PGR Code of Practice
Academic Year 2025/26

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1. Introduction

At the University of Aberdeen, we recognise the vital contribution postgraduate researchers make to our university and our research excellence. We are committed to providing a research environment and culture in which our postgraduate researchers can thrive and reach their full potential. We are guided by the University's 2040 themes of 'Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International, and Sustainable' to provide the highest quality of provision and support for postgraduate researchers to develop into independent and leading researchers equipped and knowledgeable to navigate a successful career in a variety of sectors.

This **Code of Practice** sets out the University's expectations and responsibilities for institution-wide standards relating to all research degrees. It provides guidance and practical advice for postgraduate researchers, their supervisors, and key people involved in the postgraduate research journey, with the aim of supporting postgraduate researchers to have a fulfilling and high-quality experience. This Code applies to all University of Aberdeen research degrees delivered by all Schools, and across all modes and locations of study.

The Code aligns with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees (2018): and should be read in conjunction with the formal requirements set out in the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations, and other relevant University policies. The Code of Practice is reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to align with the University of Aberdeen Postgraduate research regulations, reflects developments in the higher education sector nationally and internationally, and continues to comply with the terms of relevant legislation. **Information outlined in this Code of Practice is accurate at the date of publication**. It is the responsibility of the postgraduate researcher and supervisor to ensure they are familiar with the most recent version of the Code of Practice. Postgraduate researchers have a responsibility to make themselves aware of current and ongoing policy changes arising from funders at regional, national, and international level which affect the conduct of research and/or the commercialisation, dissemination or publication of research results or findings.

2. General degree information, admissions and registration

The postgraduate research (PGR) student population at the University of Aberdeen makes an important contribution to the realisation of the University's Strategy, which sets out the University's aim to be a world-class, world-changing university. The University seeks to create an environment in which inspiring researchers create world-changing impact.

Relevant Regulations:

- Awards available: General Regulation 1 for Research Degrees
- Admission requirements: General Regulation 2 - 5 for Research Degrees
- Registration and academic year: General Regulations 12 for Research Degrees
- Class certificates: General Regulation 28, 29 for Research Degrees
- Criteria for research degree awards: General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees

2.1 Research Degree Regulations and Awards

The Regulations for Postgraduate Study are available within the University Degree Programme Calendar. The Regulations are reviewed annually. It is the postgraduate researcher and supervisor's responsibility to be aware of any changes that are applicable to their research degree.

The Regulations define the structure and requirements of the University's postgraduate research degrees, including requirements and information on:

- Awards available
- Admission requirements
- Modes of study
- Minimum and maximum periods of study
- Monitoring requirements
- Extensions to study
- Thesis requirements, submission, and outcomes
- Examination of Research Degrees

2.2 Research Degree Awards

The completion of a programme of research study may lead to the award of one of the following research degrees:

In all Subject Areas

- The degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- The degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

In Arts & Social Sciences

- The degree of Master of Letters (MLitt) (Research)
- The degree of Master of Science (MSc) (Research)

In Education

- The degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

In Science and in Engineering

- The degree of Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
- The degree of Master of Science (MSc) (Research)

In Divinity

- The degree of Master of Theology (MTh) (Research)

In Law

- The degree of Master of Laws (LLM) (Research)

In Medicine

- The degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- The degree of Master of Science (MSc) (Research)
- The degree of Master of Surgery (ChM) (Research)

The criteria for research degree awards requires that for the degree of:

i) **PhD, EdD, EngD or MD**, the thesis 'makes a distinct contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality as shown by the exercise of independent critical powers'

ii) For the degree of **MPhil,** the thesis 'makes a contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality';

iii) For a **one-year Master of Science (Research)** degree the thesis 'displays evidence of originality or that it is a satisfactory, orderly and critical exposition of existing knowledge within the field concerned'.

2.3 Admissions and Registration

The University is committed to admitting students with the potential to achieve academic excellence and contribute to a positive research culture. Our inclusive recruitment policies and procedures take account of all aspects of an application and not just an applicant's academic profile.

Admission to the University is in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy, the standard admissions requirements for research degrees set out in the General Regulations 2 – 5 for Research Degrees, and any entry requirements outlined for specific degrees.

2.3.1 Admissions Guidance

Detailed practical admissions guidance is available for potential postgraduate researchers and should be referred to during the application process.

Current members of academic staff of at least 5 years, may apply to submit a thesis of published work for the degree of a PhD as outlined in General Regulation 4 for Research Degrees.

2.3.2 English language requirements for international students

To study successfully in Aberdeen students will need to speak and write English fluently, please refer to the full details of our English Language requirements.

2.3.3 Registration

At the start of their studies, and at the start of each subsequent academic year, postgraduate researchers are required to register.

As per General Regulations 12 for research degrees, postgraduate researchers are required to complete registration for every academic year in which they are studying, up until completion of their thesis, including any minor corrections required after examination. Failure to complete re-registration within one month of the start of an academic year, or within one month of resumption from a period of suspension, may result in the termination of a candidate's studies at the University. Detailed guidance is available for postgraduate researchers on the registration process, including activating their IT account, email and password.

The start of the academic year is defined as 1 October for postgraduate researchers. Postgraduate researchers taking taught course modules will start classes in September.

2.3.4 Student portals

A student's University username and password will give them access to their Student Hub Through their Portal, postgraduate researchers can view, update personal information and access relevant on-line learning resources.

2.3.5 Library Services

Library services and related support are available to all registered students.

2.3.6 Computing Services

IT Services provide central computing facilities and services, which can be accessed using student username and password. All communications to a postgraduate researcher should be through their University email account. It is the postgraduate researcher's responsibility to check e-mail on a regular basis**.**

2.3.7 Council Tax

During the period of supervised study full-time postgraduate researchers are exempt from paying Council Tax. The University routinely provides Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils with confirmation of its full-time postgraduate researchers' status. If a postgraduate researcher has registered and requires confirmation of full-time study for a Council Tax exemption claim, they should contact InfoHub.

It should be noted that all postgraduate researchers in an extension period are registered as part-time, regardless of whether they were full-time or part-time during their supervised study and are liable to pay council tax. Aberdeen City Council exempt postgraduate researchers who were full-time, and paid fees at the standard full-time rate, throughout their period of supervised study from paying Council Tax for up to 12 months into a period of an extension following supervised study. Aberdeenshire Council, so far, does not offer this concession.

If a postgraduate researcher submits before the completion of the 12 months period, the postgraduate researcher is regarded as being under examination and not engaged in writing up and the University cannot certify that they are engaged in full-time study. Relevant postgraduate researchers must complete an application form for Council Tax Exemption. Part-time postgraduate researchers and postgraduate researchers in an Extension Period (who are not exempt) are liable to pay Council Tax.

2.4 Attendance and Monitoring Procedures

In order to be eligible for examination, postgraduate researchers must have a Class Certificate (General Regulation 28, 29 for Research Degrees) for the course in question. A postgraduate researcher who has been validly registered for a research programme, and who has not withdrawn from that programme prior to their viva examination (or been deemed to have withdrawn, or to have had their class certificate refused), is regarded as having obtained a Class Certificate for that course automatically. It should be noted there is no physical certificate.

The University operates an attendance and engagement system to identify postgraduate researchers who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies. Unless good cause is demonstrated, and approved by Senate, postgraduate researchers who have not met the expected attendance and monitoring requirements will be refused a Class Certificate.

2.4.1 Student Visa Monitoring Requirements

The requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) mean that the University is obliged to carry out regular visa checks for candidates on an international student visa. Failure to report for these checks could mean that students are de-registered from their studies and reported to the UKVI. This could lead to their Student Visa being curtailed or cancelled.

International students on a Student Visa should note that they may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by UKVI. Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVI will take priority.

Detailed guidance on immigration and student visas is available. The Student Immigration Compliance Team are the first point of contact for Visa advice on;

- Changing programme or degree
- Academic progress and impact on visa
- Questions on the visa check process
- Issues with attendance or absence from University
- Registration.

The International Student Advisers are the first point of contact for advice on:

- issues with student visas – loss, theft or damage
- changing student visa – needing an extension or new visa
- working in the UK, including internships
- bringing dependants to the UK
- police registration.

2.5 Intellectual Property Rights and Data Protection

Unless there is a sponsorship agreement stating otherwise, postgraduate researchers will assign Intellectual Property Rights to the University as a standard condition of registration. The option to opt out is offered where there are no joint ownership issues or sponsorship

agreements in place. Guidance is provided on Assignation of Intellectual Property Rights by students in the student terms and conditions statements.

2.5.1 Data Protection

All personal information provided by postgraduate researchers will be treated strictly in terms of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). The data postgraduate researchers provide will be used for stated purposes only and postgraduate researchers will be advised about any further uses. Detail information on how the University handles personal information in all areas is provided on the Privacy information webpages and Freedom of Information guide. If a postgraduate researcher has any questions about the uses of personal data, the Data Protection Officer can be contacted by email at dpa@abdn.ac.uk.

3. PGR Governance

Central to creating a supportive environment for researchers to thrive are robust governance structures and policies that meet the needs of the individuals involved. The University is committed to ensuring governance structures and processes in place help foster a healthy, supportive, and inclusive research environment that is reflective and adaptive to our increasingly diverse PGR Community.

3.1 Senate and the Quality Assurance Committee

Senate has ultimate responsibility for the assurance of the quality and academic standards of the programmes of study. The powers prescribed under the various higher degree regulations are exercised on its behalf by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

In reference to Research Degrees, the Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for:

- Recommending the appointment of examiners on the nomination of Heads of School
- Approving degree results in the light of examiners' reports and recommend to the Senate the conferral of awards as appropriate.
- Review proposals for
    I. the introduction of new courses and programmes of study
    II. amendments to existing courses and programmes, and
    III. the withdrawal of existing courses and programmes, and make appropriate recommendations;
- Recommend to Senate changes in the General and Supplementary Regulations

The QAC have delegated a number of responsibilities to the Postgraduate Officers (PGO).

