



University of Essex



Principal Regulations for Research Degrees

2025 - 2026

Authors:	Postgraduate Research Education
Publication date:	1 August 2024
Amended:	-
Review date:	May 2025

Table of Contents

Principal Regulations for Research Degrees	3
<hr/>	
Research Degree requirements	3
Paid duties	4
Distance learning	4
Standard and completion periods	5
Completion period	6
Permission to conduct research away from the University	6
Change of status	7
Change of degree title	8
Thesis requirements	9
Appointment of examiners	10
Appointment of an Independent Chair	11
Oral examination/Viva Voce examination (Viva)	11
Examination results	12
Failure to agree	14
Publication of result	15
Final Thesis submission	15
Conferment of the Degree	15
Appeals and complaints	15
PhD by publication	15
Staff candidature	17

Principal Regulations for Research Degrees

4.1.

The University of Essex confers the following research degrees: Masters by Dissertation (MA or MSc), Masters in Professional Studies (MProf), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Psychology (DPsych) and Professional Doctorate. The Senate has approved *The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees* and *The Code of Practice for Professional Doctorates* that should be used in conjunction with these Regulations. For Regulations 4.2 to 4.91 the 'Dean' refers to the Executive Dean (or their deputy) or Dean of Partnerships (or their deputy).

Research Degree requirements

4.2.

For all the University's research degrees a student shall:

- a) attend such classes, seminars and personal consultations as the supervisor(s) shall require at times arranged by the supervisor(s)
- b) attend Supervisory Panel meetings as required, and produce work and/or other evidence of progress as required by the supervisor and other panel members
- c) submit, in accordance with the regulations and rules governing presentation of such work, a thesis¹ for examination under a title which has been approved by the Head of Department; and
- d) be aware of the requirements of these Regulations and the Code of Practice that govern the award for which the student is registered

¹ 'Thesis' includes dissertations submitted for the degree of Masters by Dissertation.

4.3.

Full-time students are expected to undertake the equivalent amount of study to a full-time job spending 36 hours per week, averaged across the year, engaged in full-time study at the University except in the case of distance learning or those who have specific permission from the Dean.

Paid duties

4.4.

Students must, if relevant, fully comply with the terms and conditions of their scholarship/studentship and the requirements of the Home Office.

Full-time students may, with the consent of their supervisor(s), undertake paid duties alongside their studies.

Students employed to teach or demonstrate at the University of Essex are regulated by their contract and other related documents. A student in further completion, or in an extension to their completion period, is not permitted to be employed to teach or demonstrate at the University.

Distance learning

4.5.

Distance Learning does not normally involve face-to-face contact between a student and their supervisor(s) but instead uses technology to enable supervision from a distance.

A person either not resident within the UK or, in appropriate circumstances, a UK resident who conducts their work remotely, may, on the recommendation of the Head of Department, or nominee, be accepted by the Dean PGRE as a student for a research degree by part-time or full-time Distance Learning. As part of the recommendation, the supervisor and student will agree details of the supervisory arrangement, which will include:

- a) the frequency and mode of contact
- b) the extent of face-to-face contact envisaged
- c) any periods of time to be spent at the University
- d) access to local facilities and expertise where relevant (most commonly in the place of employment), and
- e) arrangements for written reports on research and progress

Standard and completion periods

4.6

The standard period is the minimum time a student is required to be registered on the specific research degree, unless exceptional circumstances exist (see 4.11). If a student does not submit for examination in the standard period they may be permitted to move into a completion period, up to a maximum of three terms (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students) of completion (see 4.10). At the end of the approved completion period a student is expected to submit their thesis. For students who have three terms of completion approved, the final submission date is four weeks before the end of the third term (sixth term for part-time students) of completion. Extensions beyond the completion period will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances approved by the Dean.

The standard and completion periods of study are detailed within regulations relating to specific programmes. *Students starting prior to the 2016-17 academic year will need to refer to the appropriate regulations (see <https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/university-calendar-2016-2017.pdf>) .*

4.7.

At the end of each academic year during their standard period, a student may be permitted to proceed to the next year by the Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)² where it is satisfied that the student has met the requirements as outlined in the relevant milestones document. The RSPB's decision will be reported to the Dean, accompanied by appropriate supporting documents. See 4.13-4.17 for change of status.

4.8.

In exceptional circumstances, the Dean may reduce the standard period of study, provided that:

- a) no more than three terms of the period shall be waived (for a full-time PhD) (pro-rata for other awards and part-time students), and
- b) they are satisfied that the student has completed their study and research and is ready to submit the thesis

² RSPB – Research Students' Progress Board throughout these Regulations

Completion period

4.9.

