Where Regulations or the Code of Practice for Research Degrees are included in the text of this Handbook, they are shown in shaded boxes.

Unless indicated otherwise, references to Regulations are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis which are included as Appendix D to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees (Appendix 2).

All research Regulations are accessible from your MAP homepage or at http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/staff/regsandpolicies/researchregulationsandprocedures/

The information in this Handbook is correct at the time of publication (September 2020) but may be subject to change. As the Handbook is updated annually, please ensure you are referring to the current version which takes precedence over earlier versions.
### Student Handbook: Road Map for Key Milestones during your Research Degree Programme

Refer also to the Key Milestones document in Appendix 11

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<th>When/Frequency</th>
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**Student Handbook: Road Map to key regulatory and policy documents for your research degree programme**

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Appendix 11: Key Milestones for a full-time student with Qualification Aim of PhD
Appendix 12: Research Student Development Fund (SDF) Guidance Notes for Applicants
Appendix 13: Research Student Development Fund (SDF) Application Form

Students located at a distance: not all sections of the Handbook will be relevant to you UNLESS you decide to visit the University in which case they provide important and/or useful information which we need to make you aware of. If you are located at a distance and require a visa to visit the UK, please see important information about this in Section 3.3 before arranging a visit to the University.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Information about visas is contained in various Sections of this Handbook, summarised here for ease of reference:

3.3 studying at a distance: visiting the University
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3.28.1 travel insurance
5.2 International Student Advisers (Student Services at The Hub)
5.3 The Visa Compliance Team

For up-to-date information, contact the Visa Compliance Team by email: vct@aston.ac.uk
Summary of key changes and/or additions to Handbook for 2020/21

| Section | Throughout the document:  
| --- | --- |
| | • changes to reflect the centralised support for PGR Administration introduced during the academic year 2019/20. This includes the removal of a section on the School Research Administrator (former 2.3) and renumbering of subsequent sections;  
| | • references to Colleges in place of Schools;  
| | • mention of online delivery of services/participation in events, where available. |
| 1 | Introduction to Aston University  
| | Revised to reflect the new College structure. |
| 1.1 | Aston Graduate School  
| | Includes details of the PGR Administration Team. |
| 2.2 | Associate Dean Research, Director of Research Degree Programmes and PGR Tutor  
| | Includes information about the roles of the Director of Research Degree Programmes and PGR Tutor. |
| 3.3 | Contact and Communication  
| | Includes details of how to request an additional Aston University email address. |
| 3.13 | Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)  
| | Reflects the expectation that the information provided for ATAS should be reviewed quarterly. |
| 3.26.5 | Placements/Off-campus study  
| | New section to provide guidance about study off-campus. |
| 3.27 | Withdrawal/Transfer  
| | New section to provide guidance re process for withdrawing from programme or transferring to another institution. |
| 3.28 | Conference Attendance and Travel  
| | Revised to reflect changes to funding and guidance re travel. |
| 4 | College Specific Information  
| | Revised to reflect changes to the administration of PGR programmes and greater standardisation of PGR support across Colleges. |
| 6 | Health and Safety Essential Information  
| | Expanded section, including changes to reference Campus Safety (formerly Security) and the SafeZone App. |
| Appendix 2 | Code of Practice for Research Degrees  
| | See the Appendix itself for details of key changes/additions, including that the University Research Data Management Policy is now included as an Appendix. |
| Appendix 3 | Learning Agreement  
<p>| | Revised to include expectations for pattern of study, and the University Research Data Management Policy and Intellectual Property (IP) Policy in the list of key documents. |
| Appendix 3a | Training Needs Analysis |</p>
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<th>Appendix</th>
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| 4        | Second Year Progression Task Feedback Forms  
Additional forms added for empirical thesis chapter and written paper feedback |
| 5        | Record of Supervisory Meeting Form  
Revised to include the expectation that a student’s ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) information should be reviewed quarterly, and reference to the University Research Data Management Policy. |
| 8        | Policy on Teaching Hours  
Revised to indicate that the Policy does not apply to research students who are also members of Aston University staff contracted to deliver teaching. |
| 12       | Research Student Development Fund Guidance Notes  
Added in light of new procedure for Research Student Development Fund – outlined in Section 3.28 |
| 13       | Research Student Development Fund Application Form  
Added in light of new procedure for Research Student Development Fund – outlined in Section 3.28 |
Introduction

Aston is a long-established research-active University, known for its world-class teaching quality and strong links to industry, government and the professions. Founded in 1895, and a University since 1966, Aston is also an inclusive, forward-thinking and diverse institution, deeply committed to ensuring all of its students can maximise their achievements.

Your studies this academic year will be different due to the pandemic and the precautions we are taking to ensure the health and well-being of our students, staff and visitors. There has been extensive work by our academic staff, our professional services and the Aston Students’ Union to deliver a great student experience. We have captured our approach in the Aston Student Pledge where we focus on providing the high academic quality and standards of Aston teaching whether your study is on campus, blended or fully online. We will provide extensive student and academic services support, before and during your studies, both online and on-campus, to help you deal with any challenges and enable you to succeed.

We take supporting our students very seriously and we are proud to have been awarded Gold status in the government’s Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), where the feedback said that “students from all backgrounds achieve consistently outstanding outcomes”. The most recent Guardian University Guide has ranked Aston first in the UK for ‘value added’ reflecting the effective supportive environment, excellent teaching and opportunities to develop the student experience.

With the aid of our award-winning Careers and Placements team, Aston’s graduates are some of the most employable in the UK. Six months after graduation, nearly eight out of ten Aston alumni are in graduate level destinations – an employability rate comparable to those of the traditional elite universities. Aston is ranked fourth in the UK for work placements, which help students gain invaluable experience, soft skills and professional growth. Whilst Covid-19 presents us with new challenges, Aston has been quick to respond and now offers a more flexible suite of options alongside the traditional placement year. In addition to on campus activities, our Learning Development Centre (LDC) also offers a range of academic tutorial support.

We are committed to delivering high quality teaching and support to give you the skills to thrive in business and the professions. We are constantly adapting to the changing needs of our students and the wider society and in keeping with the University’s progressive motto, ‘Forward’, we pledge to continue to do so. This seems more pertinent than ever as we work our way through the challenges of a global pandemic while providing a high quality and engaging experience for all of our students.

Saskia Loer Hansen
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Engagement
Welcome from the Dean of Aston Graduate School

On behalf of Aston Graduate School, I would like to welcome you to your research studies at Aston University.

The Graduate School's main objective is to provide a supportive environment for all research students across the University, whatever their mode of study and wherever they are located, with a view to widening and enriching their experience during their research studies. The PGR Administration Team within the Graduate School is the first point of contact on non-academic matters for all research students and their supervisors. The Graduate School is also responsible for maintaining the quality of research degree programmes and the development of training in core research and transferable skills, thus enabling all research students studying for an Aston degree to realise their full potential, whichever pathway they choose.

Your College is the main centre for the delivery of subject-specific postgraduate training and development. Complementing this, the Graduate School provides a focus for the sharing of ideas and best practice between the Colleges. The Graduate School supports and promotes cross-institutional interdisciplinary work and studies and, together with the student-led Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS), which is sponsored by Colleges, promotes both academic and social events. These will provide many research students with the opportunity to interact with other research students across the academic disciplines.

The journey from enrolment to graduation can be challenging at times, but it should also be enjoyable. Both the Graduate School team and your Colleges are here to give you full support and advice whenever you need it. Information you will need during your study is contained in this Handbook or can be found on the Graduate School Website or the Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students – Researcher Development course on Blackboard. The website contains information for ‘Current Students and Supervisors’, including links to Training and Development, Postgraduate Research Community and Quality Assurance.

During your studies, you will be supported by a Graduate Development Team, with experts in different areas (for example, Library Services, Career Development, Research & Knowledge Exchange) who collectively provide a range of training and development opportunities for research students and research staff. Engagement in these opportunities provides an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and information across discipline boundaries and is an important part of your research development. So please take advantage of all the opportunities available to you and enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding journey to the completion and award of your research degree.

The Graduate School is located on the sixth floor of the Main Building. In addition to the Graduate School Office (MB652a) and the Graduate School Training Room (MB652b), there is the Postgraduate Student Common Room (MB652c), a space designated for you to meet, relax and socialise.

Professor Gertrud Reershemius, Dean of Aston Graduate School
1. Introduction to Aston University

Founded in 1895 as the Birmingham Municipal Technical School and a University since 1966, Aston has an established record of academic excellence.

The University’s Mission is
to be the UK’s leading University for students aspiring to succeed in business and the professions, where original research, enterprise and inspiring teaching deliver local and global impact.

The University’s Vision is that:
in 2023 Aston will have an international reputation for delivery of outstanding graduate outcomes and equipping business and communities with the skills for future success.

How is Aston organised?
The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alec Cameron, is the principal academic and executive officer. He is supported by a team of Deputy and Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

The academic activity of the University is organised in three Colleges:

- Business and Social Sciences (BSS)
- Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS)
- Health and Life Sciences (HLS)

Where is Aston University?
See http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/directions/ for maps, directions and other useful information on finding your way around.

Please be aware that the University does not provide student car parking, except in very exceptional circumstances for welfare or medical grounds. If you feel you have a case to be considered, please contact The Hub in the Main Building or phone (0121 204 4007) or email The Hub.

1.1 Aston Graduate School

As mentioned in the Welcome from the Dean, the Aston Graduate School is responsible for the administration of research degree programmes and supporting research students and supervisors.

The quality assurance of research degree programmes is one of the key responsibilities of the Graduate School Management Committee (GSMC) which is chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. GSMC is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee and is responsible, amongst other things, for:

- considering and making recommendations on all matters concerning the regulation, assurance and enhancement of the quality and standards of research degree programmes including the supervision and examination of research students; and
- monitoring the extent and effectiveness of provision of research training, supervision and other support for research students.
GSMC has academic staff and research student representation, and representation from central areas that support research students (see Appendix 1).

Information about quality assurance processes for research degrees is available on the Graduate School website.

The Graduate School offices are located on the sixth floor of the Main Building. This is where the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Administration Team is located (MB652a), alongside the Graduate School Training Room (MB652b) and the Postgraduate Student Common Room (MB652c).

The PGR Administration Team provides help and guidance on all aspects of your progression and interactions with the University including Regulations, your Annual Progress Reports, and your thesis examination. If you have queries which cannot be resolved at a local level, you should contact the PGR Administration Team in the first instance; the team members are:

Manager - Farat Ara

PGR Admissions Team - Steve Baker and Katy Physick (pgr_admissions@aston.ac.uk)

PGR Progression Team - Caroline Brocklebank and Catherine Jarrett (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk)

PGR Programmes Support Officer – Sinead Cussen (ags_development@aston.ac.uk)

The PGR Administration Team works closely with the following colleagues:

Professional Development Advisors (Research) – Eren Bilgen and Eleni Tseligka (ags_development@aston.ac.uk)

Graduate School Manager – Alison Birch

2. Your Support Network

2.1 Supervisory Team

All research students will have a supervisory team consisting of a Main Supervisor and one or more Associate Supervisor(s). For the majority of students this team will be in place before the start of the programme. For students on some specific programmes, the supervisory team will be appointed once they enter the research phase of the programme. The aim is that team supervision will provide more sources of support for the student and the student will learn from the process of effective team working. This model also ensures that staff members who are new to research supervision can work in a team and learn about the process in a way that supports both them and the students.

Within this team, a Main Supervisor is clearly nominated and the individual contribution of the Associate Supervisor(s) is specified in a meeting with the student at the outset of the programme and recorded in the Learning Agreement (see Appendix 3).
2.1.1 Supervisor
The Code of Practice for Research Degrees (see Appendix 2) includes an outline of your and your Supervisor's responsibilities to each other regarding your research; these may be expanded upon or clarified by your College and will be included in the Learning Agreement (see Appendix 3) you discuss with your Supervisor shortly after you start your research.

Your Supervisors are your academic mentors and primary source of all help and guidance; they are there to guide and direct you. You should develop a good working relationship with your Supervisors and maintain regular contact (Regulation 8.1).

It is your joint responsibility to make sure that meetings are useful and productive, and also to ensure that records of the meetings are retained.

Frequency of meetings
You should meet with your Supervisors at least once every 2 weeks. In the early stages of your research, meetings with your Supervisors should be quite frequent. In the latter stages, when you become more independent, these meetings may become less frequent, but perhaps more technically intense. There is a requirement for a formal, structured meeting at least every 3 months for the duration of the programme (Regulation 8.1).

Meeting records
You should keep a record of all meetings with your supervisory team. The format of these records can vary depending on what works best for you and your Supervisors. The formal 3 monthly meetings must be recorded using the Record of Supervisory Meeting Form (see Appendix 5 for a template). (These Meeting Forms will indicate progress and will be submitted to the PGR Administration Team, normally via MAP (My Aston Portal). The 3-monthly records of supervisory meetings provide an important record of your research as you progress through the research degree programme. At least three 3-monthly meeting reports are required in order for annual progression to be confirmed and the reports will be reviewed if progress is considered to be unsatisfactory at any point. There are Guidance Notes on how to upload your Meeting Forms to MAP in the ‘3-monthly supervisor meeting reports (3MR) information’ area of the Blackboard Module Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development.

If you are in any way unhappy about your interaction with your Supervisors, you should discuss the issues with the Postgraduate Tutor named on your Learning Agreement as a source of independent advice (Regulation 6.1g; see also Section 3.25). The Postgraduate Tutor’s contact information is also provided on MAP. If you consider that the Postgraduate Tutor (PGR Tutor) for your School or College is not independent of your supervisory team, you may approach the PGR Tutor from a different School/College (see Section 4.7).

2.1.2 Associate Supervisor
Most students will have at least one Associate Supervisor. The circumstances in which an additional Associate Supervisor may be appointed are detailed in Regulation 6.3 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. The role of any Associate Supervisor in your research should be clarified at the meeting to discuss the Learning
Agreement and be documented in it. The Associate Supervisor(s) should be involved jointly with your Supervisor in at least some of the meetings you have about your research and may, if nominated by the Supervisor to attend in their place, also attend the Qualifying Report **viva voce** examination.

### 2.2 Associate Dean Research, Director of Research Degree Programmes and Postgraduate Tutor

The Associate Dean Research oversees the School or College’s research activity, including the research student experience. The Associate Dean Research or their nominee has a number of regulatory responsibilities in respect of research degrees including, for example, consideration of student requests for a leave of absence or extension (see Sections 3.26 and 3.14).

The Director of Research Degree Programmes supports the Associate Dean Research in their oversight of research degree programmes in the School or College and often acts as their nominee. The Director of Research Degree Programmes is a member of the Graduate School Management Committee.

The Postgraduate (PGR) Tutor is someone independent of the supervisory team who students can contact if they are not able to discuss matters with their supervisor(s). Where students consider that the PGR Tutor for their School or College is not independent of their supervisory team, they may approach the PGR Tutor from a different School/College.

The names of the Associate Deans Research, Directors of Research Degree Programmes and PGR Tutors are provided in Section 4.5.

### 2.3 Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS)

The Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS) is the University-wide research student society. It is funded by the Colleges and affiliated with the Students’ Union. The Society was founded in 2010 in order to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between postgraduate research students. More importantly, it seeks to improve social and academic experiences of research students across the University by organising social events to allow students from different research disciplines to meet and by communicating the concerns of all postgraduate research students to the Graduate School. The Society is run by postgraduate research student representatives from each College. More information, including the names and contact details of representatives, can be found on the [APRS website](https://www.aprs.org.uk).

All new postgraduate research students (PGRs) are automatically invited to join APRS when they enrol; this requires you to also be a member of the Students’ Union. APRS regularly organises social and academic events, such as ‘Welcome’ events for new students, ‘Lunch with Professor X’, and an annual Christmas social, and many more events throughout the year. In the absence of an ability to do in-person events, APRS offers weekly Zoom hangouts to allow students to still be in contact with their fellow PGRs. The APRS Committee sends out emails to notify students of events and other important information, but students can also keep up-to-date with the latest APRS news by following the social media networks:

Instagram: [@APRS Official](https://www.instagram.com/aprs_official) and
If you wish to contact the Society Committee with any enquiries or questions, please email your College or School representative.

2.4 Graduate School Training Programme

In addition to the range of training and development opportunities provided by your College, the Graduate School draws on specific expertise and experience from across the University to deliver a Training Programme, co-ordinated by Dr Eren Bilgen, Professional Development Advisor (Research).

The Departments that contribute to the Training Programme are collectively known as the Graduate Development Team, comprising:

- Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE)
- Careers+Placements
- Learning Development Centre (LDC)
- Library Services

The Graduate School Training Programme is available at the start of each term and is accessible from the Graduate School website and in the Research Training and Skills section of the Blackboard course Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development. The Training Programme is a comprehensive suite of personal and professional development opportunities for research students. The collection of courses and workshops covers a broad range of generic skills that support your ability to succeed on your programme and skills that will prepare you for future employment. The course provision is mapped against the national Vitae Researcher Development Framework - see Appendix 10 for details) and in broad terms the courses cover:

- Research Methods
- Research Skills
- Personal Skills and Effectiveness
- Professional and Career Development Skills
- Working with Others
- Teaching
- Communication Skills
- Business Skills
- Academic Writing Skills
- IT Skills

Access to the Graduate School Training Programme is an inclusive part of your learning experience at Aston, and we encourage you to talk to your Supervisor about which courses you should do and how you can schedule them over your period of research. Booking onto courses is easy: follow the directions from the Graduate School website or, from the Training section of your MAP Research page, ‘Find and Book a Training Course – log into Core HR’ (or via http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/aston-staff-portal/). Once logged into Core HR, select Training, and use the Book a Course option to find and book relevant courses).
In addition to the courses, each Department in the Graduate Development Team offers other opportunities that are more personalised and often one-to-one – further information is provided below.

There are also resources on the Blackboard course Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development, including:

Training Videos section:
- The Good Viva
- The Good Supervision
- The Good Presentation
- The Good Doctorate
- The Good Upgrade
- “What Next”

Additional Resources section:
Information about joining Vitae (using your ‘aston.ac.uk’ email address to register). The Vitae website has a wealth of resources and advice designed specifically for researchers; for example, there is information for research students on ‘Doing a Doctorate’. You may also be interested in some of the Guides on Postgraduate Issues from The Society for Research into Higher Education.

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) section
A regular event organised by the Graduate Development Team is the 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition and students are encouraged to participate, either as a competitor or attendee. Some of the presentations from previous competitions can be accessed in this section of the Blackboard course or on Aston YouTube.

Annual Interdisciplinary Conference
Working with the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS), the Graduate School aims to organise an annual interdisciplinary conference with a different theme each year. The conference will give you an opportunity to promote your work in an interdisciplinary environment, network with other postgraduate researchers and gain experience in communicating your ideas to a non-specialist audience from different disciplines.

2.4.1 Careers+Placements

Whether you are undertaking your postgraduate research degree to facilitate your career in academia, or considering alternative options after you have completed your research, Careers+Placements at Aston University is here to help you consider your options and successfully navigate the labour market.

We offer individual advice and guidance appointments online and by phone during Autumn 2020, with the availability of face-to-face appointments being dependent on when Aston is fully open to students. You can book an online/phone meeting with an Aston University careers consultant at any time as a research student at Aston, and for up to three years after completion. Careers meetings of up to one hour can be used to help you explore options after your research studies, identify potential employers and
opportunities, develop your application skills, and prepare for interviews and assessment centres.

Career management workshops are also run as part of the Graduate School Training Programme, and you can find careers resources for postgraduate researchers in the ‘Careers and Employability’ area of the Blackboard course: Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students – Researcher Development and on the Careers+Placements website.

To book a careers consultant meeting please email:
- Jim Reali on j.reali@aston.ac.uk or
- Iwan Griffiths on i.griffiths@aston.ac.uk

See also Section 5.13.

Location:
The Careers Centre is located on the first floor of the South Wing.

Contact details:
Email: careers@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 204 4757
Website: www.aston.ac.uk/careers

2.4.2 Library Services

Open 24/7 When It Matters Most
Aston University Library Services has achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard, meaning that the service is customer focused with friendly, knowledgeable and professional staff.

Opening Hours
The University Library has flexible opening hours, which are always displayed in the foyer and on the website http://www.aston.ac.uk/library. An access control system has been implemented in the Library in order to maintain the safety of students, staff and visitors.

Access
The Library has proximity access at the entrance - you need your uniCARD to get in, and this Card must not be used by anyone other than the person named on it.

Study Space
The Library building will be open for drop in and bookable study areas. You can also access University computers. Please check the Library website for information on how to book study spaces. Various study environments have been designed to meet your needs. You are requested to choose where you sit according to your requirements and to respect the needs of other Library users. Please ensure that desks are left clean and tidy when you finish.

There is a postgraduate study room on the third floor of the Library towards the rear staircase. There is also additional space in the Main Building (Library 2 – Room MB225)
equipped with PCs, group study tables, a printer, power sockets and USB chargers. Please check the availability of these study areas via the Library website.

Training and support
Our Information Specialists regularly provide training sessions to help researchers make the most of our resources. You can contact them at any time using the contact information for the Library below. In addition, there are tailored ‘Research Bites’ sessions for researchers held during July and August. Look out for the programme on the Research Bites LibGuide.

There is further information on the Library’s ‘Research Support’ webpages and in the Blackboard Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development course under Library Resources.

Membership
You automatically become a member of the Library at enrolment. The barcode on your uniCARD shows your Library membership number. You must use your uniCARD to get into the Library and to take books out. It is important to regularly access your Library Record and check your Aston email in case a book that you have borrowed gets recalled (there are fines on recalled items): https://library.aston.ac.uk/patroninfo

You are still a member of the Library if you are not based on campus and can make use of all the Library facilities. If you are a part-time or distance learning student or have a disability or additional need, you can ask the Library staff to post books out to you.

If you would like to use other UK University libraries, you will need to complete a SCONUL application form at http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access.

Self Service
We make our services as user-friendly as possible, so you can borrow books or laptops, pay fines, print documents and use the online facilities even at night when there are no Library staff available.

Access to Resources
The Library contains over 148,000 volumes, with access to 133,000 journals (electronic and print) and 200,000 e-books across all subject areas. Reservations can be placed on specific titles that are in high demand.

Large, full-text databases such as ABI Inform Complete (Proquest), Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Emerald Fulltext, JSTOR, ScienceDirect and Econlit with Full Text (all full-text business and management journals) are supplemented by access to Web of Science, Scopus, Datastream, Fame (financial databases), Economist, the Financial Times and Nexis UK (international press coverage). Most databases are also available via the Internet, both on and off-campus via the A-Z Databases listing: http://libguides.aston.ac.uk/az.php

From the Library home page http://www.aston.ac.uk/library/ you can:
• link to Library SmartSearch to look for books, journals and e-resources in your subject area;
• find out about Library services and facilities;
• check how to reserve books and view your Library Record.

LibGuides
For access to key resources for your subject area, help with referencing and research advice, check your subject LibGuide – provided by your Information Specialist: http://libguides.aston.ac.uk/. On this page, you will also find LibGuides for distance learners, advice for new academic staff, open access publishing, research data management, copyright and intellectual property.

AsktheLibrary
If you have any questions about Library Services, you can LiveChat from 9am until 6pm or post questions via AsktheLibrary: http://libanswers.aston.ac.uk/

libanswers.aston.ac.uk

In the Library building, support is available from the Help Point on the Ground floor. Staff can help with printers, copiers, self-service facilities and finding books or online resources.

Open Access publishing
Open Access (OA) publishing is all about sharing research freely and openly to all readers online. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the European Commission now mandate for OA publication of journal articles and conference papers. OA publishing also means your research gains wider visibility and usage. See our OA LibGuide for more details http://libguides.aston.ac.uk/openaccess, and for specific questions about OA please contact openaccess@aston.ac.uk.

ORCiD
Researchers face the ongoing challenge of distinguishing their research outputs from those of others with similar names. ORCiD is a registry of unique researcher identifiers that definitively links outputs etc. with their authors. All Aston researchers should register for an ORCiD and use this throughout their career to identify themselves on manuscript submissions, grant applications, patent applications etc. ORCiDs are free of charge and can be linked to research profiles in PURE and Aston Research Explorer. Further information is available from your Library Information Specialist or the Open Access team.

Regulations
The Library regulations can be found on the Library website (see Conditions of Use).

Contact details:
Email: library@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 204 4525
Twitter, Facebook and Instagram:
2.4.3 Learning Development Centre

The Learning Development Centre (LDC) provides academic and pastoral support for students throughout their studies at Aston through a range of activities, including one-to-one appointments, taught sessions and peer mentoring schemes.

The LDC offers one-to-one and group tutorials to help students develop their maths and academic skills. Our Maths Centre offers a drop-in tutorial service, appointments and workshops to assist with maths and statistics. Our advisors also deliver a series of workshops and webinars covering several topics, including academic writing, understanding referencing and reading strategies.

Online academic support and resources:

All of the LDC services are available online through Skype, email or Blackboard. Appointments can be arranged outside of regular working hours if required.

You can also access maths and study resources within the maths support area on Blackboard and the LDC Blackboard course. These online resources include a range of study guides, video clips and general worksheets.

Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme

The transition to postgraduate study is exciting but can be daunting. Having the support of an experienced postgraduate student mentor can help you to settle in and make the most of your time at Aston. This support is primarily pastoral and includes practical advice to help you to integrate into the University as a postgraduate research student. Mentoring support is available in your first year and focuses on practical issues such as:

• settling into the University and the postgraduate student community, whether you are based on campus or at a distance
• getting to grips with University or School processes
• finding out about accommodation and transport
• dealing with the 'culture shock' of a new environment
• achieving a good life/study balance
• …just having someone to chat to who understands your concerns

You can also seek more specific support from your mentor, such as:

• ideas on how to manage your time while studying and/or working
• learning more about campus and online support

Postgraduate Mentors are NOT supervisors; they are an additional resource to support you through your studies. They offer you a student’s perspective, having been in your shoes not so long ago!

What can you gain by having a Postgraduate Mentor?
• Practical advice, encouragement and support
• Share another postgraduate student's experience, knowledge and skills
• Increased social and academic confidence
• Empowerment to make decisions
• Develop communication, study and personal skills
• Develop strategies for dealing with personal and academic issues
• Identify goals and an insight into the next stage of your university career

If you are a current postgraduate student, why not apply to become a Postgraduate Mentor?
• Improve your communication and personal skills
• Develop your leadership and management qualities
• Receive full training and on-going support
• Increase your confidence and motivation
• Contribute to the postgraduate student community
• Enhance your CV and employability skills

If you are interested in postgraduate mentoring, please contact:

Email: mentoring@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 204 5226
Website: https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/get-involved/mentoring-at-aston-university/the-postgraduate-mentoring-scheme/index

For more information about using the LDC, study advice and resources available, please visit our website, Facebook page or follow us on twitter for more information.

Location:
The Learning Development Centre is located on the first floor of the Library building.

Contact details:
Email: ldc@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 204 3040
Website: https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/ldc

Opening Hours
10am-4pm Monday to Friday, term-time
Limited availability out of term

2.4.4 Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA)
CELCA specialises in teaching English for Academic Purposes and providing language, communication and academic skills support to Aston students.

CELCA tutors can help students to improve their accuracy and fluency when using spoken and written English, pronunciation, giving presentations, academic writing, including proposals and journal articles, and other academic skills such as taking part in seminars or listening to lectures.

For more information or to book a tutorial, please visit our website:
https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/english

Email: celca_programmes@aston.ac.uk
3. From Enrolment to Examination: key stages and important information

3.1 Enrolment and MAP (My Aston Portal)

Before commencing your research, you will need to enrol with the University. The first stage is on-line enrolment, during which you will be assigned a student number, username and password, followed in most cases by face-to-face enrolment at Aston at which you will be required to present your original identification and qualifications documents; distance learning students will be advised of alternative arrangements by the PGR Admissions Team. Online pre-enrolment is through the University portal, MAP (My Aston Portal). At the appropriate time, you will receive an email to your personal email address inviting you to complete online pre-enrolment.

Once you have enrolled, you will receive a University ID card (uniCARD). Your effective research start date will be one of 1 October, 1 January, 1 April or 1 July, whichever is closest to your enrolment date (Regulation 4.1). Your research start date will be used to calculate dates for the submission of reports on your progress (see Sections 3.9 and 3.12) and the date for the submission of your thesis, and it is therefore important that you enrol as close to your research start date as possible.

Most research students are enrolled in the first instance for an unspecified higher degree by research and thesis, with progression to a specified degree programme (e.g. PhD) being subject to satisfactory progress (Regulation 4.4).

A PhD/professional doctorate is normally expected to be completed within three years (full-time students) or six years (part-time students) from the research start date and an MPhil/MD within two or four years, respectively (see also Section 3.14).

Your research programme details, including your research start date, details of your supervisor(s), and your projected thesis submission date, will be displayed on your MAP Home Page. If you believe any of these details are incorrect, you should contact the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk). Your MAP Home Page will also display or contain links to the following:

- Personal Details, such as contact address, phone number, emergency contact (you are responsible for keeping these up-to-date via MAP and we will assume that you do so);
- Electronic Resources, including links to the University Library and to the virtual learning environment, Blackboard, which can also be found at https://vle.aston.ac.uk. Blackboard contains an Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development course;
- Student Finances, including a link to the online payments homepage and expense claim forms;
- Standard Letters available for you to request, including Confirmation of Student Status;
- Recorded Absences;
- Research Training and Development (see Section 3.8);
- Regulations and Codes of Practice relevant to your degree programme;
• University Contacts, including links to the Graduate School and The Hub (Student Support Services).

3.2 Re-enrolment
All students are expected to re-enrol annually in September, irrespective of their research start date. The purpose of re-enrolment is to confirm that you are enrolled in the current academic year, rather than to confirm that you have completed (a further) 12 months of your research programme. The re-enrolment process therefore indicates the number of academic years (rather than calendar or research years) that you have been enrolled at the University. For example, a student with a research start date of January will re-enrol into their second academic year in September when they are nine months into their research degree programme.

Re-enrolment is via MAP and you will be emailed when the MAP re-enrolment task is available for you to complete, usually in the first half of September. As part of the re-enrolment process, you will be asked to confirm that you accept the University’s regulations for the current academic year which are always applicable to all students in all years/stages of the programme. A summary of the key changes to the research degree Regulations is posted on the Graduate School website each year.

3.3 Contact and Communication
We usually contact students by email and will use the Aston email address that will be allocated when you enrol (not personal email accounts). All formal University correspondence will be sent to your Aston email address and you should check your account regularly, via MAP or https://webmail.aston.ac.uk/. It will be assumed that Aston emails are received and read; failing to retrieve an email from an Aston email address cannot be used to account for lack of communication except in the case of proven technical failure by Aston.

Postgraduate research students who wish to change their numerical email address (like 12345678@aston.ac.uk) can request a new email address which includes part of their surname and a number (to ensure that it is unique).

The new email address will be in addition to the current 12345678@aston.ac.uk format and both email addresses will work and deliver to your current inbox. Any emails you send will originate from your new address, which will be in the form of SURNnnnn@aston.ac.uk (4 letters of the surname and 4 numbers). Only one email address will show for you in the Outlook Address Book.

Your current logon credentials (giving access to systems such as PCs, MAP, and your emails) will not be affected.

Please email the Digital Services Helpdesk (digital_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk) with the Subject Line ‘New research email address’ if you wish to take up this option.

Setting up an autoforward from your Aston emails to your personal or other email accounts is not recommended but if you need to do this, you should read the guidance on forwarding emails to non-Aston accounts. If you experience any problems with email, contact the Digital Services helpdesk on digital_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk, telephone 0121
204 3445 or visit Main Building East, Ground Floor.

If you are located at a distance and require a visa to visit the UK, please be aware that, in order to visit the University campus for any meetings with your Supervisor, to use the University Library, to attend a research seminar, or to carry out any other activity on the Aston campus that is connected with your research programme, you will need to contact the Visa Compliance Team for advice and to obtain the correct paperwork for your visa application by completing the online questionnaire here https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/hub/visacompliance/questionnaire. Please do not attempt to apply for a visa without help from the University as we may not be able to grant you access to the University campus, or you may be refused entry to the UK.

3.4 University ID Card (uniCARD)

Students are issued with an individual University ID card (uniCARD). This Card has an ID number, which is registered to you. The system logs the use of this Card. We would encourage you to read the Rules and Regulations for the uniCARD which can be found at https://www2.aston.ac.uk/ict/regulations/unicard-regs. Breach of any of these rules or regulations, in particular the loan of your Card to another person, will be subject to disciplinary action. All bona fide members of staff, students and registered visitors will be issued with a Card for their own use.

Cards must be worn at all times on campus. Cardholders are available from the Digital Services Helpdesk. Any student not wearing their Card will be asked to leave the building.

If you lose your uniCARD or it is stolen, then you must report the loss as soon as possible to the Digital Services Helpdesk via the Solve portal - https://solve.aston.ac.uk/tas/public/ssp/content/serviceflow?unid=c70f6e78f4aa4ef88b64492ce11c6f8f. Alternatively this can be reported directly at the Digital Services Helpdesk located on the ground floor of Main Building East, or via telephone 0121 204 3445; email digital_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk.

If you lose your Card there is a replacement charge of £10. However, if the Card has been stolen it will be replaced free of charge on receipt of a police crime report number.

Details about the uniCARD and information regarding replacements is available on the Solve Portal - https://solve.aston.ac.uk/; just type uniCARD into the search bar.

3.5 Learning Agreement

A Learning Agreement (see Appendix 3) should be jointly completed by all students and Supervisors at the start of the programme. This document forms an agreement between a student and their Supervisors, setting out agreed responsibilities of each party. The Learning Agreement should normally be completed within one month of the student’s start date at a meeting involving the Supervisor, the student and Associate Supervisor(s). The student and the Supervisor should each retain a copy, and the original should be sent to the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk).
Discussion of the Learning Agreement should also involve clarifying the role of Associate Supervisor(s) in the supervision of the student and the details should be included on the form for future reference.

