



Doctoral  
Academy

# CODE OF PRACTICE ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Code of Practice defines the institutional framework for the delivery of the University's postgraduate research (PGR) degrees. These include, for example: PhD, Professional Doctorate, DM and MPhil programmes. It forms an integral part of quality assurance mechanisms and is designed to assure the quality and maintain the academic standards of research degrees at Keele University, bringing consistency to research degree provision across the institution.
- 1.2. The primary purpose of this document is to ensure that current postgraduate researchers and staff know what their responsibilities are and what they can expect from one another in order to support high standards of research and the postgraduate researcher experience.
- 1.3. The particular characteristics of doctoral degrees are set out in the [QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement](#). A core characteristic is that postgraduate researchers should generate new knowledge or original research, or apply existing research in a new way. This Code of Practice aligns with [the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](#), produced by the QAA for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, along with the requirements of good research governance.
- 1.4. This document supports, and is compliant with, the [University's Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations, codes of practice, policies and procedures](#), which are applicable to all students and staff of the University.
- 1.5. Further research degree handbooks and forms are published on the University's web pages, along with useful additional advice for postgraduate researchers and staff. Programme/subject specific guidance is also available within the Faculty PGR Handbooks. These documents are authoritative, definitive and should be adhered to by all postgraduate researchers and staff of the University, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and the deviation has been authorised by an appropriate member of the senior management of the University.

## 2. Research Environment and Postgraduate Research Degrees at Keele

- 2.1. Universities are assessed independently on the quality of their research by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). At Keele, 80% of our research was deemed to be world-leading, or internationally excellent, in the REF 2021. It is this leading reputation for research that has resulted in our degrees being highly regarded by employers and by other universities around the world.
- 2.2. The University's research, including postgraduate research degrees, is administered by the faculties in association with their related Schools.

- 2.3. The University's research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures, and protocols.
- 2.4. The University offers a range of different research degree programmes, which include MPhil and PhD programmes and professional doctorate degrees. MPhil programmes focus on a systematic understanding of knowledge, critical awareness, and originality in the application of knowledge. PhD programmes focus on the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship. Professional and practice-based doctorates also include structured taught elements and have an emphasis on acquiring research and professional skills in addition to conducting original research. All research degree programmes are fully aligned to the expectations set out in the [QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement](#).
- 2.5. Each Faculty and School will ensure that all postgraduate researchers can interact with research-active staff in the subject area, either internal or external to the University, and provide postgraduate researchers with the opportunities and the support, including reasonable resources, they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

### 3. Governance and Quality Assurance of Research Degrees

#### 3.1. PGR Governance Structures

- 3.1.1 The University ensures that effective arrangements are in place to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality of programmes. The Senate has the ultimate responsibility for assuring and enhancing the quality of the University's degree provision. For research degree programmes in particular, these arrangements are managed and monitored on behalf of Senate through a network of committees and groups (the relevant Terms of Reference for these committees are published on the University's [website](#)):

##### Research Committee

The Committee's scope encompasses all matters concerning the strategic management of, and support for, University research.

##### Faculty Research Committee

Each Committee's scope encompasses all matters concerning the strategic management of research within the Faculty.

##### Research Degrees Committee

The Committee's scope is to operate as a pan-University examination board approving PGR degree awards, on behalf of Senate. The Committee also has a role in ensuring the quality and consistency of research degrees and the examination process by monitoring and approving matters with respect to individual postgraduate researchers (including extension requests), staff and examiners on the recommendation of the Faculty PGR Committees.

##### Education Committee

The Committee's scope encompasses all strategic and policy-related matters concerning the development and delivery of the University's educational programmes.

##### Faculty PGR Committees

The Committee's scope is to oversee all matters relating to the progress and experience of postgraduate researchers within the Faculty and to ensure compliance with the University's Regulations and Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees. This Committee is responsible for the consideration and approval of PGR progression, requests for leave of absence and other changes of status or candidature.

#### University Doctoral Academy Committee

The Committee's scope is to maintain and promote a high-quality postgraduate research culture within the University thereby contributing to the University's broader mission as a research-led university. The Committee operates as a network forum for the University's academic and professional services staff that have key roles in the PGR experience, acting as an action group to identify and problem-solve strategic development issues reflecting on internal and external practice.

### 3.2. PGR Governance Roles

- 3.2.1 There are many staff around the University that contribute to the PGR experience, be it in an academic capacity or a supporting or service function. The officers of the University who play a key role in the governance of the University's research degrees, and postgraduate researchers, are listed below:

#### Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation

The Vice-Chancellor of the University is supported by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and three Pro Vice-Chancellors – one of which has the portfolio of Research and Innovation. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation is the executive lead within the University for all research matters, including research degrees.

#### Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) Director

The KDA Director acts as the lead figurehead for doctoral research within Keele, ensuring that the University's approach to doctoral research receives ongoing senior level focus. The KDA Director leads strategic development, is the focal point for internal and external stakeholders, and also serves as Chair of the Research Degrees Committee and University Doctoral Academy Committee.

#### Keele Doctoral Academy Manager, Academic Registry

The Doctoral Academy Manager supports the KDA Director operationally, ensuring a high-quality experience for all researchers. The KDA Manager is responsible for developing initiatives to enhance the PGR experience as well as highlighting funding opportunities and training initiatives, organising cross-Faculty research events and identifying and supporting the development of key partnerships.

#### Executive Deans

The Executive Deans occupy key leadership roles within the University and are required to lead, manage and develop the Faculty to ensure it achieves the highest possible standards of excellence in all its activities. The Executive Deans are responsible for all aspects of the executive leadership and strategic direction of research and education within their Faculty, including external and international engagement.

#### Faculty Deans for Research

Faculty Deans for Research are responsible to the Executive Dean for the Faculty's research and enterprise strategy and maintain oversight of Faculty compliance with University and statutory regulations in the areas of research governance and ethics.

### Heads of School

The Heads of School are responsible for all aspects of educational and research leadership and management of the School. They work closely with the School Director(s) of Research to ensure alignment with the University Research Strategy and compliance with University and statutory regulations.

### Postgraduate Research Directors

A Postgraduate Research Director (PGRD) is appointed for each Faculty; this person is identified as an experienced supervisor of postgraduate researchers. The Postgraduate Research Director is responsible for chairing Faculty PGR Committee. The PGRD is responsible to the Dean for Research for the local arrangements for research degrees and for liaising with and reporting as necessary to the Head of School and/or Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation. They are also members of the University Research Degrees Committee and UDAC.

### Postgraduate Leads

The PGR Leads have responsibilities at School level for postgraduate researchers and ensuring that the PGR processes are adopted, working with the PGR Directors.

### Postgraduate Officer – Keele Doctoral Academy, Academic Registry

The Postgraduate Officer, in addition to their capacity as the Secretary to the Research Degrees Committee and University Doctoral Academy Committee, has an advisory capacity on a broad remit of PGR matters. The main focus of the role is to ensure that postgraduate researchers are provided with a high-quality experience, that postgraduate research awards generally are robust and of the highest academic standards, and to assist in achieving the University's strategic aims for postgraduate research.

### Postgraduate Research Administrators - Keele Doctoral Academy, Academic Registry

The Postgraduate Research Administrators are Secretary to the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees, supporting PGR Leads and Directors to collate and process PGR paperwork, ensuring compliance with the University's Regulations and Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

## 3.3. Quality Assurance of Research Degrees

3.3.1. The University safeguards the academic integrity and consistency of its research degree programmes by applying award criteria which is articulated within the University Regulations and University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees, which takes account of the academic standards summarised in the UK qualification descriptors for doctoral degrees and research masters degrees.

3.3.2. The University adopts the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies qualification descriptor](#), which states that for:

Doctoral degree (level 8) researchers should demonstrate:

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship and/or creative practice, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional or creative practice;

- The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- A detailed understanding of the applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Research Masters (MPhil) degree (level 7) researchers should demonstrate:

- A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional or creative practice;
- A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- Conceptual understanding that enables the postgraduate researcher: to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

3.3.3. The University has governance structures and a framework in place to monitor the academic standards and quality of its research degree provision on a routine basis, with the additional measure of a formal audit review of academic programmes in Schools as part of the University's Internal Quality Audit (IQA) process by the Quality Assurance team which takes place typically at least every five years.

3.3.4. For professional doctorate courses, please refer to [Regulation C9](#) and for all other research degrees please refer to [Regulation C10](#).

## 4. Applications and Admission

4.1. Regulations C9 and C10 detail the conferment and award of postgraduate research degrees; and Regulation C1 stipulates the maximum period of registration for doctoral and research masters degree researchers.

