

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES  
PRIFYSGOL DE CYMRU**

***CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH  
SUPERVISORS***

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**<http://gro.southwales.ac.uk>**

# **Code of Practice for Research Supervisors**

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# 1. Introduction

***“There is nothing that pleases a professor more than to discover that one of their students has become a better professor than they themselves”***

*J S Fulton, Founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex*

Research training is based within higher education institutions in order that the practical and intellectual skills needed by society are acquired by students within a community of committed academic and support staff.

It is well recognised in most disciplines that the single most important factor in the success of research training is the quality of supervision. High quality supervision typically arises when supervisors are widely recognised as research active and nurtures their students towards full partnership in ownership and authorship of work or, in many cases, encourages ultimate independence of the student for the delivery of the work as a high quality thesis, artifact or publication accompanied by oral presentations to expert audiences.

Research students contribute to the research ethos of the University through supervised work which carries forward projects which advance knowledge and, in some cases, lead to commercial exploitation by taking intellectual property or products to market. The importance of training and activity in projects which lead to wealth creation is well recognised and the University sector generally has developed processes for commercial exploitation of work in which the supervisor and the research students are inventors and stakeholders. The University of South Wales has put in place several such processes and the Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC) is anxious to encourage further commercial outcomes by early recognition of opportunities by supervisors and students. The process of exploitation of suitably identified projects involves the Faculty(s), an existing or new University Commercial Company and will, when involving an approved research degree proposal, be monitored by the Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC).

An important measure of the value of any university is the success achieved by students in research and research related careers within industry, commerce, government or academia. The ultimate purpose of the work of the Faculty Research Programmes Committees (FRPCs) and Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC) is to serve research students in a manner which achieves excellence in their work at the University of South Wales and in subsequent careers. Many former students have demonstrated high attainment. The membership of the FRPCs and RPSC is appointed in terms of criteria which recognise the experience and qualities to deliver this remit.

This Handbook provides a range of general guidance based on experience of operating the University's Research Degree Regulations. It comprises requirements for operating the Regulations together with advice on good practice. An important test of high quality supervision is the success of the research student in terms of high level external recognition.

## 2. Research Programmes Quality Assurance

All Faculties will undertake the quality assurance of research degrees through a Faculty Research Programmes Committee (FRPC). The FRPC will consider applications, confirm registrations and undertake the transfer, extension/suspension and changes thereto of all research students.

The Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC) will discharge, on behalf of Research Committee and Quality Assurance Committee, the responsibilities for the quality and standards of its research degrees. The procedures for enrolment and registration are detailed in the *Code of Practice for Research Students*.

## 3. Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC)

The Research Programmes Sub Committee (RPSC) will:

- ◆ To consider issues or concerns raised by research students
- ◆ To consider examination arrangements, including the approval of examiners
- ◆ To periodically review examiners' reports
- ◆ To consider the recommendations of examiners for the conferment of research awards
- ◆ To audit the process of annual monitoring of research degree students and FRPCs
- ◆ To consider ethical issues
- ◆ To identify and disseminate good practice in the delivery of research degrees
- ◆ To make recommendations to the Research Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Faculty Executive as appropriate
- ◆ To undertake such matters as required by Research Committee.

## 4. Faculty Research Programmes Committee (FRPC)

The Faculty Research Programmes Committee (FRPC) will be responsible for:

- ◆ To consider issues or concerns raised by research students
- ◆ To consider the approval of research applications submitted to the faculty
- ◆ To note the registration of students for research degrees in the faculty and to transfer students from MPhil/PhD to PhD
- ◆ To monitor the progress of research students in the faculty
- ◆ To ensure that appropriate ethical approval is secured for each research degree
- ◆ To undertake any other task delegated to it by Research Programmes Sub Committee
- ◆ To report to the Research Programmes Sub Committee and Faculty Executive as appropriate.

The FRPC will be chaired by a senior member of academic staff within the Faculty nominated by the Dean of Faculty. The FRPC membership will comprise academics with experience of designing, delivering and assuring research degrees. The FRPC will be responsible and accountable for the delegated powers for the Faculty and will be expected to ensure that all quality assurance activities are carried out with the required level of independence. The Faculty Ethics Champion is a member of FRPC and advises the committee on ethical issues

The FRPC will be required to conform to the University's Research Degree Regulations and to follow the processes and procedures set out in the Codes of Practice.

