

Research Degrees Regulatory Framework

Yellow highlighted text identifies the most recent revisions to the regulations. If you require these revisions to be identified in an alternative format, please contact the Secretary to Academic Board.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 These regulations apply to research degree awards offered by the University, unless, for reasons of professional or statutory body requirements or similar, a variation or exception has been agreed by Academic Board. Such variations will be identified in a Programme Specification.
- 1.2 These regulations apply to all students pursuing a research degree award unless otherwise stated.
- 1.3 The Masters by Research (MRes) is governed entirely by the [Taught Course Regulatory Framework](#)
- 1.4 The regulations concerning all taught postgraduate awards are set out in the Taught Course Regulatory Framework. Where a research degree award includes taught modules, the reader is referred to this document.

2. Terminology

- 2.1 As a means of ensuring that the regulations are consistently interpreted and applied, the following definitions have been used:

Assessment: the process by which the University is able to confirm that a student has achieved the learning outcomes for a module or for the programme of research. Assessment is work, such as an oral examination, a thesis, a project proposal or a presentation; there may be one or more items of work which make up the components of assessment. The evaluation of the work (which may take the form of a mark or may take the form of 'pass', 'resubmit' or 'fail') contributes to the appraisal of the student's performance and the determination of their entitlement to proceed with the programme or eligibility for an award.

Assessment Item: a piece of assessed work, e.g. an essay, project, assignment or examination.

Award: a formal qualification awarded by the University to an individual student e.g. MPhil which may be either the qualification to which a student is registered or an intermediate award.

Award Title: the name of the programme which is appended to an Award e.g. PhD in 'Award Title' as it is to appear on an award certificate and transcript.

Programme Leader: academic with designated oversight of admissions, progression and supervision for specified research degree programmes within an academic school.

Critical Overview: a document that establishes the coherence of a portfolio and demonstrates that the outputs within a portfolio are equivalent to doctoral standard.

Exit Award: a formal qualification awarded by the University to an individual student who has decided to leave a programme before completing the award for which they were originally registered. A student registered for a Professional Doctorate, for example, who has successfully completed the taught element of their programme may opt not to progress to the thesis stage. In this case the student can exit with a certificate of credit or complete a further 30 credits at level 8 and exit with the award of Postgraduate Diploma in Research Enquiry.

Level: a description of the credit level i.e. 8 which is an indicator of the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning and of learner autonomy

A student may be described as studying at Level 8.

Level	Description	Framework for Research Education Qualification Levels (FHEQ)	National Qualification Framework (NQF)
Level 8	Doctoral Level	D	8

Mark: the percentage used to indicate the standard reached by a student in the item(s) of assessment and the overall module assessment.

Maximum period of registration: the maximum permitted period of time to complete a programme specified at the time of admission.

Mitigation: exceptional reasons outside of a student's control that either prevented a student from taking an item of assessment or affected their performance in an assessment.

Mode of Study: there are two modes of study, full-time and part-time.

Module: a discrete unit of study with approved learning outcomes and assessment scheme. Modules are assigned to one or more subject areas. Each module will specify a level that indicates the intellectual standard required to successfully complete the module. Most modules are of a standard credit value although some modules (e.g. a Dissertation) may have a different credit value. A module will normally be taught and assessed over one semester. Modules may be designated 'open' or 'closed'.

Portfolio: a portfolio is a collection of outputs that are a product of an individual's research and/or professional practice which together form a coherent body of work.

Programme of Research: the structure and associated timetable for an individual student's research agreed with the supervisory or advisory team and kept under review by the University's Research Degrees Board. The programme will elaborate on the generic structure set out in the programme specification to identify key tasks, activities and milestones which when completed will enable the student to meet the requirements of the award.

Programme Specification: a document that specifies (amongst other matters) admission requirements for the programme, the structure of the programme, any particular conditions

to be met (e.g. Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body requirements) for conferment of the relevant named award.

Research Degrees Board: the University body that oversees registration, progression and examination for research degree programmes under delegated power from Academic Board.

Student: any person admitted or enrolled by the University of Worcester to follow a programme of research, or any sabbatical officer of the Students' Union. All students remain subject to the common and statute law, and any rights or constraints conferred or imposed by these regulations are in addition to, and do not alter in any way, their right and duties as citizens.

Thesis: a substantial independent piece of work following systematic and detailed investigation into a discrete area of research which will primarily be in written form although it may include material in other than written form.

Transcript: a formal and verifiable record issued by the University of what a student has studied and achieved.

Viva Voce: an oral examination.

3. The Admission of Students

- 3.1 The admission of an individual applicant is at the discretion of the authorized admissions tutor(s), subject to:
- a. the University's policy on admissions;
 - b. a reasonable expectation that the applicant will be able to achieve the learning outcomes of the course and achieve the standard required for the award;
 - c. fulfilling the entry requirements as stated within the programme specification of the approved course.
- 3.2 Applicants for a research degree may apply at any time of the year but will only be permitted to commence their studies at one of the entry points as advertised by the University.
- 3.3 All applicants for a research degree must apply to the University using the appropriate application form.
- 3.4 The normal requirements to enable an applicant to be considered for admission onto a University research degree programme of study are as follows:
- a. **Master of Philosophy (MPhil)**
 - i) First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or an approved equivalent award;
 - or
 - ii) The applicant has appropriate research or professional experience which has resulted in appropriate evidence of achievement.
 - b. **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

- i) A Postgraduate Master's Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study;
 - or
 - ii) First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or equivalent award in an appropriate discipline;
 - or
 - iii) The applicant has appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of achievement.
 - c. **Doctor of Philosophy by Published or Creative Work (PhD by Published or Creative Work)**
 - i) A Postgraduate Master's Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study;
 - or
 - ii) First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or equivalent award in an appropriate discipline;
 - or
 - d. **Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)**
 - i) A Postgraduate Masters Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study;
 - or
 - ii) A minimum of 3 years' experience as a senior manager and/or other appropriate business experience in a relevant profession.
 - e. **Doctor of Education (EdD)**
 - i) A Postgraduate Masters Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study;
 - or
 - ii) A minimum of three years' experience of professional practice in an education .
- 3.5 Any applicants whose first language is not English or who have not been educated wholly or mainly in the medium of English must reach a minimum IELTS score of 6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any component or have previously studied in the UK at Honours degree level of above or otherwise demonstrate that they have an adequate command of both written and spoken English before starting a programme. If an applicant does not meet this standard they may be required to attend a pre-sessional English course or any other requirement laid down by the University.
- 3.6 An applicant holding qualifications other than those specified above shall be considered on their merits. Evidence of ability and background knowledge must be provided in relation to the proposed topic and research degree.
- 3.7 All applicants must produce at or before initial Registration evidence of their identity and relevant qualification(s) and or transcript(s) showing that they have satisfied the relevant entry requirements.

