

Edge Hill
University

Research Degree Regulations

For students undertaking research study leading to the awards of Masters by Research and Master or Doctor of Philosophy

ACADEMIC REGISTRY
November 2011

N Research Degree Regulations

N1 OPERATION OF AWARDING POWERS

- N1.1 Research Degrees of the University are awarded by the Academic Board under the powers outlined in section A2.
- N1.2 Awards are confirmed by the Graduate School Board of Studies operating under devolved powers from the Academic Board.
- N1.3 The Graduate School Board of Studies is a sub-committee of Academic Board and is responsible to the Board for the assurance of the standard of research degree awards and for the development and operation of the processes and procedures of all aspects of research degree registrations
- N1.4 In operating its research degree awarding powers, the University is alert to, and assures consistency with, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes.

N2 AWARDS OFFERED

- N2.1 The University offers the following awards:

i **Masters by Research (MRes) (FHEQ level 7)**

The Masters by research (MRes) is awarded to a candidate who, following a programme of research training, demonstrates an understanding of research methodology appropriate to the field of study, designs appropriate research, investigates a focused topic and presents and defends a thesis, by oral examination, to the satisfaction of the appointed examiners. Specific regulations for MRes degrees are at N18 below.

ii **Master of Philosophy (MPhil) (FHEQ level 7)**

The Master of Philosophy (MPhil) is awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methodology appropriate to the field of study, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the appointed examiners.

iii **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (FHEQ level 8)**

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent, significant and original contribution to knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of research methodology appropriate to the field of study, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the appointed examiners.

- N2.2 Awards offered are defined by a series of benchmarks relating to the general level of knowledge and skills required to register for the award and the qualification and study levels required to achieve the award. (Qualification level descriptors are taken from the FHEQ and are shown as *Appendix 3*).

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N3 APPLICATION OF THE ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

N3.1 Except as specified in this section, research students and research degree programmes are subject to the general Academic Regulations of the University as they apply.

N4 ADMISSION

N4.1 The normal entry requirement for a research degree is a first or upper second class honours bachelor degree from a United Kingdom university or other institution recognised for this purpose by the Graduate School Board of Studies, or a qualification which is regarded by the Board as equivalent. The normal entry requirement for a PhD direct registration is a Masters degree by research.

N4.2 The University may also accept other qualifications and/or professional experience in lieu of the general entry requirement. In such cases, applicants may be required to provide evidence of their suitability for research degree study through the provision of a prior learning portfolio.

N4.3 All pre-doctoral applicants must successfully complete the Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Research or otherwise satisfy the requirements for MPhil/PhD or direct PhD registration.

N4.4 Applicants for research degrees must provide at least two academic references from appropriate referees who can attest to the applicant's academic attainment and fitness for research.

N4.5 All applicants must show sufficient command of the English language to complete a programme satisfactorily and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Applicants whose first language is not English or who originate from countries whose national language is not English are required to demonstrate English language proficiency to minimum standards. For the purposes of these regulations, the minimum standard required is specified as an IELTS score of 7.0 or equivalent.

N4.6 Appropriately qualified applicants will be interviewed before an offer of a place is made. Interviews will be conducted by a Research Student Admissions Panel, appointed through the Graduate School, comprising a minimum of two research active members of staff who will have received appropriate training, at least one of whom will be an experienced supervisor.

N4.7 Offers are made by, and are subject to, the approval of the Director of the Graduate School who will seek assurance from the Dean of Faculty or Head of Department that, as far as can be determined at this initial stage, adequate and appropriate supervisory arrangements can be made and that the research environment, governance arrangements, available resources and facilities are suitable to the proposal.

N4.8 Following admission, a student will be formally allocated at least one experienced supervisor who will work with the student to develop an application to register for a research degree programme.

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N4.9 Admission and enrolment to the PG Cert in Research does not guarantee registration for MPhil/PhD. On successful completion of the PG Cert programme, students are either recommended for MPhil/PhD registration, or alternatively exit with the award of a PG Cert in Research.

Students who continue to MPhil/PhD registration will not be awarded a PG Cert, but will continue towards the doctorate (or in some cases an MPhil). Those students who progress to MPhil/PhD registration, but are unsuccessful in gaining an MPhil will be awarded the PG Cert in Research. The PG Cert in Research, therefore, is purely an exit award.

N4.10 Admission may be additionally subject to completion of a specified programme of related studies or research training. Normally any such requirement will be integrated into the requirements for the PG Cert in Research.

N4.11 Applicants may not appeal an admissions decision. Applicants who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the admissions process may use the University Complaints Procedure.