PGO's are responsible for:

• Monitoring the Postgraduate Assessment Forms in regard to postgraduate researchers' progress

• Considering changes of degree and/or subject

• Considering changes of status (e.g. registration from full-time to part-time and vice-versa or suspension or extension of study)

• Attending to queries, problems and complaints, either referred to them by Heads of School or Supervisors, or raised directly by postgraduate researchers

3.2 Dean for Postgraduate Research

The Dean for Postgraduate Research provides academic leadership for postgraduate research degrees and to the PGR College through:

- The development and implementation of a strategic vision for postgraduate research that aligns with the University's 2040 strategy implementation plan
- The promotion of excellence in postgraduate research programmes and facilitation of recruitment of high calibre postgraduate researchers
- Working with Schools to ensure the delivery of an outstanding postgraduate researcher experience and the delivery of a supportive and enabling research and learning environment for all postgraduate researchers and supervisors though effective training, development. and induction
- The monitoring and evaluation of data for recruitment, retention and completion of postgraduate researchers, leading change where required
- The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of postgraduate research programmes, ensuring that they meet the highest standards of academic excellence and compliance
- Monitoring the impact of processes on postgraduate researchers and staff with protected characteristics (Equalities Act 2010); encouraging access to postgraduate degrees for those with protected characteristics
- The effective and efficient resolution of appeals and complaints
- Representing the interests of postgraduate researchers in the senior committees of the University

3.3 Heads of School

The Head of School is responsible for the management and governance arrangements to support the achievement of the School's strategic and operational ambitions. The Head of School may delegate their powers in respect of postgraduate researchers, as appropriate. Responsibilities include:

- Receiving applications for admission and recommending acceptance or rejection and any conditions of entry
- Nominating supervisors in the light of postgraduate researchers' interests and the School expertise
- Applying the Postgraduate Structured Management Frameworks to meet the needs of their School and ensure that postgraduate researchers and their Supervisors are issued with the relevant Framework (i.e. for full-time or part-time study)

- Facilitating postgraduate researchers obtaining research training, language tuition, and necessary skills
- Approving facilities, support, and materials as needed for postgraduate research
- Ensuring that Supervisors and postgraduate researchers are acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and that postgraduate researchers receive appropriate training and supervision when following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous
- Ensuring that the study environment and culture is inclusive
- Monitoring supervision and ensuring that supervisors perform their duties appropriately
- Addressing queries, problems and complaints either referred to them by Supervisors, or raised directly by postgraduate researchers
- Recommending changes of degree registration and/or subject
- Recommending changes of status (from full-time to part-time and vice-versa or suspension of study)
- Recommending changes of Supervisor and/or discipline
- Nominating internal and external examiners
- Recommending that a candidate's registration be terminated, where appropriate.

4. Academic Integrity

Promoting academic integrity is a shared responsibility among the academic community. By maintaining academic integrity, researchers contribute to the credibility and reputation of the academic community, foster a culture of trust and fairness, and uphold the values of intellectual honesty and integrity.

4.1 Research Governance, Ethics and Research Misconduct

The University of Aberdeen is committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspect of its research activities and expects that all those involved with research at the University maintain a similar commitment. Postgraduate researchers and supervisors should ensure they are familiar with the Research Governance Handbook. The Handbook provides detailed information on standards, expectations and general principles to ensure all researchers comply with all external regulatory and legislative requirements as well as the expectations of and those of any other key stakeholders.

4.1.1 Research Ethics and Ethical Approval

The Research Governance Handbook (section 3) provides details relevant to postgraduate researchers on the ethical approval process, including how to determine if/ when it is required, how to apply for approval and details of mandatory training. All postgraduate researchers and staff **must** complete the University's online Research Ethics and Governance training course (see section 7) before submitting an ethics application.

4.1.2 Research Misconduct

The Research Governance Handbook (section 4) provides details of responsibilities, processes (including reporting and investigations) and definitions associated with allegations of unacceptable research conduct.

4.1.3 Academic Misconduct

The University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) outlines offences considered as academic misconduct and the procedures which may be taken in response, including disciplinary action (and the roles of the School and University). Plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) / collusion, Contract Cheating and other forms of cheating and Research Misconduct are covered under this policy.

Plagiarism also includes the use of Artificial Intelligence tools to generate content without appropriate acknowledgement or use of the source. Postgraduate Researchers and supervisors should refer to the guidance for PGRs on the use of Artificial intelligence (available in PORTAL) and together discuss the appropriate use and acknowledgement of AI in their work.

It is recognised postgraduate researchers with learning differences may use a range of AI tools as part of their reasonable adjustments. Please refer to Guidelines for disabled postgraduate researchers for further guidance on reasonable adjustments for PGRs.

5. PGR Support Services

The University of Aberdeen take a collaborative approach to provide support for postgraduate researchers to ensure that their experience with us enables them to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to navigate a research degree and prepare for their future career. Although postgraduate researchers *will greatly benefit from the advice and direction of their supervisors, many other teams and key contacts are on hand to provide support and advice.*

5.1 Postgraduate Research College

The Postgraduate Research College (PGR College) provides strategic and operational leadership for research degrees, postgraduate researcher experience and training, supervisor training and development on areas related (but not limited) to:

- Governance and reporting
- PGR strategy
- Cultures and Community
- Postgraduate researcher and supervisor development
- Funding and studentships

5.2 Postgraduate Research Officers and Directors

Postgraduate Officers (PGOs),have been appointed to represent each area of study of the University. On behalf of Senate and the QAC, they review requests for official amendments to individual PGR periods of study (Change of Circumstances).

PGR Directors (may also be referred to as postgraduate coordinators) are experienced members of academic staff with extensive knowledge of their School, Discipline, and/or Institute's research. PGR Directors will support a postgraduate researcher and their supervisor through the following responsibilities:

- Induction of new postgraduate researchers
- Providing advice on School processes including the Annual Progression Exercise
- Nominating advisers or mentors where these are appointed
- Supporting with academic and pastoral PGR issues
- Supporting a breakdown in supervisory relationship
- Dealing with disciplinary issues concerning postgraduate researchers
- Ensuring provision of school/discipline level research training

5.3 The Registry

The Registry is responsible for a range of postgraduate researcher academic administration. Responsibilities relevant to postgraduate researchers include:

- Registration of postgraduate taught and postgraduate researchers
- Management of the postgraduate researcher student record
- Changes to study
- Tuition fees
- Interpretation and advice on postgraduate regulatory issues
- Postgraduate researchers: thesis submission, dispatch to Examiners and notification of exam outcome
- Graduations

5.4 Student Support & Advice Team

The Student Support & Advice Team offer impartial and confidential advice for all postgraduate researchers on a range of issues including personal, academic, financial matters, disabilities and specific learning differences, mental health and wellbeing. If a postgraduate researcher wishes to access support, they can email a Student Adviser at student.support@abdn.ac.uk or contact the out of hours support.

5.5 Student Learning Services

All postgraduate researchers can access support with academic skills, including academic writing through the Student Learning Service (SLS) which offers workshops and one-to-one advice sessions (with the agreement of the supervisor to ensure topic support). SLS also offer support for postgraduate researchers with dyslexia and other specific learning differences.

5.6 Multi-faith Chaplaincy

The Multi-faith chaplaincy supports a wide variety of society meetings, including a PG Café, lunchtime seminars, prayer and study groups, and other events. They provide pastoral care, support, and advice to all members of the University community, including postgraduate researchers.

5.7 Students' Union

The Students' Union exists to promote the interests of all students, including postgraduate researchers, and to communicate on their behalf with the University authorities on matters affecting postgraduate researchers. As members, postgraduate researchers have access to a wide range of activities and services including student representation, student-led forums and societies, including a dedicated PGR Society and access to support and advice.

5.8 PGR Community Teams Channel

This is a dedicated Teams space for all postgraduate researchers from across the University to connect, interact and receive information on development opportunities and social events. Postgraduate researchers can sign-up by requesting access to the Teams page.

5.9 Equality Networks

The University recognises the value of Equality Networks in creating an environment that respects the diversity of its community and enables them to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the University. Many of the staff equality networks are open to postgraduate researchers to provide a safe space to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion.

5.10 Research Support

The Research and Innovation directorate ensure all researchers have the skills, information, and support they need to achieve maximum impact from their research.

- The Public Engagement with Research Unit support researchers to use a range of activities and methods to engage members of the public with the design, conduct, and dissemination of their research.
- The Grants Academy offers expertise to all researchers to help develop ideas and craft competitive grant applications at all stages of the research cycle.
- Impact Toolkit for Research supports researchers to understand their potential impact, consider new and existing stakeholders, and get the most out of engagement activities.

6. The Supervisory Relationship

The nature of the research project, the best interests of the postgraduate researcher, and specific staff expertise will determine the makeup of the supervisory team. The roles and the key responsibilities of each supervisor must be agreed by the team at the beginning of the postgraduate researcher's programme. All supervisors have a responsibility towards the postgraduate researcher.

Relevant Regulations:

- Location of full-time postgraduate researchers: General Regulation 21 for Research Degrees
- Supervisors: General Regulations 24 to 26 for research degrees

  Postgraduate researcher's and supervisors should also refer to the Academic Quality Handbook Statement of Expectations for PGR Postgraduate researchers and Supervisors.

A good supervisory relationship will:

- Be open to adapting styles to ensure postgraduate researchers are supported as per their individual needs
- Discuss and agree expectations with the postgraduate researchers at the start of their degree and amend as appropriate during the remainder of the degree programme
- Being aware of changing needs of the postgraduate researcher over the degree timeline
- Meet regularly (at least monthly for full-time postgraduate researchers, pro-rata'd for part-time, unless otherwise mutually agreed. Frequency of meetings are likely to increase at the beginning and end of the research degrees, and ahead of assessments e.g. annual progression exercise).
- Recognise the increasing diversity of the postgraduate researchers population and demonstrate inclusive good practice
- Being aware of timelines for regulatory progression and review exercises
- Being aware of institutional policies and procedures in the event of difficulties faced by the postgraduate researcher and sources of support for both parties. Actively seek to signpost postgraduate researcher to appropriate support services for pastoral and/or academic issues
- Being aware of funder policies and procedures and sources of support for both parties.

- Attend mandatory supervisory training every five years and actively engage in appropriate training to enhance their supervisory practice

6.1 The Supervisory Team

Postgraduate researchers rely on contact with their supervisors for academic and pastoral guidance and input. The supervisory needs of postgraduate researchers will vary depending on the subject area, and the work patterns and personalities of the postgraduate researcher and supervisors.

A supervisory team will comprise more than one supervisor, working in co-supervision, always with one supervisor designated as lead. The lead supervisor will, normally, be an employee of the University. For candidates undertaking their studies within the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (MMSN), the lead supervisor appointed must be an employee of the University. The benefit of having a supervisory team is that the postgraduate researcher should always have an identified point of contact who they can approach.

The requirements for a supervisor, including external supervisors, are articulated in General Regulations 24 - 26 for Research Degrees. Supervisors are normally Professors, Readers or Lecturers/Senior Lecturers of the University, or may be honorary members of staff, or members of staff of an approved research institution (as listed in General Regulation 21 for Research Degrees). Postgraduate researchers may have a supervisor appointed who is external to the University, i.e. not a paid employee of the University, an honorary member of staff (or indeed members of staff of an approved research institution, as listed.), but they must always have at least one paid academic member of staff at the University who is appointed to provide supervision of their research. In some Schools, such as the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, the supervisory team should normally include two University of Aberdeen tenured members of staff.

In addition to the supervisory team, a postgraduate researcher may also have an academic member of staff who has been appointed to provide additional pastoral support. The term of reference for this person will vary between Schools but are most often referred to as an Adviser. All postgraduate researchers can contact their School Director of PGR for additional pastoral support if required.

The percentage input of each supervisor will be recorded on the University's Student Record system. Where an adviser has been appointed, they will also be recorded on the postgraduate researcher's record, but not as a supervisor.

Where the lead supervisor is a probationary lecturer or a member of staff supervising a postgraduate researcher for the first time, a co-supervisor should be appointed who will normally be an experienced member of the academic staff of the University who has seen a postgraduate researcher through to successful completion of a research degree.