3.6 Research Training and Development

The requirements in respect of skills training are set out in Regulation 7 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. Although the regulatory minimum requirement is that students undertake 90 hours of appropriate skills training for a PhD/professional doctorate (60 hours for MD/MPhil), you are encouraged to complete up to 150 hours from across the four key skills domains in the national Vitae Researcher Development Framework. The four domains are: Knowledge and intellectual abilities (domain A); Personal effectiveness (B); Research governance and organisation (C); Engagement, influence and impact (D).

Students with an approved MSc in Research Methods may be exempt from some of the University skills training requirements on request (check with your Supervisor if you think you may be exempt) and students on professional doctorates may meet the requirement through the taught element of the programme. Occasionally, there may also be other reasons for granting an exemption. Your Supervisor will review your training needs with you when you meet to discuss the Learning Agreement, and a Training Needs Analysis form is appended to the Learning Agreement for that purpose (see Appendix 3a).

The research training and development activities that can count towards skills training hours are:

- Internal courses and workshops offered through the Graduate School Training Programme by Departments represented in the Graduate Development Team and offered through the course booking system (see details in Section 2.4 above);
- Internal courses and seminars offered by your College – please see table below;
- Poster presentations at conferences, seminars or poster competitions (10 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 5 hours for University events);
- Oral presentations at conferences/seminars (15 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 8 hours for University events);
- External workshop requiring active participation: 5 hours;
- Aston (University-wide) 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition: 5 hours for participation; 1 hour for attendance (once per year);
- Attendance at ‘Lunch with Professor/Doctor X’ lecture series: 1 hour (maximum 3 hours per year).

You are required to report details of the skills training undertaken to your Supervisor through your Annual Progress Report submission at the end of each year of your research (Regulation 8.2a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Programme (s)</th>
<th>Module(s)</th>
<th>Number of Skills Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Social Sciences (BSS)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Philosophy of Social Science; Research Design, Practice and Ethics; Foundations in Qualitative Research;</td>
<td>80 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.7 Training Needs Analysis

All students are expected to plan their research training and development in discussion with their Supervisor. This should include both research skills and transferable skills. Supervisors and students should review the student’s research training and development needs when they meet to discuss the Learning Agreement, and a Training Needs Analysis form is appended to the Learning Agreement for this purpose (see Appendix 3a). The student’s skills development should be reviewed at least annually, at the time of the Annual Progress Report, and the student should keep the record of training undertaken, and to be taken, up-to-date through the My Research Training and Development task on MAP. Details of training should be reported through the Annual Progress Report submission (see Section 3.12). Off-campus students may have the opportunity to meet training needs through in-company training and development activities.

Students interested in accessing teaching opportunities are advised to discuss this with their Supervisor when they discuss their training needs. The Graduate School Management Committee’s Policy on Teaching Hours is set out in Appendix 8.

### 3.8 Recording Your Research Training and Development Activities via MAP

All research students are required to record their research training and development activities (e.g. Graduate School Induction, courses from the Graduate School Training Programme or external courses, conference attendance, seminars) on MAP.

Courses offered through the Graduate School Training Programme can be selected in MAP and will show the duration and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework skills domain for the activity (i.e. one of Knowledge and intellectual abilities (A); Personal effectiveness (B); Research governance and organisation (C); Engagement, influence and impact (D)). For any external courses, you will be able to indicate the number of hours attended and the appropriate skills domain; you will also be expected to upload documentary evidence of attendance to MAP. Through MAP, you are able to print out a list of all of the research training and development activities you have recorded for submission with your Annual Progress Report or as requested by your Supervisor. There
is also a pie chart that shows the proportion and number of activities in each of the Researcher Development Framework skills domains.

Students who recorded their research activities in the 'My Research Activities' task on MAP prior to October 2019 continue to have access to that information in MAP.

There is detailed guidance on how to record your research training and development activities in the 'Research Training and Development on MAP' area of the Blackboard Researcher Development course.

3.9 Qualifying Report for students with Qualification Aim of PhD/MPhil/MD

A major element of assessment for all research students is the Qualifying Report which has to be submitted by the end of month 10 for full-time students and before the end of month 20 for part-time students. Please see Regulation 8.3 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis for more detail, e.g. length of report, assessment process and possible outcomes. Successful completion of the Qualifying Report is a prerequisite for progression to PhD or MPhil, and for confirmation of continuation on the MD. You may also find it helpful to refer to Appendix 11 which details the key milestones to completion for a full-time student with the qualification aim of PhD.

A ‘Guide to the requirements for the Qualifying Report’ is shown in Appendix 6 and a template of the report that your Supervisor will complete is in Appendix 7. The PGR Progression team will inform you if your College Research Committee has specified a higher minimum or a maximum length for the Qualifying Report. A plan for achieving submission of the thesis at the end of the standard duration of the doctoral degree, indicating that all research work will have been completed by then (i.e. by the end of three years for a full-time PhD or professional doctorate), must be submitted with your Qualifying Report.

Qualifying Reports will normally be submitted to plagiarism detection software; the University’s Policy on Plagiarism Detection Software is available at http://www.aston.ac.uk/quality/a-z/.

Following the Qualifying Report viva, you will receive confirmation of the progression decision and a copy of the Report. If the decision is to recommend a student’s withdrawal, the student will be offered the opportunity to make representations (see Section 3.25 for more information about this).

There are Graduate School Training Programme courses on ‘Writing your Qualifying Report’ and ‘Preparing for the Qualifying Report viva voce’.

3.10 Progression Point for Professional Doctorates

Regulation 8.4 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis contains information about the progression point for professional doctorates, which may differ according to programme. If a Qualifying Report is required for progression, Section 3.9 applies.
3.11 Progression at End of Second Full-Time/Fourth Part-Time Year
Details of the progression task to be completed by PhD and professional doctorate students at the end of the second full-time, or fourth part-time, year of research are detailed in Regulation 8.5. The options are an oral presentation or one of two written tasks; the choice of task to be undertaken will be agreed in consultation with your Supervisor.

The forms for providing feedback can be found in Appendix 4 of this Handbook.

3.12 Annual Progress Report
The requirements for Annual Progress Reports for MPhil and doctoral students are set out in Regulation 8.2. In the year of the Qualifying Report, the Annual Progress Report is submitted to the Associate Dean Research by the independent examining panel of the Qualifying Report. In all other years, the Report is submitted to the Associate Dean Research by your Supervisor following discussion with you, together with details of the research and training development activities you have already undertaken and those you have identified following a review of training needs with your Supervisor. Courses offered through the Graduate School Training Programme should be booked on Core and recorded on MAP.

If your work is satisfactory and you have completed any additional requirements for the year in question (e.g. the oral presentation/written paper/empirical thesis chapter on your research referred to in Section 3.11), you will be allowed to proceed to the next year of your MPhil or doctoral programme.

Part of the Annual Progress Report will be completed after discussion between you and your Supervisor and you will also be invited to provide confidential feedback. This provides you with the opportunity to comment on the supervision that you have received over the previous year, in confidence, and will not be shown to your Supervisor without your permission.

Confirmation of your progression and a copy of the Annual Progress Report will be sent to you in due course.

3.13 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)
International students in the Colleges of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Health and Life Sciences who have an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate will need to apply for a new ATAS certificate if the research project brief changes from that originally, or most recently, submitted. The application for a new ATAS certificate must happen in a timely manner.

The 3-monthly meetings with your Supervisor provide an opportunity to ensure that you review the project brief submitted for your current ATAS certificate on a regular basis to ensure that the brief has not changed. If, at any time during your research programme, there is a change that is so significant that it results in a change of direction relating to the research, your Supervisor should provide the PGR Progression Team with a new project proposal so that you can re-apply for an ATAS. You must re-apply for your ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.
If you need more time to complete your research degree programme and the end date of your project is postponed for a period of more than 3 calendar months, then you must re-apply for an ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.

If there is any doubt as to whether the change is significant, a new ATAS should be applied for. Please note that this is a free application process and only takes a few weeks. More information about ATAS is available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme.

If you require guidance on this matter, please contact the University’s Visa Compliance Team on casqueries@aston.ac.uk.

### 3.14 Thesis Submission Time Limits

The prescribed time limits for the submission of your thesis for examination are detailed in Regulation 14.1 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. All time-limits are calculated from the student’s research start date, and from 1 October for MSc/MA (by Research). For full-time students aiming for a PhD or professional doctorate, the thesis submission date is three years from the research start date (unless you are funded for four years by a sponsor); the thesis submission date for full-time MPhil and MD students is two years.

If you can provide good reason for not submitting your thesis on time, the Regulations (14.2) make provision for an extension of time of up to 12 months to finalise the thesis for submission in a **maximum** of four years (which means that an extension period is not available to students funded for four years). Any application for an extension should be made through the PGR Progression Team at least one month before the thesis is due to be submitted and should include supporting information, confirmation of support for the extension from your Supervisor, and an agreed timeline to show how the thesis will be completed in the additional time requested. You should be aware that extensions are unlikely to be granted to allow more time to undertake primary research.

If your extension is approved, you should ensure that you re-enrol (in September, irrespective of your research start date) via MAP. You will then be required to submit your PhD/professional doctorate thesis within a **maximum** of four full-time/seven part-time years. It is extremely unlikely that you will be granted an extension of time of more than one year. Such a request would require the support of the College Research Committee for a waiver of regulations and is only likely to be considered if there are exceptional circumstances.

No fee is charged for the first six months of the extension period. This means that for a PhD/professional doctorate student, a writing up fee becomes due after three full-time years and six months. If, exceptionally, a waiver of regulations is approved to allow you a period beyond the one-year extension of time in which to submit your thesis, a further writing up fee will be charged.

### 3.15 Research Data

Research data is defined as factual records used as primary sources for research and that are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to validate...
research findings. Research data should be managed according to the Research Data Management Policy and, if applicable, any specific requirements from your funder.

As well as managing your research data, you should also maintain a working log book of your activities and ideas, irrespective of whether you are involved in laboratory or desk-based research. This is accepted good practice in the research community and a core feature of the University’s Research Integrity Policy. Your log book need not necessarily be paper-based; it might instead be a folder on your computer containing one or more Word documents recording your activities and ideas. Where it is agreed that a physical log book is the most appropriate format, each time you make an entry in your log book, the page should be signed and dated by someone else, ideally an academic not directly connected with your research project. The log book should be handed in to your Supervisor when you leave the University.

Good research data management practice promotes integrity through ensuring that your research is reproducible and can be validated by others. It is strongly recommended that prior to commencing any research project, a Data Management Plan (DMP) is produced detailing how the data will be created, processed, analysed, stored, managed and potentially shared. This is of particular importance for Research Council (RCUK) funded research. The DMP can either be paper-based or use the DMPOnline tool developed by the Digital Curation Centre and commonly used at Aston. Whichever method you use, you should ensure that you get into the habit of making your records as complete as possible.

It is recommended that Aston research students manage their active data by storing it in Box and regularly backing up their data. Students should also apply versioning to data where possible, together with using non-proprietary file formats such as .CSV and .txt. By adhering to these guidelines we will ensure that we are able to address any queries arising from published research and where necessary reproduce the results obtained. For further guidance on any aspect of research data management or to book onto a training course, please contact researchdata@aston.ac.uk. Alternatively, visit our Research Data Management LibGuide.

3.16 Intellectual Property (IP)

Intellectual Property as both a term and an idea is likely not at the forefront of your mind when developing or carrying out any project, but it is an important concept to understand, and is critical when planning how to get the most from your work.

IP refers to ideas, information and knowledge that can be protected and commercialised (used to generate revenue). This includes: inventions (protectable with patents); literary, artistic works and images (protectable with copyright); symbols and names (protectable with trade marks); designs (protectable with design rights); as well as know-how and trade secrets (protectable with confidentiality). Other forms of IP include (amongst others) plant breeder’s rights, integrated circuit layouts (“mask work”) and databases.

These forms of protection may sometimes seem like a barrier to the sharing of knowledge that it is your job to create. But they are often necessary for ensuring non-academic uptake. The classic example is a new medicine. With an average cost to market being more than $2 billion, the majority of new medicines require substantial funding that is only ever given if there is strong intellectual property protection in place to ensure that the cost
to market can at least be recouped by a period of exclusivity in selling the medicine. This means that new medicines that are not patented almost never reach patients and the ideas are wasted.

Though the financial numbers may be far less in your field, non-governmental/charity funding is often rarely provided without some IP protections around your work in place.

Your log book may be important in supporting any claims to authorship or inventorship and associated Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), including attribution and commercialisation.

As a research student, it is important that you pay attention to the IP issues that surround research activities. In particular:

- You should understand the concept of Freedom to Operate (FTO – meaning the ability to pursue a course of action or exploit an invention without infringing IPR held by others).
- Before committing significant time or resources to a line of research it is good practice to review any existing patents in the field. The University’s Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKE) can assist with this.
- You should be familiar with the University’s IP Policy which covers how you should handle IP and how the University deals with attribution, publication and commercialisation.

If you wish to discuss the IP implications of your research, you should do so with your Supervisor in the first instance (see also section 4 of the Learning Agreement in Appendix 3) and then with RKE (email: ip@aston.ac.uk).

Patents are often of particular interest, being the most powerful (but also the most expensive) form of IPR. A patent grants monopoly rights for a limited time (typically 20 years) in a specific jurisdiction, which can be extremely valuable. More importantly there are many fields where any technologies developed will only be uptaken if there is someone who will make money at the end of the development cycle, and often a patent is requisite for getting the investment needed for that development cycle.

To be patentable, an invention must be:

- Eligible (i.e. not in an excluded category)
- Novel (i.e. new)
- Non-obvious (i.e. requiring an ‘inventive step’ beyond what is already known in the field)
- Useful (i.e. capable of ‘industrial application’)

Acquiring, maintaining and exploiting a patent is often a complicated and lengthy activity, which needs to be carefully considered before an application is filed.

Disclosure of an invention outside the protection of a properly executed Confidential Disclosure Agreement (CDA) will almost certainly destroy the possibility of patenting that invention, so:
• If you make an invention, maintain confidentiality, notify your Supervisor then contact one of the University’s RKE or IP staff promptly for advice.

If you are working on an idea that may be patentable, please contact RKE well in advance of submitting anything for publication (even if it is a poster) to develop a plan which will optimise the academic, impact and commercial potential of your idea.

3.17 Ethics
All research students should take the time to reflect on the ethical implications of their research and are expected to adhere to the standards of work performance and conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University as set out in the University’s Research Integrity Policy (see Appendix A of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees in Appendix 2).

Appropriate ethical review is required for all research projects. There is useful information about the ethical and protocol approval process online at https://www2.aston.ac.uk/about/management-structure/policies-and-regulations/ethics-policy-and-procedures. Please discuss the requirements and process within your College with your Supervisors. Further guidance can also be sought from the Chair of your College’s Ethics Committee.

3.18 Data Protection
The use of your personal data, and any personal data you collect as part of your research, will be subject to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and has policies and procedures in place to ensure its compliance. For further information, please visit the University’s data protection page (www.aston.ac.uk/data-protection). You must ensure that any data you process in relation to research participants is GDPR compliant.

3.19 Submitting Your Thesis/Portfolio for Examination
The General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses (Appendix E of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees in Appendix 2) contain detailed information about the format your thesis/portfolio should take, including the order of contents. The General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis detail the requirements for the submission of the thesis (e.g. number of copies and documentation) for MSc (by Research) (Regulation 15.1.1) and MPhil or Doctorate (Regulation 15.1.2).

If your Supervisor does not wish to receive a hard copy of your thesis, only two copies of your soft-bound thesis need be submitted. The External Examiner will be provided with an electronic version of a student's thesis – it should be provided only via the PGR Progression Team and in protected PDF format (Graduate School Management Committee Minutes 13/111 and 16/171).

The copies of your thesis/portfolio and of your thesis summary should be submitted to the PGR Progression Team by the submission date. Information about the thesis summary is provided in Regulation 3.3.1 of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.
The electronic copy of your thesis may be uploaded to plagiarism detection software (General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses, Regulation 4.1.4). The University’s Policy on Plagiarism Detection Software is available at http://www.aston.ac.uk/quality/a-z/.

The length of your thesis will depend very much on the nature of your research but please refer to Regulation 2.9 the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses for maximum word lengths. Your thesis should be proof-read carefully before being submitted (General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses, Regulation 1.5).

3.20 Your Viva Voce Examination

As your submission deadline draws near, your Supervisor will nominate an Internal and an External Examiner for the assessment of your thesis and to conduct your *viva voce* examination, unless you are, or have recently been, a member of staff in which case both Examiners will be external to the University (see Regulation 16.4 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis for more information).

The criteria for the appointment of Examiners are detailed in the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. Once the appointment of the Examiners has been approved by the Associate Dean Research and on behalf of the University Senate, your Supervisor will arrange your *viva*. Regulation 17 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis details those persons who must attend the *viva voce* examination and those persons who may attend; your Supervisor may attend if you are happy for them to do so.

During your *viva*, you will be questioned about your research, including: your literature review, choice of methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Such examinations vary in duration but can often last about three hours. More detailed information about the Conduct of the *Viva Voce* examination is provided in Appendix C of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees (Appendix 2 to this Handbook). There is a Graduate School Training Programme course on preparing for your *viva voce* examination and ‘The Good Viva’ video is accessible from the Blackboard course Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development.

Following the *viva voce* examination, the Examiners will make one of the recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. If the Examiners are unable agree to upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner will be appointed (Regulation 16.3).

Examiners may recommend an award subject to revisions being made. Information on the Completion of Revisions is provided in Regulation 20.

| Revisions are not expected to require a major re-working of, or major additions to, the thesis. They will vary from thesis to thesis but may include: typographical errors; inclusion of a small amount of additional material; revisions to some sections of the text; further statistical analysis. (*Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio, Section 8.3*) |

Examiners may recommend that a thesis be revised and resubmitted for re-examination.
In circumstances where the Examiners believe that the standard for the award may be reached by a significant reworking of the thesis/portfolio, for example additional experimental work or data analysis, they may decide to allow the candidate to submit a revised thesis for re-examination. (Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio, Section 8.4)

Further information on resubmission and re-examination of a revised thesis is provided in Regulations 21 and 22 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis; Regulation 23 details the possible outcomes of a thesis resubmitted for re-examination.

If you are required to submit a revised thesis for re-examination, you will be invoiced for a resubmission fee (usually at the time you resubmit your thesis).

3.21 Academic or Intellectual Malpractice

The Regulations on Student Discipline include the following examples of academic or intellectual malpractice. If an allegation of malpractice is brought against a student, the student will be subject to disciplinary proceedings; the penalties which may be applied when an allegation is found to be proven are detailed in the Regulations on Student Discipline and the Tariff of Penalties:

**Plagiarism** - where a student uses, without appropriate acknowledgement, the work of other people and presents it as their own which may give an unfair advantage over others. Intentional and unintentional acts of plagiarism will be construed as offences. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*

Plagiarism includes copying passages, sentences or even phrases from other work, without quotation marks. It also includes presenting the ideas or arguments of others as your own, i.e. without acknowledging the source. Please note that this applies to material retrieved from the internet as well as books, journals and periodicals. It applies even if you have paraphrased (changed the wording), or taken ideas from another student, or any unpublished material. If you are in any doubt about how to acknowledge your sources and reference correctly, seek advice from your Supervisor.

**Falsification of data or other research** - where a student deliberately falsifies or fabricates results in order to support a thesis or argument. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*

This includes the deliberate augmenting, amending or omission of data, with the intention to deceive. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain the integrity of the data at all stages of the research. If data are excluded from analysis for any reason, if hypothetical data are discussed at any point, or if any corrections are applied to data, then this must be made explicit. Students must retain raw data and evidence of informed consent by participants, where appropriate.

**Collusion** - where two or more people have worked together without permission to produce a piece of work which is then submitted for assessment as the work of only one person, which may give an unfair advantage over others. Action may be taken against a student who has allowed their work to be used as well as against a student who submits work resulting from collusion. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*
Allowing someone to impersonate a student for the purposes of assessment attendance - where a student allows someone to attend an assessment in lieu of their own attendance with the intention of impersonation and/or to falsely represent the attending student’s work as being their own. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*

Contracting/purchasing - where a student contracts or purchases from someone else, a piece of written work and submits it as their own original piece of written work. There does not have to be a financial transaction involved. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*

Impersonating a student for the purposes of assessment attendance - where a student attends an assessment on behalf of another student with the intention of falsely representing their own work as having been produced by the impersonated person. *(Regulations on Student Discipline)*

3.22 Quality Management: What it is and how to play your part

**Annual Progress Reports**
Towards the end of each research year, Supervisors must submit an Annual Progress Report (see Section 3.12) on the performance of each of their research students, in consultation with the student. These Reports are considered by the Associate Dean Research or nominee on behalf of the College’s Research Committee and generic issues arising (for example, to do with the availability of resources) may form part of the College’s Evaluation Report on its research degree programmes which is subsequently considered by the University’s Graduate School Management Committee.

Annual Progress Reports provide you with the opportunity to comment, in confidence, on the supervision you have received. If you raise concerns, these will be discussed with you by the Associate Dean Research or nominee before any further action is taken.

**Taught Modules and Training Programme Evaluation**
Teaching staff welcome constructive feedback on workshops and seminars and on any taught modules you may follow as part of your research programme. Your input may be sought through questionnaires, representation on various committees, or by asking you to take part in group evaluation exercises.

**Programme Review**
Every six years, a College’s research degree programmes are subject to review. This involves the submission of a self-evaluation document by the College which is considered by a panel of members from other Colleges and two members external to the University. The panel also has a student member from a different College to that being reviewed.

Meetings with students on the research degree programmes being reviewed are an integral part of the programme review process. Following the review, a report is produced which may have essential or advisable recommendations but will almost certainly have desirable recommendations and commendations.

Participation in a programme review, either as a panel member or as a student on the programmes being reviewed who meets with the panel, provides an opportunity for you to participate in the University’s quality processes.
**Representation on Committees**
The University is committed to listening to the views of its students and to including them in the development of their own learning experience. If you are interested in finding out more about what a Student Representative does, please contact Aston Students’ Union Vice President Education at union.vpe@aston.ac.uk. There is usually a call for student representative nominations to committees that consider research degree programme matters each September.

Postgraduate representatives play an important part in relaying the requirements and concerns of postgraduate research students to the committee structure of the College and of the University. There are postgraduate representatives on College Research Committees and on the University’s Graduate School Management Committee.

As a postgraduate representative, you are asked to:
- make yourself known to all other postgraduate students
- agree a system by which students can communicate effectively with you over matters of student concern
- attend relevant Committee meetings and raise student issues as necessary
- provide feedback to other postgraduate research students on the content and outcome of meetings and discussions.

The Students’ Union provides training for committee representatives and you are advised to attend in order to fully understand the role and the position of the committee in the overall structure of the University.

**Focus Groups**
You may be invited to take part in Focus Groups at a College or University-level. These provide opportunities to make your views known in a confidential environment with fellow postgraduate students.

**Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)**
The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) allows institutions to “gain valuable data to inform enhancements to the experience of postgraduate researchers” (AdvanceHE website, accessed August 2020). All Higher Education Institutions in the UK are invited to take part on a voluntary basis; the Survey is managed by AdvanceHE.

The next PRES is expected to take place in Spring 2021 and you will be contacted by email with details of how to take part. We would encourage you to do so. Feedback from the Dean of the Graduate School on the results of the 2019 and 2017 PRES are available on the Blackboard course Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development. Results from Surveys prior to 2017 are available from the Graduate School webpage.

**3.23 Diversity and Inclusion**
We believe that the diversity of our staff and student community is fundamental to creative thinking, innovation and intellectual challenge, and we are committed to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly, regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or nationality.
We have ambitious diversity goals and an excellent record of achievement (such as meeting widening participation targets and earning Athena SWAN awards). Please see our HR Policies page and Inclusive Aston webpages for more details.

If you have any questions about diversity and inclusion at the University please contact the Inclusive Aston team at diversity@aston.ac.uk.

3.24 University Rules, Regulations and Policies
Detailed information is available via the A-Z of Academic Regulations, Quality Policies and Procedures, including the following important areas:

- Research Regulations, Procedures and Codes of Practice
- Graduate School
- Academic Appeals Procedures
- Disciplinary Regulations for Students
- Suggestions, Comments, Complaints and Concerns
- Plagiarism Detection Software Policy

3.25 Student Representations
The University has approved procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints. These are detailed in Regulations 24 and 28, respectively, of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis and in the Academic Appeals Procedures and in the Student Complaints Procedures for suggestions, comments, concerns and complaints (see section above for links to documents).

Research students who are recommended for withdrawal from the programme will be provided with the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent. If the outcome of the meeting is unsatisfactory to the student, they may appeal under the provisions of the University’s Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures. More information on withdrawal from the research degree programme, including voluntary withdrawal, is provided in Regulation 11 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis.

In cases where the University’s internal complaints or appeals procedures have been exhausted, the student will be provided with the details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. The OIA cannot interfere with the operation of a University’s academic judgement which is stated as being “a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential”1.

The Graduate School Management Committee receives the University’s annual report on academic appeals in order to review processes and guidance in place against any recommendations in the report.

If you are unsure who to approach in the first instance, please contact the PGR Progression Team.

The Advice and Representation Centre in the Students’ Union (see Section 5.5) is a source of free, independent advice for students who may be experiencing difficulties of any kind. A postgraduate research student may be accompanied or represented at investigative, representation or appeal meetings by someone from the Advice and Representation Centre (email advice@aston.ac.uk; telephone 0121 204 4848).

3.26 Absence from Research Programme

You must advise your Supervisor or, if unavailable, another appropriate member of staff (e.g. Associate Supervisor, PGR Progression Team) of any illness, vacation or other occasions when you will be absent from the University or from your research, or of any other circumstances likely to affect your work. Any vacation needs to be approved and requested through the PGR Progression Team in advance of being taken (see 3.26.3 Vacation below).

Please be aware that an extended period of lack of communication, without good reason, may lead to your Supervisor recommending that you be voluntarily withdrawn from your research programme (see Regulation 11c for more information).

3.26.1 Overseas Students Based on Campus (Tier 4 visa): Authorised Absences

As part of the Points-Based Immigration System (Tier 4), Aston University as an educational sponsor for overseas students who come to study in the UK on the Aston campus is responsible for monitoring student attendance and must record all different types of student absences for overseas students. Under the UK Visas & Immigration Services (UKVI) regulations, if you have a Tier 4 Visa you must be present on the University premises for the purpose of your research studies, for the entire duration of your course, unless you apply for, and are granted, a monitored ‘authorised absence’ from your College, for a specific period of time. If you expect to undertake research at another organisation in the UK, for example at a different university, we are required to report this to the Home Office so that you have the correct permission to be away from the Aston campus. Please contact a member of the Visa Compliance Team, through The Hub (thehub@aston.ac.uk; telephone 0121 204 4007) for advice.

If you need to leave the UK during your research programme you must obtain written permission from the PGR Progression Team for short periods of absence, for example to undertake research overseas, to attend an overseas conference, to return home due to bereavement, an illness or for a family celebration. All vacation time must be approved in advance (see Section 3.26.3 below), even if it is spent in the UK, including on campus (see also Section 3.26.2 Work below). These requirements continue until you submit your final bound thesis; if you return home once you have submitted your thesis for examination (or at any time prior to submission of the final bound thesis), the Visa Compliance Team should be informed. Please ensure you have the correct visa (not a Visitor visa) if you return to the UK from overseas for your viva voce examination.

If your absence is approved, you will be given a Letter of Authorised Absence which you must show at immigration when you return to the UK. It is essential that you inform the PGR Progression Team of any absence as soon as possible. Please note that the UK Visas & Immigration Services (UKVI) may not allow you to re-enter the UK if you do not have written permission from Aston University to be absent from your studies.
It is very important that those students under the Tier 4 system keep up-to-date with current immigration regulations as these may change in the future. You should check the International Student Support Unit (ISSU) website, your emails, MAP and Blackboard regularly for updates. Further information can be found at: https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/hub/iss/visas

3.26.2 Work
It is your responsibility to ensure that any work (paid or unpaid employment) undertaken allows sufficient time for your research programme to be completed on time; loss of time for your research because of employment will not be an acceptable reason for an extension or appeal. You are therefore strongly advised to discuss any employment opportunity with your Supervisor; for employment within Aston, you are required to complete the Research Student Casual Work Form in Appendix 9.

Students who are subject to immigration restrictions must not work more hours than is permitted by the visa in their current passport. It is each student’s personal responsibility to check the requirements specified in their own visa. Please note that there are no term-times for students on research programmes. The number of hours specified in your visa applies to paid and unpaid work undertaken throughout the calendar year. Please be aware that gaining experience of teaching, including as a requirement for one of the University’s programmes offered through the University’s Education Team, may be as unpaid work, which could be prohibited by some visa categories (such as the Visitor visas), so you must always check that you have the correct immigration permission to avoid breaching your visa conditions. We strongly advise you to contact the Visa Compliance Team (email vct@aston.ac.uk) prior to undertaking any paid/unpaid work.

3.26.3 Vacation
Please note that the six weeks’ vacation referred to in Regulation 9.2 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis is a total of 30 working days (excluding days when the University is officially closed for Christmas, Easter and Bank Holidays) across the full 52-week calendar year. Part-time research students are expected to pursue research for the equivalent of not more than 24 weeks per year and their leave reflects this (15 days). Vacation leave must be taken in full days.

You should discuss any arrangements for taking vacation leave with your Supervisor in advance of doing so. Once your Supervisor has agreed your vacation, you must formally request the leave by emailing the PGR Progression Team, copying in your Supervisor. This email has to be sent to the PGR Progression Team before the vacation commences. By copying your Supervisor in on the leave request email to the PGR Progression Team, this will be taken as confirmation that your Supervisor has approved the leave being requested. The email should have the Subject Line ‘Vacation Leave Request’ and mention whether you require a letter confirming your authorised leave from the programme. The email should also include the start and end dates of your leave so that the leave period can be recorded on MAP.

You can also expect your Supervisor to let you know when they will be absent for a prolonged period. Students with a Tier 4 Visa should also read Section 3.26.1 above.
3.26.4 Leave of Absence
In certain circumstances (e.g. documented ill-health), it is possible to take a leave of absence from your research to reflect the actual time lost. It is very important that this is done at the appropriate time, when the illness or other sufficient cause is current or imminent and supporting evidence is available. Unless medical evidence is provided, it is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted in the following circumstances:

- for a retrospective period;
- for a period that goes beyond the standard duration of study (see Regulation 14.1);
- after the standard duration of study (see Regulation 14.1) has been completed;
- for periods of employment.

You should discuss requesting a leave of absence with your Supervisor so that they are kept fully informed of your situation.

If you are a sponsored student, your Supervisor may request on your behalf that your funding is suspended until such time as you return to your research studies. If this is to happen, you will receive a letter notifying you of this when your leave of absence is confirmed. The letter will ask you to inform the PGR Progression Team when you are returning so that the reinstatement of your maintenance grant can be arranged.

You should also be aware that a leave of absence will affect the date when your Annual Progress Report will be due and the date for submission of your thesis. For example, if your research start date is 1 October and you are granted a six month leave of absence, your Annual Progress Report would change from being due on 30 September to being due on 31 March.

Students on leave of absence should nevertheless complete the annual re-enrolment process via MAP.

You can request a leave of absence from your MAP homepage. You will need to give an explanation of your reasons and you can also upload any supporting evidence. The PGR Progression Team will respond through MAP so you should check your student homepage regularly.

Where a student who is writing up takes a leave of absence, the writing-up fee will not be adjusted and the student will continue to be liable to pay the full writing-up fee.

If you hold a Tier 4 visa, you may be required to leave the UK during your period of absence and your current visa may be cancelled. Please contact the International Student Advisers for help prior to requesting your absence so that you can make an informed choice about your situation.

3.26.5 Placements/Off-campus Study

It is a University requirement that all postgraduate research students must secure approval from the relevant Associate Dean Research before taking part in off campus study, for example, placements, professional internships (e.g. BBSRC PIPS) or away mini-projects. Please email a request for change of research location, with a supporting statement from your supervisor, to pgr_general@aston.ac.uk well in advance of arranging
your off campus study. Please include the reason for the request and the dates. If you are on a Tier 4 visa, you are also required to contact a member of the Visa Compliance Team, through The Hub (thehub@aston.ac.uk; telephone 0121 204 4007) to secure the relevant permission for change of research location, which we are required to report to the Home Office.

3.27 Withdrawal/Transfer

3.27.1 Withdrawal from the Programme
If you are considering withdrawing from the programme please discuss with your supervisor in the first instance as there may be other options such as a Leave of Absence rather than a permanent withdrawal. You can also seek guidance from the PGR Admin team. If withdrawal is the only option, please email pgr_general@aston.ac.uk stating the reason and effective date for the withdrawal.

3.27.2 Transfer to Another Institution
If you wish to transfer to another programme or institution (for example, because your supervisor is leaving and you would like to join them), we recommend that you contact the admissions team at the institution that you wish to transfer to, to check what their arrangements are for student transfers. If you need a reference from Aston as part of your application to transfer, please speak to your supervisor. If you need a letter confirming your registration at Aston and/or progression, please email pgr_general@aston.ac.uk.

