guidance for written amendment requests:

Direction: this should be by thesis page number (and further by paragraph or line number as necessary) to direct candidate. In cases of more major/substantive change, this could be by chapter/section number.

There are three categories of feedback to candidates:

1. **Required amendment**: the rationale for these requirements should be clearly stated. Candidates will make these amendments, or will provide explicit rebuttal with full justification as to why such adjustment was not made. It should be clear to candidates that such rebuttal may not be accepted by examiners, and this should be discussed with the supervisory team prior to resubmission. The examiners may re-request, with justification, that these amendments are undertaken once they have reviewed the amended thesis.

2. **Recommendations**: this is an opportunity for examiners to give a more opinion-based series of amendments – these are not essential, but rather, are recommended to improve the overall quality of a thesis. Candidates should consider these and make changes where they agree that this will improve the thesis overall. Candidates cannot be referred for further revisions on the basis of recommendations which have not been followed.

3. **Typographic errors/format errors**: these should be corrected in all cases.

Timing of delivery of thesis amendments to candidates: All feedback, including required amendments, recommendations and typographical and format errors, must be delivered to the Research Degrees Office no later than ten working days after the oral examination. Any exception to

this timing must be agreed in advance with the Exam Panel Chair and communicated to the candidate and RDO. It is the candidate's responsibility to carefully consider their list of amendments. Should anything be unclear, after discussion with their supervisory team, they may ask for clarification via the EPC, who will contact the examiners where necessary. Neither the candidate nor their supervisors should contact the examiners directly regarding the examination while the examination process is ongoing.

Where a candidate feels that they require further clarification beyond a straightforward query or question, they may request a one-off subsequent meeting with the examiners. The request must be made through the EPC and the EPC must chair this meeting. Both examiners must be present.

Time Allocated for instating amendments: Following the receipt of the list of amendments, candidates have a set period of time in which to complete the required amendments. The time allowed is calculated from the date that the examiners' decision is formally communicated to the student by the RDO. This varies as follows:

PASS – 1 week (for the correction of any typographical errors)
CONDITIONAL PASS – 6 months
FAIL RESUBMIT – 12 months

In each case, should more time be required, this can be requested in writing to the relevant school Research Degrees Committee. Importantly, the times stated above stipulate the total time allowed. Students are encouraged to complete and submit their revised thesis as soon as is reasonably possible.

Review of Amendments: As the list of required amendments represents the perspectives of both examiners, the review of amendments must be made in all cases by both examiners. The examiners must achieve a consensus as to the outcome of this review. Where there is a lack of agreement, the examiners are advised to consult with the EPC. Where agreement is not possible, the perspective requiring further amendments should prevail. The examiners' judgement on the amendments must be returned to the RDO no later than one month after receipt of the amended thesis. Where this timeline is likely to prove difficult, this must be discussed with the EPC and the RDO informed at the earliest opportunity in order that the candidate is alerted to the potential delay.

Submission of amended thesis and Resubmission with viva

In cases where a student is required to submit an amended thesis (6.2, 6.3 or 6.4), the same procedure as outlined above will be followed upon resubmission (without the requirement of an oral exam for 6.2 and 6.3).

When examining an amended thesis or a full resubmission and second viva, the only possible outcome options are UNCONDITIONAL PASS, CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS, or FAIL. (That is, the options of 'pass with major amendments' or 'fail resubmit' are no longer available.) At this stage, the decision of FAIL may be returned on the basis of a failure to implement sufficient improvements and the judgement that the resubmitted thesis does not meet the required standard for the award of a doctorate.

When examining a **second submission of an amended thesis** the only possible outcome options are UNCONDITIONAL PASS, or FAIL. As above, the decision of FAIL may be returned on the basis of a failure to implement sufficient improvements and the judgement that the resubmitted thesis does not meet the required standard for the award of a doctorate.