4.2. The University's [Regulations](#) specify the requirements for admission to a research degree, with the Faculty having additional criteria which they may apply in selecting candidates for research degrees. The University also has a policy for considering claims for the [recognition of prior learning](#) gained through professional practice or other appropriate work experience or study. Applicants wishing to transfer their research degree from another institution to Keele University should follow the guidance and policy.

4.3. The University is committed to the provision of a high-quality, fair and transparent admissions process for all applicants; the principles, including legal requirements, are set out in the University's [Admissions Policies, Admissions Feedback Policy and Admissions Appeals Policy](#). Prospective postgraduate researchers are provided with step-by-step guidance on how to apply for a research degree, available on the University's [website](#).

4.4. The University will provide clear communications to each applicant about the admissions process and requirements, including the applicant's financial responsibilities (the appropriate fees for the research degree) and the consequences of being unable to meet the commitments.



4.5. Applications for PhD and MPhil programmes will be considered in the Faculty by at least two academic staff within the relevant subject area, and the Postgraduate Research Director (or nominee) representing the Faculty PGR Committee. Applications for Professional Doctorate programmes will be considered in the Faculty by the programme lead and another member of the programme team and the Postgraduate Research Director (or nominee) to ensure appropriate supervisory expertise is available. Selection will be made on the basis of all information available, including the application form, proposed area of research, qualifications, references and interview. Applicants will be accepted only if the University believes that they are likely to be successful in completing the research degree for which they have applied and if the University can be sure that it can meet the requirements set out in the following paragraph.

4.6. Prior to admission, the University will ensure that:

- There will be appropriate expertise available to the Faculty to supervise and assess the prospective postgraduate researcher\*;
- There will be appropriate facilities and resources available to enable the prospective postgraduate researcher to carry out their work;
- There will be sufficient related research activity in the Faculty to provide a research-active environment for the prospective postgraduate researcher; and
- The proposal is a suitable basis for embarking on a research degree project at the proposed level.

\* Please note the University cannot guarantee that the initially identified supervisory team or research project will remain unchanged over the course of the programme of study; for example staff departures and change of role may necessitate changes to the supervisory team or project scope which will always be made in discussion with the postgraduate researcher, and subject to supervisory expertise (see section 7).

4.7. In addition to academic qualifications, where the applicant's first language is not English, the applicant will be required to demonstrate proficiency in English language; the requirements (IELTS) are set out on the University's [website](#), along with information on English language support. Applicants who require Immigration Permission (a visa) to study in the UK must have a minimum of higher level of English proficiency required by the UK Home Office prior to starting their research degree.

4.8. Equal opportunities information will be collected from all applicants for monitoring purposes to satisfy that:

- The programme complies with the internal and external equality and diversity policies and guidance;
- An effective support infrastructure is in place for all postgraduate researchers, taking account of mode of study, subject needs and individual circumstances.

4.9. Further guidance on the application and admission process for a PhD by Publication, including criteria and examination information, can be found within [Regulation C10](#) and the Guidance for a PhD by Publication.

## 5. Registration and Induction

5.1. For as long as postgraduate researchers are pursuing their programme of study, they must remain formally registered with the University (re-registering on an annual basis) and pay the appropriate level of fees. Postgraduate researchers must comply with their thesis submission date, i.e. their registration end date.



- 5.2. Full-time postgraduate researchers are expected to undertake a full working week (typically 35 hours) on their degree. Agreement must be reached between the supervisor and part-time postgraduate researchers at the start of their registration as to the proportion of time they will be spending on their degree. It is expected that those on part-time routes will normally spend the equivalent of at least 17.5 hours (0.5FTE) or up to 28 hours (0.8FTE) per week on their research degree. Any alternative arrangement agreed will not affect the submission time or funding arrangements within the prescribed period.
- 5.3. It is the normal expectation that postgraduate researchers will retain the same registration status throughout their periods of study; however, guidance and procedures are in place for circumstances when a change to a postgraduate researcher's registration status is required, including changing from full-time to part-time study or vice-versa, , to take a leave of absence, or to transfer to continuation status ('writing-up' period). Such requests to change status/candidature should be submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee for their consideration and approval in a timely fashion (see Annex A for specific deadlines). Postgraduate researchers who are on a Student Visa to study in the UK must discuss any requests to change their registration status or mode of attendance (distance/ campus based) with Immigration Compliance.
- 5.4. The time limits for completion of a research degree are set out below and are also applicable to Distance Learning routes. [Regulation C1](#) contains further information on the maximum period of registration for research degrees:

Degree registered for	Mode of attendance (registration status)	Minimum period of supervision from initial registration to submission	Expected time to submission	Maximum time to submission	Maximum time to submission including approved Leaves of Absence and Extension Requests
Masters Degree (MPhil)	Full-time	12 months	18 months	24 months	48 months
	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	24 months	36 months	48 months	92 months
	Part-time (0.8 FTE)	15 months	23 months	30 months	60 months
Doctoral Degree (PhD, DM)	Full-time	24 months	36 months	48 months	72 months
	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	48 months	72 months	96 months	144 months
	Part-time (0.8 FTE)	30 months	45 months	60 months	86 months
Professional Doctorates	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	48 months	72 months	96 months	144 months

- 5.5. **In exceptional circumstances** the maximum registration period may be extended, as shown in the final column of the table above following consideration and approval of the case by the

Research Degrees Committee, on behalf of Senate. Any postgraduate researcher wishing to extend their registration period must follow the guidance and procedure set out in the [PGR Handbook](#) for submitting their case to the Research Degrees Committee. Paperwork must be submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee at least three months before the submission deadline (Annex A).

Requests for further time beyond the maximum period of registration tabled above can be made and are at the discretion of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). These types of request should be sent to the Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee.

- 5.6 Leave of absence requests can be submitted for a maximum of 12 months at any time. Leaves of absence will automatically extend the end date up to the maximum periods of registration as shown in 5.4, and in extremely exceptional cases, postgraduate researchers will have the opportunity to apply for further extension requests towards the end of their programme if required (see 5.5 above).

A second 12 month leave of absence for the same reason is unlikely to be approved. Likewise, a second consecutive leave of absence will not normally be approved. Postgraduate researchers who experience prolonged periods of exceptional circumstances that are deemed likely to prevent them from completing their research within the maximum registration timeframes will be advised to withdraw and re-apply to start a new research degree at a suitable later date. If they re-apply and re-start, they will be entitled to the maximum time to submission from initial registration from the start of their new research degree. Any previously completed relevant research training will be considered upon application. Postgraduate researchers will usually need to undertake at least the minimum period of supervision for a research degree from the start date of their new degree, regardless of any research work already undertaken, although admission with advanced standing is possible under certain circumstances with approval from the relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Director.

Those in receipt of funding from external bodies including UKRI, or international researchers on a student visa, may have different terms and conditions relating to their eligibility for leave or student status and should check carefully before applying.

- 5.7 Any postgraduate researcher wishing to transfer from their doctoral degree to another doctoral programme or to an interim or exit award should follow the University's guidance and procedure set out in the [PGR Handbook](#).
- 5.7.1 In the case of voluntary withdrawal, postgraduate researchers should consult their supervisor and/or PGR Lead and SESO as soon as possible. Notification should be made to Student Records and your PGR Administrator.
  - 5.7.2 In the case of transfer from their doctoral degree to another doctoral programme, postgraduate researchers should consult their supervisor as soon as possible and must seek authorisation from the Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee as per the deadlines set out in Annex A. Where a postgraduate researcher is requesting to transfer in from another institution, each case will be considered on its own merits, with postgraduate researchers expected to complete a minimum of 50% of their registration period at Keele University.
- 5.8 Postgraduate researchers who are on a Student Visa to study in the UK must consult with [Immigration Compliance](#) before requesting any changes to their intended degree programme (including changing the area of research, which would need Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance) or any other changes that may affect their registered end date. This includes where any academic progress review results in the transfer of degree level, e.g. from PhD to MPhil route or vice versa, which will require a new visa to be obtained from outside of the UK.

5.9 Postgraduate researchers who fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress, in accordance with university requirements, may be required to terminate their studies at the University, or change their mode of attendance – see progress and review (Section 8 of this Code) below.

