

# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

## Academic Year 2019/20



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH

### Purpose of Policy

The assessment regulations set minimum requirements and standards for students and staff, articulating the academic goals and policies of the University.

### Overview

These regulations:

- (i) replace the previous Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees;
- (ii) set out the rules which must be followed in research assessment for Research Degrees; and
- (iii) provide links to other sources of guidance or related regulations.

### Scope: Mandatory Policy

These regulations are University-wide and apply to all postgraduate research degrees at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework levels 11 and 12. The regulations apply to work submitted for assessment during the current academic year. They relate to all research degrees listed in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk).

More detail is given in the document.

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## Document control

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Consultation undertaken	Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations Working Group, Colleges, Students' Association, Curriculum and Student Progression Committee, Researcher Experience Committee, Student Disability Service, College Academic Misconduct Officers, Records Management, Distance Learning, Student Administration and Edinburgh Research and Innovation				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Student Appeal Regulations, Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study, Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students, DRPS Glossary of Terms: <a href="http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/GlossaryofTerms2019-20.pdf">www.drps.ed.ac.uk/GlossaryofTerms2019-20.pdf</a>				
UK Quality Code	The regulations are consistent with The UK Quality Code				
Policies superseded by this policy	Previous versions of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees				
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# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Additional guidance

For research degree programmes that contain a significant proportion of taught courses, taught elements are governed by the University's Taught Assessment Regulations: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf>. The regulations must be applied, unless a concession has been awarded by the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) on the basis of a case proposed by a College. The "Application of the regulation" must also be applied, unless the College has approved an exemption on the basis of a case proposed by a School. Concessions and exemptions are recorded by CSPC and Colleges as appropriate. The regulations operate in accordance with legislation and University policies on Equality and Diversity: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/about/legislation-policies/policies>. Members of staff who need additional guidance may consult their Head of College or their nominee, their College Postgraduate Office, Academic Services, Student Administration or Student Systems.

Where reference is made to "the relevant Dean" this should be taken as being the Dean with responsibility for postgraduate research matters and "the Committee" is the relevant College Postgraduate Committee, or the Committee of each College which is formally identified as exercising the functions of a College Postgraduate Committee for the purposes of postgraduate research academic decisions. Where reference is made to 'the Head of College' or 'Head of School' this may also in some cases be a designated representative of that individual. The term MSc by Research includes Masters by Research, MTh by Research and LLM by Research.

For Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) students on courses that use the assessment grade scheme, the term 'mark' in the regulations also includes 'grade'.

Definitions of some of the key terms in the regulations can be found in the Glossary of Terms: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/GlossaryofTerms2019-20.pdf](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/GlossaryofTerms2019-20.pdf)

These research assessment regulations, and related University practices, are consistent with the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code of Higher Education, <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

This document should be read in conjunction with University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study; the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students; the External Examining Code of Practice; and Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees. These are available via:

[www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/a-to-z](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/a-to-z)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Contents

### **Section A Roles and Responsibilities**

- Regulation 1 Scope of regulations
- Regulation 2 College Postgraduate Committee: responsibility for research degree programmes
- Regulation 3 Examiners: appointment
- Regulation 4 Non-Examining Chair: appointment
- Regulation 5 Number of examiners
- Regulation 6 Examiners: responsibilities
- Regulation 7 Avoiding potential conflicts of interest

### **Section B Conduct of Assessment**

- Regulation 8 Assessment requirements: student responsibilities
- Regulation 9 Assessment deadlines: student responsibilities
- Regulation 10 Reasonable adjustments
- Regulation 11 Language of assessment: languages other than English or Gaelic
- Regulation 12 Language of assessment: Gaelic
- Regulation 13 Progression review
- Regulation 14 Annual progression review recommendation
- Regulation 15 Repeat progression review
- Regulation 16 Notification of intention to submit a thesis for assessment
- Regulation 17 Deadlines for the submission of a thesis for assessment
- Regulation 18 Early submission
- Regulation 19 Examiners' reports
- Regulation 20 Preparation for oral assessment
- Regulation 21 Oral examination
- Regulation 22 PhD by Research and other Doctorates: examiner recommendation
- Regulation 23 PhD by Research Publications: examiner recommendation
- Regulation 24 MPhil: examiner recommendation
- Regulation 25 Thesis resubmissions
- Regulation 26 Academic misconduct
- Regulation 27 Security of marks

### **Section C Thesis Regulations**

- Regulation 28 Format of thesis
- Regulation 29 Copyright
- Regulation 30 Thesis title
- Regulation 31 Thesis length
- Regulation 32 Previously published material
- Regulation 33 PhD by Research Publications: submission
- Regulation 34 Signed declaration

### **Section D Assessment Decisions**

- Regulation 35 College Postgraduate Committee: approval of assessment decisions
- Regulation 36 Committee recommendation



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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- Regulation 37 College Postgraduate Committee: quorum for assessment decisions
- Regulation 38 Confidentiality
- Regulation 39 Retention and destruction of material
- Regulation 40 Award of degrees
- Regulation 41 College Postgraduate Committee: return of decision
- Regulation 42 Status of Decisions
- Regulation 43 Convener's Action
- Regulation 44 Final version of the thesis
- Regulation 45 Academic Appeal

## **Section E MSc by Research Degrees**

- Regulation 46 MSc by Research degrees: examination
- Regulation 47 MSc by Research degrees: submission of research project or dissertation
- Regulation 48 MSc by Research degrees: markers
- Regulation 49 MSc by Research degrees: oral assessment
- Regulation 50 MSc by Research degrees: requirements for award
- Regulation 51 MSc by Research degrees: examiner recommendation
- Regulation 52 MSc by Research degrees: distinction
- Regulation 53 MSc by Research degrees: merit

## **Section F Interpretation and significant disruption**

- Regulation 55 Interpretation of the regulations
- Regulation 56 Significant disruption: concessions and standards



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Section A Roles and Responsibilities

### Regulation 1 Scope of regulations

All relevant provisions of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees apply to all Doctoral and MPhil degree programmes except where stated.

The Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees also apply to MSc by Research degree programmes where relevant. Information regarding how these regulations apply to MSc by Research degree programmes is provided in Section E of these regulations.

### Regulation 2 College Postgraduate Committee: responsibility for research degree programmes

Research degree programmes are the responsibility of the relevant College Postgraduate Committee.

#### Application of the regulation

- 2.1 The College Postgraduate Committee will consider and ratify the recommendation of the Internal and External Examiners appointed to examine a student for the award of a research degree.
- 2.2 The responsibilities of the College Postgraduate Committee include:
  - (a) approving the format of assessments;
  - (b) the security of and arrangements for assessments; examining and marking assessed work; and processing and storing marks and grades;
  - (c) the quality and standards of marking;
  - (d) ensuring all examiners are aware of their responsibilities;
  - (e) accurate recording, minuting and reporting of decisions of the Committee.
- 2.3 Committees may, where appropriate, delegate operation of some responsibilities to Schools. Such delegation decisions are recorded by the College.
- 2.4 Colleges produce information on postgraduate research assessment:  
CHSS: [www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-students](http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-students)  
CMVM: [www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CMVM/PGMarketing/CMVM+Postgraduate](http://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CMVM/PGMarketing/CMVM+Postgraduate)  
CSE: [www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=118719348](http://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=118719348)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 3 Examiners: appointment

Examiners are appointed by the relevant College. There are Internal Examiners, who are staff of the University nominated by the relevant Head of School, and External Examiners.