The period between the end of the standard period and the end of the last expected submission date is known as the completion period.

4.10.

A student may be permitted to proceed into a completion period if they have met the requirements as outlined in the relevant milestones document. The Supervisory Panel will consider the amount of work remaining, and recommend a period of completion of between one and three terms (two and six terms for part-time students). The recommendation will be considered by the RSPB who will:

- for students registered pre-October 2018, report the decision to the Dean
- for students registered post October 2018, submit the relevant recommendation to the Faculty Dean, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation, for consideration and approval.

Students who are permitted to proceed into a completion period will be required on registration to pay the specified completion period fee as determined by the University.

4.11.

Where a student has not met the requirements as outlined in the relevant milestones document the Dean may extend the standard period, by up to one term, on the recommendation of the RSPB. In such instances, the maximum number of completion terms available to the student will subsequently be reduced by one term. In exceptional cases an extension of more than one term may be granted, or the maximum number of completion terms may not be reduced, and consideration will be given on a case by case basis. A student who is not permitted to proceed into a completion period shall pay in advance the appropriate fee for the additional terms of their extended standard period. *Students starting prior to the 2019-20 academic year will need to refer to the appropriate regulations (see <https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/university-calendar-2018-19.pdf>)*

Permission to conduct research away from the University

4.12.

The Head of Department, or nominee, may give permission during the standard period to conduct research away from the University that is either:

- i. for an extended period of time in the UK, or

- ii. outside the UK for any length of time. Approved periods of research away from the University must be reported to the Postgraduate Research Education Team

A student may not spend the first six months of their research degree programme on research away from the University except in special circumstances approved by the Dean.

Normally the maximum time spent on research away from the University is one third of the standard period except in special circumstances approved by the Dean.

Permission under this regulation for Visa sponsored students should be made in consultation with the International Services Team to ensure such permission does not breach Home Office requirements.

Change of status

Upgrading

4.13.

Upgrading can only take place in the standard period.

A student for the degree of Masters by Dissertation may be permitted to transfer to the degree of MPhil or MPhil/PhD by the RSPB. The Dean may permit students to count the period of study begun for the Masters towards the standard period of study required for the degree of MPhil or MPhil/PhD.

A student for the degree of Master of Philosophy may be permitted to transfer to the degree of MPhil/PhD or PhD by the RSPB. The Dean may permit students to count the period of study already undertaken for the MPhil towards the standard period of study required for the degree of PhD.

Upgrading for Visa sponsored students should be made in consultation with the International Services Team to ensure a change does not breach Home Office requirements.

Downgrading

4.14.

Downgrading may take place at any time prior to the submission of the thesis. Downgrading for Visa sponsored students should be made in consultation with the International Services Team to ensure a change does not breach Home Office requirements.

The Dean may, after a recommendation from the RSPB, require that the registration status of a student for the degree of MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD or Professional Doctorate be changed to either the degree of MPhil, Masters by Dissertation or a Masters of Science as appropriate.

Discontinuation

4.15.

Discontinuation may take place at any time prior to the submission of the thesis.

The Dean may, after a recommendation from the RSPB, require a student to discontinue as a research degree student.

Full-time/part-time

4.16.

Students are not normally allowed to transfer from full-time study to part-time study in the final term of their standard period.

Students are required to undertake periods of part-time study in multiples of two terms, before requesting a change to full time study (two terms of part-time study equate to one term of full-time study).

The Dean may permit transfer from one mode of study to another, eg from full-time to part-time, (including distance learning) or vice-versa. The Dean will not normally permit a change of mode of study within the final six months of the standard period. Students who have changed from full-time to part-time or vice-versa will have any completion period calculated on the predominant mode of study for their standard period. A student who commences and remains on a part-time mode of study will have up to six terms of completion available (the pro-rata equivalent of three terms for full-time study). A student who has completed two-thirds or more of their standard period on a part-time mode of study, having switched between full-time and part-time study during their standard period, and is entering a period of completion as a part-time student, will have up to six terms of completion available (the pro-rata equivalent of three terms for full-time study). A student who has completed less than two thirds of their standard period on a part-time mode of study or is entering completion as a full-time student, will have up to the full-time equivalent of three terms of completion applied (unless exceptional circumstances exist, considered on a case-by-case basis). Changes from full-time to part-time, (including distance learning) or vice-versa for Student Visa sponsored students should be made in consultation with the International Services Team to ensure a change does not breach Home Office requirements.

