



REGULATION C10: RESEARCH DEGREES

(formerly Regulations 2D, 3A and 3B: Research Degrees)

1. SCOPE

1.1 This Regulation covers programmes that lead to the award of PhD, DM and MPhil (and, in section 13 below, Higher Doctorates (DLitt, LDD, DSc). It should be read with the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) and associated guidance documents.

2. ADMISSION

2.1 To be admitted to a Research Degree programme, you must provide approved identification at enrolment and provide original copies of academic transcripts or certificates if requested. You must also have one of the following:

- (a) a bachelor's degree, normally with First or Upper Second Class Honours, from a higher education institution or the equivalent if you have been educated outside the UK; or
- (b) for Doctorate in Medicine (DM) programmes: a primary medical qualification awarded by a higher education institution; or
- (c) other qualifications and/or experience that the University finds acceptable. If you are accepted under this sub clause you might be required to take an examination or attend an interview; or
- (d) successfully completed Part 1 of a Professional/Taught Doctorate at a higher education institution.

2.2 By accepting a place at the University, you confirm that you will abide by the University's rules, regulations and policies which are set out in the Keele Academic Regulations and Policies.

2.3 We will withdraw your registration if we find that you submitted a fraudulent application to the University.

2.4 If you require student visa route sponsorship to study in the UK you must meet the entrance criteria for the programme of study (see paragraph 2.1 above) and the requirements, rules and responsibilities of the UK Home Office for sponsorship. An offer of

admittance to the degree programme does not guarantee student visa route sponsorship and any offer of sponsorship is made at our discretion.

3. REGISTRATION

3.1 You must enrol with the University within three weeks of starting your programme. You must re-register in each academic year by a date set by Academic Registry.

3.2 If you withdraw or allow your registration to lapse before completing your programme of study you will not be allowed to re-register, unless you get permission from the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) on behalf of Senate and meet any conditions RDC sets.

4. PROGRAMMES FOR HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH

4.1 You must study your programme for the minimum period of registration (see the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)) with the guidance of a supervisory team. The supervisory team will include a Lead Supervisor and (with the exception of PhD by Publication) a minimum of one other team member. **The registration period runs from enrolment to the formal submission of a thesis.** Extensions granted by the Research Degrees Committee will normally be for a maximum of one calendar year.

4.2 In exceptional circumstances, the Research Degrees Committee, on behalf of Senate may approve early submission of a thesis. However, we reserve the right to charge the full tuition fees for the minimum registration period stated in Regulation C1.

4.3 Postgraduate researchers taking higher degrees by research must:

- (a) Demonstrate personal development and employability skills which have been gained through various routes including modules, courses and workshops, as well as any subject specific training required by their Faculty.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPERVISION

5.1 The responsibilities and duties for postgraduate researchers and their supervisors, including the process to be followed for supervisory team changes are stated in the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)

6. PROGRESS REVIEW 1 (PhD, DM or MPhils who request to transfer to PhD only)

6.1 You must demonstrate to the relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee that you are suitable for doctoral study during your Progress Review 1 meeting (previously known as Doctoral Progression). A review must normally take place at 10 months of full-time study, and no later than 12 months (or equivalent for part-time). The review will include a formal progression meeting with a panel approved by the School PGR Lead. You will not pass doctoral progression until you fulfil the relevant research training requirements as set out in

the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#). For details of when progress reviews are due for different modes of attendance , see the Progress Review Handbook.

6.2 The relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee will decide that:

- (a) you are suitable for doctoral study and can progress; or
- (b) you are not yet suitable for progression and, following review, will be given a programme of work to complete over a maximum period of 2 months for full-time postgraduate researchers and 4 months for part-time postgraduate researchers. Details on the resubmission process can be found in the Progress Review Handbook.
- (c) you are not suitable for doctoral study, but are suitable for Level 7 study and should transfer your registration to MPhil and prepare a thesis for submission for an MPhil award.

6.3 If you are dissatisfied with the decision under paragraph 6.2 above you can appeal the decision (see [Regulation B6](#) Academic Appeals).

7. ACADEMIC STANDING

7.1 If you fail to remain in good academic standing the relevant committee can withdraw you from the University at any stage in your programme of study.

7.2 The following are examples of failure to remain in good academic standing:

- (a) failing to maintain a satisfactory standard of work or active engagement with your studies for at least four calendar weeks resulting in the implementation of the academic warning procedure;
- (b) dangerous and/or unsatisfactory professional conduct;
- (c) failing to pass or fulfil the requirements for any assessment which you must take as part of your programme of study.

7.3 The Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees and the Progress Review Handbook set out the formal procedures for academic warnings, recommendations for withdrawal, and the appeals process.