Before you make any arrangements to transfer, we would advise you to consider carefully the following:

- If you are in receipt of a studentship, it is unlikely in most cases that you will be able to transfer the studentship so you should seek advice from the funder before formalising any transfer arrangement. Please discuss with the PGR Admin team if you are unsure what the funder’s rules are.
- If you receive funding through Student Finance then you will need to tell the relevant Student Finance organisation that you have left your studies. You may be able to do this by logging onto your on line account with Student Finance and making changes to your application on line. You could also contact Student Finance by phone. The University will also contact Student Finance to confirm that you have left your studies at Aston. We recommend that you contact the student finance team at the institution that you wish to transfer to, to check what their arrangements are for student transfers.
- If you are an international student on a Tier 4 visa, you must seek advice from the visa compliance team via The Hub (thehub@aston.ac.uk) before you make any arrangements for transfer.
- You should also check what the institution’s regulations are regarding exemption from any mandatory training and their equivalent of the Aston Qualifying Report (QR) process. It may be that you would need to register as a new starter rather than transferring to the same stage of your research. We recommend you consider this carefully before making a final decision.
- If you have transferred to another institution, you will no longer have access to Aston facilities or email even if you live locally and/or have an Aston based Associate Supervisor.
Once you have a confirmed place at another institution, you will need to make a request in writing to withdraw from your programme at Aston via pgr_general@aston.ac.uk. Please state the effective date of the withdrawal.

3.28 Conference Attendance and Travel

The discussion and planning of conference attendance should form part of your personal development plan. Specific advice can be obtained from the PGR Progression Team or your Supervisor but each research student should have access to some funding to support training and development. Students who are self-funded or in receipt of a University studentship which does not provide research training support funding or bench fees are able to apply for funding for conferences or other development opportunities via the University Research Student Development Fund. This Fund provides an amount of £1500 (equating to £500 per annum) for each eligible student. In order to be eligible, students must be self-funded or in receipt of a University studentship which does not include research development funding or bench fees, have passed their Qualifying Report and must be in the first three full-time or six part-time (pro rata) years of their research. Further information can be found in the guidance notes in Appendix 12; a copy of the application form is in Appendix 13.

Authorisation to attend must be obtained before you travel. Contact the PGR Progression Team for the forms that need to be completed prior to travel. Overseas students will need to seek advice on any visa implications both in terms of travel outside the UK and for entering the country to which they are travelling (see Section 3.26.1 on authorised absences).

Students who are in receipt of a UKRI funded studentship or any other source of funding which includes support for research training and development activities and conference attendance and/or bench fees are not eligible to apply for the Research Student Development Fund as they will have access to similar funding via their funder. Please discuss with your Supervisor if you are not sure how to access this funding.

3.28.1 Travel Insurance

Given the current COVID-19 situation, it is unlikely that you will be able to travel outside the UK for conference attendance in the near future. An update on the University Travel Insurance policy will be provided in due course when travel restrictions are eased. In the meantime, if you have an urgent query regarding University travel insurance you can email insurance@aston.ac.uk or contact the PGR Admin team for advice,
4 College Specific Information

4.1 Research Areas and Groups

As a research student you will normally be located within a Department or Research Group. This is normally the Department or Research Group/Centre to which your Main Supervisor belongs. The main Departments/Research Groups for each College/School are listed below. In addition, each College will have a number of Research Centres and Institutes. You can find more information on the relevant College webpages.

**Aston Business School (ABS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Group</th>
<th>Departmental Research Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting (ACC)</td>
<td>Dr George Salijeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aston Law School (LAW)</td>
<td>Professor Simon Cooper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship (EFE)</td>
<td>Dr Sajid Chaudhry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Strategy (MKT)</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations and Information Management (OIM)</td>
<td>Dr Ahmad Beltagui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and Organisation (WON)</td>
<td>Dr Elina Meliou/Dr Claudia Sacramento</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/Institute</th>
<th>Head of Department/Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIPT</td>
<td>Professor Sergei Turitsyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Mr Bill Glew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aston Foundation Centre</td>
<td>Dr Darren Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTUTE</td>
<td>Professor David Webb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEAC</td>
<td>Professor Paul Topham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Dr Jo Lumsden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBRI</td>
<td>Professor Patricia Thornley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Systems &amp; Supply Chain Management (ESSCM)</td>
<td>Professor Edward Sweeney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEE</td>
<td>Dr Paul Harper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Dr Sotos Generalis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>Dr Darren Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical &amp; Biomechanical Design (MBD)</td>
<td>Dr Laura Leslie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>Prof Mujib Rahman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health & Life Sciences (HLS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Group</th>
<th>Director of Research</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Health</td>
<td>Professor Claire Farrow</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biosciences</td>
<td>Professor Corinne Spickett</td>
<td>Biosciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition &amp; Neuroscience</td>
<td>Professor Brian Roberts</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optometry &amp; Vision Science</td>
<td>Professor Nicola Logan</td>
<td>Optometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceutical &amp; Clinical Pharmacy</td>
<td>Professor Afzal Mohammed</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology &amp; Translational Neuroscience</td>
<td>Professor David Poyner</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translational Medicine</td>
<td>to be confirmed</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Facilities

Campus-based students normally have access to shared or dedicated desk-space within their Schools. *However, normal access to facilities on campus may be limited during the 2020/21 academic year owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictive measures. Your College/School induction will provide more information about what facilities you can access and how. Please check with your Supervisor(s) in the first instance what facilities may be available and who to contact in order to arrange access.*

4.3 Training

All PGR students undertake some compulsory research skills and/or methods training, normally within the first year of the programme. Exemption from these requirements (for example, because of prior learning) is rare and will be considered on cases by case basis by the relevant Director of Research Degree Programmes.

**Aston Business School (ABS) and School of Social Sciences & Humanities (SSH) PhD students (shared training programme)**

All PhD students are required to undertake four compulsory taught modules which they must pass as well as the Qualifying Report in order to proceed.

The aims of the compulsory training are:

- To ensure that you develop an appreciation of the philosophical basis of the social science research paradigms and their applications within the field of management.
- To provide you with an appreciation of research design principles and the choices you make, as well as the strategies you can undertake for successful planning, executing and completion of research.
- To ensure you are aware of the range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods that are available to the researcher scientist and the conditions under which they can be applied.
- To appreciate the limitations of formal methods of research enquiry and to provide the opportunity to deepen your knowledge and experience based on particular approaches.
- To ensure that you acquire competence in all the basic practical skills of the researcher (library searching, computing etc.) and that you understand the conditions under which they can be applied.

At the end of the programme, you should be able to:
• Demonstrate a good level of competence in a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods.
• Formally develop appropriate methods of research enquiry and identify the appropriate research method for investigation.
• Develop at an appropriate level, useful models and social and economic behaviour at a level appropriate to your background.
• Offer a useful critique of underlying theories and an awareness of both the theoretical and empirical problems that can arise in formal research.
• Understand and have the ability to apply the relevant software packages at an appropriate level.
• Demonstrate competence in a range of transferable skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODULE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BNM838 Research Design, Practice and Ethics</td>
<td>To identify and address the strategic choices made in the design of a research project including the ethical issues which need to be considered; formulate research questions and hypotheses (where appropriate); discuss the relationship between theory and evidence and the potential biases in research findings; understand different forms of sampling and case selection; and demonstrate an understanding of concepts of validity, reliability and replicability and the different perspectives on how these may be defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPM048 Philosophy of Social Science Research</td>
<td>This module sets out to familiarize students with the ongoing discourses relating to, and emerging from within, the philosophy of the social sciences. It adopts a contemporary framework that is informed by the history of ideas. In so doing it offers students the ability to critically reflect on narratives that both compliment and interrogate a variety of methodological approaches adopted within the social sciences, broadly construed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNM839 Fundamentals in Quantitative Research Methods</td>
<td>The module will focus on concepts, methods and skills central to quantitative social research, including data collection approaches and concept operationalization. Building on a grounding in ideas relating to probability sampling, sampling error and statistical inference, coverage of techniques will extend from comparisons of means and simple cross-tabular analyses to a discussion of non-parametric tests and multivariate analysis approaches, focusing on linear and logistic regression, but also introducing other techniques relevant to specific analytical goals (e.g. principal components analysis, structural equation modelling, multilevel linear models, cluster analysis and hazard models).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYM014 Foundations in Qualitative Research Methods</td>
<td>The module aims to provide postgraduate training in social research centred on qualitative research methods and methodologies. The module considers the ways in which social scientists understand, select, approach and design and conduct qualitative research, analyse their findings, the fieldwork tools that this involves, and the ethical implications and underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions involved in this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 2020/21 the sessions will be delivered online. Details will be provided at the School/College induction and will be available via Blackboard.
Assessment
All modules are assessed and **must be** successfully completed by participants before they can proceed to the PhD. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by the designated time and date. The pass mark is 50% for each module.

Marked assignments will be available on Blackboard 4 weeks after the assignment deadline. The marks will be provisional until they are ratified by the Exam Board.

**Late or Non-Submission of Assessed Work**
If you need to request an extension due to exceptional circumstances, you must seek approval via the College Programme Office bss_studentsupport@aston.ac.uk and provide supporting documentation, such as a doctor’s note, and agreement in writing from your supervisor. This must be completed before the original submission date. **Extension requests need to be made in advance as soon as an issue arises.** Module tutors and students cannot agree individual extensions.

*Failure to submit an assignment will result in a ‘fail’ mark.*
Any assignment that is submitted late without an authorised extension will be subject to late submission penalties in line with the University’s Assessment Policies. The Regulations governing the taught modules can be found at:


**Further information and support**
The administration of the taught modules is managed by the College Programme Office and you can direct any queries to bss_studentsupport@aston.ac.uk

You can also contact the PGR Administration Team if you have any general issues or queries – pgr_general@aston.ac.uk

**Aston Business School (ABS) DBA Students**
All DBA students undertake compulsory taught modules as the foundation of their development as a professional researcher. The modules provide the essential grounding in the skills necessary for research and then allow you to specialise in methods and techniques appropriate to your particular research project.

You will be formally assessed on the modules and will need to pass all modules (see below) as well as the Qualifying Report in order to proceed to the thesis stage of the DBA.

**Aims and Objectives**
The aims of the taught modules are:
• To ensure that you develop an appreciation of the philosophical basis of the social science research paradigms and their applications within the field of management.
• To provide you with an appreciation of research design principles and the choices you make, as well as the strategies you can undertake for successful planning, executing and completion of research.
• To ensure you are aware of the range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods that are available to the researcher scientist and the conditions under which they can be applied.
• To appreciate the limitations of formal methods of research enquiry and to provide the opportunity to deepen your knowledge and experience based on particular approaches.
• To ensure that you acquire competence in all the basic practical skills of the researcher (library searching, computing etc.) and that you understand the conditions under which they can be applied.

At the end of the course, you should be able to:

• Demonstrate a good level of competence in a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods.
• Formally develop appropriate methods of research enquiry and identify the appropriate research method for investigation.
• Develop at an appropriate level, useful models and social and economic behaviour at a level appropriate to your background.
• Offer a useful critique of underlying theories and an awareness of both the theoretical and empirical problems that can arise in formal research.
• Understand and have the ability to apply the relevant software packages at an appropriate level.
• Demonstrate competence in a range of transferable skills.

**Modules**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODULE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DBK101 Introduction to Business Management and Research</strong>  (Module Leader: Rakesh Bissoondeeal, <a href="mailto:r.bissoondeeal@aston.ac.uk">r.bissoondeeal@aston.ac.uk</a>)</td>
<td>The module is designed to develop the necessary basic research skills students will need to conduct a thorough literature review, as well as provide insight into the management of the research process itself. Students will also be inducted into the programme, developing ties with their cohort (combining in residence and distance learning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DBK102 Applied Research Methods</strong>  (Module Leader: Dr Sudeshna Bhattacharya, <a href="mailto:s.bhattacharya@aston.ac.uk">s.bhattacharya@aston.ac.uk</a>)</td>
<td>The module will look at the nature of knowledge, the logic of argument, and the process by which new knowledge is created. A range of social theories will be presented but participation, application, and criticism are vital. Students will be encouraged to think critically about knowledge building and the individual application to doctoral students’ own research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**DBK103 Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods**  
(Module Leaders: Dr Elina Meliou, e.meliou@aston.ac.uk, and Jonathan Crawshaw, j.r.crawshaw2@aston.ac.uk)  
This module will build upon quantitative / qualitative theoretical principles and approaches giving the student a grounding in both methodologies.

**DBK104: Professional Development and Research Impact**  
(Module Leader: Dr Chris Owen, c.owen@aston.ac.uk)  
In this module students will explore how their research may deliver impact to their organisations and the practise of management. Students will also explore their roles as scholar-practitioners and their own development needs.

**Assessment**  
All modules are assessed and must be successfully completed by participants before they can proceed to the thesis stage of the DBA. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by the designated time and date. The pass mark is 50% for each module.

Marked assignments will be available on Blackboard 4 weeks after the assignment deadline. The marks will be provisional until they are ratified by the Exam Board.

**Late or Non-Submission of Assessed Work**  
If you need to request an extension due to exceptional circumstances, you must seek approval from the Director of Research Degree Programmes (via the PGR Administration Office – pgr_general@aston.ac.uk) and provide supporting documentation, such as a doctor’s note, and agreement in writing from your supervisor. This must be completed before the original submission date. The decision to revise a deadline will be made by the Director of Research Degree Programmes. Extension requests need to be made in advance as soon as an issue arises. Module tutors and students cannot agree individual extensions.

Failure to submit an assignment will result in a ‘fail’ mark.

Any assignment that is submitted late without approval from the Director of Research Degree Programmes will be subject to late submission penalties in line with the University’s Assessment Policies. The Regulations governing the taught modules can be found at:


**Further information and support**  
The administration of the taught modules is managed by the PGR Administration Team. If you have any queries, please contact pgr_general@aston.ac.uk.

**Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS)**  
The College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) runs a Research Skills Module that is mandatory for all new PhD and MSc by Research students. The module aims to provide new EPS research students with a fundamental and general introduction into the
necessary skills for conducting research. Having successfully completed the module, students will be able to undertake a review of the current literature in their field of research, critically review the knowledge gap in a particular research area and disseminate project results in both written and oral formats. The module is divided into the following sections: Starting a Research Degree, Project Management, Responsible Research and Innovation, Academic Writing, Intellectual Property, Presenting, Career Planning, and Qualifying and incorporates a three-day Core Research Skills programme. In addition to the mandatory sessions, optional sessions are also delivered in specialist areas and more detailed information about the programme is available upon enrolment and also posted on the Blackboard VLE.

Health & Life Sciences (HLS)
The College of Health and Life Sciences runs a Professional Development Module that is mandatory for all new PhD/MD/MPhil students in the School. The Programme is available upon enrolment and also posted on the Blackboard VLE. Most of the content is focused on library and bibliographic skills, conducting literature reviews, research ethics/teaching skills, and incorporates a three day Core Research Skills Programme. This will concentrate on academic writing skills and is constructed around assignments, with the option to submit these for formal assessment. The three day Core Research Skills course will be repeated in Term 2. The remaining sessions in Term 2 deal with more practical skills; including career advice, preparing abstracts, and guidance on producing a Qualifying Report for your Progression Panel at the end of Year 1.

ALL students are required to attend these sessions unless an exemption/partial exemption has been specified within the Learning Agreement. So please remember NOT to commit to any other activities during these times.

The main route to gain exemption from the Year 1 Professional Development Module is for your supervisor to apply on the basis that you already have an MRes or an MSc in Research Methods in a subject area directly relevant to your PhD/MD/MPhil. The application should include clear information on what topics were covered in the Master’s programme that would justify an exemption.

Students on other doctoral programmes usually complete taught modules during an earlier stage of their programme.

4.4 Risk Assessment
This section should be read in conjunction with Section 6 of this Handbook which provides essential information about Health and Safety.

All postgraduate research students must comply with the University’s health and safety requirements and undertake any mandatory training required either by the University or their College. In addition, some Colleges require students to perform a risk assessment prior to starting any new experimental procedure. In the College of Health and Life Sciences it is essential that you carry out a formal risk assessment for your research project during your first year. This should appear as an Appendix in your Qualifying Report. You must also lodge a copy of your risk assessment with the College Health and Safety Officer.
## 4.5 Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/College</th>
<th>Associate Dean Research</th>
<th>Director of Research Degree Programmes</th>
<th>PGR Tutor</th>
<th>Other useful contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Professor Nicholas O'Regan <a href="mailto:n.oregan@aston.ac.uk">n.oregan@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dr Jonathan Crawshaw <a href="mailto:j.r.crawshaw2@aston.ac.uk">j.r.crawshaw2@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dr Ian Combe <a href="mailto:i.combe@aston.ac.uk">i.combe@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Paul Jones, Senior Research Manager <a href="mailto:p.jones5@aston.ac.uk">p.jones5@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS</td>
<td>Professor Patricia Thornley <a href="mailto:p.thornley@aston.ac.uk">p.thornley@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dr Aniko Ekart <a href="mailto:a.uk.aekart@aston.ac.uk">a.uk.aekart@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Professor Wen Cao <a href="mailto:w.p.cao@aston.ac.uk">w.p.cao@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLS</td>
<td>Professor Roslyn Bill <a href="mailto:r.m.bill@aston.ac.uk">r.m.bill@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Professor Tim Meese <a href="mailto:t.s.meese@aston.ac.uk">t.s.meese@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Gill Pilfold, Senior Research Administrator <a href="mailto:g.m.pilfold@aston.ac.uk">g.m.pilfold@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSH</td>
<td>Professor Phil Mizen <a href="mailto:p.mizen@aston.ac.uk">p.mizen@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dr Amanda Beattie <a href="mailto:a.r.beattie@aston.ac.uk">a.r.beattie@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dr Abigail Boucher <a href="mailto:a.boucher@aston.ac.uk">a.boucher@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Dan Thomson, Research Manager <a href="mailto:d.thomson1@aston.ac.uk">d.thomson1@aston.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 University Resources and Information

5.1 MyAston App
MyAston app is designed to improve your experience of studying at Aston and living in Birmingham and is available to download from IOS and Android app stores.

The app allows you to access your university email, timetable, library services, book appointments with lecturers and personal tutors and more.

For more details and download links visit our Current students’ webpage

5.2 Aston SafeZone App
We’ve launched a free safety and security app designed to optimise safety around campus for both students and staff.

Through its user-friendly interface, SafeZone enables students and staff to send location-based alerts via various electronic devices to the Aston Campus Safety Team by pressing a single button based on the support required.

SafeZone can be used in instances where an emergency response is required, such as first-aid, support, or other emergency response, as well as general assistance. For more information and download links, please visit our Campus safety webpage

5.3 Student Services at The Hub
The Hub team provides support and advice to all students about all sorts of topics including your studies and your finances. The team also has a dedicated, specialist team to work with international students on issues such as visa compliance. Additionally, we offer counselling and mental wellbeing support and have an Enabling Team to assist students with disabilities.

All of our services are accessible during this pandemic and you can still call and email us in the usual ways. During the academic year our services will be on campus and also available virtually so please do get in touch.

See The Hub Webpage for more details and to book an appointment or contact thehub@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4007

5.4 Academic Services
The Academic Services teams provide a range of administrative support services for students throughout your time at Aston, from initial application to graduation.

The services offered by these teams can be accessed remotely (If face-to-face interaction is not possible). All the information you need is available on the web pages below, including how to contact them.

The Examinations Office is responsible for the administration and timetabling of all University examinations. See The Examinations Office Webpage for more details or contact exams@aston.ac.uk.
The **Student Records Team** is responsible for all student records from initial enrolment through to graduation. See The Student Records webpage for more details or contact reg_studentrecords@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4455.

### 5.5 Aston Students’ Union

For many students, life at Aston revolves around the Students’ Union (SU); the go-to-place for making the most of your time here.

**The SU offers loads of services including:**

- Sports Clubs and Societies
- Opportunities to represent your peers within the University, locally and nationally
- The Advice and Representation Centre (ARC)
- The Lounge Bar, The Good Place Café, shop and entertainment
- A space to socialise and study
- Prayer Facilities
- Accommodation advice and support
- Affordable student accommodation (The Green)
- Facilities for commuter students

Find out more at the Aston SU website

**Contacts:**

Harry Sheppard - Union President: union.president@aston.ac.uk
Safa-Atiya Ahmed - Vice President Welfare: union.vpw@aston.ac.uk
Balraj Purewal - Vice President Student Activities: union.vpsa@aston.ac.uk
Jawad Ahmad - Vice President Education: union.vpe@aston.ac.uk

Welcome Desk
0121 204 4855

**Aston Student Voice**

The SU is a charity with the aim of promoting the rights and interests of Aston students. The Student Activities and Voice team is here to support this aim by:

- promoting the Union’s democratic processes, ensuring that the Union remains student-led;
- coordinating and overseeing annual elections to appoint student Officers;
- supporting elected officers in delivering on their goals and projects;
- recruiting and developing the skills of Student Reps, to give you the tools to have a say on how your University is run;
- delivering campaigns to promote student interests and wellbeing.

For more information see the Aston SU website.
Student Representation and Feedback

Here at Aston University your views and feedback are important and help the University to enhance the quality of the student experience for current and future students with the aim of giving our students the best learning experience possible.

There are a variety of opportunities for you to provide feedback on your course from module evaluations to national surveys that seek to gauge your opinions. Student Reps are empowered to represent your academic interests to the University and the Students’ Union. They are supported by your Vice President Education who represents and campaigns for your academic interests, within the University and nationally.

You can volunteer to be a Student Rep from the start of the academic year. There are no limits to who can be a Student Rep – all you need is a desire to improve the lives of others and the willingness to learn and develop in the role!

If you would like to find out more about the role of Student Reps or how the Students’ Union is representing your academic interests then you can email your Vice President (Education) (union.vpe@aston.ac.uk). You can also find out more by visiting the Aston SU website.

The Advice and Representation Centre (ARC)
The ARC is here to help throughout your time at Aston. Experienced and qualified staff offer advice on a wide range of issues, study related or personal, and can refer you on to specialist services if necessary.

For more information, visit the ARC webpage or contact advice@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4848

The Advice and Representation Centre is a member of AdviceUK the largest network of independent advice agencies. The advice team are supported by specialist consultancy support from Citizens Advice and the National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS).

Aston Students’ Union, Advice & Representation Centre is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Authorisation no. 618885.

Clubs and Societies
The Student Activities and Voice team offer lots of fantastic opportunities for students to get involved and make the most of their time at AstonYou can make new friends and find ways to boost your CV, learn a new skill, continue a hobby or learn something completely new.

Please note: many clubs, societies and events have been disrupted by the need for covid safety and social distancing. The SU is committed to putting the safety of students and staff first. But as it becomes safe to do so, we will once again begin to offer more face-to-face and on-campus activities.

In the meantime, the Aston Virtual Campus Facebook group is a great place to meet other students online: https://www.facebook.com/groups/astonvirtual/

Clubs and Societies: https://www.astonsu.com/activities/clubsandsocieties/
Volunteering and Student Led Service and Project Groups:
http://www.astonsu.com/activities

The Good Place Café  Due to Covid-19, The Good Place Café will be closed until further notice, however drinks will be served upstairs at The Lounge, the SU’s brand new bar and restaurant on the first floor of the SU building.

For opening times and an overview of facilities, please visit the SU Lounge webpage

Be sure to follow the SU on social media for updates on products, promotions, events, and more.

The Shop
The Aston Union Shop, on the Ground Floor of the SU, is dedicated to Aston students and their day-to-day life on the University campus. Whether you need good value stationery, a cosy warm hoodie for cold nights or a quick bite to eat in between lectures or touch points, we are here for you!

5.6 Digital Services
Aston University has extensive IT facilities with over 1,500 desktop computers specifically for student use, offering a range of networked software packages, database systems, modelling tools, computer-aided learning materials. We have also created WiFi Study Spaces around the campus that are open to students. For students studying remotely we have a range of support available which can be accessed through the Solve Portal https://solve.aston.ac.uk.

To help you make the most of the IT facilities, we have created several guides and solutions which contain information on all of the services provided including email, printing and much more. You can view the guides on the Solve Portal https://solve.aston.ac.uk

WiFi is available across the campus and is called _Aston Connect._ It is really simple to use - just connect your phone, tablet or notebook and enter your computer login details when requested.

Useful links:
My Aston Portal (MAP) is an internet portal that acts as a secure single point of contact for many of the services you use as a student, including Blackboard VLE which is our virtual learning environment.

Blackboard VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) is a web-based resource that can be accessed any time from any place via MAP.

The Digital Services Helpdesk on the ground floor of the Main Building is available from 8am to 6pm during term time and can provide assistance with any issue relating to your IT services or the operation of your uniCARD for building access.

_Due to the ongoing situation with Covid-19, we’re unsure when these will be physically open again but you can still access all the support you need via our virtual channels._
5.7 Speak Up Policy
Aston University’s Speak Up Policy provides a confidential and secure way for you to raise concerns about misconduct by another person; breaches of the law; health and safety issues; or financial malpractice. The Speak Up Guide outlines the key steps you need to take and who to contact if you wish to raise a concern. Click here to access the full Speak Up Policy.

5.8 The Chaplaincy Team
The Chaplaincy Team is based in the Martin Luther King Multi-faith Centre at the heart of campus, providing a quiet place to drop in if you need someone to talk to, or if you are looking for some support. The Chaplaincy welcomes people of all faiths and none and can also provide wellbeing support and guidance. See The Chaplaincy Webpage for more details or contact chaplaincy@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4729.

5.9 Aston University Nursery and Pre-School
Aston University Nursery and Pre-School is based on the University campus and is committed to providing the highest standard of care and education to all registered children. Nursery places are limited so please book as soon as possible. See Aston nursery webpage for further information and contact nurseryenquiries@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4562.

5.10 Employability Services
Our Careers and Placements team is here to help you to find a placement, a part-time job, perfecting your CV, interview technique and much more. See the Careers and Placements webpage for more details and our programme of employability events.

Aston Futures
Aston Futures is an online platform run by Careers and Placements which allows you to receive job alerts, apply for roles and more. For further information see the Aston Futures webpage.

JobShop
Our JobShop team can help you secure work experience - from volunteering to part-time jobs. For further information see the JobShop team webpage or contact jobshop@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4844.

Contact the Careers and Placements Team
The Careers and Placements Centre and JobShop are located in the Main Building on the 1st Floor, South Wing. Due to the ongoing situation with covid-19, we’re unsure when these will be physically open again but you can still access all the support you need via our virtual channels.

Contact careers@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4757.
5.11 Outreach Opportunities
Aston’s Outreach team provides exciting opportunities for University students to take part in mentoring and tutoring with local students across Birmingham, including: Aimhigher, a mentoring programme for Year 9-13, Aston Progression Pathways Mentoring, a Law, Business and STEM-specific mentoring programme for Year 12 and the Access Project - GCSE tutoring for Year 10-11. Contact Outreach@aston.ac.uk

5.12 MyAttendance – Aston University’s Attendance Recording System
When attending timetabled activities on campus, you are encouraged to ‘check in’ by placing your uniCARD on readers on entry to all your teaching sessions including lectures, seminars, tutorials, lab session etc. You will then be able to access your record of attendance in the MyAttendance system and view the same information in MyEngagement. Attendance at teaching sessions ensures you benefit fully from the support and guidance the University offers.

Tier 4 students
If you hold a Tier 4 visa, MyAttendance will create an automatic face to face engagement for you and will form part of your Student Engagement Monitoring information for the UKVI.

To log in and find further information please visit the MyAttendance webpages

5.13 Student Ambassadors
Aston University student ambassadors are current Aston students who help the Student Recruitment and Outreach Team to promote University and student life to school pupils, prospective students and their families.

For more information about getting involved visit the Student ambassador webpage.

5.14 Sport Aston
The Home of Sport and Fitness
The Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre
At Aston University, The Sir Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre is our on-campus sports facility. At the Sports Centre, Aston students get access to high-quality facilities, including a 100+ station gym, 25m pool, sauna and steam rooms, and fitness classes. The sports facilities are open to all abilities and can be used on a pay and play basis except for the gym which has special prices for Aston students.

- Gym
- 25m Pool
- Sauna & Steam
- Sports Halls
- Racket Sports
- 3G Football Pitches
- Fitness & Yoga Classes
Off Campus Sports Facilities

The Recreation Centre
The Aston University Recreation Centre is the home venue for many of our sport clubs’ competitive matches. The Football, Hockey and Rugby Teams all play there on Wednesday afternoons in the BUCS fixtures.

- Grass Football Pitches
- Grass Rugby Pitches
- A Hockey Pitch
- Cricket Pitch
- Bar & Function Room

Contact Details
Email: sportsenquiries@aston.ac.uk
Web: www.aston.ac.uk/sport
Tel: 0121 204 4623

6. Health & Safety Essential Information
All new postgraduate research students are directed to follow the College’s local arrangements provided at induction and, where appropriate, a College-wide talk on any Health and Safety Issues that takes place.

6.1 Health and Safety Mandatory Induction Training Courses
The general University Health and Safety induction material can be found within the University's Health and Safety Awareness and the Fire Safety Awareness e-learning training courses found on Blackboard

These courses are mandatory and should be done within a few weeks of joining the University. The links can be found within the staff portal on Core, under Training; postgraduate research students have access to the Training area of the staff portal.

Local fire safety information should be provided during local induction in your College. Further information can be obtained from the local College/Professional Health and Safety Coordinator.

6.2 First Aid and Accidents

Colleges and Professional Support Areas
Each of the Schools and Professional Support Services have their own trained first aiders who are available to provide assistance if required. The first aider should have been made known to you at your local Health & Safety induction. If you have an accident, feel unwell or need first aid during office hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm), contact your local First Aid Officer for assistance in the first instance. You can also call Campus Safety on 222 from any internal phone or 0121 359 2922 from a mobile, or via the Safezone Mobile App.
Campus Safety Deployment
If the person is not mobile, if movement could worsen the condition or if they are unconscious, contact Campus Safety immediately on emergency extension 222 (internal), 2222 (from Aston Student Village) or 0121 359 2922 (external, including from a mobile) or using the Safezone Mobile App (24/7) which goes straight to the Campus Safety control room. Notify Campus Safety of the location of the ill/injured person, the nature of the illness/injury, and the extension number of the nearest internal telephone. The Campus Safety team will provide first aid assistance and contact the ambulance service for you, if required.

First aid cover during out of hours working
When work or study is taking place outside normal office hours, first aid cover will be reduced or absent. Campus Safety are in operation 24/7 and can be called upon in an emergency, including by using the Safezone Mobile App which goes straight to the Campus Safety control room. All Team members are first aid trained and in constant radio contact with the Campus Safety control room, through which all emergency calls are channelled.

All accidents must be reported on a University Accident & Incident Report Form which can be downloaded from the Health and Safety Unit webpages.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)
Currently the University has AED units located in the following areas:

1. Aston Students’ Union – Inside Lobby/Entrance area
2. Conference Aston – Main Reception Area
3. Library – Main Reception Desk Ground floor
4. Main Building – Adjacent to Main Reception Desk
5. Main Building – MB625 Life and Health Sciences
6. Sir Doug Ellis / Woodcock Sports Centre - Reception
7. Walsall Recreation Centre – Reception

NHS Walk-in Centre
Alternatively, if medical help is required inside normal working hours and the person is mobile, you can visit The Walk-in Centre on the lower ground of Boots the Chemist, which is situated on the High Street in the centre of Birmingham:
Lower Ground Floor, Boots
66 High Street
Birmingham
B4 7TA

Telephone: 0121 255 4500
Website: http://www.birminghamnhswic.nhs.uk/

Note: Due to Covid-19, the service offered by the walk-in centre may have changed. If you require urgent medical assistance, please call NHS 111. Alternatively, please visit the website for the latest COVID-19 guidance and information.
Dental Practice
There is a dental practice in the Vision Sciences Building, Henderson Dental Practice, telephone 0121 204 4310.

6.3 Campus Safety and Working Out of Hours
The Campus Safety Officers are based in the Main Building Reception area. They can be contacted on extension 4803 (the emergency extension is 222 (internal), 2222 (from Aston Student Village) or 0121 359 2922 (external, including from a mobile)).

You are encouraged to work within the normal University day (8.00am-6.00pm). If, however, you need to work out of hours in the Main Building, you should use your uniCARD to gain access via the 'Out of Normal Hours' Entrance – this is off Potter Street. The times when your uniCARD will have to be used to gain entry will be as follows:

- Monday-Friday: 8pm-6am
- Saturday: 1pm until Monday 6am

There will be other times that the Building will be closed (Bank Holidays, etc.) and these will be notified in advance.

All university users are required to have their uniCARD at all times.

6.4 Working Alone
Postgraduate students may undertake office or laboratory computer work alone provided the University’s Guidance on Lone Working is followed. Students must not work alone on any procedures involving risk of harm. If in doubt, check with your Academic Supervisor. The use of Safezone Mobile App is recommended when lone working.

6.5 Fire and Safety Awareness Course
The Fire Awareness Course is mandatory and should be completed via Blackboard and the Aston University Fire Safety video can be found by clicking the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owvq6e9KJgA&feature=youtu.be

Fire Alarm and Fire Alarm Testing
Every Thursday in the Main Building, the fire alarm is tested four times between the hours of 0830-0900. These tests should last no longer than 15 seconds. Should the alarm continue for longer than 15 seconds you should follow the evacuation procedure, as shown in the Fire Safety Video above.

For all other buildings you must contact the reception staff for that building to confirm when the test is undertaken.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Unit by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Emergency and Fire Evacuation Procedure
The Main Building and Wings operate a two-stage fire alarm system. Should the alarm sound intermittently (and in certain areas be accompanied by voice instructions) this means a fire has been detected in the building and you should prepare to evacuate. If the
alarm sounds continuously (and in certain areas be accompanied by voice instructions) you must leave the building by the nearest available exit and proceed to the assembly point.

