



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 assist current research students and staff to know what their responsibilities are and what they can expect from one another in order to support high standards of research and the research student experience.
- 1.3. The particular characteristics of doctoral degrees are set out in [the QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement](#). A core characteristic is that research degree students 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 guidance documents and forms are published on the University's [website](#), along with useful additional advice for research students and staff. Programme/subject specific guidance is also available within the Faculty PGR Student Handbooks. These documents are authoritative, definitive and should be adhered to by all research degree students and staff of the University, unless there are exceptional circumstances and the deviation has been authorised by the 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, 97% of our research was deemed to be world-leading, or of international importance, in the REF 2014. 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 doctoral degree programmes, which include the traditional PhD programme and professional doctorate degrees. While PhD programmes will focus on the creation of new knowledge, 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/School configuration will ensure that all students can interact with research-active staff in the student's subject area, either internal or external to the University, and provide students 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 students (including extension requests), staff and examiners on the recommendation of the Faculty PGR Committees.

Faculty PGR Committees

The Committee's scope is to oversee all matters relating to the progress and experience of postgraduate research students 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 research student 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 student 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 student 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 research degree students, are listed below:

Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

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

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.

Keele Doctoral Academy Manager

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 postgraduate student 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 Dean plays a major leadership role within the University and is required to lead, manage and develop the Faculty to ensure it achieves the highest possible standards of excellence in all its activities. The Executive Dean is 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 the Faculty's 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 leadership and management of the School, including research, where they work closely with the School Director(s) of Research, and ensuring 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 research students. The Postgraduate Research Director will be the Chair of the Faculty PGR Committee. The Director will be 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 Enterprise. They will also sit on the University Research Degrees Committee and the KDA .

Postgraduate Leads

The PGR Leads have responsibilities at School and disciplinary research centre level for PGR students and ensuring that the PGR processes are adopted, working with the PGR Directors.

Postgraduate Officer – Quality Assurance Team, Student & Academic Services

The Postgraduate Officer, in addition to their capacity as the Secretary to the Research Degrees Committee, has an advisory capacity to staff and students on a broad remit of PGR matters. The main focus of the role is to ensure that PGR students are provided with a high quality student 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.

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) students 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) students 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 student: 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 students.
- 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 procedure 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 procedure.
- 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 students 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 (where used) 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 student*;
 - There will be appropriate facilities and resources available to enable the prospective student to carry out their work;
 - There will be sufficient related research activity in the Faculty to provide a research-active environment for the prospective student; 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 will remain unchanged over the course of the student's programme of study; for example staff departures and change of role may necessitate changes to the supervisory team which will always be made in discussion with the student, and subject to supervisory expertise.
- 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 research students, 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 research degree students 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. Research degree students should comply with their thesis submission date, i.e. their registration end date.
- 5.2. Full-time students are expected to undertake a full working week (typically 37 hours) on their research degree. Agreement should be reached with part-time students at the start of their registration as to the proportion of time they will be spending on their research degree. It is expected that part-time students will normally spend the equivalent of at least 16 hours per week on their research degree, and that any arrangement agreed will not compromise submission time within the prescribed period.
- 5.3. It is the normal expectation that students will retain the same registration status as PGR students throughout their periods of study; however, guidance and procedures are in place for when a change to a student'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 student status/candidature should be submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee for their consideration and approval, whilst recognising that students who are on a Tier 4 Visa to study in the UK must only study on a full-time basis.
- 5.4. The time limits for completion of a research degree are set out below. [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	Expected time to submission from initial registration	Maximum time to submission from initial registration
Masters Degree (MPhil)	Full-time	12 months	18 months	24 months
	Part-time	24 months	36 months	48 months
Doctoral Degree (PhD, DM)	Full-time	24 months	36 months	48 months
	Part-time	48 months	72 months	96 months
Professional Doctorates	Part-time	48 months	72 months	96 months

- 5.5. The maximum registration period may be extended by one year due to exceptional circumstances.

Following the above table in section (5.4) and in accordance with Regulation C1, the maximum **standard time** to submission from initial registration for a full-time doctoral degree is **48 months**. This is made up of 36 months research plus 12 months continuation (writing-up) time. The pro-rata maximum standard time to submission from initial registration for a part-time doctoral degree is **96 months**. This is made up of 72 months research plus 24 months continuation (writing-up) time.