5.10 The University will host induction events at regular intervals for postgraduate researchers, supplemented by a Faculty local induction programme. They will also have access to a range of other University induction materials and presentations on the [website](#). The induction material will cover the essentials of supervision, training, and support available at the University and signpost to a range of support services.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### 6.1 The University

6.1.1 The University's role and responsibilities are to provide:

- A collegial community of academic staff and postgraduates conducting excellent research in cognate areas;
- Supervisors with the necessary skills and knowledge to support postgraduate researchers in working towards the successful completion of their research degrees;
- Access to the facilities and equipment necessary to enable postgraduate researchers, in all modes of study, to complete their research degrees successfully;
- Access to welfare and support facilities that recognise the distinctive nature of research degree study;
- The opportunity for postgraduate researchers to raise complaints or appeal;
- Mechanisms for addressing postgraduate researchers' feedback both as individuals and collectively;
- Sufficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another organisation, the standards of both organisations are maintained.

### 6.2 The Supervisor and research environment

6.2.1 The role of supervisors, and other staff within the local research environment, is critical in maintaining quality and academic standards when supporting postgraduate research. The key responsibilities of supervisors are set out below, with further instructions available within section 7 of this Code.

The key responsibilities of supervisors and staff within the research environment are:

- Being familiar with the provisions of this Code of Practice, the Faculty PGR Handbook, the University Regulations and policies that affect them and their postgraduate researchers;
- Introducing the postgraduate researcher to the Faculty/School, its facilities and procedures, and to other postgraduate researchers and relevant staff;
- Providing satisfactory and accurate guidance and advice;
- Ensure that the postgraduate researcher has a clear understanding of postgraduate research; the form and structure of the thesis (including the appropriate forms of referencing); the required standards; the importance of planning and time management and procedures for monitoring and reporting progress;
- Monitoring the progress of the postgraduate researcher's programme, ensuring that the research project can be completed fully, including preparation and submission of the thesis, within the tuition fee-paying period, and advising accordingly; ensure that the postgraduate

researcher is informed of any inadequacy of standards of work below that generally expected and suggest remedial action, or training, as appropriate;

- Reach agreement on the frequency of progress meetings and the arrangements for keeping records and maintain regular contact with the postgraduate researcher;
- Being accessible to the postgraduate researcher to give advice (by whatever means is most suitable, given the postgraduate researcher's location and mode of study) and advise, in advance, of any planned periods of absence from the University. If the period of absence is significant (more than the length of time between supervisory meetings), the supervisor should ensure that appropriate arrangements for alternative supervision are made and that the postgraduate researcher is informed of them;
- Contributing to the assessment of the researcher's development needs by engaging with them to understand their academic background and identify any areas in which further training is required;
- Providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the work and overall progress within the programme;
- Ensuring that the postgraduate researcher is aware of the need to exercise probity and conduct their research according to ethical principles, including intellectual property rights, and of the implications of research misconduct;
- Ensuring that the postgraduate researcher is aware of sources of advice, including careers guidance and health and safety policies and procedures;
- Helping the postgraduate researcher to interact with others working in the field of research, for example encouraging the researcher to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking [funding](#) for such events;
- Where appropriate, giving encouragement and guidance to the postgraduate researcher on the submission of conference papers and articles to journals;
- Maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, undertaking mandatory continuing professional development to ensure that they have the appropriate skills to perform all of the role satisfactorily;
- Ensuring all paperwork relating to Progress Reviews and the examination process, and extensions and leaves of absence where applicable, is completed and submitted in a timely manner. Paperwork which needs to go through the Research Degrees Committee such as Examination Panel forms and Extension Requests should be sent in at least three months before the intended submission date or deadline, and paperwork which only needs Faculty PGR Committee should normally be submitted one month in advance. For further details, see Annex A at the end of this document.
- Nominate appropriate examiners no later than 3 months before the thesis will be submitted; read and comment on drafts of the thesis before submission; ensure that the postgraduate researcher understands the procedures for the submission and examination of the thesis and assist them in preparing for the oral examination, including offering a mock viva;
- Where concerns are identified with health and wellbeing, to signpost researchers to university support services (which includes Counselling and mental health support; Student Experience and Support; Residence Support; Wellbeing; Study Support; Sexual Violence; Disability, Support and Inclusion; and Bullying and Harassment) (see [www.keele.ac.uk/studentservices](http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentservices));
- Checking and prompting whether Reasonable Adjustments should be in place for those with Disabilities, Specific Learning Difficulties and/or long-term health conditions, under the Equality Act 2010 .

### 6.3 The Postgraduate Researcher

#### 6.3.1 The key responsibilities of postgraduate researchers are:

- Being familiar with the provisions of this Code of Practice, the Faculty PGR Handbook, the University Regulations and policies that affect them, including those relating to their qualification, academic conduct, equality and diversity, health and safety, intellectual property, ethics, research governance, GDPR, electronic repositories, and good research practice;
- Taking ownership of their personal and professional development, including maintaining their Personal Development and Learning Plan and recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;
- Maintaining regular contact with supervisors according to the agreed frequency of meetings (a joint responsibility with supervisors) and preparing adequately for meetings with members of their supervisory team);
- Actively participating in Interim Progress Reviews and Progress Review processes within the timescales prescribed;
- Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- Maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
- Attending any development opportunities (research-related or other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors;
- Raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their academic work or registration; and
- Ensure all communications sent from the University are read and, where relevant, responded to, in a timely manner, including correspondence via their Keele personal email account;
- For those who require a Student Visa to study in the UK, ensure compliance with [their Immigration Responsibilities](#).
- Maintaining their own health and wellbeing and taking necessary action if they are experiencing difficulties. This might include: seeking assistance from the University Support services (which includes Counselling and mental health support; Student Experience and Support; Residence Support; Wellbeing; Study Support; Sexual Violence; Disability, Support and Inclusion; and Bullying and Harassment) (see [www.keele.ac.uk/studentservices](http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentservices)); and/or seeking alterations to study arrangements.
- Notifying the University of any health condition/disability so that their supervisor and the Disability, Support and Inclusion team can consider and agree relevant reasonable adjustments and, where relevant, signpost students towards further support.

#### 6.4 Attendance

- The University aims to support a vibrant community of postgraduate researchers and to encourage engagement through both physical and digital forms.

##### 6.4.1 Campus

Attendance on campus is mandatory for certain programmes of research, where specialist equipment and access to resources are necessary. In many other cases attendance on campus is desirable. The University commits to providing flexible study space for all postgraduate researchers who intend to study on campus and they should liaise with their supervisors in the first instance, to discuss study space.

##### 6.4.2 Distance

- Certain programmes of research can be undertaken at a distance, with access to supervision, research groups, research training, pastoral support, language and study support, assessment, and financial support where applicable all provided online. Postgraduate researchers on approved distance learning programmes will themselves be responsible for the resources they require to complete their research, apart from those campus resources which can be accessed remotely. For more information see section 12.

## 7. Supervision

- 7.1 The University will appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage postgraduate researchers, and to monitor their progress effectively. All postgraduate researchers shall have one lead supervisor and (with the exception of those on a PhD by Publication route) at least one other member of the supervisory team.
- 7.2 Upon agreeing to supervise a postgraduate researcher, supervisors accept that they must abide by the rules set out both in this section and section 6.2 above. If a postgraduate researcher expresses concern about a supervisor's performance, the School PGR Lead will first attempt to resolve the situation informally through discussion with postgraduate researcher and supervisor, other members of staff might be consulted, such as the School Early Resolution Officer, Faculty PGR Director or Head of School, if necessary. Postgraduate researchers can raise concerns with their supervision by following the [PGR Concerns Process](#). Further action may be taken as appropriate.
- 7.3 If the postgraduate researcher and/or their supervisor develop any concerns relating to their PGR experience, this should be raised to the Faculty PGR Director. Refer to the guidance forms on how to submit these documents:
- [PGR Concern Review Form \(Supervisor\)](#)
  - [PGR Concern Review Form \(PGR\)](#)
  - [PGR Concern Review Form \(PGR Lead\)](#)
- 7.4 The lead supervisor will be selected primarily on the basis of appropriate subject expertise and will have the necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct postgraduate researchers' work. The individuals being nominated to a position of lead supervisor should:
- Be a member of academic staff holding a current contract of employment with the University of at least 0.2 FTE;
  - Be expected to remain in a research-active (or an active professional-practice) position within the University for the projected duration of the postgraduate researcher's studies and be able to provide the necessary guidance and support to their postgraduate researchers;
  - Lead supervisors will normally be members of the Education & Research (E&R) job family, however, in some circumstances it may be appropriate for the lead supervisor to be from the Education & Scholarship (E&S) job family (for example, when the topic of research relates to scholarship)
- The lead supervisor will:
- Have the primary accountability for the researcher and be responsible for ensuring paperwork is completed according to the expected timeframes set out in Annex A.
  - Be accessible to the postgraduate researcher, and meet or make contact with them a minimum of once every 4 weeks (see 7.15);
  - Have a thorough and up to date knowledge of University and Faculty policies and procedures concerning postgraduate researchers and supervisory responsibilities.