**Designated Fire/Emergency Assembly Points**

- Main Building & North and South Wings – **car park 12 (covered car park underneath the football pitch)**
- Vision Sciences, Aston Day Hospital, Library, Aston Students’ Union, Woodcock Sports Centre, and all Residences Buildings – **Fountain Area in front of the Main Building**
- Nelson Building (Aston Business School) – ‘**amphitheatre’ adjacent to Aston Students’ Union**

**Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)**

A PEEP is an agreed evacuation plan which contains all required information to ensure safe egress from a building by an individual requiring assistance to leave the building in an emergency.

If you have special needs, or may find it difficult to evacuate the building in an emergency, you should complete a PEEP Self-Assessment form on arrival at the University obtained by email to safety@aston.ac.uk.

Upon completion, your PEEP document will be reviewed by the Fire Safety Advisor, who will contact you either to confirm your PEEP arrangements or to discuss your PEEP needs.

For more information on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans please contact the Health and Safety Unit by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

**Smoking**

Please be aware that smoking or vaping is NOT permitted anywhere inside or within five metres of an opening of any University Building.

**6.6 Recharging of Personal Electrical Equipment**

The University requires that any personal device, e.g. mobile phone charger, PDA, must be safety tested before being plugged in. In addition, portable electrical equipment must be visually inspected prior to use and defective equipment must be withdrawn from use immediately.

**6.7 COVID-19 SECURE Social Distancing Guidance**

The University Health and Safety Unit has developed guidance to minimise risk and to enable staff and students to work safely in a COVID-19 secure environment. This guidance is available on the University website. It includes information on:

- Lone working and the use of **Safezone Mobile App** (‘check in’ feature – strongly recommended)
- Access routes to and from buildings
· Use of PPE
· Corridors, staircases and lifts
· Customer service desks
· Open plan and shared offices
· Use of kitchens and toilets
· Labs and workshops.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Unit, by emailing: safety@aston.ac.uk
Appendix 1: Aston Graduate School – key stakeholders

The following is a diagrammatic representation of the key stakeholders in Aston Graduate School.

*Graduate Development Team includes

- Research and Knowledge Exchange, including Professional Development Advisors (Research)
- Careers+Placements
- Learning Development Centre
- Library Services
Graduate School Management Committee
(reports to University Research Committee)

• Dean of Graduate School (Chair) - Professor Gertrud Reershemius
• Graduate School Manager (Secretary) - Alison Birch
• Directors of Research Degree Programmes (see right)
• Co-Presidents of Aston Postgraduate Research Student Society (APRS) - Madison Hunter & Aleksandr Donodin
• PGR Administration Manager - Farat Ara
• Professional Development Advisor (Research) - Dr Eren Bilgen
• Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact - Rebecca Stokes
• Representative from Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA) - Ania Bailey
• Representative from Education Team - Nicola Shephard
• Representative from Careers+Placements - Iwan Griffiths
• Representative from Library Services - Nicola Dennis
• Representative for Professional Doctorates - Dr Rowena Senior
• Representative of PGR Tutors - Professor Tim Meese
• Students’ Union Vice-President Education - Jawad Ahmad
• Students’ Union Postgraduate Officer - to be confirmed

ABS - research team
Associate Dean Research: Professor Nicholas O'Regan
Director Research Degree Programmes: Dr Jonathan Crawshaw
PGR Tutor: Dr Ian Combe

EPS - research team
Associate Dean Research: Professor Patricia Thornley
Director Research Degree Programmes: Dr Aniko Ekart
PGR Tutor: Professor Wen Cao

HLS - research team
Associate Dean Research: Professor Roslyn Bill
Director Research Degree Programmes: to be confirmed
Training Research Programmes & PGR Tutor: Professor Tim Meese

SSH - research team
Associate Dean Research: Professor Phil Mizen
Director Research Degree Programmes: Dr Amanda Beattie
PGR Tutor: Dr Abigail Boucher

PGR Administration Team – supporting all Colleges
Manager: Farat Ara
PGR Admissions: Steve Baker and Katy Physick
PGR Progression: Caroline Brocklebank and Catherine Jarrett
PGR Programmes Support: Sinead Cussen
Appendix 2: Code of Practice for Research Degrees

Code of Practice for Research Degrees

AU-GSMC-19-2763-A

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of research degree programmes

2020-21
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Policy Summary
The Code of Practice for Research Degrees defines minimum standards for research degree programmes, including:

- Selection, admission and induction.
- Responsibilities of Supervisors and of research students.
- Arrangements for progress and review.
- Research training and development.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance
These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University’s General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses (Appendix D) and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees (Appendix E)

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the general regulations webpage.

Where Regulations are included in the text of this Code of Practice, they are shown in shaded boxes. Unless indicated otherwise, references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, included as Appendix D.

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This document is reviewed annually; please ensure you are referring to the current version, which takes precedence over earlier versions.

Summary of key changes and/or additions to this document for 2020/21

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1 **Foreword**

This document is one of a suite of inter-related documents which forms an overall institutional policy for the conduct of research degrees, and which includes the institutional response to the Expectations and Core Practices set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education as they apply to research degrees (November 2018). University staff and students are expected to be familiar with the sections of the University Code of Practice that are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities. The University Code defines minimum standards for research degrees which may be supplemented at the School level by additional advice.

Unless stated otherwise, where Regulations are referred to in the text the references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (included in full as Appendix D).

2 **Definitions**

2.1 **Research**

The definition of research in this document draws on the definition used for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) which defines research as.

‘a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.’

‘It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.’

‘It includes research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports (as defined in paragraph 26.1).’

2.2 **Research Programmes**

This University Code of Practice is intended to apply to the wide range of research qualifications offered by the University, including MPhil, MD, PhD, professional doctorates (e.g. DBA, DOptom), and the University award of MSc/MA (by Research), although not all sections of the document apply equally to all types of research programme.

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2 [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk); Publication REF 2019/01 ‘Guidance on submissions’.

3 Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.’ Journal articles and monographs are also important forms of scholarship.
3 Institutional Arrangements

3.1 Governance

*Dean of the Graduate School*
The Dean of the Graduate School has oversight of research degree provision across the University.

*Graduate School Management Committee*
The Dean of the Graduate School chairs the Graduate School Management Committee (GSMC) which is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee. GSMC is responsible, amongst other things, for:

- considering and making recommendations on all matters concerning the regulation, assurance and enhancement of the quality and standards of research degree programmes including the supervision and examination of research students; and
- monitoring the extent and effectiveness of provision of research training, supervision and other support for research students.

GSMC has academic staff and research student representation from each College, plus representation from central areas that support research students.

*Associate Dean Research*
The role of the Associate Dean Research in each School is to support the School's Executive Dean in matters relating to research, including in respect of research degree programmes.

*College Research Committee*
The College Research Committee is normally chaired by the Associate Dean Research. This Committee considers matters relating to research degree programmes and students in the College, and may make recommendations to GSMC. There is a student representative on the College Research Committee.

*Programme Director*
Each College has a Director of Research Degree Programmes who has day-to-day responsibility for research degree programmes and students in the College. In addition, professional doctorates with a taught element have a Programme Director.

*Postgraduate Research Tutor*
Each College also has a Postgraduate Research Tutor who is a member of academic staff independent of the supervisory team, the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, and from whom advice can be sought, for example if the supervisory relationship is not working well or in case of welfare issues.

3.2 Regulations

Regulations in respect of research degrees are approved by the University Research Committee (acting with delegated authority from the Senate) on the recommendation of the Graduate School Management Committee. Regulations cover:

- requirements for admission to the programme;
b procedures for considering claims for the recognition of prior learning (RPL);
c the academic and procedural requirements for research awards, including supervisory arrangements;
d the requirements for progression, including monitoring and review arrangements for the award, and the minimum and maximum periods within which the programme may be completed;
e assessment methods, requirements and procedures, including the criteria for achieving the award;
f procedures for dealing with research misconduct;4
g information on the University’s complaints and appeals processes.

In addition to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (Appendix D), there are also General Regulations for Research Degrees by Staff of Aston University and by Aston University Graduates. These Regulations cover: staff candidates for MPhil, MD and PhD; the degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Letters; and the PhD by Previously Published Work.

General Regulations on the Presentation of Theses (Appendix E) provide guidance on the submission of the thesis for examination and after the examination.

The Regulations and codes of practice for research degrees are available to staff, students, applicants, graduates and examiners via the Graduate School website. They are also available on the My Aston Portal (MAP) homepage of enrolled students.

### 3.3 Target Setting and Monitoring

a Recruitment targets for research degrees are proposed by the Colleges in co-operation with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and agreed by the University Executive; achievement towards targets is monitored by Associate Deans Research and by Graduate School Management Committee.

b Graduate School Management Committee receives a number of reports to monitor research degree provision, including:

i. annual report, by full-time and part-time cohort, of awards and completion times, and withdrawals;

ii annual report on student appeals;

iii annual summary of comments from External Examiners;

iv employment destinations of research students;

v Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results.

c Research degree programmes are reviewed on an annual basis by College Research Committees in accordance with the procedures for evaluation of research degree programmes. Factors to be considered by the College Research Committees through this process include:

i recruitment profiles; submission and completion times and rates; pass, referral and fail rates; withdrawal rates;

ii analysis of comments from External Examiners;

iii feedback from research students, graduates and external stakeholders;

iv provision of research and generic skills training;

v any appeals or complaints dealt with at the College level.

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4 covered in more detail in the University’s Research Integrity Assurance Procedures in Appendix B.
The University’s Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, ensures that these factors have been given due attention.

d A College’s research degree provision is subject to **periodic review** every six years. The periodic review panel includes at least two members who are external to the University and a student member from a different College. The review panel meets with academic and support staff involved with the programmes, and with research students.

4 **The Research Environment**

The results from the last national Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014 confirmed the quality and depth of the University’s research:

- 78% of the research submitted was evaluated as world-leading or internationally excellent;
- research impact was ranked 35 out of 128 institutions, with 91% of Impact rated internationally excellent or world leading.

The University is committed to only accepting research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring and where the appropriate conditions for admission can be met.

‘Common features of an effective research environment include:

- originality, significance and rigour of research outputs recognised through peer review or through the award of grants resulting in outputs such as journal publications, books and work produced in other media
- capacity of research-active staff (including postdoctoral researchers and research students)
- knowledge exchange and impacts (including knowledge transfer partnerships) with an emphasis on the practical impact of research outcomes and demonstrable ability to attract external funding’ (from UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Research Degrees, Guiding Principle 2).

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University. All members of the University’s research community are responsible for maintaining professional standards. The University’s Research Integrity Policy (Appendix A), prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University.

Research students are supported by a Graduate Development Team, comprising experts from different areas (including Library Services, Careers+Placements, Research and Knowledge Exchange) who collectively provide a range of training and development opportunities for research students and research staff.
5 Selection, Admission and Induction of Students

5.1 Selection and Admission

The selection of research students must follow the requirements set out in the Regulations and any additional criteria set by the School and approved by the appropriate College Research Committee and the Graduate School Management Committee. The admissions criteria should be available to applicants both via the web (http://www.aston.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research-programmes/) and in printed form.

The selection of students should take into account any declared additional needs the student may have, and consideration of how such needs may be supported.

Prior to interview, applicants should be provided with details of the University’s Enabling Team and asked whether they require any measures/adjustments to be put in place in order to support a disability or additional need. Applicants should be advised that, depending on the nature of the support requested, their disability/additional need may need to be disclosed to other interview panel members.

Applicants should be interviewed, in English, if necessary by telephone or online, and should be invited to visit the University. Wherever possible, applicants should have the opportunity to meet with relevant staff and students.

Interviews should be conducted by the potential Supervisor and a person independent of the proposed supervisory team – Colleges may specify additional requirements for the composition of the interview panel. Consideration should be given to the diversity of the panel. Between them, the panel members are expected to have undertaken the University’s training in: recruitment and selection; equality and diversity; and unconscious bias. All prospective supervisors are required to undertake the research student supervisor training (see section 6) and at least one panel member’s training in this area must be up-to-date at the time of the interview. Offer letters will not be issued to applicants unless all members of the proposed supervisory team have completed research student supervisor training within the previous three years.

Consideration of applications should include: whether the proposed area of research will sustain the required level of investigation for the research degree concerned; whether the proposed research can be expected to be completed within the duration permitted for the research degree concerned; the continued availability of required resources, including appropriate supervision, throughout the degree. It may be helpful to include a skills-based assessment in the interview, such as: a demonstration of practical techniques; understanding of methodology; or questions based on a journal article distributed in advance of the interview.

Students may only be admitted to a research degree programme with the involvement of at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the College’s Associate Dean Research or their nominee. Students may only be admitted to the University if their application has been approved by the College’s Associate Dean Research or their nominee.

Students must be sent a formal offer letter which should normally include the following information:
- the expected duration of study;
b the expectations of the student in terms of attendance, progress reports, contact with supervisors;
c arrangements for enrolment;
d references to the University’s Regulations, Code of Practice for Research Degrees, student handbook, sources of funding;
e a clear indication of the financial costs of the programme;
f the requirements and conditions of any sponsor (if known);
g reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information;
h the terms and conditions of offer.

Other information to be provided early in the students’ attendance includes:
a details of health and safety procedures;
b University Regulations;
c Graduate School Student Handbook, including School-specific information;
d an outline of any opportunities to undertake teaching or other duties and any conditions associated with these, including training requirements;
e good practice in research and guidance on research ethics;\textsuperscript{5}
f guidance on intellectual property rights.

5.2 Induction

Students will be provided with an appropriate induction programme and introductory material providing details about where they can find essential information. This will include a cross-College Induction to the Graduate School, as well as separate College-specific induction events. The Graduate School induction will comprise presentations from, as a minimum, the Dean of the Graduate School, areas represented by the Graduate Development Team, and the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS). College induction events will provide an opportunity to meet key staff and other research students.

The student should meet their Supervisor at the earliest opportunity to discuss their respective responsibilities. The Learning Agreement may form the basis of this meeting. For distance learning research students and other students who are away from the campus for a significant part of their research, appropriate arrangements for regular contact will be established.

6 Supervision

Every research student must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff of the University, as defined in Section 1 of the Statutes or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow. Research Fellows may only be appointed as Supervisor when their contract extends beyond the expected thesis submission date of the student. The Academic Staff Supervisor of an MD student will additionally have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue and appropriate academic scientific expertise to support Protocol development and delivery of the study. For students following the Doctor of Business Administration, a Process Supervisor will be appointed for the taught element of the programme; the Process Supervisor will fulfil the role of Supervisor until the supervisory team is appointed. \textit{(Regulation 6.1a)}

\textsuperscript{5} See Research Integrity Policy in Appendix A and Aston Research Data Management Policy in Appendix F
The Supervisor should have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.

A research student's supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff. Additional Associate Supervisors may be appointed in appropriate circumstances. (Regulation 6.3)

The role of any Associate Supervisor(s) will be clarified at an initial meeting with the student and documented in a Learning Agreement (see Section 6.2 of this Code).

No person may be the Supervisor for more than six research students at any time without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. (Regulation 6.1f)

The Associate Dean Research will review the situation, taking account of the overall workload of the member of staff concerned and the extent to which Associate Supervisors have been appointed.

A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will not normally supervise more than three research students. (Regulation 6.1f)

Supervisors who have not supervised at least four students to successful doctoral completion at the time of their appointment to Aston must attend the University’s training session on research student supervision. Supervisors who have such supervisory experience will be inducted into Aston procedures and policies by appropriate College and Graduate School staff and are expected to undertake the online ‘update’ training. The Associate Dean Research or nominee in each School must appoint an Associate Supervisor for a Supervisor who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion.

A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will be supported by an Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff who has supervised a doctoral student to successful completion as main Supervisor. (Regulation 6.1d)

The University expects that all Supervisors will take the initiative to update their knowledge and skills on a regular basis and access ‘update’ training at least once every three years.

All research students must be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of Academic Staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where a student finds the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well. (Regulation 6.1g)

This member of Academic Staff may be from outside the specific area of the student’s research topic. The same appointment would normally continue throughout a student’s full period of study. (Regulation 6.1h)

In the event that a Supervisor leaves the University during a student’s research programme, every effort will be made to appoint an alternative Supervisor and, where possible and appropriate, to retain the involvement of the original Supervisor as an Associate Supervisor.

The names and contact details of a student’s Supervisor, Associate Supervisor(s) and Postgraduate Research Tutor are displayed on the student’s MAP homepage.
6.1 Responsibilities of Supervisors

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

a introducing the research student to the research environment, its facilities and operational procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;
b providing satisfactory, accurate and ongoing guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of additional Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial as the student’s research progresses;
c being responsible for monitoring the student’s progress, mindful of the timing of the student’s progression points and thesis submission date;
d establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student (normally at least every two weeks), and including structured interactions at least every 3 months to discuss and agree progress, and to report it formally (Regulation 8.1);
e ensuring their reasonable accessibility to the student at other appropriate times when the student needs advice;
f having input into the assessment of a student's development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning;
g providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, including their overall progress;
h ensuring that the student is made aware of lack of satisfactory progress on the research programme and the implications of this for the student;
i ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct their research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct\(^6\), including plagiarism;
j providing guidance on the maintenance of research records applicable to the nature of the research;
k providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support, including student advisers, Graduate School staff, the Postgraduate Research Tutor and, where appropriate, support for mental health and well-being;
l helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking funding for such events, or in potential career pathways; and, where appropriate, giving encouragement and guidance on the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
m maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform the role of Supervisor satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

6.2 Responsibilities of research students

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their thesis within the periods of study as prescribed in Regulations for their particular degree.

Students are also responsible for:

\(^6\) set out in detail in the University’s Research Integrity Assurance Procedures in Appendix B
taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor or the Graduate School;

b ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with: University Regulations and College guidelines and procedures relating to their degree; relevant Codes of Practice and other University and College requirements (including health and safety advice, intellectual property and ethical research); the monitoring of progress; and terms of any sponsorship;

c 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;

d ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University’s requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress;

e discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings for which they adequately prepare;

f maintaining regular contact, normally at least every two weeks, with their Supervisor and initiating supervisory meetings where necessary;

g in conjunction with their Supervisor and informed by the Vitae Researcher Development Statement7, identifying their training needs and attending training on research methods and other relevant topics, including personal and skills development opportunities;

h maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;

i deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of research and before the end of the maximum period of research specified in the Regulations), taking due account of the Supervisor’s opinion;

j ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor’s responsibilities (see section 6.1 above);

k advising their supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances or concerns likely to affect their work;

l where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;

m seeking advice from an International Advisor in The Hub if they have any queries about their student visa or immigration status (international students only).

Supervisors and students will complete individual Learning Agreements as an aide memoire to covering these points and as a document for future reference. A Training Needs Analysis will be completed at the same time as the Learning Agreement and will be reviewed at least annually. Template forms are provided in the Student Handbook.

7 Progress and Review Arrangements

Each student and their Supervisor are expected to be in regular contact, meeting, or interacting over a distance, normally at least every two weeks on average. At least every three months a student’s progress should be formally reviewed by the Supervisor. Prior to the meeting, the student will be expected to provide the Supervisor with a detailed report of their progress during the previous three months, including, where appropriate, the methods used and the results obtained from their research. The recorded outcomes of the meetings, or other interaction if students are studying at some distance from the University,

The Vitae Researcher Development Statement (RDS) is provided as an Appendix to the Student Handbook. Detailed information about the RDS and the associated Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is available on the Vitae website (www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf).
will be held on MAP. A template Record of Supervisory meeting form is provided in the Student Handbook and is available to download from MAP.

At the end of each year of research a report must be submitted to the Associate Dean Research on the performance of each research student, including details of the skills training undertaken by the student during the year and a review of forthcoming training needs, unless the student has been granted an exemption from skills training or completed it as part of a professional doctorate programme. *(Regulation 8.2a)*

For MPhil/PhD students, the annual report before the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year of research will contain a recommendation concerning the student’s progression to either the MPhil or PhD degree programme, based on the student’s Qualifying Report on the research work and a *viva voce* examination (see Regulations, Section 8: Reports). A Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report is provided in the Student Handbook. Professional Doctorate students will have a similar progression point specified for their programme. Doctor of Medicine (MD) students enrol on the MD programme from the outset and submit a Qualifying Report to determine continued progression on the programme.

Before the end of the second year (fourth year for part-time students) PhD and professional doctorate students are required to complete a minimum of: an oral presentation of all or part of their research; or write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication); or write up all or part of their research in the form of an empirical chapter that would constitute part of their thesis. The Supervisor will consult with the student about which task the student is expected to complete and structured feedback will be provided. The student is expected to write a brief report on what they have gained from completing the task. Template feedback forms for each of the progression tasks are included in the Student Handbook. The Graduate School is responsible for the monitoring of student performance and notifies students of their review timetable and of the outcomes of the key stages above.

The Regulations allow for leave of absence in appropriate circumstances (e.g. evidenced illness) and for an extension of up to 12 months beyond the normal duration of the research programme to finalise the submission of the thesis (subject to approval by the College Research Committee). Detailed information about the processes to be followed is contained in Student Handbooks.

### 8 Development of Research and Other Skills

The University considers skills training to be key to the development of independent, employable, researchers, and students are therefore expected to complete a minimum number of skills training hours during their research programme, as defined in Regulations and as agreed with their Supervisor during completion and review of the Training Needs Analysis. A list of the training undertaken is sent to the Examiners before the *viva voce* examination.

For professional doctorate programmes, the taught element of each programme satisfies the requirement for skills hours but students are nevertheless encouraged to take advantage of the additional opportunities available for personal development.

The University will provide training in research and generic skills appropriate, wherever possible, to a student’s individual needs and as identified in the Training Needs Analysis initiated at the beginning of the first year as part of the Learning Agreement and reviewed
at least annually thereafter. Training will normally be provided by the Colleges, and by the Graduate Development Team. Provision of skills training will be kept under review by Colleges as part of their annual review of research degree programmes, and by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Guidance, support and training will be provided to, and will be expected to be undertaken by, students who have opportunities for teaching, demonstrating and/or assessing. Details of how to access teaching/demonstrating opportunities in each College are provided in the Student Handbook.

9 Evaluation Mechanisms

As part of the annual programme evaluation process, Colleges will consider and, where necessary, respond to feedback from research students, graduates, examiners, employers, sponsors and other internal and external stakeholders. College Programme Evaluation Reports are subsequently considered by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Students will be given the opportunity to provide confidential individual feedback as well as the opportunity to take part in College and University committee meetings. Students will be informed of actions taken in response to their feedback.

Feedback from research students will be sought through the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) administered by Advance HE. Students will be provided with feedback on the PRES results.

The Dean of the Graduate School will meet regularly with the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS) Committee providing the opportunity for discussion with research student representatives from each College.

10 Assessment

The assessment of students is on the basis of an appropriate body of work, as specified in the Regulations for that award, and a *viva voce* examination conducted according to the guidance set out in Appendix C, Conduct of the *viva voce*. The requirements for the award are stated in Regulations and reference the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) doctoral qualification and master’s degree descriptors.

Two Examiners are appointed for each student candidate and one Examiner must be external to the University. In the case of staff candidates, both Examiners must be external to the University.

The Internal Examiner may not be the student’s Supervisor, an Associate Supervisor, or be otherwise involved in the supervision of the student e.g. a member of a supervisory team. *(Regulation 16.1d)*

The Examiners’ role is critical in the assessment of research degrees, not only for the individual candidate but also for assuring the quality of the University’s academic standards, and the Regulations specify detailed criteria for their appointment. All Examiners must be appropriately experienced in research as judged by the Associate Dean Research and a nominee of the Senate.
An External Examiner must have previous experience of successful PhD supervision [and] the examination team must have experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations) of examining doctoral research degree students. (*Regulations 16.1g and 16.1h*)

Recommendations for the appointment of Examiners must be submitted using the form designed for this purpose.

Neither the Internal nor the External Examiner should have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student’s work, and neither of the Examiners’ own work should be the focus of the student’s thesis/portfolio. (*Regulation 16.1i*)

An External Examiner should not have been involved in collaborative research activities with the other Examiner or any member of the supervisory team within the five year period prior to the *viva voce* examination. (*Regulation 16.1j*)

Examiners will be requested to declare any personal conflict of interest which might preclude their appointment. (*Regulation 16.1k*)

All Examiners’ appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. (*Regulation 16*)

Examiners must submit individual independent written reports on the student’s thesis before the *viva voce* and a joint written report after the *viva voce*.

For all *viva voce*, an independent, non-examining Chair normally should be appointed from the suitably qualified Academic Staff within the relevant College except for staff candidates when the Chair should be from a different College. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate’s work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment. Independent Chair appointments should be in accordance with Section 1 of the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio*. (*Regulation 17b*)

See Appendix C for the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio* document which provides further guidance.

The University takes a serious view of misconduct in research at any stage in the research degree programme and cases of alleged misconduct, which includes plagiarism and collusion, are dealt with under the *University’s Regulations on Student Discipline*.

### 11 Complaints and Appeals

The University has approved procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals which may be found on the *University’s website* and which will be referenced in the Student Handbook. The procedures will also be accessible from a student’s MAP homepage. Research students who are recommended for withdrawal from the programme because of, for example, lack of satisfactory progress, including as a result of the examination of the Qualifying Report, will be provided with the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent (Regulation 11). If the outcome of the meeting is unsatisfactory to the student,
they may appeal under the provisions of the University’s Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures.

Research students who are dissatisfied with their conditions of work or the quality of their supervision should wherever possible discuss the difficulties with their Supervisor. In doing so, it may be appropriate to refer to [this] University Code of Practice for Research Degrees. *(Regulation 28a)*

If a research student prefers not to discuss their concerns with the Supervisor, the student should approach the Associate Dean Research or their nominee or, where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean. *(Regulation 28b)*

Ultimately, a complaint may be referred under the procedures detailed in the Student Complaints Procedure.

The student may be accompanied or represented at investigative, representation or appeal meetings and will be made aware of the availability of independent advice from the Students’ Union Advice and Representation Centre.

In cases where the University’s internal complaints or appeals procedures have been exhausted, the student will be provided with the details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. The OIA cannot interfere with the operation of a University’s academic judgement which is stated as being "not any judgment made by an academic; it is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential."8.

Graduate School Management Committee will receive the University’s annual reports on student appeals and complaints in order to review processes and guidance in place against any recommendations in the report.

**References and Acknowledgements**

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees
- Vitae Researcher Development Statement (RDS) - [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- Aston University General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis 2020/21

Last updated July 2020/SAS/Graduate School/AJB

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Appendix A: RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

If you are consulting this document, please check https://www2.aston.ac.uk/research/supporting-our-researchers/integrity-and-ethics/research-integrity-and-ethics to ensure that it remains the most recent version.
This document sets out the policy governing the allegations of breaches of integrity in the field of research.

January 2019
Title

Research Integrity Policy

Introduction and Context

The University’s expects the highest standards of research integrity from the researchers we support, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted.

Researchers can expect of the University:
- a strong commitment to research integrity from its senior management;
- clearly stated standards and expectations;
- support to help researchers comply with standards of good research conduct;
- support to develop excellent researchers;
- oversight of the implementation of the Research Integrity Assurance Procedure; and
- a robust and fair approach to dealing with allegations of research misconduct.

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the standards of research integrity expected by the University from its researchers.

1.2 What is covered by the Policy

This Policy applies to all research undertaken by the individuals covered by this Policy.

1.3 Who is covered by the Policy

All those who conduct research as employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus members of staff or as members of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted. This Policy does apply to allegations of plagiarism related to course assessment for students.

This Policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

1.4 Breach of this Policy

Any breach of this Policy will be addressed in accordance with the Research Integrity Assurance Procedure. A serious breach may amount to gross misconduct, and could therefore result in summary dismissal.

The University will consider allegations of a breach of this Policy against a member of staff when they were not working at the University but may (acting reasonably) determine that it is not possible to undertake a fair investigation of those allegations.

1.5 Policy Ownership

Research Committee has approved this Policy, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research is the Executive sponsor and the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity is the officer responsible for the Policy. Any questions about the operation of this Policy or any concerns that the Policy has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity.

2. THE POLICY STATEMENT
The guiding principles of this Policy are to ensure that the University maintains the highest standards of research integrity.

**Guiding Principles of Research Integrity**

**Excellence**  
Researchers are expected to strive for excellence when conducting their research; aiming to design, conduct, produce and disseminate work of the highest quality and ethical standards.

**Honesty**  
Researchers must be honest in respect of their own actions and in their responses to the actions of others. This applies to the whole range of research activity including:
- applying for funding;
- experimental and protocol design;
- generating, recording, analysing and interpreting data;
- publishing and exploiting results;
- acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others; and
- reporting cases of suspected misconduct in a responsible and appropriate manner.

**Openness**  
Researchers must be open when conducting and communicating their research (subject to the terms and conditions of any research contracts, the protection of intellectual property and commercial exploitation and the University’s IP Policy). This includes:
- the disclosure of any conflicts of interest;
- the reporting of research data collection methods;
- the analysis and interpretation of data;
- making all research findings widely available (including sharing negative results as appropriate);
- disseminating research in a way that will have the widest impact; and
- promoting public engagement/involvement in research.

**Rigour**  
Researchers must be thorough and meticulous in performing their research. Care must be taken:
- to use the appropriate methods;
- to adhere to an agreed protocol (where appropriate);
- when drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and
- when communicating the results.

**Safety**  
All research should be conducted in a manner which, so far as is reasonably practicable, is safe for researchers, participants, the University and the environment. Researchers must familiarise themselves, and comply with, the obligations set down by the University in its Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.

**Ethical responsibility**  
Researchers should have respect for all participants in, and subjects of, research including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. The University expects all researchers to consider the ethical implications of their research and to be aware of their responsibilities to society, the environment, their profession, the University, research participants and the organisation(s) funding the research in accordance with the University Ethics Framework and the University Research Ethics Regulations and Procedures.

**Responsible management**  
Established researchers are responsible for nurturing researchers of the future; fostering a constructive and supportive environment without undue pressure and ensuring that appropriate supervision, mentoring and training are provided.

**Regulatory compliance**  
Researchers are expected to make themselves aware of, and comply with, any legislation or regulations that govern their research. This includes, but is not limited to:
• General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 and the University’s Data Protection Policy and Procedures and Records Management Policy and Procedures;
• The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004;
• Human Tissue Act 2004 and the University’s Quality Manual.

Professional standards
Researchers should observe the standards of practice set out in guidelines published by professional societies, funding agencies and other relevant bodies, where appropriate and available. They must ensure that they have the necessary skills and training to conduct the research.

Report research misconduct
Researchers should be aware of the extreme seriousness of research misconduct. Staff and students of the University have an obligation to report suspected research misconduct in accordance with the University’s Research Integrity Assurance Procedure.

3. RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING POLICIES

This Policy should be used in conjunction with other relevant University policies and documents including:
• Ethic’s Framework;
• Research Ethics Regulations and Procedures
• Health and Safety Policy and Procedures;
• IP Policy;
• “Speak-up” Policy;
• Research Data Management Policy;
• Data Protection Policy and Procedures; and
• Records Management Policy and Procedures.

Please contact the Office of the General Counsel if any conflict is identified between the University’s policies and procedures and any external guidance.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

It is expected that Schools led by the Associate Dean Research will implement practices to ensure compliance with this Policy and review them regularly.
Appendix B: RESEARCH INTEGRITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

If you are consulting this document, please check https://www2.aston.ac.uk/research/research-integrity to ensure that it remains the most recent version.

Research Integrity Assurance Procedures

1. Scope of the Procedures

The Procedures assures the University’s compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.1 Purpose of the Procedures

The Procedures assure the University’s compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.2 What is covered by the Procedures

The Procedures apply to all research undertaken by those covered by the Research Integrity Policy and these Procedures.

1.3 Who is covered by the Procedures

All those who conduct research as employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus members of staff or as members of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted. These Procedures apply to allegations of plagiarism related to course assessment for students.

These Procedures do not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. Owner

Research Committee has approved the Procedures, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research is the Executive sponsor and the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity is the officer responsible for the Procedures. Any questions about the operation of the Procedures or any concerns that the Procedures have has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity.

3. Detailed Procedures Statement

The detailed Procedures are divided into sections that relate to specific stages of the process:

Section 4: What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

Section 5: How to raise a concern

Section 6: Researcher review

Section 7: Investigation

Section 8: Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Section 9: Determination of Research Misconduct

Section 10: Definitions

4. What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

4.1 Research misconduct is characterised as behaviours or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld. It can
cause harm to people and the environment, wastes resources, undermines the research record and damages the credibility of research. We recognise that academic freedom is fundamental to the production of excellent research. This means that responsibility for ensuring that no misconduct occurs rests primarily with individual researchers.

4.2 Research misconduct can take many forms, including:

4.2.1 fabrication: making up results, other outputs (for example, artefacts) or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and presenting and/or recording them as if they were real

4.2.2 falsification: inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents

4.2.3 plagiarism: using other people’s ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission

4.2.4 failure to meet: legal, ethical and professional obligations, for example:

- not observing legal, ethical and other requirements for human research participants, animal subjects, or human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment
- breach of duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent
- misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality
- improper conduct in peer review of research proposals, results or manuscripts submitted for publication. This includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for the purposes of peer review.

4.2.5 misrepresentation of:

- data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data
- involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution
- interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study; qualifications, experience and/or credentials
- publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication.

4.2.6 improper dealing with allegations of misconduct: failing to address possible infringements, such as attempts to cover up misconduct and reprisals against whistle-blowers, or failing to adhere appropriately to agreed procedures in the investigation of alleged research misconduct accepted as a condition of funding. Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct includes the inappropriate censoring of parties through the use of legal instruments, such as non-disclosure agreements.

Honest errors and differences in, for example, research methodology or interpretations do not constitute research misconduct.