### Application of the regulation

- 3.1 Where appropriate, upon receipt of a student's Notice of Intention to Submit form, the College Office will contact the Head of the student's School to request that examiners are nominated for the assessment of the thesis or submitted assessment.
- 3.2 Before submitting nominations to the College, the Head of School should consult the student's supervisors over the choice of examiners. Supervisors inform students of the names of possible examiners, and students must inform their supervisor if any problems are likely to arise if particular examiners are appointed. Any comments will be taken into account but students have no right to determine the Head of School's eventual recommendation, and therefore have no right to veto any particular appointment.
- 3.3 The External Examiner will be approached informally by the Head of School to establish their willingness to act. However, the College Postgraduate Committee has responsibility for the approval of all examiners. Any objection to the proposed examiners must be made to the College committee in good time before the relevant assessment. Complete final lists of examiners are maintained by the relevant College Office.
- 3.4 Internal Examiners are academic and/or honorary staff of the University. Honorary staff, in this context include:  
  
Staff from Associated Institutions: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/associated-institutions](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/associated-institutions) ;  
  
Teachers and senior staff from partner schools to the Moray House School of Education;  
  
Academic staff from partner higher education institutions as part of specific collaborative agreements;  
  
and NHS staff who are honorary staff members of the University of Edinburgh.
- 3.5 Internal Examiners are appointed by the student's School with approval by the relevant College. Staff who are or who have been a supervisor of the student at any time cannot be an Internal Examiner for that student.



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

- 3.6 No person who has held an appointment on the teaching or research staff or has been a student of the University, or who has been granted honorary status in the University, is eligible to act as an External Examiner until a period of four years has elapsed since the termination of the appointment or the status. In exceptional circumstances this rule may be waived by the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee. Members of affiliated or associated institutions may be Internal but not External Examiners.
- 3.7 The School must inform the student of the names of their examiners when the examiners have been approved by the College committee.
- 3.8 If more than three months have elapsed between the examiners being appointed and the student submitting the thesis, the College Office has responsibility for checking whether the commitments of any examiner have changed significantly so that consideration may be given to appointing an alternative examiner.

### **Regulation 4      Non-Examining Chair: appointment**

The College must appoint a Non-Examining Chair if the Internal Examiner is acting for the first time, or is a member of honorary staff.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 4.1 The appropriate process for appointing a Non-Examining Chair is the same as for appointing Internal Examiners (see regulation 3).
- 4.2 The role of the Non-Examining Chair is to ensure that due process is carried out and to attend for the duration of the oral examination. The non-examining chair needs to be a person with appropriate experience of postgraduate research examining from within the University. The Non-Examining Chair need not be from the same School as the student. The Non-Examining Chair must ensure that all parties to the examination process fully understand the expectations of them and should offer assistance and facilitation where necessary. The Non-Examining Chair must not express an opinion on the merits of the thesis.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 5      Number of examiners

Each student is assessed by at least one External Examiner and one Internal Examiner.

### Application of the regulation

- 5.1 In particular cases, such as the assessment of an interdisciplinary topic, a second External Examiner may be appointed.
- 5.2 When the student is or has been a member of staff of the University during their research degree there must be two External Examiners and one Internal Examiner. "Member of staff" will be defined by the student's School with approval by College. There is no requirement for students who are or have only been tutors or demonstrators (or have undertaken similar roles) to have two external examiners.
- 5.3 See also Regulation 7 Avoiding potential conflicts of interest.

## Regulation 6      Examiners: responsibilities

Examiners must have the requisite experience to examine the degree programme at the level at which it is offered. They need to meet the responsibilities set out by the College Postgraduate Committee and comply with quality and standards requirements.

### Application of the regulation

- 6.1 The College Postgraduate Committee will specify responsibilities and requirements to examiners, and ensure they are aware of these regulations and the recommendations available to them.
- 6.2 It is the responsibility of the College Postgraduate Committee to ensure that the External Examiner is competent to assess the degree. The External Examiner is appointed for their specialist knowledge, whereas the Internal Examiner may be a generalist or an expert in only part of the subject matter of the thesis.
- 6.3 Internal Examiners must be fully conversant with the procedures and regulations for oral examinations within the University. Heads of School must ensure that Internal Examiners are aware of all their duties in the examination process.
- 6.4 During the assessment the examiners must hold the thesis and the abstract in strict confidence.





# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Regulation 7      Avoiding potential conflicts of interest

No member of University of Edinburgh staff, Internal Examiner, External Examiner, or Non-Examining Chair shall be involved in any assessment or examination in which they have a personal interest, for example a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship with a student being assessed.

### Application of the regulation

- 7.1 If there is a potential conflict of interest the College Postgraduate Committee will be consulted.
- 7.2 The University's Policy on Conflict of Interest is relevant:  
[www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Conflict\\_of\\_Interest.pdf](http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Conflict_of_Interest.pdf)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Section B Conduct of Assessment

### Regulation 8 Assessment requirements: student responsibilities

It is a student's responsibility to be aware of the assessment practices and requirements for the degree programme, including the Standards for the Format and Binding of a Thesis.

#### Application of the regulation

- 8.1 The grounds for the award of specified research degrees are provided in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)
- 8.2 The student must read the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf)
- 8.3 It is a supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the student is informed of all assessment practice and requirements, including *The Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students*.
- 8.4 There are flow charts showing the thesis assessment process and the responsibilities of the student, College, School and Examiners: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/doctoralthesisassessment.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/doctoralthesisassessment.pdf)
- 8.5 The Standards for the Format and Binding of a Thesis can be found online at: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf)

### Regulation 9 Assessment deadlines: student responsibilities

It is a student's responsibility to meet their assessment deadlines, including thesis submission deadlines and oral examination times and location.

#### Application of the regulation

- 9.1 It is a supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the student is informed of all assessment requirements.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 10 Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments will be made to assessments for disabled students.

### Application of the regulation

- 10.1 Reasonable adjustments must be determined in advance by the Student Disability Service (SDS). They are recorded in the student's Schedule of Adjustments by the SDS, which communicates the Schedule of Adjustments to the student, the student's supervisor, the School's Co-ordinator of Adjustments, and other relevant areas.
- 10.2 The School's Co-ordinator of Adjustments has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Schedule of Adjustments. The Co-ordinator of Adjustments will liaise with academic colleagues who are responsible for putting the adjustments in place in the School. In the case of oral examinations, the supervisor is responsible for communicating relevant adjustments to the chair of the oral examination.
- 10.3 The Co-ordinator of Adjustments will liaise with the SDS should any adjustments require further discussion, clarification or alteration. If there are any amendments to the Schedule of Adjustments, the SDS will communicate these and ensure that the student is informed.
- 10.4 The SDS provides examples of reasonable adjustments, deadlines and support: [www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/student-support/support-we-offer/study-adjustments](http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/student-support/support-we-offer/study-adjustments)
- 10.5 The SDS supports students in the preparation and review of their Schedule of Adjustments. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that their Schedule of Adjustments covers all types of assessment methods relevant to the programme. For example if a student discovers that an aspect of their programme is likely to impact on their support needs, they should contact the SDS as soon as possible in case any amendment is required to be made to their Schedule of Adjustments.
- 10.6 Arrangements can be made via the SDS for students with temporary injuries or impairment, on the submission of relevant medical information. Students should contact the SDS as soon as possible to allow the SDS to determine any relevant adjustments and support.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 11 Language of assessment: languages other than English or Gaelic

The English language is the usual medium of teaching and assessment at the University of Edinburgh. All work submitted for assessment must be written in the English language, with the following exceptions: theses, dissertations or research projects may be submitted in Gaelic (see regulation 12); theses, dissertations or research projects, and other assessed work may be submitted in the language which is being studied where the relevant course or programme handbook specifies that this is allowable.

