*Code of Practice for MPhil and PhD Degrees*

# 1. Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out the policy of the University of Wales [hereafter 'the University'] on matters of good practice related to MPhil and PhD degrees by Research. A separate code of practice covers professional doctorates. It applies to accredited institutions [hereafter referred to as institutions] and collaborative and other approved centres [hereafter referred to as 'centres'].

It is intended to provide information useful to members of academic staff, research students, administrators and members of examining boards. It elaborates on the framework for the management of research studies provided by the Common Academic Regulations for Research Degrees.

The Code of Practice aims to ensure that:

i.   the academic standards of the University are maintained, and
ii.  postgraduate research students have a fair and reasonable opportunity to achieve the full potential of their research.

The Code of Practice lays down administrative rules, which should be treated as having regulatory authority subordinate to the Regulations.

The code has been drawn up after consulting various documents published externally, including:

- the relevant section of the QAA *Code of practice*;
- HEFCE October 2002 report "Improving standards in research degrees programmes";
- NPC Guidelines on Codes of Practice for Research;
- SET for Success;
- Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales;
- NQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- University of Wales Regulations;
- Institution Research Degrees Guidelines;
- Institution Postgraduate Researchers Handbook;
- Institution Postgraduate and Part-time Student Handbook;
- Institution Supervisors Handbook
- Institutional or Centre Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations

Note: Every effort has been made to ensure consistency between the different documents produced by the University of Wales for the management of research degrees. However, where there appears to be a conflict between the guidance or regulations contained in these documents, the University of Wales Regulations for Research Degrees take precedence over all other documents, including this Code of Practice.

This code takes precedence over Institution/Centre handbooks for research students and supervisors.

## 2. Regulations

The University of Wales' Regulations [hereafter 'the Regulations'] are available to all staff and research students via the Global Campus. They can also be obtained upon request from the Academic Registry of each institution [hereafter the term 'Academic Registry' should be taken to mean the Academic Registry or its equivalent in the accredited institution or centre where the student is enrolled].

The Regulations set out:

- the qualifications required for entry to programmes of research, as well as qualifications or experience that may give exemption from part of the required period of study, or part of the required research methods or induction training;
- the requirements for progression, monitoring and review of required periods of study;
- thesis and examination rules and procedures.

## 3. The Research Environment

During the consultation process with applicants prior to entry, institutions should ensure that there is adequate expertise available to provide supervisory support for the topic to be pursued within a research-active environment and that appropriate training is available to support the candidate's specialist needs.
Care should be taken to ensure that potential research students are not isolated within their own project and that they have contact with other researchers both from within and outside the University of Wales so that they can share experiences and form networks.
Generally there should be:

- opportunities to link with the wider professional community through, for example conference and seminar attendance;
- ready access to academic colleagues for advice and support;
- availability of adequate learning and research tools;
- the opportunity to develop peer support networks where issues or problems can be discussed informally;
- guidance on research ethics and good practice;
- an emphasis on the need to complete the research programme within an agreed time-frame.

# 4. Selection and Admission

It is the responsibility of Research Degrees Committees at institutions and centres to ensure that only suitably qualified candidates are admitted to research degree study.

In the case of candidates whose first language is not English or Welsh, this includes ensuring that candidates will meet the University of Wales' English or Welsh language requirements.

It is important for candidates to undertake a specified research student induction programme at the start of their programme of research.

## 4.1 Publicity

Institutions and centres should ensure that their promotional material, whether web-based or paper-based, is clear, accurate and up-to-date, and of sufficient detail to be helpful and informative to potential candidates about the level of activity and focus of research.

## 4.2 Selection

The institution or centre's Research Degrees Committee is responsible for ensuring that all applicants for study have been fully and fairly considered in the light of legal requirements and the applicable policies on equality and diversity. Where candidates have special needs, these should be identified and dealt with satisfactorily before an offer is made.

Research Degrees Committees should have in place an admissions system for research degree candidates which ensures that applications are considered fairly.

## 4.3 Entry requirements and procedures

Generally, the University expects that candidates seeking admittance to a research degree programme possess an honours degree from a recognised Higher Education Institution, with a classification of 2:i or above *or* a master's degree or a qualification deemed by the University of Wales to be equivalent to this level.

Where candidates do not meet these requirements, the University of Wales' Research Degrees Board has delegated to institutional Research Degrees Committees the responsibility to

ensure that they can demonstrate equivalent academic ability, for example, that they have acquired the requisite skills, knowledge and training from their professional work. It is therefore important that, in reaching its recommendations to the Research Degrees Board, the Research Degrees Committee documents the features of candidates' professional work that evidence the acquisition of the skills. For example, the work may use the academic skills developed during an undergraduate degree in a way which develops independent critical assessment of evidence, or formulation of plans, or use of methodologies which would have extended their undergraduate achievement. Clearly, candidates working in non-graduate positions will not easily be able to satisfy this requirement.