Change of degree title

4.17.

The Dean may permit a change of degree title via a transfer to an alternative, approved PhD programme.

Thesis requirements

4.18.

The maximum word length for the thesis is specified within each programme.

A thesis submitted for examination must not exceed the maximum word length for the degree unless previously submitted for a higher award. When a student wishes to submit a thesis that exceeds the maximum word length permission must be sought from the Dean at least one month prior to the submission of the thesis.

4.19.

The thesis will include a summary or abstract of the work not exceeding 300 words in length.

4.20.

The thesis and summary must normally be in English. This does not include quotations. The Dean may approve, at admission to the programme of study, a request for the thesis to be in another language.

4.21.

A student who is about to submit a thesis must give at least two months' prior notice in writing to the Dean. The Head of Department, or nominee, must approve the title of the thesis.

4.22.

Copies of a thesis for examination shall be submitted according to the University [Policy on Thesis Submission, Deposit and Retention](#) (.pdf)

4.23.

The form of a thesis may vary. A thesis will normally consist of an investigation by one author of a unified theme of research. Where a thesis includes any work that has been written or produced in collaboration with another person(s), the candidate must explicitly acknowledge this, and must state, normally in a preface to the thesis, the extent and nature of the contribution of the other person(s). This applies whether or not the co-written or co-produced work has been published in any format before the examination of the thesis.

In cases where the submission takes the form of a thesis by papers, the thesis must be submitted in accordance with the [Guidance Notes for Submitting a Thesis as a Series of Papers](#) (.pdf). The thesis as a series of papers consists of a minimum of three papers of publishable quality, preceded by a substantial introduction and a conclusion. The student must use the introductory section of their thesis to outline the context of the research and to set the overarching, unifying question which the thesis addresses. The introductory section should include a literature review and an outline of the

methodologies employed. The overall work must constitute a coherent and continuous thesis, rather than a series of disconnected papers. In case of co-authorship the candidate has to be the sole author of at least one of the papers and has to be the main contributor to the research and production of the other papers. Additionally, a co-authored thesis has to be submitted together with a 'Statement of Authorship'.

In the case of a thesis involving original creative output, the thesis must embody the results of research carried out and/or output created during the approved period of study. The thesis must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work.

4.24.

A candidate must clearly identify all sources, published and unpublished, from which material in the thesis is derived, and must supply full references to all sources, in an appropriate format, both in the body of the text and in the bibliography or reference list.

4.25.

A candidate must ensure that their thesis does not contain material the publication of which may lead to liability under English law, specifically (but not limited to): intellectual property law; data protection law; defamation law; and discrimination law.

4.26.

A thesis may not incorporate, whether in the same or different form, work that has been submitted to this or to any other Higher Education provider for a degree unless the subject of the research is an extension or continuation of research begun for such a degree. In such a case the extent of the material and the degree, if any, obtained should be indicated. The candidate may be required to produce the work previously submitted. An exception to this regulation will apply where the thesis is resubmitted after unsuccessful submission for a higher award at the University of Essex (see 4.33).

4.27.

Upon submission of a thesis for examination, a student becomes a candidate for that degree.

Appointment of examiners

4.28.

A candidate for a research degree shall be examined by at least two persons appointed for the purpose by the Dean. For student candidates, the examiners shall include a member of the Academic staff of the University of Essex or Partner Institution, as the internal examiner, and an external examiner who shall be independent of the University of Essex and its Partner Institutions. For staff candidates see 4.43 below.

In cases where a re-examination is necessary and the internal examiner has left the University after the original examination they shall normally continue to act as the internal examiner for the re-examination.

No person who has been a supervisor of the candidate's work shall be appointed as an examiner nor shall such a person be present at a viva of that candidate except in special circumstances to be approved in each individual case by the Dean and with the agreement of the external examiner.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a person who has temporarily supervised the candidate's work for not more than six months in the absence of the permanent supervisor may, in exceptional circumstances, be appointed an examiner, provided that they have not acted as a temporary supervisor during any part of the six months before the candidate is examined.

No person who has a professional or personal relationship with the candidate that might give rise to a conflict of interest shall be appointed as an examiner. Except with the prior permission of the Dean, both examiners (or, where more than two are appointed, all examiners) shall be present when a viva is held.

For the examination of a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Medicine the external examiner shall normally be medically qualified and/or experienced in the relevant area of research.

The University takes gender equality seriously. When recommending and appointing examiners and, if appropriate, an Independent Chair, every effort shall be made to achieve a reasonable gender balance.