## **5. Review of RPSC/FRPC/Progress Board decision**

- ◆ A student who requests a review of a decision of the RPSC/FRPC/Progress Board (e.g. not to register, approve examination arrangements, extend registration, etc) should submit their request in writing to the Chair of the RPSC/FRPC/Progress Board.
- ◆ The Chair of the RPSC/FRPC/Progress Board will pass the details of the request to an appropriate adviser outside of the Committee (and possibly the University) who has not previously been involved with the candidate or project but who will be familiar with the research degree procedures. The adviser will be asked to provide a written report. On receipt of the report RPSC/FRPC/Progress Board will review the case.
- ◆ If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the review above, she/he should submit details of their review request in writing to the Chair of Quality Assurance Committee who would follow the same procedure as above but with a different and independent adviser.
- ◆ Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the second review above, and following the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter, a student may lodge a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Details of the OIA and the relevant information in relation to the Scheme can be accessed at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk). Further information and advice can be obtained from the Student Casework Unit, University Secretary's Office.

## **5. Responsibilities for research degree work by supervisors**

Notwithstanding resource issues which are considered within the faculty responsibilities for research programmes, high quality research supervision is primarily determined by the enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of the supervisor(s). Every student will have a supervision team with a Director of Studies who will be the principal supervisor. The Director of Studies will have

administrative and pastoral responsibility for the student and be responsible for guiding them in their research degree. In addition, students may have one or more additional supervisors who will provide support to the Director of Studies, and provide support for the student, particularly in the Director of Studies' absence. All members of the supervisory team will have relevant expertise and complementary skills that they can bring to the project. More detailed information on supervision matters are provided in Section 6 of this Handbook.

## ■ ***Admission, Enrolment and Registration***

All research applications together with the research proposal will be considered at the Faculty Research Programmes Committee (FRPC).

In approving an application for enrolment and registration, the FRPC shall satisfy itself that:

- a the candidate is suitably qualified and/or experienced; including a sufficient level of English language competence a **minimum** IELTS score of 6.5 (including a minimum of 6.5 in reading and writing)
- b that the proposed research fits within the research focus of the Faculty and/or the University's Research Strategy
- c potential for contribution to knowledge where appropriate
- d that the Faculty is able to provide suitable research supervision
- e the University is able to provide appropriate facilities for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme
- f that the form of submission is appropriate to the candidate
- g that the applicant has been made aware of the University's Ethical Guidelines

The FRPC will confirm the applicant's registration. Students are required to formally enrol and pay the appropriate fees upon commencement of study. This legitimises the research and covers the student for insurance purposes. This applies even where the person concerned is employed by the University, either as a member of staff or as a research assistant. Enrolment takes place at fixed time points during the academic year: October, January and April. Re-enrolment takes place annually subject to satisfactory progression.

## ■ ***Registration***

Full details of the initial registration procedures and registration periods are provided in the Research Degree Regulations.

## ■ ***Specific needs***

The supervision requirements of research students with disabilities and those with additional specific needs will require attention at the recruitment stage. Arrangements for the student's supervision and for the execution of their research degree must reflect their individual needs, which may include special provision of equipment, access, time, assistance and counselling. It is recommended that a supervisor discusses specific requirements with Student Support services prior to enrolment.

## ■ **Tuition Fees**

The payment of tuition fees entitles the student to supervision, use of the library and all other University facilities. The tuition fee is payable at the time of initial enrolment and annually thereafter at re-enrolment, otherwise the student will not be entitled to supervision or use facilities.

If the student does not complete their work and submit for examination within the normal registration period they may be eligible to pay a 'writing up' fee. The writing up fee is a significantly reduced amount and is normally used for the period of one academic year, for students who have effectively completed their research and are writing up their thesis. The Director of Studies must confirm in writing to the Graduate Research Office that the student is eligible to pay the writing-up fee. If the thesis has not been submitted for examination within the writing-up period, normal tuition fee rate will resume until such time as the thesis is submitted for examination.

Where a student, following examination, is required by examiners to resubmit and be re-examined with or without an oral examination, they will be required to pay a resubmission fee.

Where a student withdraws from their course of study, an application for a refund of part of the annual tuition fee may be made. The amount of such a refund will, however, be at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor.

Details regarding the tuition fees for postgraduate research degrees are available from the Finance Department or the Graduate Research Office.

## 6. **Supervising a Research Student**

### ■ **Good Supervisory Practice**

Both supervisors and students are recommended to consult the booklet entitled 'Research student and supervisor: An approach to good supervisory practice' (published by EPSRC and ESRC) and 'The Good Supervision' DVD available on the Hub. There is also a book entitled 'A Handbook for Doctoral Supervisors' by Stan Taylor and Nigel Beasley.