 In addition, all candidates must supply the names of at least two authoritative referees. Where applicants do not meet the normal minimum entry requirements, the Research Degrees Committee must ensure that two satisfactory confidential reports are received before offering the applicant a place.

An interview (either face-to-face or at a distance) should, wherever possible, be conducted by at least two members of staff, at least one of whom should have had appropriate training in selection and admissions procedures.

The staff responsible for interviewing candidates during the entry consultation process must:

 i. ensure that there is sufficient motivation to cope with the rigours of a research degree;
 ii. ensure that there are realistic prospects of having the resources to pay the required fees and to provide support through the programme;
 iii.  ensure that candidates have a clear picture of the:

- fees to be paid;
- working environment;
- resources available;
- supervisory team;
- institution/centre's expectations.

When the selection process is complete, the Research Degrees Committee, together with other members of staff who interviewed the candidate, will decide whether or not the candidate has been successful, and will record the reason for the decision.


## 4.4 The offer letter


The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for communicating with the appropriate authority at the institution or centre about applications and for advising the supervisory team and appropriate administrative staff of admissions decisions.

Where an offer is to be made, details should be dispatched to candidates in accordance with the policies of the institution or centre concerned.


 The offer letter for MPhil/PhD applicants should contain the following information:

- the title of the degree programme;

- that normally candidates will be enrolled for an MPhil (unless given advanced standing), with possible transfer to a PhD after satisfactorily completing a qualifying period of study;
- full-time or part-time study;
- minimum and maximum periods of study;
- expected total fees, including tuition fees and any other fees, charges or costs that candidates would be expected to meet;
- the name of the Director of Studies or the supervisory team;
- the name of the person at the institution or centre whom they may contact in case of problems;
- a link to this Code of Practice and the applicable Postgraduate Researchers Handbook, where further information (including information about arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction, candidates' responsibilities, attendance and training requirements, as well as any restrictions on hours of work outside the research programme) can be accessed.

## 4.5 Conditions for enrolling external research students

Candidates who wish to conduct research externally to the institution or centre may be allowed to enrol on research degree programmes subject to:

- adequate arrangements being made for attendance;
- adequate research facilities being available externally;
- adequate supervisory arrangements.

Note: Candidates regularly using facilities at the institution or centre at which they are registered while conducting their research are internal candidates

### Requirements for external candidates

The following information will be required by the Research Degrees Board, in addition to the normal research application, before it will consider approving a programme of study for either full-time or part-time external candidates.
The institution should:

- provide a detailed account of all the resources required for the programme of research, and where the candidate will be able to access the resources. These include specialised sources (such as data holdings, analytical equipment, catalogues, etc.) as well as more general resources such as IT support, internet and library facilities;
- provide details of the planned formal research training programme and personal development programme;
- provide a detailed account of the qualifications and roles of the members of the supervisory team (both internal and external) and how they will manage the research

programme, including the means and frequency of candidate access to supervisors, the role of the external supervisors, arrangements for informal supervision, as well as formal quarterly and annual reviews, and management of candidates' professional development portfolios (PDPs);

- ensure that, as part of the annual monitoring of external candidates, supervisory teams and candidates are asked to comment explicitly on the frequency and quality of supervisory contacts or meetings;
- agree a provisional timetable of attendance at the institution or centre. Normally the expectation would be that at least 10 days per year should be spent at the institution or centre for supervision and course/ seminar attendance.

# 5. Training

Candidates should attend required courses at the institution or centre. These should include at a minimum: research induction training and other compulsory courses provided either at the institution or centre or on a University of Wales-wide basis.

Candidates without appropriate training in research methods should complete an approved training programme in such methods either at the institution or at another approved centre. Where the institution or centre deems further research training to be appropriate, arrangements must be agreed for this training.

Directors of Studies are responsible for ensuring that personal development needs and professional development portfolios are reviewed regularly and recorded appropriately. Where training is not to take place at the institution or centre, the Director of Studies should indicate where this training will take place.

## 5.1 Induction

The institution or centre must run an induction programme for postgraduate research students close to each entry period. Candidates should be given the opportunity to attend this programme as soon as possible after admission. The programme should have the functions of providing information and training as well as introducing candidates to academic and administrative staff, and helping the development of their networking with other postgraduates.
Arrangements should also be made for candidates to be introduced formally to the relevant library staff and for them to receive appropriate library training.

The induction process should clarify:
- facilities available to candidates;
- rules about the use of facilities, good practice, and training required for special equipment;
- rules about data management and protection;
- Health and Safety requirements and C.O.S.S.H.;

- Intellectual Property policy;
- the research ethics application and approval process of the institution or centre, as well as the University of Wales' research ethics requirements;
- requirements for candidates to attend and give research seminars and undertake other research training;
- opportunities for candidates to attend conferences and meetings;
- supervisory and review arrangements and available support.

Where candidates provide documented evidence that prior training equivalent to that provided in the induction programme has been completed satisfactorily, the Research Degrees Committee may decide that they can be exempted from the requirement to undertake part or all of the induction programme.

