

**Prifysgol Cymru, Llanbedr Pont Steffan**  
**University of Wales, Lampeter**



A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE  
FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS



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*N.B.* These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University's *Learning and Teaching Strategy* and are based on the QAA's *Code of Practice – Postgraduate Research Programmes* ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk))

## 1. Institutional Arrangements

University of Wales, Lampeter is committed to providing the appropriate support and guidance to enable research students to complete their programmes of study, and helping students, supervisors, examiners and other staff involved in degree programmes to fulfil their responsibilities. This guide is designed to safeguard the academic standards of all postgraduate research programmes, and to put in place measures that will enable such programmes to be delivered successfully according to national and, where relevant, international expectations.

The degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) are awarded solely on the basis of the examination of a thesis, following a period of sustained research which can be full-time or part-time<sup>1</sup>. It is recognised that non-resident research students may have only limited contact with the postgraduate community at Lampeter. Whatever the pace at which work is conducted, all postgraduate students are engaged in scholarly activities and require a high level of attention and advice from supervisors.

Each Department must have at least one permanent member of staff (who may also be the Head of Department) who is designated as having overall responsibility for postgraduate studies. Some delegation of duties may be advisable, especially if the Department is running more than one type of postgraduate programme. These posts constitute major administrative responsibilities and must be so acknowledged, both within the Department and within the University.

The responsibilities of the University include:

- ◆ overall quality assurance mechanisms
- ◆ admission procedures
- ◆ procedures for monitoring progress.

### University Regulations

All University of Wales, Lampeter Research Degree Programmes are governed by the official Regulations of the Federal University of Wales. Copies of all Regulations can be obtained from the Academic Registry, from Lampeter's Website [www.lamp.ac.uk](http://www.lamp.ac.uk) or the University of Wales website [www.wales.ac.uk](http://www.wales.ac.uk)

The regulations cover the following areas:

- requirements for admission to the programme (Enabling Regulations)
- the academic procedural requirements for particular postgraduate research awards
- the requirements for progression, including monitoring and review arrangements for the award and the minimum and maximum periods in which the programme may be completed
- assessment method, requirements and procedures, including the criteria for achieving the award
- the Institution's procedures for dealing with research misconduct, including plagiarism
- complaints and appeals procedures

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to table on pages 5-6

In addition to the above, Departments may issue their own subject specific guidance. Copies of such documents must be forwarded to the Academic Registry for information and must be made available on the Departmental website.

### **Monitoring the Success of Postgraduate Research Programmes**

The University will evaluate the effectiveness of its postgraduate research degree programmes (normally as part of the annual monitoring process) by the following means:

- submission and completion times and rates
- pass, referral and fail rates
- withdrawal rates
- the number of appeals and complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are upheld
- analysis of comments from examiners
- information on employment destinations
- student comments on annual report forms
- Staff-Student Committees

Information collected will be reported to relevant Institutional and Departmental committees and groups for action where necessary.

### **Facilities available to Postgraduate Research Students**

Registered postgraduate students should, wherever possible, have the following minimal level of facilities to assist them in their work.

#### *Full-Time Research Students (studying on campus)*

- access to the University Library and its lending facilities
- access to the University Computing Service
- free photocopying (within the Department) up to 1,000 copies per annum
- access to study facilities in the Department or elsewhere as and when available

#### *Part-Time Research Students (studying on campus)*

- access to the University Library and its lending facilities
- access to the University Computing Service
- free photocopying (within the Department) up to 500 copies per annum
- access to study facilities in the Department or elsewhere as and when available and after priority has been given to full-time students

#### *Full-time or Part-time Research Students (studying off-campus)*

- remote access to the University Library and where practicable, its lending facilities
- remote access to the University Computing Service

- free photocopying (within the Department) when visiting the campus up to 1,000 (full-time) or 500 (part-time) copies per annum
- advice and help in obtaining access to library facilities in other locations

Postgraduate students will, for the first twelve months immediately following the completion of the formal period of registration, have the same facilities available to them as if they were still registered postgraduate students. At the end of that period, such students may request via the Academic Registry to have further borrowing rights in the Library (though they must pay for any Inter-Library Lending) and continuing access to the computing facilities (but they must pay for printing).

## **2. The Research Environment**

Research students will only be accepted into an environment that can provide support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring. The QAA Code of Practice gives the following examples of factors that can be used to indicate high quality research include:

- Demonstrable research achievement/output in the subject, such as: journal publications; books; work produced in other media
- Sufficient numbers of staff, including post-doctoral researchers, and research students (either within the Institution or collaboratively)
- Knowledge transfer and the application of research techniques and solutions to practical problems (such as those funded by employers)
- In some research environments, the ability to attract external funding

In addition to the Department the student can expect to benefit from membership of one of the Research Institutes, which should offer a supportive environment for the type and range of students being recruited, and their changing needs and requirements as the programme develops. The environment should be enabling and instructional, and be conceived of as a place of learning as well as of research productivity. This research environment will include:

- Opportunities and encouragement to exchange and develop ideas with people at appropriate levels who are also engaged in doing and learning about research and pursuing established research programmes
- Ready access to academic colleagues and others able to give advice and support
- Adequate learning and research tools including access to IT equipment, library and electronic publications
- Opportunities for students to develop peer support networks where issues of problems can be discussed informally
- Supervision that encourages the development and successful pursuance of a programme of research
- Guidance on the ethical pursuit of research and the avoidance of research misconduct, including breeches of intellectual property rights

- An emphasis on the desirability of developing research-related skills that contribute to the student's ability to complete the programme successfully
- Availability of advice on career development where relevant

Such a learning environment will also enable research students to make judgements requiring creativity and critical independent thought, accepting that uncertainty is a feature of the conduct of research programmes. This environment should enable students to grapple with challenges that develop intellectual maturity and encourage a high level of reflection on the student's own learning about research as well as on research outcomes. Postgraduate run initiatives such as journals, conference organisation and attendance are valuable ways for students to develop professional skills

### **Timely Submission and Successful Completion of Research**

Students are expected to submit their research for examination within a given time limit.

### **PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)**

Full-time students will register and pay fees for a period of three years or, if they have a Masters degree from an approved Institution, for two years. Part-time students must register and pay fees for six years or, with a Masters degree from an approved Institution, for four years. The thesis should be 80,000 – 100,000 words in length (excluding footnotes and appendices) and may not be submitted for examination until six months before the end of the period of registration. It must be submitted before a fixed time limit (see below).

#### **TIME LIMITS FOR PhD:**

Scheme of Study	Must submit no later than the number of calendar years shown below from the official beginning of period of study.
3 years FULL-TIME	3 years fee paying + 2 years 'writing up' = 5 years
2 years FULL-TIME	2 years fee paying + 2 years 'writing up' = 4 years
6 years PART-TIME	6 years fee paying + 3 years 'writing up' = 9 years
4 years PART-TIME	4 years fee paying + 3 years 'writing up' = 7 years

### **MPhil (Master of Philosophy)**

Candidates will be registered for one year full-time or two years part-time and then submit a thesis of 50,000 to 60,000 words (excluding footnotes and appendices) for examination. The thesis may not be submitted until two weeks (for full-time) or six months (for part-time) before the end of the period of registration and must be submitted before a fixed time limit (see below).

## TIME LIMITS FOR MPhil:

Scheme of Study	Must submit no later than the number of calendar years shown below from the official beginning of period of study.
FULL-TIME	1 year fee-paying + 2 years 'writing up' = 3 years
PART-TIME	2 years fee-paying + 3 years 'writing up' = 5 years

## Extensions

In exceptional circumstances extensions may be granted to students with genuine reasons who are unable to submit their thesis for examination on time. Students should refer to Standing Order 19 for full details of the grounds on which an extension may be granted (copies of Standing Order 19 and Extension Application forms are available from the Academic Registry).

## Department's Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Department include:

- ◆ making recommendations about applications
- ◆ ensuring proposals are feasible in timescale and resources, including a supervisor with suitable expertise
- ◆ allowing supervisors sufficient time and reasonable workload to enable them to discharge their duties
- ◆ monitoring of progress, including making recommendations about upgrading from MPhil to PhD.

## Supervisor to Student Ratios

Departments must decide the normal maximum number of full-time research students to be supervised by any one member of staff. It is suggested that between 6 to 8 full-time registered and residential postgraduate students should, in normal circumstances, be appropriate. Part-time students, external full-time students and students writing-up who have completed their period of registration might each count as half of a registered full-time student. Account should be taken of the other responsibilities of the supervisor, including involvement in postgraduate teaching. It is of great importance that an individual's involvement in postgraduate supervision should be given proper weight in estimates of his/her work load. Within a Department, a member of staff who attracts a high proportion of research students should normally be relieved of some and in exceptional cases all undergraduate teaching responsibilities.

## 3. Selection, Admission and Induction of Students

The University has an equal opportunities policy which applies to postgraduate admissions (copies are available from the Academic Registry).

Application packs are available from the Academic Registry (and via the website). These contain full details of how to apply, together with information on funding available and further information for students with special needs.

Students will only be admitted to postgraduate research programmes if they can demonstrate a sufficient level of English Language Competence (usually IELTS 6.5 or equivalent), though Departments may decide that a higher standard is required. Where this is the case this must be indicated clearly in the Departmental publicity material, Departmental handbooks, as part of the admissions criteria and on the website. English language support is available at the University for students who require it.

Students applying for research programmes will also be expected to have one or more of the following:

- An initial degree, from a recognised Institution, normally with a class 2(i) or equivalent in a relevant subject
- A relevant master's qualification or equivalent (for PhD)
- Be at least 25 years of age and have had at least 2 years experience studying or working in the relevant field

Fully completed postgraduate application forms, together with additional required documentation, should be submitted to the Academic Registry in the first instance. Applications will then be forwarded to Departments for consideration. Once a decision has been made, Departments must return the forms to the Academic Registry who will then communicate the decision to the student. In each Department decisions on postgraduate admissions should involve at least two members of staff, preferably including the postgraduate admissions tutor or an admissions committee and must be approved by the Head of Department or his/her designated representative.