N5 ENROLMENT

N5.1 Students are required to enrol with and pay fees to the University once they have accepted the offer of a place. Initial enrolment is normally to the PG Cert in Research which is a requisite element of research degree programmes for pre-doctoral students.

N5.2 There are two enrolment points during the academic session: October & January. Students who are accepted for registration to a research degree programme are required to enrol and pay fees for each academic session, or part of session, they remain registered.

N5.3 Students may enrol as either full-time or part-time students.

N6 REGISTRATION FOR AWARD

N6.1 Registration is normally for MPhil or MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD. Exceptionally, the Graduate School Board of Studies may accept applications for PhD direct.

N6.2 The maximum length of the pre-registration period is either governed by the regulations for the PG Cert in Research or otherwise set at 12 months from the point of admission for full-time and part-time students.

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N6.3 The minimum and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

Award	Minimum	Expected	Maximum+
<i>MPhil</i>			
Full-time	12 months	24 months	36 months
Part-time	24 months	36 months	54 months
<i>PhD (inclusive of MPhil registration period where appropriate)</i>			
Full-time	24 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time	36 months	54 months	72 months

+The Graduate School Board of Studies may approve a maximum of 12 months suspension of study (intercalation) in accordance with regulation N10.4.

N6.4 In those cases where a student combines periods of full-time and part-time enrolment during the registration, the maximum registration period will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

N7 APPROVAL OF REGISTRATION

Registration procedures are detailed in the University's Research Student Handbook.

N7.1 Applications to register for a research degree programme are subject to approval by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Initial assessment of the proposal is through formal presentation by the student to a Registration Review Panel, appointed through the Graduate School, comprising three research active members of staff, one of whom will normally be a member of the student's proposed supervisory team. The Chair of the Panel is approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Exceptions to these arrangements require the approval of the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies.

N7.2 On completion of the assessment, the Panel will submit a report to the Graduate School Board of Studies with one of the following recommendations:

- i. The student should be registered for the degree for which registration is sought;
- ii. The student should be registered for MPhil only in the first instance;
- iii. The student should not be registered for a research degree at the present time.

N7.3 In cases under iii above, a student will be allowed to resubmit a proposal for consideration within a six-month period. Further applications will not be considered and the student will be required to withdraw.

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- N7.4 The Graduate School Board of Studies will consider applications to register, along with reports and recommendations from Panels. In approving an application to register, the Board shall satisfy itself that:
- i. the research student is suitably qualified;
 - ii. the programme of research submitted by the applicant is viable and appropriate to the standard of the award sought (as demonstrated through successful completion of the PG Cert in Research);
 - iii. the supervisory arrangements are adequate and sustainable in terms of the programme requirements;
 - iv. appropriate resources and facilities are available for the conduct of the programme of research;
 - v. ethical approval has been obtained where appropriate or the proposal has been referred to the Research Ethics Committee for further consideration;
 - vi. where a project is wholly or partly funded by an external agency or there is a collaborating institution, this does not inhibit the fulfilment of the objectives of the project and/or the academic requirements of the research degree, nor potentially give rise to a conflict of interest with the University.
- N7.5 Where the committee is not satisfied on any of these points, the application may be rejected, referred back for further work or remitted for Chair's Action subsequent to the receipt of further information as required by the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N7.6 The Graduate School Board of Studies may approve registrations where the research student's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry, subject to the work having been undertaken, or being put to substantial new use, as part of the registered programme of research.
- N7.7 The Graduate School Board of Studies may approve registrations in which the principal focus is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, musical or choreographic work or other original artefact(s).
- N7.8 In the case of registrations under N7.6 or N7.7, the application for registration will set out the form of the intended submission and the proposed methods of assessment for approval by the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N7.9 The date of registration is deemed to be the date of the Graduate School Board of Studies meeting at which approval of the research programme is obtained. The committee may approve backdating the date of registration, with appropriate justification, to a date not earlier than the date of the Panel meeting recommending approval of the registration.
- N8 SUPERVISION**
- N8.1 The supervisory team is approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies as part of the approval of registration.
- N8.2 The supervisory team will consist of at least two and normally not more than three supervisors, at least one of whom will have previous experience of successful supervision at the level of the award for which the student is registered.
- N8.3 The supervisory team will collectively demonstrate active engagement in research bringing a range of skills and knowledge relevant to the project.