Following confirmation of attendance at the induction programme or the granting of an exception in a whole or part, candidates are required to complete a Research Training Review form. This form outlines candidates' training needs in respect of the proposed research project and is the first stage in the PDP process.

Following completion of a Research Training Review form, candidates and their supervisor(s) must discuss and agree a plan which will form the basis of the PDP. The plan must be reviewed regularly and revised throughout the duration of the research programme. The plan must contain a full skills assessment and details of any training which may be required to assist in the successful completion of the research project.

Candidates should review, and where necessary revise, the plan throughout the duration of the research programme. Directors of Studies are responsible for ensuring that assessment of the PDP forms part of the annual monitoring report for supervisory teams.

# 6. Supervision

## 6.1 Confirmation of Director of Studies

Details of Directors of Studies should be confirmed when candidates are offered a place to study for an MPhil or PhD, and should be included in the offer letter. Where possible, the names of other supervisors should also be included. However the Research Degrees Committee may wait until candidates are enrolled before finalising the supervisory team but the full team must be confirmed within 3 months of enrolment. The names and supervisory experience of people who will supervise particular projects are required on the Research Degree Proposal form.

## 6.2 The supervisory team

Candidates should have at least two supervisors who are expected to remain in employment at the Institution or Centre for at least the minimum period of study for which candidate will be enrolled. At least one member of the supervisory team should be a substantive employee of the Institution or Centre (holding a contract equivalent to at least 0.4 of a full time post). Supervisory teams must include staff with:

Supervisory teams must include staff with:

- experience of supervising research degree candidates to successful completion;
- evidence of recent research activity;
- evidence of substantial research achievements (for example, significant levels of publications, grants or awards).

The main supervisor is called the Director of Studies and has overall responsibility for the academic work and progress of candidates, supervising them regularly and frequently. Directors of Studies are responsible for directing supervisory teams, and ensuring that candidates and other supervisors know the role of each member of the team.

Directors of Studies must be suitably qualified active researchers, fulfilling criteria set out by the University of Wales Research Degrees Board for inclusion in the Research Degrees Board Register of Directors of Studies. Normally the Director of Studies is a member of staff of the Institution or Centre.

At least one supervisor must have experience of supervising to successful completion of research degrees at or above the level of the proposed enrolment.

It is also expected that all supervisors should be able to demonstrate that they fulfil at least one of the following requirements:

- possession of a higher degree by research;
- authorship of research publications in an area relevant to the proposed research programme;
- experience of supervising research in an area relevant to the proposed research programme.

In addition to supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be attached to supervisory teams to contribute some specialised knowledge or to act as a link with an external organisation.

Research Degrees Committees are responsible for ensuring that supervisory teams have the appropriate expertise and experience, especially in research activity and achievement and training and that the volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual members of the supervisory team are such that supervisors are able to carry out their duties satisfactorily and promptly.

The Research Degrees Board has determined that for an individual staff member, the supervisory workload, including both Director of Studies and other supervisory roles, should not exceed a total of ten full-time equivalent students, with a maximum of six full-time equivalent students as Director of Studies.

When candidates have submitted their thesis, they no longer count towards this limit,

and institutions may (within reason) anticipate the submission date in planning supervisory responsibilities for expected student enrolments.

Normally members of staff who are themselves candidates for research degrees should not simultaneously be supervisors of other candidates, as this may give rise to a conflict of interest. Nonetheless, where members of staff are in the final stages of completing their own research degree, and where they have special expertise relevant to the project not available elsewhere in the institution or centre, the member of staff may (with the approval of Research Degrees Committee) be included as a second or third supervisor.

In seeking such approval, the proposers must state which member of the proposed supervisory team is a research degree candidate, and the special expertise for which they are included in the supervisory team.

## 6.3 Research Degrees Board Register of Directors of Studies and Supervisors

In the context of the Register of Directors of Studies, Research Degrees Committees may submit to the Research Degrees Board at any time the names of proposed Directors of Studies who fulfil any of the following criteria:

*i. Refereed outputs (publications/conference presentations/exhibitions)*

In the previous five years, a minimum of three publications, of which two should be in journals or other publicly available research-related documents, e.g. an essay in a catalogue;

*ii. Practice-based expertise*

Demonstration in the past five years of national standing in discipline (e.g. keynote speaker at professional conference, election to senior position in national organisation, national award, appointment to national consultancy role such as membership of government committee) and three practice-based journal publications or published conference presentations, government evaluation reports, technical papers, or consultancy reports;

*iii. Experience*

Prior substantial track-record of research achievement (ie less than (a) in past five years but substantial prior publications etc) and, in the last six years, a track-record of at least two successful PhD completions as a Director of Studies;

*iv. Funded research/classic knowledge transfer expertise*

At least two completed Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) in the main academic supervisory role, or other substantial grant-funded research activity. (Mini KTPs should not be counted here).