7.5 If the individual being nominated to a position of lead supervisor has not supervised a postgraduate researcher at the level of the degree from start to completion or has not yet completed their probationary period, then the Faculty will ensure that they have a mentor. Mentors must be established supervisors who have experience of supervising one or more postgraduate researchers to successful completion of their degree and who have a good understanding of the relevant University and Faculty policies and procedures. **Please note that supervision of PhDs by publication does not count towards the three years of experience of research degree supervision required for lead supervisor status.**

7.6 Postgraduate researchers must have a Co-supervisor on their supervisory team (with the exception of those on a PhD by Publication route).

In addition to a Lead Supervisor, the Co-supervisor will also serve as a point of contact and will have an input (agreed with the Lead Supervisor) in shaping the research and reviewing progress which will be recorded in the Personal Development and Learning Plan.

The following core principles are applicable to all Co-supervision arrangements:

- The Co-supervisor must have involvement in a postgraduate researcher's studies, whether it be through the provision of subject-specific expertise, methodological specialism, or pastoral support (this includes Co-supervisors based outside the University as well as internal colleagues);
- The Co-supervisor must have a minimum of two meetings a calendar year with the postgraduate researcher;
- The Co-supervisor will be involved at decision making checkpoints, e.g. Progress Reviews 2 and 3.

Additional Co-supervisors should be appointed if a postgraduate researcher is conducting their research across more than one Faculty, in two institutions, or with an external partner (for example in industry, a charity or arts organisation). Co-supervisors working in a partner organisation must be able to fulfil the University's expectations for the role and will be provided with opportunities to engage in developmental and training activities.

7.7 The following categories of staff may not be the lead supervisor of a postgraduate researcher, but may act as a co-supervisor subject to approval by the Faculty PGR Committee:

- Visiting Professors or Research Fellows, provided that they will be in post for the duration of the degree and are able to maintain regular contact with the postgraduate researcher;
- Honorary contract staff such as supervisors employed by other institutions\*;
- Members of staff who are themselves currently registered on a research degree;
- Members of academic staff who have yet to complete their probationary period (see also section 7.4 above);
- Members of technical staff, professional service staff or Research Associates with relevant expertise and experience.

\*Where external co-supervision is required, the school will be responsible for liaising with colleagues within the KDA, to request an honorary title or an external co-supervisor's contract. Honorary titles should be used where staff are built into the supervisory team from the start of a postgraduate researcher's studies, if a supervisor leaves the University but will continue to supervise, and external co-supervisor contracts should be used in instances where extra support is required on a temporary basis or where honorary titles are not appropriate. For guidance on the processes to follow if a supervisor leaves the University, please see section 7.11 below.



- 7.8 Emeritus and retired members of staff may be appointed or remain as additional members of the supervisory team but will not be permitted to act as lead or co-supervisors
- 7.9 The roles of each member of the supervisory team will be specified in the Personal Development and Learning Plan (PDLP) and may be modified during the programme. If the lead supervisor is not available for a period of more than 4 weeks, postgraduate researchers will be informed of their alternative point of contact. This will either be the co-supervisor or an additional designated member of academic staff able to provide advice and support. If a postgraduate researcher has more than one co-supervisor, they should be provided with clear information about which is the main point of contact when the lead supervisor is unavailable.
- 7.10 The School PGR Lead along with the Head of School shall be responsible for the confirmation and appointment of the supervisory team prior to registration, taking accounts of any supervision limits in place within the school. For professional doctorate researchers, final confirmation of the supervisory team will happen by the end of the taught element of the programme. The Faculty PGR Committee is responsible for monitoring that postgraduate researchers have continuous supervision during their period of registered study. If a supervisor is absent for an extended period or leaves the University, the School PGR Lead along with the Head of School must ensure that adequate supervisory support is maintained, including enacting alternative arrangements where appropriate.
- 7.11 Supervisory responsibilities may be considered at the request of a postgraduate researcher or a supervisor if circumstances change (e.g. due to a change of direction). Postgraduate researchers and supervisors will be consulted on any change of supervisor. Normally, any change of supervisor will be by mutual agreement between the postgraduate researcher and the University (including school PGR Lead, Head of School and Faculty PGR Director) and must take into account the requirements of any sponsors. There will be no detriment to the postgraduate researcher should they wish to change supervisors for any reason during their degree.
- 7.12 If a lead supervisor leaves the University, a new lead supervisor must be appointed by the Faculty PGR Committee with assistance from the Head of School and School PGR Lead. The University will endeavour to ensure that another member of staff is appointed as lead supervisor before or within the month after the original lead supervisor leaves.

In exceptional circumstances where a postgraduate researcher is near the end of their studies, or there is a lack of expertise in the research area, the PGR Director will consult with the postgraduate researcher, supervisors and Faculty PGR committee to agree future supervisory arrangements. Options considered will include but are not limited to:

- The departing supervisor remaining on the supervisory team as an external co-supervisor by filling in the External Co-Supervision Agreement or Honorary title (whichever is the most appropriate);
  - The research is altered;
  - The postgraduate researcher transfers institution alongside their supervisor (subject to funding);
  - Appointment of another external co-supervisor with appropriate expertise alongside an internal lead supervisor with cognate expertise.
  - On rare occasions, following consideration of the options above, it may not be possible to agree replacement supervision arrangements. At this point the PGR may be required to withdraw from their studies.
- 7.13 The request for a change of supervisor will be distinguished from a complaint/appeal about the adequacy of supervision – further information is available within section 15 of this Code.
- 7.14 The lead supervisor is responsible for setting up an initial meeting with the postgraduate researcher and the rest of the team to agree on plans for the programme.

- 7.15 Postgraduate researchers and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained, with the minimum frequency of recorded contact being once every 4 weeks (although the normal expectation is likely to be more than this). At the outset of the programme, supervisors and postgraduate researchers should agree on the frequency of progress meetings and the arrangements for keeping records.
- 7.16 Formal records should be maintained within Skillsforge of supervision meetings or contacts at least every 4 weeks. This includes during any period of corrections or revisions following examination. These formally recorded supervision records may be used to evidence the “contact points” to satisfy UKVI requirements.
- 7.17 If any member of the supervisory team has a personal relationship with a postgraduate researcher at any point during the research degree, the member of staff in question should declare this immediately and procedure invoked, in accordance with the University’s Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Professional Guidance [policy](#).

## 8. Progress and Review

### 8.1 Reviewing Academic Progress

- 8.1.1 Regular reviews of a postgraduate researcher’s progress are essential to maximise the likelihood of the postgraduate researcher completing the programme successfully within an appropriate timescale, and to ensure that if progress is unsatisfactory, that they are given support to enable them to make improvements. Attendance and progress is monitored to ensure that completion rates remain high and in order to comply with statutory reporting, including the University’s annual return to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and for International postgraduate researchers the UK Home Office (UKVI). More information on Progress Reviews can be found in the [Progress Review Handbook](#).
- 8.1.2 The assessment, monitoring and progression requirements of any taught components that are part of a research degree programme, e.g. professional or practice-based doctorates, will be specified within the Faculty PGR Handbook or equivalent.
- 8.1.3 Formal progress reviews will take place either in person or online by agreement of all parties.

### 8.2 Progress Review

- 8.2.1 Progress Reviews represent gateways for progression to the next stage of the programme, ensuring that the postgraduate researcher is on target to meet the expected submission date. Progress Reviews are a formal check of the progress and support requirements for the intended award against individual targets and the University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees. The Reviews can result in a recommendation to alter the postgraduate researcher's status to that of MPhil path (if on a doctoral programme) in cases of unsatisfactory progress, or an equivalent exit award for professional practice programmes
- 8.2.2 Progress Review Reports should be discussed with the postgraduate researcher prior to submission for consideration and approval by the Faculty PGR Committee. The role of Faculty PGR

Committee is to provide an objective and independent check of progress. These reports allow supervisors to reflect on progress during the previous year and to plan for the year ahead and are an important method of providing formal feedback that might not otherwise be addressed in supervisory meetings. The Progress Review Report also includes a section reflecting on the postgraduate researcher's progress with their Personal Development and Learning Plan (PDLP). Researchers are required to confirm that they have seen the content of the Progress Review Report.