- 3.8 All applicants are required to declare 'unspent' convictions within the application process. Applicants for certain courses must comply with additional entry requirements that may be imposed by law or accrediting/professional bodies. Some courses require additional declarations by the applicant relating to their health, criminal convictions (spent and unspent) and cautions. There may be a requirement for a check of criminal convictions (via the Disclosure and Barring Service) and/or medical examinations. Failure to comply with any such special requirements may result in an applicant not being permitted to start the course or being required to leave the course and/or the university.
- 3.9 The university reserves the right to refuse admission (or cancel Registration) to any applicant (or student) who has misrepresented information in their application.
- 3.10 There is no appeal against admissions decisions. Applicants who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the admissions process may use the Admissions Complaints Procedure detailed in the prospectus.
- 3.11 All successful applicants are provided with an individual letter of acceptance and a contract which sets out the terms of the offer. Students with special needs are referred to the University's student support services. The terms of the contract are binding on the institution and, upon acceptance, on the student.
- 3.12 A research degree applicant may propose to work outside the United Kingdom, for whatever period. In order to do so, the following conditions must be satisfied:
- a. the student will establish and maintain close links with the University throughout the period;
 - b. there will be evidence to show the student will have access to relevant facilities and resources and "local" supervisory support during this period;
 - c. the arrangements proposed for supervision will specify that frequent and substantial contact will be made between the student and the supervisor(s) based in the United Kingdom, including adequate face-to-face contact;
 - d. the student will be expected to spend a period of time each year undertaking the programme of research at the University. This must be agreed between the student and their supervisory or advisory team and will depend on the particular programme, the supervision and the facilities available, and on the University. This *must* take into account the requirement to attend taught elements of the programme.

4. The Registration of Students

- 4.1 Each student, other than sabbatical officers of the Students' Union, must register at the start of their programme and will undertake to comply with the regulations of the University. Students must re-register at the start of each academic year irrespective of when they started the programme. Students who do not register or re-register by the published deadline will be withdrawn from the University.
- 4.2 Students are required to pay fees in accordance with the prevailing fees policy and financial regulations approved by the Board of Governors. No student will be entitled to register or re-register unless the prescribed fees have been paid or satisfactory arrangements made to ensure that they will be paid. Students unable to register, because of outstanding debts, will be obliged to temporarily withdraw from their course or withdraw from the University

- 4.3 The University reserves the right to decline acceptance of, or make a charge for, late or incorrect registration of awards, programmes and modules.
- 4.4 Where a student has not completed the formal process of registration but, by their actions, are deemed to be undertaking activities compatible with the status of a registered student, the Academic Registrar may formally enrol a student and arrange for the relevant tuition fee to be charged. Such activities would include attendance at classes, submission of work and regular use of their ID card to gain access to the University, etc.
- 4.5 Students requiring a visa to study in the UK must ensure that they meet, both at the beginning and for the duration of the course, requirements stipulated by the Home Office and conditions of their visa.

4.6 Students may not simultaneously register for more than one full time award either at the University of Worcester or at another Higher Education Institution **unless a contract is in place for a Dual award.**

4.7 The maximum periods of registration are as follows:

Award	Mode of Study	Maximum
MPhil	Full-time	2 years
	Part-time	4 years
PhD by thesis	Full-time	4years
	Part-time	8 years
PhD by Published or Creative Work	Part-time	4 years
Professional Doctorate	Part-time	8 years

- 4.8 Any extension of duration of registration from the maximum may only be granted when the maximum registration period is about to be exceeded (up to 12 months and no less than 4 months before the maximum registration date). A request will normally only be approved if the student has made satisfactory progress to date, can demonstrate the ability to submit within the requested time period and can provide evidence of having grounds to support their claim (as laid out in the Course Handbook). The final decision will be made by the Research Degrees Board. All requests must be agreed by the supervisory or advisory team.
- 4.9 The Research Degrees Board will normally only approve one extension request for a maximum period of 12 consecutive months. The Research Degrees Board will not approve an extension if a temporary withdrawal has already been previously agreed based on the same supporting evidence.
- 4.10 Where a student has previously undertaken research as a student registered for a research degree of a university or other institution of research education, or of an appropriate organisation, it may be appropriate to approve a duration of registration to take account of all or part of the time already spent by the individual on such research. In no circumstances shall the overall duration of registration be less than 6 months full-time or 12 months part-time including any retrospective registration approved by the Research Degrees Board.

- 4.11 Any change in the duration of registration must be approved by the Research Degrees Board.
- 4.12 In the case of international students, the duration of registration agreed at the time when a visa was sought must be adhered to and, in those exceptional circumstances where an extension to the duration of study is required, a written request for this must be submitted to the Academic Registrar for consideration prior to the period of extension being agreed with the student.
- 4.13 Research degree students may register on a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time students are required to devote at least 37.5 hours per week on average to the programme of study over a normal 45-week academic year. Part-time students are required to study flexibly and efficiently in a pattern agreed with the supervisory or advisory team. Any change in the mode of study from part-time to full-time or vice versa must be notified by the student to the **Doctoral** School. All changes in mode of study must be approved by Research Degrees Board.
- 4.14 Once registration is completed, a student will continue to be registered with the University until the end of the programme or until re-registration is required, whichever is the earlier, unless a student shall cease to be a registered student due to:
- a) exclusion from the programme on academic grounds;
 - b) exclusion from the programme for non-compliance with the prevailing fees policy;
 - c) exclusion from the programme on medical grounds;
 - d) exclusion from the programme due to persistent non-attendance;
 - e) expulsion from the University following a recognised disciplinary procedure;
 - f) voluntary withdrawal from the programme
- 4.15 Students must notify the University of any changes occurring during the academic year in the information supplied at registration.