4.3 All relevant definitions are included in Section 10.

5. How to raise a concern

5.1 Notwithstanding the University’s Whistleblowing Policy, all employees and students, including those holding honorary contracts, are required to report, and individuals authorised to work in University premises have a responsibility to report to the University any concerns about misconduct in research whether this has been witnessed or for which there are reasonable
grounds for suspicion. Failure by a member of staff or student to report research misconduct may constitute concealment of misconduct in research.

5.2 Subject to paragraph 5.3, Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity should be reported in writing to:

Pro Vice Chancellor Research
Main Building
Aston University
Aston Triangle
B4 7ET
research_governance@aston.ac.uk or via the online form available.

5.3 Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity relating to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research should be reported in writing to Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Concerns should be reported in good faith and accompanied by supporting evidence that substantiates the concerns.

5.4 Concerns about Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity can only be investigated through this process. Where concerns of Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity have been raised with someone other than the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, that person must take responsibility for informing the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.

5.5 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer all reported concerns of Research Misconduct and Breaches of Research Integrity in accordance with these Procedures.

6. **Researcher review**

6.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer the concern of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity to the Designated Officer.

6.2 The Designated Officer will determine whether the concern relates to a Breach of Research Integrity that amounts to Poor Research Practice for the purposes of these Procedures. If the Designated Officer makes such a determination, they may approach the researcher and request that the researcher reviews any related research and associated publications and takes any corrective actions arising from that self-review.

6.3 This self-review by the researcher may identify the requirement for an improvement plan that would be led by the relevant supervisor and/or School as required.

7. **Investigation**

7.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that the allegation of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity does not amount to Poor Research Practice, the Designated Officer will conduct an investigation.

7.1.1 In conducting an investigation, the Designated Officer may obtain confidential advice from internal and/or external independent experts in the research area concerned, request relevant evidence from both the complainant and the person/s whom the allegation has been made against. This may include experimental material, names of witnesses, IT records and other documents subject to the prior approval of the General Counsel or their nominee.

7.1.2 Failure to provide the requested information may be considered misconduct or gross misconduct.

7.2 In determining whether there is a case to answer, the Designated Officer will consider whether the allegations, if proven, could constitute Research Misconduct.

7.3 Following the investigation, the Designated Officer may form any of the following views:
7.3.1 there is no substance to the allegation; or
7.3.2 the case is appropriate for researcher review; or
7.3.3 there is a case of Poor Research Practice; or
7.3.4 there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity; or
7.3.5 there is a case of Research Misconduct; or
7.3.6 there may be substance to the allegation but this is subject to a separate University policy or procedure so referral is required in accordance with that policy or procedure.

7.4 Even if the person accused of non-compliance has resigned from the University, an investigation to establish the facts may be pursued by the Designated Officer. Distortions of the research record may need to be rectified, whether or not the person involved remains at the University.

7.5 The Designated Officer will report the outcome of the investigation to the person who made the allegation, to the person against whom the allegation was made, and to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to the fullest extent permissible by law.

8. Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity, the Designated Officer may refer the matter under the University's disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9. Determination of Research Misconduct

9.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of Research Misconduct, the Designated Officer may take the following action:

9.1.1 Refer the matter to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, with a recommendation for a formal investigation. The formal investigation should be undertaken by a panel of three members where at least one member is an external to Aston University. The formal investigation will be in line with UK Research Integrity Office procedure for the investigation of misconduct in research. This has been adopted by universities and NHS Trusts, endorsed by funding bodies and used to investigate allegations of research misconduct.

The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will determine how to proceed in accordance with the relevant agreement or other relevant procedures, for example, if non staff are involved.

9.1.1.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will determine how to proceed in accordance with the relevant agreement or other relevant procedures, for example, if non staff are involved.

9.1.1.2 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research may refer the matter under the University’s disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9.1.1.3 The Designated Officer will provide all correspondence and information collected as part of the investigation to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.

9.1.2 Ensure that relevant funding agencies, journals and other media through which the research in question was reported are informed of the determination of a case of Research Misconduct to the fullest extent permissible by law.

10. Definitions

<p>| Designated Officer | An experienced senior staff member nominated by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to provide independent and informed guidance to university staff regarding research integrity and associated courses of action. The Designated |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Poor Research Practice</strong></th>
<th>This encompasses the intention to deceive and honest differences of interpretation or judgement in the management of research, or honest errors in the collection, evaluation or reporting of research results that are minor or unintentional.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Concordat</strong></td>
<td>The concordat to support research integrity published by UniversitiesUK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Guidance</strong></td>
<td>The RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.</td>
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Appendix C: Conduct of the *viva voce* examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio

The following paragraphs present guidance for the arrangements for and conduct of the *viva voce*; references to Regulations are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis.

1. **The Chair of the Viva Voce**

An independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed for all *viva voce*. The Chair should be selected by the College’s Associate Dean Research from a pool of suitably qualified Academic Staff who have experience of research degree assessment and are familiar with the regulatory requirements.

The Chair should be independent in that he or she should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the candidate’s work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners (*Regulation 17b*).

The Chair must be impartial and cannot therefore be a member of the student’s supervisory team or the Internal Examiner, and must be from a different research area. The Chair must not be nominated by the Supervisor or the Internal Examiner. In the case of a staff candidate, the Chair should be from a different College (*Regulation 17b*).

In some circumstances, for example where both Examiners are external to Aston, an ‘experienced’ Independent Chair may be required. An experienced Independent Chair will be a member of Aston Academic Staff who, at the time their appointment is recommended for approval, has:

- chaired an Aston University *viva voce* examination at the same level (research Masters or doctorate) within the previous five years; and
- been an External Examiner at a *viva voce* examination for a UK award at the same level (research Masters or doctorate) within the previous ten years.

2. **The Role of the Independent Chair**

The role of the Independent Chair is to:

i) meet with the Examiners at least 20 minutes before the *viva voce* examination to hear their proposed agenda for the conduct of the examination;

ii) ensure the *viva voce* examination is conducted in an open, professional, and non-intimidating manner by all parties involved;

iii) be prepared to intervene in the process if the above requirements are not complied with;

iv) ensure that only those parties who should be actively involved in the *viva voce* process are participating and that other attending parties (such as a Supervisor) do not take an active role and leave the meeting at the appropriate time, i.e. with the student;

v) ensure that the candidate has an opportunity to defend the thesis;

vi) suggest appropriate breaks in particularly long examinations and be mindful of the impact of a long examination on those attending;

vii) provide an opinion on points of order or University Regulations if requested to do so by the Examiners or the student and in circumstances where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure that appropriate procedures are not breached;
viii) take the lead in informing the candidate of the overall outcome, deferring to the Examiners for detailed feedback, and ensuring that the outcome is clearly communicated and understood by the student;
ix) sign at the end of the viva voce examination to confirm that the examination was conducted fairly, professionally, and without bias.

It is not the role of the Independent Chair to:

i) receive a copy of the thesis to be examined;

The independent non-examining Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis. (Regulation 18a)

ii) be involved in the examination of the candidate;

iii) contribute to the academic examination of the thesis;

iv) take part in the discussions as to outcome of the assessment.

3. The Role of the Examiners

Prior to the viva voce examination (on receipt of the thesis) the Examiners will satisfy themselves that they have the relevant expertise to examine the thesis and will not have a conflict of interest (see Regulation 1.5 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis) in doing so. If that is not the case, the Examiner will inform the Graduate School Office as soon as possible.

The role of the Examiners is to:

i) determine whether the candidate’s work has met the requirements for the award being examined;

ii) be confident, via the viva voce process, that the thesis is the candidate’s own work and that the candidate is able to defend it.

The External Examiner is also responsible for assuring that the University’s processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are robust and equitable compared with those of other universities.

4. Arrangements for the Viva Voce

The viva voce examination shall normally be held at least three weeks and no more than three months after the submission of the thesis/portfolio. (Regulation 15.3)

The Supervisor should notify the Examiners, the student, and the Independent Chair, in writing, giving at least two weeks’ notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending the viva voce examination. Members of the supervisory team should not host meals for Examiners; this should be done by either the Internal Examiner or the Independent Chair.

The viva voce examination will normally take place on the University campus. It should be held in a suitable room which ensures privacy and lack of distraction or interruption from others, with an appropriate amount of time being set aside for the meeting. There should be a separate waiting area for the candidate.

It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the Examiners, in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the final viva voce examination, of any factors which may affect their performance. (Regulation 18d)
Reasonable adjustments may be made where required, in accordance with guidance received from the University’s Enabling Team.

5. **Purpose/Aim of the Viva Voce**

i) Provides the student with an opportunity to defend their thesis;

ii) assists the Examiners in their decision as to whether or not the student has met the requirements for the degree;

iii) examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies;

iv) allows detailed discussion of the thesis;

v) explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis;

vi) clarifies points of ambiguity;

vii) satisfies the Examiners that the thesis is the student’s own work and, where applicable, the extent of any collaboration.

6. **Conduct of the Viva Voce**

i) If any of those who should be attending are unable to be present, then the *viva voce* must normally be re-arranged;

ii) time should be made available on the day of, and before the *viva voce*, for the Examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary reports and to discuss the approach to the examination, for example the main areas to be explored with the candidate and the order in which they will be raised;

iii) the Examiners will confirm their agenda for the examination with the Chair before the examination commences;

iv) the Chair should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the form the *viva voce* will take and what happens afterwards. The Chair will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding (including of regulatory matters), unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour, but should not hesitate to do so if this is the case;

v) each Examiner should contribute, but with the External Examiner taking the lead;

vi) there are no rules governing the length of the *viva voce*. It is at the Examiners’ discretion to make the *viva voce* as long or as short as they think necessary but around two hours is typical and it should not normally be expected to exceed four hours. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/requested;

vii) there may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive. Wherever possible, Examiners should ask questions in a constructive way. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the questioning becomes aggressive, they should intervene;

viii) the Supervisor may be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions but will be required to leave before any decision is taken, and should not sign any of the Examiners’ reports or recommendations (Regulation 17b);

ix) no-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

7. **After the Viva Voce**

i) The candidate and Supervisor (if present) should be asked to withdraw. The Supervisor must not be involved in any of the deliberations or decision-making;

ii) the Examiners should deliberate in private, with the Chair observing the discussion and providing guidance on regulatory matters when appropriate but not contributing to the academic examination of the thesis;

iii) the Examiners may invite the student and Supervisor to hear the recommendation (noting that this is provisional only). Care should be taken to convey the recommendation clearly and in accordance with the Regulations (see section 8 below: ‘Outcomes of the Examination’). The Chair will take the lead in informing the candidate of the recommendation;
iv) the Examiners' Reports on the *viva voce* examination and the Joint Recommendation should be completed and submitted to the Graduate School Office, together with an outline of any revisions or required amendments, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the *viva voce*;

v) the Independent Chair should sign the Examiners' Joint Recommendation on the *viva voce* examination to indicate whether or not the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias;

vi) all Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office (*Regulations 19a and 23*)

vii) External Examiners are invited to complete a separate report to provide feedback on the processes and arrangements for the examination.

8. Outcomes of the Examination

8.1 Satisfactory
A satisfactory recommendation will only be made in cases where the Examiners are satisfied that the quality of the thesis and the defence of it at the *viva voce* examination have met the requirements for the degree (General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, Regulation 1.2).

(Regulations)

19.1 Satisfactory

a If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination (or written examination, if Regulation 18(e) is used), they must jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.

b The Examiners may recommend the award of MSc/MA (by Research) with distinction if they are satisfied that the thesis is of exceptional quality.

c The Examiners may not recommend the award of MD/PhD/professional doctorate to a student unless the student submitted for that award.

19.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions
If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Doctoral Submission
i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate, be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

b MPhil Submission
i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, with ‘distinction’;
That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, without ‘distinction’.

19.3 Unsatisfactory
If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination), they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a) Doctoral Submission
   i. that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio for re-examination within one year for the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate (see Regulation 21a);
   ii. that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only);
   iii. that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see Regulation 20b);
   iv. that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio within one year for re-examination for the degree of MPhil (PhD submission only);
   v. that no degree be awarded;
   vi. that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master’s dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only).

b) MPhil Submission
   i. that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination within one year for the degree of MPhil (see Regulation 21a);
   ii. that no degree be awarded.

c) MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
   i. that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) within six months of the date of the *viva voce*. In such cases no distinction may be awarded;
   ii. that no degree be awarded.

19.4 No Agreed Recommendation
If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see Regulation 16.3).

16.3 Referee Examiner
If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see Regulations 19.4 and 23.4).

8.3 Revisions within three or six months

20 COMPLETION OF REVISIONS

a) The Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to a thesis/portfolio within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.

b) Revisions to a thesis/portfolio must be completed by the student in accordance with the wishes of the Examiners within an agreed timescale of three or six months from the date of the *viva voce* examination. For revisions to an MSc/MA (by Research) thesis a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.
c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student’s completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student’s completion of revisions.

e The Supervisor will provide guidance on the correction of revisions at the request of the student.

The period of time given for revisions should reflect the amount of work involved, rather than the individual circumstances of the student. It should not be influenced by whether the candidate was previously full- or part-time.

Revisions are not expected to require a major re-working of, or major additions to, the thesis. They will vary from thesis to thesis but may include: typographical errors; inclusion of a small amount of additional material; revisions to some sections of the text; further statistical analysis.

### 8.4 Submission of a revised thesis for re-examination (Resubmission)

In circumstances where the Examiners believe that the standard for the award may be reached by a significant reworking of the thesis/portfolio, for example additional experimental work or data analysis, they may decide to allow the candidate to submit a revised thesis for re-examination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21 RESUBMISSION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOR RE-EXAMINATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>a Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio must be rectified within one year of the date of the <em>viva voce</em> examination. This time limit is applicable to both full-time and part-time research students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MSc/MA (by Research) thesis should be rectified within six months of the date of the <em>viva voce</em> examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c The Examiners must provide the student with details of the required amendments, in writing, when making their recommendation to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. This should normally be within two weeks of the date of the <em>viva voce</em> examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Students should submit a commentary with their revised thesis/portfolio indicating how the amendments required by the Examiners have been addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e The student’s Supervisor will provide appropriate and reasonable guidance on the revision of the thesis.</td>
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<tr>
<th>22 RE-EXAMINATION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO</th>
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<tr>
<td>The examination procedure must be as specified in Regulations 17 and 18, except where modified by the following provisions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a the resubmitted thesis/portfolio must be examined by the previously appointed Examiners unless the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate is satisfied that there is a sound case for the replacement of any Examiner(s). An Internal Examiner who has since left the University and is no longer a member of the Academic Staff may continue in the role for the student concerned;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b the appointment of any replacement Examiner(s) must be in accordance with Regulation 16;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c the Examiners may require the student to attend a <em>viva voce</em> examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio.</td>
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EXAMINERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS ON A RESUBMITTED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

All Examiners’ recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.

The Examiners should normally determine their recommendation within three months of the student resubmitting their thesis/portfolio.

23.1 Satisfactory

a If the Examiners are satisfied with the revised thesis/portfolio (and with the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required, or written examination if Regulation 18e is used), they shall jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.

b The Examiners may not recommend the award of PhD to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MPhil.

c The Examiners may not recommend an award ‘with distinction’ to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MSc (by Research).

23.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and, where applicable, with the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Resubmission for Doctorate

i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

b Resubmission for MPhil

i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)

i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions within a maximum timescale of three months. The award may not be made ‘with distinction’.

23.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required), they shall make one of the following recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Resubmission for doctorate

i that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only),

ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see Regulation 20b),

iii that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master’s dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only),

iv that no degree be awarded.

b Resubmission for MPhil
23.4 **No Agreed Recommendation**
If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 23.1, 23.2 or 23.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see Regulation 16.3).

16.3 **Referee Examiner**
If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see Regulations 19.4 and 23.4).
Appendix D: General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis

General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis

AU-GSMC-19-2628-B

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of research degree programmes

2020-21
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30  APPENDIX 1   PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES INDEX
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Policy Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University Research Committee, set out the requirements for postgraduate research degree programmes and awards assessed by thesis (MSc or MA (by Research); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD) and professional doctorates), including:

- Entry requirements and regulations on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- The characteristics of different types of postgraduate research degree programmes, including MSc/MA (by Research) and professional doctorates.
- The typical duration of postgraduate research degree programmes.
- The requirements for progression and thesis submission.
- The requirements for the appointment of Examiners of research degree programmes.
- Recommendations available to Examiners of research degree programmes.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University’s General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the general regulations webpage.

Version Control

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<td>University Research Committee</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
<td>September 2019</td>
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<td>AU-GSMC-19-2628</td>
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<td>Alison Birch</td>
<td>University Research Committee</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
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1 GENERAL

1.1 Admission to the degree

Students of the University may be admitted by the Senate to the degrees of MSc or MA (by Research), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or a professional doctorate (e.g. Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Optometry (DOptom), Doctor of Hearing Therapy (DHEaring Therapy)) on complying with the requirements of these Regulations, with the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degrees, and with such Ordinances and other Regulations as are relevant.

1.2 Nature of the degree and requirements for the award

a MSc or MA (by Research) and MPhil

The degree of MSc/MA (by Research) or Master of Philosophy may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a contribution to knowledge and shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and, where appropriate, must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

Master’s degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated (Level 7, QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications):

i a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice

ii a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship

iii originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline

iv conceptual understanding that enables the student:

• to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
• to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

b PhD

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a substantial original contribution to knowledge, shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated (Level 8, QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications):

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

c MD

The degree of Doctor of Medicine may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a substantial original contribution to medical or biomedical science knowledge, shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

The expectations of doctoral candidates are stated in b, i-iv, above.

d Professional Doctorates (DBA, DOptom, DOPhSc, PharmD, DHearing Therapy, EdD)

The professional doctorate is equivalent to PhD standard (Level 8, QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications). It is a doctoral level qualification for professionals working in a particular field which aims to aid the dissemination, development and management of a range of professional practice and policy development. The research thesis or portfolio results in a substantial and original contribution to knowledge (either theoretical or applied to professional practice), shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The structures of professional doctorates, which may vary in the size of taught and research components, are detailed in programme descriptions for each award. Taught components must be passed, along with the research thesis or portfolio, for the award of the professional doctorate.

The expectations of doctoral candidates are stated in b, i-iv, above.

1.3 Qualification for the degree

In order to qualify for the award of a degree by research and thesis a student must have:

a enrolled as a research student of the University,
b pursued a course of research within the time limits prescribed in these Regulations,
c presented a satisfactory thesis or portfolio upon the subject of the research,
d satisfactorily undergone a *viva voce* examination unless, in extraordinary circumstances, a written examination has been substituted under the provisions of Regulation 18e,
e paid the appropriate fees and discharged all other obligations to the University.

1.4 The requirements for all Aston University Qualifications, including credits, and Levels of awards, are detailed in Aston University Credit and Qualifications Framework.

1.5 Conflicts of interest

a A conflict of interest exists where, to an independent observer of a situation, a person’s self-interest may cast doubt on their ability to take impartial and objective actions or decisions in a professional context. Examples of conflict of interest include personal and financial relationships.
b Research students and staff involved with research degree programmes are responsible for taking appropriate steps to avoid potential or perceived conflicts of interest at all stages of the programme: application, admission, supervision, progression and examination.

c Where a research student or a member of staff believes there is the potential for a perceived or actual conflict of interest, this must be disclosed in confidence to the Associate Dean Research or Dean of the Graduate School at the time it is first recognised as such.

d The Associate Dean Research or Dean of the Graduate School will determine the appropriate measures to take to address the situation.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

a MPhil or PhD applicants should normally have been awarded a Master’s degree or first or upper second class Honours degree in a relevant subject or should have an award and/or experience deemed by the Associate Dean Research and the Pro Vice Chancellor Research or nominee to provide similar evidence of research potential.

b The MD is aimed at persons in clinical practice. MD applicants must hold an MBBS or BDS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery or Bachelor of Dental Surgery) degree or equivalent, be registered with the General Medical Council or General Dental Council, and have at least three years of clinical or scientific postgraduate experience. Candidates should normally be in appropriate clinical or scientific employment at the University or in an NHS Trust for the duration of the degree. Data collection for the MD is expected to be undertaken as part of a project for which: the University is the sponsor or co-sponsor; or a project sponsored by an NHS organisation where the candidate is named as a student in documentation supporting the project’s approval by the Health Research Authority. For NHS sponsored projects, a data sharing agreement will also be required to be in place before the candidate enrols.

c Professional doctorate applicants should normally have been awarded either a Master’s Degree or a first or upper second class Honours degree in a relevant subject and should have relevant experience in the area of professional practice they wish to research. Any programme specific entry qualifications for professional doctorates will be included in the relevant Programme Description.

d MSc/MA (by Research) applicants must produce evidence of having fulfilled the entry requirements as prescribed by the programme regulations relating to that particular programme. Applicants should normally have been awarded at least either a first degree from a recognised University or Institute of Higher Education or a qualification deemed by the appropriate College Research Committee to be at least of equivalent standing.

e Applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate that they have met the College’s English Language requirement before enrolment.

f Entry requirements for each individual research student will be stated in their offer letter.

g Applicants will provide details of two referees, one of whom should be for the applicant’s most recent period of study/research.

h The following basic principles have been drawn up to assist Colleges in developing procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), in cases where this is accepted by the College. Recognition of Prior Learning includes certificated learning and experiential learning and may be considered in circumstances where a student wishes to transfer to the University having completed a period of research at another institution:
the responsibility rests with the student for making a claim and supporting the claim with appropriate evidence, although advice and assistance on the nature of the evidence required should be provided by the Associate Dean Research. The College should determine appropriate fees for this service;

ii the experience of the student is significant only in so far as it can be identified as a source of learning;

iii academic assessment of certificated and experiential prior learning is the responsibility solely of academic staff;

iv attention should be paid to the matching of a student’s stated achievements and competencies against the requirements of the period of the research degree programme for which exemption on the basis of RPL is sought;

v in making offers for admission with exemption the Associate Dean Research should be sure that the student has already gained the required knowledge/skills for which exemption is awarded and that their ability to follow the rest of the programme will not be jeopardised;

vi any exemptions on the basis of RPL should be approved by the Associate Dean Research and the period of research for which exemption is granted reported to the College Research Committee;

vii exemption may be granted for no more than two thirds of the maximum time allowed for submission of the thesis/portfolio, as defined in Regulation 14.1. Students are required to complete at least one full-time or two part-time years within the normal time limits for the programme enrolled as students of the University.

Where a proposal for exemptions involving Recognition of Prior Learning applies to a group of students, the University recognises that whilst the experience of the group might be similar, the students’ learning from it, and therefore the exemptions to which they may individually be entitled, might differ.

3 ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT

3.1 Admission

Students may only be offered a place if at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the relevant College’s Associate Dean Research, or their nominee9, approve all of the following:

a the student’s entry requirements (see Regulation 2 above)
b the research start date and mode of attendance (see Regulation 4 below)
c the proposed research topic (see Regulation 5 below)
d the location of the research work (see Regulation 4.3 below)
e the supervisory arrangements (see Regulation 6 below).

Prior to enrolment the student is required to accept the conditions of the offer in writing.

Any subsequent amendments to the conditions, for example a change in the supervisory arrangements, should be approved by the Associate Dean Research, or their nominee, and reported to the College Research Committee.

9 The Associate Dean Research’s nominee will normally be the Director of Research Degree Programmes or equivalent. Neither the Associate Dean Research nor the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) should take action within these Regulations in respect of students they supervise.
3.2 **Enrolment**

Before commencing research, an applicant for a degree by research and thesis must enrol as a student of the University by fully completing the enrolment process.

4 **DATE AND TYPE OF RESEARCH**

4.1 **Research start date**

The student’s effective research start date will be one of the following four dates in the appropriate academic year:

1 October, 1 January, 1 April or 1 July

The date (including the year) is determined and approved by the College Associate Dean Research and will be the date closest to the date on which the student enrols. MSc/MA (by Research) students normally start on 1 October.

4.2 **Mode of attendance**

Research students must be enrolled on one of the following bases:

a as a student on an approved MSc/MA (by Research)
b as a full-time research student
c as a part-time research student (pursuing research for the equivalent of not more than 24 weeks per year)
d as a part-time MD student
e as a full-time MD student if they are a full-time employee of Aston University and are employed for the purpose of delivering a research project (normally as Clinical Research Fellow).

Full-time research is not compatible with full-time employment.

A part-time research student (MPhil/PhD/MD) may be permitted to attend the University for less than 24 weeks a year if approved by the Associate Dean Research on the recommendation of the student’s Supervisor.

Most professional doctorate students will be registered as part-time students. Part-time is defined as pursuing research or study (including work-based research) for not less than 24 weeks per year, or equivalent, and not more than 24 weeks per year, or equivalent. Full-time professional doctorate students will only be accepted if they can demonstrate links which will allow appropriate interaction with practice as this will be required for assessment.

The normal time limits for each type of attendance are listed in Regulation 14.1, below.

4.3 **Location of research**

A research student may pursue full-time or part-time research wholly, or partly, outside the University under the direct supervision of a University Supervisor if approved by the Associate Dean Research on the recommendation of the student’s Supervisor.
All research students are expected to attend the University for the examination of the Qualifying Report or equivalent, and for the examination of the final thesis, unless the Associate Dean Research waives this requirement.

4.4 Specific enrolment

All PhD and MPhil students are enrolled in the first instance for an unspecified higher degree by research and thesis. On satisfactory completion of the first year of supervised research, in the case of full-time students, or the second year of supervised research, in the case of part-time students, based on a satisfactory Qualifying Report assessment, each student may be recommended for progression to the MPhil or to the PhD degree programme (see Regulation 8).

The entry route to a professional doctorate will be specified in the Programme Description and may be via a linked Master’s. Professional doctorate students are required to satisfy progression point requirements specified for their programme (Regulation 8.4).

5 PROPOSED RESEARCH TOPIC and RESEARCH DATA

a Applicants for a degree by research and thesis should normally provide a project outline as required by their College.

b The proposed Supervisor must attest that the proposed scheme of work is capable of being pursued to the level and extent appropriate to the relevant research degree (see Regulation 1.2) within the specified time-limit.

c Where a proposed research topic is concerned with particularly sensitive material, arrangements may be made to restrict the circulation of the resultant MSc/MA (by Research), MPhil, MD, PhD or professional doctorate thesis or portfolio for up to a maximum of three years through a 'Restriction of Access' (see Regulation 15.2).

d The student and the proposed Supervisor are advised to ensure at an early stage of planning the thesis or portfolio that sensitive information will be excluded which does not clearly support the academic basis of the work, to avoid wherever possible the need to request a restriction of access to the finished thesis.

e Research data (methods and results) are core to research and should be managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University’s Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student’s sponsor.

6 SUPERVISION

6.1 Supervision

a Every research student must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff, as defined in Section 1 of the Statutes or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow. Research Fellows may only be appointed as Supervisor when their contract extends beyond the expected thesis submission date of the student. The Academic Staff Supervisor of an MD student will additionally have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue and appropriate academic scientific expertise to support Protocol development and delivery of the study. For students following the Doctor of Business Administration, a
Process Supervisor will be appointed for the taught element of the programme; the Process Supervisor will fulfil the role of Supervisor until the supervisory team is appointed.

b Where the Supervisor is a Research Fellow, a member of the Academic Staff must be appointed as Associate Supervisor.

c A research student’s supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor (see Regulation 6.3).

d A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will be supported by an Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff who has supervised a doctoral student to successful completion as main Supervisor.

e At least one member of the supervisory team (Supervisor and/or Associate Supervisor) must be engaged in excellent research.

f No person may be the Supervisor for more than six research students at any time without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will not normally supervise more than three research students.

g All research students must be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of Academic Staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where the student finds the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well.

h This member of Academic Staff may be from outside the specific area of the student’s research topic. The same appointment would normally continue throughout a student’s full period of study.

6.2 **MSc/MA (by Research)**

Students normally must pursue full-time or part-time research wholly within the University under the direct supervision of a Supervisor.

6.3 **Associate Supervisors**

A research student’s supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff. Additional Associate Supervisors may be appointed in appropriate circumstances. No person may have an overall supervisory load of more than twelve students (with a maximum of six as Supervisor) without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. An Associate Supervisor must be appointed by the Associate Dean Research in the following instances:

a where the Supervisor has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion. This Associate Supervisor will be engaged in excellent research;

b for an MD student, an Associate Clinical Supervisor nominated by the collaborating NHS Trust. Clinical Supervisors are expected to hold a Consultant contract with the Trust in an appropriate clinical area and to have experience of acting as a Principal Investigator for clinical studies.

The appointment of an additional Associate Supervisor is also considered beneficial in the following instances:

c where the student’s research is interdisciplinary, another member of the Academic Staff of the University may be appointed as Associate Supervisor;
d an appropriately qualified and experienced Research Fellow may be appointed as Associate Supervisor where this would benefit the student’s research;
e where the Supervisor leaves the University and a replacement is appointed from among the Academic Staff of the University, the original Supervisor may be appointed as Associate Supervisor;
f where there is a collaborative relationship with an external institution, a member of staff of the external institution may be appointed as Associate Supervisor where this would benefit the student’s research;
g to provide a less experienced member of Academic Staff who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion with practical experience.

6.4 External Contacts

A member of an external organisation in which a student is pursuing research may be appointed in the role of External Contact. The External Contact is not formally involved in the supervision of the student and it is the Supervisor’s responsibility to keep the External Contact informed of the student’s progress.

6.5 Aston University’s Code of Practice for Research Degrees

The Code of Practice for Research Degrees contains guidance on the responsibilities of Supervisors and research students.

7 SKILLS TRAINING

a All students enrolled on the MD programme or with the aim of qualifying for an MPhil must undertake a minimum of 60 hours’ appropriate skills training, including conference sessions, between the research start date and the submission of the thesis/portfolio. All students aiming to qualify for a PhD must undertake a minimum of 90 hours’ appropriate skills training, including conference sessions, between the research start date and the submission of the thesis/portfolio.
b The choice of training to be undertaken is subject to the approval of the Supervisor, in accordance with College guidelines.
c A list of the training undertaken must be submitted with the thesis/portfolio and sent to the Examiners before the viva voce examination.
d A Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research or nominee 10 that a student be exempted from the skills training requirements on the basis of prior learning or experience. The recommendation should normally be made at the time of the student’s enrolment on the research programme.
e All students enrolled with the aim of qualifying for an MSc/MA (by Research) or professional doctorate will undertake appropriate skills training as part of their programme. Details are available as part of the appropriate programme handbook/information.

10 The Associate Dean Research’s nominee will normally be the Director of Research Degree Programmes or equivalent. Neither the Associate Dean Research nor the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) should take action within these Regulations in respect of students they supervise.
8 REPORTS

8.1 Reports

Students and Supervisors are expected to be in regular contact, normally at least every two weeks. There should be structured interactions at least every three months between the student and the Supervisor. Before each 3-monthly interaction (which will normally take the form of a meeting), a report of the student’s progress covering the previous three months should be submitted to the Supervisor by the student. The student and Supervisor will discuss and agree academic and personal progress, and a record of the outcomes of all such interactions shall be maintained electronically.

8.2 Annual Reports (MPhil, MD, PhD And Professional Doctorate)

a At the end of each year of research a report must be submitted to the Associate Dean Research on the performance of each research student, including details of the skills training undertaken by the student during the year and a review of forthcoming training needs, unless the student has been granted an exemption from skills training (see Regulation 7(d)) or completed it as part of a professional doctorate programme (see Regulation 7(e)).

b Annual reports must be completed before the end of each year following the student’s research start date, this applies equally to full-time and part-time students.

c The annual report submitted to the Associate Dean Research before the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year will contain a recommendation from an independent panel concerning the student’s continuation on the MD or progression to either the MPhil, PhD or professional doctorate degree programme, based on the student’s Qualifying Report or progression point requirements, and a viva voce examination (see Regulations 8.3 and 8.4).

d In exceptional circumstances, an extension of no more than three months for an annual report may be approved by the Associate Dean Research or nominee*. An extension granted for this purpose will not normally extend the duration of the research programme.

e Each report must be approved by the Supervisor and will normally be agreed by the Associate Supervisor(s)/Associate Clinical Supervisor for MD. The report must give brief details of meetings between the student and Supervisor(s). A copy of the approved report will be made available to all members of the supervisory team.

f Details of annual reports received and student progression will be reported to the College Research Committee.

g Each research student must be sent a copy of their annual report after it has been approved by the Associate Dean Research.