Where proposed Directors of Studies do not meet any of the criteria (i) to (iv), Research Degrees Committees may make a case to the Research Degrees Board for them to be included on the Directors of Studies Register, for example, colleagues may possess a combination of elements from different criteria.

In the context of the Register of Supervisors, Research Degrees Committees may submit

to the Research Degrees Board at any time the names of proposed supervisors who fulfil any of the following criteria:

i. Holder of a higher degree by research in a relevant discipline at or above the level at which the person may supervise;
ii. Authorship of research publications in an area relevant to the proposed research programme;
iii. Track-record of research grant awards or refereed publications in the past five years;
iv. Practise-based journal publications or published conference presentations, government evaluation reports, technical papers or consultancy reports in the past five years;
v. Demonstration in the past five years of national standing in discipline (e.g. keynote speaker at professional conference, election to senior position in national organisation, national award, appointment to national consultancy role such as membership of government committee);
vi. Experience of recent supervision of research in an area relevant to the proposed research programme, e.g.
- in the past six years a track record of a successful supervision of a PhD to completion
- at least one completed Classic KTP in the past six years in the main academic supervisory role.

Where proposed supervisors do not meet any of the criteria (i) to (vi), Research Degrees Committees may make a case to the Research Degrees Board for them to be included on the Supervisors Register, for example, colleagues may possess a combination of elements from different criteria which are slightly outside the time-limits set above.

## 6.4 Professional development of supervisors

Professional development of research degrees supervisors should be managed through a system of mentoring and workshops for new supervisors. All academic staff new to supervision must attend workshops for new supervisors, approved for the purpose by the institution, before the end of their first year as a supervisor. In addition, another member of the supervisory team on which they serve should be assigned formally as their mentor for developing supervisory skills.
It is expected that experienced supervisors will attend workshops and other events to maintain and enhance their skills and to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the University and institution/centre, especially where new requirements are introduced. Attendance at such may be required. In addition, where experienced supervisors have not been examiners or hairs of examining boards it will be necessary for them to attend relevant training programmes in these aspects of research degree practice.

## 6.5 Supervisory roles

Normally the supervisory team will consist of a Director of Studies and a second supervisor. A larger supervisory team may be needed in some cases to ensure adequate expertise and experience, and in some cases a novice supervisor may be added to a team

for experience. Research Degrees Committees, however, should aim to appoint a supervisory team of two wherever possible, as working with a larger team brings with it logistical problems for candidates and institutions.

Supervisory teams should be put together with the intention of each member having a specific role in the supervisory process. Normally Directors of Studies should carry the main responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the candidate.

Other members of supervisory teams may:

- provide expertise in a particular facet of the research;
- assist the candidate in the development of reflective skills;
- provide support for the Director of Studies;
- provide pastoral support for the candidate;
- act as the main supervisor in the absence of the Director of Studies.

It is essential that supervisory teams establish agreed roles and responsibilities and communicate these to candidates.

## 6.6 Formal and informal meetings

Meetings between Directors of Studies (or other members of supervisory teams) and candidates are often informal. However, a proper record should be kept by candidates and supervisors of agreed actions. Meetings should be held at least fortnightly for full-time candidates, at least during the early stages of their study.

Supervisory teams should hold regular formal meetings with candidates (at least every three months in the case of full-time candidates, or every six months for part-time candidates) to review achievements, progress, skills acquisition, and to establish objectives for the next period of research.

Directors of Studies will ensure completion of a supervision meeting record, and notify the appropriate member of Research Degrees Committee when quarterly meetings have been held and whether, in the opinion of a team, progress is satisfactory. It is particularly important, if progress is not satisfactory, that the appropriate member of Research Degrees Committee is informed promptly, so that appropriate remedial action can be taken without delay.

### Records of meetings

Written records should be kept by candidates and supervisors of scheduled meetings. At a minimum, the following information should be recorded:

- dates of meetings;
- those present;
- outcome of actions from last meeting;
- actions agreed;
- date of next meeting.

It may also be useful to record, where relevant:

- progress made by candidates since the previous meeting;
- developments which may have affected the progress of candidates;
- other developments (within the institution or centre or externally) relevant to candidates;
- current state of research training requirements;
- concerns of either candidates or supervisors;
- review of planned time-scale;
- deliverables initiated by candidates.

These records should form part of candidates' PDPs, and should be available to the Research Degrees Committee for inspection.

## 6.7 Needs analysis and the training programme

The formal training requirements for different research degrees programmes are set down in the programme guides. For all programmes, supervisory teams will help research candidates undertake an analysis of their academic and generic skills, and the skills required for them to complete a research programme.

In the light of this analysis, teams will assist candidates in setting up a training schedule and monitoring skills acquisition at formal review meetings.

All research candidates are required to develop PDPs. Advice on PDPs and reflective practice should be included in induction programmes.

Many candidates may have developed a PDP as a requirement of their professional work prior to admission to study, and this may be adaptable to include their research development; the University of Wales is not prescriptive about the form of candidates' PDPs.