5. Supervisory arrangements

MPhil, PhD, DBA and EdD

- 5.1 Students undertaking an MPhil, PhD, DBA or EdD will have a supervisory or advisory team consisting of at least two but normally no more than three supervisors.
- 5.2 All supervisors, including associate supervisors, must be on the University's Register of Research Degree Supervisors and must meet the specified conditions to remain on the Register, with the exception of an "external supervisor". An external supervisor is not employed by the University.
- 5.3 One of the team must be designated as the Director of Studies (DoS). The DoS will normally be the primary supervisor, responsible for overseeing student progress, managing supervisory relations and ensuring the student complies with regulatory requirements and relevant processes. Neither an associate supervisor nor an external supervisor can act as DoS.

- 5.4 Unless an individual has been given a designated research role, they will not be permitted to supervise more than six research degree student Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) concurrently, and to be Director of Studies for no more than three student FTEs at any one time. For the purposes of supervision, a part time research degree student should be regarded as 0.5 FTE. The supervisory capacity for all colleagues on the Register of Approved Supervisors shall ultimately be decided by the Academic School in which they are based, taking into account factors such as current workload, prior experience of supervision, etc.
- 5.5 Anyone who is registered for a research degree, either by the University or by another institution, shall be ineligible to act as the Director of Studies, but, in certain circumstances and subject to the prior approval of the University, may be appointed to act as a second supervisor or as an adviser.
- 5.6 An Emeritus Professor, or an Honorary or Visiting appointment, may act as a supervisor but must be on the Register of Approved Supervisors.
- 5.7 All supervisory teams will be approved at the point of admission on to the programme.
- 5.8 In addition to the supervisors, if appropriate, an advisor or advisors may be identified to contribute specialist knowledge and/or to provide a link with an external organisation.

PhD by Published or Creative Work

- 5.9 Students undertaking a PhD by Published or Creative Work will have a team consisting of two advisors, one of whom will be designated as Lead Advisor and at least one of whom will be employed by the University.
- 5.10 The team should collectively have experience of supporting students on a PhD by Published or Creative Work programme and experience of research in the specific programme of research. Advisors will normally be on the University's Register of Approved Supervisors unless they are external to the University.
- 5.11 All advisory teams will be approved at the point of admission to the programme.

6. Programme of Research

- 6.1 All students must work with their supervisory or advisory team to establish a programme of research which aligns with the requirements of their research degree programme. Where appropriate, they will be supported to do this through the taught elements of their research degree programme as set out in the relevant programme specification.
- 6.2 If the proposed programme of research is to be part of a joint or group project or activity, the programme of research to be undertaken by the applicant for registration must, in itself, be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the category of registration and level of award being sought.

- 6.3 This programme of research and progress against it should be kept under constant review by the student and supervisory or advisory team but will be subject to a formal Annual Progress Review.

7. Student progression

Annual Progress Review

- 7.1 All students will be subject to an Annual Progress Review (APR), the first of which will take place no later than 12 months after initial registration for MPhil and PhD students and 12 months after entering the “thesis stage” for DBA and EdD students then every 12 months thereafter until the submission of the thesis.
- 7.2 Where a student has had a period of temporary withdrawal between annual progress reviews, the timing of the next review will normally remain as scheduled. Where a student is temporarily withdrawn at the point of their Annual Progress Review, the timing of the next review will also remain as scheduled. In both cases, at the point a student returns to study, if the next APR review point is over 6 months from the return to study date, an interim review of progress should be arranged with the Programme Leader to bridge the gap. The interim review must be completed within 6 months of their return to study.
- 7.3 For the purposes of the review, the student and supervisory or advisory team must submit a set of documentation appropriate to their year and mode of study (as set out in the Course Handbook) by the published deadline. The Programme Leader (or nominee) for their School will then review the documentation and make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Board:
- a. The student’s progress and standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is at or above expectations; the student may progress and no further action is required.
 - b. The student’s progress and standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is at or above expectations but there are some outstanding issues identified by the Programme Leader (or nominee); the student may progress subject to providing a satisfactory response to the issues outlined by the Programme Leader (or nominee) by an agreed deadline.
 - c. The student’s standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is below expectations and the student should be referred to an APR panel to include feedback from an expert reviewer.
 - d. Although the standard of work meets expectations, the rate of progress for the student is below expectations. The student should be referred to an APR panel. No expert reviewer is required for this panel.
 - e. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the student’s progress and /or standard of work is at or above expectations. The student should be referred to an APR Panel. No expert reviewer is required for this panel.
- 7.4 The APR Panel’s role is to assess the student’s progress against the programme of research and to make recommendations to the Research Degrees Board.

- 7.5 The Panel will produce a report setting out progress against the expectations and make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Board:
- a. The student's progress and standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is at or above expectations. The student may progress and no further action is required.
 - b. The student's progress and standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is at or above expectations but there are some outstanding issues identified by the Panel; the student may progress subject to providing a satisfactory response to the issues outline by the Panel by an agreed deadline.
 - c. The student's standard of work, including their technical proficiency in the English language, is below expectations and the student must respond to a set of actions determined by the Panel by a specified deadline.
 - d. Although the standard of work meets expectations, the student's progress is below expectations and the student must respond to a set of actions determined by the panel *and* must meet with the Panel again on an agreed date, normally within 6 months of the original meeting.
- 7.6 In those instances where the Panel required a response, it will consider the student's responses to the actions specified and may recommend the following to the Research Degrees Board:
- a. The student has responded satisfactorily to the actions specified and no further action is required.
 - b. The student has not responded satisfactorily to the actions specified and should be given a specified timeframe to provide a further response to the Panel.
- 7.7 If the Panel deems that this further response is not satisfactory, the Panel may recommend that the Research Degrees Board withdraw the student from the programme.
- 7.8 Where a student does not respond in the stated timeframe without explanation at either stage set out above, the Research Degrees Board may withdraw the student from the programme.
- 7.9 Where a student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory in two consecutive Annual Progress Reviews, the Research Degrees Board may withdraw the student from the programme without need for further action.