Degree registered for	Mode of attendance  (Registration status)	Progress Review 1  (Doctoral Progression)	Progress Review 2	Progress Review 3 (Pre-Submission Review) *
Masters Degree (MPhil)	Full-time	n/a	n/a	10 months
	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	n/a	n/a	20 months
	Part-time (0.8 FTE)	n/a	n/a	13 months
Doctoral Degree (PhD, DM)	Full-time	10 Months	22 months	36 months
	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	20 months	44 months	72 months
	Part-time (0.8 FTE)	13 months	28 months	45 months
Professional Doctorates	Part-time (0.5 FTE)	24 months	44 months	72 months

\*Note: PR3 can be submitted earlier in acknowledgement of the fact that the thesis can be submitted before the expected time of completion, as set out in Section 5 of this Code. The dates set out above for Progress Review 3 are intended as a guide and will vary depending on progress towards the submission of the thesis.

8.2.3 All full-time MPhil researchers must attend a 10-month progress review meeting (PR3) with their lead supervisor (equivalent for those on a part-time registration) to assess readiness to submit thesis. The review report is submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee for consideration and approval. This is not applicable for MPhil exit awards.

8.2.4 The format of the Progress Reviews for doctoral postgraduate researchers will be:

- Progress Review 1: Postgraduate researcher completes requirements (outlined within the Progress Review Handbook) and attends an Independent Panel interview, with panel membership normally excluding members of the supervisory team\*, for the confirmation review of their status - for PhD and Professional Doctorate routes this forms doctoral

progression. Professional or practice-based doctorates should refer to their Faculty PGR Handbook or equivalent for Progression review report 1 requirements

- Progress Review 2: Postgraduate researcher attends an interview with their supervisory team to assess progress against time-point criteria and plan work to be completed to achieve the deadline for submission.
- Progress Review 3: Postgraduate researcher attends an interview with their supervisory team to assess readiness to submit thesis and change of status to continuation status (if appropriate).

\* Members of the supervisory team can be present as silent observers at the Progress Review 1 Independent Review Panel interview by advance agreement from all members of the panel at least 24 hours before the interview takes place.

### 8.3 Interim Progress Review

8.3.1 The academic progress of all postgraduate researchers with full-time, part-time and continuation status must be formally assessed by Interim Progress Reviews. The Interim Progress Reviews will reflect upon the PDLP, general progress and standard of work, and the alignment with the University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees. Interim Progress Reviews will take place every six months in addition to the more regular recording of supervisory meetings. This will normally begin for PhD/MPhil routes six months from start date and for Professional Doctorate routes, six months following successful completion of Progress Review 1.

8.3.2 Part One of the Interim Progress Report will be completed by the postgraduate researcher and Part Two will be completed by the Lead Supervisor, in consultation with the Supervisory Team. Interim Progress Report that highlight poor or unsatisfactory performance will be considered by the Faculty PGR Committee and further action may be taken.

### 8.4 Academic Standing and Interruptions to Study

8.4.1 In accordance with University Regulations, all postgraduate researchers are required to remain in good academic standing by conducting themselves responsibly and professionally, maintaining active study and a satisfactory standard of work, complying with their responsibilities outlined within this Code. Failure to do so may result in the termination of study (subject to approval of the relevant committee); or for the level of degree to be altered, for example, from a PhD to an MPhil degree or the equivalent exit award for Professional Doctorate (subject to approval of the Faculty PGR Committee).

8.4.2 If progress is unsatisfactory, staff within the research environment will take action to identify whether any additional support or guidance is required and can be offered, either by the Faculty or by other support services. Depending on when the issues are identified, they may be dealt with via informal and formal stages of academic progress reviews. Lead supervisors can advise the Faculty PGR Committee to issue an academic warning to a postgraduate researcher under the terms of [Regulation C10](#) (or [Regulation C9](#) for Professional Doctorate researchers) at any stage of the programme. The Faculty PGR Committee can issue three consecutive academic warnings. In the first warning period, the postgraduate researcher would have 4 weeks to satisfy the requests detailed in the warning. In the second and third warning periods, while the standard remains at 4 weeks, the Faculty PGR Committee can use its discretion to vary the number of weeks a postgraduate researcher has to address the terms of the warning. If a postgraduate researcher fails to comply with the terms of the third warning, the Faculty PGR Committee may recommend to the RDC that they be required to withdraw from the University. The Progress Review Handbook includes further

detail on the process for resolving unsatisfactory academic performance and the action to be taken where problems cannot be resolved, resulting in academic warnings and ultimately, the postgraduate researcher's studies at the University being terminated.

- 8.4.3 If there are exceptional circumstances that have resulted in (or are likely to result in) unsatisfactory academic progress, postgraduate researchers should identify, with the support of university staff, if an extension or leave of absence (maximum of 12 months) or a change to mode of attendance should be requested. If it is envisaged that a postgraduate researcher will need more than 12 months away from their studies, please consult section 5.5 above. Any interruptions to study should be discussed with the lead supervisor in the first instance (and also Immigration Compliance for international postgraduate researchers), reflecting on the University guidance on extensions, leave of absences or other changes to a postgraduate researcher's registration status which can be found on the University's website.
- 8.4.4 The University retains the right to enforce a compulsory leave of absence, in accordance with Regulation C10.
- 8.4.5 Postgraduate researchers have the right to submit an appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Committee to withdraw registration from the University for not maintaining good academic standing; or the decision of the Faculty PGR Committee to alter the level of the research degree due to academic failure at the progress review point. Further information about research degree appeals can be found in Section 15, below, or within the guidance available on the University's website.
- 8.4.6 Professional Doctorate researchers have the right to appeal against the decision of the relevant examination board in relation to marks awarded during the taught element of their research degree. Following progress review 1, appeals from professional doctorate researchers should follow the route set out in paragraph 8.4.5.

## 9. Research Training and Development

- 9.1 The University is committed to the provision of skills and employability training for all postgraduate researchers, taking into account national standards including the Roberts 'SET for Success' report, [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#) and the expectations of [UK Research and Innovation](#).
- 9.2 The development and application of research, personal development and employability skills acquired during research degree programmes is recognised as an important factor in whether a postgraduate researcher completes their degree successfully.
- 9.3 The University encourages postgraduate researchers to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, during and after their programme of study, and to recognise the value of developing transferable skills – whilst studying at Keele, this is supported by their record of personal development, their Personal Development and Learning Plan (PDLP). A key focus will be on development of employability skills, which will aim for progressing essential skills and qualities preferred by employers, both within and outside of academia.
- 9.4 The University supports its researchers by providing research training, which is delivered by the University (through Schools, Faculties, and the Keele Doctoral Academy, KDA), or provided by partner institutions, but also integrates opportunities for skills development into research

degree programmes. For researchers on professional doctorate programmes, research training is primarily provided as part of the taught component of the programme, supplemented by the wider University training offer.

- 9.5 Research and Innovation Support Enhancement (RaISE) and the Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) offer support for all researchers at the University on a range of skills, both research and generic, in the form of workshops specifically tailored to researchers and by providing learning resources for postgraduate researchers. Further information regarding research training resources can also be found via the research training webpages of the [Research Governance Toolkit](#).
- 9.6 The University's [Doctoral Academy Handbook](#) is intended to assist postgraduate researchers in identifying where they might find support for their research; containing the formal modules approved for research training, as well as a selection of courses offered by the KDA.
- 9.7 Postgraduate researchers are required to complete the minimum subject-specific training, as prescribed by their Faculty and outlined within the University's Doctoral Academy Handbook, and also engage with personal development and employability skills training, as a requirement from research councils and the University. For Professional Doctorates, the research training will typically be contained in the taught modules of the programme. Currently, this requires a commitment of two weeks per year or 200 hours over a three year full-time doctoral programme or over six years for part time routes. For MPhil, this will be 70 hours in year 1.
- 9.8 Engagement and training will be evaluated at each Progress and Interim Progress Review stage. Exceptions, exemptions or credits to the research training requirements may (subject to approval by the Faculty PGR Committee) be made for researchers who have already successfully completed the whole or part of an equivalent programme – which must be recorded on the PDLP.
- 9.9 Those wishing to supervise postgraduate researchers (MPhil, PhD, and Professional Doctorate) must complete the mandatory 'Introduction to Postgraduate Research Supervision' training. This has an online asynchronous component (Part 1) and a synchronous workshop delivered by KDA staff (Part 2). For experienced supervisors (those who have supervised a postgraduate researcher through to completion) who are new to Keele, only Part 1 is necessary. For inexperienced supervisors both components are required.
- 9.10 All active supervisors must complete a mandatory update on 'Advancing your Research Supervisory Practice' every two years to their supervisor training to ensure that they are abreast of changes.
- 9.11 Supervisory training will be recorded on supervisors' training records on Keele People.