6.2 Expectations of the Supervisory Team

It is important expectations are discussed and agreed from the very start of the supervisory relationship to ensure there is clarity around roles, expectations and boundaries of all those in the supervisory team, and of the PGR. Both supervisors and postgraduate researchers should be aware of PGR milestones and timelines, Postgraduate Supplementary Regulations and General Regulations for Research Degrees.

Expectations and responsibilities may differ depending on the postgraduate researcher and the project; however, general expectations for the roles and responsibilities of the supervisory team are as follows:

6.2.1 Joint Expectations and Responsibilities for Postgraduate Researchers and Supervisors

- Postgraduate researchers and supervisor(s) should work together to develop the research project, including clear timelines for the delivery of work, review points and preparation for assessments.
- Postgraduate researchers and supervisor(s) meet the timeline for assessments
- Postgraduate researchers and supervisor(s) should set clear timeframes for delivery of written and other work and discuss appropriate expectations for feedback.

6.2.2 Postgraduate Researcher Expectations and Responsibilities

- Postgraduate researchers should take responsibility for the development and completion of their project.
- Postgraduate researchers should be willing to have a professional openness with their supervisor(s) and keep them informed about any difficulties they are facing with the project.
- Postgraduate researchers should also inform their supervisor(s) or another appropriate person located in the School of any other difficulties they are facing that might affect their work.
- Postgraduate researchers should check with their supervisor(s) if there is anything discussed in supervision meetings that they do not understand.

- Postgraduate researchers should be aware that their supervisor(s) have many commitments and that they cannot always be available immediately for them.

6.2.3 Supervisor Expectations and Responsibilities

- Supervisors are expected to support their postgraduate researchers throughout their period of supervised research and for up to twelve months thereafter during any Extension Period. Supervisors are not expected to provide supervision after this period except when a thesis has been examined and referred, in which case the supervisor should provide advice until the specified date for resubmission.
- Supervisor(s) should respond to emails and questions from their postgraduate researcher within a reasonable and agreed timescale and should be available during advertised office hours. However, supervisors may be off campus when on research leave or for other good reason. In such instances, they should communicate how the postgraduate researcher will be supported in their absence.
- Supervisor(s) should provide advice to postgraduate researchers in applying for funding, conferences and other career development opportunities.
- Supervisor(s) should be aware to the general well-being of their postgraduate researchers and encourage them to work in a manner that is healthy and appropriate.

6.2.4 Lead Supervisor Responsibilities

Lead supervisors have primary responsibility for supervision arrangements and research guidance. Responsibilities of a lead supervisor include:

- The administrative aspects of supervision, for example reviewing monitoring forms, requests for Changes of Circumstances, ensuring expected frequency of supervisory meetings occur, nominating viva examiners.
- Someone who can give advice on the shape and development of the project and guide postgraduate researchers through the decision making process of the research project - but the responsibility for this is ultimately the postgraduate researchers.
- Ensuring the postgraduate researcher is aware of the responsibilities of individual supervisory team members
- Ensure that appropriate steps are taken to find alternative arrangements should other members of the supervisory team leave
- Set up initial meeting with the PGR, referring to the setting up the supervisory relationship guide

- Where conflicts and issues arise within the wider supervisory team or research group the lead supervisor should work to resolve them.

6.2.5 Co-Supervisors

Co-supervisors have an equal role and responsibility to the lead supervisor with respect to supervision of the postgraduate researcher's work, they should be present at the early meetings in which the initial scope of the project is established, and will be expected to review and provide feedback on assessment submitted by the postgraduate researcher for monitoring or progression purposes.

Responsibilities of a co-supervisor include:

- Equal responsibility as Lead to ensure regulations are adhered to
- Provide feedback on assessments
- Should normally be present at supervisory meetings with the postgraduate researcher, but, in the event that they are unable to attend in person, they must be kept informed of the outcome of meetings.
- May act as a temporary lead supervisor in the event of the departure or long-term absence of the lead supervisor, or in the event of a breakdown in supervisor relationship

6.3 Supervisor Training

Supervisor Training is **mandatory** for all new members of staff (new to the University and/or new to supervising). All new supervisors must attend a New Supervisor Training session within 12 months of joining the University or prior to supervising a postgraduate researcher for the first time.

As an existing supervisor, you are required to attend an update session every **five years.** The PGR College will contact you when it is time to attend. External supervisors are expected to undergo University of Aberdeen PGR Supervisor training and should contact the PGR College.

The PGR College host regular masterclasses, workshops and short 'supervisor surgery' sessions, covering a range of topics, to support the development of a PGR Supervisor. These can be booked on the University's coursebooking system.

6.4 Postgraduate researchers studying at local research institutions

Postgraduate researchers studying at one of the approved research institutions listed in General Regulation 21 for Research Degrees will have, as a minimum, a named University of Aberdeen supervisor and a supervisor at the research institution. The extent of University of Aberdeen involvement in supervision will vary however as a minimum, the University of

Aberdeen supervisor will ensure that all University of Aberdeen procedures are followed and that progress is monitored through standard University procedures.

6.5 Supervisory Meetings

It is the responsibility of the lead supervisor to make contact with the supervisee prior to their arrival in Aberdeen or commencement of studies (if the postgraduate researcher is undertaking a distance programme) and arrange a meeting between the supervisory team and the supervisee. The School PGR Administrator will advise of upcoming School events/induction sessions scheduled for postgraduate researchers.

A guide has been created to help guide discussion points and information to cover during the first supervisory meeting. After the initial meeting, postgraduate researchers should take responsibility for arranging meetings. If a postgraduate researcher has not arranged a meeting, the supervisor should follow this up.

It is expected that frequency and means of communications should be agreed in the first meeting. However, both parties should be flexible to requests out-with normal frequencies. Supervisors should maintain reasonable accessibility so that advice may be offered at other times, and the supervisor should establish with the postgraduate researcher mutually agreed means of communication and contact with one another. Communications should be through University channels (MS Teams, university e-mail address) and within normal working hours and days.

While the amount of contact between a supervisee and supervisor will vary depending on the subject area and stage of the candidate, it is expected that there should be as a minimum, one formal, minuted, supervisory meeting at least once a month (for full-time postgraduate researchers), or a frequency agreed mutually, with informal meetings held more frequently as and when required.

It is important both postgraduate researcher and supervisor ensure meetings are occurring as agreed. This will provide an opportunity to review the development of the project, prepare for upcoming assessments, review timelines for delivery of work and discuss any additional academic skills development or pastoral support required.

Supervisors should be aware of any disabilities or learning differences disclosed in the application or a meeting and contact their School Inclusion coordinator who will help to ensure relevant meetings (such as with Disability Services and Student Learning Services) are set up and inclusive adjustments are in place. Supervisors should ask whether a postgraduate researcher requires disability-related adjustments at the initial meeting, and when preparing for upcoming assessments .

The postgraduate researcher should take brief written notes of formal meetings with the supervisor, and both postgraduate researcher and supervisor should agree that the notes are an accurate record of the meeting and should retain a copy of these notes.

6.6 Absence of supervisor

Schools must make arrangements for maintaining the supervision of postgraduate researchers whenever a lead supervisor is absent. The arrangements made will vary between Schools/disciplines and will depend on whether the supervisor who is absent is the sole supervisor or is part of a supervisory team. Where a sole supervisor is absent for a period of time, an acting supervisor should be appointed as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that any such interim supervisory arrangements are made. Where a suitable supervisor cannot be identified in a timely manner, the PGR Director will act as a placeholder supervisor until more permanent arrangements can be put in place.

If a postgraduate researcher's research project is dependent on the supervision of a single, specialist member of academic staff and that member of staff leaves the University, or is otherwise unable to continue supervising the postgraduate researcher, then the School/Department must seek to make alternative, comparable arrangements to supervise the postgraduate researcher to complete their research degree.

6.7 If the supervisory relationship breaks down

If a postgraduate researcher or supervisor has concerns about the supervisory relationship, that cannot be addressed through discussion with the supervisee/ supervisor, they are encouraged to contact their PGR Directors. The University will always try to find a mutually acceptable way of resolving issues when handling complaints. More information on the University's policies and processes for appeals and complaints can be accessed here: When things don't go to plan | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk)

7. Postgraduate Researcher Development

Investing in personal and professional development during a research degree will provide the postgraduate researcher with a range of skills to not only be an effective researcher, but to make meaningful contributions to their field and help shape and achieve their career aspirations.

7.1 Professional Development

A postgraduate researcher should be proactive in identifying skills and engaging with personal and professional development required to undertake their research degree. Postgraduate researchers should discuss their personal and professional development with their supervisor during the first months of their studies and on an ongoing basis throughout their studies. Postgraduate researchers will undertake a researcher development audit at the beginning of their programme of study and identify an appropriate development plan through discussion with their supervisor(s). This plan should be reviewed and updated at the start of each year of the research degree. Regular supervisory meetings should also be used to reflect on skills development and identify new areas for growth. The PGR College will issue annual reminders to complete the researcher development analysis, and further information is available on the PORTAL.

The PGR College Training and Development team provide a range of resources and toolkits, to help postgraduate researchers personalise their development plan throughout the different stages and requirements of a research degree and in preparation for a future career in a variety of fields and industries.

7.2 Mandatory Training

As a condition of being a postgraduate researcher at the University of Aberdeen, there are mandatory training courses that must be completed within the first six months of study (applicable to both full-time and part-time postgraduate researchers). Some courses will require annual refreshers, you will be notified of this by University email. Detail can be found on the PGR College website. Completion will be monitored by the Postgraduate Research College. Failure to complete mandatory training may result in formal monitoring.

Postgraduate researchers must also be aware of training requirements set from their funders and School. Postgraduate researchers should contact their School PGR Administrator to find out more on School requirements and the PGR College Studentships Team for funder requirements.

7.3 Training for PGR Demonstrators, Tutors and Teaching Assistants

Academic Schools in collaboration with the Centre for Academic Development run introduction to teaching sessions for all new postgraduate researcher demonstrators and

tutors. The introductory online session covers small group teaching, equality & diversity, and assessment & feedback. To help the transition to online delivery, the session also explores the tools available for remote teaching and learning.

All postgraduate researchers involved in teaching or marking must complete this mandatory training. Training and support for teaching is part of the University Student teaching framework.

8. Postgraduate researcher Progression and Engagement

Although it is important to track progression to ensure postgraduate researchers are meeting the expectations, timeframes, and standards for the award of a research degrees, progression reviews also act as a platform for postgraduate researchers and supervisors to raise academic and pastoral matters.

Relevant Regulations:

- Monitoring Postgraduate researcher Progress: General Regulation 27 for research degrees

As per General Regulation 27 for Research Degrees, all postgraduate researchers are required to undertake an annual review of their progress and development. These reviews are intended to support PGRs in successfully progressing through their research degree by assessing progress, providing a structured forum for postgraduate researchers and supervisors to raise academic and pastoral concerns, facilitating feedback on the supervisory relationship, monitoring engagement, and acting as an early intervention to address potential issues.

8.1 Postgraduate Milestones and Timelines

Postgraduate Milestones and timelines have been established for the degrees of PhD, MPhil and the one-year research Master's degree (full-time and part-time). The Milestones and Timelines can be tailored to reflect School's expectations, while retaining a core element to ensure consistency of quality supervisory practice and postgraduate researcher and project progress.

