Code of Practice
For the academic welfare of postgraduate research students

Introduction

1. Postgraduate research students pursue independent research in academic departments, leading to the award of the degree of MPhil, Masters by Research or PhD. Successful progress depends primarily on their own efforts, supported by those of their supervisors, but also on the research environment in the department and on the quality of their research training. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to specify the practices and procedures which underpin these efforts. It should be read in conjunction with the College's Research Degree Regulations. A range of useful information is also available on the Current Research Students webpage.

2. Disciplines differ quite markedly in the day-to-day conduct of postgraduate research. While some students will spend long periods in the field or in distant libraries and archives, others will be in daily contact with their research groups in laboratories. Consequently, the appropriate procedures for guiding their research will vary. Students should not be surprised by these variations, and should not be disconcerted if their department requires, for example, more frequent reviews or more extensive written reports than are specified in the Research Degree Regulations, which set out minimum requirements based on sector-wide best practice.

3. Responsibility for implementing this Code of Practice is shared between the student, the supervisor and adviser, the Director of Graduate Studies in the department and the Head of Department. This document sets out the specific responsibilities of each of these individuals, and the relationships between them.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Student

4. The student is responsible for his or her own affairs. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

> (a) attending a schedule of agreed supervisory meetings, keeping a brief record of the meetings, and providing their supervisor with an agreed version of the notes of each meeting;

(b) with the supervisor(s), agreeing in writing, before the end of the first term, a broad timetable of work and the objectives that should be met in the first year;

(c) discussing with the supervisor(s) the type of guidance and form of comment found most helpful;

(d) undertaking research and generic skills training provided by the College (see Current Research Students webpage), the department and/or the supervisor (see Research Student Training Log);

(e) maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the agreed objectives, including the submission of written work as required in sufficient time to allow for comment and discussion;

(f) attending reviews when required and writing formal reports for these as necessary;

(g) taking the initiative in raising at the earliest opportunity any personal difficulties which are interfering with their work or any disabilities or special educational needs for which they may require support; students should feel able to confide in their supervisor, but may prefer to speak with their adviser, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Head of Department, Student Welfare or the Students' Union;

(h) dealing with supervisory problems, ideally by discussing any concerns informally with their supervisor or adviser in the first instance, and possibly involving the Director of Graduate Studies or the Head of Department if necessary; further guidance is given in the Complaints Procedure for Students, which also describes how to make a formal complaint if attempts to resolve the matter informally have not been successful;

(i) deciding when to submit the thesis, taking due account of the supervisor's/ supervisors' opinions (which are advisory only), within the timescale prescribed by the Research Degree Regulations and those of Research Councils where appropriate;

(j) taking full responsibility for checking the accuracy of grammar, spelling and referencing in drafts submitted to supervisors as well as in the thesis before final submission;

(k) ensuring that all illustrative material, e.g. audio recordings, are in the appropriate form and produced correctly;

(l) being aware of, and adhering to, ethical, legal and professional requirements for the conduct and presentation of research, including rules relating to plagiarism;

(m) being aware of the College's Research Degree Regulations;

(n) ensuring that the department and Student Administration are provided with current postal and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers and for updating relevant Banner records to incorporate any change of these contact details.

5. Students should complete the College's online feedback questionnaire for postgraduate research students. This internal College survey is conducted every two years, and is available to complete online from early April until mid-May. Completion of this questionnaire is a requirement for a student's annual review or upgrade in some departments. Each alternate year, the College takes part in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

Details of current surveys being conducted will be available on the Postgraduate Research Student website pages:

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/pgr/home.aspx

6. A postgraduate research degree requires a considerable commitment of time from all students. However, the challenges to part-time students are often different from those encountered by full-time students as in many cases part-time students will be in full-time employment and/ or have other responsibilities. Part-time students need to be aware of these factors before embarking on postgraduate study.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor

7. Each research student is allocated a supervisor (or, if appropriate, joint supervisors), normally a non-probationary and doctorate-holding member of the academic staff of the College. A second supervisor may, exceptionally, be external to the College. Supervisors who have not supervised some students through to completion will have an experienced senior colleague as their co-supervisor. In cases where a student has more than one supervisor, a separate adviser must also be allocated.