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- N8.4 One member of the team, who will be a permanent member of staff of the University, will be designated as Director of Studies. The Director of Studies has responsibility to ensure supervision of the candidate on a regular and frequent basis, manage the supervisory team and ensure the quality of the research project.
- N8.5 Other members of the team will have specific subject and/or methodological expertise and may be drawn from outwith the University.
- N8.6 In addition to the supervisors, an adviser, or advisers, may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation or collaborating institution.
- N8.7 A research student is generally ineligible to act as a member of a supervisory team for another research student, but may be appointed as an adviser. Exceptions may be considered where the proposed supervising student already holds a research degree award.
- N8.8 The maximum number of students that can be supervised concurrently by an individual member of staff of the University is normally six. Deans of Faculty and Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that the workload allocation model takes account of the requirements for research student supervision.
- N8.9 Any change to the supervisory arrangements must be approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Where a change is necessitated by the ill-health, retirement or other long-term unavailability of a member of the supervisory team, appropriate alternative arrangements must be proposed by the relevant Dean of Faculty/Head of Department such that the student is not disadvantaged in project progression.
- N8.10 Students who experience difficulties with any aspect of supervision should first seek to resolve these informally through discussion with the Director of Studies. Unresolved difficulties should be raised with the relevant Head of Department or Dean of Faculty or the Director of the Graduate School for action. Exceptionally, this may lead to a change in supervisory arrangements, subject to approval by the Graduate School Board of Studies.

N9 TRANSFER OF REGISTRATION TO DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

- N9.1 Students registered for MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD who wish to transfer to PhD must submit a transfer application to the Graduate School Board of Studies. Normally, such applications should be submitted no later than eighteen months from first registration for full-time students or thirty-six months for part-time.
- N9.2 Applications must be supported by the supervisory team.

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- N9.3 Applications to transfer must be accompanied by a transfer report of no more than 6000 words outlining:
- i. progress to date in the literature review, methodological development and data collection;
 - ii. the original contribution to knowledge that will be made by the research;
 - iii. the written work to date, its form and whether it has been seen and commented on by supervisors;
 - iv. the timetable for thesis submission;
 - v. a detailed plan of the final thesis structure.
- N9.4 Applications to transfer are initially assessed by a Transfer Review Panel, appointed through the Graduate School, by means of a formal presentation of the application by the student.
- N9.5 Membership of the Transfer Review Panel will comprise three research active members of staff no more than one of whom will be a member of the supervisory team. One member will be external to the University and at least one of the independent members will have experience of supervising at least one PhD to successful completion. The Chair of the Panel will be approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Amendment to these arrangements requires the approval of the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies and will only be given where exceptional mitigating circumstances apply.
- N9.6 On completion of the assessment, the Transfer Review Panel will prepare a report making one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Board of Studies:
- i. the application to transfer be approved;
 - ii. the application be referred back for further work and resubmitted.
- N9.7 Where a referral is approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies, the student will be allowed a period of no more than nine months (for full-time students) or twelve months (for part-time students) to make a resubmission. Written feedback will be provided to the Graduate School by the Transfer Review Panel for transmission to the student.
- N9.8 Only one resubmission of an application to transfer to PhD is permitted. Where an application is rejected for the second time, the MPhil registration will be maintained.
- N9.9 Students who are refused permission to transfer at the second submission may appeal under the University's Appeals Procedure (see section N20).

N10 CHANGES TO REGISTRATION

- N10.1 With the exception to change in mode of study, changes to registrations are by application and are subject to the approval of the Graduate School Board of Studies including:
- i. Suspension of study (intercalation)
 - ii. Extension to the period of registration
 - iii. Change in award level
 - iv. Early Submission
- N10.2 All changes to registration must be supported by the supervisory team.

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- N10.3 A student registered for PhD who is unable to complete, or seeks to exit before submission for PhD, may apply for the registration to be remitted to MPhil. Equally, a student originally registered for MPhil alone may apply to transfer the registration to PhD. In either case, the Graduate School Board of Studies will satisfy itself, having regard to the transfer regulations outlined in section 9, that the standard of award applied for is appropriate and can be met.
- N10.4 A suspension of study (intercalation) may be approved where a student is prevented from making progress with the research because of illness or other reasonable cause. The maximum suspension period per application is twelve months. Normally, a student shall only be permitted periods of suspension totalling twelve months during the registration. Exceptions are subject to approval by the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N10.5 An agreed period of suspension will not be included in calculating the period of registration specified in N6.3.
- N10.6 Applications for extension must be supported by evidence of exceptional the circumstances which have prevented completion within the normal timescale.
- N10.7 Withdrawal from registration must be notified to the Graduate School by the Dean of Faculty or Head of Department for report to the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N10.8 Where a student is not making satisfactory academic progress and/or is no longer in contact with his/her supervisory team, the Graduate School Board of Studies may formally terminate a registration.