8.2 Annual Progression Exercise

The Annual Progression Exercise (APE) is mandatory for all year 1 and year 2 postgraduate researchers and most Master of Science (Research) postgraduate researchers; in some disciplines, an assessment/check-point may also take place in year 3. It is designed to assess the postgraduate researcher's ability as a researcher, to confirm the suitability of the project, and to ensure that the supervisory team is working well. It is a formal record of the postgraduate researcher's progress, requiring a satisfactory outcome for progression into the subsequent year.

The APE is determined by the School and the format and requirements may therefore vary between Schools and years but would normally consist of a presentation and/or submission of written work to be assessed by a panel. Postgraduate researchers would be expected to

demonstrate they have a thorough background knowledge of their project, be able to appraise key issues critically, be able to describe their research and understand what its significance/contribution is, and to have a plan of work for future milestones and skills training. The APE also provides a formal platform for supervisors and postgraduate researchers to feedback on progress and supervision.

Postgraduate researchers and supervisors are encouraged to contact their School PGR Administrator for details of their APE and refer to for APE process and outcomes (below) and should also refer to Appendix A: Annual Progression Exercise Process.

Postgraduate researchers registered for research training programmes such as the MRes in Psychology or the MLitt in Visual Culture are exempt from completing the assessment form as long as they are completing Student Course Evaluation Forms at the end of each course taken.

8.2.1 Annual Progression Exercise Outcomes

The APE outcomes are as below. In cases where a panel concludes work submitted for an APE is unsatisfactory, a postgraduate researcher will always be given the opportunity of a resubmission for assessment (Outcome 3). If the work assessed remains unsatisfactory, outcome 5 or 6 will be recommended as per General Regulation 27 for Research Degrees. P. Postgraduate researchers and supervisors should refer to Appendix A: Annual Progression Exercise Process and School APE policies. s and supervisors should refer to Appendix A: Annual Progression Exercise Process and School APE policies.

1. Satisfactory: proceed to next academic year
2. Satisfactory with reservations: proceed to next academic year but actions will be recommended to address any identified weaknesses with which the PGR must comply by an agreed date
3. Resubmission: additional work required for further review before a final decision of satisfactory or unsatisfactory returned. This must be completed within two months of the original annual progression date
4. Amend the supervisory team to provide additional technical/academic expertise
5. Unsatisfactory, lower award: may not continue e.g. on the PhD pathway but may be eligible to register for a lower award (MPhil or Master's by Research)
6. Unsatisfactory, termination of studies: the PGR has neither reached the standard required for e.g. a PhD programme nor a lower award. This may occur immediately after a progression exercise or following resubmission (3) of work.

8.3 Progression exercises: Academic Integrity

All reports submitted as part of the Year 1 Annual Progression Exercise (for progression from year 1 to year 2) will be submitted by the postgraduate researcher via the School Turnitin (or other appropriate software) sites in order to ensure that there are no instances of Academic Misconduct. The Turnitin Similarity report will be reviewed by either the supervisory team or the progression review panel, as required. If it is identified that Academic Misconduct may have taken place, the case will be referred to Head of School for a Preliminary Investigation to be carried out. The procedures for dealing with Academic Misconduct will be followed as per the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).

8.4 Unsatisfactory PGR Progress

If a postgraduate researcher's progress is unsatisfactory, candidature for the degree may be terminated, or moved to a lower award, as appropriate. Where a postgraduate researcher's progress is flagged as "unsatisfactory" in the bi-annual monitoring exercises, the School's School PGR Director will meet with the postgraduate researcher, and often with the supervisor, to discuss any underlying issues, areas of additional support and agree a work plan to support the postgraduate researcher to meet expectations.

It should be noted an unsatisfactory outcome is not always indicative of a postgraduate researcher's ability to complete a research degree; however, may be indicative that additional support is required. Where possible, a postgraduate researcher will be given the opportunity to address issues raised and resubmit (for an Annual Progression Exercise). In these cases, postgraduate researchers will receive support from the School's PGR Director and supervisors, as described above.

8.5 PGR Engagement

All postgraduate researchers are expected to show reasonable engagement with their research studies. Lack of PGR engagement may be indicative of difficulties being faced by the postgraduate researcher, as such it is important that concerns around PGR engagement are raised and actioned promptly.

8.5.1 Unsatisfactory PGR Engagement

Concerns around a postgraduate researcher's engagement may be raised if:

- Postgraduate researcher does not attend 2 consecutive formal supervision meetings without good cause
- Postgraduate researcher does not meet 2 or more deadlines for submission of work (for assessment and/or formal supervisory meetings)
- Postgraduate researcher does not submit work for formal review and progression within the deadline/ time permitted.

- An unauthorised absence from research study is taken (please refer to absence policy)
- Postgraduate researcher does not attend or complete a compulsory training activity

If a postgraduate researcher has extenuating circumstances that are impeding their progress and/or level of engagement, it is the postgraduate researcher's responsibility to inform the Supervisor(s) accordingly at the earliest opportunity.

If a Supervisor has growing concerns about any postgraduate researcher's physical or mental health, the Supervisor should contact the Student Advice and Support Team

8.6 PGR Monitoring Process

If postgraduate researchers do not show a reasonable level of engagement with their research studies or fail to meet with their supervisors, the monitoring process can be initiated (please refer to Appendix B: PGR Non-Engagement Monitoring Process: Lack of Engagement). Concerns around unsatisfactory PGR engagement should initially be discussed informally between the supervisor and postgraduate researcher. Actions and timeline should be agreed to address lack of engagement. A postgraduate researcher should be advised that if concerns are not satisfactorily addressed following the initial discussion or agreed actions are not taken, the monitoring process will be initiated and an At Risk marker (C6) will be entered in the postgraduate researcher's record.

This will be communicated to the PGR by the School PGR Director, clearly articulating required actions to meet expected levels of engagement to remove the C6 and stop it from progressing further. The letter should also include a link to appropriate support, such as the Student Advice and Support Team, particularly where mental health and wellbeing are a concern.

A meeting should also be convened with the postgraduate researcher, School PGR Director and supervisory team. The meeting should be minuted and a clear plan of actions, timelines and reviews, to support the postgraduate researcher to meet reasonable engagement expectations, should be agreed.

The Student Immigration Compliance Team have produced guidance on monitoring engagement and attendance of Student visa holders, at all levels of study, in Schools.

9. Annual leave, Absences and Changes to Terms of Study

Life continues while undertaking research, and even the best laid plans may hit an unexpected bump in the road. Postgraduate researchers may wish to apply to change any of the conditions listed in their admission letter to navigate unexpected life circumstances or take a leave of absence.

Relevant Regulations:

- Full and part-time status: General Regulations 13 and 14 for Research Degree
- Minimum periods of study: General Regulation 15 and 16 for Research Degree
- Maximum periods of study: General Regulation 17 for Research Degree
- Extensions to periods of study: General Regulations 18 and 19 for Research Degree

Postgraduate researcher's and supervisors should also refer to the Academic Quality Handbook Statement of Expectations for PGR Postgraduate researchers and Supervisors.

9.1 Leave of Absences

The University values the health and wellbeing of its students and is committed to fostering a compassionate and inclusive research environment.

All PGRs are entitled to take leave and such absences must be reported and recorded appropriately, as outlined within the Policy and Procedures on Student Leave of Absence from Study (PGR) document. Leave categories covered by this policy include

- Authorised leave
- Medical leave
- Parental and family leave
- Additional Leave

9.1.1 Authorised Holiday Absence (including Annual leave)

Postgraduate research programmes run for the full academic year. All PGRs are entitled to authorised leave (including annual leave). Authorised leave forms part of the total period of study and does not suspend or pause the registration period or entitle the student to additional research time at the end of their degree.

Postgraduate researchers can request an authorised absence from their School. This absence must not impact on the postgraduate researcher's ability to complete their studies on time. Authorised absence should be spread across the year. Detailed guidance on authorised absence including duration, funding considerations, visa guidance and reporting processes is outlined within the Policy and Procedures on Student Leave of Absence from Study (PGR) document.

9.1.2 Medical Leave

PGR students should take time away from their studies due when facing periods of illness or medical treatment. Detailed guidance on taking medical leave, including duration, funding considerations, supporting evidence, visa guidance and reporting processes is outlined within the Policy and Procedures on Student Leave of Absence from Study (PGR) document.

Examples of Medical Leave include:

- Minor illnesses e.g. colds, stomach bugs, short periods of influenza
- Sick leave (including both physical and mental health)
- Pregnancy-related illness
- Antenatal appointments
- Fertility treatment
- Disability-related illness (including chronic illness)
- Disability-related appointments (including for chronic illness) e.g. diagnosis, therapy or treatment
- Gender reassignment – a Student undertaking gender reassignment and has been medically advised that they require leave

Postgraduate researchers must report all absences in line with the Policy and Procedures on Student Leave of Absence from Study (PGR) document.

Funded postgraduate researchers and their supervisors should refer to PGR Leave of Absence Policy for guidance on funded leave.

Postgraduate researchers funded by a UKRI Research Council are eligible for paid medical leave for a period of up to 28 weeks (within a rolling 12 month period from the start of medical leave), additionally the studentship may be extended by a commensurate period. The total amount of medical leave is capped at 52 weeks across the Studentship. Any UKRI funded PGR student who requires formal medical leave must contact pgrs-studentships@abdn.ac.uk in the first instance. Retrospective claims can only be approved in exceptional circumstances (e.g., inability to submit a request due to incapacitation).

International PGR students holding a student visa should have any medical leave approved and recorded using the Authorised Absence process and form, unless a suspension of studies has been approved.

PGR student visa holders should be aware that periods of extended absence may have an impact on the University's ability to continue sponsoring their Student visa. The University is only permitted to continue sponsoring a student's visa during a period of absence if the student is still able to achieve their overall degree intention upon their return to study. PGR students holding a student visa should contact the Student Immigration Compliance Team immigration@abdn.ac.uk for advice.

9.1.3 Parental Leave

The University recognises that PGR students may require time away from their studies due to becoming a parent or family responsibilities. To support students during this important life stage, the University is developing a dedicated Parental Leave Policy (due for publication early 2026), setting out parental leave entitlements, eligibility criteria, application processes, and the support available to all students. It is designed to promote equity, transparency, and wellbeing for PGR students balancing research and family.

All registered PGR students, whether full-time or part-time, and regardless of their funding source (University-funded, externally funded, or self-funded), are entitled to request parental leave. For students in receipt of funding, eligibility for funded parental leave and extensions to the funded period will be determined by the specific terms and conditions of their award and the parental leave policy should be referred to for further guidance.

International PGR students who hold a visa must contact the Student Immigration Compliance Team (immigration@abdn.ac.uk) before applying for parental leave, to ensure continued compliance with their visa conditions. PGR student visa holders should be aware that periods of extended absence may have an impact on the University's ability to continue sponsoring their Student visa. The University is only permitted to continue sponsoring a student's visa during a period of absence if the student is still able to achieve their overall degree intention upon their return to study. PGR students holding a student visa should contact the Student Immigration Compliance Team immigration@abdn.ac.uk for advice.