## 6.8 Absence of Director of Studies

Where a Director of Studies is absent for short periods (three months or less), another member of the supervisory team should assume their responsibilities, either through formal or informal arrangements.

Where a Director of Studies is expected to be absent for a period of more than three months, the Research Degrees Committees should consult with candidates and supervisory teams and appoint another Director of Studies (either for the period of absence of the current Director of Studies, or for the remainder of the research programme (as appropriate)).

The impact of extended absence by other members of supervisory teams should also be considered by the candidate's Director of Studies, and, where, necessary the Director of Studies should consult with the Research Degrees Committee to identify and appoint a

suitable alternative supervisor.

# 6.9 Progress, review and monitoring

Supervisory teams play a critical role in ensuring that postgraduate researchers are able to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to make progress on research programmes at the rate required to allow completion within an appropriate period.

Candidates and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the research and training plan are reviewed at reasonable intervals (for example, every three months for full-time candidates) and adjusted in the light of developments.

Supervisors are responsible for evaluating the progress of candidates in achieving these objectives, and advising them of the corrective action necessary where problems arise.

At an early stage (preferably within three months of enrolment for full-time candidates and six months for part-time candidates) candidates should agree a research programme with the supervisory team and submit a research proposal to the Research Degrees Committee and to Research Degrees Board, whose approval shall be required for continued enrolment.

Where candidates have not submitted a project for approval within six months of the date of enrolment, this will be a cause of concern and in such circumstances, Research Degrees Committees should ensure that satisfactory progress is being made and that supervisory teams have developed adequate plans to deal with any barriers to progress.

## What constitutes satisfactory progress?

Satisfactory progress generally means making sufficient progress to maintain the likelihood of completion within the normal minimum period of enrolment. Unforeseen personal or professional problems may impede progress, and this advice is intended to provide general guidance, not to anticipate all possible eventualities.

### Principles

During the first year of research, it is very important to ensure that candidates are showing the necessary development to continue their research projects through to completion.

Where candidates are showing areas of weakness that may seriously impede their ability to complete the programme, it is essential that the weaknesses are addressed promptly, and that any remedial programme or activity is closely monitored.

Where candidates are showing clear signs during the first year of study that they may be

unable to complete satisfactorily the research programme within the normal minimum time, the institution or centre should give very serious consideration to advising them of the consequences of failure to make satisfactory progress, and counselling them to consider terminating enrolment.

During the first year, the quarterly reviews need to take a very detailed and critical look at the development of the appropriate skills by candidates, and of their achievements of the following milestones:

- a satisfactory written literature review to support the project proposal. The review should show a satisfactory grasp of the rules for written presentations, the ability to analyse and summarise published work, and to justify the research project. The timing for this requirement will vary depending on the subject area; it may be a much smaller requirement in a practice-based research area than in a theoretical research area. However the date for a satisfactory review to be received should be set at the start of the programme, and should be completed by the end of the first year at the latest for full-time candidates, or by the end of the second year for part-time candidates.
- a satisfactory Research Proposal, giving details of the work to be carried out, the techniques to be used, and how any skills are to be acquired, and the planned timeframe for the completion of the project. This timeframe should form the basis for assessing whether progress with the project is according to plan. This is expected by the second quarterly review (six months after enrolment for full-time candidates or twelve months for part-time candidates), and where a proposal has not been approved by the supervisory team by this stage then candidates' progress should be more closely monitored, and the Research Degrees Committee notified;
- at the end of the first year for full-time candidates (second year for part-time candidates), an annual monitoring report, including plans for the transfer application, should be approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

During the second year of study (third year for part-time candidates), a major milestone is the transfer from MPhil/PhD to PhD. It is advisable that initial applications for transfer should be made as early as possible during this year. In any case, the application for this transfer must have been made within an 18-month period after enrollment for full-time candidates (30 months for part-time candidates). (See section 7 below.)

In addition, by the end of the second year of full-time study (third year for part-time candidates), candidates should have produced a plan for the thesis, and should be able to make a more reliable estimate of the likely completion date.

Midway through the third year of full-time study (or at the end of the fourth year for part-time candidates), institutions or centres should require a review of progress with the thesis.

By this stage, the first draft of the thesis should be substantially complete, and should have been received by the Director of Studies. An examination board should have been identified, and a submission date agreed.

Any barriers to progress with the thesis should be identified by the supervisory team, and if necessary, help to overcome the barriers should be sought promptly from the Research Degrees Committee. Where the expected milestones have not been achieved then the Research Degrees Committee should be notified.

The annual report form required for enrolment onto the fourth year for a full-time PhD candidate (or sixth year for a part-time candidate) must include a detailed plan for submission of the thesis with milestones; these should be kept under review by the Research Degrees Committee.

## Formal reviews

Candidates and supervisory teams should, wherever possible, agree and complete an on-line record of supervisory meetings or notify the appropriate member of Research Degrees Committee when quarterly reviews have been completed.