8.3 Qualifying Report (MPhil, MD, PhD)

a By the end of month 10 of the first year of research, in the case of full-time students, or by the end of month 20 of the second year in the case of part-time students, each research student must write a report on the research work. The report should be a minimum of 6,000 words or as specified by the College Research Committee and should be submitted to the Graduate School Office for forwarding to the Supervisor in the first instance. College Research Committees may specify a maximum length for the Qualifying Report.

b The Supervisor (and the Associate Clinical Supervisor for MD students) will meet with the student to provide structured written feedback on the Qualifying Report in the form of a brief report. For students in the College of Business and Social Science, the report should also indicate whether the student intends to submit their thesis in the
three paper format\textsuperscript{11}. The submitted Qualifying Report, without further amendment, and the Supervisor’s structured feedback report will then be submitted to an independent examining panel. Within two months of the Qualifying Report being submitted, and in sufficient time to allow the progression decision to be communicated by the end of month 12 full-time or month 24 part-time, the student must be examined on its content at a viva voce examination conducted by the panel. The panel will comprise at least two members of the Academic Staff, one of whom will be designated as Chair; an Emeritus Professor who is a former member of Academic Staff is eligible to be a member of the panel. The panel will have a minimum of three successful doctoral supervisions between them and at least one panel member will be familiar with the subject area. For an MD student, the panel should have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue. In addition:

i. the panel members should not have a supervisory role in respect of the student being examined;

ii. either the Supervisor, or an Associate Supervisor nominated by the Supervisor to attend in their place, should attend the viva voce as an observer. In the case of a less experienced Supervisor who is supported by an Associate Supervisor, the Associate Supervisor may also attend;

iii. the student will have the opportunity to meet with the panel without any member of the supervisory team being present.

c. It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the examining panel in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the qualifying viva voce examination, of any factors which may affect their performance.

d. On the basis of the student’s Qualifying Report and viva voce examination, and taking into consideration the Supervisor’s structured feedback, the independent examining panel must submit a report to the Associate Dean Research, agreed by all panel members, which includes one of the following recommendations:

i. that the student’s progression to the PhD degree programme be approved,

ii. that the student’s progression to the MPhil degree programme be approved,

iii. that the student’s continuation on the MD degree programme be approved;

iv. that an MD student’s progression to an alternative degree programme, e.g. MPhil, be approved;

v. that the student’s enrolment should be terminated, subject to the procedures on representations outlined in paragraph 11e being followed.

e. A research student with a doctoral qualification aim who is unhappy with a recommendation from the independent examining panel for progression to a non-doctoral qualification may make representations in accordance with paragraph 11e.

f. The report on the student should also give a provisional title for the thesis/portfolio.

g. If a research student plans to write the thesis/portfolio in one of the languages taught and examined in their College (other than English), application must be made to the College Research Committee by the Supervisor, on behalf of the student, at the time of the Qualifying Report. The application must explain clearly the reason for the request and must demonstrate that there will be no undue restriction in the choice of Internal or External Examiner if the application is approved. Irrespective of the proposed language of the thesis/portfolio, the Qualifying Report must be written in English and the viva voce examination of the Qualifying Report should be conducted in English (as must the viva voce examination of the final thesis – see Regulation 18c).

\textsuperscript{11} As detailed in Paper AU-GSMC-16-0016-A, approved by the Senate in March 2017 with effect from 2017/18 for students in Aston Business School and Paper AU-RC-18-1733-A approved by University Research Committee in April 2019 with effect from 2019/20 for students in the School of Languages and Social Sciences. The Schools now form the College of Business and Social Science.
8.4 Progression Point (Professional Doctorates)

a Students will be formally assessed for progression to the professional doctorate at a suitable point in the programme (normally one year full-time or equivalent).

b The purpose of the progression point is to assess the student's ability to complete the relevant professional doctorate. It includes an assessment of the candidate's capacity to undertake research.

c All progression points will include an appropriate *viva voce* examination by an independent, Internal Examiner.

d Progression points may differ according to programme. A Qualifying Report as defined in Regulation 8.3 might be used as the progression point. Successful completion of a linked Master’s programme, if one is included in the curriculum, might be appropriate if the programme provides adequate research skills training and includes a *viva voce* examination of the research report.

e The progression point will be defined in the documentation for approval of the programme and approved as part of the programme approval process.

f At progression point an agreement should be reached on the form of assessment (thesis or portfolio) for the professional doctorate.

g The outcome of the progression point assessment will be one of the following recommendations:
   i that the student’s progression to the relevant professional doctorate degree programme be approved;
   ii that the student’s progression to an alternative degree programme, where applicable, e.g. a linked Master’s, be approved;
   iii that the student’s enrolment should be terminated, subject to the procedures on representations outlined in paragraph 11e being followed.

8.5 Progression at End of Second Full-Time/Fourth Part-Time Year (PhD and Professional Doctorates)

Before the end of the second year of research, in the case of full-time students, or before the end of the fourth year in the case of part-time students, each research student must complete a minimum of one of the following:

   an oral presentation of all or part of their research;
   or write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication);
   or write up all or part of their research in the form of an empirical chapter that would constitute part of their thesis.

The choice of task to be undertaken will be made by the Supervisor in consultation with the student. The format of the oral presentation will be specified by the College and will normally be a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 60 minutes (including time for questions); it should provide the student with a ‘seminar’ experience. The student should also write a brief report on what they have gained from the task. Structured feedback shall be provided to the student after the task, normally by the Supervisor and one of the panel members who assessed the Qualifying Report. A copy of the feedback shall be submitted with the annual report to the Associate Dean Research making a recommendation as to continued progression.
In the case of poor performance in the progression task, the student will be required to undertake the task again, within a specified time period not exceeding six months, in order to demonstrate improvement. Continued poor performance will inform the Supervisor’s decision as to the student’s overall satisfactory progress (see Regulation 11b).

9 ABSENCE

9.1 Work away from the University

Research students may, if permission has previously been received from the Associate Dean Research, undertake their research for an extended period at approved centres other than the University, or undertake appropriate field work. Where research is undertaken outside the University in this way, it must remain under the control and supervision of the Supervisor. See also Regulation 4.3, Location of Research.

9.2 Vacation

A full-time research student may be allowed up to six weeks (30 days) of vacation a year, and a part-time student up to 3 weeks (15 days), by prior arrangement with their Supervisor, or a vacation allowance as specified by their sponsor.

9.3 Leave Of Absence

A research student may apply to the Associate Dean Research or nominee for leave of absence of no more than two years on the grounds of pregnancy, illness or other sufficient cause, during which the research work is suspended and no tuition fee is charged, although the student is required to re-enrol. No more than 12 months will normally be granted in the first instance and a request for an unspecified period of leave of absence will not be considered. The period of leave of absence does not count in the University’s calculation of time limits for submission of the thesis/portfolio (see Regulation 14 below), and is the same for full-time and part-time students. The decision should be reported to the College Research Committee.

10 TRANSFER BETWEEN MPhil AND PhD DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Provision is made in exceptional cases for transfer between the MPhil or MD and PhD degree programmes at the request of the student or the Supervisor subject to the following conditions:

a any request for transfer between degree programmes should be submitted to the Associate Dean Research or nominee and must be accompanied by a detailed assessment of the student’s work by the Supervisor;

b the Associate Dean Research may seek independent advice on the standard of the student’s work before making a judgement;

c in agreeing any transfer between degree programmes, the Associate Dean Research shall specify the new submission date for the thesis;

d the decision shall be reported to the College Research Committee;

e in the case of an MD student, the relevant NHS Trust(s) agree to the transfer.
a If a student wishes to withdraw from their research programme, the student must notify their Supervisor and the Graduate School in writing, stating their main reason(s) for leaving.

b If at any time the Supervisor considers that a research student’s progress is unsatisfactory and that the student is unlikely to complete the requirements of the degree, the Supervisor must report this to the student and to the Associate Dean Research, in writing. Where the Associate Dean Research is involved in the supervision of the student, the report should be submitted to the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent. Where the Associate Dean Research and/or the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) are involved in the supervision of the student, an appropriate nominee will undertake the role.

c Where the unsatisfactory progress has arisen from an extended period of lack of communication over a period of at least three months and where reasonable efforts have been made to contact the student\textsuperscript{12}, the Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research that the student should be deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn from the research programme. If the Associate Dean Research accepts the Supervisor’s recommendation, the Associate Dean Research will formally notify the student of the decision and allow the student a reasonable period of time in which to present any mitigating circumstances, normally fourteen days.

d If progress continues to be unsatisfactory following the initial notification in writing (other than as a result of an extended period of lack of communication), the Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research that the student be withdrawn from the research programme. Before deciding that a student should be withdrawn, the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent, shall give the student (aided by another member of the University\textsuperscript{13}, or by a member of staff acceptable to the Senate, if desired) the opportunity to make representations in writing, or in person, or both, of any circumstances that have affected their progress. Where the Associate Dean Research and/or the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) are involved in the supervision of the student, an appropriate nominee (e.g. Head of Research Group) will undertake the role. The student must normally be given a minimum of 10 days’ notice if a full-time student or 20 days’ notice if a part-time student, of the meeting. The student will be informed of the decision, in writing, normally within ten days of the date of the meeting.

e A student whose enrolment is recommended for termination or for progression to a non-doctoral qualification as a result of the examination of the Qualifying Report or progression point assessment will have the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent, as outlined in d, above.

f If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the consideration of representations made under d or e above, they may appeal under the provisions of the University’s Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures, copies of which are available on the University web-site (see Regulation 24).

\textsuperscript{12} See University Ordinances, Part 2.14: Service of Notices and Documents
\textsuperscript{13} as defined in University Ordinances, Part 1.1: Members of the University. A Student Welfare Adviser from the Students’ Union has been approved by the Senate to act in this context.
12 MSc/MA (by Research)

12.1 Definitions

MSc/MA (by Research) shall be awarded for individual research of, typically, 12 months’ duration, to be examined primarily by thesis (normally a small number of taught credits will be included in programmes e.g. research methods training).

MSc/MA (by Research) have a defined structure but do not normally have a programme title as the students’ individual research is the main assessment and each individual will normally present a different thesis title.

12.2 Programme Structure and Requirements

a The overall learning outcomes for any MSc/MA (by Research) programme shall be at master’s level as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (see Regulation 1.2a).

b There will be a handbook for students which will include the programme structure and module requirements, and programme regulations.

c The programme description will specify:

- entry requirements;
- attendance requirements (if any);
- programme structure including any required modules;
- specific assessment requirements for modules including whether modules must be passed or completed.

12.3 Assessment

a The pass mark for any assessed taught modules shall be 50%.

b Students may not be reassessed in any module for which they have already obtained credit.

c The taught component of the programme must be passed before the thesis is submitted.

d The thesis will be examined in accordance with sections 15-23 of these Regulations.

e A student who fails to submit a thesis within the permitted time may be required to withdraw from the programme.

f MSc/MA (by Research) may be awarded ‘with distinction’ if specified by the programme regulations for the award. To achieve an award with distinction candidates must be recommended for a distinction by the thesis examiners. The Examiners’ decision is based on the quality of the thesis (see Regulation 19.1b) although they will also receive details of the taught modules as confirmation that this element of the programme has been completed.

12.4 Examination Board

Any taught modules will be assessed by Boards of Examiners. Boards of Examiners will be conducted as specified by these regulations and by the General Regulations for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners.
13 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

13.1 Characteristics of a Professional Doctorate Award

The professional doctorate is intended for professionals who can utilise and initiate research in relation to the development and management of a range of professional practice and policy development. The award is distinct from the PhD award in the following respects:

- students will be professionals normally conducting research in their own subject;
- within the programme of professional practice, the research leads to the production of a thesis or portfolio which makes a substantial original contribution to knowledge within the student’s area of professional practice and of direct relevance to it;
- the research outcomes will contain publishable elements of relevance to the professional areas. The development and dissemination of ideas and good practice are key features of the objectives of the programme;
- the professional doctorate may be made available as part of a suite of linked awards.

13.2 Programme Description

Each professional doctorate award will have a Programme Description, which includes information about the programme structure and any programme specific regulations.

13.3 Title

The degree of professional doctorate is awarded in a professional area such as Education, Engineering, Business Administration, and other appropriate professional subjects. The title is to have currency in the academic area and designated as Doctor of ‘subject’ (abbreviated to D and subject acronym, or subject acronym and D) e.g. Doctor of Business Administration, DBA, Doctor of Pharmacy, PharmD, Doctor of Optometry, DOptom. The title will be approved during the programme approval process.

13.4 Structure of a Professional Doctorate

a Mode of study and duration

Typically professional doctorates include a minimum of three calendar years full-time postgraduate study, or equivalent, with study at Level 7 representing no more than one-third of this.

b Credits

The professional doctorate, in common with other Aston University doctorates, is not credit-rated. Where a professional doctorate includes a linked Master’s programme or individual modules drawn from taught programmes the award or modules will be credit-rated in line with University regulations for taught programmes.

c Taught modules

All professional doctorate programmes include taught modules. Specific content will vary depending on the professional area of the degree but will be expected to contain:
- formal research training (including research strategies and methodologies),
- appropriate study of the field.
13.5 Assessment

a Taught modules

Students will be required to successfully complete the assessment for a specified number of credit-rated modules.

b Research thesis or portfolio

- Thesis
  Submission and examination of the thesis, by *viva voce*, will be in accordance with these Regulations.

- Portfolio
  i Submission and examination of the portfolio, by *viva voce*, will be in accordance with these Regulations.
  ii The portfolio material will demonstrate a substantial engagement with professional practice over a period of time; the portfolio must contain a body of evidence, which might include published work or innovative practice.
  iii The portfolio will include both an overriding line of argument and a critical commentary which sets the material in a theoretical and professional context.
  iv The portfolio must focus on an area/theme of direct relevance to the student's professional area of work, and aim to disseminate new knowledge and practice throughout the profession to aid its development.
  v The portfolio, taken as a whole, will make an original contribution to knowledge and professional practice.
  vi The nature and indicative components of a portfolio will be specified at the outset as part of the programme approval process, such as to enable the candidate to demonstrate (at the final examination) that the outcomes expected of doctoral candidates have been met. Details of assessment including the minimum number of articles, the minimum length of articles will be specified at the time the programme is approved. A minimum of two published articles and a covering paper outlining the overall line of argument will be required.

13.6 External Examiners

*Viva voce* assessment of the thesis or portfolio will be undertaken by (at least) two independent fellow professionals appointed as Examiners according to the following criteria and to the criteria for the normal appointment of Examiners (see Regulation 16.1):

- each Examiner will be experienced in research in the general area of a student's submission and, where practicable, will have experience as a specialist/professional practitioner in the topic(s) to be examined.
- taught modules should be considered by an appropriate Module Board of Examiners. Any linked awards (e.g. Master's awards) shall be considered by an appropriate Programme Board of Examiners. Module and Programme boards will be conducted according to University Regulations for taught programmes.
13.7 **Linked Awards**

Masters awards may be linked to a professional doctorate including MSc, MA, MRes, MSc or MA (by Research), Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate. The relevant General Regulations for these awards will apply to them.

14 **TIME LIMITS FOR SUBMISSION OF THESES**

14.1 **Normal Time Limits**

All time-limits are calculated from the student’s research start date, and from 1 October for MSc/MA (by Research). An exception to the normal time limit may be permissible if a sponsor or funding body specifies a different timeframe for the research.

**a  Full-time students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MSc/MA (by Research)</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>PhD/Professional doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earliest date for submission:</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum time allowed:</td>
<td>one year</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>three years (see also Regulation 14.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**b  Part-time students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MSc/MA (by Research)</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>PhD/Professional doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earliest date for submission:</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>four years</td>
<td>four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum time allowed:</td>
<td>two years</td>
<td>four years</td>
<td>four years</td>
<td>six years (see also Regulation 14.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.2 **Extension of Time Limit**

**a** A student who is unable to submit a thesis/portfolio within the normal time limit may apply in advance for permission from the Associate Dean Research or nominee to submit late, if the student can provide good reason why the thesis/portfolio cannot be submitted in time.

**b** The application from the student should be made at least one month before the thesis/portfolio is due to be submitted. It must be accompanied by a timetable showing in detail how the thesis/portfolio will be completed within the additional time requested and by a supporting statement from the Supervisor.

**c** The Associate Dean Research may grant an MSc/MA (by Research) student up to three months’ extension.

**d** Normally, the Associate Dean Research may grant a full-time or a part-time doctoral or MPhil student up to one year’s extension beyond the maximum time limits for full-time and part-time students given in Regulation 14.1 above. The extension period
available to a student on a different timeframe will be adjusted such that the thesis submission deadline is no greater than the maximum normal time limit in Regulation 14.1 plus 12 months.

e Students who are allowed additional time in which to complete their thesis/portfolio must re-enrol for the period of the extension and will be expected to be finalising their thesis during this period unless specified otherwise.

f The decision should be reported to the College Research Committee.

14.3 Time Limits if Transfer Between Full-Time and Part-Time Mode of Attendance

Where a student transfers between full-time and part-time mode of attendance, the guideline will be that one year of full-time research is considered to be equivalent to two years part-time research.

15 SUBMISSION OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO BEFORE EXAMINATION

15.1 Required Documentation

15.1.1 MSc/MA (by Research)

Within the prescribed time-limits, a research student enrolled for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) shall present to the Graduate School Office:

a three unbound copies of a thesis/portfolio not exceeding 30,000 words in length, excluding appendices. The thesis/portfolio should be produced in accordance with the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.

15.1.2 MPhil or Doctorate

Within the prescribed time-limits, a research student enrolled for a doctorate or for the degree of MPhil shall present to the Graduate School Office:

a three unbound copies of an MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio produced in accordance with the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses. A portfolio submission is not permitted for MD or Doctor of Hearing Therapy;

b two copies of the thesis/portfolio summary;

c a signed statement by the student, countersigned by the Supervisor (and Clinical Associate Supervisor for an MD student), clearly acknowledging those parts of the work described in the thesis/portfolio which were done in collaboration (if any) and the extent of the student’s contribution to those parts of the work, and confirming that the work has not been submitted for any other academic award unless it is also to be submitted to a second institution as part of a formal cotutelle agreement;

d if any part of the thesis includes work that is the result of collaborative research (e.g. in a three paper format thesis or as an individual chapter in a manuscript), a statement must be provided by the collaborating researcher(s), confirming the contribution made to the research by the candidate;

e for a doctorate, signed confirmation from the Supervisor(s) and student that all data is located and secured in accordance with the University’s Research Data Management Policy;

f three copies of a list of skills training undertaken (where applicable).
15.2 **Restriction of Access to Thesis/Portfolio**

a. Access to a thesis/portfolio may be restricted for an initial period of up to two years from the date of the award of the degree at the request of the Supervisor and student through the College Research Committee to the Graduate School Management Committee.
b. The request must state clearly the reasons for requiring restricted access to the thesis/portfolio.
c. Restriction of access for a further period may only be granted in special circumstances.

15.3 **Time between Submission and Viva Voce Examination (MPhil and Doctorates)**

The *viva voce* examination shall normally be held at least three weeks and no more than three months after the submission of the thesis/portfolio.

16 **APPOINTMENT OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO EXAMINERS**

All Examiners’ appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

16.1 **Normal Appointment of Examiners**

Upon submission of the thesis/portfolio the Examiners should be nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research and reported to the College Research Committee. Where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean or Deputy Dean should approve the nominated Examiners. Examiners should be approved in accordance with the following requirements (for professional doctorate candidates see also Regulation 13.6):

a. one Internal Examiner and one External Examiner must be appointed for each research student and both Examiners must be demonstrably research active. For an MD candidate, at least one of the Examiners should be medically qualified;
b. each Examiner will be experienced in research in the general area of a student's submission;
c. the Internal Examiner must be a member of the Academic Staff of the University;
d. the Internal Examiner may not be the student’s Supervisor, an Associate Supervisor, or be otherwise involved in the supervision of the student e.g. a member of a supervisory team;
e. former staff and students may not be appointed as an External Examiner within five years of leaving Aston;
f. Associate Deans Research are required to monitor the nomination of examiners to ensure that the same External Examiner does not regularly examine students from the same Research Group;
g. an External Examiner must have previous experience of successful PhD supervision;
h. the examination team must have experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations) of examining doctoral research degree students;

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14 The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.
i neither the Internal nor the External Examiner should have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student’s work, and neither of the Examiners’ own work should be the focus of the student’s thesis/portfolio;
j an External Examiner should not have been involved in collaborative research activities with the other Examiner or any member of the supervisory team within the five year period prior to the viva voce examination;
k Examiners will be requested to declare any personal conflict of interest which might preclude their appointment.

16.2 Early Appointment of Examiners

The Supervisor may request that the Examiners are appointed before the thesis/portfolio has been submitted. The request must be accompanied by the thesis/portfolio summary and a statement by the student of the date by which the thesis/portfolio will be submitted.

16.3 Referee Examiner

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation, an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see Regulations 19.4 and 23.4).

16.4 Examiners for Staff Candidates

Any student who at the time of submitting the thesis/portfolio has been appointed as an employee of the University (i.e. not appointed on casual worker arrangements), or who has ceased to be an employee of the University within the previous 12 months, must be examined by two External Examiners, in accordance with the General Regulations for Research Degrees by Staff of Aston University and by Aston University Graduates for specified awards.

16.5 Changing an External Examiner

The External Examiner may be changed up to the date of the viva voce examination following a submission by the Supervisor for approval by the relevant Associate Dean Research and the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. The appointment of any replacement Examiner must be in accordance with Regulation 16.1.

17 ATTENDANCE AT THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

a The Supervisor is responsible for nominating the Examiners and for arranging the viva voce examination.
b The following persons must attend the viva voce examination:
   the research student;
   the Internal Examiner;
   the External Examiner;
   the independent non-examining Chair.

The independent non-examining Chair should be appointed from the suitably qualified Academic Staff within the relevant College, except for staff candidates when the Chair should be from a different College. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate’s work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment. Independent
Chair appointments should be in accordance with Section 1 of the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student’s thesis/portfolio*.

The Supervisor may, unless the student objects, attend the *viva voce* examination. The Supervisor may be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions but will be required to leave before any decision is taken, and should not sign any of the Examiners’ reports or recommendations.

c The Supervisor may nominate an Associate Supervisor to attend the *viva voce* in their place.

d No other person may be present at the *viva voce* examination without obtaining permission in advance from the Senate, or from the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

18 CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINATION

a Following their formal appointment each Examiner must be sent a copy of the thesis/portfolio by the Graduate School Office. The independent non-examining Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis.

b Before the *viva voce* examination each Examiner must read the thesis/portfolio and submit an independent written report.

c A *viva voce* examination must then be held, normally at least three weeks after and within three months of the student submitting the thesis/portfolio, at which the Examiners test the student’s knowledge of the research upon which the thesis/portfolio is based. Irrespective of the language of the thesis/portfolio, the examination must be conducted in English. The Examiners must submit a joint written report on the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination.

d It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the Examiners, in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the final *viva voce* examination, of any factors which may affect their performance.

e If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio but not with the performance of the student at the *viva voce* examination, they may set the student a written examination and make their final recommendation on the basis of the student’s performance in the written examination.

f All Examiners’ reports must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School.

g Examiners’ reports for MSc/MA (by Research) shall be submitted to the appropriate Examination Board for information.

18.1 *Virtual Viva Voce Examination*

Online platforms supported by Digital Services may be used in *viva voce* examinations only where the External Examiner or candidate is unable, for reasons of prohibitively high cost, difficulties of time, or restricted mobility, to travel to the University at an appropriate time. The option of a virtual viva should not normally be made available solely for the reason that the student has left the University after submitting the thesis/portfolio and does not want to return for the *viva voce* examination.

Where the candidate is the remote party, any materials brought into the virtual meeting should be identified at the start of the examination and no one else should be in the room with the candidate.
Vivas may only be held virtually with the agreement of the candidate, the Examiners and the Associate Dean Research.

Contingency plans should be made in case of technological failure or the need for the candidate to repeat the *viva voce* examination at a later date.

19 EXAMINERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS

a All Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee\(^\text{15}\) on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.

b A student may obtain a copy of the Examiners' joint recommendation relating to their *viva voce* examination on application to the Graduate School Office. Alternatively, the Internal Examiner may provide the research student with a copy of the Examiners’ joint recommendation at the conclusion of the *viva voce* examination.

19.1 Satisfactory

a If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination (or written examination, if Regulation 18(e) above is used), they must jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.

b The Examiners may recommend the award of MSc/MA (by Research) with distinction if they are satisfied that the thesis is of exceptional quality.

c The Examiners may not recommend the award of MD/PhD/professional doctorate to a student unless the student submitted for that award.

19.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Doctoral Submission

i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

b MPhil Submission

i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);

ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).

c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission

i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, with ‘distinction’;

ii That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, without ‘distinction’.

\(^{15}\) The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.
19.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student’s performance at the *viva voce* examination), they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Doctoral Submission
   i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio for re-examination within one year for the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate (see *Regulation 21a*);
   ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only);
   iii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see *Regulation 20b*);
   iv that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio within one year for re-examination for the degree of MPhil (PhD submission only);
   v that no degree be awarded;
   vi that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master’s dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only).

b MPhil Submission
   i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination within one year for the degree of MPhil (see *Regulation 21a*);
   ii that no degree be awarded.

c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
   i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) within six months of the date of the *viva voce*. In such cases no distinction may be awarded;
   ii that no degree be awarded.

19.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see *Regulation 16.3*).

20 COMPLETION OF REVISIONS

a The Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to a thesis/portfolio within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.

b Revisions to a thesis/portfolio must be completed by the student in accordance with the wishes of the Examiners within an agreed timescale of three or six months from the date of the *viva voce* examination. For revisions to an MSc/MA (by Research) thesis a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.

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16 The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.
c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student’s completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student’s completion of revisions.

e The Supervisor will provide guidance on the correction of revisions at the request of the student.

21 RESUBMISSION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOR RE-EXAMINATION

a Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio must be rectified within one year of the date of the viva voce examination. This time limit is applicable to both full-time and part-time research students.

b Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MSc/MA (by Research) thesis should be rectified within six months of the date of the viva voce examination.

c The Examiners must provide the student with details of the required amendments, in writing, when making their recommendation to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. This should normally be within two weeks of the date of the viva voce examination.

d Students should submit a commentary with their revised thesis/portfolio indicating how the amendments required by the Examiners have been addressed.

e The student’s Supervisor will provide appropriate and reasonable guidance on the revision of the thesis.

22 RE-EXAMINATION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

The examination procedure must be as specified in Regulations 17 and 18, except where modified by the following provisions:

a The resubmitted thesis/portfolio must be examined by the previously appointed Examiners unless the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate is satisfied that there is a sound case for the replacement of any Examiner(s). An Internal Examiner who has since left the University and is no longer a member of the Academic Staff may continue in the role for the student concerned;

b the appointment of any replacement Examiner(s) must be in accordance with Regulation 16;

c the Examiners may require the student to attend a viva voce examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio.
23 EXAMINERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS ON A RESUBMITTED
THESIS/PORTFOLIO

All Examiners’ recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or
nominee\(^\text{18}\) on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.

The Examiners should normally determine their recommendation within three months of the
student resubmitting their thesis/portfolio.

23.1 Satisfactory

a If the Examiners are satisfied with the revised thesis/portfolio (and with the student’s
performance at the viva voce examination, if required, or written examination if
\textit{Regulation 18e} is used), they shall jointly recommend the award of the degree. The
bound thesis should be submitted within one month.

b The Examiners may not recommend the award of PhD to a student submitting a
revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MPhil.

c The Examiners may not recommend an award ‘with distinction’ to a student submitting
a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MSc (by Research).

23.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and, where applicable, with the
student’s performance at the viva voce examination but require revisions to be made to the
thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and
inform the student accordingly:

a Resubmission for Doctorate
   i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of
      revisions within three months (see \textit{Regulation 20b});
   ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of
      revisions within six months (see \textit{Regulation 20b}).

b Resubmission for MPhil
   i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three
      months (see \textit{Regulation 20b});
   ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six
      months (see \textit{Regulation 20b}).

c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)
   i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of
      revisions within a maximum timescale of three months. The award may not be
      made ‘with distinction’.

23.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student’s
performance at the viva voce examination, if required), they shall make one of the following
recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

a Resubmission for doctorate

\(^{18}\) The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate
School.
i that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only),
ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see Regulation 20b),
iii that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master's dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only),
iv that no degree be awarded.

b Resubmission for MPhil
i that no degree be awarded.

c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)
i that no degree be awarded.

23.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 23.1, 23.2 or 23.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see Regulation 16.3).

23.5 Completion of Revisions

a If the student is required to attend a viva voce examination, within two weeks of the viva voce examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio, the Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to the thesis/portfolio, and an agreed timescale of three or six months for their completion. For MSc/MA (by Research) a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, and the maximum should be three months.
b If the student is not required to attend a viva voce examination, within three months of the thesis/portfolio resubmission date, the Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to the thesis/portfolio and an agreed timescale of three or six months for their completion. For MSc/MA (by Research) a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.
c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.
d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student’s completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student’s completion of revisions.
e The student’s Supervisor will provide guidance in the correction of revisions.

24 APPEALS BY RESEARCH STUDENTS

A student wishing to appeal against a decision of the Examiners may appeal on the grounds set out in the University’s Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures, copies of which are available from the University Website. There is no right of appeal against the academic judgement of Examiners.

19 The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.
25 SUBMISSION OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOLLOWING EXAMINATION

25.1 Required Documentation

a After the viva voce examination, the student must submit to the Graduate School Office one copy of the thesis/portfolio, printed in the manner prescribed in Regulation 4.2 of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses and one electronic copy of the thesis/portfolio. Both copies of the thesis must incorporate any revisions required by the Examiners. The electronic copy must be presented in the manner prescribed in Regulation 4.2 of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.

b The copies of the thesis/portfolio must be accompanied by a signed statement from the Internal Examiner or the nominated External Examiner in the case of a staff candidate certifying that they are identical versions of the work assessed by the Examiners, except where revisions were made at their request.

c The thesis/portfolio must be accompanied by the Research Degree Deposit Agreement Form signed by the student. This Form will be retained by Aston University’s Library Services together with the electronic copy of the thesis/portfolio.

25.2 Distribution of Theses

The approved thesis/portfolio will normally be uploaded to the Aston University Research Repository. Doctoral theses will normally be harvested by the British Library EThOS Service.

26 AWARD OF DEGREE

The Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee20 on behalf of the Senate, upon receipt of reports and satisfactory recommendations from all the Examiners, together with confirmation that all the requirements listed in Regulation 1.3 have been met by the student, shall approve the award of the degree.

27 WAIVERS OF REGULATIONS

Where, in the opinion of the College Research Committee, exceptional circumstances have adversely affected a research student which could not reasonably have been foreseen, the Graduate School Management Committee may waive any relevant part of these Regulations on such conditions as it may deem fit.

Applications for waivers of Regulations should be submitted to the Graduate School on behalf of the student by the Examiners, if appointed, otherwise by the Supervisor.

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20 The Vice-Chancellor’s nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.
28 COMPLAINTS BY RESEARCH STUDENTS

a Research students who are dissatisfied with their conditions of work or the quality of their supervision should wherever possible discuss the difficulties with their Supervisor. In doing so, it may be appropriate to refer to the University Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

b If a research student prefers not to discuss their concerns with the Supervisor, the student should approach the Associate Dean Research or their nominee or, where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean.

c If the Supervisor or Associate Dean Research/Executive Dean does not resolve the student’s difficulties, the student may refer the complaint to the Executive Dean under the procedures detailed in the College/Departmental stage of the Student Complaints Procedures, copies of which are available on the University web-site.

d In circumstances where the Supervisor is the Executive Dean, or the Executive Dean has been approached in place of the Associate Dean Research, the complaint may be referred to the Chief of Operations and Estates or their nominee under the procedures detailed in Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

29 MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH

The University Research Committee has approved Research Integrity Assurance Procedures (AU-RC-18-1563-A and subsequent versions). In this context, misconduct in research is defined, in accordance with the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) definition as including, but not limited to:

a fabrication;
b falsification;
c misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement;
d plagiarism; and
e failures to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for:
   i avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to: humans; animals used in research; and the environment; and
   ii the proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research.

Examples of research misconduct would also include:

- the intentional, unauthorised use, disclosure or removal of, or damage to, research-related property of another, including apparatus, materials, writings, data, hardware or software or any other substances or devices used in or produced by the conduct of research;
- fraudulent applications for research funding or the misuse of research funding;
- the facilitation of misconduct by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others.

It does not include honest error or honest differences in judgements or in the interpretation of data.

The University takes a serious view of any such misconduct and cases of alleged misconduct are dealt with under the University’s Regulations on Student Discipline.
The full Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis apply to professional doctorate awards. The following may be most relevant:

R1.2d   Nature of the Degree
R2c     Entry Requirements
R4.4    Enrolment
R5      Proposed Research Topic and Research Data
R6      Supervision
R7      Skills Training
R8.1    Three-monthly reports
R8.4    Progression point
R8.2    Annual reports
R11     Withdrawal from research degree programme
R13     Professional Doctorate
R14     Time limits for submission of theses
R15 to R26 Regulations covering Final Examination and Award of Degree

The full Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis apply to the Doctor of Medicine award. The following may be most relevant:

R1.2c   Nature of the Degree
R2b     Entry Requirements
R4.4    Enrolment
R5      Proposed Research Topic and Research Data
R6      Supervision
R7      Skills Training
R8.1    Three-monthly reports
R8.2    Annual reports
R8.3 Qualifying Report

R11 Withdrawal from research degree programme

R14 Time limits for submission of theses

R15 to R26 Regulations covering Final Examination and Award of Degree
General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of research degree programmes

2020-21
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5 RESUBMITTED THESES
Policy Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University Research Committee, set out the requirements for the presentation of theses for the postgraduate research degree programmes of MSc or MA (by Research); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD), and professional doctorates, including:

- The requirements for presentation, content, and submission of theses.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University’s General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the general regulations webpage.

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<td>University Research Committee</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
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</table>
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The responsibility for the production of the required number of copies of the research thesis lies solely with the student (see section 4).

1.2 Where additional copies of the thesis are requested by an Executive Dean or other individual, the cost of producing the extra copy or copies must be met by the person(s) making the request.

1.3 The cost of amending the thesis following an unsuccessful examination must be met by the student.

1.4 Any theses which are not presented in accordance with these Regulations, or whose presentation is not of a sufficiently high standard, may be returned to the student and will not be accepted for examination or re-examination until the faults have been corrected.

1.5 The thesis should be proof-read carefully for typographical errors before being submitted.

PRESENTATION

2.1 All the copies of the thesis must be prepared with the same quality of paper and identical text, diagrams etc.

2.2 Language

2.2.1 The thesis must be written in English, except where Regulation 2.2.2 (below) applies.

2.2.2 A research student in the School of Social Science and Humanities may submit the thesis in one of the languages taught and examined in that School providing that permission has already been granted at the time of the Qualifying Report (see Regulation 8.3g of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis).

2.3 Paper and Layout

2.3.1 The thesis must be printed on white A4 size paper of good quality, between 70gsm and 100gsm weight.

2.3.2 Only one side of the paper should be used and the thesis should be bound so that text appears only on the right hand pages.