Staff involved in such decisions should have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. It is essential that balanced and independent admissions decisions are made. Admissions staff should consider the following when making their decisions:

- how interviews may be used as a selection criterion (including arrangements for those based abroad and those working at a distance)
- references and other information to assess the suitability of a candidate to undertake postgraduate research
- student qualifications and aptitude
- the student's motivation and potential to complete the programme
- that the student has adequate financial support to complete the programme
- that the student has adequate language skills to complete the course, and the importance of providing opportunities for students to improve their language skills by in-house training
- that the student has adequate access to library resources

The admissions procedure for postgraduate students must include obtaining two references and, wherever possible, should involve an interview. In the

case of an internal candidate, only one reference is required, except for those who do not have an upper second class honours degree, a Master's degree or equivalent. The Department may also request examples of written work. For applicants from abroad, where an interview is not practicable – though this may be possible by video-conference - the admitting Department will often require that written work is submitted as part of the admissions procedure.

Normally an applicant for a PhD must be registered first for the degree of MPhil and may then be allowed to upgrade to PhD status after working towards the MPhil for at least twelve months (two years in the case of a part-time student). The University currently allows for the possibility of an applicant being admitted directly to study for a PhD, but this procedure must be used only when an applicant has already completed and obtained a Master's degree in a relevant discipline. In the case of an applicant who is in the process of completing a Master's degree, the applicant's registration may only be upgraded to PhD on successful completion of the Master's degree.

The selection of a research topic is part of the admissions procedure. Responsibility for formulating the research topic rests jointly with the proposed supervisor and the applicant. (This may be subject to the requirements of an external funding body.) The proposed supervisor's main responsibility is to help the applicant to formulate a topic which will fulfil the requirements for the degree and which is realistic and manageable within the required period. The Head of Department should have sufficient information to enable him/her to be satisfied that:

- the subject for research is appropriate for the degree
- the work can be completed in the specified period of time
- the candidate will have access to the necessary resources for the research.

### ***Standards***

The University normally requires at least an upper second class honours degree or Master's degree from an approved University or higher education Institution. In the case of applicants from overseas whose degree results cannot be immediately translated into the degree classes used in British universities, the admitting Department must satisfy itself that the degree is equivalent to at least an upper second class honours or a Master's degree.

Applicants not holding at least an upper second class honours degree or its equivalent or a Master's degree may be admitted provided that the Head of Department is satisfied that the applicant has achieved a level of academic attainment which demonstrates the ability to complete successfully the postgraduate work applied for. That level of attainment may be indicated by the completion of a period of service or employment in a field related to the area of postgraduate study.

An applicant may also be admitted on the basis of age (minimum 25 years of age) and experience.

A copy of this publication, *A Guide to Good Practice for Research Students*, must be given to all postgraduate students and supervisors at the relevant induction meeting or as part of their introductory packs. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) have codes of practice for the supervision of research students. In Departments which obtain studentships from the Research Councils those codes of practice should be followed along with *A Guide to Good Practice*.

### **Offers of Admission**

The offer to successful candidates for research degrees will be expressed in a formal letter that is specific to the individual applicant. This letter constitutes a contract between the student and the University. The terms of the letter are binding on the University and, upon acceptance, on the student. The letter will normally refer to or enclose other information: for example, references to Institutional web pages, supplemented by printed information where necessary. The letter and enclosures normally refer to:

- the expected total fees, and any other expenditure on practical items relevant to the individual student;
- the expected period of study for which the student is enrolled;
- the requirements which the University places upon the research student (for example, attendance, progress reports, contact with supervisors) and arrangements for enrolment and registration;
- references to the University's regulations, student handbook, sources of funding and other relevant information for a research degree programme
- the responsibilities being accepted by the student for their academic studies and candidacy for a research degree;
- if known, the requirements and conditions of any sponsor;
- an outline of any opportunities to undertake teaching or other duties and any conditions associated with these (for example, training for teaching), to be defined in principle at the beginning of the student's programme unless already part of his/her funding arrangements;
- reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information.

Other information may be provided separately, possibly as part of the induction process. For example, handbooks (printed or electronic) may include details of health and safety procedures, regulations concerning plagiarism and good practice in research, and guidance on research ethics. It is also important that students are aware of the University's expectations of them in relation to personal conduct and academic performance.

### **Matriculation**

All new postgraduate students must matriculate with the University of Wales. For this they must produce certified copies of their original degree and diploma certificates. These copies must be certified by a lawyer's office or by the original degree granting Institution. Alternatively, originals may be sent. These will be returned—though their safety in the post cannot be guaranteed.

## 4. Supervision

### Induction and Beginning Study

All new resident postgraduate research students (including part-time and newly arriving international students) are expected to attend an induction programme. Induction sessions will be delivered by a combination of central and Departmentally arranged programmes at appropriate times of year in line with registration. Non-resident students will be provided with information packs containing the relevant parts of what is offered to resident students in the induction programme. Alternatively, they are welcome to attend the campus-based induction programme.