Appointment of an Independent Chair

4.29.

As determined by the University *Policy on the Appointment of an Independent Chair* (.pdf), the Dean may appoint an Independent Chair to oversee the conduct of the viva.

Oral examination/Viva Voce examination (Viva)

4.30.

The viva will normally be held within two months of the submission of the thesis for examination if submitted in accordance with regulations 4.21 and 4.22.

A candidate must attend a viva, except when the Dean, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners, excuses a candidate from the viva.

A candidate will normally only be excused from the viva where the viva has been arranged for a re-examination following a referral period and where the examiners are in agreement that the candidate is

now in a position to pass the viva, or where there are exceptional circumstances which prevent a candidate from engaging in the viva process.

A viva will not be waived where one or more examiners has deemed from reading the thesis that the candidate seems likely to fail, only eligible for a lower award or to be referred.

4.31.

A viva may be conducted either in person or via video link in accordance with the University [Policy on the Conduct of Research Degree Vivas](#) (.pdf).

4.32.

Supervisor(s) are not normally permitted to be present at the viva. The student's supervisor can only be present in exceptional circumstances, to be approved on an individual basis by the Dean and with the agreement of the external examiner. It is good practice to invite the supervisor to attend at the end of the viva when the examiners communicate their recommendation to the candidate. The attendance of the supervisor in these circumstances is with the permission of the examiners and the candidate.

Examination results

For all research degrees

Viva outcomes

4.33.

The outcomes available for each degree, and any lower award, are specified in the programme requirements below. The outcomes are:

- a) *Pass subject to no corrections*
- b) *Pass subject to typographical/presentational corrections.* The candidate makes any corrections prior to submission of the final version of the thesis, usually within four weeks of being notified of the outcome
- c) *Pass subject to minor corrections* to be made within three months. The examiners must provide a list of corrections that they wish to see made. Minor corrections should not require the candidate to conduct further research or undertake substantial further work. These include typographical errors, clarifying points, rephrasing, editing/adding paragraphs, correcting references, etc. The internal examiner must confirm in writing that these have been made satisfactorily. Corrections must be made and the thesis submitted within three months

- d) Pass *subject to major corrections* to be made within six months. The examiners must provide a separate list of corrections that they wish to see made. Major corrections require the candidate to undertake substantial further work but the corrected thesis should not require re-examination. Such major corrections include more extensive editorial revisions, the addition of substantial new material, re-writing of substantial parts of the thesis, re-analysis of existing data, etc. The internal examiner must confirm in writing that these have been made satisfactorily. Corrections must be made and the thesis submitted within six months
- e) Referral for re-examination in up to 12 months. The candidate has not met the requirements for the degree examined but may resubmit, on one occasion only, a revised thesis for re-examination within 12 months. The examiners must provide a separate statement describing the shortcomings of the thesis and the changes required. These may include, amongst other things, editorial corrections and revisions, rewriting a part, parts or the whole of the thesis, the carrying out of further research and/or experimental work. They must also specify the referral period, which should not normally be less than six months or exceed 12 months

For viva outcomes (f) to (i) (below) the candidate is awarded a degree at a lower level from the qualification for which they were initially assessed (for example awarding a MPhil to a PhD candidate). In such cases, the examiners must clearly provide in their statement how the candidate has met the criteria for the lower award in addition to the reasons for not meeting the criteria for the higher award.

- f) Award of a (lower award) *subject to no corrections*
- g) Award of a (lower award) *subject to minor typographical/presentational corrections*. The candidate makes any corrections prior to submission of the final version of the thesis
- h) Award of a (lower award) *subject to minor corrections* to be made within three months. The candidate has not met the requirements for the degree examined but has met the requirements for the (lower award) subject to the approval of minor corrections. The examiners must provide a list of the corrections that they wish to see made. Minor corrections should not require the candidate to conduct further research or undertake substantial further work. These include typographical errors, clarifying points, rephrasing, editing/adding paragraphs, correcting references, etc. The internal examiner must confirm in writing these have been made satisfactorily. Corrections must be made and the thesis submitted within three months
- i) Award of a (lower award) *subject to major corrections* to be made within six months. The candidate has not met the requirements for the degree examined but has met the requirements for the (lower award) subject to the approval of major corrections. The examiners must provide a list of the corrections that they wish to see made. Major corrections require the candidate to undertake substantial further work but the corrected thesis should not require re-examination. Such major

corrections include more extensive editorial revisions, the addition of substantial new material, re-writing of substantial parts of the thesis, re-analysis of existing data, etc. and the internal examiner must confirm in writing that these have been made satisfactorily. Revisions must be made and thesis submitted within six months