8. PGR HEALTH AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

This section of the Regulation is supported by the Leave of Absence Procedure for postgraduate researchers, as set out in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

8.1 A leave of absence is an approved absence from the University. The absence period is a minimum of one month up to a maximum of 12 months, normally. During this time you must

not undertake your studies. **Leaves of absence will automatically extend the end date up to the maximum periods of registration.**

8.2 You can take a leave of absence only if it is agreed and authorised by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee.

8.3 You can request a leave of absence for the following reasons:

- (a) medical reasons;
- (b) maternity/paternity/adoption leave;
- (c) bereavement;
- (d) personal Financial Hardship;
- (e) other valid personal reasons.

Where appropriate, we will request documentary evidence to support a leave of absence request.

8.4 You must submit any request for a leave of absence through the University's established procedures. These are outlined in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees and accompanying guidance on changes in your registration status.

8.5 You will normally receive communications from the University about re-registration a minimum of one month before your leave of absence is due to end. Before re-enrolment is approved, fitness to study evidence may be required. You must respond to these communications.

8.6 Applications for a leave of absence lasting longer than one academic year will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. You must apply for the leave of absence to the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee. The Committee will seek specialist advice where necessary and will decide if permission will be granted. The committee can also set conditions.

8.7 If you experience difficulties but do not want to take a leave of absence you should speak with your Postgraduate Research Director to discuss submitting an extension request. Further guidance about extensions can be found in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

8.8 We may decide that it is in your interest to take a leave of absence, due to the state of your health, even if you have not applied for one. This is because you must be healthy enough to enable you to conduct your studies. We can, on the basis of professional advice, require you to:

(a) take a compulsory leave of absence until we are satisfied that you may resume your studies; or

(b) in exceptional circumstances, be withdrawn from the University.

8.9 You can appeal against the decision of the University to require a compulsory leave of absence or withdrawal based on your state of health.

8.10 You can appeal on one or both of the following grounds:

(a) Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the case;

(b) There is new evidence that can be proven, including exceptional circumstances, which was not known at the time, and may have affected the outcome had the Faculty Research Committee (and the Research Degrees Committee) known. There must be a valid reason for not making it known at the time.

8.11 You must submit your appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar within 10 working days of the date of the letter sent informing you of the decision.

8.12 The Academic Registrar will chair a Support to Study Appeals Panel, which will decide whether a case exists and advise you of the outcome within 10 working days.

8.13 In the event of a conflict of interest, the Academic Registrar will nominate an appropriate member of staff to deal with your appeal on their behalf. If this is the case, you will be notified of the name of the nominated person in writing.

8.14 You can submit a grievance to the University Council under the terms provided by Statute 17 (22) if you are dissatisfied with the appeal. Grievances must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the letter informing you of the outcome of the appeal and must be made in writing to the Secretary to Council. Grievances can be made only on one or both of the following grounds:

(a) Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the case;

(b) There is new evidence that can be proven, including exceptional circumstances, which was not known at the time of the review, and may have affected the outcome had the Committee known. There must be a valid reason for not making it known at the time.

9. EXAMINATION

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

9.1 The final examination will be on the basis of a thesis.

9.2 You must submit a thesis of a maximum of 60,000 words.

9.3 Alternatively, if approved by the Faculty Research Committee at the start of the programme of study, you can submit the following:

- (a)** a body of creative work, suitable for publication and/or exhibition, which has been documented and recorded by means appropriate for the purposes of examination and eventual deposit in the University Library; and
- (b)** an accompanying thesis of no more than 30,000 words showing clear evidence of academic competence and awareness of the current critical context in which the creative work has been produced.

Doctoral Degrees (PhD, DM)

9.4 The final examination will be on the basis of a thesis.

9.5 You must submit a thesis of a maximum of 100,000 words for a PhD award or 70,000 words for a DM award.

9.6 Alternatively, if approved by the Faculty Research Committee at the start of the programme of study, you can submit the following:

- (a)** a body of creative work, suitable for publication and/or exhibition, which has been documented and recorded by means appropriate for the purposes of examination and eventual deposit in the University Library; and
- (b)** an accompanying thesis of no more than 50,000 words showing clear evidence of academic competence and awareness of the current critical context in which the creative work has been produced.

10. THESIS

10.1 Your thesis must be written in English, except in language subjects where the supervisor and Research Degrees Committee has agreed it can be in another language. Elements of the thesis may be presented in an *additional* language with the approval of Research Degrees Committee.

10.2 The thesis must be your own account of your research and must be accompanied by a declaration stating this. A breach of this regulation can result in an allegation of academic misconduct (see Regulation D4).