APPENDIX 7: GUIDANCE FOR THE EXAMINATION OF MASTERS BY RESEARCH

Preamble

A candidate for examination for a Masters by Research degree must submit a thesis or, in the case of Masters by Research by Creative Practice, a portfolio, which articulates a clear research question(s) and provides a critical evaluation of the extent to which it has been addressed. Under normal circumstances, there is no requirement for candidates for Masters by Research to undergo an oral examination. In cases where the examiners are unable to determine a clear decision based on their reading of the thesis, an oral examination may be requested. All such requests should be addressed to the University Research Degrees Committee. In making such a request, the examiners should consult with the Exam Panel Chair and present a clear rationale as to why they believe an oral examination is likely to assist them in making a clear decision. Examples of situations where an oral examination may be beneficial would include instances where there are significant inconsistencies in the thesis, where there is insufficient explanation, or where the expression is sufficiently poor, in each case meaning that it is difficult to sufficiently appraise the candidate's understanding of the material discussed and/or their own argument. Following the approval of such a request, the standard procedures for arranging a viva should be followed.

In the standard case of examination by thesis only, after evaluating the candidate's submitted work, the examiners are required to submit separate copies of form RD13Mres to the Exam Panel Chair who will then arrange a meeting of the examiners. Prior to the meeting, the examiners will receive copies of each other's forms. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the student's submitted work and agree on an outcome. There are a number of such potential outcomes and these must be agreed between both examiners. The outcomes are a reflection of the quality of the work and the substance of any amendments required. The outcomes must not be decided on the basis of a subjective assessment of how long the required amendments may take to implement. Following discussion the examiners will complete form RD101 to convey their combined feedback and list of amendments. The form should be returned to the Doctoral College Operations Team by the EPC.

Outcomes:

6.1 PASS - The candidate should be awarded the degree of MRes.

A decision of PASS indicates that the candidate has met the standard of an MRes award through the submission of independent work which clearly constitutes an original and significant contribution to knowledge. Where the work requires the correction of occasional typographical errors, this should not stop the examiners from recommending a straight pass.

6.2 CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS - The candidate should be awarded the degree of MRes, subject to the completion of minor amendments being made to the thesis.

A decision of CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS indicates that the candidate has submitted work which is close to but does not yet meet the standard of an MRes award and that the thesis requires the inclusion of additional material in order to achieve such a standard. Minor Amendments should be understood to entail a small number of substantial insertions or deletions. These may take the form of, for example, the addition of citations, improvement of some graphical/presentational aspects, small textual additions/deletions/rewordings. Importantly, numerous minor corrections do not collectively constitute major corrections. These remain simply as minor, although numerous in nature.

6.3 CONDITIONAL PASS with MAJOR AMENDMENTS - The candidate should be awarded the degree of MRes, subject to the completion of major amendments being made to the thesis.

A decision of CONDITIONAL PASS with MAJOR AMENDMENTS indicates that the candidate has submitted work which is likely to meet the standard of an MRes award with some further work. Major Amendments should be understood to entail the inclusion of new material or substantial reconfiguring of existing material in the thesis. Examples constituting major corrections would be where there is; substantial data reanalysis to be undertaken which is then likely to require downstream interpretative amendment; substantial structural alterations; or substantial introduction of new literature sources which in turn alter some aspects of interpretation. Major corrections should not require the candidate to perform any new research. Rather, they are confined to the candidate's interpretation and presentation of the research already undertaken.

6.4 FAIL RESUBMIT - The candidate is required to make substantial amendments to the thesis for re-examination.

A decision of FAIL RESUBMIT indicates that the candidate has not produced a thesis which would be considered to be of an MRes level. This may be due to such factors as a lack of coherence, poorly determined focus, lack of understanding of theory, or confused theoretical and/or methodological perspectives. It may also suggest that the student has not been able to explain what the thesis has argued or what the project has achieved. The decision of FAIL RESUBMIT should be understood to indicate that the thesis requires substantial revision, including the writing of new sections/chapters, the substantial revisiting of lines of argument or engagement in further research to supplement what has been included to date.

6.5 FAIL - The candidate should not be permitted to submit again.

A decision of FAIL, without the option to resubmit should be returned in cases where the examiners determine that the thesis and/or underpinning research evidence academic misconduct. Any suspected academic misconduct will subsequently be investigated by an Academic Integrity Officer in line with the Student Conduct Regulations. The student is unlikely to be permitted to submit again if they are found, following the academic conduct investigation, to have committed academic misconduct. This decision will be confirmed upon conclusion of the academic conduct procedure.

This is the only situation in which an outcome of FAIL should be decided on first submission.