## 10. Research Governance

### 10.1 Research Integrity

- 10.1.1 Research integrity refers to high quality and robust practice across the entire research process i.e. the planning and conduct of research, the collection and recording of data, reporting and dissemination of findings and the application and exploitation of findings.

10.1.2 Keele University supports the five commitments outlined in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and expects its researchers to be aware of their responsibilities outlined in the Concordat and to adhere to the highest standards of integrity when undertaking research. More information regarding research integrity can be accessed via the research integrity webpages of the [Research Governance Toolkit](#).

## 10.2 Research Compliance

10.2.1 Legislative policy and guideline requirements - Researchers are responsible for being aware of, and complying with, all legislative, policy and guideline requirements relevant to their research activities, including current and on-going policy changes.

10.2.2 Research policies and procedures - There are a number of research policies and procedures that researchers should be aware of and abide by. The University's Code of Good Research Practice, which reflects a number of other policies including Data Protection, Management of Conflicts of Interest and the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care, outlines the University's expectations of all researchers.

## 10.3 Research Approvals

10.3.1 Postgraduate researchers are responsible for ensuring that the necessary approvals, including peer review, ethics and Health Research Authority (HRA) approval, are obtained before any fieldwork can commence. Information regarding the approvals and considerations for the various types of research activity can be found via the approvals and considerations pages of the [Research Governance Toolkit](#).

## 10.4 Research Ethics

10.4.1 All research involving human participants, their tissue\* or data is required to undergo an appropriate research ethics review process. Information about the appropriate ethical review process for each type of research activity can be found via the approvals and considerations webpages of the [Research Governance Toolkit](#). \*Postgraduate researchers and their supervisors must comply with the Keele University Human Tissue Quality Management System (HTQMS) - please contact [research.humantissue@keele.ac.uk](mailto:research.humantissue@keele.ac.uk) for guidance.

## 10.5 Research Data Management

10.5.1 There is the expectation that the data created during the research degree programme will be a valuable resource that can be used and re-used for future scientific and educational purposes. Good practice in data management is one of the core areas of research integrity. Postgraduate researchers are responsible for being aware of and adhering to the University's Data Management and Sharing Policies and procedures.

## 10.6 Intellectual Property Rights

10.6.1 Intellectual property (IP) is intangible property that is the result of creativity and innovation and which can be owned in a similar way to physical property: examples include patentable technologies, design rights, copyrights, etc. Postgraduate researchers are responsible for being



aware of and abiding to, the University's policies, procedures and guidance on IP and must declare at the point of submission if the thesis contains IP and/or if embargo on access should be applied (Thesis Submission Form).

- 10.6.2 Where the IP has been generated with the benefit of the University environment (including resources, facilities and intellectual capital) the University would normally own the IP. The exception to this occurs where the postgraduate researcher is sponsored by a third party, where it has been contractually agreed, that the sponsor will own the IP arising from the sponsored research work.
- 10.6.3 Postgraduate researchers are entitled to a share of any financial gain resulting from the IP generated during the degree, in accordance with the University's [Intellectual Property Management Code of Practice](#).

## 11. Educational Partnerships

- 11.1 The University defines educational partnerships, including those which relate to research degrees, as educational provision leading to an award by the University which is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation.
- 11.2 There are a range of different arrangements for educational partnerships. The [Code of Practice for Educational Partnerships](#) sets out each of these arrangements, including those which are specific to research degrees, and defines the process through which the University approves, monitors and reviews such arrangements.
- 11.3 Where a joint research degree, dual award/cotutelle research degree, split-site PhD or other such arrangement is under discussion, early contact should be made with Educational Partnerships Team and Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) for advice and to ensure that the appropriate process is followed.

## 12. Distance PGR Study

- 12.1 Applicants may register for a PGR programme by distance learning. Standards, admissions criteria, and access to all support facilities will be similar to campus-based facilities, except made available online. These require postgraduate researchers to have appropriate access to the necessary resources (internet, computing, and any other resource required for their research) in their own location. This will be checked at the admissions interview.
- 12.2 In the case of projects that require access to specialist additional resources, postgraduate researchers will be responsible for finding and paying for this if applicable, in addition to the tuition fee.
- 12.3 Admissions to distance PGR programmes will include a compulsory interview organised by the PGR Lead which aims to establish that:
- The supervisory team is willing and able to undertake supervision remotely;
  - The project lends itself to research conducted at a distance;
  - Adequate resources are available for study and for contact (study space, computing facilities, access to stable internet);

- Adequate access to other resources is available (e.g. access to specialist equipment or populations) locally or online;
  - The postgraduate researcher has genuine motivation and shows awareness of the requirements and challenges of distance study (time, accommodating time differences).
- 12.4 Postgraduate researchers are able to attend Keele for short visits to coincide with other activities (e.g. induction, Researcher Summer School, conferences, or to meet with their supervisor) but these are not mandatory. As such, student visas will not be issued to international postgraduate researchers, but they may request short term study visas.
- 12.5 Postgraduate researchers will be made aware that there are limits to distance learning in that any additional costs must be borne by themselves, including visas and travel if they choose to take the opportunity to visit Keele, and that they may not be able to access paid teaching opportunities.
- 12.6 Transfers between distance learning and campus-based programmes (or vice versa) will be possible up to the minimum period of registration (i.e. after 24 months FT for a PhD, 48 months PT), subject to approval by the Faculty Postgraduate Committee and other factors such as whether UKVI requirements are met for international postgraduate researchers. International distance-learning postgraduate researchers may not change to campus-based study after the minimum period of registration (see 5.4).

## 13. Submission, Examination and Award

### 13.1 Submission

*[For resubmissions – see Section 13.3]*

- 13.1.1 Postgraduate researchers are required to submit their thesis (and where relevant, also a body of creative work) by their registration end date, aligned to the time limits set out in Regulation C1 and Section 5 of this Code, unless amended by an extension formally approved by the Research Degrees Committee or as granted automatically following a period of approved leave of absence.
- 13.1.2 Postgraduate researchers should always consult their supervisory team before submitting their thesis for examination, ensuring that they discuss any matters related to confidentiality, embargo or intellectual property that may need to be declared on the Thesis Submission Form.
- 13.1.3 If it appears likely that the deadline will not be met, the postgraduate researcher should consult their lead supervisor and PGR Director immediately. In exceptional circumstances, an extension to the registration end date may be requested (including evidence of the circumstance), subject to formal approval by the Research Degrees Committee..
- 13.1.4 The relevant research training requirements, as set out within the Faculty PGR Handbooks and the University Doctoral Academy Handbook, must be completed prior to submission.
- 13.1.5 Prior to submission, the final thesis title and exam panel will be approved by the Faculty PGR Committee at the same time that the Committee recommends to the Research Degrees Committee the examination panel. This must be three months before submission as per the table in Annex A.

- 13.1.6 When preparing a thesis for submission, postgraduate researchers must follow the Guidance for the Submission of a PGR Thesis and comply with the formal requirements for submissions in order not to jeopardise the acceptance of their thesis or the award of their degree.
- 13.1.7 On the day of submission, postgraduate researchers are required to email [submissions.pgr@keele.ac.uk](mailto:submissions.pgr@keele.ac.uk) all of the following in order for their thesis to be accepted by the University:
- A fully completed and signed electronic copy of [Thesis Submission Form](#);
  - A fully completed and signed electronic copy of [Academic Honesty Form](#);
  - An electronic copy of the thesis and abstract – emailed to [submissions.pgr@keele.ac.uk](mailto:submissions.pgr@keele.ac.uk).
- 13.1.8 Upon electronic submission, postgraduate researchers will receive an automated submission confirmation. Once all the necessary submission checks have been carried out, postgraduate researchers will be emailed with confirmation that their thesis has been successfully submitted and that they will be contacted by the faculty regarding viva details once the examiners have completed their evaluation of the thesis.
- 13.1.9 The University reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect instances of plagiarism. Postgraduate researchers should be aware that the University may submit the electronic copy of their thesis through Turnitin (plagiarism detection software) or other relevant software tools, with the consequences outlined within Section 15 of this Code (academic misconduct).
- 13.1.10 Where a postgraduate researcher fails to submit their thesis by their registration end date, they will continue to be charged fees at the continuation rate until the submission is complete. If the submission is more than three months overdue, the Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the postgraduate researcher's studies being terminated by the University. The postgraduate researcher will have a right of appeal against a decision to terminate their studies.