2.4 Font Size

2.4.1 Textual material should be printed in black ink only using a clear 11 point font (e.g. Arial) (i.e. the height of lower-case text should be around 2mm).

2.5 Spacing

2.5.1 Single spacing must be used for the thesis summary, indented quotations, footnotes, formulae and diagrams, and may be used in Appendices and References.

2.5.2 Double spacing or 1.5 spacing must be used for all other textual material throughout the thesis.
2.6 Margins

2.6.1 The margins of the thesis when bound should measure not less than 35mm at the binding edge (left-hand side) and not less than 15mm for the other margins.

2.7 Page Numbers and Footers

2.7.1 Every page of the thesis must be numbered consecutively from beginning to end, beginning with the title page and including pages of diagrams, photographs, and the appendices.

2.7.2 Roman numerals (i, ii, iii etc.) are not to be used.

2.7.3 The page numbers should be placed centrally at the top or the foot of each page, not in the margin. They do not need to be preceded by the word 'Page', e.g. Page 1 etc.

2.7.4 If the thesis occupies more than one volume, the second and subsequent volumes should begin with page 1 rather than continue the numbers from the preceding volume.

2.7.5 Every page of the final thesis submitted after the examination must also have a footer, in the format: initials, surname, abbreviation for degree, Thesis, Aston University, year thesis was submitted for examination (or re-examination, if applicable), e.g.


2.8 Figures

Figures, tables, diagrams etc. must be labelled and numbered separately. (See Regulation 3.6 below).

2.9 Length

2.9.1 Theses presented for the award of MSc/MA (by Research) should not normally exceed 30,000 words in length, excluding appendices.

2.9.2 Theses presented for the award of Doctor of Medicine (MD) should not normally exceed 50,000 words in length, excluding appendices.

2.9.3 MPhil or doctoral theses (apart from MD) should not normally exceed 80,000 words in length, excluding appendices. Theses for professional doctorates (e.g. DBA, DOptom) may be shorter than for a traditional PhD.

2.9.4 Theses that exceed the word limit will not normally be accepted for examination and any student who anticipates exceeding the word limit should seek the advice of their Supervisor before submitting the thesis.
3 CONTENT

3.1 Order of Items

The thesis must contain the following items in the order given (see below for more information on the items):

Title Page
Thesis Summary
Dedication (optional)
Acknowledgements (if appropriate)
List of Contents
List of Abbreviations (if applicable)
List of Tables, Figures etc.
Main Text of Thesis
List of References*
Appendices*

* If the Appendices are to be bound in a separate volume, then the list of references should be placed at the end of the volume which contains the main text of the thesis.

3.2 Title Page

The title page of every volume of the thesis must contain the following information:

• the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any), as agreed with the Supervisor;
• the volume number, if more than one volume will be submitted;
• the full name of the research student (must match the name the student has enrolled under on the University’s student records system);
• the degree, written in full, for which the student is enrolled (e.g. Doctor of Philosophy);
• the official title of the University ('Aston University');
• the month and year of first submission for examination or, if resubmitted, the month and year of resubmission for re-examination (i.e. not the month/year of the viva voce examination or award);
• the following copyright statement:

©full name of research student, year of submission (or resubmission for a re-examined thesis), e.g. ©Any Person, 2020
[full name of research student] asserts their moral right to be identified as the author of this thesis

“This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright belongs to its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without appropriate permission or acknowledgement.”

A sample title page is given at the end of these Regulations.
3.3 Thesis Summary

3.3.1 The thesis summary is a concise description of the work undertaken and should contain reference to the problem to be addressed, the approach taken, the key results and conclusion. It must be written in English, and printed in single spacing. All the information should be contained on one sheet of A4 paper unless the 3,000 word synopsis applies (see Regulation 3.3.3 below).

3.3.2 The summary must be headed 'Aston University', and give:
- the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any);
- the full name of the research student;
- the degree for which the student is enrolled;
- the year of submission or, if resubmitted, the year of resubmission.

3.3.3 The summary itself should not exceed 300 words, or 3,000 if the student has obtained permission to submit the thesis in a foreign language.

3.3.4 At the end of the summary there must be up to five key words or phrases (excluding those in the title) which can be used as index terms by the British Library for the national EThOS Service.

3.4 Acknowledgements

Any collaborative work must be clearly acknowledged by the student in a signed statement submitted with the thesis and this acknowledgment should be included with any others on this page.

3.5 List of Contents

3.5.1 All chapters, sections and relevant subdivisions of the thesis must be listed in the correct sequence, with page numbers.

3.5.2 If the thesis comprises more than one volume, the contents of the whole thesis must be listed in the first volume. Each subsequent volume must contain a list of its particular contents, with page numbers.

3.6 List of Tables, Figures, etc.

All tables, figures, photographs, diagrams etc. must be listed in the correct order in which they appear in the text (and Appendices), with page numbers.

3.7 Main Text of Thesis

3.7.1 The thesis must be divided as appropriate into chapters, sections and, if necessary, other sub-divisions. Each chapter must have a title and begin on a new page. Any system of headings or numbering of sections or sub-sections must be used consistently.

3.7.2 Every table, diagram or illustration must be clearly labelled and numbered. Wherever possible they should be placed near the text to which they relate.

3.7.3 Illustrations which cannot be reproduced digitally must be clearly labelled and numbered and either permanently bonded to the appropriate page of the thesis or enlarged to A4 size and bound into the thesis.
Students should remember that if they include colour photographs, or tables or diagrams using colour, the full meaning may be lost when they are reproduced in monochrome.

3.7.4 If abbreviations that are not commonly used are included in the thesis, the first use of the abbreviation should appear in brackets after the full wording. If many abbreviations are used, they should be included with their full wording in a list at the beginning of the thesis and be referenced in the List of Contents.

3.8 List of References

3.8.1 All published material referred to in the text of the thesis must be clearly identified.

3.8.2 The student must use a consistent system of notation and must provide sufficient information for future readers to identify the publication and locate the specific section referred to.

3.8.2.1 References to books should include the name of the author, the title of the book, the name of the publisher and year and place of publication.

3.8.2.2 References to articles in periodicals should include the name, with initials, of all the authors, the title of the contribution, the title of the publication, the volume number, number of first and last pages, and year of publication.

3.8.2.3 References to conference proceedings should include the name of the conference, the name(s) of any sponsoring bodies, the date when and place where the conference was held, the date and place of publication, the publisher, and the editor if applicable.

3.8.2.4 References to reports should include the series name and number where there is one.

3.8.2.5 References to publications available electronically should include the type of electronic medium (e.g. World Wide Web page), as many details of publication as are available and, where publication details are not clear, the date accessed and the internet location.

3.8.2.6 References to chapters in edited books should include the name of the author, year of publication, title of chapter, title of book, editor(s) of book, pages of chapter, name of publisher and year and place of publication.

3.8.2.7 References to working papers should include author, date (month and year) and publisher or equivalent.

3.9 Appendices

3.9.1 Any material which the student considers to be an important and relevant part of the argument in the thesis, but whose bulk would interrupt its flow (e.g. a list of published work), should appear as an Appendix.

3.9.2 The Appendices should not contain information which is already included in the main text of the thesis.

3.10 Additional Unbound Material, including Audio Visual Material

3.10.1 Whenever practicable, diagrams, maps, illustrations, computer printouts and tables must be bound into the thesis. Transcriptions of audio speech recordings should be included in the text of the thesis.
3.10.2 Additional unbound material, including audio-visual material, should be stored in Box prior to the examination. Details of the link to the Box folder should be submitted with the thesis and will be shared with the Examiners.

3.10.3 The Box folder must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, degree and date. All items in the Box folder must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item in the Box folder must match its number and description in the List of Contents.

3.10.4 After the examination, the same additional unbound material as was stored in Box for the Examiners should be stored on a USB stick and submitted with the print copy of the thesis. The USB stick will be forwarded to Library Services with the thesis.

3.10.5 The USB stick must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, abbreviation for degree (e.g. PhD), and date. All items on the USB stick must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item on the USB stick must match its number and description in the List of Contents.

3.11 Research Data

Research data (methods and results) are core to research should be managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University’s Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student’s sponsor. Raw data should not be submitted with the thesis but it must be made available, on request, to Supervisors and, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations, to Examiners.

4 SUBMISSION OF THESIS

4.1 Submission before Examination

4.1.1 The three copies of the thesis submitted before the examination should be soft-bound.

4.1.2 Soft-bound copies of the thesis should have an acetate or plain card front cover, a plain card rear cover, and a glued or spiral binding spine.

4.1.3 The soft-bound copies of the thesis must be accompanied by an electronic copy, saved as a single protected file. An electronic and a hard copy of the thesis will be sent to the External Examiner by the Graduate School Office.

4.1.4 The electronic copy of the thesis may be uploaded to plagiarism detection software and if the electronic format is not compatible, the student may be required to provide an alternative electronic copy of the thesis.

4.2 Submission after Examination

4.2.1 After the viva voce examination, the student must submit to the Graduate School Office one copy of the thesis, printed in the manner prescribed in Regulations 4.2.3 to 4.2.4 below, and an electronic copy, both of which must incorporate any revisions required by the Examiners.

4.2.2 The copies of the thesis must be accompanied by a signed statement from the Internal Examiner (or nominated External Examiner in the case of a staff candidate) certifying that
they are identical versions of the work assessed by the Examiners, except where revisions were made at their request.

4.2.3 Each print copy thesis will be A4 in size and must be loose bound in a manner specified by the Graduate School.

4.2.4 No single volume should exceed 400 pages.

4.2.5 One copy of any unbound material, including audio visual material, should be submitted with the thesis, presented as in Regulation 3.10.

4.2.6 The preferred format for the electronic copy is a single unprotected Portable Document Format Archivable (PDF/A) file; a single unprotected PDF file, or separate PDF files (e.g. for each chapter) will be acceptable, provided that the sequence is clear and the student accepts that the file will be joined together in a single PDF. The electronic copy will be accompanied by the Research Degree Deposit Agreement Form, signed by the student. This Form will be retained by Aston University’s Library Services.

4.2.7 The electronic copy must be clearly named with the student’s full name, Student Number, and year of submission or resubmission for examination.

4.2.8 Where a student who submitted for PhD is recommended for the award of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page, thesis summaries and the spine of the bound copies of the thesis.

5 RESUBMITTED THESSES

5.1 The above requirements apply equally to first submission and resubmission of the thesis, with one exception: where a student is required to resubmit a former PhD thesis for the degree of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page. The date the thesis was resubmitted for re-examination, not the date of the first submission, should be used, including in the copyright statement.
Appendix F: Aston Research Data Management Policy
Aston Research Data Management Policy

May 2020

This document sets out the policy for research data management for Aston University staff & students.

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Aston University Research Data Management Policy

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The maintenance of accurate and retrievable data arising from research projects is an essential component of good practice in the conduct of research and a key component of research integrity. While computers and memory sticks can be secured with encryption, regular backup and access to the latest version cannot be ensured. When data was recorded and altered needs to be transparent along with the ability to retrieve any data mistakenly deleted.

Opening up research data for scrutiny, to validate and replicate research or for re-use in further, possibly unrelated, research is a key component of Open Research.

The principles of Open Research Data are set out in the Concordat on Open Research Data of which UKRI (HEFCE and RCUK at the time), UUK and Wellcome Trust are all signatories. The principle that research data, arising from publicly funded research should be treated as a public good, is reflected in the policies and conditions of major public research funders. Open Research Data can only be delivered when the planning and management of research data takes account of that eventual outcome in earlier stages of the research lifecycle.

1.1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy covers Aston’s approach to Research Data management (including Open Data), as a critical output of the research process.

1.2. What is covered by the Policy

This policy covers the processes, arrangements and limitations for storing research data and (where appropriate) for making research data open either for re-use or in support of research publications to enable the validation of that research.

For the purposes of this policy, Research Data are defined as factual records, which may take the form of numbers, symbols, text, images or sounds, used as primary sources for research, and that are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to analyse and validate research findings. Data may comprise primary raw data or secondary analysed data.

Making data open is essential where there is a funder requirement for Open Research Data and its application may be extended to research data from non-funded research where there are no legal, commercial sensitivity or ethical barriers.

1.3. Who is Covered by the Policy

This policy applies to all researchers and research students at Aston University with regards to the management of data arising from their research, and to the roles of the various individuals or services that will support the management of research data during its lifecycle.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1. General data management

2.1.1. The principal investigator / supervisor should set up a folder on Box *(or an alternative Aston University Research Integrity Office approved data store) for each project where all data is to be stored ideally in real time. This cloud storage can allow access to data lost in the past 194 days. Secondary back-ups can be made on other devices. There is space on
Box for all research data including images/videos. Exceptions can be considered as part of the ethics and governance review procedures.

2.1.2. Consent forms should be scanned, stored in a separately pass-worded area of Box* and the originals destroyed.

2.1.3. Data storage should follow the duration approved as part of the ethics and governance review.

2.1.4. Each research student supervisory meeting record should include a commitment as to these regulations being followed.

2.2. What Research Data should or should not be made Open

2.2.1. Research data arising from research where the funder has a requirement for Open Research Data should be made Open in line with that funder’s requirements and with this policy.

2.2.2. Where research data underpins a research publication, then sufficient data to enable validation or replication of that research should be made Open subject to legal, commercial sensitivity and ethical constraints.

2.2.3. Research datasets with the potential for reuse in future research should be made Open subject to any legal, commercial sensitivity or ethical constraints.

2.2.4. Research data should NOT be made Open if:

i. it relates to research which is likely to be commercialised (i.e. a patent),

ii. it contains confidential or personal data,

iii. doing so would be an infringement of a legal agreement (e.g. with a funder or collaborator),

iv. or where there is a need to manage a security risk.

2.3. Where and how should Research Data be made Open

2.3.1. Data in datasets should be fully anonymised before being made Open. Note that fully anonymised data must no longer have any means of linking it back to the individual and is no longer classified as personal data;

2.3.2. Datasets should be identifiable (i.e. the sets, not any personal data), retrievable, and available when needed;

2.3.3. Datasets should be assigned a persistent Digital Object Identifier (DOI) which has been generated for that dataset;

2.3.4. Publications for which there is an underpinning dataset should have a Data Access Statement added prior to article submission. This should include the persistent DOI generated for the relevant dataset. Note that this is an essential requirement of some funders;

2.3.5. Data should be stored in a secure data repository suited to the data concerned; Aston Data Explorer is open to all datasets;

2.3.6. Any data which is retained outside Aston, for example in an international data service or domain repository, should be registered with the University by including the associated metadata and a link in Aston Data Explorer;

2.3.7. Sufficient metadata to describe the data and facilitate discovery should be provided in Aston Data Explorer (based on E-prints http://researchdata.aston.ac.uk/);

2.3.8. Links between publications records and related datasets records should be established.

2.4. Making Research Data Open with restrictions or an embargo

Where the type of data makes it necessary to limit or control access to a dataset a repository (such as Aston Data Explorer) should be selected which offers one of two options:
• Embargoed, for when research data can be Open after an initial embargo period has expired.

• Restricted, for data types which have ethical, commercial, copyright or IP issues where a decision has been made that the metadata for the dataset can be made public but access to the dataset only provided to users who make a request on the repository and provide sufficient justification.

2.5. Retention of Open Research Data

Datasets that have been made Open should be retained for a period which follows best practice in the discipline or in line with funder requirements. If none exists, data will be retained by default for a period of 10 years after which a review will take place to determine whether the data should be retained for a further period.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. The University is responsible for:
3.1.1. Providing access to services and facilities for the storage, backup, deposit and retention of research data and records that allow researchers to meet their requirements under this policy and those of the funders;
3.1.2. Facilitating access to training, support and advice on research data;
3.1.3. Providing the necessary resources to those central services responsible for the provision of these services, facilities and training.

3.2. Research Group Heads or Associate Deans for Research are responsible for:
3.2.1. Ensuring that researchers in their area are aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it;
3.2.2. Defining protocols or producing guidelines to assist researchers in their area to meet the requirements of this policy.

3.3. Principal Investigators are responsible for:
3.3.1. Ensuring, at the outset of a research project, a Data Management Plan is created which documents clear procedures for the collection, storage, use, re-use, access and retention or destruction of the research data;
3.3.2. Ensuring that throughout the project, storing, sharing and manipulation of data is in accordance with legal and ethical requirements and recommended practices to ensure data is kept secure, backed-up and organised effectively;
3.3.3. Ensuring that accurate and up to date data of all projects are stored in line with university’s policies so it is accessible after the completion of the research or in the event of their departure or retirement from the University;
3.3.4. Ensuring that any requirements in relation to research data and records management placed on their research by funding bodies or regulatory agencies or under the terms of a research contract with the University are also met;

4. SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

Advice on how to implement the requirements set out in this policy are available in the Research Data Management Libguide or by emailing researchdata@aston.ac.uk

5. DEFINITIONS

*Research Data:* are defined as factual records, which may take the form of numbers, symbols, text, images or sounds, used as primary sources for research, and that are commonly
accepted in the research community as necessary to validate research findings. Data may comprise primary raw data or secondary analysed data.

Open Research: **Open Research is the practice of researching in such a way that others can collaborate and contribute throughout the research process.** Open Research is not limited to STEM subjects; it encompasses all fields and stages of research with the goal of making the results Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR).

Open Research Data: Making your research data freely available to anyone, anywhere in the world and downloadable.

Metadata: Information held as a description of stored data.

DOI: Digital Object Identifier, a persistent identifier used to identify objects uniquely and standardised by the International Standards Organisation.

6. RELATED REGULATIONS, STATUTES AND POLICIES
   - Concordat on Open Research Data
   - Intellectual Property (IP)
   - Research Integrity
   - Ethics
   - Research Integrity Assurance Procedures
   - Open Access Policy and Code of practice
   - Data Protection Policies and Procedures
   - Records Management Policies and Procedures
   - Aston Data Explorer Governance Policy
Appendix 3: Learning Agreement

ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

LEARNING AGREEMENT

1. Introduction
This document forms an Agreement between a student and their Supervisor, setting out agreed responsibilities of each party. This document is intended to be personal to the relationship between a student and Supervisor and, as such, should be amended to the satisfaction of both. This should be done within one month of the student’s start date at a meeting involving the Supervisor, the student and the Associate Supervisor(s). Once completed, the original should be submitted to the PGR Progression Team and each party should retain a copy.

2. Student and Supervisor Details

(include name, email address, phone number and office location of staff members named)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Group:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Start Date: 1 October / 1 January / 1 April / 1 July Year: _______</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Registration: Full-time / Part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location: On campus / Off campus¹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree aimed for: MPhil / MD / PhD / DBA / DOptom / DOphSc / EdD / PharmD / D Hearing Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor:</td>
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<tr>
<td>External Contact (if appropriate):</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Associate Supervisor(s):</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Associate Director of Research for Research Area:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Postgraduate Research Tutor:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Training hours: 60 / 90 / Exempt / Other~* ______</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ Details of where and for what periods should be set out in a separate document which should be attached to this Agreement. Where the research environment, supervision or facilities are being provided by another organisation, the arrangements should be set out in a 3-way agreement between Aston University, the research student and the provider - please attach the agreement.
* Clarify details of the role of the Associate Supervisor(s) in the supervision of the student in Section 8.
** The Associate Director of Research may be approached for academic advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the Supervisor.
~ The Postgraduate Research Tutor is a source of independent advice if the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well.
~* Please note exemption from the mandatory skills training is rare or not permitted at all. Requests are considered on a case by case basis by the Director of Research Degree Programmes.
3. **Research Aims and Objectives**

   a. Synopsis of research project and overall aims

   b. Objectives of research project for first year (full-time students) or first two years (part-time students), including: literature review; experiments; laboratory practices; laboratory books.

   c. Expectations for pattern of study (taking account of full- or part-time status), including attendance at the University (e.g. in laboratories) and engagement in relevant research activities (e.g. seminar programmes, research in progress meetings), noting that a part-time student is expected to pursue research for the equivalent of not more than 24 weeks per year (Regulation 4.2).
4. **Ownership**  
Discussion of the ownership of any work which the student undertakes.

*Note:*  
Intellectual Property (IP) is the term given to outputs of intellectual and creative endeavour including patents, copyright, design rights, trademarks, database rights, plant variety rights etc.

If you are involved in any new discovery or invention you should notify your Aston Supervisor. **You must not publicise the discovery to anyone else, under any circumstances, in any way, until any required legal protection is in place.** Potential patent rights can be destroyed by disclosure of an invention before a patent application is filed.

Research Students: IP created in connection with your research will be owned by the University. Other Students: In most cases, the University will not claim ownership of IP created by you during your time at Aston. Exceptions apply to IP created jointly with a member of staff, research student, or other external persons, such as emeritus professors, visiting academics, and contractors. Note that, although not claimed by Aston, IP created on an industrial placement will probably belong to your employer as part of a placement or employment agreement.

In cases where the University claims ownership of IP, it will share any net income with staff and students in accordance with the IP Policy in force at the time.

5. **Extract from the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degrees (AU-GSMC-19-2763-A):**

5.1 **Responsibilities of supervisors**

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

(a) introducing the research student to the research environment, its facilities and operational procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;

(b) providing satisfactory, accurate and ongoing guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of additional Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial as the student’s research progresses;

(c) being responsible for monitoring the student’s progress, mindful of the timing of the student’s progression points and thesis submission date;

(d) establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student (normally at least every two weeks), and including structured interactions at least every 3 months to discuss and agree progress, and to report it formally (Regulation 8.1);

(e) ensuring their reasonable accessibility to the student at other appropriate times when the student needs advice;

(f) having input into the assessment of a student’s development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning;

(g) providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student’s work, including their overall progress;
ensuring that the student is made aware of lack of satisfactory progress on the research programme and the implications of this for the student;

(i) ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct their research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct (set out in detail in the University’s Research Integrity Assurance Procedures), including plagiarism;

(j) providing guidance on the maintenance of research records applicable to the nature of the research;

(k) providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support, including student advisers, Graduate School staff, the Postgraduate Research Tutor and, where appropriate, support for mental health and well-being;

(l) helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking funding for such events, or in potential career pathways; and where appropriate, giving encouragement and guidance on the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals;

(m) maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform the role of Supervisor satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

5.2 Responsibilities of research students

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their theses within the periods of study as prescribed in Regulations for their particular degrees.

Students are also responsible for:

(a) taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor or the Graduate School Office;

(b) ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with: University Regulations and College guidelines and procedures relating to their degree; relevant Codes of Practice and other University and College requirements (including health and safety advice, intellectual property and ethical research); the monitoring of progress; and terms of any sponsorship;

(c) 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;

(d) ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University’s requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress;

(e) discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings for which they adequately prepare;

(f) maintaining regular contact, normally at least every two weeks, with their Supervisor and initiating supervisory meetings where necessary;

(g) in conjunction with their Supervisor and informed by the Vitae Researcher Development Statement (provided as an Appendix to the Student Handbook), identifying their training needs and attending training on research methods and other relevant topics, including personal and skills development opportunities;

(h) maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;

(i) deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of research and before the end of the maximum period of research specified in the Regulations), taking account of the Supervisor's opinion;
(j) ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor’s responsibilities (see section 5.1 above);

(k) advising their Supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances or concerns likely to affect their work;

(l) where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;

(m) seeking advice from an International Advisor in The Hub if they have any queries about their student visa or immigration status (international students only).

6. **Key Documentation and Other Useful Information**

Discussion of relevant documentation and other useful information, as detailed below, and confirmation that the student has, or knows how to access, further details:

- Code of Practice for Research Degrees, including appendices, i.e. Research Integrity Policy; Research Integrity Assurance Procedures; Conduct of the *viva voce* examination; University Research Data Management Policy *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 2 and available on MAP homepage and the Graduate School webpage)*

- General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis *(in Code of Practice for Research Degrees, Appendix D and available on MAP homepage and the Graduate School webpage)*

- General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses *(in Code of Practice for Research Degrees, Appendix E and available on MAP homepage and the Graduate School webpage)*

- Key milestones to completion for a full-time student with the qualification aim of PhD *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 11)*

- Record of Supervisory Meeting Form *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 5)*

- Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 6)*

- Presentation Feedback Form (for second year progression task) *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 4)*

- Empirical Chapter of Thesis Feedback Form (for second year progression task) *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 4)*

- Policy on Teaching Hours *(in Student Handbook, Appendix 8)*

- Intellectual Property (IP) Policy

- College Health and Safety Policy Document

- Health and Safety information specific to student’s research environment (if relevant)

- Academic Appeals Procedure

- Student Complaints Procedure

- Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme *(in Student Handbook, Section 2.4.3)*

- Requirement to re-apply for ATAS certificate if the original research project brief changes significantly at any time during the research programme *(international students in EPS and HLS only - in Student Handbook, Section 3.13)*

- Access to funding for conferences or other development opportunities *(in Student Handbook, Section 3.28)*

- Circumstances that may necessitate a leave of absence (e.g. ill-health) to be raised in a timely manner *(in Student Handbook)*

- Consideration of any English language support required (CELCA) *(in Student Handbook, Section 3.26.4)*

7. **Skills Training**

All students on campus must normally attend:

- a health and safety course as soon as possible after enrolment;
- a teaching skills course prior to undertaking any teaching or demonstrating in the College (sessions on teaching and assessment are offered via the Education Team).
The student and Supervisor should discuss other courses/seminars/conference sessions that will meet the professional and personal development needs of the student and contribute towards the regulatory requirement to undertake appropriate skills training during the research programme (60 hours for MD or MPhil/90 hours for PhD, with up to 150 hours encouraged).

The choice of the remaining training to be undertaken should be agreed between the Supervisor and the student, noting that not all of the hours need to be agreed at the initial meeting and that the student’s development needs should be reviewed at least annually. A Training Needs Analysis form is appended to this Agreement to aid the discussion and to record decisions. The training and development activities that can count towards the skills training hours are:

- Internal courses and workshops offered by Departments represented in the Graduate Development Team and offered through the course booking system;
- Internal courses and seminars offered by the College;
- Poster presentations at conferences, seminars or poster competitions (10 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 5 hours for University events);
- Oral presentations at conferences/seminars (15 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 8 hours for University events);
- External workshop requiring active participation: 5 hours;
- Aston (University-wide) 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition: 5 hours for participation; 1 hour for attendance (once per year)
- Attendance at ‘Lunch with Professor/Doctor X’ lecture series: 1 hour (maximum 3 hours per year)

The student should keep a record of the skills training undertaken on MAP (My Research Training and Development task) and this will be reviewed by the Supervisor and student at the time of the Annual Progress Report. Details of the training recorded in MAP, including any future courses to reflect discussion of training needs at annual review, will then be recorded with the Annual Progress Report.

A full list of the research skills training hours will need to be submitted with the thesis for forwarding to the Examiners. A list of completed training can be printed from MAP.

8. **Role of Associate Supervisor(s)**

Detail the role of the Associate Supervisor(s) in the supervision of the student:
9. **Declaration by the Student**
I have read and agree with the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degrees and the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. I have discussed the recommended skills training with my Supervisor(s) and completed a Training Needs Analysis form which will be subject to annual review. I have read the School Health and Safety Policy Document and have been advised of any particular hazards and precautions associated with my research area. I understand that I must not undertake any teaching without the prior agreement of my Supervisor. I am satisfied with both my responsibilities and those of my Supervisor as outlined above.

………………………………………   …………………………..
Signature of Student   Date

10. **Declaration by the Supervisor and Associate Supervisor(s)**
We have met with the above-named student, discussed with them the roles of the Supervisor and Associate Supervisor(s)/External Contact and made recommendations for skills training which are recorded on the appended Training Needs Analysis form and will be subject to annual review. The student is familiar with the requirements of the College Health and Safety Policy and of any particular health and safety issues associated with the research area. We are satisfied with our responsibilities and those of the student as outlined above.

………………………………………..  ……………………………..
Signature of Internal Supervisor  Date

………………………………………..  ……………………………..
Signature of Associate Supervisor  Date

When completed, the Supervisor, Associate Supervisor(s) and student should each have a copy of this form and the Supervisor should then pass the original to the PGR Progression Team within two months of the student’s enrolment.
Appendix 3a: Training Needs Analysis

ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Training Needs Analysis for Research Student [insert your name]:

To ensure satisfactory progress through your research degree, and in terms of your future career and employability, it is important that you consider what skills you need to develop and plan how this might be achieved over the duration of your research degree programme.

The training needs analysis is conducted against the national Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) which is endorsed by the Research Councils and other research funders. Split into four key skills 'domains', the RDF articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. Development in many areas of the domains is achieved directly as a consequence of studying for a research degree, but other skills can be developed by attending or participating in other activities.

Many development opportunities available to research students are offered locally within the research group at School level, and at institutional level. Students are also encouraged to explore broader development activities away from campus, such as participation in conferences, use of on-line training resources, external courses offered through Vitae and opportunities available with employers (part time students). These off-campus activities will be particularly beneficial to distance learners and part-time students.

The skills domains contained in the Researcher Development Framework have been listed in the tables below and all development activities (internal or external to Aston) should be recorded through the My Research Training and Development task on MAP. Some of the professional development opportunities available through the Graduate School Training Programme, and the corresponding skills domain to which they relate, are also listed below. This list is not exhaustive and represents some of the opportunities available on campus, and to distance learners.

If you are interested in undertaking teaching or demonstrating, this should be discussed with your Supervisor alongside your other training needs (see also Appendix 8: Policy on Teaching Hours).

All students are expected to undertake training in ethics, avoiding plagiarism, intellectual property and research integrity (Skills Domain C). Ethics training will be offered through your College. For students in the College of Business & Social Sciences, these topics are covered on the Social Sciences Research Training Course or, for DBA students, on the Research Methods Programme; for students in the Colleges of Engineering & Physical Sciences and Health & Life Sciences, these are covered on the Research Skills and Professional Development Modules respectively. For other development opportunities, see the Graduate School Training Programme.

All training needs should be reviewed at least annually.
Skills domain A - Knowledge and intellectual abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe area for development</th>
<th>Specific development activity</th>
<th>Date to be completed</th>
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Skills domain B – Personal effectiveness
Enthusiasm, Perseverance, Integrity, Self-confidence, Self-reflection, Responsibility, Preparation and prioritisation, Commitment to research, Time management, Responsiveness to change, Work-life balance, Career management, Continuing professional development, Responsiveness to opportunities, Networking, Reputation and esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe area for development</th>
<th>Specific development activity</th>
<th>Date to be completed</th>
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Skills domain C - Research governance and organisation
Health and safety, Ethics, principles and sustainability, Legal requirements, IPR and copyright, Respect and confidentiality, Attribution and co-authorship, Appropriate practice, Research strategy, Project planning and delivery, Risk management, Income and funding generation, Financial management, Infrastructure and resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe area for development</th>
<th>Specific development activity</th>
<th>Date to be completed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Property</td>
<td>For students in the College of Business &amp; School Sciences, these topics are covered on the Social Sciences Research Training Course or, for DBA students, on the Research Methods Programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding Plagiarism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Integrity</td>
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</table>
For students in the Colleges of Engineering & Physical Sciences (PAS) and Health & Life Sciences (HLS), these are covered on the Research Skills (EPS) and Postgraduate Professional Development (HLS) Modules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills domain D - Engagement, influence and impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegiality, Team working, People management, Supervision, Mentoring, Influence and leadership, Collaboration, Equality and diversity, Communication methods, Communication media, Publication, Teaching, Public engagement, Enterprise, Policy, Society and culture, Global citizenship</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Describe area for development</th>
<th>Specific development activity</th>
<th>Date to be completed</th>
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Signed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Supervisor:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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</table>
Graduate School Training Programme courses, workshops and resources (subject to availability). Visit the course directory to book a place on a course (through the Aston Staff Portal) or follow the links below to access on-line learning material. Please note that additional workshops may be included in the training programme throughout the year and you will be informed about these via email.

**Skills domain A - Knowledge and intellectual abilities**

- Refined Literature Searching – Research Bite *(recorded) (1 hour)*
- Conducting A Literature Review *(2 hours)* [included in the EPS Research Skills and HLS Postgraduate Professional Development Modules]
- Cite it! Sort it! EndNote it! – Research Bite *(recorded) (0.75 hour)*
- Grey Literature – Research Bite *(recorded) (0.5 hour)*
- Navigating the Scientific Literature *(2 hours)*
- Managing the Scientific Literature *(2 hours)*
- Box Cloud Storage: An Introduction *(1.5 hours)*
- Designing Questionnaires and Surveys: An Introduction *(3 hours)*
- Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviews *(2 hours)*
- Qualitative Research Interviewing: Developing your Practice *(2 hours)*
- Graduate School Induction *(3 hours)*
- EndNote® bibliographic software *(3 hours)*
- EndNote – online resource
- Microsoft® Excel Intermediate *(3 hours)*
- Microsoft® Powerpoint Advanced *(3 hours)*
- Microsoft® Word for Researchers *(3 hours)*
- NVivo – an introduction *(recorded) (1 hour)*

*Additional IT Training material is available on the intranet at [http://www.aston.ac.uk/ict/staffguide/it-training/support/](http://www.aston.ac.uk/ict/staffguide/it-training/support/)*

- Reading & Note-making for Academic Purposes *(2 hours)*
- Running Focus Groups *(2 hours)*

**Skills domain B – Personal effectiveness**

- Careers and Personal Development Planning – online resource.
- Introduction to Career Management for Research Students – Research Bite *(recorded) (1 hour)*
- Managing your Time Effectively *(2 hours)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting and Managing your PhD [included in the EPS Research Skills and HLS Postgraduate Professional Development Modules]</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Retreat</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Doctorate – online video resource</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Supervision – online video resource</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘What Next’ – online video resource</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skills domain C - Research governance and organisation**

- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Confident about Copyright
- Ethics
- Research Integrity

*For students in the College of Business & Social Sciences, these topics are covered on the Social Sciences Research Training Course or, for DBA students, on the Research Methods Programme.
*For students in the Colleges of Engineering & Physical Science (EPS) and Health & Life Sciences (HLS), these are covered on the Research Skills (EPS) and Postgraduate Professional Development (HLS) Modules.