Students will be given the following information as part of the induction programme:

- general information about the University and its postgraduate portfolio in the relevant subject(s);
- the registration, enrolment, appeals and complaints procedures, assessment requirements and research degree regulations;
- the names and contact details of the student's supervisor(s) and information about how supervisory arrangements work;
- the University's research ethics and codes and those of relevant professional bodies and discipline groups, including consideration of issues concerning authorship and intellectual property;
- the Institution's expectations of the independence and responsibilities of the student;
- student support and welfare services;
- a summary of the facilities that will be made available to the student, including the learning support infrastructure;
- relevant health and safety and other legislative information;
- reference to the challenges that will typically face research students during the course of their studies and where guidance may be sought in the event of difficulties;
- any opportunity for the student representative body to introduce themselves, including specific postgraduate representation;
- social activity, including that provided specifically for postgraduates;
- opportunities for postgraduates to be represented by the student body;
- details about opportunities and requirements for skills development.
- evaluation and monitoring and review procedures

During the induction process, students will be provided with details of opportunities that exist for meeting other research students and staff, and for developing scholarly competence and independent thought.

The student will meet his/her supervisor at the earliest opportunity, to agree on their plans for the programme, including the following:

- the initial objectives of the research (taking account of the sponsor's requirements where appropriate);
- the development and general educational and training needs of the student, measured against the research councils Joint Skills Statement if appropriate;

- the means by which the student will communicate progress to the supervisor(s) and how they will arrange regular meetings;
- monitoring of progress in the research and training aspects of the programme.

### **Supervisors**

The supervisor must be someone who has sufficient expertise in the general subject of the applicant's research topic to make sound judgements on the student's work and the nature of its contribution to the subject. The Head of Department must be assured that the supervisor is able to give adequate supervision to the applicant. If the subject area in which an applicant wishes to work is the provenance of a probationer or of someone with no experience of postgraduate supervision, the Department must provide for joint supervision with a more experienced permanent member of the Department.

A supervisor must be or have been a permanent and full-time member of the Department's academic staff. Procedures exist whereby a second supervisor, who is not a permanent member staff of the of the University, may be allowed to assist with supervising a student registered for an MPhil or PhD degree. Nevertheless, the first supervisor has ultimate responsibility for the postgraduate student's academic progress and welfare.

### **Second Supervisors**

If a second supervisor is to be employed, the Department concerned must prepare a written agreement with the second supervisor about rates of pay and hours of supervision. The Department must keep on file a statement of the second supervisor's qualifications which make him/her suitable to supervise a particular research topic or range of topics.

Joint supervision of candidates is strongly recommended in a number of circumstances. Second supervision of external candidates is particularly appropriate in cases where a postgraduate student is not in residence near Lampeter and in cases where there is insufficient range of competence of staff within a Department to supervise all aspects of the postgraduate's research.

Where this involves members of different Departments or of a different Institution, there must be an agreement between the respective parent bodies. In all cases of joint supervision the specific duties and responsibilities must be worked out and a statement of these must be approved by the Head of the Department concerned.

The postgraduate student should begin submitting written work to the supervisor at an early stage, preferably within the first few weeks. It is not necessary to assume that the first pieces of written work will be a part of the thesis in its final form, but they are important for developing the student's confidence and ability in writing about the issues central to the research subject. Written work is also important for providing a basis for discussions between the supervisor and student. While there may be room for considerable variation between disciplines, it is important that the student

should be strongly encouraged to start producing written work on a regular basis soon after he/she begins postgraduate work.

Each research student will have one main supervisor and frequently a second supervisor, and in some cases other internal or external staff members contributing to the supervisory team. Involvement with a supervisory team can provide valuable staff development and grounding in the skills required to become an effective research supervisor. A supervisory team can give the student access to a multi-faceted support network. Between them, the supervisory team will ensure that research students receive sufficient support and guidance to facilitate their success. At least one member of the supervisory team will be currently engaged in research in the relevant discipline(s), so as to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up to date subject knowledge and research developments. Breadth of experience and knowledge across the supervisory team will mean that the student always has access to someone with experience of supporting research student(s) through to successful completion of their programme.

In all cases, a student should have an identified single point of contact, normally the main supervisor. It should be clear to the student who the relevant contact is if the main supervisor is not available. This will normally be an additional, designated member of academic staff able to provide advice and support and usually the second supervisor. To avoid misunderstandings, the names, contact details and responsibilities of the main and any other supervisor(s) should be provided to students at registration and be readily available throughout their programme.

As and when a main supervisor is not able to continue supervising the student, an appropriate supervisor will be appointed to assume the role. If a main supervisor is absent for more than three months a permanent replacement will need to be appointed. During this period the second supervisor will assume the role of main supervisor to ensure continuity of supervision for the student. If this is not possible another member of staff must be given responsibility for the student while a replacement main supervisor is found.