## 13.2 Examination

- 13.2.1 The University will normally appoint two suitably qualified examiners to assess the thesis against the University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees set out in section 4.6 of the [PGR Examination Handbook](#) (and where relevant, also a body of creative work) and then undertake an oral examination (*equivalent terminology: viva or viva voce*).
- 13.2.2 Normally, one examiner will be an internal member of staff and one examiner will be external to the University. Under no circumstances will a member of the supervisory team, either past or present, be an examiner. In some circumstances, two external examiners will be appointed, for example, if the postgraduate researcher is a member of staff within that research environment, and in exceptional cases a third examiner may be appointed at the discretion of RDC. The postgraduate researcher will be consulted in the consideration of potential examiners.
- 13.2.3 All parties will follow the Guidance on the Nomination of the Oral Examination Panel. For the examination process, the guidance sets out the expectations for candidates, examiners and Independent Chairs at the oral examination. There are seven options of recommendations available to examiners, which are detailed within the guidance and also within the [examiners' report forms](#).
- 13.2.4 The [Oral Examination and Thesis Title Approval Form](#) will be considered and approved by the Research Degrees Committee against the Guidance on the Nomination of the Oral Examination Panel. This will include the appointment of an Independent Chair to be responsible for the

conduct of the oral examination, ensuring compliance with University Regulations, policies, procedures, guidance and this Code; and also responsible for coordinating the timely submission of examination reports. All oral examinations will have an Independent Chair, who will be trained and/or have suitable experience within the University as an examiner. The Independent Chair will be provided with the abstract to the thesis.

- 13.2.5 The University requires all postgraduate researchers to undertake an oral examination (the viva). Vivas can take place either electronically via a video link or in-person, but under no circumstances can hybrid set ups be used. All parties must follow the guidance outlined in the Examinations Handbook. Under no circumstances will an oral examination be conducted by telephone/voice call.
- 13.2.6 The supervisor may exceptionally be present during the oral examination if all parties agree.
- 13.2.7 The thesis will be sent to each of the examiners, who are then required to submit separate, independent written reports five working days prior to the oral examination, electronically – the Pre-Viva Examiner’s Report Form provides a template for the information required from the examiner, including an initial recommendation. In some circumstances, examiners may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving the thesis.
- 13.2.8 The examiners’ independent reports will be exchanged prior to the oral examination taking place; the Independent Chair will also receive both reports.
- 13.2.9 The aim of the oral examination is to evaluate whether the candidate has met the criteria for the research degree award, in accordance with the examiner’s guidance and the University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees. During the oral examination, the postgraduate researcher is required to defend their work, which is expected to be a challenging event in the researcher’s career. The University offers support and guidance for postgraduate researchers in preparation for their oral examination, including workshops.
- 13.2.10 On conclusion of the oral examination, the examiners will agree a recommendation, in the presence of the Independent Chair, and complete a joint examiners’ report, electronically – the Post-Viva Examiners’ Joint Report Form provides a template for the information required from the examiners, including any required revisions and the joint recommendation. The completed Post-Viva Examiners’ Joint Report Form must be signed off by both examiners and the Independent Chair and emailed to [exams.pgr@keele.ac.uk](mailto:exams.pgr@keele.ac.uk) account within five working days of the date of the oral examination.
- 13.2.11 The examiners’ reports will be provided to the postgraduate researcher by the University on completion of the examination process. Postgraduate researchers should not have direct communications with their examiners, other than during the oral examination.
- 13.2.12 The whole examination process should normally take no longer than three months, from the date of submission until the receipt of the examiners’ joint recommendation and report.
- 13.2.13 The Independent Chair is expected to maintain a record of the conduct of oral examination in case of challenge by the postgraduate researcher in the form of an appeal.
- 13.2.14 Where examiners, mediated by the Independent Chair, cannot reach a consensus on the joint recommendation, all parties may agree that the only solution would be to appoint an adjudicator – Recommendation 7. In such circumstances, the guidance available in the University’s PGR Examinations Handbook will be followed.

13.2.15 Where a postgraduate researcher receives corrections – Recommendation 2 – and fails to complete these revisions within the period allowed (agreed by examiners and approved by RDC – see Section 12.4 of this Code), they must complete an Extension Request Form to provide a rationale for being late. If the corrections are more than three months overdue, the Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the termination of studies at the University. The postgraduate researcher will have a right of appeal against this decision.

### 13.3 Resubmission

13.3.1 Where examiners have recommended, ratified by the Research Degrees Committee, that the thesis should be resubmitted for examination following resubmission (Recommendation 3 or 5), postgraduate researchers are required to submit the resubmission within one calendar year from the date of the Research Degrees Committee. In exceptional circumstances, an extension to the one year period may be requested (including evidence of the circumstance), subject to formal approval by the Research Degrees Committee – [Extension Request Form](#).

13.3.2 Where a postgraduate researcher fails to complete the required revisions within the period allowed (agreed by examiners and approved by RDC – see Section 12.4 of this Code), they will continue to be charged fees at the continuation rate until the resubmission is complete. If the resubmission is more than three months overdue, the Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the studies being terminated. The postgraduate researcher will have a right of appeal against this decision.

13.3.3 Postgraduate researchers must not consult the examiners between completion of the original examination process and resubmission, but will be guided by their supervisory team in the light of the examiners' reports and any other feedback.

13.3.4 The normal expectation is that the original examiners will assess the resubmission; however, if either/both cannot complete the re-examination, (a) new examiner(s) will be appointed in the normal manner and will be clearly informed of their role and remit.

13.3.5 Examination of a resubmitted thesis shall focus upon whether the revisions required after the first examination have been completed satisfactorily. Examiners, including those newly appointed for the resubmission, may not introduce new requirements at this stage. In other respects, the thesis will be examined in the same way as the original submission.

13.3.6 The thesis will be sent to each of the examiners, who are then required to submit separate, independent written reports (electronically) normally within 6 weeks of receiving the thesis – the Resubmission - Examiner's Preliminary Report Form provides a template for the information required from the examiner, including an initial recommendation from those available for resubmissions. Where examiners recommend either minor corrections (Recommendation 2) or that the degree be altered from doctoral level to MPhil/MRes (Recommendation 4), they are required to justify within their Preliminary Reports whether a second oral examination should be offered to the postgraduate researcher as an opportunity to allow defence of their work before the joint examiners' recommendation is reached and the joint report submitted to the Research Degrees Committee. Whether a second oral examination is to be offered to the postgraduate researcher will be confirmed by the KDA Exams Office ([exams.pgr@keele.ac.uk](mailto:exams.pgr@keele.ac.uk)) following submission of the Preliminary Reports.

13.3.7 If there is no requirement for a second oral examination, the Resubmission – Examiners' Joint Report Form will be completed, including sign-off by the Independent Chair, and submitted to the Research Degrees Committee in the normal manner. Where a second oral examination is required, the procedure as for original submissions shall be followed.

#### 13.4 Research Degrees Committee and Senate

- 13.4.1 Examiners' reports and recommendations are considered by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which makes recommendations to Senate for the final ratification of the award.
- 13.4.2 Where an award is recommended, this will not be submitted to Senate until all required revisions have been completed and authorised, and the thesis has been deposited in the Library – Guidance for Depositing a PGR Thesis (section 7 of the [PGR Examination Handbook](#)). Where no award is recommended (fail), the recommendation will be made to Senate following the meeting of RDC.
- 13.4.3 Postgraduate researchers have the right to submit an appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Committee concerning the final award recommendation to Senate. Appeals are conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in Regulation 7, with further information available in Section 14.2 of this Code.
- 13.4.4 Where a postgraduate researcher fails to deposit their thesis in the Library, the University will send reminders after three and six months to remind them of the necessity of this action. A postgraduate researcher's continuing failure after six months to deposit their thesis will normally result in them being withdrawn from the University without an award. The postgraduate researcher will have a right of appeal against this decision. A postgraduate researcher who has fulfilled all requirements for their award following completion of all necessary corrections within the allocated time but subsequently fail to deposit their thesis in the library may nonetheless at a later stage apply to the University to be considered for the award. Where this occurs after the postgraduate researcher was withdrawn from the University, they will be asked to provide evidence of depositing their thesis. Where this is provided, the University may ask Senate to confirm the award retrospectively.