- j) Referral for a (lower award). The candidate has not met the requirements for the degree examined but may resubmit a revised thesis for re-examination for a (lower award). The examiners must provide a statement describing the shortcomings of the thesis and the changes required. These may include, amongst other things, editorial corrections and revisions, rewriting a part, parts or the whole of the thesis, the carrying out of further research and/or experimental work. They must also specify the referral period, which should not normally be less than six months or exceed 12 months
- k) Fail. The examiners must provide a clear statement describing the shortcomings of the thesis.

Any student who receives an outcome that includes 'subject to corrections' who fails to complete the corrections satisfactorily by the deadline will be given additional feedback from the examiner/examination team and afforded one further period to complete the corrections required.

Any student who does not successfully complete the corrections to the satisfaction of the examiner/examination team following the second (and final) attempt, may receive an outcome of either a lower award or a fail, as deemed appropriate by the examination team

Refusal by a student to complete the stipulated corrections, including not engaging during the corrections period, will result in the original thesis being returned to the examiner(s) and may result in an outcome of either a lower award or a fail, as deemed appropriate by the examiner/examination team. A student may appeal the final decision in line with the published Appeals Procedure for Research Degree Students

Failure to agree

4.34.

In the event of disagreement on the viva outcome, the examiners may, after due consideration between themselves, certify that their failure to agree on an outcome is irreconcilable. Two new examiners shall then be appointed. The new examiners shall examine the thesis and conduct a viva. The new examiners may recommend to the Dean any result that was open to the original examiners and their decision on the recommendation shall be final, subject only to any right of appeal that may be given under the provisions of other Regulations.

Publication of result

4.35.

A candidate shall normally be informed of the result of the viva within one month from the date of the viva. Candidates are entitled to receive copies of the examiners' reports on their thesis on request, when examining is complete.

Final Thesis submission

4.36.

Before being eligible for the conferment of the degree, the candidate shall deposit a copy or copies of the thesis according to the University *Policy on Thesis Submission, Deposit and Retention* (.pdf).

Conferment of the Degree

4.37.

The Dean determines the conferment or otherwise of the degree.

Appeals and complaints

4.38.

A student or candidate has the right to appeal a Research Student Progress Board decision or a viva outcome following the *Progress and Appeals Procedures for Research Degree Students* (.pdf).

A student or candidate has the right to make a formal complaint following the *Student Concerns and Complaints Procedure* (.pdf).

PhD by publication

4.39.

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Publication must either:

- i. be a graduate of this University, or
- a current member of staff of the University and its Partner Institutions or have been a member of staff of the University and its Partner Institutions within the past 12 months, or

- be a graduate of another University with at least five year's standing, normally holding a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and evidence of substantial professional work experience,

and have published work of a nature and depth consistent with the doctoral level research and/or practice.

As well as standard academic or creative publications, 'published work' may include performance, exhibition, installation, media of various kinds as defined in relevant regulations and policies, provided that it is made available in an appropriate recorded format. The body of published work must be of appropriate quantity and quality of research and/or practice equivalent to that of a traditional PhD student.

Published work must:

- i. form a coherent body of research
- ii. be timely and current as determined by academic judgement
- iii. demonstrate sufficient substance and significance as to meet the criteria for the Doctor of Philosophy as specified in regulation 4.69

The published work submitted must be formally published by the date of registration; works not yet submitted for publication are ineligible for submission.

In all cases, a written critical analysis should accompany the published work (or Practice as Research submission), as well as a statement outlining the contribution the work makes to the field. The total submission should be equivalent to the standard thesis requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The maximum period of study shall normally be six months. The Executive Dean or nominee can exceptionally permit a period of up to twelve months.

4.40.

To apply for the admission to PhD study, a candidate must consult with the Head of the relevant academic Department and submit to them their evidence of published work of a nature which is consistent with the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, as well as their accompanying critical analysis or plans to develop the critical analysis under the supervision of an appointed supervisor/supervisory team. The Head of Department will make a recommendation to the Executive Dean, or nominee, outlining the candidate's eligibility (or ineligibility) for admission to the PhD by Publication, to include:

- i. A list of the publications or other outputs on which the assessment for the degree is to be based as well as a comment on the suitability of the submitted work

- ii. The supervisor(s) to be appointed to support the writing of the critical analysis and advise the candidate on the inclusions of published work and coherence of the body of research work
- iii. The duration of registration

The quality of the publisher/venue/outlet(s) (i.e. scholarly journals, scholarly texts, curated productions) within which publications or other outputs have been published and the timeliness of the research will be assessed as part of the application procedure.