8. The supervisor bears the major responsibility for advising the student on the conduct of his or her work. However, independent research is carried out by the student. The supervisor is an important resource and is there to offer guidance, ask relevant questions and suggest lines of enquiry, but not to provide answers to the major research questions.

9. The supervisor should be approachable and available for consultation at reasonable times. The success of a student in his or her research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance that the supervisor offers. Close contact, especially in the early stages of the work, is recommended if difficulties are to be avoided.

10. The supervisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

> (a) agreeing with the student a suitable research topic that can be completed within time and at an appropriate level, and checking that appropriate resources are available;

> (b) advising on techniques and methods, and encouraging familiarity with developments in the subject;

> (c) with the student, advising on and agreeing a schedule of meetings, based on a minimum (for full time students) of one meeting per month in the first year and, on average, one meeting every six weeks throughout subsequent years (and a pro-rata equivalent for part-time students); for laboratory-based projects, students can expect more regular supervision, with discussion meetings often on

a weekly basis for full time students (or fortnightly for part-time students); only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. the postgraduate working abroad) will communication by e-mail or telephone be an acceptable substitute for regular face-to-face meetings;

(d) Lodge notes of each substantive supervisory meeting (as agreed with the student) centrally in their department (this would normally be with the Annual Review notes);

(e) by the end of the first term, agreeing with the student a broad timetable of work and objectives to be met in the first year; these must be written down and sent to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval and filing;

(f) agreeing with the student a written statement of research and skills development needs at the start of the programme (by completing a [Research Student Training Log](#)) and monitoring the fulfilment of these needs through supervisions, annual reviews and at the upgrade meeting;

(g) arranging appropriate introductions to the departmental research environment;

(h) promoting awareness of ethical, legal and professional issues relevant to the conduct and presentation of research, including plagiarism

(i) requesting written work according to an agreed schedule and returning such work with constructive criticism in a reasonable time;

(j) making students aware of the procedures for annual review and upgrade from MPhil to PhD and arranging reviews of student progress; ensuring that the student is fully aware of the progress of the work in relation to the expected standard and the agreed programme; writing to students to make them aware if progress is inadequate, offering support and advising them how to rectify the situation; making an annual written report to the Director of Graduate Studies;

(k) offering support to students with their personal development planning by encouraging them to attend research and generic skills training courses and conferences and, where appropriate, facilitating the presentation of papers; providing opportunities for the student to present work to appropriate seminars; advising on making grant and job applications; giving guidance on identifying learning, achievement and employment goals;

(k) completing documentation for funding bodies, where required;

(l) with the Director of Graduate Studies, ensuring that adequate supervision is maintained if the supervisor is on leave or is leaving the employment of the College;

(m) co-ordinating and advising on the submission of examination entry forms, the nomination of examiners, and arrangements for the *viva voce* examination; supervisors may attend the *viva voce* examinations of their students, provided the student has agreed;

(n) offering to meet with students after the release of the final examination report to provide advice and guidance on the examiners' requirements and how these could be addressed. Where minor amendments or re-presentation of the thesis in a revised form are required, supervisors should make themselves available for further consultation at times to be agreed between student and supervisor as appropriate;

(o) making students aware of the services offered by Student Welfare and the Students' Union for students with personal difficulties;

(p) exercising their duty of care towards students with disabilities and special educational needs in line with advice from the Disability and Dyslexia Services (DDS);

(q) alerting students to the various courses and types of support offered by the College as part of the generic skills training programme, and the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS) to support academic writing skills;

(r) reporting to the College any students who hold a Tier 4 (general) student visa and who have failed to meet the requirements set out by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

11. Where there are joint supervisors, one will be appointed as the lead supervisor, who will be a member of the academic staff of the College and responsible for submitting joint reports on progress to the Director of Graduate Studies. Under no circumstances will supervision exclusively by persons from outside the College be permitted. It is the normal expectation that joint reports on progress will be agreed and signed by both supervisors, although exceptionally the supervisors may decide to submit separate reports.