## 14. Feedback Mechanisms

- 14.1 Postgraduate researchers have a variety of opportunities for giving feedback on their academic programme and any other aspect of their experience whilst studying at Keele. There are postgraduate representatives on the majority of university committees, including Council, Senate, University Education Committee, , University Doctoral Academy Committee and University Student Voice Committee. Representatives also attend School Research Committees, Faculty Postgraduate Committees and regular Postgraduate Representative meetings with the Doctoral Academy and Postgraduate Association.
- 14.2 The University will integrate the results of external surveys, such as the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), with internal feedback mechanisms and will publish the outcomes of these surveys, along with any actions arising from analysis of the feedback.
- 14.3 The University has a students' union dedicated to representing postgraduate students, the Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA), and the Keele Students' Union (KeeleSU) also offers representation for postgraduate students.

14.4 All Faculties have mechanisms to collect, review and respond as appropriate to the feedback from those concerned with research degrees, including individual postgraduate researchers and groups of researchers or their representatives. Quality assurance processes will also incorporate opportunities for feedback on the academic quality of programmes. There will also be local mechanisms for ensuring postgraduate researchers can participate in discussions and bring forward concerns that may affect their academic progress or experience.

## 15. Academic Misconduct, Discipline, Academic Appeals and Complaints

### 15.1 Academic and Research Misconduct

- 15.1.1 The University expects its students will produce work for assessment on time, honestly and without attempting to take any unfair advantage - this is academic integrity. Academic misconduct is doing something that could give postgraduate researchers an unfair advantage in an assessment or examination, including the production of a research degree thesis.
- 15.1.2 The University treats academic misconduct very seriously and penalties will be given for proven cases, including exclusion from the University for very serious or repeat offences, in accordance with [Regulation D4](#) and the [Student Academic Misconduct Code of Practice](#) along with supporting guidance. Postgraduate researchers must understand how to prepare their thesis honestly in order to avoid plagiarism and other academic misconduct. The University will provide various resources, including training sessions, guidance documents and expert staff within the local research environment and within professional services, to assist students in their understanding and avoidance of plagiarism and other misconduct.
- 15.1.3 The University reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect instances of plagiarism. Postgraduate researchers should be aware that the University may submit the electronic copy of their thesis through Turnitin (plagiarism detection software). Following interpretation of the originality report, the Academic Conduct Officer may take the decision to enact misconduct procedures.
- 15.1.4 Normally all alleged academic misconduct involving postgraduate researchers will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee for consideration. Cases may be referred to the Committee before submission if academic misconduct is suspected during the research or writing up process e.g. falsification of data, unpermitted use of generative AI, ethics offences, commissioning of work. Postgraduate researchers must retain copies of their draft work and their research e.g. completed questionnaires, so that this can be produced if challenged about the authenticity of their work. This includes any correspondence with a proofreader. Guidance on proofreading is available on the University's [website](#).
- 15.1.5 Postgraduate researchers can seek assistance on the University misconduct processes from [Student Academic Conduct](#) and independent advice / assistance can be sought from ASK.
- 15.1.6 The University has a clear and robust process in place to deal with allegations of Research misconduct, it gives clear accountability when things do go wrong, and appropriate actions taken to address any findings. [Research Misconduct Procedure](#)

### 15.2 Discipline



- 15.2.1 As a member of the University, you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that is responsible and respectful to others, whether they are other students, members of staff, visitors to the University or members of the local community. The University is committed to the fair and equal treatment of all individuals regardless of gender, age, disability, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, socio-economic group, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibilities, religious or political beliefs. By accepting an offer of a place at the University, you agree to abide by all relevant policies and regulations of the University which have been designed to support the University's key values.
- 15.2.2 With reference to Regulation C10, section 7.2(b), non-academic disciplinary issues will be investigated as a breach of [Regulation B1](#) as determined by the Student Conduct Team.
- 15.2.3 Where a disciplinary issue is raised, unless an immediate concern for person or property is present, this will initially be reviewed and try to be resolved informally and within the relevant school, faculty or locale. Where an immediate concern for person or property is present, this will be treated in accordance with Regulation B1, section 5.
- 15.2.4 If the issue cannot be resolved informally or persists beyond the initial informal resolution, an allegation of misconduct may be referred under Regulation B1.

### 15.3 Academic Appeals

- 15.3.1 Academic appeals are initiated by the postgraduate researcher, in accordance with [Regulation B6](#). The purpose of the research degrees appeals process is to allow all postgraduate researchers the right to appeal on the following grounds:
- Procedural irregularities;
  - Exceptional circumstances, providing that:
    - These circumstances were not known by the Board of Examiners/Research Degrees Committee (or Faculty PGR Committee) at the time it made its decision;
    - These circumstances can be verified by appropriate evidence (see University guidelines); and
    - There is a valid reason for not notifying the Board of Examiners/Research Degrees Committee (or Faculty PGR Committee) in accordance with [Regulation B3](#).
  - Inadequacy of supervision or facilities (However, postgraduate researchers should note that alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study must be raised at the time and does not constitute grounds for appeal following the submission of the thesis).

Details about the appeals process can be found at; [Academic Appeals - research degrees](#) Independent advice and assistance with preparing submitting an appeal can be provided by ASK.

### 15.4 Complaints

- 15.4.1 If a postgraduate researcher is unhappy with any aspect of their experience at Keele University, they have the right to submit a complaint. Every effort should be made to resolve the issue on an informal basis in the first instance, without recourse to a formal procedure. The first course of action should be to contact the lead supervisor to discuss the matter or a member of the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee (I.e a PGR Lead or PGR Director).
- 15.4.2 Postgraduate researchers should consider whether the complaints process is the suitable route or whether the PGR Concerns process, which is a route to make concerns about supervision known and seek to have them resolved, is more suitable. Postgraduate researchers should

review and access the [PGR Concern Review guidance and form](#).

- 15.4.3 Postgraduate researchers are expected to make problems known early to enable the University to find suitable practical solutions in the first instance. The University reserves the right to reject complaints made at either stage of the complaints process outside of the normal eight-week deadline, unless genuine reasons are given for not making issues known sooner. The University also reserves the right to fully or partly reject retrospective complaints about supervision only made after key milestones, for example formal progression, thesis submission and the viva. The PGR Concerns process is similarly intended to identify practical solutions to issues wherever possible, and postgraduate researchers must accept that there is limited scope to resolve issues reported a significant amount of time after the events in question.
- 15.4.4 If the problem persists, the complaint should be addressed to the local (or Faculty) Early Resolution Officer for investigation. Postgraduate researchers who are unable to resolve their complaint informally through the Faculty procedure can then submit a formal complaint to the University under [and the student complaints guidance](#). [Regulation B7 and the student complaints guidance](#).
- 15.4.5 Details about the complaints process can be found at; [Student complaints](#). Advice and assistance with preparing and submitting a complaint can be provided by ASK.

## ANNEX A: Paperwork Deadlines

Process	Committee(s) to be approved at	Deadline for paperwork submission (postgraduate researcher and supervisor)	Deadline for Committee sign off
Change of status	Faculty PGR Committee	3 months before change is due	1 month before change is due
Change of supervision	Faculty PGR Committee	1 month before the change is due	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork
Leaves of Absence	Faculty PGR Committee	Normally 1 month before the intended submission date to begin their leave of absence, unless there are extenuating circumstances	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork
Withdrawal requests (non-voluntary)	Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee	As soon as possible	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork
Interim Progress Reviews	Reported at Faculty PGR Committee	Report due within 10 working days of the meeting	To be reported at the next scheduled meeting.
Progress Review Paperwork (PR1 and PR2)	Faculty PGR Committee	Report due within 10 working days of the meeting	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork
PR3	Faculty PGR Committee	Report due within 10 working days of the meeting	No later than a month prior to the intended submission date
Exam panel nomination form	Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee	3 months before intended submission date	1 month before intended submission date
Extension Requests	Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee	3 months before the candidate is due to submit	1 month before intended submission date
Transfer Requests	Faculty PGR Committee and Research Degrees Committee	3 months before the candidate is due to transfer	1 month before intended transfer date
Training funds requests	Faculty PGR Committee	1 month before the funds are required	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork
Visiting and Placement applications	Faculty PGR Committee	3 months before intended visit	Within 10 working days of receiving the completed paperwork

## **ANNEX B: Further Information**

Link to the University Regulations: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations/>

Link to the webpage for prospective postgraduate researchers:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/postgraduateresearch/>

Link to the current PGR webpages, including the KDA handbook, PGR Examination Handbook and accompanying forms:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/postgraduateresearch/kda/researchstudents/pgrguidanceandforms/>

Student Support: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/students/student-services/>

Student Finance: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/student-funding/>

KPA: <http://kpa.org.uk>

KeeleSU: <https://keelesu.com/>

KDA: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/postgraduateresearch/kda/>