



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON  
RESEARCH DEGREES**

**2008**

## Foreword to the 2008 Edition

This Policy and Guidance has been approved by the University's Education Committee as the framework of expectations which the committee wishes to see underpin the provision of research degrees within the University. The approval has been made on the basis that the format of the policy and guidance documents was considered and approved by Council, and the three-fold structure of regulations, policy requirements and guidance on good practice reflects Council's endorsement. It is expected that all departments and faculties will normally observe the regulations and policy requirements.

Some responses to the earlier editions of the document have found the significant amount of repetition in its various sections, intended to minimise the need for frequent cross-reference, unhelpful. Others have however wished to preserve the lists of responsibilities for different bodies or office-holders, and for that reason the approach has been maintained. Shaded text indicates material newly added to the Policy and Guidance.

The Policy and Guidance largely reflects existing practice within the University, and so much of what is described is already in place. It should now also be read in conjunction with the relevant divisional guidance, and in particular the Divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision. For national expectations please see section one of the QAA Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Programmes at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section1/postgrad2004.pdf>.

This document will be found on the Education Committee section of the University website at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/resdegs08.pdf> or <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/resdegs08.doc>.

Divisional/CE Codes of Practice for Supervision are found at:

- MPLS:  
<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/graduateprog.html>
- Humanities: [http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/graduate\\_study/research\\_degrees](http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/graduate_study/research_degrees)
- Social Sciences:  
[http://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/studying\\_at\\_oxford/code\\_of\\_practice\\_on\\_supervision\\_of\\_graduate\\_research\\_students](http://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/studying_at_oxford/code_of_practice_on_supervision_of_graduate_research_students)
- Medical Sciences:  
<http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/portal/notices/news/2007/code-of-practice-for-supervisors/>
- Continuing Education:  
<http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/studentssupport/PDF/Files/supervisionguidancePG.pdf>.

## CONTENTS

1: Introduction .....	6
2: Admissions and selection procedure .....	7
Information for applicants.....	7
English language requirements .....	8
Equal opportunities .....	8
Special needs.....	9
First degree requirements.....	9
Study and residence requirements .....	9
External supervision.....	9
3: Induction and the early stages of research .....	11
Induction .....	11
The initial term.....	12
Skills training .....	13
4: The role of the supervisor(s) .....	15
The Memorandum of Guidance .....	15
Agreeing to supervise .....	15
Prior to arrival and first meeting.....	15
Likely early duties of the supervisor(s) .....	15
Meetings with the supervisor and written work.....	16
Reports on the student's work.....	16
Other possible tasks undertaken by the supervisor(s).....	16
Extract from the Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students .....	17
5: The role of the student .....	20
The Memorandum of Guidance .....	20
Overriding responsibility .....	20
The early stages of the course.....	20

Working with the supervisor(s) .....	20
Responsibilities in connection with submission .....	21
Extract from the Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students .....	22
<b>6: The role of the Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Distribution of responsibilities.....	23
Overall responsibility.....	23
Admissions.....	23
Induction and the early stages of the course .....	25
Supervision and relations between supervisors and students .....	25
Teaching by graduate students.....	26
Feedback .....	27
Complaints and appeals .....	27
<b>7: The role of the department/faculty within the division .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Departmental/faculty responsibilities .....	28
General responsibilities.....	28
Specific functions.....	29
<b>8: Transfer and confirmation of status.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Background.....	30
Transfer of status.....	30
Transfer in relation to performance in a master's course .....	30
Possible outcomes.....	30
The assessment process.....	31
Unsuccessful applications.....	32
Confirmation of status.....	33
The confirmation process.....	33
Unsuccessful applications and appeals .....	34

9: Complaints and appeals.....	35
10: Study Requirements.....	36
Background.....	36
Dispensation from residence.....	36
Extensions of time.....	36
Suspensions of status .....	37
Reinstatement.....	37
Applications outside normal limits .....	38
11: Teaching by graduate students.....	39
12: Examination of research degrees.....	40
Background.....	40
Approval and appointment of examiners.....	40
Questions about examiners .....	41
Procedures involved with the appointment of examiners .....	41
Enquiries before and after the viva .....	42
Complaints .....	42
13: Sources of information and advice .....	43
ANNEXE 1: SKILLS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS.....	44
ANNEXE 2: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS .....	47
ANNEXE 3: EPSC CIRCULAR RE TRANSFER AND CONFIRMATION ....	49
ANNEXE 4: QAA FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS.....	51

## 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Policy and Guidance for Research Degrees provides three categories of information and guidance on the framework within which the University expects research degrees to be offered and administered. First, it draws on the *Examination Regulations* (which have overriding authority) and especially on the *Memorandum of Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors*, which is set out in the *Examination Regulations*. General Regulations will be found in the chapters dealing with individual research degrees, e.g. M.Sc. by Research, M.Litt., D.Phil., and will also be found in special subject regulations for research students. Second, it includes policy requirements which Council expects that responsible bodies will observe in framing their own policy and practice (including any special regulations). Where those bodies wish to vary that policy or practice significantly from the policy requirements set out by the Education Committee, they will be required to present a reasoned case, and to receive approval from or on behalf of the Education Committee. These policy requirements have been supplemented by divisional material, and in particular the divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision. Third, it incorporates good practice guidance.

Material from or reflecting the regulations is set out in **bold**, policy requirements (including the *Memorandum of Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors*) in *italics*, and good practice suggestions (and descriptive linkages) in ordinary type.

The Education Committee will review all parts of the document annually in the light of reports from examiners, feedback from students, the annual reports of the Proctors, and comments from divisions, faculties and departments.

1.2 The Policy and Guidance reflects the established framework for research degrees within the University. In addition to describing the roles and responsibilities of those principally involved in the processes, it seeks to promote a consistent and fair approach across all subjects. Research environments differ considerably and the range of subjects, disciplines, types, styles and places of work, may lead to some variation in what is provided in different subjects; this will be reflected in the individual subject guidance provided by faculties and departments. However practice within all departments, faculties and divisions is already required to observe the requirements set out in the *Examination Regulations*, and should now also reflect the general policy requirements set out in the Policy and Guidance, (and taking account of the divisional codes), unless a specific exemption has been sought and granted by the Education Committee.

1.3 The Policy and Guidance should be read in conjunction with other related policies and guidance, particularly that regarding legal and other obligations, for example in relation to:

- ❑ [Health and Safety](#)
- ❑ [Data Protection](#)
- ❑ [Academic Integrity in Research and Ethical Review Processes](#)
- ❑ [Equal Opportunities](#)

## 2: ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

**General regulations governing admission to Probationer Research Student, M.Sc. by Research, M.Litt. or D.Phil. status are set out in the relevant sections of the *Examination Regulations*. These should be read in conjunction with the associated special regulations made by individual boards or departments.**

### Information for applicants

#### *Policy requirements relating to admissions procedures*

2.1 *An admitting body should ensure that information relating to postgraduate research possibilities is clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to enable applicants to make informed choices. Careful consideration should also be given to the type of information that is available to potential candidates prior to accepting the offer of a place. As well as indicating the formal structure of a research programme, information describing the range of expectations, entitlements and responsibilities of a graduate student undertaking a postgraduate research programme is of obvious assistance to applicants. Consistency of data between the University's information for graduate students, especially in the Graduate Prospectus, and information provided by the department, faculty or division, is of the utmost importance. The Education Committee attaches particular importance to comprehensive and practical information being made available to prospective students via the individual PGR templates of provision accessed via the Graduate Admissions website.*

#### Good Practice

2.2 This information may be found in the *Prospectus*, other preliminary literature or relevant websites. Specific items might include:

- required qualifications and conditions within the research programme, e.g. whether a qualifying examination will have to be taken, whether the offer is only for a specific topic with a designated supervisor, the possibility of transfer to the relevant lower degree rather than to doctoral status;
- total university fees, including any legitimate additional charges, and an indication of approximate college fees;
- information about the proposed research programme, the normal length of study and the likely available facilities within the subject, the University and the student's college (this information will be included in each subject's template of provision for students);
- the name of the supervisor(s) and the likely supervisory arrangements;
- any requirements relating to attendance/residence, progress reports, contact with the supervisor(s), academic conduct and performance;
- specific requirements relating to matters of general importance to the student's research career, e.g. research ethics, health and safety, procedures relating to plagiarism and scientific misconduct; intellectual property rights;
- the possibilities and limitations on any teaching or demonstrating which the student may be able to undertake in the course of his or her research.

