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### 1. Admissions

- a) PGR admissions offer workflow - for non-funded applicants

[View the PGR admissions offer workflow for non-funded applicants](#)

- b) PGR admissions and studentship offer workflow - for funded applicants

[View the PGR admissions and studentship offer workflow](#)

The Doctoral School has been working closely with the Admissions PG team to streamline the studentship offer letter process. Our ultimate aim is to be able to provide a single letter which offers both the study place and the studentship but this project is dependent on the introduction of the replacement for RHDirect, due within the next few years. In the meantime, we have reduced the number of communications that the students receive and have combined the acceptance of the study place and the studentship in one, which should improve the student's experience and remove some of the common delays / misunderstandings.

- c) **Admissions' policy regarding current Masters students hoping to start PhD in September**

[View Admissions' policy regarding current Masters students hoping to start PhD in September](#)

## 2. **Studentships**

- a) **Co-funding request workflow**

In collaboration with Research and Innovation and Finance's Grants and Contracts team, we have created an overview of the co-funding request process for you. The request form and further details can be found [here](#).

[View the co-funding request workflow](#)

- b) **SeNSS collaborative studentship competition**

SeNSS will shortly be launching the supervisor phase of the collaborative studentship competition. A webinar for interested supervisors will be held on 29 June from 2-4pm, which will cover all the necessary information on how the competition works, as well as a number of strategies for making a successful application.

- The Zoom link for the webinar is <https://essex-university.zoom.us/j/92692874167>.
- Please click on the link above to register for this webinar.

## 3. **Overseas students**

- a) **Student Route / Tier 4 visa-sponsored students**

We have recently received questions from supervisors about why the Doctoral School asks you every two months to confirm via a short online form whether your Student Route / Tier 4 visa-sponsored students are continuing to engage with their studies.

- The College is under a legal obligation to ensure that all students who we are sponsoring under a Student Route / Tier 4 visa are engaging with their studies.
- If this questionnaire were sent out less frequently than every two months, the College runs the risk of not reporting engagement concerns to the UKVI within the required timeline, therefore putting our visa sponsorship at risk.
- Please note that the Doctoral School sends out this questionnaire on behalf of the Visa Compliance Officer in Student Administration and is not qualified to provide compliance advice for visa-holding students. Any immigration advice should be sought from the [International Student Support Office](#) or [Student Administration](#) (but please copy in the Doctoral School so that we can be kept in the loop regarding any potential visa issues).

[View guidance for supervisors with Student Route / Tier 4 visa students](#)

[Find out more about the engagement monitoring of Student Route / Tier visa PGR students](#)

## **b) English language support**

We have had some queries about 1 to 1 Academic English support for Doctoral Researchers from students and staff in the last few months and would like to remind all supervisors that:

- neither the Doctoral School nor CeDAS are resourced to support PGRs 1 to 1 in English language support.
  - This should be borne in mind if you wish to take on applicants even though they do not meet the College's PGR English language conditions
- Academic English courses are held as part of the [Researcher Development Programme](#) in the autumn and spring terms

## **c) Partial studentships**

To avoid situations where overseas students end up facing financial difficulties as they do not have a full studentship, please be aware of the following policy:

- Studentships with less than the full UKRI stipend rate should only be offered to overseas applicants if they are able to provide proof that they have funds to cover the balance between the amount offered and the full UKRI rate (e.g. bank statement / sponsorship letter)

## **d) Fee waivers**

A reminder that if you have a potential overseas applicant who is receiving sponsorship (e.g. from their government) to cover their stipend only, you may wish to request a fee waiver to cover their fees:

- Please complete the standard [co-funding request form](#) (but you can miss out the costings section – section B2 - as the Doctoral School can fill this part of the form out for you)

## **4. Progression and examination**

### **a) Update to Annual Review and Upgrade form approval process**

In order to streamline the Annual Review and Upgrade processes – and to reduce the administrative burden on the review panel – the following update has been approved by Chair's Action:

- Once the review has taken place, the completed review form needs to be signed off only by the independent panel member, on behalf of all the other panel members (instead of all the panel members having to sign the form / email in their agreement).
- This update comes into effect immediately.

## b) Guidelines for including a student's own publications in a monograph thesis

Please note that these guidelines are for monograph theses only, not those presented in an 'alternative format' (e.g. as papers (including book chapters, journal articles, or conference proceedings))

[View the guidelines for including a student's own publications in a monograph thesis](#)  
[Find out more about thesis format options](#)

## c) Preparing for the viva – useful resources

As part of a QAA-funded project, a series of videos and resources to help students prepare for their viva (oral) examination have been developed. These resources are freely available to all PGRs across all UK Higher Education institutions and you may find it useful to make your late stage PGRs aware of them:

[Link to 'Preparing for your Viva' resources](#)

This link has been added to the [viva information webpage](#) on the Doctoral School microsite

## d) Importance of submitting the exam entry form two months prior to thesis submission

We strongly recommend that the exam entry form (for both MPhil/PhD and Masters by Research examinations) is submitted to the Doctoral School **at least two months** prior to the submission of the thesis/dissertation. This allows plenty of time for the Doctoral School to process the form and invite the examiners – and for the examiners to formally accept the invitation - before the thesis is submitted.

Please be aware that due to the large number of examinations the Doctoral School supports, we cannot ensure that the examiner invitation process will be complete by the time your student submits if the form is submitted to the Doctoral School later than this.

To avoid unnecessary delays, can we please ask you to:

- ensure that the form is approved by your PGR Lead and Director of Postgraduate Research Education before the entry form reaches the Doctoral School
- remember to complete all the sections of the form accurately, particularly the contact details of each examiner.

[Link to exam entry form for MPhil/ PhD exams](#)

[Link to exam entry form for Masters by Research exams](#)

## e) Importance of informing the Doctoral School of viva dates well in advance

A reminder please that it is important for the supervisor to let the Doctoral School know the date and format of your student's viva as soon as this has been agreed and **no later than 2 weeks prior** to the set date.

- This allows enough time for the Doctoral School to remind the examiners to send their preliminary reports, to chase any missing reports, and then to share the reports with the examiners and Independent Chair, once both preliminary reports have been received.
- The Research Degree regulations require both examiners to submit their independent preliminary reports on the thesis prior to the viva.

- If the preliminary reports are not received prior to the viva, the candidate may have a valid grounds for appeal if they are not happy with their viva outcome
- The Doctoral School cannot ensure that the preliminary reports have been received as per the regulations if we have not been informed of the viva date