Throughout the period of registration the Director of Studies is the student's key contact within the Faculty. Ideally this relationship will be stable over time, productive for the student and enriching for both parties. Undertaking sustained research work can be exhilarating, but it can also be stressful, and on these occasions the student may need extra encouragement and support; this should always be given within the constraints of the supervisor's time, expertise and professionalism. Supervisors will be aware of the consequences for their own position and for the work of the student of extending their relationship with the student beyond professional boundaries, and they should guard against placing themselves in situations where students could challenge their professional integrity.

## ■ ***The Role and Responsibilities of a Director of Studies and/or Supervisor***

The Director of Studies and/or Supervisor should ensure at an early stage that the student understands the supervisors' responsibilities in relation to the student's written work, including the nature of the guidance and comment which may be offered. This should include giving the student help to decide on an appropriate structure for the thesis and providing detailed comments and guidance.

### ***A Director of Studies should ensure that:***

- all necessary enrolment, registration, monitoring and examination processes are dealt with
- the student undertakes a programme of related studies, where appropriate
- any necessary facilities are provided by the appropriate department

This list is by no means definitive, and Directors of Studies should also bear in mind the responsibilities detailed below.

A supervisor's responsibilities **may** include the following:

- providing satisfactory guidance and advice
- being responsible for monitoring the progress of the student's research programme
- establishing and maintaining regular contact with students and ensuring his/her accessibility when advice is needed by whatever means is most suitable given their student's location and mode of study
- having input into the assessment of their student's development needs
- providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on their student's work, including overall progress with the research degree
- ensuring that they are aware of the need to exercise probity and conduct their research according to ethical principles and be aware of the implications of academic misconduct
- ensuring that students are aware of institutional-level sources of advice, including ethics, careers guidance, health and safety legislation and equal opportunities policy;
- providing effective pastoral support and/or referring students to other sources of such support, including student advisers, Faculty and Graduate Research Office staff and others within the student's academic community;



- helping students to interact with others working in their field of research, for example, encouraging students to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking funding for such events; and where appropriate to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
- keeping up to date with the appropriate skills and knowledge required to perform the supervisory role satisfactorily.

Supervisors need to be sensitive to the diverse needs of individual students, including international students and the associated support that may be required in different circumstances.

Guidance should be given on the minimum frequency of contact advisable between students and supervisors.

## ■ ***The Role and Responsibilities of a Second Supervisor***

The appointment of a second supervisor is seen as an advantage to most students since it broadens and enhances the range of expertise available to the student and, most importantly, provides continuity of supervision in the absence of the Director of Studies.

### ***A Second Supervisor should:***

- provide additional guidance to the student and the Director of Studies on the planning, timetable and conduct of the research, expected standard and overall progress
- provide specialist expertise that might not otherwise be available
- maintain an awareness of the current status of the student's research and progress
- be accessible to the student at appropriate times for consultation
- attend any supervisory team meetings
- meet with the student and the Director of Studies according to an agreed schedule (normally at least once per month)
- be prepared to take over, at least on a temporary basis, from the Director of Studies should the need arise.

## ■ ***A Director of Studies or Second Supervisor should also:***

- ensure the safety of students in areas of potential risk
- participate in the selection of topics of suitable scope
- ensure that adequate time is made available for supervision
- be able to communicate with students about their abilities and achievements and discuss their commitment to their research and any external circumstances that affect it
- ensure that the student fully comprehends the complexity of the proposed task
- ensure that the student is made aware of her/his responsibilities as a research student
- ensure that the student is focusing the work in the intended direction

- o ensure that the student has access to primary research materials
- o ensure that the student and the University are aware of any ethical, legal or political problems associated with the work
- o ensure the student meets other researchers working in similar subject areas, either within the institution or elsewhere, as appropriate
- o provide guidance and encouragement to students while fostering their gradual development as independent research workers
- o assist students to develop the skills specific to their research and the more general professional competencies necessary for career progression
- o prepare regular reports on the progress of the student as required by the relevant Progress Board
- o encourage students to prepare draft chapters at an early stage, even if these subsequently need revision
- o agree arrangements for **regular** meetings with the student
- o ensure that the final thesis is the student's own work
- o remember that a student's best interests are not served by allowing her/him to continue on a research degree unless there is a reasonable expectation of success.