2.3 *Where an offer has been made to an applicant, attention should be drawn in a timely and appropriate fashion to the additional information which should be studied and its location or locations.*

### **General requirements relating to admission procedures**

2.4 *An admitting body should ensure that:*

- *admissions procedures are clear and consistently followed;*
- *admissions criteria [including the use of references, written work, and interviews (where these are possible)] have been drawn up and are reviewed at regular intervals;*
- *admissions decisions involve the judgement of more than one member of the academic staff with relevant experience and expertise;*
- *admission offers make clear what the applicant must do: a) to take up the offer, b) to request deferral of entry, or c) if they fail to meet any conditions specified in the offer.*

2.5 *Admitting bodies should note the priority that the University places on the following:*

- *the obligation to admit only graduate students for whom appropriate supervision is available for the expected duration of the research programme, and willingness to supervise has been assured;*
- *the maintenance of appropriate entrance qualifications and standards;*
- *the assurance that appropriate laboratory or bench space is available and that research groups are not too large for adequate supervision;*
- *the acknowledgement of divisional, faculty or departmental norms and maxima for the number of research students allocated to individual supervisors;*
- *prospective students are informed of any significant changes to a programme made between the offer of a place and the start of the course, and the options open to the student in those circumstances.*

### **English language requirements**

2.6 *The University's English language requirements for individual programmes of study, set either at the Higher level or at the Standard level (as specified in the Graduate Prospectus) [http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate\\_courses/international\\_students/index.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/international_students/index.html) must be met in full.*

### **Equal opportunities**

2.7 *The University regards as an overriding priority the admission of suitably qualified candidates for whom the University can provide appropriate research opportunities and supervision. It seeks to select research students solely on the grounds of proven and potential academic excellence, and its admissions procedures are geared to this end. In the context of*

*assessing applications, appropriate attention should be given to relevant equal opportunities principles and legislation.*

### **Special needs**

2.8 *Where students are admitted with special needs, care should be taken to ensure that an effective support structure is in place, and that students are provided with information about particular sources of support within the University (see the entries relating to Disability on the A-Z of Academic Policies at [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/oxonly/resources/A-Z\\_policies.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/oxonly/resources/A-Z_policies.shtml)).*

### **First degree requirements**

2.9 *There is no formal class of degree result required by the University for entry to graduate study, partly because of the need to be able to admit mature candidates qualified in other ways and also because the UK system of degree classification is not universal.*

#### **Good Practice**

2.10 Most faculties and departments follow the general requirements of the research councils, which will not normally support students with less than a 2.1 (or its equivalent) for a research degree. In considering applications from students who are less well qualified, it is important to remember that in accepting a candidate a department or faculty is tacitly, if not explicitly, indicating its confidence in his or her capacity to undertake the research programme in question.

### **Study and residence requirements**

2.11 **Apart from a small number of graduate taught courses, the existing schemes for research degrees by part-time study in Education, Continuing Education and Theology, and a special provision within Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (for students to be admitted to work in a well-founded laboratory other than in Oxford), all graduate taught courses and research degrees are undertaken (for the required period of residence) on the basis of full-time supervised study in Oxford.**

2.12 **The residence limit for graduate students (other than those in 2.11 above) is twenty-five miles from Carfax. Application can be made by a student's college to the Proctors for exemption from this limit<sup>1</sup>, but it is the University's general expectation that only candidates who can meet the residence requirement will be accepted.**

### **External supervision**

2.13 *Admitting bodies should not admit graduate students unless they are able to provide a suitably qualified supervisor from within the University or its environs (i.e. supervisors operating from Harwell or Rutherford Appleton are usually regarded as external only in the technical sense).*

2.14 *If circumstances arise in which there is a case for a graduate student's primary supervision to be entrusted to an individual external to the University, e.g. the unavailability of anyone within the University to take over the role of supervisor for an existing student, then particular care should be taken to ensure that: (i) a local joint supervisor is also*

<sup>1</sup> The relevant form may be downloaded from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/oxonly/collegeforms.shtml>.

*appointed; (ii) standard external supervision fee arrangements are acceptable to the individual concerned and his/her employer or acceptable alternative fee arrangements have been approved/funded by the relevant divisional board; (iii) appropriate travel expenses are in place for the student concerned.*

*2.15 This is not to rule out the exceptional use, for a small number of students, usually some time into their work, of joint supervision involving an external supervisor, where a specialised aspect of the student's work is best covered by these means. In these cases, however, attention is drawn to the qualifications set out in 2.14(ii) and (iii) above which are likely to apply equally to an external joint supervisor.*

### 3: INDUCTION AND THE EARLY STAGES OF RESEARCH

#### Induction

##### *Policy requirements*

3.1 *All students should be provided with a programme of induction to complement that provided by colleges\* so that they can begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working.*

##### Good Practice

3.2 Particular care should be taken to ensure that all newcomers to existing research groups are made aware of the customs and conventions within the group, and in relation to other members of a department. Whatever form induction takes, departments, faculties and divisions are likely to want to consider the inclusion of information about some or all of the following:

- typical challenges which may face the research student and sources of support and guidance in times of difficulty;
- facilities available for students within the subject, the University and within colleges;
- the framework for the degree programme, registration, any forms of qualifying examinations/courses, transfer of status (including the possibility of transfer to the relevant lower degree), methods of assessment and examination, regulations and other requirements;
- student welfare (in the departmental or faculty context);
- relevant health and safety practices both within the group and more generally;
- other legislative information (including guidance on plagiarism);
- supervision arrangements, including creating appropriate working patterns, evaluation, monitoring and reporting procedures;
- skills training available within and outside the subject [see 3.9 below];
- opportunities for meeting other research students and staff;
- encouragement to pursue opportunities to share experience and understanding beyond the student's immediate study area, within the University, and nationally and internationally;
- ethical review processes;

\* The University's existing agreement is that Monday and Tuesday of week 0 between 9 and 5 and Thursday between 1 and 6 should be reserved for departmental induction, but that all other time in that week should be available for college induction.

- where appropriate, English language provision available via the Language Centre.

## **The initial term**

### ***Policy requirements***

3.3 *Those responsible for the student's research programme should aim to ensure, in co-operation with the student, that the main framework for the student's work is established as speedily as possible during the first term.*

#### **Good Practice**

3.4 This may include all or some of the following:

- work to establish a clear project proposal with a reasonable prospect of completion within the required time scale, and to identify the initial stages and early objectives of the project;
- (where completion of an initial research training course is required) identification of the structure, timetable and requirements of the course, with particular attention to any deadlines for the approval of titles, modes of assessment and submission of material;
- preliminary identification by the student and supervisor(s) of the skills, knowledge and aptitudes which are likely to be required for the successful completion of the research programme, and appropriate arrangements for their provision;
- earmarking the appropriate resources (including staffing and working facilities) to support the research project and identifying arrangements for monitoring the continued availability of such resources;
- (where periods of field work or other absence from the university are involved) the availability of appropriate monitoring and support for the student's work and careful observance of the special provisions for health and safety;
- a satisfactory pattern of working relations between supervisor and student.

3.5 *The University does not stipulate (beyond the use of the term 'regularly') the number of meetings between research student and supervisor, which may be expected each term, since this will vary widely according to the subject, the individual, and the stage of the research reached. However, each department/faculty has been asked (via Divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision) to recommend a minimum frequency of formal supervisory contact for resident students and to state this in subject handbooks. While variation from this figure is permissible, the onus will be on the student and supervisor jointly to agree to deviate from the recommendation. In addition, the University does not set down a common format for recording the outcomes of those meetings, although it endorses the view that both supervisors and students should keep some record of supervisory meetings. It does place particular importance on the completion of the termly supervision report, to which both student and supervisor now contribute. The discussion of the contents of the report should be viewed as part of a regular termly review of progress.*

### Good Practice

3.6 A number of students and supervisors have found that a practical and convenient method of maintaining an agreed record of meetings is for the student, as a matter of course, to send the supervisor a short e-mail summarising the content of the meeting and the agreed outcomes.

3.7 *Following the requirements of divisional codes of practice, the main elements of the student's research programme, including the items in 3.2, 3.3, and 3.5, should normally be reviewed by the student and the supervisor(s) during the course of the student's first term.<sup>1</sup>*

### Good Practice

3.8 This view can appropriately include infrastructure available to the student, as described in the subject's template of provision for graduate students, e.g.

- laboratory provision (bench space);
- library provision;
- access to appropriate computer facilities, including e-mail and the internet;
- access to telephone, word-processing and fax facilities;
- common room facilities.

### Skills training

3.9 *The University acknowledges the priority that is attached nationally by HEFCE and by the Research Councils (see annexe 1) to students developing and refining a range of skills as an integral part of a research degree programme, whether these are:*

- *subject-specific skills (including any skills required for inter-disciplinary aspects of a topic);*
- *general research training skills;*
- *personal and professional skills.*

*Students' skills training needs should be assessed formally on at least three occasions during the student's programme: in the initial general review under 3.4, in preparation for transfer of status (where the transfer of status form has been amended accordingly) and at confirmation of status. It is, however, an integral part of the supervisor's role, at the regular supervisory meetings, to continue to monitor and advise the student on his or her skills training needs, and to draw to the attention of the research student, and encourage the student to take up, such opportunities as are available for the further development of these skills.*

### Good Practice

3.10 Divisions, faculties and departments will make a variety of provision for such skills training, and this will reflect the discipline, subject and context of the research. Students and their supervisors should review regularly (both informally during supervisory meetings and formally at the three points identified above) the skills that

<sup>1</sup> A small number of faculties/departments have indicated that the nature of their research would indicate a later review date. This should not be outside the first two terms.

may be of benefit to the student in relation to: subject-specific needs, analytical and research skills, and personal and professional skills. (Where necessary, support for language and academic writing skills should also be considered.) It is sometimes found helpful to link such reviews to the Research Councils' Joint Statement on 'Skills training requirements for research students' reproduced as Annexe 1. Supervisors will wish to alert the relevant Graduate Studies Committee/Director of Graduate Studies to the existence of training needs not yet catered for by the faculty/department or the University.

## **4: THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR(S)**

### **The Memorandum of Guidance**

4.1 The responsibilities of the supervisor(s) are set out in full in the University's *Memorandum of Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors*, reproduced in the *Examination Regulations* and in subject Notes of Guidance. The memorandum should be read in conjunction with the general regulations dealing with the supervision of specific categories of research students, i.e. D.Phil., M.Litt., and M.Sc. by Research. They are also now supplemented by divisional materials, in particular the Divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision, the Brief Guide to Supervision and the PGR Template of Provision. In summary form, the memorandum may be summarised as follows. [For convenience, the full text relating to supervisors is annexed to this section.]