10.3 Every copy of a thesis submitted must include an abstract of a maximum of 300 words.

10.4 The majority of the work that contributes to the thesis must have been undertaken since registering onto the current programme of study. Any work or any thesis previously submitted to a higher education institution, including Keele, cannot normally be re-submitted, except as part of re-examination unless it has been agreed with the supervisor

and clearly indicated in the thesis and on the declaration form. Please refer to the Code of Practice for minimum work contributions required for transfers into Keele.

10.5 Before the degree is awarded you must deposit an electronic copy of your thesis with the University Library. This copy will be the property of the University.

11. ORAL EXAMINATION AND AWARD

11.1 You must attend an oral examination.

11.2 Once it receives your approved title and an examinational panel nomination from Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee, the Research Degrees Committee will appoint a minimum of two examiners and an independent chair for your oral examination. One of the examiners must be external.

11.3 There will be two external examiners in the following circumstances:

- (a) If the postgraduate researcher is also a member of Keele academic staff;
- (b) If no appropriate internal examiner can be found;
- (c) Any other circumstances that the Research Degrees Committee considers it necessary to have a second external examiner.

11.4 Following the oral examination, the examiners will recommend to the Research Degrees Committee that:

- (a) you be awarded the degree for which you have submitted your thesis; or
- (b) you be awarded the degree for which you have submitted your thesis once satisfactory revisions have been made to the thesis; or
- (c) you have not met the required standard for the award, but your submission is of sufficient merit to permit you to re-present your thesis within one calendar year from the date of the decision at the relevant meeting of the Research Degrees Committee and to attend a further oral examination should the examiners require it. A second oral examination will be required, unless both examiners agree that the quality of the resubmitted work meets the criteria for award of a thesis (paragraph 11.4.a or 11.4.b above). The procedures for an oral examination following resubmission will be the same as those for an initial oral examination, and examiners are required to agree a joint recommendation; or
- (d) instead of a Level 8 award, you should be approved for an MPhil award at Level 7, subject to any required minor amendments; or
- (e) instead of a Level 8 award, you should be permitted to re-present the thesis for the award of an MPhil award at Level 7, and, where required by the examiners, to

attend a further oral examination within one calendar year from the date of the decision at the relevant meeting of the Research Degrees Committee; or

(f) you should not be awarded any degree nor be permitted to re-present the thesis, nor submit to any further examination.

(g) where the examiners are unable to come to a joint recommendation, an additional examiner or examiners should be appointed to resolve the matter.

11.5 You can appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Committee following [Regulation B6](#).

11.6 Posthumous

(a) A postgraduate research degree can be conferred posthumously if a postgraduate researcher dies before they were able to complete the requirements of their award. A posthumous award can be accepted on the postgraduate researcher's behalf by a parent, spouse or other appropriate individual. If the postgraduate researcher had submitted their thesis for examination but had not yet been examined, examiners will be appointed in the usual way and will submit reports to the Research Degrees Committee for consideration.

(b) If a postgraduate researcher dies before they were able to submit their thesis for examination, the Research Degrees Committee will consider available evidence of the postgraduate researcher's ability. A sufficient amount of the research must have been completed in order to determine if the required standard has been achieved. The supervisor will submit a written statement to support the recommendation.

11.7 Aegrotat

(a) An aegrotat award for incomplete study may be conferred in exceptional circumstances, such as a postgraduate researcher being unable to complete their award due to severe illness. All research awards are available as aegrotat awards, except degree programmes that are subject to fitness to practise requirements.

(b) An aegrotat award is a final exit award; therefore it must be the end of the postgraduate researcher's programme of study. Before a recommendation for an aegrotat award is submitted, the postgraduate researcher must indicate that they are willing to accept the award and that they understand they are waiving their right to be reassessed.

(c) If the postgraduate researcher had submitted their thesis for examination but had not yet been examined, examiners will be appointed in the usual way and will submit reports to the Research Degrees Committee for consideration.

(d) If the postgraduate researcher had not submitted their thesis for examination, the Research Degrees Committee will consider available evidence of the postgraduate researcher's ability. A sufficient amount of the research must have been completed in order to determine if the required standard has been achieved. The supervisor will submit a written statement to support the recommendation.

12. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

12.1 We, Keele University, own any Intellectual Property that arises from your studies for a research degree at the University. You must comply with the arrangements for ownership and management of intellectual property rights as set out in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

13. RESEARCH DEGREES BY PUBLISHED WORK – PHD AND HIGHER DOCTORATES (DLITT, LLD, OR DSC)

13.1 We can award research degrees by published work to candidates who have demonstrated a sustained record of academic publication.

Under this Regulation you can proceed to the following degree programmes: PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) or a Higher Doctorate: Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Doctor of Laws (LLD) and Doctor of Science (DSc).