The University takes issues of academic misconduct very seriously, and supervisors may take any steps they think are necessary (including plagiarism detection) at any stage to determine if academic standards are being upheld. Should a student submit work (even in draft form) where plagiarism is identified, supervisors should refer to the Academic Misconduct Regulations <http://uso.southwales.ac.uk/StudentCasework/AI/> or seek advice from the Graduate Research Office.

### ■ ***Managing Conflicts in the Student – Supervisor Relationship***

Following good practice in research degree supervision is vital in order to minimise potential conflicts between student and supervisor. It is important for students and supervisors to be aware of expectations and roles from the outset and to always keep communication channels open. Students should alert you to any potential problems as they arise. As supervisors you invest a great deal of time and effort in your students' projects and the University would expect that every effort is made to resolve difficulties within teams wherever possible. If a student cannot discuss the problem with their Director of Studies or if this does not resolve the issue, they are advised to talk to another member of their supervisory team who would be expected to try to mediate the situation if possible. It may be possible to swap roles within the team, if this can alleviate any tensions without compromising the quality of supervision.

If a problem persists and cannot be resolved at student-supervisor level, the Chair of the Faculty Research Programmes Committee should be approached and will endeavour to mediate the situation in order that a successful resolution can be reached. In cases where the conflict between is irreconcilable, the Chair of the Faculty Research Programmes Committee will be responsible for identifying and allocating a new supervisor and / or supervisory team with appropriate subject expertise and supervisory

experience. This should be in consultation with the existing supervisory team. In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible or appropriate to appoint a new supervisor with the relevant expertise and there may not be a successful outcome. In such situations, students are informed of this as soon as is reasonably possible.

## ■ ***Progress of Research Students***

The progress of research students towards successful completion within approved time periods will be reviewed regularly.

Supervisor(s) are expected to be in contact with their research student as appropriate and at least once per month.

A formal record of each face to face meeting will be made and provided to the supervisor(s) and student. A template for this which students and supervisors may wish to use can be found in Appendix II. The record should be signed by the student and supervisor(s).

The record should contain:

- a review of the student's progress towards meeting previously agreed objectives
- a clear set of targets and/or objectives for the next meeting
- a date, time and place for the next meeting

In addition, each Director of Studies, acting on behalf of all supervisors where relevant, should complete an annual statement of progress.

In the event that a supervisor disagrees with the Director of Studies' report, he/she should complete a separate form.

In their statement of progress, the Director of Studies or nominated supervisor will grade each student's progress:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A | Excellent progress with no problems and completion anticipated on time  |
| B | Satisfactory progress, some issues exist, but completion anticipated on time  |
| C | Some progress being made, but there is a serious question as to whether the thesis will be completed satisfactorily on time |
| D | Progress unsatisfactory   |

In the event of a student's progress being graded C or D, the Director of Studies or nominated supervisor should include details of any factors that may have impeded progress during the year.

Students are required to submit a separate statement of progress.

All forms, together with the supervision reports, should be sent to the Graduate Research Office.

## ■ ***Progress Boards***

Each Faculty will hold a Progress Board, chaired by the Chair of the FRPC and consisting of: Heads of Departments or nominees and selected members of the FRPC. The Board will review each student's progress, using the annual statement of progress and other material as is available, e.g. transfer reports, records of meetings with students.

The Progress Board will make one of the following recommendations:

1. Recommend a further period of enrolment
2. Remedial work be completed within a specified timeframe
3. Termination of enrolment

Candidates will be informed and consulted on any changes to their registration and may appeal against the decision of the Progress Board.

The Board will also ensure that appropriate training and development needs have been met.

It is expected that Boards will meet as required, but will meet at least twice per year, once to conduct an annual review of progress and then to consider any outstanding issues, or to follow up any relevant matters.

## ■ ***Providing Feedback***

It is the supervisor's job to critically review and to provide feedback on students' work, but criticism should always be given in a constructive and supportive way (harsh criticism may have an adverse effect on both the student and their work). It is important to remember that giving praise, when appropriate, is an important element of feedback. When returning a student's written work it is important to spell out in precise terms if it needs to be re-written, and why. The aim of giving constructive criticism should be to enable students to evaluate their own work eventually, and to help them to become independent researchers. Students need to be kept informed of how the supervisor sees their work progressing through regular meetings and honest feedback regarding their work.