In exceptional circumstances, the maximum registration period may be extended, by not more than 12 months, following consideration and approval of the case by the Research Degrees Committee, on behalf of Senate. Any student wishing to extend their registration period must follow the guidance and procedure for submitting their case to the Research Degrees Committee.

In exceptional circumstances and including any leave of absence, the maximum period of registration for a full-time doctoral degree is **72 months**. This is made up of the 48 months standard maximum registration time plus 24 additional months arising from approved extensions or leave(s) of absence. The pro-rata maximum period of registration for a part-time doctoral degree is **144 months**. This is made up of 96 months standard maximum registration plus 48 additional months arising from approved extensions or leave(s) of absence.

The same maximum registration periods apply pro-rata to MPhil degrees.

In very exceptional circumstances, as a result of an academic appeal under [Regulation B6](#) (Academic Appeals), a student may be granted a further 12 months extension to the maximum period of registration at the discretion of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

Any student who envisages a prolonged period of exceptional circumstance that is likely to prevent them from completing their research within the maximum registration timeframes

may be advised to withdraw and re-apply to start a new research degree at a suitable later date. 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 taken into account upon application. Students will still 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.

- 5.6. Any student 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, seeking authorisation from the Faculty PGR Committee for the registered degree to be changed. Any student wishing to voluntarily withdraw from the University or wishing to transfer their research degree to another institution must follow the guidance and procedure, again seeking authorisation from the Faculty PGR Committee.
- 5.7. Students who are on a Tier 4 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.
- 5.8. Students who fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress, in accordance with University requirements, may be required to terminate their studies at the University – see progress and review (Section 8 of this Code) below.
- 5.9. The University will host induction events for research degree students, supplemented by a Faculty local induction programme. Students who do not commence their studies at the start of an academic year can attend a second University induction event in the second semester; they will also have a local induction and access to a range of other University induction materials and presentations on the [website](#) for current PGR students.

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 research students in working towards the successful completion of their research degrees;
- Access to the facilities and equipment necessary to enable research students, 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 research students to raise complaints or appeal;
- Mechanisms for addressing research students' 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 research students' research. The key responsibilities of supervisors are set out below, with further instructions available within the Research Degree Supervisor Handbook and within the Supervision 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 Student Handbook, the University Regulations and policies that affect them and their students;
- Introducing the research student to the Faculty/School, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;
- Providing satisfactory and accurate guidance and advice;
- Monitoring the progress of the research student's research programme;
- Establishing and maintaining regular contact with the research student (guided by the University's academic framework, Regulations and guidance);
- Being accessible to the research student to give advice (by whatever means is most suitable, given the research student's location and mode of study);
- Contributing to the assessment of the research student's development needs;
- Providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the research student's work and overall progress within the programme;
- Ensuring that the research student 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 research student is aware of sources of advice, including careers guidance and helping research students understand health and safety responsibilities;
- Providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the research student to other sources of such support, including Student Services, professional services staff (e.g. within the Directorate of Student and Academic Services) and others within the research student's academic community;
- Helping the research student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example encouraging the research student to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking [funding](#) for such events;
- Where appropriate, giving encouragement and guidance to the research student on the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals; and
- Maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform all of the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

6.3. The Student

6.3.1. The key responsibilities of research students are:

- Being familiar with the provisions of this Code of Practice, the Faculty PGR Student 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, 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 (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 student registration; and
- Ensure communications sent from the University are read and, where relevant, responded to, in a timely manner, including correspondence via the student's Keele personal email account;
- For students who require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK – ensure compliance with [your Immigration Responsibilities](#).