Normally no formal report of the outcome of the review is needed; however where serious and unresolved concerns about progress have been raised then the appropriate member of Research Degrees Committee should be notified of the nature of the concerns and the actions agreed to deal with them.

It is essential, where supervisory teams have formally raised concerns about progress, that every effort is made to ensure that candidates understand the basis for the judgement and have the opportunity to comment on it. The supervisors should give the candidate a written warning about the basis of their judgement of lack of satisfactory progress, setting out the agreed actions required to establish satisfactory progress, the timeframe of the plan, and the consequences of a further formal finding of lack of satisfactory progress. It is the responsibility of the appropriate member of Research Degrees Committee to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to comment on the warning, and this may be done independently of the supervisory team.

It is particularly important that supervisory teams strike a balance between positive support of development and critical appraisal of progress. Where candidates do not show satisfactory development, despite the support and guidance of the supervisory team and the Research Degrees Committee, the expectation is that they will not be allowed to continue.

## Annual monitoring

Annually, candidates and supervisory teams should complete a report to Research Degrees Committee detailing progress against planned objectives, and objectives for the coming year, as well as drawing attention to any set-backs or problems which might delay the successful completion of research programmes. Reports should also allow candidates the opportunity to comment on the facilities available to them, and on the quality of the supervision they receive.

Although candidates and supervisory teams are required to file a report annually, candidates may submit a report directly to the Research Degrees Committee at any time if they experience problems which are not being resolved satisfactorily.

Failure to submit a satisfactory annual report or failure to resolve satisfactorily any issues in the report of concern to the Research Degrees Committee may result in enrolment being terminated. Research Degrees Committees will normally require evidence of a previous formal warning to candidates on progress, a recovery plan

agreed at that time, and further evidence of lack of progress, before the research programme is terminated. Candidates have the right to appeal against such decisions.

# 7. Transfer from MPhil/PhD to PhD

Except where candidates are allowed to enrol with advanced standing due to the prior satisfactory completion of a substantial piece of research, all candidates are required to undergo a formal review process (normally after 12 months for full-time candidates and 24 months for part-time candidates), before they can transfer to, or continue on, a PhD programme. The Research Degrees Board requires that initial applications for transfer of enrolment from MPhil/PhD to PhD must have been made within an 18-month period after enrolment for full-time candidates, and within 30 months for part-time candidates. Research Degrees Board requires that the transfer process is completed within 24 months of enrolment (36 months for part-time candidates) and will not consider applications for transfer that have not been approved by the institution or centre within this time-frame (See Section 9 of the Research Degree Regulations).

The purpose of the transfer process is to ensure that candidates have shown the development in skills needed to be able to complete the PhD; it is not expected that all the skills required of a doctoral candidate at examination will be fully developed at transfer, however where candidates are clearly not showing an appropriate level of skills development then they should not transfer to a PhD enrolment but complete the degree of MPhil.

The transfer process should involve candidates producing a written report of 3000 to 6000 words in length on work completed and in progress, training undertaken, a literature review and a research schedule. Draft chapters may constitute part of the written report.

The report should be assessed by a progression panel which includes an independent researcher who should have experience of supervising at least one PhD candidate to successful completion.

Candidates should give an oral presentation to the progression panel, and respond to questions raised by members of the panel.

It is the responsibility of candidates and supervisory teams to start the transfer process by submitting a report to the Research Degrees Committee. It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to set up the progression panel.

The progression panel in its report to Research Degrees Committee may recommend:

- transfer a candidate to a PhD programme;
- deferral of the decision for a defined period to allow a candidate to meet conditions set by the progression panel;
- refusal of transfer. Full reasons for this should be given in writing to candidates. Generally such a recommendation will only be made where candidates have already received written notice at an earlier stage that their progress is not satisfactory.

The Research Degrees Board makes a final decision on all transfer recommendations
Note: Where a candidate has been permitted to enrol directly onto a PhD, a formal process of transfer of enrolment does not apply. However, the first annual review (second for part-time candidates) should be considered as important as a transfer review.

# 8. Assessment

The formal procedures for assessing research degrees are set out in the Regulations.
The oral examination of a candidate on the basis of his or her thesis forms the final assessment, and criteria for the award of the appropriate degree are included in the Guide to the Examiners and Chairs of Examining Boards.

## 8.1 Submission of the thesis

To be eligible to submit a thesis, research degree candidates must be enrolled on the degree for which submission is intended, and have paid all fees due (including any re-examination fee required) and satisfied all other financial obligations.
The intention to submit a thesis for examination is given by the supervisory team submitting the nominations for the examining board initially to the Research Degrees Committee.
Within the maximum enrolment period, candidates should submit to the institution or centre two copies of the temporarily or permanently bound thesis and separate material, as well as an additional loose copy of the abstract transcribed onto the appropriate form. Where the nature of the work makes it difficult to comply with the requirement for copies of separate material, candidates should seek advice from the Academic Registry on numbers of copies.
Candidates may not amend, add to, or delete from the theses after they have been submitted and prior to examination. However, should candidates find that material has been left out of the copies of the thesis sent to the examiners, the chairs of the examining boards may take action to permit the missing material to be sent to the examiners.
Arrangements for the examinations and all associated correspondence are co-ordinated by the institution's Academic Registry or by the appropriate administrative authorityof the University of Wales in the case of candidates at centres.