## ■ ***Time spent doing research***

The registration periods for the different types of postgraduate research degrees can be found in the Research Degree Regulations. A full-time PhD student, for example, would be expected to complete within 3-4 years but has a maximum registration period of 5 years. A part-time PhD student would be expected to complete within 5 years but their maximum registration period is six years.

For a part-time research degree at least twelve hours per week should be set aside by the student for their research whereas a full-time student is expected spend around 35 hours per week on their research.

Full-time students are entitled to up to eight weeks annual leave (which includes periods when the University is officially closed) and this must be agreed by their Director of Studies.

### ■ ***Time spent teaching***

Teaching opportunities may become available within the University and we encourage research students to undertake some teaching duties in view of the benefit which they will derive from it. The **maximum** time permitted for full time researchers to teach is **6 hours per week**, including not more than 2 hours per week of classes that require preparation. Research students are paid for undertaking these duties but research assistants are required to do this as part of their normal duties. However, in some cases, the terms of external grants preclude research assistants from teaching.

Any teaching, marking and preparation time should be agreed in advance with the student's Head of School and Director of Studies. Teaching should not be authorised if it is to the detriment of the student's research. Only those research students who have undertaken appropriate training will be eligible to be considered for any teaching opportunities that arise. It is the responsibility of Heads of School to check with the Graduate Research Office that students have undertaken the relevant training.

### ■ ***Supervising a Research Assistant***

The role of Director of Studies/Supervisor can become more complicated if the student is also a research assistant. Understandably, the main priority will be the completion of the research project for which the research assistant is employed, but the research assistant, in their capacity as student, is entitled to the same degree of supervision as all other students. It is important, therefore, to agree with the research assistant at the outset the precise nature of their MPhil/PhD study and how it will differ from the main research project. Both supervisor and student will need to discuss and agree how much time the student will spend on their MPhil/PhD.

## **7. Transfer of Registration**

### ■ ***Applying to Transfer***

Students registered for MPhil/PhD, should apply to the FRPC to approve transfer as soon as they have made sufficient progress on the project. Candidates will have to provide evidence of the work completed so far and the potential for original contribution to knowledge. This application should be made within 9-15 months of registering for full-time study and within 18-24 months of registering for part-time study. Students registered for MPhil only may apply to transfer to PhD if the student and supervisor(s) agree that sufficient progress

has been made to provide evidence of a potential original contribution to knowledge.

■ ***Transfer report***

In support of their application to transfer, students will prepare a full progress report on the work undertaken for submission to the FRPC, along with Form **R6** and the name of three specialists (to be provided by the Director of Studies). Full instructions are available in the Code of Practice for Research Students

■ ***Nomination of independent specialists***

The Director of Studies will need to provide the names of three independent specialists, one of whom will be asked to comment on the application. A written report will be sought from a specialist who may, or may not be, one of the specialists nominated by the Director of Studies. A fee determined by the University is payable to nominated external specialists only. It should be noted that the specialist chosen by the University to comment on an application to transfer will not be permitted to act as an examiner for the candidate at a later stage.

■ ***Consideration by FRPC***

The student's progress report, form R6 and the names of the three specialists should be submitted to the Secretary of FRPC at least four weeks before the meeting at which it is to be considered. A member of the FRPC with expertise in the area of the research project will be asked to comment on the proposed transfer and to nominate one of the specialists to consider the transfer. The FRPC member may, however, consider it more appropriate to seek the opinion of an alternative specialist. The Committee will seek guidance from the specialist's report.

■ ***Oral examination at transfer stage***

An oral assessment (transfer viva) will be used by the FRPC as part of the assessment of the case for transfer to PhD. The transfer viva whenever possible will be conducted by the independent specialist who considered the transfer report and observed by the Director of Studies and/or supervisor.

■ ***External advice***

In the consideration of approval by the FRPC of a proposal for registration or transfer from MPhil to PhD it is recognised that there is a balance to be struck between seeking specialist advice or otherwise. This decision is initially made by the member appointed to present the proposal to the FRPC who also decides, in the case of any specialist advice, whether this is sought from an internal or external specialist.

The advice is received within a developmental, as well as a judgmental, framework and allows the student and supervision team to receive

constructive suggestions. This, in turn, has frequently permitted follow-up discussion between the team and the specialist adviser leading to enhancement of the work and better linkages with the external peer community to which the project team belongs and has an input.

Unless the proposal is deemed to be seriously flawed in some way the process of seeking specialist internal or external advice should be approached within a framework of general confidence in the abilities of the student, supported by the supervision team, to successfully complete the research degree.