N11 ANNUAL MONITORING, PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT

- N11.1 In order to assist progression, all students will be offered opportunities to acquire appropriate generic and transferable skills as part of the University's Research Support Programme and through other relevant events.
- N11.2 All students are encouraged to maintain a Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) and will be provided with appropriate guidance when they register.
- N11.3 The University will operate an annual review system in relation to research degree registrations involving both the research student and the Director of Studies.
- N11.4 Documentation from the supervisory team will include a recommendation in relation to progression to the next academic session.
- N11.5 Where a student fails to make satisfactory progress or respond appropriately to feedback, registration may be terminated under N10.8 above.
- N11.6 A student who is denied progression or whose registration is terminated under these regulations may appeal under the Research Degree Appeals Procedures

N12 SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS

- N 12.1 A thesis will be submitted in English, unless otherwise approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies.

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- N12.2 Submission must be completed within the period of registration and must comply in length, style, layout and presentation with *Schedule A* to these regulations. Submissions may be in print or electronic format.
- N12.3 Where the student's own creative work has formed a significant part of the intellectual enquiry under N7.6, the final submission must be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative element of the work, where practicable, bound in with the thesis.
- N12.4 Where the principal focus of a programme of research has been the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, a musical or choreographic work or other original artefact(s) under N7.7, the completed submission must include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations together with a significant introduction and critical commentary which sets the text(s) or artefact(s) in their relevant historical, theoretical and/or critical context.
- N12.5 The thesis is generally regarded as a public document. Exceptionally, the Graduate School Board of Studies may approve an application for a thesis to remain confidential to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material.
- N12.6 Applications for confidentiality are normally made and approved at the time of registration. Where the need for confidentiality only becomes apparent as the research progresses, a later application may be made but must precede submission of the thesis for examination.
- N12.7 The period of confidentiality will not normally exceed three years. Exceptions are at the discretion of the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N12.8 The copies of the thesis submitted for examination will remain the property of the University but intellectual property rights (IPR) and copyright normally resides with the research student. Where a student is being sponsored in relation to the research, agreement on the allocation of IPR will be agreed at the time of registration. Where appropriate, the University will assist the student, on an agreed basis, in the exploitation of IPR.

N13 EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

- N13.1 Examination arrangements, including proposals for the appointment of examiners, are approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N13.2 The Director of Studies is responsible for submitting proposals for the examination team to the Graduate School Board of Studies at least six months prior to the proposed date of the examination.
- N13.3 A research degree student will be examined by at least two examiners, normally including one internal and one external examiner. In addition, the Graduate School Board of Studies will nominate a suitably experienced independent member of staff to chair the viva and to keep notes in relation to the process.

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- N13.4 An additional external examiner is required for students who are also members of staff¹ of:
- i. the University;
 - ii. a designated partner institution of the University;
 - iii. a collaborating institution as designated on the approved registration documentation .
- N13.5 Examiners will be experienced in research in the general area of the student's thesis and, where practicable, will have specialist experience in the particular topic that is the subject of examination.
- N13.6 The examining team must collectively hold a minimum of two previous examinations of research students at the level of the award being examined. One external examiner must have previous examining experience (see also N13.3).
- N13.7 An external examiner may not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser nor have been, within the previous three years, either a supervisor of another research student, or an external examiner on a taught course, in the same Department.
- N13.8 External examiners will be clearly independent of both the University and any partner or collaborating institution and will not have been employed by the University, or any partner or collaborating institution, during a period of three years prior to appointment. The Graduate School Board of Studies will ensure that an external examiner is not appointed with such frequency that familiarity with the University might be considered prejudicial to objective judgement.
- N13.9 The internal examiner will be a research active member of the University's permanent or emeritus professorial staff who will not be the student's supervisor, former supervisor or adviser at the corresponding level of study.
- N13.10 Where there is a requirement for the thesis to remain confidential, examiners must be prepared to agree to maintain such confidentiality.
- N13.11 Examiners are required to maintain confidentiality within the examining process and in particular with respect to the thesis until publication.

N14 THE EXAMINATION

- N14.1 The examination for the degrees of MPhil and PhD has two stages:
- i. the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis;
 - ii. the defence of the thesis by oral examination (or approved alternative).

¹ The following are not considered to be subject to this regulation: staff on fractional contracts less than 0.3 FTE, associate tutors teaching fewer than eight hours per week, graduate teaching assistants and staff who have been appointed to a full-time or permanent contract within one year of examination.