### Application of the regulation

- 11.1 Quotations may be given in the language in which they were written.
- 11.2 In very exceptional circumstances, a candidate may be granted permission to submit a thesis, research project or dissertation written in a language other than English, where this is not specified by the relevant course or programme handbook. Approval will only be given in cases where the nature of the research is such that presentation of the research results in the language(s) of the materials under analysis confers significant intellectual advantage to the community of scholars who are expected to comprise the primary audience of the research. Approval to do so must be sought either at the time of admission to the University or no later than by the end of the first year of full-time study (or equivalent part-time study), and will not normally be granted retrospectively. Approval must be given by the appropriate College Committee, which must be satisfied that there are sound academic reasons for the request, and that appropriate arrangements can be made for supervision and examination, including the availability of both internal and external examiners suitably qualified to read and examine the thesis, research project or dissertation in the proposed language of submission.
- 11.3 Where such approval is given, in addition to the standard requirements, the thesis, research project or dissertation should also include a substantial summary (of approximately 10,000 words in the case of theses) written in English, summarising the main arguments, and an abstract in English must also be produced. Where Examiners' reports are completed in a language other than English, these must be translated into English before submission to the Board of Examiners. Any costs associated with this should be borne by the relevant School.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 12 Language of assessment: Gaelic

Theses, research projects and dissertations submitted for assessment and examination may be submitted in Gaelic.

### Application of the regulation

- 12.1 The University of Edinburgh wishes to accord Gaelic equal respect with English under the terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 12.2 Candidates who wish to submit a thesis, research project or dissertation in Gaelic should seek approval to do so as early as possible, and certainly not later than by the end of the first year of full-time study (or equivalent part-time study) in the case of Doctoral and MPhil students. Approval must be given by the appropriate College Committee, which must be satisfied that appropriate arrangements can be made for supervision and examination, including the availability of both internal and external examiners suitably qualified to read and examine the thesis, research project or dissertation.
- 12.3 Where such approval is given, in addition to the standard requirements, the thesis, research project or dissertation should also include a summary (of approximately 1500 words) written in English, summarising the main arguments, and an abstract in English must also be produced. Where Examiners' reports are completed in Gaelic, these must be translated into English before submission to the Board of Examiners. Any costs associated with this should be borne by the relevant School.

## Regulation 13 Progression review

The first progression review will take place for all students within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment. The student must participate in a meeting and may be required to make a written submission and/or prepare an oral presentation. Progress in the subsequent years (at 9 to 12 months) is assessed until the thesis is submitted. The online progression report form must be completed.

### Application of the regulation

- 13.1 Guidance on the procedure for the progression review is included in the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf)
- 13.2 It is expected that progression reviews are normally held early within the 9 – 12 month period, to allow time for a repeat review if this is required.



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

- 13.3 There are similar procedures for full-time and part-time students, and reviews of part-time students will also take place within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment. Part-time students will not be expected to have made as much progress as full-time students within this time. Exceptionally, the first progression review may be postponed, with permission from the College. The postponement must be no longer than six months.
- 13.4 Colleges/Schools may also have additional requirements, for example 10 week review.
- 13.5 Schools must ensure that students are aware of how the progression review will be conducted.

### **Regulation 14      Annual progression review recommendation**

The Postgraduate Director or Head of the Graduate School, in consultation with the supervisors will make one of the following recommendations after the annual review

- (a) confirmation of registration, for example for PhD, MPhil;
- (b) a repeat progression review must be undertaken within three months before confirmation of progression;
- (c) for part-time students only for the first progression review: deferment of the confirmation decision to the second annual review;
- (d) registration for a different research degree such as MPhil or MSc by Research;
- (e) registration for a postgraduate taught degree (for example MSc) or diploma can be recommended if the student has undertaken the coursework for that qualification;
- (f) exclusion from study.

The College Postgraduate Committee is responsible for making the progression decision, having considered the recommendation of the Postgraduate Director or Head of the Graduate School.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 14.1 If the outcome of the annual review is 14(b) then the three month period starts from the date of issue of the progression decision to the student.
- 14.2 If there are doubts about a student's ability to complete a PhD successfully then option (d) must be considered. If there are serious doubts as to the student's research capability, then options (e) or (f) must be considered.
- 14.3 The Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study can be found at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/withdrawal\\_exclusion\\_from\\_study.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/withdrawal_exclusion_from_study.pdf)



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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### **Regulation 15      Repeat progression review**

If the annual progression review indicates some concerns about a student's progress then a repeat review must be undertaken within three months.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 15.1 The repeat review can contain any or all of the components of the progression review (see regulation 13).
- 15.2 The options for recommendations from the repeat progression review are those listed in regulation 14, with the exception of Regulation 14(b). Only one repeat review may be undertaken before confirmation of registration.
- 15.3 The College has responsibility for providing the student with a statement on expectations for progress.

### **Regulation 16      Notification of intention to submit a thesis for assessment**

Students must notify their supervisor and the College Postgraduate Committee of their intention to submit their work for assessment.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 16.1 The student must complete the suite of submission forms at least two months before the thesis is submitted:
  - Notification of Intention to Submit,
  - Thesis Abstract,
  - Access to a Thesis and Publication of Abstract.

[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 17      **Deadlines for the submission of a thesis for assessment**

A student must submit their thesis for assessment, to the relevant College, within 12 months of the completion of their prescribed period of study, except:

- For the degree of **PhD by Research Publications** a student must submit their thesis within three to twelve months of registration.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 17.1 At least two, soft-bound copies of each thesis containing an abstract and lay summary, and one electronic copy of each thesis, abstract and lay summary must be submitted to the relevant College Office. If more than two examiners are appointed then additional copies of the thesis will be required. Only the submission sent by the College Office is assessed by the examiners.
- 17.2 All theses must conform to regulations and guidance in Section C.
- 17.3 Once a student has submitted a thesis they cannot retract it.
- 17.4 The relevant College Office is responsible for transmitting the thesis and the examiners' report forms to the examiners.

## Regulation 18      **Early submission**

Any student wishing to submit their thesis earlier than three months prior to the end of the prescribed period of study must have the permission of the College Postgraduate Committee.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 18.1 The student must discuss early submission with their supervisor. Colleges are unlikely to approve early submission without the agreement of the Principal Supervisor.





# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 19 Examiners' reports

The College will send the thesis to the examiners who must each submit an initial, independent written report in advance of the oral examination. The examiners must not consult with each other in completing their initial report. Examiners will not send any comments or decision to the student prior to the oral examination. After the oral examination the examiners will submit a joint report.

### Application of the regulation

- 19.1 At the University of Edinburgh, doctoral and MPhil degrees are assessed through a two-stage process in which each examiner, acting independently, submits an initial ('Part I') report on the thesis before the oral examination is held. Following the oral, the examiners are asked to submit a joint ('Part II') report on the thesis. Examiners submit their own Part I reports and the Internal Examiner is responsible for sending the Part II report to the relevant College Postgraduate Committee. The forms are available online:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/school-college-forms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/school-college-forms)
- 19.2 Exceptionally, if the examiners do find it necessary to consult before writing their Part I reports, this fact and the reason(s) for it must be noted in their reports.
- 19.3 The reports must be sufficiently detailed to enable members of the College Postgraduate Committee (after the oral examination) to assess the scope and significance of the thesis and to appreciate its strengths and weaknesses. They must be expressed in terms that are intelligible to those who are not specialists in the particular field of the thesis.
- 19.4 Examiners must complete their initial reports (Part I) prior to the oral examination, in the time frame advised by the School or College. The joint report (Part II) should be completed directly after the oral examination and sent to the College Postgraduate Committee within two weeks of the oral.
- 19.5 The chair of the oral examination should ensure that the Part II report gives a full account of the examiners' views. In the unlikely event of examiners failing to reach agreement, separate recommendations may be made and will be subject to arbitration by the College Postgraduate Committee.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 20 Preparation for oral assessment

All examiners must participate in any oral assessment of the student. The College has responsibility for overseeing the oral assessment of the student.