12. If the supervisor is due to leave the College, or will be unable to supervise the student for a protracted period, a meeting will be held beforehand to agree future supervision arrangements. The meeting will be arranged by the supervisor, or the Director of Graduate Studies, and will include the student, the supervisor, the adviser, the Director of Graduate Studies and any staff who it is proposed will be involved in the future supervision arrangements. A written record of the agreed arrangements, with the student's signature of consent, must be circulated to all those involved and placed on file in the department and lodged with Student Administration . A supervisor who leaves the employment of the College may continue to be involved as the student's second supervisor, provided the department appoints at the earliest opportunity an appropriately qualified replacement main/lead supervisor who is a member of the College's academic staff and will take responsibility for ensuring that the student is supervised and supported in line with the requirements of the College's Research Degree Regulations and this Code of Practice and who will ensure that any necessary internal administrative and other procedures are adhered to (e.g. annual progress reviews). The student should also still have an adviser.

13. If for any reason the student, or the supervisor, believes that a change of supervisor is necessary, then this change should be agreed between the student, the old supervisor, the new supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. A written record of the agreed arrangements, with the student's signature of consent, must be circulated to all those involved and placed on file in the department and in Student Administration.

Responsibilities of the Adviser

14. Each research student will be allocated an adviser as an additional source of academic and pastoral support. The adviser will be an established or probationary member of the academic staff of the College, or an Honorary Research Fellow or Visiting Professor. The procedures for requesting a change of adviser are the same as those for a change of supervisor (see paragraph 13).

15. The adviser's responsibilities are:

(a) participating in annual and other periodic reviews of the student's progress and in procedures for upgrade from MPhil to PhD;

(b) if necessary, and appropriate, acting as supervisor in the absence of the appointed supervisor (e.g. during sabbatical leave) and assuming the supervisory role if the original supervisor takes employment elsewhere or retires.

16. Where appropriate, the adviser may also:

(a) with the supervisor, contribute to the discussion of the planning of research and any associated training;

(b) advise on the timetable and objectives, in collaboration with the supervisor.

Responsibilities of Directors of Graduate Studies

17. Each department has a Director of Graduate Studies, whose responsibilities include:

(a) ensuring that a departmental file is maintained for each research student;

(b) ensuring that a departmental handbook containing information about postgraduate programmes, procedures and resources both within the department as well as the College is available to all members of the department and to students;

(c) co-ordinating and maintaining an up-to-date record of departmental admissions procedures in respect of postgraduate programmes, ensuring that these comply with College guidelines;

(d) arranging an appropriate departmental induction for all postgraduate research students;

(e) ensuring that supervisors submit reports of annual and other periodic reviews of the work of postgraduate research students and reports of their upgrades according to the procedures laid down in the Research Degree Regulations, taking appropriate action if reviews or upgrades do not take place or if the outcomes are unsatisfactory;

(f) ensuring that reports of students' upgrades are submitted to the Examinations and Research Degrees Office as soon as possible after the upgrade has taken place;

(g) ensuring that students participate in relevant skills training activities;

(h) appointing advisers and notifying the Student Administration Centre of the names of the supervisors and advisers for each research student. This should normally be within four weeks of the student's date of registration;

(i) with the supervisor, ensuring adequate supervision is maintained in the event of the appointed supervisor being unavailable, and notifying the Student Administration Centre of any change;

(j) seeking special permission from the Vice-Principal (Education) before an offer is made if it is necessary to charge an overseas or privately-funded applicant a supplementary fee;

(k) ensuring that data from completed College feedback questionnaires along with other sources of feedback such as the Annual Review report of Postgraduate programmes is considered by the department and should be shared with students.

Responsibilities of Academic Departments

18. It is the responsibility of Heads of Department to ensure that their departments exercise collective oversight of postgraduate research work. This may be achieved either by the establishment of a Departmental Postgraduate Committee or Research Committee reporting to the Departmental Board or by the inclusion of postgraduate affairs as a standing item of business on the Departmental Board's agenda at least once a term. Whichever practice is adopted, minutes must be kept and made available for scrutiny by the Faculty Board if required.