Supervisory review of progress and standard of work

- 7.10 It is the role of the supervisory or advisory team, in particular the Director of Studies, to keep the student's progress and standard of work under review throughout the programme of research.
- 7.11 If the Director of Studies identifies a student's progress is unsatisfactory at any time, they should first discuss the matter with the student and other supervisors, identifying any actions required to rectify the situation.
- 7.12 If the student's progress continues to be unsatisfactory, the Director of Studies, following consultation with the other supervisors, should submit a formal written

statement to the student, copied to the Chair of the Research Degrees Board, identifying why the student's progress is unsatisfactory, and setting out specified actions and a timeframe in which these actions should be addressed.

- 7.13 If the student does not respond to this statement in the timeframe or does not effectively address the actions, the Director of Studies, following consultation with the other supervisors, should submit a formal written statement to the Chair of the Research Degrees Board identifying why the student's progress continues to be unsatisfactory.
- 7.14 The Chair of the Research Degrees Board will at this point identify one of the following actions:
- a. The student's progress must be considered independently by a Progress Review Panel (outside of the Annual Progress Review) which will make recommendations to the Research Degrees Board.
 - b. The student must respond to specified actions in a specified timeframe.
 - c. The student must be withdrawn from the programme.
- 7.15 Where a student does not respond to the specified actions effectively or in the agreed timeframe, the student will be withdrawn from the programme.

8. Submission of the Assessment Item(s)

- 8.1 For MPhil or PhD, the assessment item(s) for the non-taught element of the programme must consist of a written thesis which may be supplemented in certain contexts by additional elements as set out below.
- 8.2 For DBA or EdD, the assessment item for the non-taught element of the programme must consist of a written thesis.
- 8.3 For PhD by Published or Creative Work, the assessment items must consist of a portfolio of published or creative outputs and a critical overview.
- 8.4 The assessment items must be submitted primarily in English and it shall be the responsibility of each student to ensure that the items are submitted for examination, in the form prescribed by the University before the expiry of the period of registration, taking account of any extension(s) or suspensions of registration that have been approved.
- 8.5 Although the University would not recommend that a student submit for examination against the advice of the supervisors, the submission for examination is at the sole discretion of the student. When a student submits for examination against the advice of the supervisory or advisory team, then the examination team and independent chair will be informed of this.
- 8.6 A student must not assume that the supervisory or advisory team's agreement to submit, or any decision relating to progression made by an Assessment Board, guarantees a successful outcome of the examination or the recommendation for the award of the degree being sought.

- 8.7 A student registered for MPhil, PhD, DBA or EdD is required to submit an electronic copy of the written thesis and may in addition be requested to provide a soft bound copy for each examiner. Where there is an additional element of the assessment item, this must be made available in a format agreed with the examiners.
- 8.8 A student registered for PhD by Published or Creative Work is required to submit an electronic copy of the critical overview and may in addition be requested to provide a soft bound copy for each examiner. The student must also provide copies for each examiner of the outputs that make up the portfolio in an appropriate format. This may be electronic (for example, in the case of a journal article) or hardcopy (for example, in the case of an authored book). Where it is not practical to submit copies of an output, for example where the output is a past exhibition or performance, or an artefact, a brief description and clearly documented evidence of its (current or prior) existence (e.g. catalogue, programme notes, review) may be sufficient.
- 8.9 Prior to submission, all research degree students are required to put their thesis/critical overview through the plagiarism detection software Turnitin. The thesis/critical overview submitted for examination must be accompanied by the 'Originality report' generated by this software. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the reprographic accuracy of each copy of the documentation and any artefacts submitted.
- 8.10 Before conferment of a research degree, students are required to submit an electronic copy of the final agreed version of the written thesis or critical overview to the **Doctoral** School with a deposit agreement. The thesis or critical overview will be stored on the University's output repository and made publicly available through this repository as well as subsequently through the British Library's ETHOS. Students may request an embargo, normally for a defined period, on the publication of the thesis or critical overview where it can be evidenced that its publication would breach confidentiality or another person's or organisation's Intellectual Property Rights or would impact on the student's ability to otherwise publish the thesis in part or in whole.

Regulations regarding submission specific to MPhil, PhD, DBA and EdD

- 8.11 The student shall not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis submitted for examination, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, provided that it is made clear in a formal declaration and in the thesis which work has been so incorporated. This may occur, if, for example, a student has completed an MRes Degree and chooses to progress the same project to PhD level. In these circumstances the student would not be permitted to replicate the work but would be expected to show how the earlier work has been progressed.
- 8.12 Where the research was undertaken as part of a joint project or collaborative group, the student must give a clear statement of their individual contribution and of the nature and extent of the collaboration.
- 8.13 Where the assessment item includes outputs from creative or performance practice, there must be prior agreement with the examiners as to how these outputs will be examined. The practice element may either be examined 'live' or through documentation provided alongside or as part of the thesis. In either case, the submission must be accompanied by a permanent record of the practice outputs that

should be stored in a way that makes it accessible and retrievable. Where practicable, this record should be bound into the thesis. Any practice outputs submitted as part of the assessment item must have been completed during the student's period of registration for the research degree and not prior to this.