### **Agreeing to supervise**

4.2 *In agreeing to supervise a research student, the supervisor must recognise and accept the responsibilities both to the student and to the relevant department, faculty and division implicit in the supervisory relationship.*

### **Prior to arrival and first meeting**

4.3 *Where possible, the supervisor should assign the student some directed reading before arrival. The supervisor is required to meet the student not later than the second week of Full Term.*

### **Likely early duties of the supervisor(s)**

4.4 *A range of duties may fall to the supervisor/course organiser. Depending on the specific subject and its arrangements, these may require the supervisor(s):*

- *to advise the student about all aspects of the research programme: standards, planning, literature, sources, attendance at classes/ lectures, techniques and skills;*
- *(where co-supervisor or part of a supervisory team) to co-ordinate advice and guidance, and to ensure that respective responsibilities are clear both to academic colleagues and to the student;*
- *to advise at an early stage on experimental design and the effective collection and storage of data;*
- *to assist the student during the course of the first term with the identification and subsequent development of skills for subject specific, research training and personal and professional purposes;*
- *to aim to ensure that a student's topic is defined within a reasonable time, that the student is developing the necessary background knowledge for the topic, and that the necessary resources are available;*
- *to ensure that, where a student undertakes research as part of a team or group, there is full explanation provided of the way in which the student's own contribution fits into the work of the remainder of the group.*

- *to draw to the student's attention the need to consider any ethical issues which may arise during the course and any requirements for ethical approval (for further information see: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/>).*

### **Meetings with the supervisor and written work**

#### 4.5 *Supervisors should be in a position to:*

- *meet with the student regularly [in accordance with divisional and departmental/faculty guidelines] and return submitted work with constructive criticism within a reasonable time;*
- *be accessible to the student at appropriate times when advice is needed;*
- *assist the student to work within a planned framework and timetable, [in particular by conducting regular reviews of the student's progress];*
- *monitor the student's ability to write a coherent account of his or her work in good English;*
- *attempt to avoid unnecessary delays in the progress of the research;*
- *pursue opportunities for the student to discuss his or her work with others in the wider academic community (including the presentation of research outcomes where relevant) at university, national and international level;*
- *have reasonable familiarity with institutional, national and international expectations relating to research environments, research supervision and research training (see especially the relevant section of the QAA Code of Practice at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice/section1/postgrad2004.pdf>);*
- *avoid absence on leave without appropriate temporary supervision having been arranged for the student. [Leave will not normally be approved without such arrangements being in place.]*

### **Reports on the student's work**

#### 4.6 *Supervisors are required:*

- *to co-operate with the student to produce a detailed joint report on progress at the end of each term;*
- *to provide the student with regular information as to the student's progress, and, where problems arise, provide guidance and assistance as to necessary corrective action.*

### **Other possible tasks undertaken by the supervisor(s)**

4.7 In fulfilling the tasks set out in 4.4 – 4.6, the supervisor(s) may also, as appropriate, be able:

- to ensure that a student is familiar with the research facilities and activities of a department or faculty and aware of the expectations (including those relating to health and safety, research conduct and research ethics) which are incumbent on research students;
- to assist the student with the preparation, timetable and submission of material relating to applications for transfer of status, for re-admission after completion of a preliminary research training or other course, and for confirmation of status, and to provide appropriate feedback, especially where the student has failed to meet the required standards;
- to advise the student on the timing of the submission of the thesis and to consult with the student in order to make recommendations for the appointment of examiners;
- to encourage the student to obtain knowledge and information about career opportunities and to alert the student, where necessary, to other services provided within the University.

#### *A note on Safety and Health*

Supervisors of all students, whether in the arts or sciences, should consider carefully the safety implications of their students' research. Those supervising students (particularly in the sciences) are responsible for all aspects of safety under their control, and in particular for the safe conduct of all experiments carried out in the course of their students' research. In the event of an accident, inadequate supervision may render the supervisor liable to prosecution. Supervisors should also ensure that their students are aware that in the event of injury to other persons as a result of their negligence, the student could be subject to civil claims for damages. Advice on the legal responsibilities for safety may be obtained from the University Safety Officer. For their part, *students* must carry out research with proper regard to good health and safety practices. Supervisors and students should be aware of the need for adequate health insurance and health precautions when travelling abroad. In case of doubt, reference should be made to the University Medical Officer.

## **ANNEXE**

### **Extract from the Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students**

#### **ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### *Responsibilities of the supervisor*

1. In considering an invitation to supervise a research student, the supervisor must recognise and accept the responsibilities both to the student and to the relevant department, faculty and division implicit in the supervisory relationship.
2. Where practicable, the supervisor should assign the student some directed reading before arrival. This might be of a general background nature so as to put the student in a position to discuss the topic with the supervisor soon after arrival, or it might form the start of a survey of current literature. The supervisor is required to meet the student not later than the second week of Full Term.
3. The supervisor is responsible for giving early advice about the nature of research and the standard expected, and about the planning of the research programme. The supervisor should ensure that, where the student's research forms part of a funded research programme, sufficient financial support should be available for the duration of the student's period of study: if there is any doubt, he or she should agree with the student an alternative fallback project at an early stage. The supervisor is also responsible for advising the student about literature and sources, attendance at classes, and requisite techniques (including helping to arrange instruction where necessary) The supervisor should

discuss with the student the lecture list for his or her subject and related lecture lists. The supervisor should identify with the student any subject-specific skills necessary for the proposed research.

4. Where during his or her first year of research a student wishes, in addition to contact with his or her supervisor(s), to have limited consultation with one or two other academics the supervisor should try to identify (in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies for the faculty, sub-faculty or department) such colleagues and to arrange for an approach to them by the student.

5. Where a supervisor operates as a co-supervisor or as part of a supervisory team, it is important to clarify the responsibilities of each supervisor and to co-ordinate advice and guidance.

6. Where a thesis is likely to involve statistical analysis or tabulation of numerical results, the supervisor should arrange for the student to obtain advice, at an early stage, about the design of any experiment or the collection and storage of data, and about its subsequent analysis.

7. The supervisor should ensure that the student works within a planned framework which marks out the stages which the student should be expected to have completed at various points in his or her period of study. The nature of this framework will of course vary widely from subject to subject, but in all subjects the formulation of the topic, planning and management of time should begin at an early stage. Particular attention should be given to the selection and refinement of the research topic, which in the case of the D.Phil. should be one which a diligent student may reasonably be expected to complete within three (or at most) four years of full-time study.

8. The supervisor should meet with the student regularly [see divisional guidelines]. Supervisor and student should agree a formal schedule of meetings on a termly or annual basis. The supervisor should also be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when advice is needed. The supervisor should also request written work as appropriate and in accordance with the plan discussed with the student. Such work should be returned with constructive criticism and in reasonable time.

9. The supervisor should tell the student from time to time how well, in the supervisor's opinion, work is getting on, and try to ensure that the student feels properly directed and able to communicate with the supervisor. It is essential that when problems arise, corrective advice is clearly identified and full guidance and assistance are given to the student.

10. The supervisor is required to report to the board on the student's work three times a year, once at the end of each term. Each report should state the nature and extent of recent contact with the student, and, if there has been none, state why this is so. The report should also make clear whether the student is making satisfactory progress, bearing in mind that a D.Phil. thesis should normally be completed within three (or at most four) years of full-time research. Any student who has not satisfied his or her supervisor on at least one occasion in an academic year that he or she is making progress will be liable to have his or her name removed from the register.

11. The supervisor should aim to ensure that by the end of the first year the topic or goal of the student's research is clearly defined, that the student has the necessary background knowledge, and that the required resources are available. The supervisor must have ascertained by then that the student can write a coherent account of his or her work in good English.

12. The supervisor should try to ensure that unnecessary delays do not occur. These have been known to arise, for example, for reasons such as:

- (a) insufficient effort at the outset in choosing and formulating the research topic;
- (b) a slow start because of the time taken to adjust to research work;
- (c) distractions from the main line of enquiry;
- (d) superfluous attempts to tie up every loose end, and, mainly in the sciences,
- (e) inadequate and delayed planning and assembly of apparatus and equipment;
- (f) insufficient collection or recording of data at an early stage, so that work has to be repeated in the later stages.

13. The supervisor should arrange for students to have the opportunity to discuss their research with other staff and students in the subject area (see also (4) above) and to communicate to others in the wider academic community, both orally and in writing, his or her research findings.
14. Where a student undertakes research as part of a team or group the supervisor should ensure that this is in full awareness of the way in which the student's own contribution fits into the work of the remainder of the group.
15. The supervisor should not be absent on leave unless he or she has ensured that appropriate temporary supervision has been arranged for the student.

## **5: THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT**

### **The Memorandum of Guidance**

5.1 The responsibilities of the student are set out in full in the University's *Memorandum of Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors*, reproduced in the *Examination Regulations* and in subject Notes of Guidance. They are supplemented by divisional materials, in particular the Divisional Codes of Practice for Supervision, the Brief Guide to Supervision and the PGR Templates of Provision. In brief form and under specific headings, these may be summarised as follows. [For convenience, the full text relating to students is annexed to this section.]