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- N14.2 It is a student's responsibility to:
- i. solely determine when a thesis is ready for submission whether or not this has the approval of the student's supervisors²;
 - ii. ensure the thesis is submitted within the registration period and complies with the required format;
 - iii. submit a declaration form confirming that the content of the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award (although reference to work already submitted may be made in a thesis covering a wider field).
- N14.3 Where a student wishes to submit a thesis prior to the expiry of the 'expected' period of registration (see N6.3), confirmation by all members of the supervisory team that the thesis is of an appropriate standard to merit examination is required.
- N14.4 A supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis does not ensure its approval by the examiners nor can it be used as grounds for appeal against the outcome of an examination or introduced as evidence in any such appeal.
- N14.5 Normally, oral examinations (or approved alternatives) will be held on mainland Britain. Exceptions must be approved by the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N14.6 All examinations will be conducted in English.
- N14.7 The oral examination will focus on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where, for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause, the Graduate School Board of Studies is satisfied that a student would be at serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval will not be given on the grounds that the student's knowledge of English is inadequate.
- N14.8 Students may not take any part in the formal arrangements for the examination nor have any formal contact with the external examiners between their appointment and the oral examination (or approved alternative).
- N14.9 Supervisors may attend the oral examination as observers with the prior written consent of the student and the examiners but must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.
- N14.10 The Graduate School Board of Studies, through the Chair of the examination viva, will ensure that the conduct of examinations and the presentation of the examiners' recommendations are undertaken in accordance with the University's regulations. Where the Graduate School Board of Studies is made aware of a failure to comply with the specified procedures, the examination may be declared invalid and new examiners appointed.

N15 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS

- N15.1 Prior to the oral examination (or approved alternative), each examiner will be sent a copy of the thesis and is required to submit an independent preliminary report in a prescribed format to the Graduate School indicating a provisional recommendation.

² *Students are strongly advised not to submit without the support of their supervisory team but retain the right to do so.*

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- N15.2 Examiners may not consult with each other in preparing their report.
- N15.3 Recommendations will be based on the examiner's judgement of the thesis in relation to the requirements for the award as set out in section N2.1.
- N15.4 If an examiner is of the opinion that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination (or approved alternative), this will form the basis of the recommendation.
- N15.5 Where all the examiners are of the opinion that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination (or approved alternative), they will provide the Graduate School with written guidance on the deficiencies of the thesis for the student who will then have a period of no more than twelve months to revise the thesis for re-examination (see section N17).
- N15.6 Where the preliminary recommendations from the external examiners are not in agreement, the Graduate School will consult with all the examiners to reach a decision as to whether to proceed with the oral examination (or approved alternative).
- N15.7 The examiners may not recommend that a student fail outright without holding an oral examination (or approved alternative).

N16 FIRST ORAL EXAMINATION

- N16.1 Examinations are conducted as set out in section N14.
- N16.2 Following the oral examination (or approved alternative) the examiners will, where they are in agreement, prepare a joint report and recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies and, where the recommendation is to make the award, certify that the thesis meets the criteria for the award.
- N16.3 The following recommendations are available to the examiners:
- i. that the student be awarded the degree;
 - ii. that the student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis, with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve months from the date of receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required. In certain circumstances under this clause, the examiners may authorise one of the internal examiners to sign-off any amendments on behalf of the examining team. Where appropriate, this will be indicated explicitly on the joint report prepared by the examiners;
 - iii. that the student be permitted to be re-examined for the degree, with or without a further oral examination (or approved alternative), with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve months from the date of receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School, on the deficiencies of the examination;
 - iv. that no award is made and that the student may not be re-examined. The examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the reasons for their recommendation which will be communicated to the student via the Graduate School;
 - v. in the case of a PhD, that the student be awarded an MPhil with or without amendments being made to the thesis, with the amended thesis being

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submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve months from the date of the receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required;

- vi. in the case of a PhD, that the student be permitted to be re-examined for the award of MPhil, with or without a further oral examination (or approved alternative), with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve months from the date of the receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School;
- vii. the examiners may require a student to undertake a further examination in addition to the oral component. Such examination will be subject to the specific approval of the Graduate School Board of Studies and will normally be held within two months of the oral examination (or approved alternative) and shall be deemed to be part of the first examination;
- viii. that malpractice has occurred and that the student be considered under the University's Malpractice regulations (see section N19).

N16.4 Where the examiners are not in agreement following the oral examination (or approved alternative), each examiner will prepare a separate report and recommendation and these will be considered by the Graduate School Board of Studies. The committee will determine one of the following outcomes:

- i. to accept a majority recommendation provided that such recommendation includes the views of at least one external examiner;
- ii. to accept the recommendation of the external examiner;
- iii. to require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- iv. to require the appointment of a new examining team.