19. The responsibilities of the Committee or Board acting in that capacity towards research students include:

(a) monitoring the implementation of this Code within the department;

(b) under reserved business, receiving reports of the annual reviews of students' progress and of upgrades from MPhil to PhD and deciding what action to take about students whose progress is unsatisfactory;

(c) considering departmental policy for postgraduate recruitment and admissions;

(d) establishing and reviewing departmental procedures to which students may have recourse if they feel that their work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside their control;

(e) establishing and reviewing a departmental procedure for transfer of registration status from MPhil to PhD, within the provisions of the Research Degree Regulations.

Research and Generic Skills Training

20. The College provides skills training for postgraduate research students at Department, Faculty and College level through a combination of subject-specific research, generic research and transferable skills training. The training may be delivered by staff of the College or external facilitators/ organisations and may be part of the College's Generic Skills Programme. Full details of the Generic Skills Programme, including booking information, are available on the [Current Research Students](#) webpage**.**

21. All students must complete research and generic skills training over the first three years of full-time study (pro-rata for part-time students), as identified and agreed with their supervisor. Students funded by Research Councils are normally required to complete an average of a minimum of 10 days of research skills training over their first three years of full-time study (pro-rata for part-time students). It is recommended that students who are not funded by Research Councils complete an average of a minimum of 5 days of research skills training over their first three years of full-time study (pro-rata for part-time students).

22. Students are provided with a [Research Student Training Log](#) at the start of their first year, designed to help them log their training needs and to monitor whether these needs have been met. Completion of the agreed skills training is monitored by supervisors at annual review and upgrade meetings. Satisfactory completion of the agreed research and generic training prior to the upgrade is one of the criteria for successful upgrade from MPhil to PhD.

Period of study

23. Students in receipt of funding from a Research Council or other approved funding body are expected to observe any requirements and deadlines set by that body in addition to the requirements set out in the College's [Research Degree Regulations](#). Additionally, students who are on a Tier 4 general or student visa must also comply with the time limits set by the UK Visa and Immigration Service, or apply for an extension (see Sections 27 and 28 below).

24. In order to complete the thesis within the prescribed time, it is essential to work out a realistic timetable. This applies particularly to the completion of practical work and the writing-up of the thesis, a stage which very often takes far longer than is anticipated. Reasonable periods must also be allowed for supervisors to read and comment on drafts of various chapters of the thesis. Students are strongly advised to read early on the requirements of a thesis set out in the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

25. MPhil or PhD students who submit their thesis during their writing-up year are eligible for a pro-rata refund of tuition fees according to the date of submission as set out in the College's [Student Fee Regulations](#). Students who are in receipt of an award from College, a Research Council, or any other external funding body, should check the implications of early submission for their funding.

26. For those students holding awards from external funding bodies the College will follow the guidelines of the funding body with regard to absences allowed for holidays, illness and maternity/paternity leave. Otherwise the following guidelines apply. Full details on

interruption of studies including the maximum period of interruption permitted are detailed in the Research Degree Regulations.

> (a) Holidays: Postgraduate research students are entitled to up to eight weeks holiday (including public holidays) in 12 months. Students should notify their supervisor in writing of any holidays that are taken. The holiday entitlement of students who are registered or funded for less than 12 months is reduced on a pro rata basis.

> (b) Illness: If a student is absent through illness for a continuous period of more than two weeks, s/he must inform the supervisor immediately after this period has elapsed and submit a medical certificate. Students who are ill for a month or more should seek an interruption of studies. A student is also expected to inform the supervisor if s/he suffers frequent short absences for medical or other reasons that are likely to result in a considerable delay to the programme of research and training. Periods of leave notified in this way may be taken into account when calculating the thesis submission date.

> (c) Maternity Leave: Students requiring maternity leave should apply for an interruption of studies for a period of time to be agreed with the supervisor.

> (d) Paternity Leave: Full-time research students who are new fathers have the right to apply for an interruption of studies for up to 13 weeks, within the first 12 months from the birth of the child.

> (e) Adoption: Full-time research students who have adopted a child have the right to apply for an interruption of studies for up to 13 weeks, within the first 12 months from the date of the child's placement.