It is important that, if a student/supervisor relationship is not working well, alternative independent sources of advice are available to the student. By mutual agreement between the student and the University, and where permitted by the terms of any sponsorship agreement, supervisory responsibilities can be changed, at the request of either the student or a supervisor. Such requests can be made by either the student or supervisor to the Assistant Registrar.

Students must have sufficient opportunities for contacting and receiving advice and guidance from their supervisor(s) throughout their programme, irrespective of their geographical location. Reasonable accessibility of supervisors is a priority and the University should ensure that students and supervisors are aware of its importance.

It is important that supervisor(s) and student are fully aware of the extent of one another's responsibilities, to enable both to understand the supervisor's contribution to supporting the student and where the supervisor's responsibilities end.

Supervisory responsibilities include:

- maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform every aspect of the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development.
- giving guidance on the nature of research and the standard expected, the planning of the research programme, literature and sources, Institutional and Departmental requirements, attendance, requisite skills and techniques (arranging instruction if necessary).
- having input into the assessment of the student's development needs and arranging as necessary for the student to consult specialists who can assist with specific questions arising in the research project.
- in research which requires fieldwork advising the student about procedures and resources and carefully monitoring the work.
- discussing with the student the type of guidance and comments the student finds most helpful, agreeing at the earliest possible stage a schedule for formal contact with the student and ensuring his/her accessibility to the student by whatever means is most suitable given the student's location and mode of study.
- giving detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work to ensure that the completed work is submitted within the scheduled time
- providing timely (normally within a month of receipt), constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, ensuring that the student is aware of any inadequacy of progress or in the standard of the work.
- helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research: for example, by presenting work to Departmental staff or graduate seminars and attending relevant conferences (supporting the student in seeking funding for such events), submitting conference papers and articles to refereed journals.
- ensuring that the student is aware of the need to exercise probity and to conduct his/her research according to ethical principles, and of the implications of research misconduct, including plagiarism.
- ensuring that the student is aware of Institutional-level sources of advice including careers guidance, health and safety legislation and equal opportunities providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support.
- in the case of non-resident, especially overseas students, ensuring that sufficient contact is made with the student, particularly in the early stages of research. Such assistance might include help with language problems and advice about language training, where necessary.
- being responsible for monitoring the progress of the student's research programme, providing formal reports to the Head of Department, as and when required by the University, on progress made, the standard of the research work undertaken and an estimated date of submission.
- in advising candidates about submission the following words are recommended (if the supervisor feels that it is fit for submission): 'The thesis is fit to be put before the examiners, but the judgement lies with them'.

Supervisors will be sensitive to the diverse needs of individual students, including international students, and the associated support that may be required in different circumstances. An awareness of the range of support available (as referred to above), and how students can access it, is an important part of the supervision process.

Students and supervisors will have access to relevant documents concerning the above responsibilities, both electronically and in paper form.

In appointing supervisors, Departments need to be aware of and guided by the overall workload of the individual, including teaching, research, administration and other responsibilities, for example, external examining duties and other professional commitments.

When a student needs advice or guidance, supervisors must be able to respond within a reasonable timescale.

### **Supervisor Training**

Supervisors will be required to engage in development of various kinds to equip them to supervise students. New supervisors will participate in specified development activities, to ensure their competence in the role.

Existing supervisors will be expected to demonstrate their continuing professional development through participation in a range of activities designed to support their work as supervisors. Supervisors should take the initiative in updating their knowledge and skills, supported by University arrangements that define and enable sharing of good practice and provide advice on effective support for different types of student. Mentoring relationships are one example of how support can be provided for supervisors.

To ensure consistency of supervision, the University will wish to encourage external supervisors working in industry or professional practice to participate as appropriate in any developmental activities offered by the Institution.

### **Students' Responsibilities**

Students must be made aware of their responsibilities at the beginning of their programme. Students' responsibilities normally include:

- taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- maintaining regular contact with supervisors (joint responsibility with supervisors);
- preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors;
- setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- making supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
- attending any development opportunities (research-related and other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors
- being familiar with Institutional regulations and policies that affect them, including the regulations for their qualification, health and safety, intellectual property, and ethical research guidelines
- discussing with the supervisor the kind of guidance and comments the student finds most helpful
- arranging with the supervisor a schedule of meetings

- taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem
- attending taught classes and other forms of instruction as required by the supervisor, the Department or the University
- maintaining a schedule of work agreed with the supervisor
- presenting written material in accordance with the programme of study agreed with the supervisor
- consulting with the supervisor on details of the formal report, including an estimated date of submission, to be presented by the supervisor to the Head of Department.
- deciding, in consultation with the supervisor, when the thesis is ready to be submitted

## **5. Progress and Review Arrangements**

The main purpose of the monitoring process is to provide overall support for the student to complete the research programme successfully within an appropriate timescale. Should a student's progress not be satisfactory, the monitoring process will ensure that support is available for the student to make improvements.