N16.5 Where an additional external examiner, or new examining team, is appointed, independent preliminary report(s) on the thesis will be prepared and, where necessary, a further oral examination (or approved alternative) be conducted. The additional external examiner, or examining team, shall not be informed of the opinions or recommendations of the original examiners.

N17 RE-EXAMINATION

N17.1 Only one re-examination for a research degree award is permitted.

N17.2 Where it is satisfied that just cause exists, the Graduate School Board of Studies may approve an extension to the resubmission timescales detailed in N16.3.

N17.3 The examining team responsible for the final recommendation from the first examination will operate for re-examination except that the Graduate School Board of Studies may require that an additional external examiner be appointed.

N17.4 On submission of the revised thesis, examiners will complete preliminary report forms as detailed in section N15.

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N17.5 The appropriate form of re-examination will depend on the outcome of the first examination and/or the examiners' recommendations with respect to the revised thesis.

N17.6 Three forms of re-examination are possible:

- i. The thesis only to be examined without an oral examination (or approved alternative);
- ii. An oral examination (or approved alternative) without the need to further revise the thesis;
- iii. Re-examination of the thesis and an oral examination (or approved alternative).

N17.7 Following the re-examination, the examiners will agree a written report and recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies.

N17.8 In the case of re-examination, the following recommendations are available to the examiners:

- i. that the student be awarded the degree;
- ii. that the student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis, with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date and no later than six months from the date of the receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required. In certain circumstances under this clause, the examiners may authorise one of the internal examiners to sign-off any amendments on behalf of the examining team. Where appropriate, this will be indicated explicitly on the joint report prepared by the examiners;
- iii. that no award is made. The examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the reasons for their recommendation which will be communicated to the student via the Graduate School;
- iv. in the case of a PhD, that the student be awarded an MPhil with or without amendments being made to the thesis, with the amended thesis (if required) being submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve months from the date of the receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the student, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required;
- v. that malpractice has occurred and that the student be considered under the University's Malpractice regulations (see section N19).

N17.9 Where the examiners are not in agreement, the provisions of N16.4 apply.

N18 MASTERS BY RESEARCH (MRES)

N18.1 The University's general academic regulations apply unless these specific MRes regulations define otherwise.

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N18.2 Masters by Research

- i. Masters degrees of Edge Hill University are aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and confer at least 180 credits at level 7.
- ii. Masters degrees of the University that include at least 100 level 7 credits achieved through a programme of research will be designated as a Masters by Research (MRes).
- iii. Whilst such degrees will normally confer the postnominal designation of MRes, other masters titles (MA, MSc, LLM and any other 180 credit masters level degree approved by Academic Board) may still be approved as a Masters by Research so long as they are congruent with these regulations.

N18.3 Credits

- i. Masters by Research degrees must normally include 60 credits (and certainly no less than 40, and no more than 80 credits) of research training in the form of taught modules. The balance between taught research training and the research project will be tested and agreed at validation.
- ii. If the taught element of the programme is to be 60 credits or greater, an exit award of Postgraduate Certificate (PgC) should be included (and its title must be approved during the validation process).

N18.4 Approval of programmes leading to the award of Masters by Research

- i. MRes programmes will be formally considered for approval at an Institutional Validation and Audit Standing Panel (VASP) event with membership drawn from internal and peer external staff with appropriate research experience and expertise.
- ii. The VASP panel will make recommendations to the Graduate School Board of Studies (GSBOS) which is granted delegated authority from Academic Board to approve such programmes on behalf of the University.
- iii. Validation outcomes will be reported to Learning and Teaching Committee for information.

N18.5 Admission to the programme

- i. Applicants for admission to the degree of Masters by Research normally require a minimum of a 2ii honours bachelors degree (or equivalent) in a cognate or appropriate discipline.
- ii. The MRes degree will generally be an integrated programme, within which completion of the taught elements is likely to lead to the development of the formal research project proposal. It is thus unlikely that APEL or other mechanisms leading to entry with advanced standing could be used for any of the programme modules. Exceptionally, if the programme team wishes to use APEL as part of the admissions process, this should be proposed and approved at validation.

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N18.6 Duration of the programme and attendance requirements

- i. The University's regulations regarding registration periods for taught masters degrees apply to the MRes:
 - Full-time registration: 1 calendar year minimum to 2 years maximum
 - Part-time registration: 18 months minimum to 3 years maximum
- ii. Registered students should attend the University for both taught and research phases of their study. However, appropriately designed blended learning may obviate the need for some physical attendance, thus permitting off-campus research where appropriate.
- iii. There should be a minimum of three regular and formal face-to-face recorded research supervision meetings per annum during the programme of research, although supervisors and student should engage regularly in a variety of manners, and generally at least once per month.