7. Supervision

- 7.1. The University will appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage research students, and to monitor their progress effectively. All research degree students shall have one lead supervisor and at least one other member of the supervisory team. The lead supervisor shall have the primary accountability for the student.
- 7.2. The lead supervisor should be selected primarily on the basis of appropriate subject expertise and will have the necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct research students' 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 student's studies and be able to provide the necessary guidance and support to their research students. 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.☐
 - Be reasonably accessible;
 - Be understanding of University and Faculty policies and procedures concerning research students and supervisory responsibilities; and
 - Have a minimum of three years' experience of research degree supervision (see also paragraph 7.3 below) and normally have experience of supervising at least one doctoral student through to successful completion (for supervision of a doctoral student).
- 7.3. If the individual being nominated to a position of lead supervisor falls short of having three years' experience of research degree supervision, or if the nominated supervisor has not yet completed their probationary period, then the Faculty should require such inexperienced supervisors to have a "mentor" during their first few years in the role to be eligible as a lead supervisor. Mentors must be established supervisors who have experience of supervising one or more research students to successful completion of their degree and who have a good understanding of the relevant University and Faculty policies and procedures. Existing supervisory staff are

encouraged to undertake continued professional development. **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.**

- 7.4. Students must have a co-supervisor on their supervisory team. The Research Degree Supervisor Handbook defines the University expectations for this role. Additional co-supervisors should be appointed if a research degree student 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 should have opportunities to engage in developmental and training activities.
- 7.5. The following categories of staff may not be the lead supervisor of a research degree student, 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 student's degree and are able to maintain regular contact with the student;
 - Honorary contract staff;
 - Members of staff who are themselves currently registered as a student for a research degree;
 - Members of academic staff who have yet to complete their probationary period (see also section 7.3 above)*;
 - Members of technical staff or Research Associates with relevant expertise and experience.
- 7.6. Emeritus and retired members of staff may be appointed or remain as additional members of the supervisory team but should not act as lead or co-supervisors.
- 7.7. Students will be informed of their alternative point of contact if the lead supervisor is not available. This should either be the co-supervisor or an additional designated member of academic staff able to provide advice and support. If a student has more than one co-supervisor, the student should be clear about which is the main point of contact when the lead supervisor is unavailable. The roles of each member of the supervisory team will be specified in the Personal Development and Learning Plan (PDLP).
- 7.8. The Faculty PGR Committee shall be responsible for the appointment of the supervisory team prior to the student's registration. For professional doctorate students, this may be deferred to the end of the taught element of the programme. The PGR Director, on behalf of the Faculty PGR Committee, is responsible for ensuring that students have continuous supervision during their period of registered study. If a supervisor is absent for an extended period, leaves the University, or if there is an irreconcilable breakdown in the supervisory relationship, the PGR Director must ensure that adequate supervisory support is maintained, including enacting alternative arrangements where appropriate.
- 7.9. Supervisory responsibilities may be changed at the request of a student or a supervisor to the PGR Director (or nominee), in accordance with the guidance and procedure, who must take into account the requirements of any sponsors. Normally, any change of supervisor will be by mutual agreement between the student and the University, and will be in compliance with University equality and diversity policies. The request for a change of supervisor should be distinguished from a complaint/appeal about the adequacy of supervision – further information is available within section 14 of this Code.

- 7.10. Students shall be provided with an early opportunity to meet with their supervisory team to agree on plans for the programme.
- 7.11. Research students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained. Arrangements between the research student and supervisor may be kept flexible, as long as both are satisfied that adequate support is being provided for the research student and that the formal progress reviews are adhered to.
- 7.12. Formal records should be maintained of the supervision meetings, which should take place at least every 8 weeks during term-time (and potentially outside term-time if/as circumstances require) for students on full-time study. Meetings should be formally recorded, including during any period of corrections following examination. Such formally recorded supervision meetings may be used to evidence the “contact points” to satisfy UKVI requirements.
- 7.13. If any member of the supervisory team has a personal relationship with the student at any point during the student’s research degree, this should be declared without delay and procedure invoked, in accordance with the University’s [Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Professional Guidance](#).

8. Progress and Review

8.1. Reviewing Academic Progress

8.1.1. Regular reviews of a research degree student’s progress are essential to maximise the likelihood of the student completing the programme successfully within an appropriate timescale, and to ensure that if progress is unsatisfactory that they are given support to make improvements. The attendance and progress of students is monitored to ensure that student 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 Students the UK Home Office (UKVI).

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 Student Handbook or equivalent.

8.1.3. There is the expectation that formal progress reviews will take place as face-to-face meetings. Procedures for monitoring students studying via remote locations will vary and students and staff should consult the relevant Progress & Interim Progress Review Handbook.