- 8.14 Where the principal focus of the programme of research includes the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text, texts or other artefacts (for example archaeological or historical artefacts), the completed submission must include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefacts, appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary setting the text(s) or artefacts in the relevant historical, theoretical, critical context or design.
- 8.15 Below are the maximum word lengths for a thesis, including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, abstract, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:
- | | | |
|----|-------|----------------------|
| a. | MPhil | maximum 40,000 words |
| b. | PhD | maximum 80,000 words |
- 8.16 Below are the maximum word lengths for a DBA and EdD including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, abstract, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:
- | | | |
|----|-------------|----------------------|
| a. | DBA and EdD | maximum 60,000 words |
|----|-------------|----------------------|
- 8.17 There will be a +10% margin for the maximum word count. There is no fixed penalty for exceeding this word count but, in line with the University's 'Policy on Word Count' the examiner will not normally consider any work after the +10% margin has been reached.
- 8.18 The length of a thesis for an MPhil or PhD that includes material other than in written form must be discussed between the student and supervisor at the beginning of the programme and reviewed during Annual Progress Review being finalised no later than APR 2 for a full time student and no later than APR 4 for a part time student.
- 8.19 Where a programme of research involves the student's own creative or performance practice and this forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry, then the 'thesis' is understood to mean the totality of the work submitted for the degree. For this reason, the 'practice' element must be accessible to the Examiners prior to the *viva voce* examination. Where it is not practical to replicate creative work, it must be displayed appropriately, catalogued and labelled for the examiners to view.
- 8.20 Small artefacts which cannot be bound should be presented in an appropriate manner with a label clearly indicating the reference number.
- 8.21 Large artefacts which cannot be moved should be photographed and the photograph should have a reference number and location of the original artefact firmly attached.
- 8.22 Performances or other dynamically creative works should be captured in a manner that renders the research imperative of the work and the role it plays in the submission. This may be by audio and video on CD, DVD, appropriate video tape format or other similar appropriate medium.

- 8.23 Artefacts which are created by a group should be accompanied by the following:
- a. a brief summary from the student of the work and the nature of their involvement;
 - b. a clear statement from the other members of the group about the student's contribution to the work presented on the letterhead of the group's host institution.
- 8.24 A summary sheet listing all artefacts in reference number order should be included in the thesis.

Regulations regarding submission specific to the PhD by Prior Published or Creative Work

- 8.25 For the purposes of this award the following are defined as publications (please note all publications must normally be available in English):
- a. Papers in peer reviewed journals
 - b. Papers in published conference proceedings
 - c. Books
 - d. Chapters in books
 - e. Research monographs
 - f. Research project reports
 - g. Other research outputs in the public domain

For the purposes of this award the following are defined as creative work (please note all related materials must normally be available in English):

- a. Software programmes, multimedia packages or other research-based computing/digital outputs
 - b. Photographs, paintings, sculptures, films, performances or other creative artefacts which demonstrate aspects of the creative, artistic, performance or design process
 - c. Patents
 - d. Other peer or critically reviewed publications or artefacts
- 8.26 The overview should provide the following:
- a. An autobiographical context for the outputs.
 - b. A chronological description tracing the development of the outputs.
 - c. An evaluative description of the originality of each output.
 - d. An evaluative review of the contribution made by outputs to the subject or discipline area and any subsequent developments since the work was completed, including published reviews of any of the submitted works and/or evidence of citation frequency of any of the submitted works (where practicable and available).
 - e. A description, synthesis and evaluation of any links between the outputs.
 - f. A critical reflection using an appropriate methodology, model or theory on the candidate's development as a research practitioner.
 - g. For publications which are not single authored by the candidate, information must be provided on the distinct contribution made by the candidate. Note that the expectation is that the candidate must be the sole or senior author for a substantial proportion of all the publications submitted.

- h. Conclusions, including a synoptic evaluation of the overall contribution made to the discipline and suggested directions for future work.
- 8.27 The maximum word length and role of the critical overview must be discussed and agreed by the advisory team and will depend on the type and nature of outputs being submitted. However, it must not exceed 80,000 words.

9. Assessment

Examination Arrangements

- 9.1 The student's Director of Studies or lead Advisor must submit details of a proposed Examination Panel which will assess the thesis or portfolio and critical overview and examine the student through a *viva voce*. These details must be submitted a minimum of three months in advance of the proposed date of the *viva voce* and considerably earlier for a PhD involving practice.
- 9.2 The Examination Panel must be made up of at least two independent examiners, of whom at least one must be an External Examiner. An internal examiner is someone employed by the University or who has been appointed as an Emeritus Professor or to a Visiting or Honorary role.
- 9.3 Two External Examiners must be appointed if the student is employed (or has been in the 12 months prior to the *viva voce* examination) on a substantive academic or research contract at the University of Worcester i.e. is employed as a Lecturer, University Tutor, Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer, Research Assistant/Associate/Fellow.
- 9.4 Two external examiners must *normally* be appointed if the student is employed (or has been in the 12 months prior to the *viva voce* examination) as an Associate Lecturer or in a professional support role at the University. However, an internal examiner may be appointed in this case where the independence of the internal examiner from the student can be clearly demonstrated. It is the responsibility of the student and DoS to provide a statement to this effect. For example, to show that there has been no line management, team teaching, co-supervision roles with the proposed examiner.
- 9.5 Where the student declares that they have not been working in any of the above named roles and a relationship (whether professional or personal) with the internal examiner is then discovered, the student may be disqualified from the award.
- 9.6 It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies or lead Advisor to ensure that any External Examiner is independent of the student, the University, and any collaborating establishment. The same person must not be appointed as an External Examiner so frequently that familiarity with the University might prejudice the giving of independent judgement. In this respect, the same external examiner must not be appointed more than once within a two-year period.
- 9.7 It is the role of the Research Degrees Board to approve any proposed Examination Panel taking into account the following.