4.41.

The Head of Department or nominee shall recommend for approval by Faculty Dean Postgraduate the names of two examiners, one of whom shall be an external examiner. This recommendation shall not normally be made later than two months before the expected date of the submission of the work to be examined. Current members of staff, that also meet the requirement to be considered a staff candidate in regulation 4.44, will need to be examined in accordance with Regulation 4.46.

4.42.

Candidates for the award of PhD by Publication must attend a viva, except when the Executive Dean or nominee may, on sufficient grounds submitted by the examiners, excuse a candidate from the viva. The examiners for a submission by published work shall declare the result of an examination for:

- a) the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as 'pass', 'minor corrections to the summary' 'resubmission of published work on one further occasion only', 'award of Master of Philosophy' or 'fail'
- b) the degree of Master of Philosophy as 'pass', 'minor corrections to the summary' 'resubmission of published work on one further occasion only', 'award of Masters by Dissertation' or 'fail'
- c) the degree of Masters by Dissertation as 'pass', 'minor corrections to the summary' 'resubmission of published work on one further occasion only' or 'fail'

Staff candidature

4.43.

Members of staff of the University and its Partner Institutions may apply to become students for a research degree and will be registered as students, and all Regulations and Policies will apply, except where stipulated.

4.44.

Candidates who commence their studies as a registered research student and take up employment at the University or a Partner Institution at any point prior to submission of their thesis and/or any point

during the examination processes, for an employment duration of more than six months may be examined as a staff candidate:

- a) Students solely employed in a role outside the Academic Department within which they are registered, or those employed as either an Assistant Lecturer, Graduate Laboratory Assistant, or Graduate Demonstrator, will not be examined as a staff candidate
- b) Students that previously had employment at the University or a Partner Institution, but ceased being employed more than 12 months prior to thesis submission, will not be examined as a staff candidate
- c) Students whose employment is not excluded within regulation 4.44 (a) or (b) will be examined as a staff candidate, unless a case can be made that the employment does not give rise to any potential conflict of interest that necessitates the student being examined as a staff candidate. The student's supervisor must outline the duration of employment and nature of the work undertaken by the student, and outline why the student should not be examined as a staff candidate. The relevant Faculty Dean (PG) will consider the supervisor's recommendation, and determine whether or not the student should be examined as a staff candidate

4.45.

Members of staff of the University and its Partner Institutions may become candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy or Masters by Dissertation on the following conditions:

- a) candidates may submit a thesis, practice as research, published research work, or a combination, if the volume of published work is deemed to require supplementing with further research and/or analysis. Following consultation with the relevant Head of Department, the Executive Dean or nominee will determine whether the intended submission is of sufficient quality and quantity. With the permission of the Dean they may submit the results of research that cannot be presented in these forms. Application for such permission should be made through the Head of Department or nominee
- b) the work will be examined as either published work or a thesis (see 4.49 below). The Dean will determine how the work is categorised for examination
- c) in the case of work examined as published work, the definition of published work outlined in regulation 4.39 (above) is applied

4.46.

The viva for staff candidates shall be conducted by two external examiners appointed by the Executive Dean or nominee. The Executive Dean or nominee shall appoint an Independent Chair for all staff candidates.

4.47.

The examiners for a submission by thesis may recommend any result that is available for the degree examined (see 4.53, 4.58 or 4.69). The examiners for a submission by publication may recommend any result available in regulation 4.42.

Joint and Dual Awards and co-supervision

4.48.

Joint and dual awards and co-supervision of research students are determined by the University Policy on Dual and Joint Research Awards (.pdf).

The rules and regulations relating to joint awards are agreed as part of the Due Diligence and Institutional Approval Process. The standard University Principal Regulations for Research Degrees do not apply to Joint Research Awards.

Masters by Dissertation

4.49.

A student shall follow a programme of supervised research approved by the Senate.

Periods of study

4.50.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Masters by Dissertation	FT	One year	Up to three terms
Masters by Dissertation	PT	Two years	Up to six terms

Requirements of the award

4.51.

A dissertation for the degree of Masters by Dissertation is required to present the results of research carried out during the approved period of study and should demonstrate advanced understanding of the area of study. In the dissertation and the oral examination the candidate is required to present the results of research that either forms original work or is an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge. The dissertation should set out the relationship between the candidate’s work and the wider field of knowledge, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.