8.2. Progress Review

8.2.1. Progress Reviews represent gateways for progression to the next stage of the programme, ensuring that the research degree student is on target to meet the expected submission date. Progress Reviews are a formal check of the student’s 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 student’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 student prior to submission for consideration and approval by the Faculty PGR Committee. The members of the Faculty PGR Committee provide an objective and independent check of progress. These reports allow supervisors to reflect on a student's progress during the previous year and to plan for the year ahead, and are an important method of providing formal feedback to students that might not otherwise be addressed in supervisory meetings. The Progress Review Report also includes a section reflecting on the student's progress with their Personal Development and Learning Plan (PDLP). Students 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	n/a	n/a	20 months
Doctoral Degree (PhD, DM)	Full-time	10 Months	22 months	36 months*
	Part-time	20 months	44 months	72 months
Professional Doctorates	Part-time	24 months	44 months	72 months

*Note: PR3 can be submitted earlier in acknowledgement of the fact that students can submit their thesis before their expected time of completion, as set out in Section 5 of this Code. The dates set out above for Progress reviews 2 and 3 are intended as a guide, and will vary depending on a student's progress towards the submission of their thesis.

8.2.3. All full-time MPhil students must attend a 10-month

8.2.4. Progress review meeting with their lead supervisor (equivalent for part-time students) 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.

8.2.5. The format of the Progress Reviews for research degree students will be:

- *Progress Review 1*: Student completes requirements (outlined within the KDA Handbook) and attends an Independent Panel interview, with panel membership excluding members of the supervisory team, for the confirmation review of their status - for PhD and Professional Doctorate students this forms doctoral progression. Professional or practice-

based doctorates should refer to their Faculty PGR Student Handbook or equivalent for Progression review report 1 requirements

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

8.3. Interim Progress Review

8.3.1. The academic progress of all research degree students with full-time, part-time and continuation status must be formally assessed by an Interim Progress Review. The Interim Progress Review 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 take place, for PhD/MPhil students six months from start date and for Professional Doctorate students, six months following successful completion of Progress Review 1.

8.3.2. Part One of the Interim Progress Report Form will be completed by the student and Part Two will be completed by the Lead Supervisor, in consultation with the Supervisory Team. The PGR Administrators within the Faculty will record the outcome and take any appropriate action. Interim Progress Report forms that highlight poor or unsatisfactory performance will be considered by the Faculty PGR Committee and further action may be taken

8.4. Unsatisfactory Academic Progress and Interruptions to Study

8.4.1. In accordance with University Regulations, all students are required to remain in good academic standing by 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 Research Degrees Committee, on the recommendation of the Faculty PGR 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 a student's progress is unsatisfactory, it is expected that 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. The Progress & Interim 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 student'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, students 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. Any interruptions to study should be discussed with the lead supervisor in the first instance (and also [Immigration Compliance](#) for international students), reflecting on the University guidance on extensions, leave of absences or other changes to a PGR student'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 2D and Regulation 10.

8.4.5. Research degree students 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 the academic failing at the progress review point. Further information about research degree student appeals can be found in Section 14, below, or within the guidance available on the University's website.

8.4.6. Professional Doctorate students 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 students 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 research degree students, 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 student completes their degree successfully.
- 9.3. The University encourages research degree students 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).
- 9.4. The University supports its researchers by providing research training, which is delivered by the University (through Schools, Faculties, and the [Keele Institute for Innovation & Teaching Excellence](#), KIITE), or provided by partner institutions, but also integrates opportunities for skills development into research degree programmes. For students 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 students 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. Research degree students 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 students. For MPhil, this will be around 60-70 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 students who have already successfully completed the whole or part of an equivalent programme – which must be recorded on the PDLP.

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 [UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and expects its researches 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. Research degree students 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](#).

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. Research degree students 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. Research degree students 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 student 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. Research degree students 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. Collaborative Provision

11.1. The University defines collaborative provision, including that which relates 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 collaborative provision. The [Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision](#) 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 the Collaborative Provision Officer in Quality Assurance for advice and to ensure that the appropriate process is followed.