## 8.2 Examinations

Candidates for MPhil and PhD degrees are examined on the basis of their work. This involves the examiners independently reviewing and reporting on the thesis, followed by an examining board conducting an oral examination. However, in the case of a re-

submitted thesis, an oral examination may be waived at the discretion of the examining board. This is done on the basis of a satisfactory oral examination after the initial submission.

The date of the examination is normally within six working weeks of the examiners' receipt of the thesis. If the submission is delayed then the time commitments of members of the examining board may preclude an early oral examination.

In cases where there has been a significant delay in the submission after the appointment of the examining board, it is good practice for the academic authorities to ensure that members of the board will be available for the oral examination within an acceptable time frame. The advice of the Research Degrees Committee should be sought if it seems necessary for an alternative examiner to be appointed.

Note: The oral examination may not be deferred for a period exceeding 12 months from the date of submission of the thesis.

## 8.3 The Examining Board

An examining board is normally made up of an independent chair, an internal examiner and an external examiner. However, in certain cases, specified in the regulations (e.g. when the candidate is a member of academic staff at the Centre concerned or where the most appropriate specialist in the thesis topic does not have an academic background), the examining board should be made up of the chair (as above) together with two external examiners.

Internal examiners are staff of the institution or centre or of other accredited institutions of the University of Wales Alliance. External examiners are from outside the University of Wales Alliance and the centres.

The composition of the examining board is arranged by the Research Degrees Committee after consultation with candidates and supervisory teams, and subject to ratification by the Research Degrees Board. Submission of the proposed examining board to the Research Degrees Board should be done about three months prior to the expected submission of the thesis.

The chair, who may not be a member of the supervisory team, shall be a senior member of academic staff approved for the purpose by the institution or centre. The chair should not have any previous connection with the candidate's work and it is considered good practice to appoint a chair from a different part of the institution or centre to that of the candidate. The responsibility of the chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted in an appropriate manner, according to the established procedures in place.

Should it prove impossible to appoint an appropriate internal examiner from within the institution or centre, Research Degrees Board may appoint an internal examiner from another accredited institution of the University of Wales Alliance.

## 8.4 Criteria for the appointment of examiners

The Research Degrees Committee should ensure that the proposed examiners:

- have been made aware of the nature and purpose of the degree for which candidates are being examined and the criteria by which the candidates are assessed;
- have received a copy of the abstract to the thesis;
- possess specialist knowledge and expertise in the subject of research as well as experience in examining research degrees;
- are prepared to examine the whole thesis.

It is not acceptable to appoint an examiner who is not prepared to make a judgment on the whole thesis, even if his or her particular expertise is more relevant to some parts of the work than to others.

The Research Degrees Committee should also ensure that the external examiner:

- is (or has until recently been) a member of academic staff at a recognised Higher Education Institution in the UK, or elsewhere, but not at an institution or centre, *or* holds a role which is deemed to be equivalent of an academic role in the discipline area (e.g. curator of major museum or gallery, holder of high office in religious organisation, member of research staff at a university-recognised or government-recognised research institute);
- has not had direct or indirect communication with candidates concerning their research;
- is not enrolled on a higher degree;
- is a recognised authority in the field, with evidence of recent advanced scholarship or research;
- has extensive publications in refereed journals in the general subject area of the thesis;
- has experience of examining postgraduate research degrees;
- has not examined more than two MPhil or PhD degrees at the institution or centre in the previous five years.

An external examiner can be appointed to a research degree examining board at a particular institution or centre no more than once in a calendar year and no more than three times in five years.

Research Degrees Committees should avoid at all time appointments which suggest reciprocity.

Where an internal examiner has a managerial relationship with the Director of Studies, care must be taken to ensure the complete independence of the examiner. In any case, there should be no discussion of the research project or candidates between examiners and the supervisory team or the candidate following the internal examiner's agreement to serve in the role.

## 8.5 The examination process

## The written reports

Prior to the oral examination, examiners are required to forward to the Academic Registry an independent written appraisal of the thesis using the form provided for the purpose. Examiners should not communicate directly between themselves prior to their independent reports being received by the Registry.

If an examiner has a concern about the thesis before the submission of the independent reports it should be discussed only with the Chair of the examining board. In addition, prior to the submission of the report, an examiner should not see the report on the thesis from another examiner.

## The oral examination

A preliminary meeting of the examining board should take place prior to the oral examination to consider the structure of the questioning, to confirm the initial opinion of the examiners and to decide upon the main points to be raised during the examination (which should include any concerns previously raised in writing by the Director of Studies).

Candidates may decide whether or not supervisors (or other observers) are present during the oral examination, but if present supervisors may only speak in response to a direct question from the examiners. It is good practice for candidates to be asked in writing whether they agree to the attendance of supervisors or other observers.