### **Overriding responsibility**

5.2 *The University expects the student to accept his or her obligation to act as a responsible member of the University's academic community.*

### **The early stages of the course**

5.3 *It is important for the student:*

- *to take ultimate responsibility for the research programme (including subject-specific, research-training, personal and professional skills) and developing an appropriate working relationship with the supervisor(s);*
- *to programme work according to an agreed timetable, and to keep relevant records of all aspects of the work;*
- *to make positive use of the University's teaching and learning facilities, and opportunities for personal and professional development;*
- *to seek out and follow the regulations applying to the research programme, and to seek clarification, where necessary;*
- *to raise problems or difficulties with the relevant authority so that appropriate guidance may be offered.*

### **Working with the supervisor(s)**

5.4 *In working with supervisors or other academic staff, students should:*

- *recognise the demands made on a supervisor's time and the need to prepare adequately for meetings and to observe deadlines;*
- *accept the importance of constructive criticism within the supervisory relationship, and seek a full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of any work;*
- *give full weight to any suggested guidance and corrective action proposed by the supervisor in the event of problems;*

- *co-operate with the supervisor to produce a detailed joint report on progress at the end of each term<sup>1</sup>;*
- *discuss their skills training needs with the supervisor, both informally during regular supervisory contacts and formally at particular times as detailed in subject handbooks;*
- *inform the supervisor immediately of any circumstance which might lead to interruption of study;*
- *(where the student feels that there are good grounds for contemplating a change of supervision arrangements) discuss this with the existing supervisor, or, if this presents difficulty, with another appropriate officer in the department, faculty or with a college adviser.*

### **Responsibilities in connection with submission**

5.5 *It is essential for the student:*

- *to ensure that his or her written and spoken English is of the necessary standard for the submission of a thesis;*
- *to allow sufficient time for writing up and to pay particular attention to final proof reading;*
- *to decide when he or she wishes to submit the thesis for examination, having provided the supervisor with sufficient time to comment on the final draft and having taken account of the supervisor's opinion;*
- *to make appropriate use of any guidance available relating to the student's career after successful completion of a research degree.*

### *A note on Safety and Health*

Supervisors of all students, whether in the arts or sciences, should consider carefully the safety implications of their students' research. Those supervising students (particularly in the sciences) are responsible for all aspects of safety under their control, and in particular for the safe conduct of all experiments carried out in the course of their students' research. In the event of an accident, inadequate supervision may render the supervisor liable to prosecution. Supervisors should also ensure that their students are aware that in the event of injury to other persons as a result of their negligence, the student could be subject to civil claims for damages. Advice on the legal responsibilities for safety may be obtained from the University Safety Officer. For their part, *students* must carry out research with proper regard to good health and safety practices. Supervisors and students should be aware of the need for adequate health insurance and health precautions when travelling abroad. In case of doubt, reference should be made to the University Medical Officer.

<sup>1</sup> A student who does not satisfy the supervisor on his or her progress at least once during the course of a year risks removal from the Register of Graduate Students.

## **Extract from the Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students**

### **ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### Responsibilities of the student

1. The student must accept his or her obligation to act as a responsible member of the University's academic community.
2. The student should take ultimate responsibility for his or her research programme, and endeavour to develop an appropriate working pattern, including an agreed and professional relationship with the supervisor(s). The student should discuss with the supervisor the type of guidance and comment which he or she finds most helpful, and agree a schedule of meetings.
3. He or she should make appropriate use of the teaching and learning facilities available within the University.
4. It is the student's responsibility to seek out and follow the regulations applying to his or her course, including faculty/departmental handbooks/notes of guidance, and to seek clarification from supervisors and elsewhere if this is necessary.
5. The student should not hesitate to take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they seem. He or she should ensure that any problems regarding the project are drawn to the attention of the supervisor so that appropriate guidance may be offered.
6. The student should seek to maintain progress in accordance with the plan of work agreed with the supervisor, including in particular the presentation of the required written material in sufficient time for comment and discussion before proceeding to the next stage. As groundwork for the thesis, the student should as soon as possible write rough drafts of possible chapters. Students in the sciences should keep a systematic record of all that has been attempted and accomplished. Both the student and the supervisor will want to keep a record of all formal scheduled meetings. They may well want to agree a record of what has been discussed and decided.
7. The student should recognise that a supervisor may have many competing demands on his or her time. The student should hand in work in good time to the supervisor and give adequate notice of unscheduled meetings. The need for adequate notice also applies to requests for references from the supervisor.
8. The student should be aware that the provision of constructive criticism is central to a satisfactory supervisory relationship, and should always seek a full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of his or her work.
9. If the student feels that there are good enough grounds for contemplating a change of supervision arrangements, this should first be discussed with the supervisor, or, if this seems difficult, with the appropriate head of department, director of graduate studies or their deputies, or the college adviser.
10. Where problems arise, it is essential that a student gives full weight to any guidance and corrective action proposed by the supervisor.
11. The student should provide regular reports on his or her progress to the board in accordance with any requirements of the Educational Policy and Standards Committee. The student must satisfy the supervisor on his or her progress at least once a year and should inform the supervisor at once of any circumstance that might require his or her mode of study to be modified or his or her registration as a graduate student to be extended, suspended or withdrawn.
12. The student should ensure that the standard of his or her English is sufficient for the presentation of a thesis. Students whose first language is not English should take advice on this.
13. The student should make full use of the facilities for career guidance and development, and should consult their supervisor for advice and encouragement where appropriate.
14. The student should ensure that he or she allows adequate time for writing up the thesis, taking the advice of the supervisor. Particular attention should be paid to final proof reading.
15. It is the student's responsibility to decide when he or she wishes to submit the thesis for examination, after taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, though this is only advisory. It is in the student's interest to ensure that the final version has been made available to the supervisor in good time before the intended date of submission.

## **6: THE ROLE OF THE GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE AND/OR THE DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

### **Distribution of responsibilities**

6.1 The role of the Graduate Studies Committee and/or Director of Graduate Studies, and the specific arrangements for research students, will vary from subject to subject. The Education Committee regards it as essential that divisions, departments and faculties ensure that the responsibilities which are set out in this section are appropriately covered within the subject area, although they may not always be undertaken by the Director of Graduate Studies and a graduate studies committee (e.g. when particular tasks are undertaken by a head of department). Where tasks are distributed, the student must know to whom he or she should go for advice, and this information should be an essential part of subject handbooks.

### **Policy requirements**

#### **Overall responsibility**

6.2 *It is of particular importance that it is widely known which body or officer takes primary responsibility for ensuring that:*

- *the relevant procedures for research students, whether at departmental, faculty, divisional or university level, are followed appropriately and monitored regularly. (In cases where there is the possibility of conflict of interest, then the Head of Department or Chairman of the Faculty Board should assume the necessary responsibility.)*
- *the departmental/faculty procedures for transfer of status, re-admission after completing a taught course, and confirmation of status operate effectively, and in line with the requirements in the Examination Regulations, and University policy as set out in section 8.*

### **Admissions**

6.3 *The Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies should ensure that*

- *appropriate provision is made for the major items in the admissions process set out in section 2, and summarised below:*
  - (a) *information relating to postgraduate research possibilities is clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to inform student choice;*
  - (b) *admissions procedures are clear and consistently followed;*
  - (c) *admissions criteria [including the use of references, written work, and interviews (where these are possible)] have been drawn up, and are reviewed at regular intervals;*
  - (d) *admissions decisions involve the judgement of more than one member of the academic staff with relevant experience and expertise;*

- (e) *admission offers make clear what the applicant must do: i) to take up the offer, ii) to request deferral of entry, or iii) if they fail to meet any conditions specified in the offer;*
  - (f) *the maintenance of appropriate entrance qualifications and standards is monitored (see especially para. 2.9);*
  - (g) *research students are admitted only for whom appropriate supervision is available, and when willingness to supervise has been assured;*
  - (h) *research students are admitted only when appropriate laboratory or bench space is available and research groups are not too large for adequate supervision;*
  - (i) *those nominated as supervisors have sufficient experience/training and expertise to carry out their duties effectively*
  - (j) *divisional, faculty or departmental norms and maxima for the number of research students allocated to individual supervisors are acknowledged in allocating students;*
  - (k) *appropriate information is made available to candidates prior to accepting the offer of a place (see para. 2.4);*
  - (l) *prospective students are informed of any significant changes to a programme made between the offer of a place and the start of the course, and the options open to them in those circumstances;*
  - (m) *the University's English language requirements are met in full;*
  - (n) *appropriate attention is given, in the context of assessing applications, to relevant equal opportunities principles and legislation;*
  - (o) *where students are admitted with special needs, care is taken to ensure that an effective support structure is available.*
- *there is appropriate monitoring of the time taken to process admissions, and means are available to pursue any unnecessary delays, taking account of any relevant circumstances affecting the operation of the admissions process at its various stages, and to respond in a timely fashion to complaints about the operation of the admissions process;*
  - *policies and procedures relating to admissions are kept under regular review;*
  - *information is available within the department/faculty about relevant sources of funding for research students, and procedures are in place for any applications for funding or studentships that require endorsement on behalf of the department or faculty.*

## **Induction and the early stages of the course**

6.4 *It is important that the responsible body or officer should:*

- *promote full understanding within the faculty/department of the procedures for the formal registration of research students both within the department/faculty and within the University, and ensure that appropriate returns are made to the University to allow a complete record of each year's intake to be made and maintained;*
- *ensure that all students receive appropriate information and induction material, e.g. handbook, notes of guidance, **Brief Guide to Supervision** etc;*
- *ensure that as soon as possible students know:*
  - *how to contact the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies ;*
  - *the name(s) of, and how to contact, the designated supervisor(s);*
  - *the relative responsibilities of those involved in the supervision of the student's work; (especially where this involves joint supervision and/or any form of supervisory role for senior post-docs);*
  - *the name and role of the student's academic advisor in the department or faculty or other person to whom they can go in addition to the supervisor(s);*
  - *the appropriate channels for raising concerns and/or making a complaint.*

## **Supervision and relations between supervisors and students**

6.5 *The appropriate body or officer will want to be in a position to:*

- *ensure that an appropriately qualified supervisor or supervisor(s) has been appointed for each research student, and that appropriate substitute arrangements are made in the case of the supervisor's absence, illness or sabbatical leave;*
- *know whether reports have been **completed by both student and supervisor** and returned at the end of each term (other than in the term when the student submits his or her thesis). It is important that the Director of Graduate Studies or other officer monitor the return of reports, and pursue unreturned reports after an appropriate time. The Director of Graduate Studies should review all reports **via the Graduate Supervision System** and investigate any concerns that are likely to affect the progress of the student's research.*
- *identify means whereby support can be provided to the supervisor(s) where serious concerns about a student's ability or application to a research programme have been raised;*
- *point to possible sources of support for a research student who needs to be advised that desired academic standards have not yet been, or are unlikely to be, achieved. Sources of counselling and advice within the faculty/department and within the student's college should be clearly identified.*