### Application of the regulation

- 20.1 Oral assessment may be conducted using technology such as video conferencing, enabling the student or an examiner to participate but not be physically present at the University. Such remote assessment must have the permission of the College Postgraduate Committee, the student, all examiners and any Non-Examining Chair. The College has responsibility for approving and overseeing this process.  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/videolinked\\_phd\\_oral.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/videolinked_phd_oral.pdf)
- 20.2 The Internal Examiner is responsible for consulting with the relevant Graduate School and ensuring that all the necessary arrangements for the oral assessment are made. The arrangements, including the date and place of the oral, the chairing of it, and the names of all those participating in it, must be provided in advance to all those who are to be present (i.e. the student, all examiners, any Non-Examining Chair and any observer). Where a Non-Examining Chair has not been appointed the Internal Examiner will chair the oral. (See regulation 4.)
- 20.3 If an examiner is unable to participate in the oral assessment, it may be postponed to a later date. If postponement would be a serious hardship to the student, the College Postgraduate Committee will consider appointing an alternative examiner.
- 20.4 The examiners complete and submit the relevant forms by the specified deadline:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/school-college-forms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/school-college-forms)

## Regulation 21 Oral examination

The examiners will hold an oral examination to assess a student's doctoral or MPhil thesis. Oral examination may be used as part of the assessment process for other research degrees.

### Application of the regulation

- 21.1 The expectation is that the oral examination will be held within three months of submission of the thesis.
- 21.2 The oral examination may be used to establish a student's knowledge of the field of their research, to establish the extent of any collaboration and to confirm that the work is the student's own. Through the oral examination, the examiners are



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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assessing jointly whether the thesis and the student's defence of it satisfy the requirements and regulations for the award of the degree.

- 21.3 Where there is a non-examining chair, they will chair and attend for the duration of the oral. Where a non-examining chair has not been appointed the Internal Examiner will chair the oral. (See regulation 3.)
- 21.4 Supervisors may attend the oral examination, with consent of the student and examiners, but will not participate in or comment during the oral examination. Supervisors must leave the examination room with the student and do not participate in the examiners' discussion and decision on recommendations.
- 21.5 The (oral) examination procedure of practice-led PhDs can include exhibitions, performances and other events, elements and processes.
- 21.6 The professional doctorate oral examination may cover any part of the degree programme.
- 21.7 At the end of the oral examination, the examiners may, if they have agreed a recommendation to make to the College Postgraduate Committee, indicate their recommendation to the student. The examiners must stress, however, that their recommendation is not final but will form the basis of the Part II report (see regulations 22-24). Receipt of the Part II report by the student from the College constitutes formal notification of the decision and beginning of any additional period of study set by the examiners.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Regulation 22      PhD by Research and other Doctorates: examiner recommendation

After the oral examination, the examiners must make one of the following recommendations to the College Postgraduate Committee:

- (a) **Award PhD/Doctorate.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the doctoral degree as laid down in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (see [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)) as appropriate. No further changes can be made to the thesis after examination; or
- (b) **Minor Corrections Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree except that editorial corrections are required or stated minor weaknesses, as identified by the examiners, must be remedied. In the opinion of the examiners, the student will be able to remedy these without further supervision and without undertaking any further original research. The corrections to the thesis must be completed within three months and are subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or
- (c) **Additional Oral Examination Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree, or satisfies the requirements except for stated minor weaknesses, but the student's oral defence of the thesis has been inadequate in specified respects. The student is required to undergo further assessment, written, oral or practical, and make any corrections to the thesis within a specified period of not more than four months. The degree is awarded subject to the student achieving a satisfactory standard in the further oral examination and subject to certification of the corrections by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests); or
- (d) **Additional Work on Thesis Needed - No Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for PhD/Doctorate.** The thesis needs work above and beyond editorial corrections or minor weaknesses in order to meet one or more of the requirements for the degree, and this work may require further supervision. However, the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy the requirements. The revised thesis must be completed within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, and which must not exceed six months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 12 months with permission from the College. In these cases College may also recategorise the recommendation to (e) – see below. The thesis is subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner(s) (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or
- (e) **Substantial Work on Thesis and Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for PhD/Doctorate.** The thesis is substantially inadequate in one or more of the requirements for the degree, but the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy the requirements. The student ought therefore to



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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be invited to resubmit the thesis for oral examination in a substantially revised form as indicated by the examiners within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, which must not exceed 12 months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 24 months with permission from the College; or

- (f) **Award MPhil.** The thesis is substantially deficient in one or more of the requirements for the doctoral degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these requirements; but the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree of MPhil; or
- (g) **Award MPhil following Minor Corrections.** The thesis is substantially deficient in one or more of the requirements for the doctoral degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these requirements. However, the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree of MPhil except for stated minor corrections in the thesis. The student should be invited to carry out the specified minor corrections as indicated by the examiners. The corrections to the thesis must be completed within three months and are subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or
- (h) **Substantial Work on Thesis Needed before Resubmission and oral examination for MPhil.** The thesis is substantially inadequate in one or more of the requirements for the doctoral degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these requirements. However, the thesis may satisfy the requirements for the degree of MPhil if stated deficiencies in the thesis are remedied. Accordingly, the student should be invited to resubmit the thesis in a substantially revised form as indicated by the examiners for the degree of MPhil. The revisions should be completed within a further period which must not exceed 12 months; or
- (i) **Award MSc by Research.** The thesis is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these requirements or the requirements of the MPhil. However, the work is of sufficient quality to merit the award of MSc by Research; or
- (j) **Fail.** The thesis is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these or any other research degree requirements.



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

### Application of the regulation

- 22.1 Students cannot resubmit the thesis more than once in line with 22 (d), (e) and (h).
- 22.2 If the student does not meet the requirements set under 22(b) to (h) then they have not complied with all assessment requirements (see Regulation 9), which will result in a fail.
- 22.3 A student presenting a thesis under Regulation 22 (h) may not subsequently be permitted to resubmit the thesis under Regulation 24 (e).
- 22.4 The College Office is responsible for ensuring that the student receives a written statement of any revisions to be made to the thesis. The supervisor must confirm with the student their understanding of any revisions to be made.
- 22.5 Where a student is offered the award of a different degree under (f), (g) or (i) above then the original word limits for the offered degree are set aside.
- 22.6 Where the examiners' recommendation is (j), the College will provide the student with a written explanation of the decision. In these circumstances the College Postgraduate Dean or nominee will be available to discuss the outcome with the student, should the student request this.
- 22.7 Students failing to meet requirements following resubmission under (d), (e) or (h) may be considered for an exit award.