9.1.4 Additional Leave

In exceptional circumstances, PGR Students may need time away from their studies that are no covered by other types of leave. These include:

- Special leave (including compassionate leave, illness or injury of a dependent, domestic emergency e.g. flooding)

- Carer's leave
- Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments
- Health and safety
- Public duties

Detailed guidance on additional leave including duration, funding considerations, visa guidance and reporting processes is outlined within the Policy and Procedures on Student Leave of Absence from Study (PGR) document.

9.2 Change to Terms of Study

A postgraduate researcher may apply to change any of the conditions listed in their admission letter however this must be discussed firstly with the supervisor. It is the responsibility of the postgraduate researcher to keep any sponsor informed of changes to study, for UKRI funded postgraduate researchers this can be done by contacting the PGR College studentship Team. This is particularly important for postgraduate researchers funded by UKRI. UKRI funded postgraduate researchers must proactively seek advice from the PGR College Studentship Team before making any changes as retrospective changes may not be permitted. All International postgraduate researchers studying at the University on a visa should refer to the terms of their visa when requesting a change to terms of study and contact the International Student Advisers for advice.

9.3 Study Off-campus

For postgraduate researchers studying on campus, periods of off campus study may be approved for academic reason directly related to their research e.g. the completion of fieldwork, work/industrial placements associated with the postgraduate researcher's research or as part of collaborative venture with another institution, i.e. a dual or joint degree. Off-campus is defined as out-with reasonable commuting distance. Candidates must agree a structure of regular contact with their supervisor and must be able to demonstrate that the facilities and infrastructure that are available to them off-campus are sufficient to enable their research to be completed at a distance.

Postgraduate researchers should not travel prior to off-campus approval being granted. If ethical approval is required for planned activities but is not granted at time of receipt of the application, the form cannot be processed.

For any off-campus study period exceeding 30 days, a formal application must be submitted using the Off-Campus Study Request Form at least six weeks in advance. Where applicable, ethical approval must be obtained before submitting the off-campus request. In all cases, a risk assessment must be completed and approved by the supervisor or PGR Director. For off-campus periods of less than 30 days, PGR students should seek guidance directly from their School.

If the postgraduate researcher is an international student holding a Student visa, the University must be satisfied that the request to study off-campus complies with the law regarding attendance requirements, before approval can be given. For advice, please contact the International Student Advisers.

If full time postgraduate researchers wish to conduct their entire research elsewhere then this must be agreed with the supervisor at the point of admission, subject to any visa restrictions and funder terms and conditions (if applicable).

9.4 Suspension of Studies

If a postgraduate researcher can't work on their research (e.g. for medical reasons or other good cause), it may be that they would benefit from an authorised break from studies. This is called a 'suspension'. Periods of suspension do not count towards the postgraduate researcher's period of study, and the research degree end date will be amended accordingly. If the suspension is requested on medical grounds, medical certificates may be required.

A request for suspension of studies can be made for up to a 12-month period. These must be supported by the supervisor and approved by a PGR Officer. Should an extension to a suspension beyond 12 months be required, a new application must be made. Multiple suspensions may not be granted if it is deemed not to be in the postgraduate researcher's best interest or there is an impact on the validity of the research. In such cases, the School Registry Officer can provide advice to the postgraduate researcher on their options.

In cases where postgraduate researchers are returning to study following a prolonged period of absence, support to return should be discussed with the postgraduate researcher and supervisors, and/or the School PGR director and the Student Advice & Support Team. Support may include a phased return or regular meetings with a Student Support adviser, depending on the individual circumstances.

An application for suspension should be completed prior to the period for which suspension is to commence, or as soon as possible in unexpected circumstances. Suspensions will not normally be approved retrospectively. Postgraduate researchers should refer to 'Appendix C: Examples of good cause for an 'exceptional extension' or suspension of studies.

Tuition fees are not payable for postgraduate researchers on suspension; however, postgraduate researchers should continue to complete online registration at the start of each academic year. Postgraduate researchers who suspend their studies are eligible to apply for Associate Student status , which will continue to permit the postgraduate researcher to have an ID card, access to the Library, an e-mail account and access to postgraduate researcher welfare/support facilities on suspension. There are fees for

registering as an associate student and postgraduate researchers will become liable for council tax. If all fees have already been paid to the University (including tuition, accommodation, and library), postgraduate researchers, or their sponsors where appropriate, will receive a refund for any periods of suspension in that academic year.

It is the responsibility of the postgraduate researcher to keep any sponsor informed of a suspension of studies and seek their approval. This requirement holds particular significance for postgraduate researchers who are funded by UKRI who expect doctoral postgraduate researchers to fulfil their obligations in accordance with the specific terms and conditions outlined by awarding Council. Before requesting any periods of suspension, UKRI funded postgraduate researchers must seek advice from the PGR College Studentship Team. This step ensures that the postgraduate researcher is aware of the implications and receives appropriate guidance.

All International postgraduate researchers studying at the University on a visa should refer to the terms of their visa when requesting a suspension of studies and contact the International Student Advisers for advice.

9.5 Reduction to Study Period

A postgraduate researcher may apply to reduce the period of study specified under General Regulations 15 and 16 for Research Degree, provided that:

(i) no application to reduce the period of study may be submitted until a thesis is submitted for examination
(ii) for full-time candidates the period shall not be reduced to less than 24 months (PhD) or 12 months (MPhil);
(iii) for part-time candidates the period shall not be reduced to less than 48 months (PhD) or 24 months (MPhil).
(iv) for the degrees of Doctor of Medicine– not less than 18 months full-time or 24 months part-time.
(v) for part-time candidates for the degree of PhD (by publication) the period shall not be reduced to less than 3 months.

The period specified for those part-time candidates who are currently employed as members of the teaching and/or research staff of the University may be reduced similarly, allowing such candidates to submit after not less than 36 months (PhD, EngD), 24 months (MPhil) or 12 months (in the case of any other Master's degree), as appropriate.

The application to reduce terms of study must be supported by the supervisors and Head of School, and approved by a Postgraduate Research Officer on behalf of senate.

9.6 Extension to Study Period

It is expected that postgraduate researchers will submit their theses by the end of their period of registered supervised study. If a postgraduate researcher requires more time to complete their thesis, they may apply for an extension taking into account General Regulations 18 and 19 for Research Degree. An extension can be granted up to a maximum of 12 months in the first instance. Postgraduate researchers who do not have an approved extension or who are beyond the maximum period of study for their research degree, will not be permitted to register.

Supervisors are expected to support their postgraduate researchers throughout their period of supervised research and for up to twelve months thereafter during any Extension Period. Supervisors are not expected to provide supervision after this period except when a thesis has been examined and referred, in which case the supervisor should provide advice until the specified date for resubmission

9.6.1 Extension to supervised study (change to degree programme)

A postgraduate researcher may find they need to extend their supervised study period to complete their research. This is considered as a Change to Degree Programme and can be applied for using the 'Change to Degree Programme' application form. Full tuition fees are payable during extended periods of supervised study and it is the postgraduate researcher's responsibility to ensure that financial support is available to meet these costs.

9.6.2 Extension to thesis submission date

Postgraduate researchers who have completed their supervised period of study and require additional time to complete and submit their thesis, must apply for an extension three months prior to their thesis submission date. The application must be supported by the supervisors and will be reviewed by a Postgraduate Officer. The postgraduate researcher must make clear the feasibility of submitting their thesis within the period of extension being sought and provide a detailed thesis plan giving target dates for completion of each chapter. Postgraduate researchers should refer to '

Appendix C: Examples of good cause for an 'exceptional extension' or suspension of studies' when making an extension application.

Postgraduate researchers will be required to pay a continuation fee in each academic year in which they are not liable for a tuition fee to continue their candidature for the degree (£120 in 2025/26). All postgraduate researchers, regardless of whether they were full-time or part-time during their supervised study will be registered as part-time during an extension period.

Postgraduate researchers not in the supervised period of study and on an extension will be liable for council tax payments. If a postgraduate researcher was full-time during supervised study and lives in Aberdeen City, they can apply for council tax exemption for up to a maximum of 12 months during an extension.

9.6.3 Duration of extension

Extensions may be applied for a maximum of 12 months in the first instance. Extension applications must be within the normal periods of extension times stated in General Regulation 18 for Research Degrees, which are as follow:

The combined period of supervised study and extension period will not normally exceed the following:

(i) **PhD, EdD** (part time only) 48 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 84 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)
(ii) **EngD** 60 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 96 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)

MPhil, MD or ChM 36 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 60 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers). **Other Master's** 24 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 36 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)

The PGO on behalf of Senate may consider an application to extend the duration of study beyond the above normal period of study, and grant an "exceptional extension", but will not do so without good cause (Appendix C: Examples of good cause for an 'exceptional extension' or suspension of studies)

Extensions will not be approved beyond the following maximum periods of study General Regulations 19 for Research Degree), which include the supervised period of study:

PhD, EdD,	60 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 96 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)
EngD	60 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 96 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)
MPhil, MD or ChM	48 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 72 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)
Other Master's	36 months (for previously full-time postgraduate researchers) or 48 months (for previously part-time postgraduate researchers)

Funding bodies may have their own stipulations on the permitted maximum length of period of study, to which all funded postgraduate researchers must comply with. For postgraduate researchers funded by UKRI it is expected that their doctoral projects are designed and supervised to enable them to submit their thesis by the end of their funding period and within any specific parameters set by the awarding Council. If an extension is required beyond the funding period, it must be approved by both the relevant Research Council and the University. Keeping the Research Council informed about any potential delays is the joint responsibility of the postgraduate researcher and the supervisor who should communicate this information through the PGR College Studentships Team.

All International postgraduate researchers studying at the University on a visa should refer to the terms of their visa when requesting an extension and should contact the International Postgraduate Student Advisers for advice.

9.7 Changes to Mode of Study (full and part time)

Normally a postgraduate researcher will be admitted to study on a fulltime basis, as per General Regulation 13 for Research Degrees, unless it is demonstrated a postgraduate researcher will have sufficient opportunities for research and adequate supervision can be provided.

A postgraduate researcher may apply for a change of mode of study providing they meet the requirements as part-time/ full-time candidates for the specified period, as per General Regulation 14 for Research Degrees.

UKRI funded postgraduate researchers should seek advice from the PGR College Postgraduate Studentships Team to enable them to make informed decisions and ensure compliance with their funding requirements.

International postgraduate researchers holding a visa are unable to undertake their research studies on a part-time basis in the UK and should contact the International Student Advisers for advice.

9.8 Withdrawal from study

Postgraduate researchers who fail to submit a thesis or equivalent piece of examinable work (e.g. exhibit or portfolio) by the deadline specified in the Regulations will be deemed to have withdrawn and will have their registration recorded as lapsed.

Where possible postgraduate researchers should discuss their intention to withdraw with their Supervisor, the School Postgraduate Director , and/or Student Advice and Support. Postgraduate researchers withdrawing prematurely from study may be entitled to a partial rebate of tuition fees paid, the Registry will assess whether any refund of fees is due.