Arrangements made between the student and supervisor may allow some flexibility, if both are satisfied that adequate support is being provided for the student and there are sufficient opportunities for formally monitoring progress. As well as providing opportunities for formal interaction, students and supervisors are expected to meet informally, and frequently enough to address the student's need for general guidance.

Students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained and there will be times when the student, as well as the supervisor, needs to take the initiative. The nature and frequency of contact between student and supervisor(s) will vary, depending on the duration of the programme, the mode of study, the way the research is being conducted and the amount of support needed by the student.

Taking account of these variables, the following should be agreed by and clear to both student and supervisor(s) from the start of the programme:

- the minimum frequency of scheduled meetings between student and supervisor, or supervisory team, and the purpose of such meetings (these should be at least once per month or once a term for non-resident students); in the case of 'off-campus' students it is expected that there will be frequent electronic communication with the supervisor with face-to-face meetings once a year.
- guidance on the nature and style of the student/supervisor interaction, including discussions about academic and personal progress.

### **Annual Review**

During the academic year, the initial responsibility for monitoring the progress of postgraduate students rests at Departmental level, first, with the individual supervisor(s) and then with the Head of Department and/or Departmental committee. Supervisors should monitor the progress of research students through regular supervisory meetings and by the regular receipt of progress

reports in the form of written presentations and/or draft chapters. Most Departments also expect research students to give seminars on their research topics at intervals during their registration period. Any problems should be referred promptly to the Head of Department.

In view of the importance of monitoring progress and of ensuring that Departments carry out their responsibilities, Departments must submit reports on their students progress to the Academic Registry once a year. These reports must contain information regarding:

- the level of supervision given or the number of formal meetings held
- the amount of work which has been presented
- the quality of such work
- any problems encountered
- an estimated date of completion.

The report will be compiled by the supervisor, who will then submit one copy to the student for comment and a second to the Head of Department. The report must then be checked by the Head of Department for submission to the Academic Registry.

In the case of an unfavourable report, the Head of Department must take remedial action by consulting the student and the supervisor. The Head of Department should, if possible, attach to an unfavourable report a summary of the action taken.

If the problems identified in the reports persist and/or there are more serious disciplinary problems such as non-attendance or failure to submit work, there are formal disciplinary procedures which the Head of Department should use as necessary. Postgraduate students are subject to Departmental Warnings and ultimately referral to the Student Review Committee in accordance with the Progress Regulations (further information is available from the Academic Registry).

Students and supervisors should be made aware from the beginning of the programme:

- the implications of the possible outcomes of review meetings;
- the criteria to be used for making decisions about the extension, suspension or termination of a student's registration;
- the circumstances in which student appeal mechanisms may be used.

### **Progress Monitoring, Review Processes and Record Keeping**

Supervisors are required to keep formal records of meeting with students. Departments may use their own pro formas, though a standard version is available from the Academic Registry if required. Information that is recorded after an informal meeting that takes place regularly between the student and his/her supervisor is likely to be different from and less detailed than the formal record of a meeting to consider an application to transfer to a doctoral degree or a meeting of an annual review panel. It is considered good practice for students to keep a record of regular, 'routine' meetings with supervisors.

## Upgrading from MPhil to PhD

After approximately one year of full-time or two years of part-time research towards an MPhil, a postgraduate student may submit an application for upgrading to PhD. Applications must be made with the agreement of the supervisor to the relevant Departmental committee and/or Head of Department.

When applications are formally submitted there will be a clear test of the candidate, normally involving:

- an official form to be completed for upgrading - copies are available from the Academic Registry - and assessment of written work relevant to the proposed upgrading *and*
- an interview/presentation of research in a seminar environment, conducted by members of academic staff other than the supervisor, and including other research students where possible

## 6. Development of Research and Other Skills

The importance of acquiring research and other skills during research degree programmes should be recognised by students, academic staff, sponsoring organisations, employers and former students. These skills improve the student's ability to complete the research programme successfully. Development and application of such skills is also understood to be significant in the research graduate's capability for sustaining learning throughout his or her career, whether in an academic role, or in other employment. Research students are encouraged to recognise the value of transferable skills in enabling them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, during and after their programme of study.

Research students need support to develop the research, subject specific, communication, and other skills they require to become effective researchers, to enhance their employability and assist their career progress after completion of their degree. These skills may be present on commencement (for example in the case of some mature students), explicitly taught, or developed during the research programme.

In providing research students with opportunities for developing personal and research skills, particular attention must be paid to the differing needs of individual postgraduates, arising from their diversity. A range of mechanisms will be used to support learning and they will be sufficiently flexible to address those individual needs. For example, the development needs of research students already employed to undertake research may be different from those of other students. The emphasis in formal training should be on quality, relevance and timeliness.

Opportunities for skills development should be embedded into research degree programmes. Depending on the needs of the subject and the student, personal and professional development opportunities for research students will either be spread across the duration of the research degree or will be provided at the beginning of the programme, the aim being to

maximise the effectiveness of training in developing skills, both research and generic.

It may not necessarily be appropriate for all students to undertake such development: for example, mature students who may be studying for their own interest in the subject may not need to acquire skills for employment.