12. Submission, Examination and Award

12.1. Submission

[For resubmissions – see Section 13.3]

- 12.1.1. Research degree students 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.
- 12.1.2. Students should always consult their supervisory team before submitting their thesis for examination, including discussions about confidentiality, embargo or intellectual property that may need to be declared on the Thesis Submission Form.
- 12.1.3. If it appears likely that the deadline will not be met, the lead supervisor and PGR Director should be consulted 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 – Extension Request Form.
- 12.1.4. The relevant research training requirements, as set out within the Faculty PGR Student Handbooks and the University Doctoral Academy Handbook, must be completed prior to submission.
- 12.1.5. Prior to submission, the final thesis title 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 should be three months before submission - Exam Panel and Thesis Title Approval Form.
- 12.1.6. When preparing a thesis for submission, research degree students 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.
- 12.1.7. On the day of submission, students are required to email 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.
- 12.1.8. Upon electronic submission, students will receive an automated submission confirmation. Once all the necessary submission checks have been carried out, students 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.

12.1.9. The University reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect instances of plagiarism. Students should be aware that the University may submit the electronic copy of their thesis through Turnitin (plagiarism detection software), with the consequences outlined within Section 14 of this Code (academic misconduct).

12.1.10. Where a student fails to submit their thesis by their registration end date, the student 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 student's Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the student's studies being terminated by the University. The student will have a right of appeal against a decision to terminate their studies.

12.2. Examination

12.2.1. The University will normally appoint two suitably qualified examiners to assess the student's thesis against the [University Criteria for Award of Research Degrees](#) (and where relevant, also a body of creative work) and then undertake an oral examination (*equivalent terminology: viva or viva voce*).

12.2.2. 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 student's supervisory team, either past or present, be an examiner. In some circumstances, two external examiners will be appointed, for example, if the student 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 research degree student will be consulted in the consideration of potential examiners.

12.2.3. 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 students, 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](#).

12.2.4. 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 (workshop delivered by KIITE) and/or have suitable experience within the University as an examiner. The Independent Chair will be provided with the abstract to the thesis.

12.2.5. The University requires all research degree students to undertake an oral examination (the viva), with the expectation that this will be a face-to-face examination with the examiners and an Independent Chair present.

12.2.6. The oral examination may need to take place using video link software where some or all parties are unable to be physically present at the same location. Video link vivas may either be used as the University's default approach to vivas during periods of national/ international movement restrictions or may be undertaken by request from the student and/ or the examiners in response to exceptional circumstances. Such requests must be approved by the

Research Degrees Committee. In such circumstances, all parties must follow the guidance outlined in the Examinations Handbook. Under no circumstances will an oral examination be conducted by telephone/voice call.

- 12.2.7. The supervisor may exceptionally be present during the oral examination if all parties agree.
- 12.2.8. 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.
- 12.2.9. The examiners' independent reports will be exchanged prior to the oral examination taking place; the Independent Chair will also receive both reports.
- 12.2.10. The aim of the oral examination is to evaluate whether the student 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 student is required to defend their work, which is expected to be a challenging event in the research student's career. The University offers support and guidance for research degree students in preparation for their oral examination, including workshops.
- 12.2.11. 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 minor/major corrections 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 the exams.pgr@keele.ac.uk account within five working days of the date of the oral examination.
- 12.2.12. The examiners' reports will be provided to the student by the University on completion of the examination process. Research degree students should not have direct communications with their examiners, other than during the oral examination.
- 12.2.13. 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.
- 12.2.14. The Independent Chair is expected to maintain a record of the conduct of oral examination in case of challenge by the student in the form of an appeal.
- 12.2.15. 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 on the University's website will be followed.
- 12.2.16. Where a student receives minor 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), the student must complete an Extension Request Form to provide a rationale for being late. If the corrections are more than three months overdue, the student's Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the student's termination of studies at the University. The student will have a right of appeal against this decision.

12.3. Resubmission

- 12.3.1. Where examiners have recommended, ratified by the Research Degrees Committee, that the thesis should be resubmitted for examination following major corrections (Recommendation 3 or 5), students 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](#).
- 12.3.2. Where a student fails to complete the required major corrections within the period allowed (agreed by examiners and approved by RDC – see Section 12.4 of this Code), the student 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 student's Faculty PGR Committee will initiate the academic warning process (see Section 8.4 of this Code), which could result in the student's studies being terminated. The student will have a right of appeal against this decision.
- 12.3.3. Students should 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.
- 12.3.4. 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.
- 12.3.5. 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.
- 12.3.6. 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.
- 12.3.7. Where an examiner recommends either minor corrections (Recommendation 2) or that the degree be altered from doctoral level to MPhil/MRes (Recommendation 4), the examiner of the resubmission is required to justify within the Preliminary Report whether or not a second oral examination should be offered to the student 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 student will be confirmed by the Exams Office following submission of the Preliminary Reports.
- 12.3.8. 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.