UK Visa and Immigration Requirements

27. The Points Based Immigration regulations from UK Visas and Immigration require all overseas students from outside the EEA who wish to study in the UK for six months or longer to apply for a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa. General information is available on the College website - see link below:

https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/international/afterapplying/applyingforastudentvisa/simplestep-by-stepguide.aspx

28. Although the majority of students will complete their thesis within the timescales provided for on a Tier 4 visa, some students with more complex circumstances and unusual patterns of study may not do so. There is a 5 year cap on International Students who are studying at degree level or above in the UK whilst on a Tier 4 (General) or Student visa. Students already in receipt of a Tier 4 visa who are likely to exceed this period will need to apply for a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) in order to continue their studies. Similarly students who interrupt their studies will need to re-apply for a CAS.

Further information on this can be found on the UK Government website link below:

https://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa

or from the UK Council for International Student Affairs:

http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Preparing--planning/Visas-and-immigration/Applying-for-a-Tier-4-General-visa/

Please note that procedures and regulations in this area may change at short notice and students are advised to check on UKVI websites that the information provided above is the latest available.

Teaching and other paid work

29. Students may undertake paid work, e.g. teaching or other work, in order to support themselves during their studies. In line with the Research Degree Regulations the amount of such work shall not exceed 20 hours per week for full-time research students. In the case of part-time students no such limit exists; however, students should be aware of the impact of paid work on their studies.

Teaching

30. Postgraduate research students may be offered teaching opportunities by their departments. This activity is beneficial in that it helps to equip students with transferable communication skills and to develop good practice in teaching that contributes to career development.

31. Teaching duties undertaken by full-time postgraduate research students should not normally exceed six hours per week in term time (i.e. 168 hours in the year), inclusive of time spent on marking. Time spent in preparing for classes is not taken into account. This limit is set so that students will be able to submit their theses within the specified period; it is also congruent with the formal limits that apply to Departmental Assistantship award holders and Research Council award holders. Teaching duties should be assigned to postgraduate research students by departments only when they are not expected to delay completion of the thesis beyond the normal period. Heads of Department are encouraged to timetable the work required of research students in such a way that it minimises the disruption to their studies, for example by concentrating the teaching on one or two days in the week.

32. Any postgraduate research student who is employed by the College in a lead teaching role (i.e. conducting teaching sessions entirely on their own) is required to register for (and complete) the College's programme in Skills of Teaching to Inspire Learning (inSTIL). Upon successful completion the student will be awarded 15 M level credits and will automatically qualify for Associate Membership of the Higher Education Academy. Postgraduate research students who are employed only to teach as part of a team (e.g. a demonstrator alongside an academic staff member), are required to complete a day of demonstrator training.   Further information is available from the Educational Development Team.

Departmental Assistantships and College Awards

33. All formal offers of Departmental Assistantships must be made by Human Resources and/or the Faculty Office. Departments may, however, inform candidates that they have been recommended to the Faculty for the award of a Departmental Assistantship.

34. The letters from Human Resources and/or the Faculty Office, in which the award is made, will clearly specify the period and value of the award, and the exact amount and type of work that will be expected from the postgraduate research student in return for the award. The department may not ask the postgraduate research student to carry out more teaching than is specified in paragraph 29. A student engaged in non-teaching duties may only be required to work for an average of six hours a week over the academic year (i.e. for a maximum of 288 hours across 48 working weeks in the year).

35. Postgraduate Research Students who are employed by the College to teach are entitled to attend courses offered by the College's Staff Development team.

Council Tax

36. Research students who are in their 1st writing-up year (and who were previously enrolled as full-time) can get a letter exempting them from Council Tax. This arrangement does not apply for any subsequent writing up period and does not apply to students enrolled on a part-time basis prior to their writing-up year. Eligible students who live within the Borough of Runnymede are automatically exempt from Council Tax.

37. To qualify for an exemption from Council Tax during their 1st writing-up year, students are expected to be undertaking an average of 21 hours' work each week on their thesis, for at least 24 weeks, from the start of their fourth year and they must not be in full-time employment in line with Section 8 of the College's Research Degree Regulations. To qualify students must previously have been studying on a full-time basis.