- *be aware of and implement divisional policy relating to the training needs of new and inexperienced supervisors. The Director of Graduate Studies should be aware of the arrangements provided at all levels (department/faculty/division/university) for training for supervisors (especially new supervisors) and for continuing staff development in connection with all aspects of research supervision; and ensure that there is advice available for colleagues on training needs as appropriate.*

6.6 *If there is a breakdown in relations between a supervisor and a student, and it appears that a change in supervision is desirable, the responsible body or officer in conjunction (as necessary) with other academic staff (including college officers responsible for graduate students), should be able to advise in confidence, assist in resolving difficulties, and if necessary arrange the appointment of a replacement supervisor.*

6.7 *It must be recognised that, once admitted by a department/faculty, a research student remains the responsibility of that department/faculty (unless formally transferred elsewhere) while the student is entitled to be on the register of graduate students.*

### **Teaching by graduate students**

6.8 *Many research students attach considerable importance to the possibility of undertaking undergraduate teaching or demonstrating during the course of their time as a research student. The responsible body or officer should ensure that:*

- *appropriate arrangements are in place within the department/faculty for the registration of research students who wish to offer undergraduate teaching or demonstrating, and:*
  - *that potential tutors/demonstrators recognise the limits on the number of hours for which they can teach/demonstrate\* and that such teaching/demonstrating should only be undertaken with the agreement of their supervisor(s);*
  - *that potential tutors/demonstrators understand that they can only take on such work having undergone relevant training and preparation. Where possible, training should be undertaken under the auspices of the central university scheme for the development of teaching and academic practice (the CETL).*

### **Good Practice**

6.9 *Where the teaching/demonstrating is undertaken on behalf of the department or faculty a simple written statement setting out the expectations on both sides (hours of work, conditions, length of contract and rates of pay) will be provided for the student(s) concerned.*

\* The University's expectation is that departments and faculties will follow the relevant research council guidelines: the majority of these stipulate that teaching should not exceed six hours per week, including preparation and marking.

## **Feedback**

6.10 *The appropriate body or officer should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place within the department/faculty to promote:*

- *open and constructive feedback from research students and supervisors on all aspects of the support provided for research programmes;*
- *opportunities for consultation and representation on relevant decision-making bodies.*

### **Good Practice**

6.11 Where a Director of Graduate Studies routinely approves the report of examiners of research degrees on behalf of a faculty/department or its Graduate Studies Committee, then it is helpful to ensure that any points of general significance to the research provision within the faculty/department or within research groups are brought to the attention of the relevant academic committee and to the individuals concerned.

## **Complaints and appeals**

6.12 *The responsible body or officer should ensure that information is available within the department/faculty relating to*

- *procedures for complaints and appeals (see Annexe 2).*

## **7: THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT/FACULTY WITHIN THE DIVISION**

### **Departmental/faculty responsibilities**

7.1 The ways in which the responsibilities of departments and faculties for research students are carried out within divisions will vary considerably, and many of the tasks listed below will have been delegated to supervisors, to heads of department, or graduate studies committees and/or Directors of Graduate Studies. The Education Committee sees it as the particular responsibility of the department/faculty under the relevant division to ensure that the following functions are appropriately assigned and carried out. The specified responsibilities include those set out in the *Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students*.

### ***Policy requirements***

#### **General responsibilities**

- *to exercise overall responsibility for the academic welfare and progress of the research students in the department/faculty;*
- *to have appropriate monitoring and review procedures to maintain and enhance the quality and academic standards of its postgraduate research programmes;*
- *to ensure that appropriate liaison is maintained with a student's college;*
- *to ensure (within the inevitable constraints on resources) that all students accepted for research degrees have appropriate access to the necessary equipment and facilities, including appropriate laboratory and library space. A template of provision for research students should be made available to prospective and new students (via publication on the Graduate Admissions website and/or departmental or faculty website);*
- *to monitor the availability of subject-specific research training, and personal and professional skills for all students within the departments/faculty, and to ensure that adequate provision is made;*
- *to exercise responsibility for safety within the department or faculty buildings, including the provision of appropriate training and information, and the execution of all required risk assessment procedures;*
- *to have in place suitable mechanisms to ensure that where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another organisation (in line with the Education Committee's Policy and Guidance on Collaborative Provision), the provision made by that organisation meets all appropriate expectations for a joint research degree programme;*
- *to take note of the guidance set out in this document, with special reference to the provision of effective supervision and monitoring of research students.*

## Specific functions

- *to ensure that a designated committee or individual is given responsibility for the matters set out in section 6, and to provide (within the constraints on resources) appropriate administrative support for the tasks concerned;*
- *to ensure that students are appropriately informed of:*
  - *any induction provided on a departmental, faculty or university basis;*
  - *welfare arrangements within the University, e.g. the Counselling Service, Disability Office, Student Hardship, Childcare Relief and Access to Learning funds, and the provision for support offered by the Proctors and the Assessor;*
  - *any training in subject-specific research skills, and personal and professional skills, from which the student is likely to profit during the course of his or her research, and the available provision at departmental, faculty and university level.*
- *to seek to ensure that opportunities are available for students to:*
  - *refine the necessary skills for presenting work clearly and professionally;*
  - *develop their communication skills, especially for different audiences;*
  - *have guidance on and, if possible, experience (through the assessment process at Transfer and Confirmation ) of oral examination techniques.*
- *to ensure that there is appropriate monitoring of a student's work and progress and that reports are completed jointly by students and supervisors and submitted on a termly basis;*
- *to pursue non-returned reports so that the student's department/faculty and college have access to regular, up-to-date reports on the student's progress;*
- *to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for students whose supervisor is on sabbatical, indisposed or otherwise unable to continue normal supervision. Co-supervision should be provided even where a supervisor is able (and offers) to keep in contact with a student via e-mail.*
- *to provide mechanisms for open and constructive feedback by research students and their supervisors on the academic and other support available within a department or faculty (e.g. through joint consultative committees, open meetings, student questionnaires).*

## 8: TRANSFER AND CONFIRMATION OF STATUS

### Background

8.1 Regulations relating to transfer and confirmation of status are set out in the relevant general regulations of the *Examination Regulations*, and in the special regulations for individual subjects, grouped within their particular division. The policy requirements and good practice guidance set out below reflect the relevant regulations. Material from or reflecting the regulations is set out in bold, policy requirements in italics, and good practice suggestions (and descriptive linkages) in ordinary type.

### Transfer of status

#### 8.2 Timing

**Most intending research students are registered as Probationer Research Student (PRS), and/or for a preliminary research training master's course. Regulations governing applications for transfer of status are set out for each subject within the *Examination Regulations* or in departmental literature. For most subjects application will normally be required by the end of the third term, and for all subjects Probationer Research Student status can normally be held for a maximum of six terms.**

#### Good Practice

8.3 Departments and faculties are encouraged to require applications for transfer of status to be made by the end of the third or fourth term of PRS status. Subjects that do not require applications for transfer until the fifth or even sixth term may face problems where the application is unsuccessful. By the time the candidate is ready to re-apply, the application is likely to be outside the six terms allowed for PRS status. It may then be necessary to apply to the Education Committee for permission to hold PRS status for longer than six terms.

### Transfer in relation to performance in a master's course

8.4 For Probationer Research Students who are required to take a master's course during the course of the first year, applications for transfer are likely to be dependent on performance in the master's course as well as the availability of appropriate supervision and a suitable research proposal.

#### Good Practice

8.5 Care should be taken to ensure that students are aware of the requirements for successful transfer in these circumstances, and on what basis a further application for transfer may be submitted, where the initial application is unsuccessful. If the transfer depends on achieving a specified level in the initial master's course, particular attention should be paid to the clear definition of the required level.

### Possible outcomes

8.6 **It is especially important to ensure that applicants for transfer to doctoral status understand that assessors may recommend a range of possible outcomes, including transfer to the relevant lower degree, subject to opportunity for further application.**

## The assessment process

8.7 **The relevant examination regulations require transfer applications to be considered by two assessors, neither of whom should normally be the student's supervisor.** Although arrangements for assessing applications vary from subject to subject, and may involve a committee including the supervisor, it is essential to ensure a significant independent element, especially where there may be any doubt about the outcome.