## **8. *Changes in Approved Registration Arrangements***

The Director of Studies should ensure that the Secretary of FRPC is notified of any changes in the student's approved registration arrangements on the appropriate form **R5**.

### **■ *Change in Approved Programme***

The FRPC approves a programme, together with its aims and plan of work. When this process takes place the Committee is exercising its quality assurance role and has ensured that the project has the potential to reach the standard required for MPhil or PhD. Therefore, if the student's project undergoes a material change, for example, the expected collaborating establishment proves unable to provide data, or ethical approval from a health body is not forthcoming, then the project clearly needs a major revision. It is *this* type of change that needs approval by the Committee. Other smaller matters do not need approval, for example, early results or the discovery of new sources may necessitate a change of focus, and such changes are probably to be expected.

### **■ *Change in Supervisory Arrangements***

Any changes in a student's approved supervisory arrangements will need to be approved by FRPC, and should be submitted on Form **R5**. A completed summary of research experience and supervision should be attached to the form for a proposed new supervisor. In assessing the application for a change in supervision arrangements the FRPC will look to ensure that the student has continued access to subject expertise and experienced supervisors.

### **■ *Change in Mode of Study***

The Director of Study should ensure that changes in the mode of study are notified to the Secretary of FRPC in writing.

### **■ *Extension of the Registration Period***

An application for the extension of a student's registration must be submitted (Form **R5**) to the Secretary of FRPC before the registration expires. An application to submit before the minimum registration period is reached will need to be submitted, in writing, at the same time as approval of examination arrangements.

#### ■ ***Suspension of the Registration Period***

If a student needs to take a complete break from their research, Form **R5** should be completed and forwarded to the Secretary of FRPC; when a student resumes their registration the Secretary of FRPC should be notified in writing.

Supervisors should keep in touch with students throughout their suspension period. Several weeks ahead of their student's expected return date, it is good practice for Directors of Study to contact them to see how they are and to enquire whether they are intending to resume study on the expected return date.

#### ■ ***Withdrawal of Registration***

The Secretary of FRPC should also be informed on form **R5** if a student decides to withdraw from the programme at any stage.

## 9. ***Examinations***

#### ■ ***Approval of Examination Arrangements***

Examination arrangements **must be approved by the University's Research Programmes Sub Committee**. The application for approval of examination arrangements must be submitted to the Secretary of RPSC at least four months before the expected date of completion of the thesis. This is necessary in order for there to be sufficient time to resolve any queries raised by the RPSC and, following approval, for the arrangements for the examination to be made.

The examination must not take place until the examination arrangements have been approved.

The Director of Studies should:

- submit the application for approval of examiners on Form **R7**. The Director of Studies should approach, informally, suitable persons and obtain the information required for the completion of the form and supporting statements about the experience and expertise of the proposed examiners.

The name of the proposed **Independent Chair** for the oral examination, *viva voce* should be included on the Form **R7**.



- ensure that there has not been significant contact between the candidate and the examiner, for example, working within the same organisation. It is appreciated that in some highly specialist subject areas the external examiner and candidate may have had some contact, for instance, given papers at the same conference. This will not preclude the appointment of an individual as an external examiner, but it is expected that the examiner will be independent. If there has been any significant contact or involvement between the candidate and proposed examiner, this should be declared on the R7 form for RPSC to consider.
- inform the candidate of the procedure to be followed for the submission of the thesis (including the number of copies to be submitted for examination) and any conditions to be satisfied before the candidate may be considered eligible for examination.
- notify the candidate, all supervisors, examiners, and the Secretary of the RPSC of the date, time and place of the oral examination. This should be done not less than seven days in advance of the examination.
- Submit an application to RPSC for approval of the oral examination being conducted elsewhere or through electronic means where there are exceptional circumstances which mean the viva cannot be conducted at the University. Approval for this should be sought at the time of appointment of examiners and at least eight weeks ahead of the viva.