N18.7 Assessment

Taught modules

- i. The assessment of the taught elements of the programme must be complete and credit awarded before the submission of the dissertation. Taught elements should normally be graded F/P/M/D.

Research project

- i. An individual project should be the norm; group projects in which all students work to the same research design should not be permitted.
- ii. In exceptional circumstances projects in which a group of students conduct research in the same area are acceptable so long as discrete individual programmes of work can be identified in which the student is able to demonstrate that s/he has designed his/her research.
- iii. The process employed to approve the students' research projects should include scrutiny by at least two research active staff in addition to the prospective supervisor.

Supervision of research project

- i. Research degree supervisors must be active researchers currently involved in the production of peer-reviewed publications, and with a recent record of such publications.

Assessment of dissertations

- i. Final assessment of the research project will be by dissertation (20-30,000 words) and viva, and will not be graded. The viva panel should comprise at least one internal and one external examiner. An internal examiner shall act as the chair.
- ii. Detailed guidelines on the conduct of vivas will be issued by the GSBOS.
- iii. The research project may not be condoned.

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Research ethics considerations

- i. Research proposals should receive ethical approval from Faculty Research Ethics Committees. Research proposals carrying significant ethical risk should be referred by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee to the University Research Ethics Committee for scrutiny.
- ii. No primary research may start until a proposal has gained the appropriate ethical approval.

Examination Boards and External Examiners

- i. Module outcomes (including the dissertation) will be considered at an appropriate module assessment board within the Faculty.
- ii. The GSBOS, the delegated awarding committee for research degrees, will form the Progression and Award Board for all MRes programmes, to which external examiners will be invited, and onto which MRes Programme Leaders will be co-opted.
- iii. An external examiner will be appointed for each MRes, with responsibility for all the taught modules as well as the research element. External examiners should attend the Module Board.

N18.8 Award classification

- i. Masters by Research will be awarded without classification.
- ii. The exit award of PgC, if offered, should be classified in accordance with the University's standard regulations for the classification of awards other than Bachelors honours degrees.
- iii. Award of a Masters by Research will exempt graduates from the requirement to engage in a formal programme of research training as a precursor to commencing study for an MPhil or PhD at Edge Hill. MRes graduates may directly enter a PhD programme, without initial registration for an MPhil, by submitting a written research proposal and successfully undertaking a registration viva.

N19 ACADEMIC MALPRACTICE

N19.1 Academic malpractice is regarded as a serious academic offence and especially within the context of a research degree. Details of what constitutes an academic offence are given in *Schedule B* to these regulations.

N19.2 All allegations of malpractice by the examiners in respect of research degrees following submission of the thesis will be referred to the common procedure outlined in *Schedule B* and a Panel of Inquiry will be established.

N19.3 The Panel will comprise a Chair (a Dean or Professor of the University) and two research active members of staff nominated by the chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies drawn from a standing panel of the committee. No member of the Panel will have had any previous involvement with the student nor will they be drawn from the subject area in which the student's research is based.

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- N19.4 The panel will meet as soon as possible and not later than six weeks from the date an allegation is formally submitted by the examiners.
- N19.5 For the purposes of these regulations, the terms of reference of the Panel of Inquiry will be to determine whether malpractice has taken place and, if so, to make a recommendation with respect to the penalty to be applied to the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N19.6 The following recommendations are available to the Panel:
- i. The accusation is unfounded and the student should be permitted to continue to examination without penalty;
 - ii. The accusation is upheld and the student should be failed with an opportunity for retraining and resubmission under the re-examination regulations (section N17). (Note this recommendation is not available if the student is already registered for re-examination);
 - iii. The accusation is upheld and the student should be failed outright with a recommendation for exclusion.
- N19.7 The Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies will confirm the position of the student at the earliest opportunity and in any event within two weeks of the hearing.
- N19.8 Students who are deemed to have committed malpractice under N19.5 have a right of appeal under the Appeals Procedures of the University (see *Appendix 22*).
- N19.9 Where evidence of academic malpractice becomes available subsequent to an award having been made or recommended by the examiners, the malpractice regulations will be invoked and the original decision may be set aside (see also section A2.5).