### Regulation 23 PhD by Research Publications: examiner recommendation

After the oral examination, the examiners must make one of the following recommendations to the College Postgraduate Committee:

- (a) **Award PhD/Doctorate.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the doctoral degree as laid down in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (see [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)) as appropriate. No further changes can be made to the thesis after examination; or
- (b) **Minor Corrections Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree except that editorial corrections are required or stated minor weaknesses as identified by the examiners must be remedied. Examiners may only request corrections to the critical review. In the opinion of the examiners, the student will be able to remedy these without further supervision and without undertaking any further original research. The corrections to the thesis must be completed within three months and are subject to certification by the Internal



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or

- (c) **Additional Oral Examination Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree, or satisfies the requirements except for stated minor weaknesses, but the student's oral defence of the thesis has been inadequate in specified respects. The student is required to undergo further assessment, written, oral or practical, and make any corrections to the thesis within a specified period of not more than four months. Examiners may only request corrections to the critical review. The degree is awarded subject to the student achieving a satisfactory standard in the further oral examination and subject to certification of the corrections by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests); or
- (d) **Additional Work on Thesis Needed - No Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for PhD by Research Publications.** The thesis needs significant work in order to meet one or more of the requirements for the degree, but the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy the requirements. Examiners may only request revisions to the critical review. The revised thesis must be completed within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, and which must not exceed six months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 12 months with permission from the College. In these cases College may also recategorise the recommendation to (e) – see below. The thesis is subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or
- (e) **Substantial Work on Thesis and Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for PhD by Research Publications.** The thesis is substantially inadequate in one or more of the requirements for the degree, but the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy them. Examiners may only request revisions to the critical review. The student ought therefore to be invited to resubmit the thesis for oral examination in a substantially revised form as indicated by the examiners within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, which must not exceed 12 months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 24 months with permission from the College; or
- (f) **Fail.** The thesis is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these or any other research degree.

### Application of the regulation

23.1 Students cannot resubmit the thesis more than once in line with 23 (d) and (e).





## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

- 23.2 If the student does not meet the requirements set under Regulation 23 then they have not complied with all assessment requirements (see Regulation 9), which will result in a fail.
- 23.3 The College Office is responsible for ensuring that the student receives a written statement of any revisions to be made to the thesis. The supervisor must confirm with the student their understanding of any revisions to be made.

### Regulation 24 MPhil: examiner recommendation

After the oral examination, the examiners must make one of the following recommendations to the College Postgraduate Committee:

- (a) **Award MPhil.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree of MPhil as laid down in the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (see [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)) as appropriate. No further changes can be made to the thesis after examination; or
- (b) **Minor Corrections Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree except that editorial corrections are required or stated minor weaknesses as identified by the examiners must be remedied. In the opinion of the examiners, the student will be able to remedy these without supervision and without undertaking any further original research. These corrections to the thesis must be completed within a specified period of not more than three months and are, subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or
- (c) **Additional Oral Examination Needed.** The thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree, or satisfies the requirements except for stated minor weaknesses, but the student's oral defence of the thesis has been inadequate in specified respects. The student is required to undergo further assessment, written, oral or practical, and make any corrections to the thesis within a specified period of not more than four months. The degree is awarded subject to the student achieving a satisfactory standard in the further oral examination and subject to certification of the corrections by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests); or
- (d) **Additional Work on Thesis Needed - No Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for MPhil.** The thesis needs significant work in order to meet one or more of the requirements for the degree, but the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy the requirements. The revised thesis must be completed within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, and which must not exceed six months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 12 months with permission from the College.





## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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In these cases College may also recategorise the recommendation to (e) – see below. The thesis is subject to certification by the Internal Examiner(s), and by the External Examiner (where the examiner so requests), before the degree is awarded; or

- (e) **Substantial Work on Thesis and Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for MPhil.** The thesis is substantially inadequate in one or more of the requirements for the degree, but the student appears capable of revising the thesis to satisfy them. The student ought therefore to be invited to resubmit the thesis for oral examination in a substantially revised form as indicated by the examiners within a further specified period of study, which is set by the examiners, which must not exceed 12 months. Exceptionally, this period may be extended to a maximum of 24 months with permission from the College; or
- (f) **Award MSc by Research.** The thesis is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the MPhil and cannot be revised to satisfy these requirements. However, the work is of sufficient quality to merit the award of MSc by Research; or
- (g) **Fail.** The thesis is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the degree and cannot be revised to satisfy these or any other research degree.

### Application of the regulation

- 24.1 Students cannot resubmit the thesis more than once in line with 24 (d) and (e).
- 24.2 If the student does not meet the requirements set under Regulation 24 then they have not complied with all assessment requirements (see Regulation 9), which will result in a fail.
- 24.3 The College Office is responsible for ensuring that the student receives a written statement of any revisions to be made to the thesis. The supervisor must confirm with the student their understanding of any revisions to be made.
- 24.4 Students failing to meet requirements following resubmission under (d) or (e) may be considered for an exit award.
- 24.5 Where the student is offered the award of an MPhil as an exit degree, having originally submitted for a doctorate, the MPhil word count will be set aside.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 25      Thesis resubmissions

Where the examiners decide that resubmission of a thesis is required, they must write a detailed statement of the aspects which require revision. The resubmitted thesis is judged only against this written statement. A student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit their thesis.

### Application of the regulation

- 25.1 No further criticism of other material or aspects of the thesis passed as satisfactory at the first assessment can be introduced at a later stage. The written statement and the aspects of the thesis which require revision must be approved by the College Postgraduate Committee and cannot subsequently be altered without the agreement of that Committee.
- 25.2 A student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit their thesis. Thereafter, at most, they may make only minor corrections.
- 25.3 In the event of resubmission, the examiners will re-assess the thesis and hold a second oral examination.
- 25.4 If resubmission is recommended, only one copy of the original thesis should be returned to the student. The other should be retained by the Internal Examiner to facilitate checking of revisions when the thesis is resubmitted.

## Regulation 26      Academic misconduct

It is an offence for any student to make use of unfair means in any University assessment, to assist a student to make use of such unfair means, to do anything prejudicial to the good conduct of the assessment, or to impersonate another student or allow another person to impersonate them in an assessment. Any student found to have cheated or attempted to cheat in an assessment may be deemed to have failed that assessment and disciplinary action may be taken.

### Application of the regulation

- 26.1 Plagiarism is the act of copying or including in one's own work, without adequate acknowledgement, intentionally or unintentionally, the work of another or your own previously assessed original work. It is academically fraudulent and an offence against University discipline. Plagiarism, at whatever stage of a student's course, whether discovered before or after graduation, will be investigated and dealt with appropriately by the University. The innocent misuse or quotation of material without formal and proper acknowledgement can constitute plagiarism, even when there is no deliberate intent to cheat. Work may be deemed to be plagiarised if it



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

consists of close paraphrasing or unacknowledged summary of a source, as well as word-for-word transcription. Any failure adequately to acknowledge or properly reference other sources in submitted work could lead to lower marks and to disciplinary action being taken.

- 26.2 It is academically fraudulent and an offence against the University's Code of Student Conduct for a student to invent or falsify data, evidence, references, experimental results or other material contributing to any student's assessed work or for a student knowingly to make use of such material. It is also an offence against the University's Code of Student Conduct for students to collude in the submission of work that is intended for the assessment of individual academic performance or for a student to allow their work to be used by another student for fraudulent purposes.
- 26.3 A student who has submitted work for one course at this or another University must not submit the same work or part of the work to attempt to achieve academic credit through another course. See also the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations at: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)
- 26.4 Students need to be careful when asking peers to proof-read their work. Proof-readers should only comment on the vocabulary, grammar and general clarity of written English. They should not advise on subject matter or argumentation. Edinburgh University Students' Association runs a peer proof-reading scheme and information can be sought from the Advice Place: [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support\\_and\\_advice/the\\_advice\\_place/academic/peerproofreading/](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/academic/peerproofreading/)
- 26.5 Students need to be careful to avoid academic misconduct when submitting group projects and to be clear about their individual contribution to the submission.
- 26.6 Information on academic misconduct and plagiarism, and how such cases will be handled, is given on the Academic Services website. [www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct](http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct)

### Regulation 27      Security of marks

Assessed work, marks and grades must be handled, transported, recorded and stored securely.