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Project Management [included in the EAS Research Skills and LHS Professional Development Modules]</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics and Code of Practice on Publishing in Journals – Research Bite [recorded]</td>
<td>0.75 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Commercialisation and Intellectual Property Rights</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Data Management and Open Access Publishing</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice – offered through the Education Team</td>
<td>3 days, scheduled over a period of 3-4 weeks</td>
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</table>

**Skills domain D - Engagement, influence and impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being an Effective Member of a Research Team [included in the EPS Research Skills and HLS Postgraduate Professional Development Modules]</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measuring Research Impact: bibliometrics &amp; what they can do for you – Research Bite [recorded]</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrating in computer laboratories (EAS)</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrating in laboratories (EPS)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching/Assessment and Demonstrating in laboratories (HLS)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Skills for New Researchers [included in the EPS Research Skills and HLS Postgraduate Professional Development Modules]</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Science – Research Bite [recorded]</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Presentation – online video resource</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<td>Training Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Upgrade – online video resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Good Viva – online video resource</td>
<td>0.5 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viva Preparation and Presentation (Qualifying Report)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<td>Viva Preparation and Presentation (final year)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing for Publication</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing your Thesis</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing your Qualifying Report</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing your Three Minute Thesis Presentation</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attracting funding: Writing and applying for postdoc fellowships</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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**Cross-domain**

**EPS Research Skills and HLS Postgraduate Professional Development Modules**

Offered as a 3-day intensive course, including: Starting and Managing Your Doctorate; Conducting A Literature Review; Presentation Skills for New Researchers; Introduction to Project Management; Academic Writing.
Appendix 4: Second Year Full-Time/Fourth Year Part-Time Progression Task Feedback Forms

**ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL**
Presentation Feedback Form

Name of Presenter: __________________________________________________________

Title of Presentation: _______________________________________________________

Date of Presentation: ____________________ Forum: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General comments</th>
<th>Key strengths</th>
<th>Suggestions for improvement</th>
<th>Excellent/Very Good/Good/Average/Poor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure - clearly defined introduction, including aims / objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content - including appropriateness for audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation delivery and coherence – Pace, engagement with audience, use of visual aids</td>
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<td>Critique of subject</td>
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<td>Conclusions - clearly signposted and coherent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handling of questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Summary</td>
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Name of assessor providing feedback: ______________________________________ Date: __________

**** In accordance with Regulation 8.5 ‘The student should also write a brief report on what they have gained from the task.’ This should take account of the experience and any outcomes, including the feedback provided above, and be submitted to the Supervisor for discussion at your next supervisory meeting. ****
Second Year Full-Time/Fourth Year Part-Time Progression Task
Empirical Thesis Chapter Feedback Form

The empirical thesis chapter should be accompanied by a short supporting document (c200 words) which outlines where and how the chapter fits into the overall thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale 1-5 (1-Excellent, 5-Poor)</th>
<th>General comments and suggestions for areas of improvement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem is clearly articulated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objectives are identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology – appropriate/justified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data – relevant and valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis – appropriate, logical, evidence based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation – meaningful, related to objective/s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for thesis – contribution to and location within overall research objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for research – academic and to business (if appropriate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next steps – how this informs subsequent phases of analysis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Presentation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of chapter – flow and structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication – readability and grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall – clear and logical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Any Other Comments**

Student Name:
Supervisor(s):
Signed:
Name:
Date:
## Second Year Full-Time/Fourth Year Part-Time Progression Task
### Written Paper Feedback Form

**Name of Student:**

**Title of Paper:**

**Date of Submission:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating in each category (highlight the most appropriate bullet point)</th>
<th>Specific comments / points to note / suggestions for improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Quality of contribution to the field              | • Excellent; original & innovative contribution  
• Good work, with innovative elements  
• Adequate quality but little originality / innovation  
• Largely insignificant contribution  
• Questionable work                                                                                 |                                                                  |
| Significance for theory and/or practice            | • Very significant  
• Significant  
• Potentially significant contribution, after further development  
• Relatively low significance  
• Marginal or no significance                                                                         |                                                                  |
| Research design and methodology                   | • Sophisticated design; rigorous methodology  
• Appropriate design; well executed methodology  
• Some areas for improvement in design or methods used  
• Poor design; inappropriate approach and/or serious methodological flaws  
• Insufficient information to judge                                                                   |                                                                  |
| Knowledge of the field                            | • In-depth and up-to-date  
• Good use of literature  
• Adequate use of literature, but some gaps in expected references  
• Lacks coherent knowledge of the field                                                              |                                                                  |
| Organisation, structure, and clarity               | • Excellent writing; well structured, future development made clear  
• Well written and structured, adequate                                                                |                                                                  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indication of future development</th>
<th>Overall rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Adequate standard of writing but scope for improvement; development needs more explanation</td>
<td>• Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs significant revision; insufficient detail of development plan</td>
<td>• Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Major revision required, including narrative structure and quality of writing</td>
<td>• Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not acceptable</td>
<td>• Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of the two assessors providing feedback:
(usually main supervisor & previous other assessor of Qualifying Report)

NB: A copy of the student’s paper with the associated ‘tracked changes and comments’ (or equivalent specific feedback provided to the student on the manuscript) must be returned with this assessment form

1. ___________________________________________ Date: 

2. ___________________________________________ Date: 

"In accordance with Regulation 8.5 ‘The student should also write a brief report on what they have gained from the task.’ This should take account of the experience and any outcomes, including the feedback provided above, and be submitted to the Supervisor for discussion at your next supervisory meeting."
Appendix 5: Record of Supervisory Meeting Form

This form has been designed to assist in maintaining a record of formal meetings between research students and their Supervisors. A formal meeting is a meeting where progress is carefully considered and reviewed. These meetings should occur at least once every three months throughout the research degree; the frequency of other supervisory meetings should be agreed with your supervisory team. Except where indicated otherwise on the form, the form should be completed by the student and be signed by both the student and the Supervisors. Students may use the completed form as part of the personal management aspect of their research planning.

A copy of the completed meeting record should be submitted* at least every 3 months and within 10 days of the date of the meeting. Three 3-monthly reports will form part of the Annual Progress Report form for the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th>Supervisor:</th>
<th>Associate Supervisor(s):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Meeting:</td>
<td>Time From:</td>
<td>Time To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thesis Working Title:

Prior to this meeting, did the student submit to the Supervisor a report outlining progress since the last meeting, detailing developments in experimental work and/or methods (e.g. results)?

YES – copy attached  NO – please explain:

Points Raised/Discussed:
(this should not be limited to discussion of the research project. At appropriate stages, topics may include: career aspirations and development; publishing opportunities; and project management)

Proposed Action by Student:

Proposed Action by Main Supervisor:

Proposed Action by Associate Supervisor(s):
Agenda Items for Next Supervisory Meeting:

Time and Date of Next Planned Meeting:

SUPERVISOR TO COMPLETE*

The student’s progress since the last formal meeting has been *(please indicate)*:

- Satisfactory
- Satisfactory, but with reservations - please explain below
- Unsatisfactory - please explain below

**Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)** *(international students in EPS and HLS only)*

You will need to apply for a new ATAS certificate if the research project brief changes from that originally, or most recently, submitted. *In submitting this form, you are confirming that you have reviewed the project brief submitted for your current ATAS certificate to ensure that the brief has not changed.* If at any time during your research programme there is a change that is so significant that it results in a change of direction relating to the research, your Supervisor should provide the PGR Administration Team with a new project proposal so that you can re-apply for an ATAS. You must re-apply for your ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.

If you need more time to complete your research degree programme and the end date of your project is postponed for a period of more than three calendar months, then you must re-apply for an ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.

If there is any doubt as to whether the change is significant, a new ATAS should be applied for. Please note that this is a free application process and only takes a few weeks. More information about ATAS is available at [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme).

**Research Data Management Policy**

We confirm that research data (methods and results) associated with the research being undertaken is being managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student’s sponsor (if applicable).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor’s Signature</th>
<th>Student’s Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date signed:</td>
<td>Date signed:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associate Supervisor’s Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date signed:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*When signed by all parties, one of the following actions should be taken:

1. If the student’s progress is ‘Satisfactory’, the student should upload the signed form to the Research area on their MAP Homepage.
2. If the student’s progress is ‘Satisfactory with reservations’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’, the Supervisor should forward the signed form to the PGR Progression Team for consideration by the Associate Dean Research. The form will be uploaded to the student’s Research area on their MAP Homepage by the PGR Progression Team in due course.

SAS/Graduate School/AJB/September 2020
Appendix 6: Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report

ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Requirements for Qualifying Report

Students and Supervisors should also refer to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, specifically the section on Qualifying Reports (Regulation 8.3), noting that the College’s Research Committee may have specified a minimum length of more than 6,000 words and/or a maximum word length.

The Qualifying Report should show evidence that the student has:

- read widely around the subject area
- identified the scope and aims of their research
- gained a detailed knowledge of previous work of direct relevance to their own research
- understood the implications of previous work for their own research
- planned and designed appropriate research work for the remaining years of study
- considered ethical issues surrounding their proposed research
- undertaken a risk assessment, and carried out relevant risk-management practices
- demonstrated necessary practical skills or identified how and when these will be achieved
- sourced any participants / animal subjects / samples etc necessary to undertake their research
- appropriately acknowledged and referenced original sources and secondary literature
- demonstrated the writing skills necessary to author a clear, concise and well-written thesis
- considered the pace at which work must be completed in order to submit their thesis on time
- the ability to fulfil the requirements of a doctorate (a substantial original contribution to knowledge) or an MPhil (a contribution to knowledge).

The piece of written work submitted should demonstrate the student’s theoretical and methodological competence. The elements of the report may or may not constitute chapters of the thesis but should in all cases provide:

- an overview of the main problem to be studied
- an overview of the principal literature or other context for the research
- a detailed account of the work already carried out
- a general strategy for future work, including a work plan and details about ethics submission/approval where relevant
- a timetable for the remaining work envisaged
- a provisional table of contents for the final thesis.
The report should include both theoretical and empirical work. Theoretical work might include a literature review, theoretical analysis and a statement of main research objectives, methods and anticipated outcomes. Experimental work would normally be expected to include the report from one study. In cases where this work is not expected at this point, the chapter could include a report of preparatory work, ongoing empirical work, or pilot studies.

The student should submit the Qualifying Report to the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk) within 10 months (if full-time) or 20 months (if part-time) of the research start date. The Supervisor will meet with the student to provide structured written feedback on the Qualifying Report in the form of a brief report. The submitted Qualifying Report, without further amendment, and the Supervisor’s structured feedback report will then be submitted to an independent examining panel (Regulation 8.3(b) of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis).

A plan for achieving submission of the thesis at the end of the standard duration of the doctoral degree, indicating that all research work will have been completed by then (i.e. by the end of three full-time years for PhD or professional doctorate), should be provided as an appendix to the Qualifying Report.
Appendix 7: Supervisor’s Assessment of the Qualifying Report and Qualifying Research Period

Every research student is required to submit a written report of at least 6,000 words, or as specified by the College Research Committee, on their research work to date by the end of the 10th month (full-time students) or 20th month (part-time students).

The General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (Regulation 8.3b) require that the student’s Supervisor meet with the student to provide structured written feedback on the student’s Qualifying Report in the form of a brief report. A structure for your Assessment Report is provided below; if there is insufficient space to provide your comments on this form, please submit your Report separately, using the same headings as given below. You should provide the student with a copy of your Report and send a copy to the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk), together with an updated Training Needs Analysis, following discussion with the student.

Your Assessment Report, including attachments, will then be forwarded by the PGR Progression Team to an independent examining panel along with the student’s original Qualifying Report. The examining panel must hold a viva voce examination within two months of the Qualifying Report being submitted, and in sufficient time to allow the progression decision to be communicated by the end of the 12th month (full-time students) or 24th month (part-time students). The examining panel will be comprised of two members of Academic Staff, one of whom will be designated to chair the meeting. The panel members should not have a supervisory role in respect of the student being examined, should have a minimum of three successful doctoral supervisions between them, and at least one panel member will be familiar with the subject area (Regulation 8.3b).

Either the Supervisor, or an Associate Supervisor nominated by the Supervisor to attend in his or her place, should attend the viva voce as an observer and the student will have the opportunity to meet with the panel without any member of the supervisory team being present.

As supervisor you are responsible for nominating the examining panel and confirming details of the date, time and location of the viva voce examination to the student and examining panel. Your Assessment Report must be submitted to the PGR Progression Team at least one week before the date scheduled for the viva voce examination.

| Name of Student: |  |
| Name of Supervisor: |  |
| Date of Supervisor’s Assessment: |  |
| Name(s) of Associate Supervisor(s): |  |
| Updated Training Needs Analysis attached? |  |
| Plan for timely submission of thesis attached? |  |
| Total Skills Training Hours Requirement | 90 / 60 / Exempt / Other ____ (please indicate) |
| Nominees for examining panel: |  |
| - Head of Research Group or nominee (chair) |  |
| - Other member of academic staff |  |
A. Frequency of Supervision

(i) How frequent are face-to-face supervisory meetings or, in the case of part-time students or those based off-campus, how frequently are there structured interactions (e.g. by email, Skype)?

(ii) Have any difficulties in providing supervision been experienced, e.g. failure to arrange/attend meetings, inadequate preparation)?

B. Research Student Training and Engagement

To be completed with reference to the Training Needs Analysis Form. The student should be able to provide you with a copy of all research skills hours you have approved printed from the MAP Research Engagement task.

(i) Have the training needs discussed and agreed for completion within the first year been completed?

(ii) Number of skills hours completed in this 12-month period __________

Section 3.5 of the Student Handbook provides information concerning training and development activities that can count towards these hours

(iii) Have training needs for the forthcoming 12 months been agreed?

(iv) To what extent has the student engaged with the wider research environment, e.g. literature reviews, research seminars, conferences, posters?

C. Programme of Research

The piece of written work submitted should demonstrate the student’s theoretical and methodological competence. The elements of the report may or may not constitute chapters of the thesis but should in all cases provide:

- an overview of the main problem to be studied
- an overview of the principal literature or other context for the research
- a detailed account of the work already carried out
- a general strategy for future work, including a work plan and details about ethics submission/approval where relevant
- a timetable for the remaining work envisaged
- a provisional table of contents for the final thesis.
The report should include both theoretical and empirical work. Theoretical work might include a literature review, theoretical analysis and a statement of main research objectives, methods and anticipated outcomes. Experimental work would normally be expected to include the report from one study. In cases where this work is not expected at this point, the chapter could include a report of preparatory work, ongoing empirical work, or pilot studies.

Does the student’s Qualifying Report demonstrate that they have (please indicate by ticking the box and, where appropriate, comment separately on points not addressed):

- read widely around the subject area
- identified the scope and aims of their research
- gained a detailed knowledge of previous work of direct relevance to their own research
- understood the implications of previous work for their own research
- planned and designed appropriate research work for the remaining years of study
- considered ethical issues surrounding their proposed research
- undertaken a risk assessment, and carried out relevant risk-management practices
- demonstrated necessary practical skills or identified how and when these will be achieved
- sourced any participants / animal subjects / samples etc necessary to undertake their research
- appropriately acknowledged and referenced original sources and secondary literature
- demonstrated the writing skills necessary to author a clear, concise and well-written thesis
- considered the pace at which work must be completed in order to submit their thesis on time
- the ability to fulfil the requirements of a doctorate (a substantial original contribution to knowledge) or an MPhil (a contribution to knowledge).

Please add further comments below, using additional pages if necessary. You may wish to indicate lines of questioning for the assessing panel to explore with the student, at the panel’s discretion:
D. Progression

(i) Are there any factors that may delay the student’s academic progress, e.g. availability of resources, including supervision, personal, health or financial problems, aptitude, ability?

(ii) When do you anticipate that the thesis will be submitted? [A plan for achieving submission of the thesis at the end of the standard duration of the doctoral degree, indicating that all research work will have been completed by then (i.e. by the end of three full-time years for PhD or professional doctorate), should be attached.]

E. Overall Assessment

Please indicate (tick box) the extent to which you are satisfied with the student’s academic progress towards achieving the qualification aimed for within the appropriate timescale:

- completely satisfied
- satisfied with reservations (these should be indicated elsewhere in the report)
- not satisfied (for reasons indicated elsewhere in the report)

By signing below, you are also confirming that you have reviewed the Turnitin™ Originality Report for the student’s Qualifying Report and have commented on any issues arising in this report (the Turnitin™ Originality Report itself should not be forwarded to the assessing panel).

 Supervisor’s Signature     Date

****************************************************************************************************************

The Supervisor should provide the student with a copy of their completed Assessment Report.

A copy should also be forwarded to the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk).

The Supervisor’s Assessment Report and the student’s Qualifying Report will be forwarded by the PGR Progression Team to the independent examining panel together with the completed Training Needs Analysis and Plan for timely submission of thesis.
Appendix 8: Policy on Teaching Hours

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

GRADUATE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

POLICY ON RESEARCH STUDENT TEACHING HOURS

The Graduate School Management Committee has approved the following recommendations in respect of teaching hours undertaken by research students across the University.

The policy does not apply to members of Aston University staff who are contracted to deliver teaching and are also following an Aston University research degree; it is expected that the dual commitment will have been discussed with appropriate colleagues prior to embarking on the research degree.

Schools are responsible for implementing the policy:

1. A student’s interest in undertaking teaching should be discussed with their Supervisor when the Training Needs Analysis form is completed, and subsequently be reviewed annually;
2. Research students should have the agreement of their main Supervisor before agreeing to any teaching commitments. A form confirming Supervisor approval should be presented to the ‘recruiting’ member of academic staff - Postgraduate Casual Work Forms are available from the Graduate School Office;
3. Research students should undertake a maximum of 6 hours teaching in any given week, to include preparation, contact and assessment time;
4. Research students should be provided with a breakdown detailing how the number of teaching hours is arrived at, i.e. identifying time allocated for preparation, contact and assessment, noting that this may differ according to the type of provision to be undertaken and the year of study the student is in;
5. Research students will not normally be expected to lecture until their third full-time year of research, and not before their second full-time year of research;
6. In accordance with the University’s Policy for Required Development Activity for those Engaged in Learning and Teaching (AU-LTC-18-1395-A):
   - Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to undertake:
     - the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert) delivered by the Education Team;
     - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity (not necessary while undertaking the PGCert);
     - peer observation.
   - postgraduate research students who deliver four or more sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake:
     - the Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice (20-credit, level 6 module) delivered by the Education Team;
     - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity;
     - peer observation.
   - postgraduate research students who deliver fewer than four sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake peer observation, and are encouraged and supported to undertake Continuing Professional Development activity;
7. Module Leaders are responsible for the academic leadership and management of modules, which includes providing advice and support to all staff contributing to their module (as detailed in the Module Leader Role Descriptor, AU-ELTC-17-1000-D).
8. Any research student scheme involving a stipend/payment of tuition fees should be at the same level as Research Council studentships, with additional recompense included if teaching hours
are a requirement of the scheme. Such students are not employed by the University; the recompense for required teaching is part of their student bursary/stipend;

9. Where teaching hours are not a requirement of the funding scheme, research students will be paid the rate of pay appropriate for the type of teaching undertaken, e.g. demonstrating, tutorials. Such students are not employed by the University; they are engaged as casual workers;

10. HR approved rates of pay are:

- A multiplier of 2.5 should be used for lectures. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another 1.5 hours of preparation is needed. This applies to all lectures other than those for which an exception has been agreed via Graduate School Management Committee (in consultation with HR). This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 2 paid lectures (5 hours with preparation time) per week;

- A multiplier of 1.5 should be used for tutorials, seminars and laboratory sessions. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another half hour of preparation is needed. This applies to all sessions other than those for which an exception has been agreed. This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 4 such sessions (6 hours with preparation time) per week. For laboratory sessions where the preparation is required at the beginning of the module, rather than before each session, payment will be made for an agreed number of preparation hours and the multiplier of 1.5 will not apply (approved by Graduate School Management Committee, Minute 17/114, and confirmed with HR).

11. The only circumstances in which a research student might be provided with unpaid teaching opportunities (where paid teaching is unavailable) is for a student requiring teaching experience in order to complete the Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice course offered by the Education Team (formerly the Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP) (Graduate School Management Committee, Minute 17/025:4)). For all students subject to immigration restrictions, any voluntary/unpaid hours contribute to the maximum number of working hours permitted by their visa.

12. It is the responsibility of the School engaging any research student for teaching work to provide appropriate induction and training, including health and safety training (e.g. evacuation of the building).

IMPORTANT NOTE:
It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that any work undertaken allows sufficient time for their research programme to be completed on time; loss of research time because of teaching hours undertaken will not be an acceptable reason for an extension or appeal. Overseas students should additionally ensure that ANY work undertaken is as specified by their immigration permission.

This document replaces AU-GSMC-17-0835-C and earlier versions. It was approved at Graduate School Management Committee in January 2019 and revised on Chair’s action July 2020. It was subsequently revised to reflect CLIPP being renamed Education Team.
Appendix 9: Research Student Casual Work Form

ASTON UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION ABOUT RESEARCH STUDENT UNDERTAKING CASUAL WORK AT ASTON UNIVERSITY
(PG Demonstrating/Teaching Assistant/Examination and Class Test Invigilation/Catering Assistant/Library Assistant etc.)

IMPORTANT NOTE:
It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that any work undertaken allows sufficient time for their research programme to be completed on time; loss of time for your research because of casual work will not be an acceptable reason for an extension or appeal. Overseas students should additionally ensure that any work undertaken is as specified by their immigration permission.

1. STUDENT NAME:

2. STUDENT NUMBER:

3. TYPE OF WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN:
(for teaching/demonstrating, please see extract overleaf from the University's Policy for Required Development Activity for those Engaged in Learning and Teaching (AU-LTC-18-1395-A) concerning the training the student is required to have undertaken)

4. MODULE NUMBER if appropriate:

5. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OFFERING CASUAL WORK:

6. NAME OF MEMBER OF STAFF OFFERING CASUAL WORK:

7. DATES OF APPOINTMENT From: To:

8. TOTAL DURATION OF APPOINTMENT IN HOURS:

9. NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK:

10. DETAILS OF ANY OTHER CASUAL WORK UNDERTAKEN AT ASTON UNIVERSITY:
    a. Department:
    b. Type of work undertaken:
    c. Dates of appointment and number of hours per week:

11. HEAD OF SUBJECT GROUP/PROGRAMME DIRECTOR confirming that they are aware of the appointment

Name........................................ Signature ........................................
RESEARCH SUPERVISOR confirming that they are aware of the appointment and have not raised any concerns. Supervisors should make a separate note below if they have advised against the student undertaking the work.

Name…………………………………    Signature………………………………

(This is to ensure that the research student's Supervisor is aware of the number of hours their student is working and to note if they have advised the student against doing so.)

*Both the student and the Supervisor should retain a copy of the form and a copy should also be forwarded to the School's Director of Research Degree Programmes. The original form should be given to the recruiting member of staff to allow the casual worker appointment to be processed. If the Supervisor has advised against the work being undertaken, a copy of this Form should be sent to the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk) for the student record.*
The Graduate School Policy on Research Student Teaching Hours (AU-GSMC-18-1540-B) in Appendix 8 states:

“Research students should have the agreement of their main Supervisor before agreeing to any teaching commitments.”

“Research students should undertake a maximum of 6 hours teaching in any given week, to include preparation, contact and assessment time.”

“Research students will not normally be expected to lecture until their third full-time year of research, and not before their second full-time year of research.

“Where teaching hours are not a requirement of [a] funding scheme, research students will be paid the rate of pay appropriate for the type of teaching undertaken, e.g. demonstrating, tutorials. Such students…. are engaged as casual workers.”

“HR approved rates of pay are:

- A multiplier of 2.5 should be used for lectures. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another 1.5 hours of preparation is needed. This applies to all lectures other than those for which an exception has been agreed via Graduate School Management Committee (in consultation with HR). This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 2 paid lectures (5 hours with preparation time) per week;

- A multiplier of 1.5 should be used for tutorials, seminars and laboratory sessions. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another half hour of preparation is needed. This applies to all sessions other than those for which an exception has been agreed. This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 4 such sessions (6 hours with preparation time) per week. For laboratory sessions where the preparation is required at the beginning of the module, rather than before each session, payment will be made for an agreed number of preparation hours and the multiplier of 1.5 will not apply (approved by Graduate School Management Committee, Minute 17/114, and confirmed with HR).”

In Accordance with the University’s Policy for Required Development Activity for those Engaged in Learning and Teaching (AU-LTC-18-1395-A)

- Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to undertake:
  - the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert) delivered by the Education Team;
  - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity (not necessary while undertaking the PGCert);
  - peer observation.

- postgraduate research students who deliver four or more sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake:
  - the Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice (20-credit, level 6 module) delivered by the Education Team;
  - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity;
  - peer observation.

- postgraduate research students who deliver fewer than four sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake peer observation, and are encouraged and supported to undertake Continuing Professional Development activity.
Human Resources

All Casual Workers must undergo a “right to work check”. Appointments should be made in accordance with the Casual Worker Engagement Form published on the HR intranet http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/a-z/casual-and-agency-staff/casual/.

Approval of hours, and hence payments, is through completion and submission of weekly online timesheets to the manager. Those processing the payments are required to take account of the preparation time.

SAS/AJB/Graduate School/this version updated to reflect changes to the GSMC Policy on Teaching Hours, September 2019
Appendix 10: Vitae Researcher Development Statement and Researcher Development Framework

Vitae Researcher Development Statement

“The UK is committed to enhancing the higher-level capabilities of the UK workforce including the development of world-class researchers. Researchers are critical to economic success, addressing major global challenges, and building a leading knowledge economy.

The Researcher Development Statement (RDS) sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers.

The RDS is for policy makers and research organisations that provide personal, professional and career development for researchers in higher education.

It is derived from the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), an approach to researcher development which aims to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base.

The RDS and RDF contribute to researcher training and development in the UK by providing a strategic statement (RDS) and operational framework (RDF) to support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers¹, the QAA Quality Code – Chapter B11 Research Degrees² and the ‘Roberts’³ recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff.”

¹https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers
²www.qaa.ac.uk

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The Vitae Researcher Development Framework is copyright Vitae®, © 2010 Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited (www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)

For more information, go to: https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework
Appendix 11: Key Milestones for a full-time student with Qualification Aim of PhD

NOTE: For a part-time student with Qualification Aim of PhD, the milestone deadlines should be doubled. For milestones for other research degree awards, please contact the PGR Progression Team (pgr_general@aston.ac.uk).

Year 1

- **Month 0**: Research Start Date
- **By end of Month 1**: Learning Agreement & Training Needs Analysis
- **By end of Month 3**: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- **By end of Month 6**: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- **By end of Month 9**: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- **By end of Month 10**: Submission of Qualifying Report
- **By end of Month 12**: Progression Decision following viva voce on Qualifying Report

Activities. Activities will also include 90 hours’ appropriate skills training during the research degree programme; these may be achieved through completion of a structured research training programme, depending on the College.

Supervisor and student quarterly reviews
Year 2

Activities. Activities will also include 90 hours' appropriate skills training during the research degree programme; these may be achieved through completion of a structured research training programme, depending on the College.

Re-enrol

By end of Month 3
Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor

By end of Month 6
Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor

By end of Month 9
Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor

By end of Month 10
Discussion with Supervisor re Progression Task

By end of Month 12
Annual Progress Decision

Supervisor and student quarterly reviews
Year 3

- Re-enrol
- By end of Month 3: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- By end of Month 6: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- By end of Month 9: Quarterly Progress Review with Supervisor
- By end of Month 10: Discussion with Supervisor re Extension (if needed)
- By end of Month 12: Thesis Submission
  Annual Progress Decision

Activities. Activities will also include 90 hours’ appropriate skills training during the research degree programme; these may be achieved through completion of a structured research training programme, depending on the College.

Supervisor and student quarterly reviews
Extension Year (if granted)

Re-enrol

By end of Month 3
Quarterly Progress
Review with Supervisor

Continuation Fee charged beyond this point

By end of Month 6
Quarterly Progress
Review with Supervisor

By end of Month 9
Quarterly Progress
Review with Supervisor

Thesis Submission
or
Withdrawal from programme

Supervisor and student quarterly reviews
Appendix 12: Research Student Development Fund (SDF) Guidance Notes for Applicants

What is the Research Student Development Fund (SDF)?

The Research Student Development Fund is an amount of £500 per annum or £1500 in total, available to doctoral students for conference attendance or other development opportunities.

Who is eligible to apply for the SDF?

Doctoral students who are wholly or partially self-funded and not in receipt of any other type of student development funding such as a research training support grant or bench fees can apply. Students who are in receipt of a School funded studentship may also be eligible if the studentship does not contain funding for research training support. Students who are in receipt of a UKRI Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) or any other internally or externally funded studentship which includes funding for conferences, training and research support, or where a bench fee is required, are not eligible for the SDF. In order to apply for the SDF eligible students must have passed their Qualifying Report and must not be on Leave of Absence or in their extension year.

What can the SDF be used for?

The SDF is primarily intended to support a student attending a conference where they will be presenting a paper but may also be used for other development opportunities such as conference attendance and training courses. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis by the relevant Director of Research Degree Programmes and students and supervisors will need to provide a supporting case where the request is for an activity other than a prestigious or recognised conference at which the student is presenting. Allowable expenses include, registration fees, accommodation, travel and subsistence and other associated costs such as visa fees.

Note: It has been agreed that students who have any unspent SDF allowance may, exceptionally, submit an application to request funding for other activities or unanticipated research expenses such as survey or data collection costs, essential equipment, etc. which they expect to incur directly as a result of COVID-19. This is a time- limited exception and such requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Director of Research Degree Programmes.
Can the funding be used for conferences outside the UK?

The funding can be used for conferences to be held outside the UK provided the conference is well recognised within the field and you will be presenting a full paper which has been accepted. You will need to complete the relevant Travel Insurance forms as part of the application process. It will be your responsibility to check the visa requirements for the country you will be travelling to, bearing in mind also the changes that come into effect as a result of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. If you are on a Tier 4 visa, you will need to seek advice from the visa compliance team and you will need a Short Absence Letter which you will need to carry with you.

Please note it will not be possible for you to attend a conference outside the UK whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place either in the UK or the country where the conference is to be held, or if the country is not on the FCO list of countries exempt from advice against ‘all but essential’ international travel.

What is the application process?

Please submit the completed SDF application form and supporting documents to pgr_general@aston.ac.uk, allowing at least 2 weeks for processing. Please note that you are required to take advantage of early bird registration and should apply for funding as soon as your paper has been accepted and/or conference registration opens.

All applications must be submitted in advance. Retrospective applications cannot be considered in any circumstances. No expenditure should be incurred until approval of the application has been confirmed by the PGR Admin Team.

For conferences which require overseas travel, a completed International Travel Form and Travel Itinerary Form must be attached with the application. The Forms will need to be signed by your supervisor. Please note the application will not be processed without these documents which are required in order to ensure that you are covered under the University’s Travel Insurance.

How do I claim the funds?

Once you have received confirmation of approval, you can make the relevant bookings/purchases and submit an expense claim (with all the receipts) via an online jotform, link and details of job code to be provided by the PGR Admin Team.

What happens if a conference is cancelled?

If a conference is cancelled or you are not able to attend, you should notify the PGR Admin Team asap. Please note that if you have already received payment from the University, any refunds or repayments you receive in the event of cancellation or non-attendance are reclaimable by the University.
How can I check my remaining balance?

Please email pgr_general@aston.ac.uk
Appendix 13: Research Student Development Fund (SDF) Application Form

Please read the attached guidance notes to ensure that you are eligible to apply for funding and that the type of activity for which you wish to request funding is eligible for funding through the Research Student Development Fund

**Student details**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aston Email Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Funding – e.g. self, School studentship, Research Council studentship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Study – please state whether full-time or part-time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>QR passed?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Type of activity for which funding is requested**

*Please select the relevant activity below and provide the required details*

1. **Conference at which you will be presenting**

| Conference details eg. name, organiser |  |
| Conference dates |  |
| Location - *if outside the UK please attach completed International Travel Form and Travel Itinerary Form (available via Blackboard)* |  |
Has your conference paper been accepted? If so, please give title and attach acceptance email and copy of paper to this form.

2. Conference which you wish to attend without presenting

*Please note that such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and you need to provide a detailed reason for the request. It is unlikely that requests for conferences held outside the UK will be approved unless you are presenting a paper and have proof of acceptance.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference details eg. name, organiser</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conference dates</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Location (must be within the UK or online)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason for request</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Training course

*Please note requests for funding to attend training courses should normally be for methodological or other specialist training which is not available at Aston or free online.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course details eg. name, organiser</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course dates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (must be within the UK or online)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason for request</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Other – COVID-19 related requests

Please provide details of other activities or purchases for which you wish to request funding and provide a supporting case. Please note such request can only be made for COVID-19 related reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Breakdown:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please provide a breakdown of the costs you are asking for:</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Costs</th>
<th>£</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Costs</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Fee</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Costs – please add further rows if required</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Amount Requested:</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supervisor Support

Statement of support from the Main supervisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Applicant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signature of Supervisor</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>

Completed and signed SDF application form should be submitted to pgr_general@aston.ac.uk copying in your supervisor.

For Graduate School Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remaining SDF Balance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRDP Decision</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refused</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please give reason</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>DRDP Signature</th>
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