To ensure students' needs are being met, the University should review on a regular basis the training in research and generic skills provided for their students, as part of the quality assurance mechanisms for research programmes.

Opportunities for skills development will usually be provided by the University but in some cases may be by other Institutions, perhaps through regional or other collaboration.

The research councils play an important role in setting standards and identifying best practice in research training. In their joint statement *Skills training requirements for research students* (attached at Appendix 1), they have set out the skills that doctoral research students they fund are expected to have on completion of their programmes.

## **Teaching**

Where postgraduate students are provided with opportunities for teaching (for example, acting as demonstrators in laboratories, or teaching small groups), appropriate guidance and support will be provided. If the student's teaching activity also extends to assessing students, training will reflect this. It is helpful for postgraduates to be part of a larger teaching team, so they can benefit from the support and mentoring provided by experienced teachers.

Postgraduate students will not normally be permitted to teach in the first year of their research. Thereafter, they may be invited to give supplementary lectures or lead seminars on modules offered by members of the academic staff. Postgraduate students should not be given sole responsibility for teaching a module. Normally, postgraduate students will be invited to teach at undergraduate level only.

## **Recording Training**

It is accepted as good practice for students to reflect on their learning, supported by frameworks developed by the University for recording personal development. National guidelines (currently *Guidelines for Higher Education Progress Files*), suggest that PDP for students should operate across the whole higher education system. Research students may find it useful to use the PDP tools to record their personal progress and development, including reference to research and other skills. Planning for skills development and checking that necessary guidance and support has been provided should form part of the process of personal development planning.

The University will use the acquisition of transferable skills as part of the academic assessment of the student's progress.

All postgraduate students must receive training in general research techniques, methodology, and information technology. The training activities available include:

- ◆ the University runs an induction programme for resident home and overseas students and it is recommended all new students attend. This programme usually takes place in the week prior to the start of term
- ◆ Departments should arrange induction programmes for new research students, taking into account the needs of part-time and distance learning students
- ◆ At Departmental level, training in particular areas is through specialised Departmental programmes specifically developed for postgraduate students.
- ◆ Departments may require postgraduate students to attend or contribute to seminars, lectures and colloquia in subject areas related to their own and they may encourage students to establish a support network of contacts in other universities and Institutions.

## **7. Feedback Mechanisms**

Each Department must have a Staff-Student Consultative Committee on which postgraduates are represented. In Departments with a large number of such students, a separate Postgraduate Staff-Student Consultative Committee may be established. There must be a written constitution concerning such issues as membership, the preparation of the agenda, and the mechanics by which items are handled within the Department. Formal minutes must be kept of these meetings. Minutes will then be sent to the relevant Departmental Meeting and to the Educational Policy Committee.

Departments are encouraged to consider the adoption of questionnaires in eliciting postgraduate students' opinions both about the taught postgraduate courses and about MPhil/PhD supervision arrangements.

## **8. Assessment**

Not completing a thesis is clearly a cause of great concern both to the student and to the University as well as being a likely reason for funding bodies to refuse to award grants to Lampeter students in the future.

The following points are designed to help both students and supervisors in planning and carrying out research:

- ◆ A plan of the research project should be prepared at the start of the research period and revised at regular intervals. Even if a student has little confidence that the final thesis will match the outline closely, it is helpful to have a provisional outline on paper. Both student and supervisor should ask themselves at regular intervals whether the planned project will actually be completed in the time allotted (see table on pages 5-6).
- ◆ A framework should be devised which marks out the stages that a student is expected to have completed at various points in the period

of study, so that the student can adequately manage his/her time. The structure of programmes of research will vary in different disciplines. In some, the immediate writing of material will be encouraged; in others sufficient data will first need to be acquired.

- ◆ The student should work conscientiously from the start of the research period. A full-time postgraduate might expect to work 40-50 hours a week for 44 weeks of the year. Postgraduates must not be allowed to take on teaching or other responsibilities which would make it difficult for them to keep to this kind of schedule.
- ◆ The student should produce rough drafts of the thesis as soon as each section of work is finished, even if a great deal of subsequent rewriting will then be necessary. This will make the actual writing up much easier, and will help to ensure that adequate data are collected as the student goes along and as questions arise from the writing process.
- ◆ Regular contact with the supervisor, particularly in the first year of research, should ensure that the student is making adequate progress and should help the student to focus on the ideas raised by the work carried out. Students should make every effort to keep systematic records of data collected, notes on relevant books and articles, and material to be included in the bibliography. As writing of the thesis proceeds, guidance from the supervisor should be sought, although such advice should not become so detailed that the thesis becomes, in effect, the product of the supervisor.

Students should contact the Academic Registry at an early stage before submission of the thesis about the administration procedures regarding submission since various official forms have to be completed.

### **Presentation of theses for examination**

A separate booklet is available giving details of the format for the presentation and submission of theses. Postgraduate students should ask the Academic Registry for copies of this booklet. The Academic Registry is always willing to offer advice and assistance to postgraduate students at any stage in their work. The Assistant Registrar is also available for advice about regulations and procedures.