- 9.8 Each examiner must be experienced in research in the general subject area of a particular student's thesis or portfolio and critical overview and, where practicable, have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined.
- 9.9 Collectively, the Examination Panel for an MPhil student should have familiarity with UK doctoral standards and experience of examining at least three students at MPhil or doctoral level and for a PhD, DBA or EdD student, experience of examining at least three students at doctoral level.
- 9.10 The external examiner is normally expected to have examined at least one MPhil student (for examination of MPhil) and one doctoral student (for examination of PhD, DBA or EdD). The external examiner is also normally expected to have a track record of successful research degree supervision.
- 9.11 Each examiner must not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or advisor.
- 9.12 Any person appointed as External Examiner must not have been employed by the University during the previous three years.
- 9.13 Any person who is appointed as an internal examiner but then leaves the University before the *viva voce* examination has taken place can continue to act as an internal examiner up to 6 months from their leaving date.
- 9.14 No person who is registered for a research degree, whether of the University or of any other university or institution of research education, may be appointed to act as an examiner.
- 9.15 A student must take no part in the arrangement of the examination and have no contact in relation to the thesis or examination, with the Examiner(s) between the time of their being appointed and the holding of the *viva voce* examination, or between that and approval of amendments or any subsequent *viva voce* examination in the case of there being a reassessment of the thesis or portfolio and critical overview.

Examination of the thesis or portfolio and critical overview

- 9.16 Each examiner is required to read and assess the thesis or portfolio and critical overview and to submit an independent preliminary report to the University before any *viva voce* or alternative form of examination is held; to this end examiners should not meet to discuss the thesis or portfolio and critical overview prior to submission of the preliminary report. As part of that assessment, each examiner must consider whether the thesis or portfolio and critical overview provisionally satisfies the University's requirements for the degree concerned, including technical proficiency in the English language, and, where possible, make an appropriate provisional decision, subject to the outcome of the *viva voce* examination.
- 9.17 Examiners are not permitted to discuss the thesis or portfolio and critical overview with the supervisory or advisory team between receipt of the examiner's preliminary reports within the University and the commencement of the *viva voce* examination. The Examiners reports will however be shared with the whole examination team once all reports have been received.

- 9.18 Any failure to comply with any of the procedures established by the University for the examination process may lead to a particular assessment being declared null and void and to the appointment of new examiners by the University.

The Viva Voce

- 9.19 The appointment of an Independent Chair must be made for all *viva voce* covered by these Regulations.
- 9.20 The Independent Chair must be wholly independent of the student and will be nominated from the **approved Pool of Independent Chairs**.
- 9.21 The Chair is not required to read the thesis or portfolio and critical overview or complete a preliminary report form and should be seen as totally independent throughout the process. The Chair does receive the Examiners' preliminary reports prior to the viva and the abstract for the thesis.
- 9.22 Prior to the *viva voce* the Chair is expected to brief the examiners on the University's procedures and facilitate the development of an agenda if requested by the examiners.
- 9.23 During the *viva voce* of the student, the Independent Chair ensures that the examination process takes place in a fair and transparent manner, guides the examiners and student through the *viva voce* and acts as an arbitrator throughout.
- 9.24 Following the *viva voce* of the student, the Independent Chair assists in the completion of documents confirming the outcome of the examination. This includes checking that the amendments highlighted in the Examiners' Report reflect the amendments agreed at the *viva voce*.
- 9.25 A supervisor or advisor is allowed, subject to the consent of the student, to attend the *viva voce* as an observer; participation in the discussion, however, is not permitted. The supervisor or advisor is required to withdraw prior to the deliberation of the Examination Panel on the outcome of the *viva voce*. When the student is invited to return, to hear the outcome of the viva, the supervisor or advisor is also required to return. The supervisor or advisor can, at this point, seek clarification about the specific amendments required. **If a supervisor does not attend the *viva voce* it is recommended that they do attend to hear the outcome and it is the responsibility of the student to notify the supervisor when they have withdrawn from the viva prior to the deliberation of the Examination Panel.**
- 9.26 The Examination Panel will recommend to the University one of the following outcomes:
- a. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered; typographical and grammatical corrections can still be made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of the Director of Studies or lead advisor before the final agreed version of the thesis or critical overview is submitted;
 - b. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered, subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at *viva*; these amendments must be submitted within 2 months; minor amendments should be such as

can be completed with little or no supervision and will likely involve minor changes or additions to content and/or small numbers of additional references and/or typographical and grammatical corrections;

- c. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered subject to amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at the viva; these amendments must be submitted within 6 months; these amendments will likely involve more substantial changes or additions to content and/or a number of additional references and/or some restructuring of the thesis and/or typographical and grammatical corrections;
- d. that the student be permitted to submit for reassessment, for the degree for which they are registered. They must submit a revised thesis or portfolio and critical overview for reassessment by both examiners, taking into account all feedback and corrections as identified by the examiners, within 12 months and undergo a second *viva voce* normally with the same examiners and Independent Chair;
- e. that the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be reassessed. In the case of a PhD by Prior Published or Creative Work a new submission would be considered providing that a minimum of two years had elapsed since the first application and that the new submission contains significant new material;
- f. where the student is registered for a doctorate, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil with no further corrections;
- g. where the student is registered for a doctorate, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at the viva, within 6 months;
- h. where the student is registered for a doctorate, that the student be permitted to submit for reassessment, for the degree of MPhil. They must submit a revised thesis or portfolio and critical overview for reassessment by both examiners, taking into account amendments as identified by the examiners, within 12 months and undergo a second *viva voce* normally with the same examiners and Independent Chair;
- i. where a student is registered for MPhil, that the student be awarded a PhD, subject to written confirmation from the examiners that the thesis has met the standards of the PhD.

9.27 Decisions (f) –(h) should only be considered when the examiners determine that a student has not reached the standard required for the award of a doctorate and will not be able to do through amendments or revision in the maximum timescales available but they are confident that the student already meets the standard for MPhil or will be able to do so through amendments or revision in the timeframes available. In these instances, examiners will have discretion to accept a thesis that is longer than that specified for MPhil in these regulations.

9.28 Following the *viva voce*, the Examination Panel must, when all examiners are in agreement, present a joint report and decision to the University relating to the award of the research degree being sought. The preliminary reports and joint decision of the examiners must together provide enough detailed observation on the scope and quality of the work undertaken to enable the University to be satisfied that the criteria for the award of the relevant degree have been met.