Postgraduate researchers must submit a withdrawal form to the Registry shortly after the decision has been made to withdraw from study. The date of withdrawal will normally be the date the form is received by the Registry and will not normally be applied retrospectively. Tuition fees will be charged up until the date of withdrawal.

The University is obliged to report International students / postgraduate researchers who are studying on a Student Visa to the UKVI as no longer being in attendance if they have withdrawn from study. Postgraduate researchers should refer to terms of their visa.

Withdrawn postgraduate researchers will not normally be permitted to submit a thesis for examination. Under extenuating circumstances, permission may be given by the Dean for Postgraduate Research and Head of School for a withdrawn postgraduate researcher to submit a thesis for examination (See Section 10.2.3)

9.9 Readmission to Study

After a period away from the University, PGR students may wish to recommence their studies and can apply for readmission.

It is important to note that readmission to a research degree is not automatic or guaranteed. In particular, students whose studies were previously discontinued by the University will not normally be eligible for readmission.

Examples of eligibility for readmission and the considerations involved in approving applications can be found in the PGR Readmission Policy.

Students who resume their studies, whether for a period of supervised study or during an extension, will be required to pay the standard tuition or continuation fees in place at the time. Funding cannot be guaranteed for students who were previously funded through the University. Students must discuss their funding situation with the relevant School. Students who were funded by an external organisation must check with their previous funder to confirm whether funding can continue or be reinstated. If funding is not available, students must either find an alternative source or be prepared to self-fund.

Students who have exceeded the maximum study period for their degree may apply for special permission to submit their completed thesis for examination through the readmission process. Before submitting the form, the thesis must be ready for submission and approved by the lead supervisor as meeting the academic standards required for the award of a research degree (See section 10). Approval must also be obtained by Head of School (Via the lead supervisor). In such cases, PGR students will be required to pay a reinstatement fee equivalent to 1/3 of the full time Home fee rate upon submission of their thesis.

Students wishing to apply for readmission must read the PGR Readmission Policy and complete a Readmission Application Form. This form will be considered by the student's supervisor, the Head of School, and the Dean of Postgraduate Research for final approval.

10. Preparation and Submission of a Thesis

The thesis is a significant and essential component of the research degree programme. It represents the postgraduate researcher's original contribution to knowledge in the field, demonstrates personal and professional development and contributes positively to society.

Relevant Regulations:

- Preparation and submission of theses: Postgraduate Supplementary Regulations 1 to 5 and General Regulations 31 - 36 for Research Degrees
- Thesis by Publication (Staff): General Regulation 4 for Research Degrees
- Extensions to periods of study : General Regulations 18 and 19 for Research Degree
- Failure to Submit: General Regulation 20 for Research Degrees
- Qualities of a successful thesis : General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees
- Submission of theses : General Regulations 31 to 36 for Research Degree

Postgraduate researchers and supervisors should also refer to: Library's guidance on the presentation of a thesis

10.1 The Thesis

All postgraduate researchers must submit an original thesis representing their research and findings (General Regulation 31 – 36) for Research Degrees). The standards to be attained for each degree are formulated in General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees, which require that:

i) For **PhD, EdD, EngD, MD or ChM**, the thesis 'makes a distinct contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality as shown by the exercise of independent critical powers';

ii) For the degree of **MPhil** the thesis 'makes a contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality';

iii) For a **one-year Master's** degree the thesis 'displays evidence of originality or that it is a satisfactory, orderly and critical exposition of existing knowledge within the field concerned'.

As per General Regulation 20 for Research Degrees, postgraduate researchers who fail to submit a thesis or equivalent by the deadline specified in General Regulation 18 and 19 for Research Degrees will be deemed to have withdrawn and will have their registration recorded as lapsed.

Candidates will not be permitted to submit a thesis to the University of Aberdeen that has been examined, or is intended to be examined, at another Higher Education Institution, unless there is a collaborative agreement between the two institutions General Regulation 35 for Research Degrees.

10.2 Thesis Preparation

In preparation for thesis submission, a postgraduate researcher and supervisor should agree an attainable timetable for completing the thesis. The thesis should be written and submitted within the period of supervised study; however, if required, a postgraduate researcher may apply for an extension of up to 12 months (see section 9).

Postgraduate researchers and supervisors should refer to the Postgraduate Supplementary Regulations 1 to 5 and General Regulations 31 - 35 for Research Degrees for thesis regulations, on intention to submit deadlines, abstract requirements, and normal maximum lengths of theses.

10.3 Thesis Format

The thesis is expected to form a coherent whole, with a consistent argument or series of arguments running through it, which must be accompanied by a declaration signed by the candidates that it has been composed by themselves, unless submitted as part of an approved programme designed specifically to lead to the award of conjoint but separate degrees of the University of Aberdeen and of another institution If any results were obtained partly in association with others, the nature and extent of this help, if substantial, must be specifically acknowledged in the declaration (General Regulations 31 for Research Degrees).

Research students should note that, unless the specific permission of a Postgraduate Research Officer is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) the normal maximum length of a PhD, EngD, MD or ChM is 100,000 words; the normal maximum length of an EdD thesis is 50,000, the normal maximum length of an MPhil thesis is 70,000 words; and the normal maximum length of a Master's degree thesis is 40,000 words.

For theses submitted in Gaelic language, the following normal maximum lengths apply: 120,000 words for a PhD, 84,000 words for an MPhil, and 48,000 words for a Masters of Science (Research).

In each case this includes figure legends, appendices, and footnotes but excludes table of contents, bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations, illustrative material necessary to an argument (diagrams, maps, tables etc.), and, where appropriate, other materials such as field notes and transcriptions of interviews (General Regulations 32 for Research Degrees).

Any data compilation, or material such as field notes or transcriptions of interviews should not be included in a separate file to the final pdf thesis. This material must be anonymised, as appropriate, and then securely attached to the thesis prior to submission.

The thesis of a candidate for the PhD in Musical Composition may take the form of a portfolio or original composition, accompanied by a written commentary of 20,000 – 40,000 words on the work submitted. The thesis of a candidate for the PhD in Musical Performance may take the form of a portfolio of practice-based elements, accompanied by a written commentary of 50, 000 words on the work submitted. If written in this form, the thesis can, where appropriate, be submitted electronically with a web link to the online commentary; a local, stand-alone version of the online commentary, including links to stereo "listening/review" versions of audio works; and audio files of works for downloading in original format (which may include multichannel works and ambisonics).

The thesis of a candidate for the MPhil/PhD in Film and Visual Culture may take the form of a written dissertation (of approximately 50,000-70,000 words in length) accompanied by a practice-based film or other visual culture element

Additional guidance on accepted thesis formats, page layout and general guidance on how to submit a thesis and the viva process can be viewed in the Library's guidance on the presentation of a thesis. Schools may have additional guidance on thesis expectations, which supervisors should advise on.

10.4 Proof Reading Guidance

The University strongly discourages the use of third-party proof-readers or commercial proof-reading services. If a postgraduate researcher feels they need assistance with their writing, they should first consult the University's guidance on the use of proof-readers and are advised to discuss assistance with writing with the Student Advice & Support Team and/or Student Learning Service.

It is recognised postgraduate researchers with learning differences may use a range of artificial intelligence tools as part of their reasonable adjustments. Postgraduate researchers and supervisors should refer to the guidance for PGRs on the use of Artificial intelligence (available in PORTAL) and guidelines for disabled postgraduate researchers for further guidance on reasonable adjustments for PGRs.

10.5 Thesis by/ with publications

A postgraduate researcher may request to submit a thesis formed from published work. This must meet the following criteria, which differs depending on whether the PGR is staff (Thesis by publication) or postgraduate researcher (thesis with publications):

10.5.1 Thesis by Publication (Staff)

Guidance for this type of scenario can be found in General Regulation 4 for Research Degrees. The PGR in this case must:

1. Be a member of academic staff at the University of Aberdeen.
2. Have been employed at the UoA for a minimum of five years.
3. State at the point of admission that they intend to submit a thesis by publication. The admissions process will include the member of staff being able to provide a minimum of five publications at the point of entry and a 1500-word synopsis. Each School/discipline will determine the expectations for publications including appropriate quality of peer review.
4. The candidate should normally be the first named or lead author on any publication included or to have made a demonstrable major contribution. In cases of joint authorship, candidates must indicate the extent of their contribution (this may for example be evidenced through contributor statements within the manuscript or through confirmation by the corresponding author of the manuscript).
5. Register for a minimum of 12 months supervised study and pay the appropriate tuition fee.
6. Must include written commentary on each publication included so that the thesis is a coherent whole and the thesis must include an overall general introduction and general discussion/conclusion section. Foot/endnoting must make clear which sections of the thesis are based on published material and how much individual responsibility the candidate has for any jointly authored work. Such material must be properly and stylistically incorporated into the thesis.
7. Understand that in all other aspects, they abide by the same regulations and processes in place for PhD candidates including examination. The final thesis will be examined in the same way as a traditional thesis and all aspects of the work, even if published, can be required to be amended if the examiners deem appropriate during *viva voce.*

10.5.2 Thesis with publications (postgraduate researcher)

The PGR in this case:

1. May not be a member of academic staff at the University of Aberdeen (exceptions may include for example Scottish Clinical Research Excellence Development Scheme (SCREDS)).
3. Will be registered for the usual 36, 42 or 48 full-time months supervised study or part-time equivalent. Will be, in cases where publications are included in the

standard PhD, required to write the papers included in the thesis during the supervised study period. The papers must have been accepted for publication at the point of submission. Each School/discipline will determine the expectations for publication, including appropriate quality of peer review.

4. Must include only research undertaken during the period of supervised study or while registered for a research degree.
5. Must be the first named or lead author on any publication included or to have made a demonstrable major contribution. In cases of joint authorship, candidates must indicate the extent of their contribution (this may for example be evidenced through contributor statements within the manuscript or through confirmation by the corresponding author of the manuscript).
6. Must include written commentary on each publication included so that the thesis is a coherent whole and the thesis must include an overall general introduction and general discussion/conclusion section. Foot/endnoting must make clear which sections of the thesis are based on published material and how much individual responsibility the candidate has for any jointly authored work. Such material must be properly and stylistically incorporated into the thesis.
7. Is not required to submit a thesis comprised entirely of publications. That is, a minimum of one publication may be included but there is no maximum number stipulated up to the maximum permitted word limit of 100,000 words. Any publications included in the final thesis must be formatted in line with the guidance set out for the submission of research thesis, thus meaning that the longform Word document (including references) be incorporated rather than a PDF print copy. References for each publication should be included within the chapter, any other references within the body of the thesis should be included in a separate refences section as normal.
8. Must understand that in all other aspects, they abide by the same regulations and processes in place for PhD candidates.

10.6 Submitting a thesis as a withdrawn postgraduate researcher

If a withdrawn postgraduate researcher wishes to submit their finished thesis, they must first contact their supervisors. Supervisors must confirm the research presented in the thesis is viable and the thesis must meet quality and regulations expected for a research degree thesis, as outlined in the Postgraduate Supplementary Regulations and General Regulation for Research Degrees.

For more information on this process, postgraduate researchers and supervisors are advised to contact the PGR Registry. A reinstatement fee will be payable on submission of the thesis.