#### Application of the regulation

- 27.1 The College has responsibility for the security of arrangements. In practice, the operation of this may be delegated to the College Office, Graduate School or equivalent.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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27.2 Security arrangements must also include sending assessed work, marks and grades to examiners, including External Examiners; marking arrangements for online assessment; and correspondence about marks, which may be by email.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Section C Thesis Regulations

### Regulation 28 Format of thesis

Students are responsible for ensuring that the submitted thesis is presented in a clear, accessible and consistent format.

#### Application of the regulation

- 28.1 Guidance regarding the Standards for the Format and Binding of a Thesis is available at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf)
- 28.2 If the School or the examiners have concerns regarding the presentation of a thesis they should seek advice from the College. If the College considers the presentation of a thesis to make it unreasonable for the examiners to conduct the examination, it may require the student to represent and resubmit the thesis.

### Regulation 29 Copyright

The student holds copyright as author of all work submitted for assessment.

Doctoral and MPhil students must grant the University the right to publish the thesis, abstract or list of works, and/or to authorise its publication for any scholarly purpose with proper acknowledgement of authorship.

#### Application of the regulations

- 29.1 The student reserves the copyright on both the thesis and the abstract.
- 29.2 Students must complete the Access to a Thesis and Publication Abstract form available to download from:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms)
- 29.3 Where students on MSc by Research programmes are required to deposit their research project or dissertation in the University library, the provisions of this regulation apply.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 30      Thesis title

The student must provide a thesis title with the Notice of Intention to Submit Form (where this form is used).

### Application of the regulation

- 30.1 The Notification of Intention to Submit Form is available online:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms)
- 30.2 The expectation is that the student's thesis title on the Notification of Intention to Submit Form will be the final title for the thesis.

## Regulation 31      Thesis length

Research degree theses, research projects and dissertations must not exceed the length specifications set out in the regulations for the degree.

### Application of the regulation

- 31.1 Word count specifications are provided in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) or programme documentation: [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)

## Regulation 32      Previously published material

Where material to be included in a thesis, research project or dissertation has been published before the thesis, research project or dissertation is submitted, the student must acknowledge the fact of such publication.

### Application of the regulation

- 32.1 The signed declaration must contain a clear statement on the inclusion of any previously published material. See also regulation 34.
- 32.2 A student cannot include in a thesis material that has been accepted for publication prior to the start of their programme of study, unless registered for a PhD by Research Publications degree. Guidance on including publications in a thesis is available online: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/publications\\_in\\_thesis.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/publications_in_thesis.pdf)
- 32.3 See also regulation 26.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 33 PhD by Research Publications: submission

The portfolio of published work submitted for the PhD by Research Publications must be accompanied by an abstract and also by a general critical review by the student of all the submitted work.

### Application of the regulation

- 33.1 The critical review must summarise the aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions covered by the work submitted in the portfolio. It must also critically assess how the work contributes significantly to the expansion of knowledge, and indicate how the publications form a coherent body of work and what contribution the student has made to this work.
- 33.2 The specifications for submission of PhD by Research Publications are listed in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS): [www.drps.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/)

## Regulation 34 Signed declaration

Every student must incorporate a signed declaration in the thesis, research project or dissertation submitted for assessment, stating:

- (a) that the thesis, research project or dissertation has been composed by the student, and
- (b) either that the work is the student's own, or, if the student has been a member of a research group, that the student has made a substantial contribution to the work, such contribution being clearly indicated, or
- (c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified, and
- (d) that any included publications are the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised and clearly identified on the declarations page of the thesis.

### Application of the regulation

- 34.1 Guidance on completing the signed declaration is available online: [www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesis\\_signed\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesis_signed_declaration.pdf)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Section D Assessment Decisions

### Regulation 35 College Postgraduate Committee: approval of assessment decisions

The College Postgraduate Committee discusses the examiners' reports and decides whether or not to approve the recommendations made by the examiners.

#### Application of the regulation

- 35.1 Prior to the meeting of the College Postgraduate Committee, examiners' recommendations are provisional until approved or modified by the Committee.
- 35.2 The examiners for individual students do not participate in any assessment decisions regarding these students in the relevant meeting of the College Postgraduate Committee.
- 35.3 The Secretary to the College Postgraduate Committee is responsible for giving reasonable notice of meetings: ensuring that the recommendations of the Committee are approved in writing and made available to Student Administration at the required time; and ensuring that a minute of the meeting is produced.
- 35.4 The minute is a confidential document although information on a particular student may need to be disclosed to that student under the Data Protection Act and generic information may need to be disclosed under Freedom of Information legislation.

### Regulation 36 Committee recommendation

The College Postgraduate Committee must *either* confirm the examiners' recommendation and transmit it to the Senatus without further comment *or* for stated reasons make a different recommendation to the Senatus, including, where appropriate, assessment by different examiners.

#### Application of the regulation

- 36.1 The Committee, on receipt of a recommendation by the examiners, must consider whether it appears to be adequately justified in the light of the full reports by the examiners, and may make further inquiry of the examiners and the student's supervisor(s).
- 36.2 If the Committee receives reports by the examiners indicating disagreement as to the appropriate recommendation, it may recommend to Senatus that the recommendation of one of the examiners be accepted in preference to that of the





## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

other. The Committee may require that a further report on the thesis be obtained from some other examiner or examiners, *or* that the assessment of the thesis be conducted from the beginning by different examiners.

- 36.3 If the Committee is offering an alternative award to that for which a student had originally submitted (for example MPhil as an exit award for PhD submission), the student must either agree or decline to accept the alternative award.
- 36.4 If the Committee varies the recommendation of the examiners for the degree, the College will provide the student with a written explanation of the decision. In these circumstances the College Postgraduate Dean or nominee will be available to discuss the outcome with the student, should the student request this.

### **Regulation 37      College Postgraduate Committee: quorum for assessment decisions**

Provided reasonable notice of a meeting has been given, a meeting is properly constituted and empowered to act if at least three academic members (including the Convenor) are present.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 37.1 The Convenor of the Committee may, at their discretion, invite any person who has been involved in the assessment of the work under consideration by the Committee to be present 'in attendance' but without voting rights.

### **Regulation 38      Confidentiality**

All discussion about the assessment of an individual student at a College Postgraduate Committee meeting is confidential.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 38.1 The College Postgraduate Committee reaches a collective decision. The decision does not need to be unanimous.
- 38.2 The views of a particular committee member should not be made known to a student. If a student makes a request under the Data Protection Act, information recorded in the minutes on that particular student will need to be disclosed. In doing so, comments should be anonymised, e.g. assigned to Member 1, Member 2. Further information is available at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/boe\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/boe_handbook.pdf)



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

- 38.3 Students have a right to see information about themselves recorded in minutes of the College Postgraduate Committee meeting.
- 38.4 Other than with the written permission of the student concerned, members of staff should not make available information about marks to persons or bodies outside the University except when necessary in the context of a reference.
- 38.5 Guidance on disclosing information on students can be found at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/records-management-section/data-protection/guidance-policies/student-information](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/records-management-section/data-protection/guidance-policies/student-information)

### Regulation 39 Retention and destruction of material

Assessed material must be retained and destroyed in accordance with the University's student records retention guidance.