12.4. Research Degrees Committee and Senate

- 12.4.1. Examiners' reports and recommendations are considered by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which makes recommendations to Senate for the final ratification of the award.
- 12.4.2. Where an award is recommended, this will not be submitted to Senate until all required revisions (minor or major corrections) have been completed and authorised, and the thesis has been deposited in the Library – Guidance for Depositing a PGR Thesis. Where no award is recommended (fail), the recommendation will be made to Senate following the meeting of RDC.
- 12.4.3. Students 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.
- 12.4.4. Where a student fails to deposit their thesis in the Library, the University will send reminders to the student after three and six months to remind them of the necessity of this action. A student's continuing failure after six months to deposit their thesis will normally result in the student being withdrawn from the University without an award. The student will have a right of appeal against this decision. A student 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 student 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.

13. Student Feedback Mechanisms

- 13.1. Research degree students have a variety of opportunities for giving feedback on their academic programme and any other aspect of their experience whilst studying at Keele. At University level, there are postgraduate representatives on the majority of University committees, including Council, Senate, University Learning and Teaching Committee, University Postgraduate Research Committee and University Student Voice Committee.
- 13.2. The University will also integrate the results of external surveys, such as the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), with internal student feedback mechanisms.
- 13.3. 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.
- 13.4. All Faculties should have mechanisms to collect, review and respond as appropriate to the feedback from those concerned with research degrees, including individual research students and groups of research students or their representatives. Quality assurance processes will also incorporate opportunities for student feedback on the academic quality of programmes. There will also be local mechanisms for ensuring research students can participate in discussions and bring forward concerns that may affect their academic progress or student experience.

14. Academic Misconduct, Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

14.1. Academic Misconduct

- 14.1.1. 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 you an unfair advantage in an assessment or examination, including the production of a research degree thesis.
- 14.1.2. 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 D1](#) and its supporting guidance. Research degree students 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.
- 14.1.3. The University reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect instances of plagiarism. Students 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.
- 14.1.4. Normally all alleged academic misconduct involving research students will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration. Cases may be referred to the Panel before submission if academic misconduct is suspected during the research or writing up process e.g. falsification of data, ethics offences, commissioning of work. Students 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](#).
- 14.1.5. Students can seek assistance on the University processes from the [University's Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team](#) or may wish to seek independent assistance from [Advice & Support at Keele \(ASK\)](#).

14.2. Academic Appeals

- 14.2.1. Academic appeals are initiated by the student, in accordance with [Regulation B6](#). The purpose of the research degrees appeals process is to allow all students 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, students 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).

14.2.2. Students can seek assistance on the University processes from the [University's Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team](#) or may wish to seek independent assistance from [Advice & Support at Keele \(ASK\)](#).

14.3. **Complaints**

14.3.1. If a research student 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 another member of staff in the research environment.

14.3.2. If the problem persists, the complaint should be addressed to the local [Early Resolution Officer](#) for investigation. Students who are unable to resolve their complaint informally through the Faculty procedure, can then submit a formal complaint to the University under [Regulation B7](#).

14.3.3. Students can seek assistance on the University processes from the [University's Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team](#) or may wish to seek independent assistance from [Advice & Support at Keele \(ASK\)](#).

ANNEX A: Further Information

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

Link to the webpage for prospective PGR students:

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

Link to the current PGR student webpages, including guidance documents and forms:

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

Link to the Keele Doctoral Academy Handbook: [https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/k-web/k-](https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/k-web/k-research/keeledoctoralacademy/Postgraduate%20Research%20(PGR)%20Handbook%202020%2021%20(4).pdf)

[research/keeledoctoralacademy/Postgraduate%20Research%20\(PGR\)%20Handbook%202020 21%20\(4\).pdf](https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/k-web/k-research/keeledoctoralacademy/Postgraduate%20Research%20(PGR)%20Handbook%202020%2021%20(4).pdf)

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://keesu.com/>

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