8.8 *It is the University's expectation that assessments for re-admission, transfer and confirmation of status will be made by academic staff working within the University. In smaller, specialist subject areas, there may be difficulty in finding enough such assessors. On rare occasions, in all subjects, there may be a strong case for having assessors who are external to the University. Where a division, board or department is willing to pay for this out of its own resources, then external assessors may be used.*

8.9 *The relevant Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies should ensure that the transfer procedure in a subject includes:*

- ❑ *criteria against which applications for transfer to doctoral status (or for the relevant lower degree) will be assessed;*
- ❑ *clear instructions about the materials required for the transfer application;*
- ❑ *clear instructions to assessors as to the nature of the required assessment process and of the assessment report;*
- ❑ *a review of the assessment report by the Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies;*
- ❑ *(for non-native English speakers) an indication of the assessors' view of the candidate's ability to present and defend the work in English;*
- ❑ *appropriate feedback to the applicant, especially where an application has been unsuccessful.*

*Attention is drawn to the 2007 EPSC (now Education Committee) circular to divisions relating to transfer and confirmation procedures (attached as annexe 3), and to the descriptors for a doctoral level qualification (level 8) in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), attached as annexe 4.*

8.10 *The University recognises that the identification of particular areas of skills training and development is a regular aspect of a student's work with his or her supervisor(s). The Education Committee sees the completion of the transfer of status form as an appropriate point at which to ask the student, with the help of his or her supervisor(s), to:*

- ❑ *record those subject-specific and personal and professional skills which the student has already acquired in the course of Probationary Research Student status;*
- ❑ *identify any such skills which might require further development or refinement;*

- *note any other related activities, e.g. presentation of posters, attendance at conferences, etc., which have made a contribution to the development of the student's work.*

*In making this record available to transfer assessors and to those responsible for approving applications for transfer, the University does not wish to make this a formal and specific hurdle within the transfer process, but to acknowledge the importance of such activities in a research student's training and to provide assessors and others with a fuller picture of an individual student's progress. It also aims to help individual students cope with the increasing expectation on the part of research councils and other funding bodies that, in conjunction with their supervisor(s), they will maintain a record of such skills and achievements throughout the course of their career as a research student.*

**8.11 It is important to note that the process of assessment should normally include an interview with the candidate; and it must always do so if the assessors cannot recommend transfer to D.Phil. status. A candidate whose first application for transfer to D.Phil. status is not approved is permitted to make one further application, and shall be granted an extension of time for one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.**

### **Unsuccessful applications**

*8.12 Regulations have been changed (see 8.11 above) in order to reflect the view of the Proctors and the Education Committee that natural justice requires candidates to be allowed to make one, but only normally one, further application. Similarly, candidates who are transferred to M.Sc. by Research or M.Litt., rather than to D.Phil., must be deemed to have one further opportunity to apply to transfer to D.Phil., if they wish to do so, but subject to two important qualifications (a) that a sufficient period of time has elapsed from the original transfer attempt to allow the possibility of significant development, and (b) the supervisor being prepared to support a further application.*

### **Good Practice**

8.13 If the conclusion of a second transfer application is that transfer to D.Phil. status or to the status of the relevant lower degree is not warranted, and that the student would be best advised to withdraw from the course and this is accepted by the student, then there is usually no need to take further action. If a student does not accept that withdrawal is appropriate, and transfer to the relevant lower degree (*having been considered by the assessors*) has not been recommended, then further action will be required. Particular attention should be paid in such circumstances to the importance of informal counselling, involving the student's college, as an integral part of any procedures. Reference should be made to the regulations governing the removal of a graduate student from the Register of Graduate Students.

## Confirmation of status

### 8.14 Timing

**Unless they have been individually exempted from the requirement, all doctoral students are required to apply for confirmation of status\* within nine terms of their admission as a graduate student of the University. A candidate whose first application for confirmation of their status is not approved is permitted to make one further application, and shall be granted an extension of time for one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.** Exemptions from the confirmation of status procedure should be regarded as exceptional since the process enables the student to have an assessment of his or her work by one or more assessors, normally other than the supervisor(s), and this is clearly an important indication that, if the work on the thesis continues to develop satisfactorily, then consideration of submission within the course of three further terms would appear to be reasonable.

The attention of students is specifically drawn to the University's understanding of the confirmation process set out in the underlined wording, which explicitly makes no linkage between successful confirmation of status and the final outcome of the examination of the thesis.

8.15 *Subject guidance should allow for and provide sufficient time for a second attempt, and should indicate the options available where a candidate's subsequent application is unsuccessful.*

### The confirmation process

8.16 *The relevant Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies should ensure that the confirmation procedure in a subject includes:*

- ❑ *criteria against which applications for confirmation of doctoral status will be assessed;*
- ❑ *clear instructions about the materials required for the confirmation of status application;*
- ❑ *clear instructions to assessors as to the nature of the required assessment process and of the assessment report;*
- ❑ *a review of the assessment report by the Graduate Studies Committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies;*
- ❑ *(for non-native English speakers) an indication of the assessors' view of the candidate's ability to present and defend the work in English;*
- ❑ *appropriate feedback to the applicant, especially where an application has been unsuccessful, normally in the form of the assessors' report.*

*Attention is drawn to the Education Committee (EPSC) circular attached as annexe 3.*

\* Requirements may vary according to subject (although all applicants are required to complete the standard university application form). Since the relevant requirements may not necessarily appear in the *Examination Regulations* it is essential that they should appear in the information provided for research students. c.f. the circular?.

### Good Practice

8.17 If it is difficult for a student to accept that they have not demonstrated sufficient doctoral potential at transfer of status stage, it is even more difficult for them to do so at confirmation. It is, therefore, always important:

- to exercise particular care in the choice of assessors, taking account of any views made known by the candidate and the supervisor(s);
- to ensure that the assessors (a) structure the assessment interview to give the student maximum opportunity to demonstrate the standard of their work, (b) keep a careful record of the assessment interview, and (c) report in some detail;
- to consider the use of one or more external assessors (see the conditions applying to the use of external assessors at transfer stage).

8.18 Given that the special regulations setting out the requirements for confirmation of status may vary according to the subject, it is important to note that the process of assessment must always include an interview with the candidate if the assessors are unable to recommend confirmation of D.Phil. status.

### Unsuccessful applications and appeals

8.19 *Complaints and appeals in relation to research degrees are covered in the University's standard template which is appended as annexe 2. Given that all students are now allowed one further attempt at transfer and confirmation if the first attempt is unsuccessful, then it is expected that any subsequent complaint would be on the grounds of process only.*

## **9: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

(See annexe 2)

9.1 *Complaints and appeals procedures should be fair, open and consistently applied, allowing students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present a case.*

9.2 *Independent and formal procedures should be in place to deal swiftly with complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision.*

9.3 *Formal procedures should be in place to deal with any academic appeals made by postgraduate research students.*

9.4 *The acceptable grounds for appeal should be clearly defined.*

9.5 *The procedures available within a department/faculty/division should normally be exhausted before a matter is referred to the Proctors.*

## 10: STUDY REQUIREMENTS

### Background

10.1 Regulations relating to transfer and confirmation of status are set out in the relevant general regulations of the *Examination Regulations*, and in the regulations governing the powers, under Council, of the Education Committee in respect of individual applications. The policy requirements and good practice guidance set out below reflect the relevant regulations. Material from or reflecting the regulations is set out in bold, policy requirements in italics, and good practice suggestions (and descriptive linkages) in ordinary type.

### Dispensation from residence

10.2 There may be periods when it is desirable or necessary for research students to work on their research away from Oxford. **Applications for dispensation from residence allow the responsible body to dispense a student from not more than three terms of residence ‘only on grounds that it is necessary to the student’s work that he or she should be allowed to study at some other place than Oxford’.** Applications should be made using the standard university form<sup>1</sup> and in good time before the proposed period of absence.

10.3 **In relation to applications for dispensation of residence for Probationer Research Students the *Examination Regulations* include the additional clause ‘in exceptional circumstances’.** *Given the increased emphasis on induction and research training, it is the University’s expectation that students will not normally be given dispensation from residence in their first year of PRS status.*

### Extensions of time

10.4 **Students working for the D.Phil. are expected to submit their thesis within three or at most four years.** *The University places particular importance on the careful definition of a research topic, the structuring and timetabling of the research, and the expeditious writing up of the thesis, in order that this time scale can be met.*

10.5 **Extensions of time can be given for up to nine terms for D.Phil. students, and up to six terms for M.Sc. by Research and M.Litt. students.** *Subject areas are strongly encouraged not to give extensions for more than three terms at a time, so that a student’s progress towards submission can be the subject of at least annual monitoring by others in addition to the supervisor.*

#### Good Practice

10.6 Students are asked to indicate on the application for confirmation of status their likely timetable for submission and whether they anticipate having to apply for extension of time. Any subsequent applications for extension of time on the part of students who have not indicated that such an application is likely should be subject to careful scrutiny.

10.7 Any application that will take a student beyond the period within which they are expected to submit by, in particular, a research council and/or a funding body, will also require particular consideration.

<sup>1</sup> Available to download from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/oxonly/collegeforms.shtml>.

10.8 Where a student has received a number of extensions and his or her prospect of making progress with the thesis is small, then lapsing or withdrawal (and later reinstatement) should be considered.

### **Suspensions of status**

10.9 **If a student cannot work for a particular reason, e.g. illness, family circumstances, financial hardship, then application for suspension of status can be sought, for not less than one and not more than three terms at any one time. Such applications will also be considered in connection with election to a student sabbatical office within the University. Responsible bodies may not allow more than six terms of suspension in total for any student. Requests for any further period of suspension must be addressed to the Education Committee, care of the Head of the Education Secretariat.**

#### **Good Practice**

10.10 While the consequence of suspension of status within the University is to stop the clock for all elements of the degree course in question, including residence, fees, terms for which a particular status may be held, this does not apply to the holder of a research council award unless that body has also specifically approved suspension of the award, and agreed a consequent extension to the time within which the thesis must be submitted. A separate application must be made by the student to the funding body in parallel to that being made within the University.

10.11 In particular, Graduate Studies Committees may want to give special attention to students who apply for suspension on the basis that they have opportunities to take up posts prior to their submission. Given that most students take up such work both for financial and career reasons, it is clear that such opportunities are of real importance to students. However, it should be noted that the research councils will not normally grant suspensions of status (and consequent extensions of time) for these reasons, and, submission rates are likely to suffer in consequence.

10.12 In considering applications for suspension of status from those students well past the original number of terms for the course concerned (12 for D.Phil., 9 for M.Sc. by Research and M.Litt.), consideration should be given to whether letting the student's status lapse, and allowing reinstatement when the thesis is ready for submission, is not a more appropriate option.

### **Reinstatement**

#### **Good Practice**

10.13 Where a student has lapsed or withdrawn at an earlier date, then reinstatement will be necessary in order to resume work on the research programme. Reinstatement should not be regarded as automatic but is usually allowed for a student who is ready to submit his or her thesis.