- 9.29 Where the degree has been awarded subject to completion of amendments, the reports must be accompanied by a definitive list of these amendments, all of which must have been raised during the viva.
- 9.30 In the case of reassessment, the report must be accompanied by an overview of the discussion held at the viva and suggestions of areas that require development in order for the student to meet the required level.
- 9.31 On receipt of the report, the student and Director of Studies or lead Advisor will be given two weeks in which they can query or seek clarification about any of the amendments listed. A query must be made by the Director of Studies or lead Advisor through the **Doctoral** School, who will contact the examiner(s) on their behalf. No further contact between student or supervisors/advisors and examiner is permitted after this time.
- 9.32 When the examiners are not in agreement, they must submit separate reports and recommendations to the University.
- 9.33 When it is decided, on the recommendation of the examiners, that the degree be not awarded and that no reassessment be permitted, the examiners are required to prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis or portfolio and critical overview and give the reasons for their decision, to be forwarded to the student by the University. This report will also be shared with the Chair of the Research Degrees Board and Vice Chancellor.
- 9.34 The Independent Chair will, where possible, facilitate a decision of the examiners on the day of the viva. Where a decision cannot be reached, a decision about the award will be passed to the Research Degrees Board, who will make a decision on how to proceed. This may be to accept a majority recommendation provided that majority recommendation has been supported by at least one External Examiner or require the appointment of an additional External Examiner in accordance with the procedures approved for the appointment of examiners.

10. Re-assessment

- 10.1 Only one opportunity for reassessment of the thesis or portfolio and critical overview shall be allowed.
- 10.2 All reassessment vivas will normally take place in person.**
- 10.3 The Examination Panel will re-assess the revised thesis taking into account the feedback and corrections they provided for the student after the first viva. This will be followed by a second *viva voce*. As reassessment requires a significant re-writing of the original thesis, the examination panel will re-examine the new thesis in its entirety, **to include the independent chair**.
- 10.4 The Examination Panel shall recommend to the University one of the following outcomes:
- a. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered; typographical and grammatical corrections can still be made to the thesis or

- critical overview, to the satisfaction of the Director of Studies or lead Advisor before the final version of the thesis or critical overview is submitted;
- b. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered, subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at *viva*; these amendments must be submitted within 2 months; minor amendments should be such as can be completed with little or no supervision and will likely involve minor changes or additions to content and/or small numbers of additional references and/or typographical and grammatical corrections;
 - c. that the student be awarded the degree for which they are registered subject to amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at the *viva*; these amendments must be submitted within 6 months these amendments will likely involve more substantial changes or additions to content and/or a number of additional references and/or some restructuring of the thesis and/or typographical and grammatical corrections
 - d. that the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be reassessed. In the case of a PhD by Prior Published or Creative Work a new submission would be considered providing that a minimum of two years had elapsed since the first application and that the new submission contains significant new material;
 - e. where the student is registered for a doctorate, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil with no further corrections;
 - f. where the student is registered for a doctorate, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview, to the satisfaction of one examiner as agreed at the *viva*, within 6 months;

11. Academic Misconduct

- 11.1 Academic Misconduct is defined by the University as any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment or assisting another student to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment. Research degree students who are believed to have engaged in academic misconduct in the course of their studies will be subject to the [Procedures for investigation of cases of alleged Academic Misconduct](#).

12. Mitigating circumstances

- 12.1 If a student has evidence that the non-submission of an assessment item, the standard of their work in an assessment item or their absence from or level of performance in the viva voce or alternative form of examination was a result of exceptional circumstances such as ill health, or family bereavement, the student may submit a claim under [Procedure for Dealing with claims of Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances](#).

13. Awards

- 13.1 An award of the University will be made when the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. the student was a registered student of the University or was registered as a student for the award of the University by a partner organisation at the time of their assessment for an award and has paid the appropriate fee to the University;
- b. details of the student's full name, date of birth, programme and the award for which he or she is a student have been recorded by the University;
- c. satisfactory confirmation has been received that the student has completed a programme of research approved as leading to the award being recommended;
- d. the award has been recommended by an Examination Panel including the requisite number of approved external examiners for the programme of research and/or the award;
- e. the recommendations of the external examiners has been received in writing.

13.2 The following awards will be available to students who meet the following minimum requirements at the levels shown or at a research level:

Award	Requirement
MPhil	Minimum of 40 credits at Level 7 and a thesis that meets the requirements at level 7.
PhD	Minimum of 40 credits at Level 7 and a thesis that meets the requirements at Level 8
PhD by Prior Published or Creative Work	Portfolio and critical overview document that meets the requirements at Level 8
DBA and EdD	Minimum of 180 credits at Level 7 and 360 credits at Level 8 including 270 credits from the thesis

13.3 The award recommended by an Examination Panel will normally be that for which the student is registered, specified in the approved programme specification, for which the student has fulfilled the requirements. There may be occasions where the Examination Panel recommends the student be awarded a lower award from that for which the student is registered.

13.4 A posthumous award may be awarded to a deceased research degree student who has submitted their thesis for examination or who has successfully completed their examination and was in the process of completing amendments.

13.5 If the student was close to completion but had not submitted work for examination, an application for consideration for a posthumous award must be made by the students Supervisory or advisory team with the permission of the student's family or next of kin, in writing to the Academic Registrar for consideration by the Chair of Academic Board.

13.6 Where there is sufficient evidence of the student's research to demonstrate that the candidate would have reached the standard required for the award in question the Chair of Academic Board will approve that a posthumous award be made.

13.7 A posthumous award will normally be the named award, as appropriate.

14. Award titles

14.1 The titles of the award will be:

Award	Award Title
MPhil	Thesis Title
PhD	Thesis or Portfolio Title
DBA and EdD	Course Title

15. Publication of Results

15.1 The **Doctoral** School is responsible for the publication of official results to students following the meeting of the Boards of Examiners. Publication of taught module results will be made electronically via the secure student portal (SOLE) and will include access to individual module results, the progression decision and the award agreed by Boards of Examiners.