#### Application of the regulation

- 39.1 Information about the student records retention schedule is online:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/guidance/records/retention/student-records](http://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/guidance/records/retention/student-records)
- 39.2 Material which contributes to the assessment of the degree will be retained in the School, College Office, Library for a suitable period after the College Postgraduate Committee meeting which decides the overall classification or award of the degree, diploma or certificate. This enables the University to respond to any student appeal.
- 39.3 Assessment material should be destroyed at the end of the retention period. For students who submit appeals, the retention period will need to be extended until the end of the appeal process. Other material which contributes to the final assessment of the degree may be returned to the student after the expiry of the retention period providing they do not make known the views of a particular examiner (see regulation 38). Theses, research projects and dissertations may be retained by Schools, who have the responsibility to make them available to any enquirer in response to a Freedom of Information request (unless an exemption applies). Assessment samples may be retained for specified periods as supporting documentation for accreditation and quality assurance purposes, e.g. Postgraduate Programme Reviews. Material which is not retained or returned should be destroyed at the end of the retention period.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## **Regulation 40      Award of degrees**

Degrees are awarded by the Senatus on the basis of recommendations of the College, or Board of Examiners.

## **Regulation 41      College Postgraduate Committee: return of decision**

Decisions and awards recommended by the examiners and confirmed by the College Postgraduate Committee must be recorded on the Student Records System as the final official results of the University.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 41.1 Doctoral and MPhil students receive Part II reports, which constitute formal notification of the Committee decision, after the meeting of the College Postgraduate Committee.
- 41.2 The decisions of the Committee must be notified to Student Administration as soon as possible and certainly no later than 21 days before the date of graduation.
- 41.3 Notification of final results and recommendation of the award of qualification to students, following the meeting of the Committee, is the responsibility of the College Office.
- 41.4 Because of the nature of research degrees, transcripts for such degrees are not issued by the University. Colleges may instead provide students with an explanation of the specific degree awarded and confirmation that the student has been awarded (or is eligible to be awarded) this degree.

## **Regulation 42      Status of Decisions**

Decisions by a College Postgraduate Committee, once certified in writing are final. In exceptional cases the College Postgraduate Committee can review its decision.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 42.1 A College Postgraduate Committee may, review a decision if significant information relevant to that decision, which was unavailable at the time the decision was made, comes to light or if any error having a material bearing on that decision or an error in the written certification of that decision has been made.
- 42.2 If the Committee is satisfied that there are grounds for changing its decision it will report its decision to Student Systems.



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

- 42.3 Where an error is discovered in the assessment or marking of any examination or any component of an assessment or in the calculation, recording or notification of the result of any assessment or any component thereof or in the classification or result of any degree or in any process connected with any of these matters, the University shall forthwith correct that error and amend its records to show the correct result or classification and whether or not the result or classification has been published or otherwise notified to the student. The University shall notify the student of the corrected result or classification as soon as practicable and shall also correct any reference or statement which may have been provided by the University whether to the student or to a third party. Having been notified of the corrected result or classification the student shall return to the University any documentation which may have been issued to the student notifying the original result or classification which has been corrected. The student shall have no claim against the University for any loss or damage which may have been incurred by the student as a result of any error which may have been made.
- 42.4 In proved cases of substantial and significant copying, plagiarism or other fraud, the Senatus has the power to reduce the classification of, or to revoke, any degree it has already awarded, and to require the degree, diploma or certificate scroll to be returned.
- 42.5 Any member of Senatus may request Senatus to refer for investigation any matter concerning assessment.

### **Regulation 43      Convener's Action**

The Convener of the College Postgraduate Committee or Progression Board may take decisions by Convener's Action.

#### **Application of the regulation**

- 43.1 This may occur when the College Postgraduate Committee takes a decision in principle but needs confirmation or further information, or when the Committee considers the possible outcomes and authorises the Convener, once relevant information is known, to apply the appropriate option. Convener's Action may also be appropriate when the decision to be made follows an existing precedent.
- 43.2 Decisions made by Convener's Action should be recorded and reported to the relevant Board or Committee.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 44      Final version of the thesis

The student is required to submit the final version of the thesis to the College Postgraduate Office.

### Application of the regulation

- 44.1 Degrees are conferred upon receipt of the final version of the thesis and following approval by the Senate at graduation.
- 44.2 The final version of the thesis must be submitted within one month of approval of corrections and/or recommendation of award. A student cannot graduate until they have submitted the final version of their thesis to the College Postgraduate Office. See:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/graduations](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/graduations).
- 44.3 Final submission must be notified by the College Office to Student Systems as soon as possible. Graduation deadline information is available online:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/key-dates](http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/key-dates)
- 44.4 Students are responsible for submitting their final version in electronic form in addition to one hard bound copy. Hard bound copies should conform to standards for the format and binding of theses:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thesisbinding.pdf)
- 44.5 Further details on the submission of theses are available in the *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students* and from the Edinburgh Research Archive (ERA) at [www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk](http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk).

## Regulation 45      Academic Appeal

Students have the right of academic appeal against the decisions of the College Postgraduate Committee on specific grounds, which are set out in the University's Student Appeal Regulations:

[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/appeals](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/appeals)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Section E MSc by Research Degrees

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### Regulation 46 MSc by Research degrees: examination

There are two types of MSc by Research degrees:

1. MSc by Research degrees which are examined by the relevant College Postgraduate Committee, and are subject to all relevant provisions of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees except for those regulations listed below.
2. MSc by Research degrees for which the responsibilities of the College Postgraduate Committee are carried out by a Board of Examiners within a School. For these programmes, the provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners apply instead of the following regulations in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees: 2 to 7; 35-38; 41 to 43.

Both types of MSc by Research degrees are exempt from the following provisions of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees: 13-19; 22-25; 33; 44.

Schools will inform students at the start of an MSc by Research programme which examination arrangements apply to their programme.

### Regulation 47 MSc by Research degrees: submission of research project or dissertation

Students on MSc by Research degrees must submit their research project or dissertation on or prior to the completion of the prescribed period of study.

#### Application of the regulation

- 47.1 Once a student has submitted a research project or dissertation, they cannot retract it.
- 47.2 Students on some MSc by Research programmes may be required to complete Notification of Intention to Submit forms prior to submission of their research project or dissertation. The relevant School or College will inform students where they are required to submit the form.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## **Regulation 48 MSc by Research degrees: markers**

For MSc by Research programmes, staff who are or have been a supervisor of the student may not act as a marker or Internal Examiner for the research project or dissertation, where the research project or dissertation is worth more than 60 credits.

## **Regulation 49 MSc by Research degrees: oral assessment**

Oral assessment may be used as part of the examination process for MSc by Research degrees. Schools will inform students at the start of an MSc by Research programme whether oral assessment is to be used as part of the examination process for their degree. Where oral assessment is used on an MSc by Research programme, the relevant College Postgraduate Committee or Board of Examiners will determine whether regulations 20 and 21 of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, or the provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations relating to Oral assessment will apply. Schools will inform students which regulations apply to their programme.

## **Regulation 50 MSc by Research degrees: requirements for award**

In order to be awarded the degree of MSc by Research, students must pass at least 180 credits' worth of courses. This may include the award of credits on aggregate for up to 40 credits. Where credit on aggregate is offered, the provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations (under "Postgraduate assessment progression") apply.