10.7 Use of Turnitin in review of work for assessment (final thesis)

The students are required to submit their final thesis to Turnitin to ensure that no instances of Academic Misconduct have taken place. Guidance on the Turnitin process can be viewed here. The Supervisors are asked to review the Turnitin Similarity report and return their comments, concerns and/or approval to Registry within 2 weeks. If no response is received by the Supervisor, the thesis together with the Turnitin report will be sent to examiners for

review. If the Supervisor identifies that Academic Misconduct may have taken place, then they will be asked to refer the case to the Head of School for a Preliminary Investigation to be carried out. The procedures for dealing with Academic Misconduct will be followed as per the Code of Practice on Postgraduate researcher Discipline (Academic).

11. The Examination Procedure

The viva is the final stage of the Research Degree. The purpose of the viva is to assess the quality, originality and contribution of the postgraduate researcher's research and provides an opportunity for the postgraduate researcher to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their work and contribution to the field.

Relevant Regulations:

- Viva examination: General Regulation 36 for Research Degrees
- Examination of Research Degrees: General Regulation 37 - 39 for Research Degrees
- Qualities of a successful thesis: General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees
- Outcomes of a thesis examination: General Regulation 40 for Research Degrees
- Requirements for Graduation: General Regulation 42 for Research Degrees

Examination is by submission of a thesis and by oral examination (*Viva Voce)*. Examiners should refer to General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees for the standards to be attained for each degree and should be familiar with the Examining Research Degree Guidance.

11.1 Viva Voce

The oral examination or *viva voce* is an integral part of the assessment for the degree, the primary function of the viva examination is to allow the candidate to explain, expand, and justify their thesis, in response to the examiners' questions. Examiners must be able to evaluate the candidate's *role* in the work, the *process* of the experimentation and the resulting *understanding* of the research involved.

All candidates for the award of a higher degree by research are required to attend a viva examination unless there are exceptional reasons General Regulation 36 for Research Degrees. In such cases, the exceptional reasons must be given in detail on the Joint Report Form and be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee; dispensing with a viva for a research degree is seldom approved. As per General Regulation 38 for Research Degrees, if the examiner reports do not agree, it may be recommended a further external examiner is appointed. If the examiners disagree in their initial assessment of the thesis, or if they are likely to recommend re-submission, a viva *must* always be held.

11.1.1 Nomination and Appointment of Examiners

Once the Registry have received a Postgraduate researcher's intention to submit form, they will request the Head of School to nominate internal and external examiners by sending a

Nomination of Examiners form for completion. Heads of School should refer to General Regulation 37 and 38 for Research Degrees when nominating examiners.

Heads of School, internal, and external examiners should familiarise themselves with the Examining Research Degree Guidance. This guidance provides information on arranging the examination process, expectations for standards, outcomes, the resubmission process and roles within the examination procedure.

11.1.2 Arrangements of the Viva Examination

The internal examiner is responsible for arranging the viva examination and should refer to Examining Research Degrees for guidance on arranging, conducting and reporting of outcomes of the viva. The viva should normally be within two months of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. The viva would normally be held in Aberdeen, on agreement of all parties it may be permissible for the external to be at a distance. In this case, the candidate and internal examiner would normally be in the same room. Exceptions may be made for cases with good cause on agreement of all parties, exceptions may include students unable to travel to Aberdeen due to visas or personal circumstances. Proposed changes to viva examinations should be arranged with the internal examiner/Moderator. The internal examiner should keep the supervisor(s) updated with arrangements.

The room in which the examination is held should be in a University building. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the examination is free from external interruptions and takes into account inclusive adjustments.

11.1.3 Inclusive Adjustments to the Viva Examination Processes

Some students may require adjustments to the processes and procedures associated with the viva. If a candidate considers there should be new inclusive adjustments in place, or there are changes required to current individual student adjustments ahead of a viva, it is the candidate's responsibility to make their supervisory team and Student Advice & Support aware, so that a review of the adjustments can be completed in a timely manner. With the PGR's consent, the examiners can be made aware of the nature of the PGR's disability and associated adjustments, for question formation/structure within the viva. The same academic standards/core competencies for the progression through, and the award of the research degree, must be upheld. Please refer to Guidelines for disabled postgraduate researchers for further information.

11.1.4 Roles, conduct and outcomes of the Viva Examination

The candidate, the examiners, the moderator if appointed, and the supervisor(s) *if invited*, are normally the only persons who may be present at the viva. The supervisor(s) should be

available at the time of the viva examination but may attend only at the specific invitation of the examiners, and after consultation with the candidate; the internal examiner (or moderator) is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor(s) will be available.

The Examining Research Degrees guidance outlines the roles and responsibilities of the persons present at the viva.

The internal and external examiners are equal as examiners, but, whilst the internal will convene the meeting, the internal will normally consider it courteous to defer to the external in the conduct of the examination. When two externals have been appointed, they too are equal as examiners. The supervisor(s) if present may participate only at the invitation of the external(s), and only for points of clarification on specific matters.

If an internal moderator is appointed, they are responsible for ensuring that the University's procedures are followed. The moderator will not examine the thesis and is not permitted to sign off a candidate's minor corrections but instead ensure that one external is designated to check and sign off the minor corrections.

The viva should not normally be less than one and a half hours. When an examination lasts longer than two hours appropriate breaks must be agreed and formally recorded. If the viva is longer than 2 hours, then details of the breaks provided must be stated on the Examiners' Joint Report form, under the account of the viva. When it is envisaged that the examination will last more than 2 hours, breaks should be agreed at the very outset. If the examination runs longer than 1.5 hours, it should be stopped at that point and appropriate breaks agreed. Candidates can be given the option to decline a break if they wish to do so, but this must also be recorded on the Examiners' Joint Report form.

If, owing to illness or other urgent and unforeseen reason, an examiner is unable to attend the viva examination, it may be postponed to a later date. If it seems likely, however, that postponement would be a serious hardship to the candidate, the Head of School should consider whether it is appropriate to appoint an alternative examiner.

Candidates should be told, by the examiners, of the recommendation of outcome to be made on the day of the viva examination. The outcome will be put for the approval of the Quality Assurance Committee and the Registry will issue an outcome letter to the candidate once approval has been given. Approval is normally obtained within 2-3 weeks of receipt of reports from the Examiners, although this will be delayed when the University is closed for public holidays, i.e. over the Christmas break.

11.1.5 Viva Outcomes

As formulated in General Regulation 40 for Research Degrees, the outcomes of a viva are:

(a) the thesis be sustained for the degree being examined

(b) the thesis be sustained for the degree being examined subject to minor corrections being made by the candidate and approved by one of the examiners (usually the internal), normally within three months (up to 6 months is permissible upon the recommendation of the Examiners). This recommendation should be made where minor corrections are either (a) factual, typographic, limited in extent and can be achieved immediately after the viva, or (b) where there is no doubt that the thesis is of a standard for the degree sought but corrections are needed which should not require major re-working nor re-interpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis.

(c) the thesis be not sustained in its present form but that the candidate be given the opportunity to re-submit in a revised form for the same degree within a stated period which should not exceed 12 months

(d) the thesis does not meet the standards for the degree being examined but does meet the standards for the award of a lower degree and the candidate be awarded the latter degree without further examination

(e) the candidate may re-submit the thesis in a revised form for a lower degree within a stated period which shall not exceed twelve months

(f) the thesis be not sustained

The one-year Master of Research degree can also be awarded with Distinction on the unanimous recommendation of the examiners.

11.1.6 Examination Procedures for Joint Degrees with Curtin University

Postgraduate research postgraduate researchers registered for a joint degree with Curtin University shall present a single thesis, the length and format of the thesis must comply with the regulations of both Institutions. A copy of the thesis should be sent to the home institution, who shall provide a copy to the host institution.

The Viva examination is expected to proceed according to the normal procedures for examination of research degrees at the University of Aberdeen, with the possible outcomes from the examination remaining as they are for all research degrees. Examiners are required to refer to the Examining Research Degrees Guidance. Two external examiners shall be appointed (one for Curtin and one for Aberdeen who shall be from the discipline in which the research degree has been undertaken) along with one Moderator internal to the Home institution, who shall not be one of the Supervisors and whose sole role is to uphold the correct conduct of the examination.

11.2 Thesis Corrections

Following QAC approval, the Registry will issue confirmation of the outcome of the viva within 2-3 working days. If there are corrections to be made to the thesis, the time for completing this will start from the date the letter is sent from the Registry.

Along with the outcome of a viva, information will be provided on corrections required, including details of the corrections, how to submit revisions and deadlines and whether a resubmission of the thesis is required. Postgraduate researchers are strongly encouraged to contact their supervisor(s) for guidance on modifications required.

11.3 Resubmission of a Thesis

In cases where a thesis resubmission is required, the resubmitted thesis is submitted to the Registry. The resubmitted thesis will be re-examined by the same examiners. These examiners will review the corrections specified during the first submission. No further criticism of other material or aspects of the thesis, which were initially considered satisfactory, can be introduced at a later stage. However, there are exceptions:

- If a second viva examination is being held
- If the revisions to the thesis have affected the validity of any data output or argument made.

11.3.1 Resubmission of a Thesis where a re-viva is required

There is not normally a viva for a resubmission unless explicitly requested by the examiners in their first Joint Report and approval is given by the Quality Assurance Committee on behalf of Senate.

The resubmitted thesis is submitted to the Registry and will be re-examined by the same examiners who will review the specified corrections from the first submission. However, the thesis as a whole, and not just the parts that were corrected, will be the subject of the viva. Candidates should be prepared to discuss and answer questions on any part of their thesis. For the avoidance of any doubt, in the event of a second viva examination, discussion may cover the entire thesis, but new criticisms or revision requests of the original work cannot be introduced unless the new content affects the validity of any original data output or argument made.

11.3.2 Resubmission Outcomes:

Following re-submission the examiners may recommend that (General Regulation 40 for Research Degrees):

(a) the thesis be sustained

(b) the thesis be sustained with minor corrections

(c) the thesis does not meet the requirements for the degree being examined, but that it does have merits which satisfy the standards required for the award of a lower degree appropriate to the discipline in which the candidate is registered

or

(d) that the thesis be not sustained.

The examiners cannot recommend that the candidate be given another opportunity to resubmit in a revised or modified form as only one resubmission of a thesis will be permitted (General Regulation 40 for Research Degrees).

In cases where the postgraduate researcher indicates that they do not wish to re-submit, the Examiners may decide that if the thesis does not meet the standards for the degree as specified in General Regulation 39 for Research Degrees, but does meet the standards specified for another degree appropriate to the discipline in which the postgraduate researcher is registered, be awarded the latter degree without further examination.

11.4 Final Thesis Submission

Requirements for the deposit of the final thesis are detailed in the Thesis Deposit Declaration and Checklist form, which must be completed when depositing the Thesis to the library. If access to the thesis is to be restricted, for a period that does not exceed 5 years, please ensure that the checklist has been completed along with a case justifying why the thesis should be restricted. This must be signed by your supervisor and Head of School.