15.2 If students do not satisfy some or all of the assessment requirements, the **Doctoral** School will communicate the decision of the Examination Panel.

15.3 It is the student's responsibility to ascertain their results.

15.4 Results will be withheld from students if they have outstanding obligations to the University, or are the subject of an allegation of a breach of discipline as follows:

- a. students who are at the end of the final year of their programme will neither receive their degree transcripts nor be supported by a University reference until the obligation is discharged;
- b. registration for the next stage of the programme will be denied to a student who has an outstanding obligation to the University at the start of the next stage;
- c. the award concerning a student who is subject of an allegation of breach of discipline will be withheld until the allegation has been determined and any consequent action discharged.

16. Appeals against the decisions of an Examination Panel

16.1 Students will be allowed to appeal against the decisions of Boards of Examiners on the following grounds:-

- a. a material administrative error in the conduct of the assessment process or in the recording, transcription or reporting of assessment results;
- b. an error by the Examination Panel who did not act in accordance with the relevant regulations and procedures;
- c. some other material irregularity relevant to the assessment(s) concerned which has substantially prejudiced the results of the assessment;

- 16.2 Disagreement with the academic judgement of an Examination Panel in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work, or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades or other information relating to a student's performance cannot in itself constitute grounds for appeal.
- 16.3 Appeals must be submitted and considered according to the Procedures approved by Academic Board through the [Student Academic Appeals Procedures](#).

17. Certification and Transcripts

- 17.1 A Certificate and transcript will be issued to all students who receive an award.
- 17.2 Transcripts are also issued on request to students who have completed part of a programme of study.
- 17.3 The award certificate issued by the University will record:
- a. the name of the University;
 - b. the student's name;
 - c. the date of the award;
 - d. the title of the course (if any) as approved by the Academic Board for the purposes of the certificate;
 - e. the certificate shall bear the signatures of the Vice Chancellor and of the Academic Registrar.
- 17.4 The transcript will be signed on behalf of Academic Board by the Academic Registrar or by some other person authorised by the Academic Registrar to do so.

18. Withdrawal and Temporary Withdrawal

- 18.1 Once a student has registered on a programme of studies, the student is expected to complete that programme within the normal registration periods unless the student withdraws or temporarily withdraws from their studies.

Withdrawal

- 18.2 A student who wishes to withdraw from the University should initially meet with the **Programme** Leader and then complete the withdrawal form.
- 18.3 The withdrawal comes into effect from the date the student submits the formal notification of withdrawal. In exceptional cases, the Chair of the Research Degrees Board may permit the effective withdrawal date to be backdated.
- 18.4 Acceptance of a Withdrawal Form will terminate the student's registration in both the programme of study and any modules associated with it. A student who has withdrawn will have no right or expectation of re-admission to the University.
- 18.5 The student's tuition fee will be based on liability periods and the annual fee charged for the period of registration until the date of withdrawal in accordance with the Tuition Fee Policy. In all cases, any unpaid balance of fees will become due immediately.

- 18.6 A student who is withdrawn/excluded from the University for poor attendance, non-engagement in studies or following the decision of an APR Panel, will need to reapply to the University. The student may not normally be re-admitted until a period of at least twelve months has elapsed.

Temporary withdrawal

- 18.7 A student may request to withdraw from the University temporarily, normally on health or personal grounds. Requests for a period of temporary withdrawal, supported by medical evidence if appropriate, should be discussed with the supervisory or advisory team and then submitted using the appropriate form.
- 18.8 The temporary withdrawal comes into effect from the date the University is notified of the student's wish to withdraw temporarily. In exceptional cases, the Chair of the Research Degrees Board may permit the effective temporary withdrawal date to be backdated.
- 18.9 The University may require a student to withdraw temporarily where the University is satisfied that a period of withdrawal is in the best academic interests of the student.
- 18.10 A student can only seek temporary withdrawal for a maximum of 12 consecutive months (full time) or 24 months (part time) in any single request and normally 12/18 months in total during their programme. The student may request shorter periods with a minimum of 1 month.
- 18.11 Students are not permitted to attend supervisory or advisory meetings, Researcher Development Workshops, modules or submit reassessment items during a period of temporary withdrawal. Access to University IT facilities and the Library will not normally continue during a period of temporary withdrawal.
- 18.12 The student's tuition fee will be based on liability periods and the annual fee charged for the period of registration until the date of temporary withdrawal in accordance with the Tuition Fee Policy. In all cases, any unpaid balance of fees will become due immediately.
- 18.13 Return to the University following a period of temporary withdrawal may be subject to conditions. Any conditions will be set out when the request to withdraw temporarily is approved. If these conditions have not been met at the point of return to the University, the student will not be allowed to re-register without the written agreement of the Chair of the Research Degrees Board.
- 18.14 The Research Degrees Board would not normally expect a student to request (or their supervisory or advisory team to approve a request for):
- a. temporary withdrawal from their studies for a period that would take them beyond 12 *consecutive* months;
 - b. temporary withdrawal from their studies for a period that would take them beyond 12 months *in total* during their programme of study for a full-time student and beyond 18 months *in total* for a part-time student;
 - c. 3 or more periods of temporary withdrawal within any 24 month period even where the total period requested is no more than 12 months for a full-time

student or no more than 18 months for a part-time student or the requests do not include a period of more than 12 consecutive months;

- d. temporary withdrawal 6 months or less before their maximum completion date.

18.15 A student returning from a period of temporary withdrawal of registration shall be subject to the regulations that apply at the time of re-registration.

19. Interpretation

19.1 These regulations should be interpreted using the terminology above. In cases of dispute these regulations will be interpreted by the Academic Board.

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For revisions prior to Academic Year 2016/17 please refer to Version 1.6 of the RDRF

Committee	Date	Change
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Academic Board (v1.10)	29 January 2020	Minor amendments [AB19-25]
Academic Board (v1.9)	4 July 2018	Minor amendments [AB17-80]
Academic Board (v1.8)	28 June 2017	Minor amendments [AB16-66]
Academic Board (v1.7)	12 October 2016	Minor amendments [AB16-11]