In the case of a dissertation involving original creative output, the dissertation must embody the results of research carried out/or output created during the approved period of study and should demonstrate advanced understanding of the area of study. The dissertation must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. The dissertation should set out the relationship between the candidate’s work and the wider field of knowledge/the genre, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.

Word length

4.52.

The maximum word length of the dissertation is 30,000 words, excluding any references and bibliography. Maximum word length for a dissertation including creative output may vary depending on the format of the dissertation.

Examination outcomes

4.53.

For the examination outcomes read thesis for dissertation. No lower award. Examiners may recommend one of the following examination outcomes on academic grounds: (a), (b), (c), (d), or (h) (see 4.33 for definitions).

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

4.54.

A student shall follow a programme of supervised research approved by the Senate.

Periods of study

4.55.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Master of Philosophy	FT	Two years	Up to three terms
Master of Philosophy	PT	Four years	Up to six terms

Requirements of the award

4.56.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study and should make a contribution to knowledge. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to present the results of research that either forms

original work or is an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge. The thesis should set out the relationship between the candidate’s work and the wider field of knowledge, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.

In the case of a thesis involving original creative output, the thesis must embody the results of research carried out and/or output created during the approved period of study. The thesis must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. Within the thesis the student must show evidence of the originality of the work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge/the genre. The thesis should demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the candidate’s work and the wider field of knowledge/the genre, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.

Word length

4.57.

The maximum word length of the thesis is 50,000 words, excluding any references and bibliography. Maximum word length for a thesis including creative output may vary depending on the format of the thesis.

Examination outcomes

4.58.

Lower award: Masters by Dissertation. When the original examination was for a PhD and the candidate was referred for a MPhil there is no lower award.

Examiners may recommend one of the following examination outcomes on academic grounds: (a) to (k) (see 4.33 for definitions).

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

4.59.

A student shall follow a programme of supervised research approved by the Senate.

Periods of study

4.60.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Doctor of Philosophy	FT	Three years	Up to three terms

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Doctor of Philosophy	PT	Six years	Up to six terms

Confirmation

4.61.

All PhD students are initially registered as MPhil/PhD except in individual cases where an MPhil student is allowed by the Dean to upgrade in accordance with Regulation 4.13.

4.62.

At the end of the first year of full-time study (or the equivalent for part-time) students studying in the Faculty of Social Sciences or Faculty of Arts and Humanities may have their PhD registration confirmed. Students studying in the Faculty of Science and Health may have their PhD registration confirmed during the first term of the second year of full-time study (or the equivalent for part-time). Partner Institutions shall determine the confirmation requirements for their programmes.

4.63.

The RSPB shall decide that a student's PhD status is confirmed only when it is satisfied that the student has produced work of sufficient quality and quantity to provide evidence of appropriate PhD-level progress. The RSPB's decision will be reported to the Dean, accompanied by appropriate supporting documents.

4.64.

In exceptional cases, if the RSPB is satisfied that a student has produced work of sufficient quality and quantity to provide evidence of appropriate PhD-level progress and the agreed milestones for confirmation had been met, PhD status could be confirmed earlier.

4.65.

A student whose PhD status is confirmed shall have their registration changed to PhD.

If a student's PhD status is not confirmed at the first meeting of the RSPB that considers the confirmation decision, their progress will be re-evaluated at the next RSPB meeting held in the following term, following consideration by an additional Supervisory Panel meeting.

4.66.

If a student's PhD status is not confirmed at the second meeting, the RSPB shall recommend to the Dean that the student's status be changed to MPhil or Masters by Dissertation, or that the student be required to withdraw. The Dean may accept or reject the recommendation, taking into account all the

circumstances. Where the recommendation to change the student's status is accepted by the Dean the standard period of study will be reduced accordingly.

Requirements of the award

4.67.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to conduct and present original investigations that make a significant contribution to knowledge, to test ideas, whether the candidate's own or those of others, to understand the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge and to express themselves clearly and concisely.

In the case of a thesis involving original creative output, the thesis must embody the results of research carried out and/or output created during the approved period of study. The thesis must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. Within the thesis and oral examination the student must show evidence of the originality of the work, demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of the theme of the thesis to a wider field of knowledge, make a significant contribution to knowledge/the genre, and must express themselves clearly and concisely.

Word length

4.68.

The maximum word length of the thesis is 80,000 words, excluding any references and bibliography. Maximum word length for a thesis including creative output may vary depending on the format of the thesis.