Assessment criteria for assessing research programmes are available from the qualification descriptors for doctoral and master's degrees in the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications* (see [www.elwa.org.uk](http://www.elwa.org.uk)).

Making assessment criteria available to research students will give them the insight they need into what the Institution expects. Criteria should enable students to show the full extent of their abilities and achievements at the level of the qualification they are aiming for. Practical advice for students is also helpful, for example on word limits and what is meant by 'originality' and other similar terms.

When a thesis has been submitted, it is examined by both an internal examiner and an external examiner. The internal examiner is normally appointed from the Department in which the candidate has been registered, and must be someone other than the supervisor(s) of the thesis. An appropriate external examiner is then nominated by the Head of Department

for appointment by the Vice- Chancellor. Once both examiners have completed the examination process, a suitable date on which to conduct an oral examination of the candidate is arranged in consultation with the Academic Registry. Please note that the oral examination is compulsory for **all PhD students** and this also applies to **all MPhil candidates who registered for the first time from 1 October 2000**. (MPhil candidates who registered before 30 September 2000 are not subject to this requirement, though an oral examination may be necessary if the external examiner requires it).

Once an external examiner has been approved the Academic Registry writes to the appointed examiner to inform him/her of the appointment and enclosing copies of relevant guidelines for external examiners. Examiners will then be sent the thesis to be examined along with the Result and Report form. Once both the external and internal examiners have finished examining they are required to complete individual reports which form part of the Result and Report form. A date for the *viva voce* examination will then be arranged. The Head of the Department or their designate will act as an independent, non-examining chair: ensuring consistency between different vivas and providing an additional viewpoint if the conduct of the viva should become the subject of a student appeal. The student's supervisor may be present, with the student's agreement, but on a supportive basis only and is not allowed to take part in the oral examination.

After the *viva voce* examination has taken place the examiners are required to write a joint report on their findings and to indicate on the Result and Report form the decision taken. The Result and Report form gives a range of options to the examiners including the option to refer the thesis and also to award a different qualification. The candidate is then normally verbally informed of the outcome. The fully completed Result and Report form is returned to the Academic Registry who update the record and then send the form to the University Registry in Cardiff. The University Registry write officially to the student, informing them of the outcome of the examination and in the case of referral the dates for resubmission.

Where the two examiners are unable to agree on the result, the Vice-Chancellor may appoint a second external examiner to arbitrate.

Departments are responsible for communicating the nature and source of guidance to be given if a student is asked to revise and re-submit the thesis.

The Academic Registry has responsibility for monitoring the examiners' report(s) and also keeping a 'log' to ensure that the process is being conducted promptly: undue delay is unfair to the student. The examination should normally take no longer than twelve weeks from the point of submission.

Just prior to submitting the theses for examination students should be warned of the penalties for plagiarism, and should be reminded of the significance of declaring that the material being presented for examination is their own work. Students are asked to sign a declaration page to this effect which is bound into their thesis.

The viva can be an especially challenging event in the research student's career, and s/he may well need support in preparing for it. The Department is

responsible for providing such guidance and/or making arrangements for the student to undergo a 'mock' viva, or other, similar experience.

## **9. Student Representations, Complaints and Appeals**

It is in the interests of students and supervisors to resolve problems at an early stage. To facilitate this, students and staff need to know the difference between informal ways of making representations and routes they can use to make formal complaints or appeals.

Complaints are defined as being representations about general matters (including conduct), and appeals as being against specific outcomes or decisions. Complaints should in the first instance be referred to the Head of Department, who may then pass the matter on to the Vice-Chancellor if the matter cannot be resolved. For appeals students should refer to the University of Wales Appeals procedures.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately students may appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education which provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints and appeals.

The importance of resolving any problems at an early stage should be made clear to students and staff. All concerned should be made aware of the stages and processes, informal and formal, through which representations can be made.

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<sup>2</sup> Available from the Academic Registry or [www.wales.ac.uk](http://www.wales.ac.uk)

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

### A INTRODUCTION

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

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

The Research Councils would also want to re-emphasise their belief that training in research skills and techniques is the key element in the development of a research student, and that PhD students are expected to make a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in their area, normally leading to published work.

### B TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

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

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

#### (B) Research Environment – to be able to:

1. *show a broad understanding of the context, at the national and international level, in which research takes place*
2. demonstrate awareness of the issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research, e.g. confidentiality, ethical issues, attribution, copyright, malpractice, ownership of data and the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
3. demonstrate appreciation of standards of good practice in their Institution and or discipline

4. understand relevant health and safety issues and demonstrate responsible working practices
5. understand the processes for funding and evaluation of research
6. justify the principles and experimental techniques used in one's own research
7. understand the process of academic or commercial exploitation of research results

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. *develop and maintain co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues and peers, within the Institution and the wider research community*
2. understand one's behaviours and impact on others when

working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams

3. listen, give and receive feedback and respond perceptively to others

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

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