N20 ACADEMIC REVIEW AND APPEALS

- N20.1 All fail decisions, or awards made at a lower level than the registered award, will be reviewed for process and procedure by a standing panel of the Graduate School Board of Studies as a matter of good practice.
- N20.2 Research degree students may appeal Graduate School Board of Studies decisions relating to progression and award under the terms of the Appeals Procedure set out in *Appendix 22*.
- The following regulations are supplementary to *Appendix 22*:**
- N20.3 Staff membership of the Appeals Committee will comprise research active members of staff nominated by the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies drawn from a standing panel of the committee. No member of the Panel will have had any previous involvement with the student nor will they be drawn from the subject area in which the student's research is based.
- N20.4 Where an appeal against progression is upheld, the recommendation for reconsideration will be to the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- N20.5 Where an appeal against an award decision is upheld, the recommendation for reconsideration will be to the Graduate School Board of Studies and will be referred back to the examining team.

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N20.6 Where the examining team upholds the original recommendation, the Graduate School Board of Studies will determine whether any further action is necessary including the appointment of new examiners.

N21 COMPLAINTS

N21.1 The University operates a universal Complaints Procedure which may be used by students in relation to any aspects not covered under the Appeals Procedure.

N12: SCHEDULE A - SPECIFICATION FOR THESIS SUBMISSION

1. TEXT

The text of the thesis, excluding ancillary data, shall not normally exceed the following guidelines:

(i) **SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, ART AND DESIGN:**

Degree of PhD	40,000 words
Degree of MPhil	20,000 words

(ii) **ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION**

Degree of PhD	80,000 words
Degree of MPhil	40,000 words

Where the thesis is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the written thesis shall normally be within the range:

Degree of PhD	20,000 - 40,000 words
Degree of MPhil	15,000 - 20,000 words

Submissions in excess of these limits will not be accepted without prior permission of the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies on recommendation from the supervisory team.

2. FORMAT

Theses may be submitted in printed or electronic format. Where submission is in printed format, an electronic copy is also required. The format for submissions will be made in accordance with the following rules:

(a) **Printed Theses**

- (i) Theses shall normally be to A4 size. Research students requesting permission to use a format larger than A4 should be aware that the production of microfiche and full-size reproduction may not be feasible.
- (ii) Copies of theses shall be presented in a permanent and legible form: either in typescript or in print. Where copies are produced by photocopying process, these shall be of a permanent nature; where electronic printing is employed, a laser type printer shall be used. The size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall not be less than font size 11.
- (iii) The Thesis shall be printed on the rectoside of the page only; the paper shall be white and within the range 70g/m to 100g/m.
- (iv) The margin at the left hand binding edge of the page shall not be less than 40mm; other margins shall not be less than 15mm.

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- (v) Double or one-and-a-half spacing shall be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used.
- (vi) Pages shall be numbered consecutively throughout the text including photographs/diagrams included as whole pages.
- (vii) There shall be an abstract of approximately 300 words bound into the thesis which shall provide a synopsis of the content. The abstract shall state the nature and scope of the work undertaken together with the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated. Three loose copies of the abstract shall be submitted with the thesis. These shall have as a heading:

the name of the author;
the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
the title of the thesis.

(b) **Electronic Theses**

- (i) Theses shall be produced using appropriate software packages which, where possible, are in common use within the University. The research student shall consult with the University Library at an early stage on the presentation and software for the thesis.
- (ii) Theses shall be produced in a format that allows the document to be electronically archived, for example through conversion into a PDF or XML file.
- (iii) Where theses contain specialised electronic elements (e.g. interactive formulae, or audio-visual clips), students should seek advice from the University Library on how to embed this information into the main file.

(c) **Title Page**

The title page of each thesis shall give the following information:

- (i) the full title of the thesis;
- (ii) the full name of the author;
- (iii) that the degree is awarded by the University;
- (iv) the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirement;
- (v) the collaborating establishment (if any);
- (vi) the month and year of submission.

(d) **Abstract**

An abstract of the thesis of approximately 300 words shall be submitted in electronic format. The abstract shall state the nature and scope of the work undertaken, together with the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated and shall have as a heading:

the name of the author;
the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
the title of the thesis.

A list of no more than 10 identifying keywords shall be submitted for indexing and information retrieval purposes.

3. THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY COPY

(Note: and additional copy of the thesis is required for the Department)

- (i) Where the thesis is produced in printed format:
 - (a) One copy of the final, approved, version should be made available for the University Library. The binding shall be black in colour and of a fixed type so that leaves cannot be removed or replaced; the front and rear boards shall have sufficient rigidity to support the weight of the work when standing upright. The outside front board shall bear the title of the work, the name and initials of the candidate, the qualification and the year of award; the same information (excluding the title of the work) shall be shown on the spine of the work, reading downwards. Such information shall be printed to a minimum size of 24pt type.
 - (b) An electronic copy of the thesis, in a format such as Microsoft Word, together with accompanying media, shall also be submitted.
- (ii) Where the thesis is produced in digital format, a copy of the final, approved version should be made available to the University Library.