**Although it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies and the supervision team to propose the examiners, it is expected that the student will have been consulted and her/his views noted.**

- ***Examiners***

The following should be borne in mind when proposing an examiner:

- (i) An internal examiner is a member of staff of the University, Emeritus Professor or Visiting Scholar to the University, or is a member of staff of the candidate's collaborating establishment, who is independent of the project.
- (ii) A research degree candidate shall be examined by at least two and not more than three examiners of whom at least one must be an external examiner.
- (iii) If the candidate and the internal examiner are both members of staff of the same establishment (whether University or collaborating establishment), a second external examiner must be proposed. A candidate who is on a fixed short-term employment contract (for instance, a research assistant) **may** be exempt from this requirement.
- (iv) Where two external examiners are proposed (see (iii) above) only one internal examiner may be proposed.
- (v) An external examiner shall be independent both of the University and of the collaborating establishment and shall not have acted

previously as the candidate's supervisor or adviser. An external examiner shall not be either a supervisor of another candidate at the University of South Wales or an external examiner on a taught course at the University. Former members of staff, or research students, of the University shall normally not be approved as external examiners until five years after the termination of their employment with, or until **five years** after they have been awarded their research degree by, the University.

- (vi) The examining team should normally have substantial experience of examining research degree candidates. In an examination for PhD, at least one member of the team should normally have substantial experience of PhD examining (that is, three or more previous examinations).
- (vii) Examiners must be experienced in research in the general area of the candidate's research degree and an external examiner should normally be a specialist in the topic(s) examined.
- (viii) No candidate for a research award shall act as an examiner.
- (ix) The Director of Studies in consultation with the Chair of FRPC will nominate a person who is independent of the student's research to chair the viva. The chair will be a senior academic with experience of supervising and examining research students and with a good knowledge of the University's research degree regulations.

#### ■ ***Completing Form R7***

- (a) **The Submission**  
The title under which the submission is to be submitted should be entered (this may have changed since registration).
- (b) **Expected date of examination**  
The form should be submitted at least four months before the expected examination date.
- (c) **Proposed Examiners**  
Information on all examiners must include names, qualifications, position and place of work and number of candidates examined for Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD. Where an examiner has examined a large number of students, precise figures are not necessary, but some indication (e.g. "over 50") should be given. "Many" is not sufficient. A brief statement of an examiner's most recent relevant research and consultancy interests and publications should also be included.

#### ■ ***Following Approval of Examination Arrangements***

Upon approval, the Secretary of RPSC will inform the candidate, the examiners and the Director of Studies.

The Director of Studies will liaise with the candidate and examiners to arrange the time and place of the examination.

**After preliminary consultation, candidates must take no part in the arrangements for their examination and must have no discussion with the external examiner(s) between the time they are appointed and the date of their examination, or discuss their thesis / project / examination with the internal examiner(s).**

It is, however, unreasonable to expect that the candidate will avoid meeting someone appointed as an internal examiner (particularly if the candidate is a full time student), but it is envisaged that both students and examiners will use their discretion as to what is an appropriate topic for discussion.

## ■ ***Submission of the Thesis/Portfolio/Publications***

Detailed information on the requirements for the format of the thesis and submission of publications/portfolio can be found in the Code of Practice for Research Students. Students are encouraged to seek the views of all their supervisors prior to submitting their thesis. It is good practice for students to put their work through plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin and to discuss the resulting report with their Director of Studies prior to final submission. Director of Studies will need to 'sign off' the student's thesis to indicate his/her approval for submission to the examiners. This must be done by completing the 'Confirmation of Thesis' form, to be submitted to the Secretary of RPSC with the thesis. Candidates also need to include a formal statement (Certificate of Research see \* below) to be bound in the thesis. (Both forms are available from the Secretary of RPSC in the Graduate Research Office). The Research Programmes Sub Committee would not recommend that students submit against the advice of their supervisors. A student does, nonetheless, have the right to submit at any time within the registration period, with or without the support of their supervisors.

### ***\*Certificate of Research***

*This is to certify that, except where specific reference is made, the work described in this thesis is the result of the candidate. Neither this thesis, nor any part of it, has been presented, or is currently submitted, in candidature for any degree at any other University. (This statement should be signed by the Director of Studies and the student, and dated).*

When the submission is ready for examination, the student must submit to the Graduate Research Office sufficient soft bound copies for all the examiners involved **and** the Graduate Research Office, as well as an electronic copy, and a signed declaration on Form **Decl**. The submission will be checked for conformity to the regulations and forwarded directly to appointed examiners by the Secretary of the RPSC.

## ■ ***The Examination***

Prior to the examination, each examiner is required to submit to the Secretary of RPSC a preliminary report on Form **R8**. **The examination may not proceed until all preliminary reports are received by the Secretary of RPSC.**

Normally a candidate will have an oral examination, which will cover both the submission content and the field of study in which the programme of work was undertaken. Where a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, as a result of sickness or similar problems, the Research Programmes Sub Committee may approve another form of examination.