The oral examination will normally be conducted at the institution or centre. Exceptionally, and with the approval of the Academic Registry, the oral examination may be conducted at another place or by video link. In the latter case the Chair should ensure that the candidate is able to communicate only with the examining board during the examination.

In the case of candidates normally resident outside of the United Kingdom, the oral examination may be deferred until their return to this country, provided that they give no less than two months' written notice to the Academic Registry of the dates between which they will be available for oral examination in this country.

When the examining board assembles on the day of the examination, the independent written reports of each examiner should be available to all members of the board, and to the Director of Studies, if present. The oral examination should cover all aspects of the thesis, in particular the points selected by the examiners at their preliminary meeting. Candidates should be given an opportunity to comment on any adverse points and on any amendments of substance that the examiners are intending to recommend.

At the start of examinations, chairs should ensure that candidates are introduced to the examiners, and that the atmosphere is reasonably relaxed so that candidates are not intimidated by the event.

Examiners may sometimes wish to indicate their initial opinion of the thesis at the beginning of the oral examination, so that candidates have the opportunity to challenge it; however no indication should be given that the oral examination is a formality.

Examiners are required to satisfy themselves at the oral examination that thesis is the candidate's original work.

At the end of the oral examination, candidates, observers and any members of the supervisory team are required to withdraw. The Chair will inform candidates of the

approximate time when the announcement of the outcome, that is, the recommendation to be made to the Research Degrees Board, is expected.

**Communicating the outcome of the examination**

The Chair should agree with the examiners on the announcement to the candidate of the outcome of the examination. The normal expectation is that this will be on the day of the examination following the oral examination. In exceptional circumstances, for example where the examiners are unable to agree on the outcome, the recommendation may need to be deferred. In this case candidates should be informed of the conflict on the day of the examination, and of the established procedures for resolving it.

At the end of the examination, the examiners are required to submit a report setting out their reasons for the recommendation. In the report examiners should explain in detail how candidates' work meets the requirements for originality and scholarship, or how it failed to do so. Full instructions must be included of any changes required to the thesis, and these requirements must be made available to candidates.

Where there is some disagreement, examiners should submit separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee within ten days of the oral examination.

Following the private discussion between the examiners, candidates (and Director of Studies, should candidates wish) should be invited to return to the examination room. The recommendation of the examining board should be conveyed to candidates and will be confirmed firstly by the Research Degrees Board and then at the University of Wales Academic Board.

The recommendation should include a clear statement selected from those available in the regulations. In the case of a requirement for minor corrections or resubmission, this should include minimum time periods before such re-submission may take place. There must also be clear indications of what candidates must complete before re-submission, and of the form of the re-submission. In such circumstances a further oral examination may, or may not, be held, at the discretion of the examining board.

Following the oral examination, all copies of the thesis should be left with the Chair of the examining board for return to the Academic Registry together with the appropriate form.

# 9.0 Rights and responsibilities of candidates

## 9.1 Entitlements and responsibilities

Institutions and centres shall be responsible for informing candidates of their entitlements and responsiblities at registration annually. Such information shall take account of the expectations of QAA, NPC as well as legislative or other requirements.

## 9.2 Leave

Internal full-time candidates are expected to be engaged in their research programmes for 35 hours during the normal working week.
Where candidates are away from the campus without prior notification to the Director of Studies, then they should inform their Director of Studies of the duration of the absence, and any reason for it.
For part-time candidates, the same rules apply, except that attendance requirements are reduced; the expectation is that they will be undertaking work related directly to their research, for 17 hours during the normal working week, to be agreed with the candidate's Director of Studies.
The attendance requirements for external candidates are detailed in section 4.5.

In all cases, arrangements for taking leave should be discussed with the Director of Studies.

## 9.3 Paid work

Engaging in academic work may be helpful to the career development of candidates, provided it does not interfere with the progress of their research. With the agreement of the Director of Studies, full-time candidates may undertake up to six hours of paid work during the normal working week.

## 9.4 Appeals

Candidates have a right to appeal against the termination of studies or refusal of transfer to a PhD or, in certain established circumstances, the outcome of the examination process and should seek advice from the Academic Registry as to the correct procedure for this purpose.

## 9.5 Complaints

Candidates may make complaints which will be heard by the institution or centre in accordance with the procedure approve d for the purpose. The Academic Registry shall

be responsible for ensuring that information on how complaints may be made, and heard, is made available to all candidates for research degrees.

## 10. Annual Institutional Reports

Research Degrees Committees should receive annually written reports from the responsible officer of the institution or centre on the overall progress of research degree candidates, including registrations, completions, and withdrawals/suspensions, attendance at training programmes by supervisors and candidates, drawing attention to any innovative practices or training that they feel has helped the quality of their programmes, and highlighting any general quality problems in the research environment that need to be addressed. The Research Degrees Committee will submit an overview report annually to the Research Degrees Board on these matters.