Following a resubmission, a decision of FAIL may be agreed where the candidate has failed to implement sufficient improvements to bring the work to the standard of an MRes award.

Required Amendments

Candidates must be provided with a single set of required amendments on the form RD101. This will constitute an agreed combination of each examiner's perspective. The form must be submitted to the Doctoral College Operations Team as soon as possible, and absolutely no later than ten working days, after the examination meeting.

Examiners should note the following guidance for written amendment requests:

Direction: this should be by thesis page number (and further by paragraph or line number as necessary) to direct the candidate. In cases of more major/substantive change, this could be by chapter/section number.

There are three categories of feedback to candidates:

1. **Required amendments**: the rationale for these requirements should be clearly stated. Candidates will make these amendments or will provide explicit rebuttal with full justification as to why such adjustment was not made. It should be clear to candidates that such rebuttal may not be accepted by examiners, and this should be discussed with the supervisory team prior to resubmission. The examiners may re-request, with justification, that these amendments are undertaken once they have reviewed the amended thesis.

2. **Recommendations**: this is an opportunity for examiners to give a more opinion-based series of amendments – these are not essential, but rather, are recommended to improve the overall quality of a thesis. Candidates should consider these and make changes where they agree that this will improve the thesis overall. Candidates cannot be referred for further revisions on the basis of recommendations which have not been followed.

3. **Typographic errors/format errors**: these should be corrected in all cases.

Timing of delivery of thesis amendments to candidates: All feedback, including required amendments, recommendations and typographical and format errors, must be delivered to the Research Degrees Office no later than ten working days after the examination meeting. Any exception to this timing must be agreed in advance with the Exam Panel Chair and communicated to the candidate and RDO. It is the candidate's responsibility to carefully consider their list of amendments. Should anything be unclear, after discussion with their supervisory team, they may ask for clarification via the EPC, who will contact the examiners where necessary. Neither the candidate nor their supervisors should contact the examiners directly regarding the examination while the examination process is ongoing.

Where a candidate feels that they require further clarification beyond a straightforward query or question, they may request a one-off meeting with the examiners. The request must be made through the EPC and the EPC must chair this meeting. Both examiners must be present.

Time Allocated for instating amendments: Following the receipt of the list of amendments, candidates have a set period of time in which to complete the required amendments. The time allowed is calculated from the date that the examiners' decision is formally communicated to the student by the RDO. This varies as follows:

PASS – 1 week (for the correction of any typographical errors)
CONDITIONAL PASS – 6 months
FAIL RESUBMIT – 12 months

In each case, should more time be required, this can be requested in writing to the relevant school Research Degrees Committee. Importantly, the times stated above stipulate the total time allowed. Students are encouraged to complete and submit their revised thesis as soon as is reasonably possible.

Review of Amendments: As the list of required amendments represents the perspectives of both examiners, the review of amendments must be made in all cases by both examiners. The examiners must achieve a consensus as to the outcome of this review. Where there is a lack of agreement, the examiners are advised to consult with the EPC. Where agreement is not possible, the perspective requiring further amendments should prevail. The examiners' judgement on the amendments must be returned to the RDO no later than one month after receipt of the amended thesis. Where this timeline is likely to prove difficult, this must be discussed with the EPC and the RDO informed at the earliest opportunity in order that the candidate is alerted to the potential delay.

Submission of amended thesis/resubmission

In cases where a student is required to submit an amended thesis (6.2, 6.3 or 6.4), the same procedure as outlined above will be followed upon resubmission.

When examining an amended thesis or a full resubmission, the only possible outcomes are UNCONDITIONAL PASS, CONDITIONAL PASS with MINOR AMENDMENTS or FAIL. (That is, the options of 'pass with major amendments' or 'fail resubmit' are no longer available. At this stage, the decision of FAIL may be returned on the basis of a failure to implement sufficient improvements and the judgement that the resubmitted thesis does not meet the required standard for the award of an MRes.

When examining a **second submission of an amended thesis** the only possible outcome options are UNCONDITIONAL PASS, or FAIL. As above, the decision of FAIL may be returned on the basis of a failure to implement sufficient improvements and the judgement that the resubmitted thesis does not meet the required standard for the award of an MRes.

[ENDS]