10.14 Reinstatement requires the support of the student's college and former supervisor. The first of these is to ensure that the student remains in good standing with his or her college, and the college supports the application. Where the former supervisor is no longer available, the relevant body will need to appoint an assessor to check on the appropriateness of reinstatement. If the assessment is satisfactory (and this is obviously more than a formality on the rare occasions where a student wants to

undertake further work prior to submission) then a new supervisor will need to be found for the purposes of submission. If no one is willing or available, the task normally falls to the Director of Graduate Studies.

**10.15 A doctoral student who withdrew before the end of his or her fee liability will, on reinstatement, immediately become liable for any outstanding fees up to the required maximum of nine terms for the D.Phil.**

**10.16 It is more likely that a student will have completed his or her twelve terms for the D.Phil., plus some or all of the nine terms' possible extension. If the first is the case, then reinstatement will need to include an extension of time (usually for one term). If the student has had his or her twelve terms plus nine terms' extension, then the application for reinstatement and extension will have to be made to the Education Committee.**

#### **Applications outside normal limits**

**10.17 Applications made to the Education Committee relate to requests which are outside the normal limits governing graduate students, and where the exceptional cases need both to be decided and monitored by the University. These normally relate to:**

- **extensions of time beyond the normal limits;**
- **permission to transfer status out of time or to hold PRS status for longer than six terms;**
- **admission directly to D.Phil. status of suitably qualified candidates from outside Oxford;**
- **dispensation from residence for longer than the normal limits.**

10.18 Applications for these matters require support from college and by or on behalf of the division. They are processed by the relevant officer, and then passed on to the Education Committee for consideration. Unless there is further information to be sought, a decision can usually be made speedily.

## 11: TEACHING BY GRADUATE STUDENTS

### *Policy requirements*

11.1 *The University expects that all subject areas should have the following:*

- *a statement of a department or faculty's general policy on teaching by graduate students;*
- *an indication of the mechanisms by which opportunities for graduate teaching are advertised and individual students are able to indicate their interest in undertaking such teaching;*
- *a statement of a department or faculty's policy on the maximum number of hours of teaching which it would expect graduates to undertake (see 11.3 below);*
- *a statement of a department or faculty's policy on the provision of training for teaching (given the University's expectation that no student will be permitted to undertake teaching without adequate relevant training).*

### Good practice

11.2 Opportunities for teaching and demonstrating are of considerable importance to many graduate students, especially students intent on an academic career. There is also particular importance attached to the fair advertisement and distribution of any opportunities available for teaching or demonstrating. Graduate Studies Committees and/or Directors of Graduate Studies should have particular concern for the procedures followed within their subject area.

11.3 A mechanism to ensure that, where the teaching/demonstrating is undertaken on behalf of the department or faculty, a simple written statement setting out the expectations on both sides (hours of work, conditions, length of contract and rates of pay) will be provided for the student(s) concerned.

11.4 In considering the question of maximum hours, the University has suggested that particular attention should be paid to the guidelines provided by the research councils; most of these stipulate a maximum of six hours teaching per week, to include, within the six hours, time for preparation and marking.

## 12: EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH DEGREES

### Background

12.1 Regulations relating to the examination of research degrees are set out in the relevant general regulations of the *Examination Regulations*, and in the directions to students contained on the relevant application forms. The policy requirements and good practice guidance set out below reflect the relevant regulations. Material from or reflecting the regulations is set out in bold, policy requirements in italics, and good practice suggestions (and descriptive linkages) in ordinary type.

### Approval and appointment of examiners

12.2 *Applications for the appointment of examiners are made by a candidate using the standard university form, and may not be made earlier than the term before that in which the thesis is to be submitted.* An explanatory leaflet setting out the procedure to be followed is available from the Graduate Studies website at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/gso/forms/>. The attention of candidates is drawn to section 15 of the student section of the *Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students*

12.3 In addition all candidates are reminded that the examination process at Oxford is strictly separate from the supervision of research, and that while a supervisor may offer advice on the student's chance of success, the outcome will depend wholly on the considered judgement of the examiners and this may reflect a different evaluation of the merits of the thesis.

12.4 **In completing the relevant section of the form, a supervisor is required to consult with the candidate concerning possible examiners, and (to) forward to the faculty board the names of suggested examiners together with any details of any special considerations which the candidate wishes to make known about any potential examiners.** Candidates are advised that this does not give the candidate a veto over the appointment of examiners since the final choice lies with the responsible board or committee.

#### Good Practice

12.5 However a board or committee that decides against examiners proposed by the supervisor in consultation with the candidate, i.e. both the first and second choice proposals, should refer back to the supervisor and candidate before approving alternative names.

12.6 *Graduate Studies Committees and/or Directors of Graduate Studies are likely to be involved in the approval of examiners for research degrees. This is a stage at which delays can occur, and, if one or both of the approved examiners declines to act, where these can be lengthy. It is important that Graduate Studies Committees and/or Directors of Graduate Studies are aware of the procedures, and can intercede on the question of the time-scale for the examination with the new appointees. Such examiners will typically not understand how helpful it can be if they can move rather more quickly than might have been the case in the normal situation.*

## Questions about examiners

12.7 While the *Examination Regulations* refer only to two examiners (and make no reference to external and internal examiners) the requirement that one examiner should be external to the University is an absolute requirement for D.Phil., M.Litt. and M.Sc. by Research examinations.

12.8 *The absence of specific reference to external and internal examiners allows the responsible board to appoint two external examiners where particular circumstances appear to suggest that this would be prudent. It is not possible to appoint more than two examiners in total.*

### Good Practice

12.9 Where two external examiners are appointed, it is common practice in many subjects to appoint a member of the department/faculty to act as a point of liaison and information for the examination, and to undertake some of the routine tasks (posting notices of the examination, booking a room, finding hospitality) which would normally be undertaken by the internal examiner.

12.10 *The University's policy in relation to examiners from overseas is intended to ensure that candidates should, as far as possible, be examined by those well qualified to do so. The University has not therefore put a formal restriction on invitations to examiners from overseas. Boards are asked to consider examiners from within the UK and Europe as a first choice, and only to look further afield if there is no one appropriately qualified from within this group, and the candidate's examination would be diminished without an examiner from elsewhere. Boards or committees are, of course, asked in these circumstances to try to fit the viva around a pre-arranged visit to the UK by the proposed external examiner.*

12.11 *Examiners act on behalf of the body which appoints them, and there is no restriction on who may act as an examiner if they are considered suitable by a board or committee, other than that examiners **who are members of the University must be members of a faculty or sub-faculty.** It is not necessary to hold an established post to act as an internal examiner, but it is important that the internal examiner should have undisputed expertise in the subject of the candidate's thesis, should understand the procedures which operate in Oxford, and have a clear sense of the expectations and standards associated with a successful Oxford doctoral thesis.*

12.12 In particular circumstances, examiners may find it more convenient both for themselves and for the candidate to arrange a viva outside Oxford. This can be done but only with the written permission of the Proctors to whom the internal examiner should apply.

## Procedures involved with the appointment of examiners

12.13 *While the University places considerable importance on avoiding unnecessary delays in the examination of research degrees, it has to follow procedures that are designed to preserve the consistency and fairness of the examination process. In particular the procedures are designed:*

- *to minimise any direct contact between the candidate and the examiners prior to the viva (i.e. by passing the thesis and associated paperwork through the Research Degrees Examinations office;*

- ❑ *to ensure that the names of proposed examiners are scrutinised and approved by or on behalf of the relevant responsible body;*
- ❑ *to recognise that examiners enter into a contract to act on behalf of the University in the examination process, and must therefore be invited formally to act and must also formally accept the invitation;*
- ❑ *to ensure that the formal outcome of the examination is not made known until the recommendation from the examiners has been considered and accepted by or on behalf of the responsible body, while recognising that by asking for minor corrections to be completed, examiners will inevitably provide the candidate with an informal indication of their likely recommendation.*

12.14 *In order to avoid excessive delays, a Graduate Studies Committee is required to report to the relevant divisional or other body any excessive delay that is brought to its attention in the examination of a candidate for a research degree. On receiving such a report the chairman or vice-chairman of the appropriate board/committee or the relevant Director of Graduate Studies may be empowered to investigate the reason for the delay and report to the board/committee.*

### **Enquiries before and after the viva**

12.15 *Where examiners have enquiries about a proposed examination (beyond those of a routine nature that can be dealt with by the Research Degrees Office), the Memorandum of Guidance for Examiners of Research Degrees stresses that these should be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies (and not to the supervisor).*

12.16 *A candidate who wishes to enquire about the outcome of an examination before the examiners' report has been considered by or on behalf of the responsible body, is directed to the Director of Graduate Studies (with the explicit proviso that the director may decide to divulge nothing until the report has been formally considered by that body.)*

12.17 *Where clarification is required from the examiners of any aspect of their report or recommendations, this may be sought on behalf of the relevant body by its chairman or vice-chairman or by the Director of Graduate Studies.*

12.18 *The University attaches importance to supervisors (and candidates) not being involved in discussions about the validity of the examiners' recommendations before these have been discussed by or on behalf of the responsible body, and officially released. Once officially released a copy of the report will be sent to the candidate.*

### **Complaints**

12.19 *All complaints relating to the outcome of an examination for a research degree should normally be directed to the Proctors, according to the published guidance for making complaints in relation to research degrees, which is included in subject notes of guidance and is available from the Research Degrees Office.*

### 13: SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

13.1 With effect from 1 September 2008, on course support for graduate students is provided directly through the four academic Divisional Offices, namely [Humanities](#), [Mathematical Physical and Life Sciences](#), [Medical Sciences](#) and [Social Sciences](#), and through the [Oxford University Department for Continuing Education](#).