11.5 Associate Student Status

A registered postgraduate researcher will be given Associate Student status for a maximum of six months following submission of their thesis. This will allow the postgraduate researcher to have an ID card and access to the library. Following completion of the degree, Associate Student status will remain for a maximum of three months or until graduation, whichever occurs first. After this time the IT account will be closed and ID card invalidated.

11.6 Graduation

All information relating to graduation, including the schedule of Graduation Ceremonies, in-person and *in absentia* dates, procedures on the day of in-person Graduation Ceremonies, gown hire and Graduation photographs, can be found on the graduation website .

It is the responsibility of each postgraduate researcher to apply to graduate and be aware of deadlines. Postgraduate researchers should not wait until they have been examined to apply to graduate.

The degree will not be awarded until the postgraduate researcher formally graduates, i.e. if a postgraduate researcher completes the requirements of their degree programme in October but does not graduate until the following July, the degree certificate will state the latter date.

If a postgraduate researcher owes the University money for any reason (i.e. fees, General Regulation 42 for Research Degrees) the postgraduate researcher will not be permitted to graduate. There is no fee to apply to graduate. There are fees relating to guest tickets, gown hire, and if any photographs are purchased.

11.7 Appeals and Complaints

The University's *Policy on Appeals* and *Complaints Handling Procedure* can be accessed at Appeals and Complaints | Students | The University of Aberdeen

11.7.1 Complaints

If a postgraduate researcher is dissatisfied with a University service, in the first instance any problems/difficulties should be raised with the Supervisor or relevant member of staff within the School. If this is not appropriate, postgraduate researchers should contact their School PGR Director or refer to the Complaints Handling Procedure. The University anticipates that by ensuring that all matters are considered informally at an early stage, problems can and will be resolved quickly and effectively at a local level.

The University's Complaints Handling Procedure provides details of the University's Complaints procedures, timeframes and support available. A complaint may relate to:

- Failure or refusal to provide a service
- Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- The quality of facilities or learning resources
- Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual (although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the institution)
- Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- Disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

11.7.2 Academic Appeals

Those involved in investigating academic appeals will not pursue an appeal that does nothing more than question academic judgement. For example, a postgraduate researcher

cannot appeal simply because they are unhappy or disagree with an assessment outcome. Academic judgement is a matter solely for the relevant School(s) and the Examiners. Academic appeals will only be pursued on grounds where:

i) it is believed that the University's procedures were not followed;
ii) it is believed that the person or body making the decision did not have the authority to do so;
iii) it is believed that the person or body making the decision did not act impartially;
iv) a student considers that they have suffered, or could suffer, material disadvantage

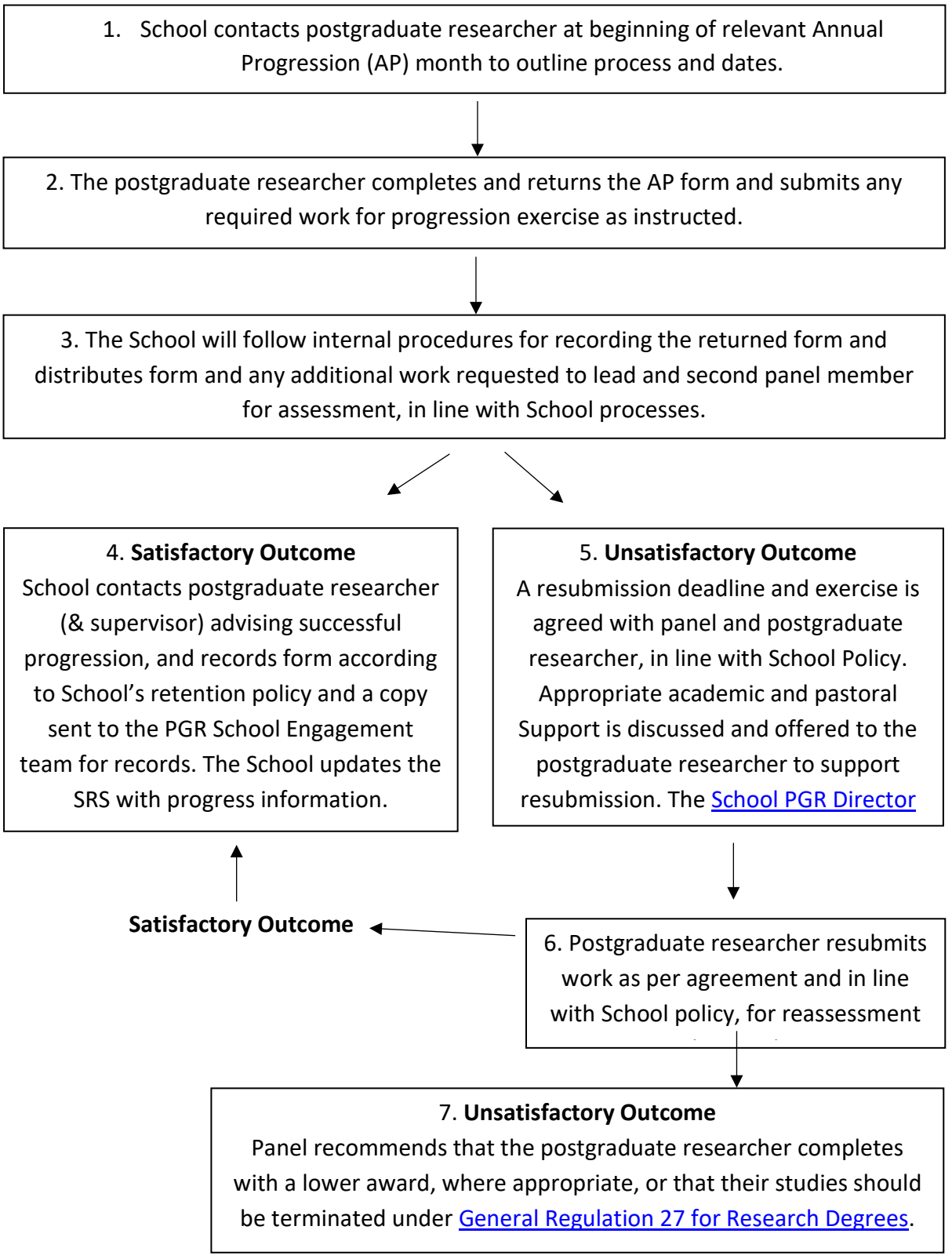
The policy and procedure on student appeals (Section 3) should be referred to if a postgraduate researcher believes that extenuating or mitigating circumstances has affected their performances in assessments or prevented them from taking an examination or meeting a deadline for submission of coursework. Ultimately, a postgraduate researcher must notify the Head of the relevant School(s) immediately, in writing, not more than three days after the date of submission. Where a postgraduate researcher has not given notice of such extenuating or mitigating circumstances (see Glossary of Terms) within the permitted timescale, they cannot be accepted as evidence in support of an appeal unless a satisfactory explanation for the delay in providing the information can be given.

11.8 Postgraduate researcher Feedback and Representation

The University conducts an annual Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) and the Advance HE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) that postgraduate researchers are strongly encouraged to complete and use as platforms to provide feedback on their research degree experience. Information gathered from the questionnaires are considered by Senate, and discussed with individual Schools.

Postgraduate researchers can also feedback any issues that arise to their PGR School Student Representative or AUSA PGR Representative.

Appendix A: Annual Progression Exercise Process



Appendix B: PGR Non-Engagement Monitoring Process: Lack of Engagement

1. Postgraduate researcher not showing reasonable engagement with their research studies, as per expectations stated in Code of Practice.

   If a Supervisor has growing concerns about any postgraduate researcher's medical, psychological or emotional health, the Supervisor should contact the Student Advice and Support Team

↓

2. Supervisor convenes meeting with postgraduate researcher and raises concerns. Actions and timeline to address lack of engagement are agreed.

↓

2.a Postgraduate researcher responds positively to discussion and engages satisfactorily with research project.

No further action required

2.b Concerns are **not** satisfactorily addressed by postgraduate researcher and/or lack of engagement continues

Formal monitoring process triggered, At Risk (C6) raised by supervisor via PGR Director

↓

3. Following the formal procedure for postgraduate researcher monitoring (Postgraduate researcher Monitoring | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk), meeting convened with the postgraduate researcher, School PGR Director and supervisory team to discuss a formal plan of action, timelines and reviews to ensure the postgraduate researcher is meeting expectations of

↓

4.a Postgraduate researcher demonstrates reasonable engagement and meets agreed actions

Postgraduate researcher does not respond to C6, there continues to be unsatisfactory engagement and/or actions not met

C7 as per Postgraduate researcher Monitoring | StaffNet | The University

Appendix C: Examples of good cause for an 'exceptional extension' or suspension of studies

Examples of good cause for an 'exceptional extension' or suspension of studies

a. Serious physical or mental illness of the postgraduate researcher;

b. Death/serious illness of a partner, close family member or close friend;

c. Unforeseeable or unpreventable events such as distress or injury caused by a serious accident; the effects of being a victim of a criminal act or the distress or serious disruption caused by fire, flood or other natural catastrophe;

d. Serious personal problems such as relationship problems, family crises;

e. Unexpected changes to the postgraduate researcher's source of funding (NB: postgraduate researchers must ensure that they have the necessary funds before embarking on their degree);

f. Breakdown of *essential* equipment where a postgraduate researcher is unable to continue research and the use of alternative equipment is not possible;

g. Delays in obtaining ethical approval where approval has been sought in good time;

h. Jury service; military service;

i. Maternity, paternity or adoption leave;

j. Delays in progress due to unforeseen problems with the degree programme and/or working environment (e.g. moving of offices/buildings, supervisor(s) changes and unavailability etc.) which are outside of the postgraduate researcher's control. (NB: the problem **must** be reported to the appropriate School at the time it occurs);

k. Study leave necessary for the degree programme (other than official leave of absence for study at an approved institution or fieldwork – see Section 9.3);

l. Internship/work placement necessary for the degree programme.

The following circumstances will not be regarded as grounds for applying for any extension or a suspension of studies:

m. The postgraduate researcher or supervisor was unaware of policy and application procedures for interruptions and/or extensions for postgraduate degrees. It is ultimately the postgraduate researcher's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures relevant to their degree;

n. Further primary research and/or laboratory work;

o. Long-term holidays/vacations;

p. Inadequate planning and time management;

q. Normal pregnancy (excluding statutory maternity leave entitlement);

r. Difficulties with English language (including delays as a result of proof reading);

s. Computer or other equipment failure or theft where use of an alternative is possible or any loss of work was avoidable, except where the work is lost through the failure of University of Aberdeen systems as confirmed by School or University of Aberdeen IT department;

t. Change in employment conditions: requests from part-time postgraduate researchers who are working while studying may exceptionally be considered where a change in employment conditions was unforeseen. This will not normally be an acceptable reason for postgraduate researchers in the submission pending or resubmission periods.

In addition to the above, the following circumstance *will* not be regarded as grounds for applying for an extension or suspension:

u. Circumstances encountered during supervised study, which should have been dealt with at the time.

The final decision on whether a suspension or an extension is granted or not is at the discretion of the Postgraduate Research Officer on behalf of the Senate.