Examination outcomes

4.69.

Lower award: Master of Philosophy (MPhil). Examiners may recommend one of the following examination outcomes on academic grounds: (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) or (h) (see 4.33 for definitions).

Integrated Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

4.70.

A student shall follow a programme approved by the Senate.

The first year shall comprise an intensively taught period of training at the end of which the student will be formally assessed. On successful completion, the first year will be followed by three years of supervised research following the requirements set out for PhDs. In some programmes, the student will receive further training in professional and research skills in the second year that will also be formally assessed.

Periods of Study

4.71.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Integrated Doctor of Philosophy	FT	Four years	Up to three terms
Integrated Doctor of Philosophy	PT	Eight years	Up to six terms

Confirmation

4.72.

For students on an Integrated PhD, the process of confirmation occurs in the second year for students studying in the Faculty of Social Sciences or the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and in the third year for students studying in the Faculty of Science and Health. The confirmation process is as per 4.64-4.67.

Requirements of the award

As per 4.67.

Word length

As per 4.68.

Examination outcomes

As per 4.69.

Doctor of Philosophy by Programme (PhD)

4.73.

A student shall follow a three-year programme approved by the Senate. In addition to the three years of supervised research following the requirements set out for PhDs, the programme commences with a six-month, intensively taught, period of training at the end of which the study will be formally assessed as specified at the time of admission.

Periods of study

4.74.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Doctor of Philosophy by Programme	FT	Three years	Up to three terms
Doctor of Philosophy by Programme	PT	Six years	Up to six terms

Confirmation

As per 4.61-4.66.

Requirements of the award

As per 4.67.

Word length

As per 4.68.

Examination outcomes

As per 4.69.

Professional Doctorates

4.75.

A student shall follow a programme of study approved by the Senate. The requirements for each programme shall prescribe the period of study, whether in or outside the University and the form of assessment required of students.

Periods of study

4.76.

The mode, standard and completion periods of study are prescribed in the requirements of each programme.

Completion period for full-time Professional Doctorates

4.77.

There is no completion period for students on full-time Professional Doctorate programmes. If a student is not ready to submit their thesis at the end of the standard period the Dean, on the recommendation of the Research Students' Progress Board, shall extend the standard period. The appropriate full-time fee is payable for the additional terms of the extended standard period.

Requirements of the award

4.78.

A thesis submitted for a professional doctorate must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to conduct and present original investigations that make a significant contribution to the nature of practice within the profession or to the way theory is applied, to understand the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge and to express themselves clearly and concisely.

Word length

4.79.

The maximum word length of the thesis is 40,000 words, excluding any references and bibliography.

Examination results

4.80.

Lower award: Masters by Dissertation (or other award in accordance with the rules of assessment for the programme). Examiners may recommend one of the following examination outcomes on academic grounds: (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) or (h) (see 4.33 for definitions).

Doctor of Medicine (MD)

4.81.

A student shall follow a two-year part-time programme of supervised research approved by the Senate. Students shall be jointly supervised by a member of the Academic or Research staff of the University and an appropriately qualified and experienced associate supervisor employed by an NHS Trust associated with the University of Essex.

Periods of study

4.82.

The normal standard and completion periods of study are:

	Mode	Standard	Completion
Doctor of Medicine	PT only	Two years	Up to three terms

Requirements of the award

4.83.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Medicine must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study and make a significant contribution to the field in some subject of Medicine. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to conduct and present original investigations that make a significant contribution to knowledge, to test ideas, whether the

candidate's own or those of others, to understand the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge and to express themselves clearly and concisely.

Word length

4.84.

The maximum word length of the thesis is 65,000 words, excluding any references and bibliography.

Examination outcomes

4.85.

No lower award. Examiners may recommend one of the following examination outcomes on academic grounds: (a), (b), (c), (d) or (h) (see 4.33 for definitions).

Document Control Panel

Field	Description
Title	Principal Regulations for Research Degrees 2025-26
Policy Classification	Regulation
Security Classification	Open
Security Rationale	N/A
Policy Manager Role	Senior Postgraduate Research Education Manager
Nominated Contact	pgresearch@essex.ac.uk
Responsible UoE Section	Academic Section
Approval Body	Senate
Signed Off Date	N/A
Publication Status	Published
Published Date	August 2024
Last Review Date	May 2024
Minimum Review Frequency	Yearly
Review Date	May 2025
UoE Identifier	0249

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact the nominated contact at pgresearch@essex.ac.uk.