Where marks are awarded for assessment on MSc by Research degrees, these must be expressed using the postgraduate common marking scheme:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/timetabling-examinations/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme>

### **Application of the regulation**

- 50.1 In each Common Marking Scheme, Colleges and Schools may amplify, but not alter, the overall description of grades.
- 50.2 For some MSc by Research programmes the examiners may award a mark or grade, merit or distinction.
- 50.3 There will be no progression hurdle to proceed to the research project or dissertation.
- 50.4 Where a mark is awarded for the research project or dissertation, this must be passed at a minimum of 50%. Failure to achieve this standard will automatically result in no award at MSc level being made.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## Regulation 51 MSc by Research degrees: examiner recommendation

The examiners may recommend:

- (a) **Award Pass with Distinction in MSc by Research.** See Regulation 52; or
- (b) **Award Pass with Merit in MSc by Research.** See Regulation 53; or
- (c) **Award MSc by Research.** The research project or dissertation satisfies the requirements for the award of the degree as laid down in the University's [Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study](#) as appropriate and that the degree should be awarded; or
- (d) **Offer resubmission for MSc by Research.** The dissertation or research project satisfies the requirements for the degree except that minor corrections are required or stated minor weaknesses as identified by the examiners must be remedied. In the opinion of the examiners, the student will be able to remedy these with minimal supervision and without undertaking any further original research; or
- (e) **Award exit award.** The research project or dissertation is substantially inadequate in one or more of the requirements for the MSc by Research. However, the work is of sufficient quality to merit the award of postgraduate diploma or certificate; or
- (f) **Fail.** The research project or dissertation is substantially deficient in respect of all or any of the requirements for the degree and does not meet the requirements for any award.

### Application of the regulation

51.1 For those MSc by Research degrees assessed by a Board of Examiners within a School, the Board makes a single recommendation for each student directly to the Senatus.





# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Regulation 52 MSc by Research degrees: distinction

MSc by Research degrees may be awarded with distinction. Different criteria for the award of distinction may be used depending on the volume of credit allocated to the research project or dissertation.

Where the research project or dissertation is worth 120 credits or more:

- (a) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation, a student may be awarded a distinction if they have attained a mark of at least 70% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation; or
- (b) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation and other courses taken as part of the degree, a student may be awarded a distinction if they have attained a mark of at least 70% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation, and an average of at least 70% for all other components for which a mark has been awarded; or
- (c) Where a mark has not been awarded for the research project or dissertation, the Examiners may recommend that the student be awarded the MSc by Research with Distinction.

Where the research project or dissertation is worth less than 120 credits:

- (d) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation and other courses taken as part of the degree, a student may be awarded a distinction if they have attained a mark of at least 70% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation, and an average of at least 70% for all other components for which a mark has been awarded.

Where an MSc by Research may be awarded with distinction, Schools must inform students in advance which criteria apply to their programme.

### Application of the regulation

- 52.1 Where a student has been permitted to resubmit their dissertation or research project following a marginal fail at the first attempt in line with Regulation 54, they are not eligible for the award of distinction.
- 52.2 The postgraduate common marking scheme can be found at:  
[www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-administration/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme)



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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## **Regulation 53      MSc by Research degrees: merit**

MSc by Research degrees may be awarded with merit. Different criteria for the award of merit may be used depending on the volume of credit allocated to the research project or dissertation.

Where the research project or dissertation is worth 120 credits or more:

- (a) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation, a student may be awarded the degree with merit if they have attained a mark of at least 60% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation; or
- (b) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation and other courses taken as part of the degree, a student may be awarded the degree with merit if they have attained a mark of at least 60% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation, and an average of at least 60% for all other components for which a mark has been awarded; or
- (c) Where a mark has not been awarded for the research project or dissertation, the Examiners may recommend that the student be awarded the MSc by Research with Merit.

Where the research project or dissertation is worth less than 120 credits:

- (d) Where a mark has been awarded for the research project or dissertation and other courses taken as part of the degree, a student may be awarded the degree with merit if they have attained a mark of at least 60% on the postgraduate assessment common marking scheme for the research project or dissertation, and an average of at least 60% for all other components for which a mark has been awarded.

Where an MSc by Research may be awarded with merit, Schools must inform students in advance which criteria apply to their programme.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 53.1 Where a student has been permitted to resubmit their dissertation or research project following a marginal fail at the first attempt in line with Regulation 54, they are not eligible for the award of merit.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## **Regulation 54      MSc by Research degrees: resubmission of the research project or dissertation**

Where the Board of Examiners has offered resubmission in line with Regulation 51 (d), students are entitled to one resubmission of the research project or dissertation. Students may also be offered the opportunity to resubmit the research project or dissertation where a special case regarding an individual student's circumstances has been approved by the College.

### **Application of the regulation**

- 54.1 The relevant Board of Examiners will provide a student permitted to submit a revised dissertation or research project with a statement, which outlines the deficiencies in their original submission. The student is also entitled to receive further written advice from their dissertation or research project supervisor on one occasion before resubmission.
- 54.2 The Board of Examiners will advise the student of the deadline for submission of their revised dissertation or research project, which will be three months from the date of the student receiving notification of their original result.
- 54.3 Where a student declines the opportunity to resubmit the dissertation or research project, or fails to submit by the stated deadline, the Board of Examiners will treat the mark the student received for their first attempt as final and the Board of Examiners will consider the student for a relevant exit award.
- 54.4 If the Board of Examiners agrees that the revised dissertation or research project meets the requirements for a pass at MSc by Research level, the student will be awarded the MSc by Research degree. Where a mark is recorded for the dissertation or research project, the recorded mark for the revised dissertation or research project will be capped at 50%. Where no mark is recorded for the dissertation or research project, the revised dissertation may be awarded a pass or fail only, and will not be eligible for merit or distinction.
- 54.5 Where students on MSc by Research programmes are required to deposit their research project or dissertation in the University library, they may be permitted to submit a revised version within one month of recommendation of award, but the revised version will not be subject to reassessment. A student cannot graduate until they have submitted the final version of their research project or dissertation to the College Postgraduate Office.



# Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

## Section F Interpretation and significant disruption

### Regulation 55 Interpretation of the regulations

The Curriculum and Student Progression Committee has authority to resolve any dispute arising from these regulations. The University Secretary and their nominees have authority to make urgent decisions relating to assessment issues.

#### Application of the regulation

- 55.1 Staff who need guidance on the postgraduate assessment regulations for research degrees, beyond that provided in the regulations and associated guidance, should contact the relevant Dean and/or the Academic Policy Officer with responsibility for the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee: [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/committees/curriculum-student-progression](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/committees/curriculum-student-progression)
- 55.2 The University uses questions on the regulations as a source of information for training and development of the regulations.

### Regulation 56 Significant disruption: concessions and standards

When the University's assessment practices are vulnerable to significant disruption then the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee may approve temporary concessions to mitigate the impact of assessment disruption on students, without compromising academic standards. The College takes decisions that ensure the consistency of treatment of students and the maintenance of academic standards. The overriding principles are that:

- (a) the academic judgement of the examiners remains paramount;
- (b) the University's academic standards will be maintained; and
- (c) the provisions of the University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees remain in force except where a concession has been approved by the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.

These concessions will only be used where necessary: if a College Postgraduate Committee is able to operate without a concession then the Committee will do so.

#### Application of the regulation

- 56.1 Significant disruption can be extremes of weather, loss of facilities, and factors beyond the University's control which have an impact on the assessment of students. This may result in College Postgraduate Committees only having partial results available.



## Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2019/20

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- 56.2 In response to individual significant disruptions that may have a widespread impact on assessment, the University will adopt a communication strategy for students, staff and key external stakeholders, e.g. External Examiners, to ensure that they are aware of the measures that are adopted.
- 56.3 All forms of assessment, such as theses submitted for assessment, examination scripts and course assignments, are the property and responsibility of the University, not of individual examiners or markers. They therefore must be accessible to the University when required.
- 56.4 Drawing on previous experience [CSPC 14/15 2 C], the issues and regulations where CSPC may consider concessions include, but are not limited to:
- (a) participation of External Examiners;
  - (b) College Postgraduate Committee quorum;
  - (c) annual progression decisions.

**1 June 2019**