13.2 Standards of Award

(a) Candidates for the degree of PhD by publication must meet the same standards of award as candidates for the PhD by supervision.

(b) Candidates for a Higher Doctorate (DLitt, LLD, DSc) must meet a substantially higher standard than that expected for a PhD. The work you submit must represent a substantial, original and long-term contribution, over a sustained period, to the development of knowledge within a discipline. The work must demonstrate internationally recognised excellence and that the candidate is a recognised authority in the relevant field of study.

13.3 Eligibility

(a) The PhD by publication award is based on the submission of a critical overview and portfolio of evidence containing peer reviewed published work and other outputs.

(b) In order to be eligible to submit for a degree by published work, you must, as a minimum:

i. Hold at least an undergraduate degree (or higher) from a nationally recognised higher education provider from the UK or overseas for at least six years or more

and fulfil at least one of the following:

ii. Be a Keele University staff member beyond the probationary period of employment;

iii. be an honorary member of staff;

iv. be an external applicant who can demonstrate a record of publications/ outputs of research of appropriate quantity or quality and who do not already hold a doctoral degree in the same or cognate discipline or area of research AND can demonstrate previous collaborations with Keele.

(c) We will normally only consider applications in subject matters for which we currently offer supervision and where appropriate supervision is available.

13.4 Application Procedure

(a) To apply for a PhD or Higher Doctorate by Published Work you must first submit the following to the appropriate Faculty Postgraduate Administrator:

i. a statement of the intended award;

ii. a critical commentary, including a précis of the work to be submitted and an explanation of the relevance of the works to the advancement of knowledge in the research area, not exceeding 500 words (PhD) or 1000 words (Higher Doctorate);

iii. your curriculum vitae (CV), including a full list of publications; and

iv. a reference

v. evidence (certificates/ transcripts) of previous publications

vi. a copy of your passport and visas (if applicable)

vii. a pre-admission form

(b) The Faculty PGR Administrator will consult with the appropriate School Postgraduate Research Lead to confirm whether the application is appropriate and that appropriate supervision is available. If satisfied, they will arrange for the Research Degrees Committee to consider the application. The Research Degrees Committee may take additional advice from within the University or externally.

(c) The approved title will be confirmed by the Faculty Research Committee, and the Research Degrees Committee will appoint two external examiners and an independent chair.

13.5 Supervision

(a) For a PhD by Published Work, the relevant Faculty will assign you an appropriate supervisor.

13.6 Submission

(a) If the Research Degrees Committee approves your application for a PhD or Higher Doctorate by Published Work, you must make a submission within twelve calendar months of the notification of the approval.

(b) You must submit an electronic copy of your portfolio, including the published works, and a critical commentary of a maximum of 10,000 words. The contents of the portfolio are explained in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and [accompanying guidance document](#).

(c) The contents of your submission must be in the English language unless specific permission to use another language has been granted by the Research Degrees Committee.

(d) You must not resubmit outputs that have previously been considered by any higher education institution for an award, including Keele.

(e) The submission must be accompanied by the relevant examination fee.

13.7 Examination

(a) Once it receives your approved title and an examinational panel nomination from Faculty Research Committee, the Research Degrees Committee will appoint a minimum of two examiners and an independent chair for your oral examination. One of the examiners must be external.

(b) The examiners will examine the work submitted, write independent reports, and write a further joint report agreeing their recommendation to Research Degrees Committee. They will make a recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee who, after consideration, will make a recommendation to Senate.

(c) An oral examination is required for all submissions for a PhD by Published Work. For a Higher Doctorate by Published Work an oral examination will normally not be required; however, this decision is at the discretion of the examiners. Examiners must make their decision on whether or not to hold an oral examination clear in their initial reports.

(d) Examiners of a PhD or Higher Doctorate by Published Work will recommend that:

- i. you be awarded the degree for which you have made a submission; or
- ii. you be awarded the degree for which you have made a submission once satisfactory revisions to the critical commentary have been made; or
- iii. you should not be awarded any degree nor be permitted to re-present the thesis, nor submit to any further examination.
- iv. they are unable to come to a joint recommendation and an additional examiner or examiners will be appointed to resolve the matter.

(e) On behalf of the Research Degrees Committee, Student Records and Examinations will communicate the outcome of the examination process to you and any subsequent instructions before approval at Senate.

14. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

14.1 Any allegation of academic misconduct shall be dealt with in accordance with [Regulation D4](#) Student Academic Misconduct and the University's [Student Academic Misconduct Code of Practice](#).

15. TERMINATION OF STUDIES

15.1 The PGR Code of Practice and [Regulation B8](#) describe the circumstances where your studies at the University could be terminated.