A Director of Studies or Supervisor, or other persons may, with the consent of the candidate, be present at the oral examination to observe. They may not interject and will be expected to leave the room before the examiners deliberate on the outcome.

At the end of the examination the joint final recommendations of the examiners should be recorded on Form **R9** and forwarded immediately to the Secretary of the RPSC.

The following recommendations are available to examiners:

**A. The candidate fulfils the criteria for the award for which they are registered:**

Examiners may recommend the candidate is awarded their degree.

- i. With no corrections or amendments required
- ii. Subject to **minor / major amendments** as indicated by the examiners

**B. The candidate does not currently fulfil the criteria for the award for which they are registered:**

The submission displays significant deficiencies of content and / or presentation in areas specified by the examiners.

- i. The candidate is permitted to revise and resubmit for the award and be re-examined on one further occasion;
- ii. The candidate is offered a lower award subject to minor / major amendments as indicated by examiners;
- iii. The candidate is permitted to revise and resubmit for a lower award and be re-examined on one further occasion.

**C. Degree not awarded.**

The candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined.

Where revisions to the submission are required before the degree is awarded, the examiners will be asked to indicate to the student in writing the amendments or corrections required. Minor amendments are expected to be completed within three months and major amendments within six months. When amendments have been completed to the satisfaction of examiner/s, they will inform the Secretary of RPSC.

Following award and the subsequent approval of any required amendments, all students are required submit one hard bound copy of their thesis and one identical electronic copy to the Graduate Research Office for submission to the

National Library of Wales and University Library respectively. The electronic copy will be made available online via the University's research repository.

Where examiners recommend that the degree be not awarded and no re-examination be permitted, or where they recommend resubmission within twelve months, the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the submission and the reason for their decision which will be given to the candidate.

Where a candidate is required to resubmit for the award or resubmit for a lower award, supervisory teams are expected to remain in place until such time as the candidate is awarded and to engage fully in progression monitoring during this time.

### ■ ***Appeals against Examination Decisions***

A candidate may, in the circumstances outlined in Section 15 of the University's Research Degree Regulations, request a review of an examination decision, whether at the first examination or re-examination. Full details of the appeals procedure can be found in the Code of Practice for Research Students

## **10. Complaints Procedure**

A student may raise any complaint informally with their Director of Studies, Dean of Faculty, or with the Chair or Secretary of RPSC/FRPC. In most cases it should be possible to resolve the issue amicably in this way without recourse to the formal complaints procedure.

Where a complaint is so serious that it makes it inappropriate to deal with informally or where the informal procedure has not proved satisfactory, a student may make a formal complaint.

For information regarding the formal complaints procedure please refer to <http://uso.southwales.ac.uk/StudentCasework/SCP/>

**Complaints from students must be made before the final thesis examination and cannot constitute grounds for appeal against the outcome of the examination.**

The Student Complaints Procedure does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist: Complaints involving an allegation of misconduct by a student, an allegation of harassment by a student or member of staff, an allegation of misconduct by a member of staff.

If a supervisor has any concerns regarding any decisions agreed by the RPSC/FRPC, these concerns should be forwarded, in writing, to the Secretary of the RPSC/FRPC for the Chair's attention.

## ***Appendix I***

### ***Recommended Reading***

Estelle M Phillips and D S Pugh, ***How to get a PhD*** (Open University Press)

Penny Tinkler and Carolyn Jackson ***The Doctoral Examination Process*** (Open University Press)

Rowenna Murray, ***How to write a thesis*** (Open University Press)

Rowenna Murray, ***How to survive your Viva*** (Open University Press)

Diana Leonard, ***A Woman's Guide to Doctoral Studies***, (Open University Press)

David Scott, Andrew Brown, Ingrid Lunt, Lucy Thorne ***Professional Doctorates***, (Open University Press)

University of South Wales, ***Research Degree Regulations***

EPSRC and ESRC, ***Post Graduate Research: A Guide to Good Practice in Engineering and Physical Sciences***

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), ***UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality. Chapter B11: Research Degrees***, June 2012

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B11.pdf>

## ***Appendix II***

### **RESEARCH STUDENT / SUPERVISORY TEAM MEETING RECORD TEMPLATE**

Date of meeting:

Student name:

Supervisors present:

Review of previous targets and objectives:

Topics discussed:

Any issues identified:

Targets and objectives for the next meeting:

Signatures and date:

Student .....

Supervisor .....