These offices deal with the administrative arrangements relating to a graduate student's academic career e.g. transfers of status, extensions of time, supervision arrangements etc. Applications for [AHRC studentships](#) are managed by the Humanities Divisional Office. Applications for [ESRC](#) studentships are made through the relevant department and the Social Sciences Divisional Office.

For University policy Graduate Studies Committees and/or Directors of Graduate Studies should feel free to consult:

- the Education Policy Support Section [[richard.hughes@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:richard.hughes@admin.ox.ac.uk) / tel. 80295].

For students, the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant will be shown on the relevant divisional/CE Website [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/gso/>] or in individual subject Notes of Guidance/Handbooks;

For information relating to student funding and the University's scholarship and bursary schemes contact the Student Funding Office at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/studentfunding/postgraduate/> tel. 80487

The OUSU Graduate Affairs section can be contacted via:

- [graduates@ousu.org](mailto:graduates@ousu.org)

For safety matters, the main enquiries e-mail address is:

- [postmaster@safety.ox.ac.uk](mailto:postmaster@safety.ox.ac.uk) or via [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/safety](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/safety)

## **ANNEXE 1: SKILLS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

### **JOINT STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH COUNCILS' TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The UK Research Councils play an important role in setting standards and identifying best practice in research training. This document sets out a joint statement of the skills that doctoral research students funded by the Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training.

These skills may be present on commencement, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research. It is expected that different mechanisms will be used to support learning as appropriate, including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring, departmental support, workshops, conferences, elective training courses, formally assessed courses and informal opportunities.

The Research Councils would also want to re-emphasise their belief that training in research skills and techniques is the key element in the development of a research student, and that PhD students are expected to make a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in their area, normally leading to a published work. The development of wider employment-related skills should not detract from core objective.

The purpose of this statement is to give a common view of the skills and experience of a typical research student thereby providing universities with a clear and consistent message aimed at helping them to ensure that all research training was [sic]of the highest standard, across all disciplines. It is not the intention of this document to provide assessment criteria for research training.

It is expected that each Council will have additional requirements specific to their field of interest and will continue to have their own measures for the evaluation of research training within institutions.

#### **(A) Research Skills and Techniques – to be able to demonstrate**

1. the ability to recognise and validate problems
2. original, independent and critical thinking, and the ability to develop theoretical concepts
3. a knowledge of recent advances within one's field and in related areas
4. an understanding of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application within one's research field
5. the ability to critically analyse and evaluate one's findings and those of others
6. an ability to summarise, document, report and reflect on progress.

**Research Environment – to be able to:**

1. show a broad understanding of the context, at the national and international level, in which research takes place
2. demonstrate awareness of issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research, e.g. confidentiality, ethical issues, attribution, copyright, malpractice, ownership of data and the requirements of the Data Protection Act
3. demonstrate appreciation of standards of good research practice in their institution and/or discipline
4. understand relevant health and safety issues and demonstrate responsible working practices
5. understand the processes for funding and evaluation of research
6. justify the principles and experimental techniques used in one's own research
7. understand the process of academic or commercial exploitation of research results

**(C) Research Management – to be able to**

1. apply effective project management through the setting of research goals, intermediate milestones and prioritisation of activities
2. design and execute systems for the acquisition and collation of information through the effective use of appropriate resources and equipment
3. identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information
4. use information technology appropriately for database management, recording and presenting information.

**(D) Personal Effectiveness – to be able to:**

1. demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge
2. be creative, innovative and original in one's approach to research
3. demonstrate flexibility and open-mindedness
4. demonstrate self-awareness and the ability to identify own training needs
5. demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and thoroughness
6. recognise boundaries and draw upon/use sources of support as appropriate
7. show initiative, work independently and be self-reliant

**(E) Communication Skills – to be able to:**

1. write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose, e.g. progress reports, published documents, thesis
2. construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally through a variety of techniques
3. constructively defend research outcomes at seminars and viva examination
4. contribute to promoting the public understanding of one's research field
5. effectively support the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring or demonstrating activities

**(F) Networking and Teamworking – to be able to :**

1. develop and maintain co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues and peers, within the institution and wider research community
2. understand one's behaviours and impact on others when working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams
3. listen, give and receive feedback and respond perceptively to others

**(G) Career Management – to be able to show:**

1. appreciate the need for and show commitment to continued professional development
2. take ownership for and manage one's career progression, set realistic and achievable career goals, and identify and develop ways to improve employability
3. demonstrate an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia
4. present one's skills, personal attributes and experiences through effective CVs, applications and interviews

## ANNEXE 2: COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

### UNIVERSITY TEMPLATE FOR COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

#### Complaints and academic appeals within the faculty/department of N

1. The University, the N Division and the N faculty/department all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their programme of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent.
2. However, all those concerned believe that it is important for students to be clear about how to raise a concern or make a complaint, and how to appeal against the outcome of assessment. The following guidance attempts to provide such information.
3. Nothing in this guidance precludes an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below). This is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.
4. Many sources of advice are available within colleges, within faculties/departments and from bodies like OUSU or the Counselling Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of these sources before pursuing your complaint.
5. General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should, of course, continue to be raised through Joint Consultative Committees or via student representation on the faculty/department's committees.

#### Complaints

6. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made *by the faculty/department*, then you should raise it with the chairman of the Teaching Committee (Dr N) or with the Director of Graduate Studies (Professor N) as appropriate. Within the faculty/department the officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.
7. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, then you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the University Proctors. A complaint may cover aspects of teaching and learning (e.g. teaching facilities, supervision arrangements, etc.), and non-academic issues (e.g. support services, library services, university accommodation, university clubs and societies, etc.). A complaint to the Proctors should be made only if attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described in the Proctors and Assessor's Memorandum [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/pam/>] and the relevant Council regulations [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/>]
8. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision *made by your college*, then you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration. ]

#### Academic appeals

9. An appeal is defined as a formal questioning of a decision on an academic matter made by the responsible academic body.
10. For undergraduate or taught graduate courses, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. **It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors.** If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put your concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor of your college. As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are on the web [<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/>].
11. For the examination of research degrees, or in relation to transfer or confirmation of status, your concern should be raised initially with the Director of Graduate Studies. Where a concern is not

satisfactorily settled by that means, then you, your supervisor, or your college authority may put your appeal directly to the Proctors.

12. Please remember in connection with all the cases in paragraphs 9 - 11 that:

- (a) The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.
- (b) The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.
- (c) On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.

13. The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.

## **ANNEXE 3: EPSC CIRCULAR RE TRANSFER AND CONFIRMATION**

### **Transfer and Confirmation Procedures: a circular on behalf of the Educational Policy and Standards Committee (Education Committee)**

1. Following a review by EPSC officers and consideration by EPSC's Graduate Panel, EPSC has agreed to ask Divisions/Continuing Education to review a number of aspects of the present procedures for transfer and confirmation of status in D.Phil. programmes. In the course of its discussion, EPSC noted that some students continue to find the procedures for transfer and confirmation unclear and inconsistent between faculties and departments. It accepts that there is room for some difference in approach within the governing general regulations but believes that what is required and why it is required should always be set out very clearly for students.

2. EPSC recognises that significant work is already taking place in this area. Medical Sciences has recently reviewed its regulations and both MPLS and Social Sciences are in the process of doing so. It welcomes these developments and sees the particular areas that it highlights below as complementary to that work.

- (a) Further work on the existing local regulations for Transfer of Status to ensure that - in all cases - they provide a clear account of the required procedures;
- (b) Reviewing the existing criteria for Transfer to ensure that they provide candidates with a clear picture of what is expected of them;
- (c) Making clear the appropriate involvement of the supervisor in the Transfer procedures;
- (d) Clarifying the detailed requirements for Confirmation of Status to ensure that it serves the original purpose in all subjects;
- (e) Identifying the body or individual charged with departmental/faculty oversight for Transfer and Confirmation and how these procedures are appropriately monitored.

3. EPSC also recognised that there continues to be uncertainty about the purpose of Confirmation of Status. It asks that particular attention be paid to the following points.

First, all students should have regular and formal review of their research which helps them to assess their progress towards submission. Many faculties/departments require their students to transfer within three or at most four terms. Submission usually takes place after ten to twelve terms. In EPSC's view, there continues to be a strong case for a further formal review point between those two stages. It is for this reason that Confirmation of Status is required within nine terms. In this respect, the tendency for some students to apply for Confirmation of Status at roughly the same time as they apply for the appointment of examiners tends to undermine this system.

Second, where Confirmation of Status takes place within nine terms, it provides students with an opportunity to check whether their work is on track to make submission within three further terms appropriate and timely. It also provides an opportunity to monitor likely submission and completion rates which continue to give cause for concern.

Third, the procedures involved in Confirmation of Status provide students with further practice in presenting and defending their research, and where this is with one or more assessors, it gives some experience of the viva to come.

4. EPSC therefore suggests that the review of Transfer and Confirmation procedures which it has asked for should look at the administrative procedures for ensuring that Confirmation of Status does take place within nine terms and does, as far as possible, fulfil the purposes set out above. It may well be that in the future the University will want to look again at Confirmation in the light of some form of annual review, but for the moment it is the existing procedures which need to work effectively.

5. EPSC would be grateful if divisions could provide a brief report on the work which they have undertaken in relation to Transfer and Confirmation procedures, and in response to this circular, by the end of Trinity Term 2008.

## **ANNEXE 4: QAA FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS**

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8: Doctoral degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 8 qualifications.

### **Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

### **Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

### **And holders will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

44 Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.

45 Holders of doctoral degrees will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees will have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

46 Doctoral programmes that may include a research component but which have a substantial taught element (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or DCLinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.

47 The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.

48 Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.

49 Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically a portfolio of work which has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment. Most higher education awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or academic staff of several years' standing.