

Research Degree Regulations Schedule G:

**Research Degree Fitness to Study
Procedures**

2021-2022

Research Degree Regulations

**Schedule G – Research Degree Fitness to Study
Procedures**



**Edge Hill
University**

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Summary

The Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures can be used by the University where there are concerns that a postgraduate researcher (PGR) is not fit to study. It is an open and supportive framework for dealing with a situation where a PGR's health, wellbeing or behaviour could have a detrimental impact on their own or others ability to progress and function.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and information to staff and PGRs about how any concerns relating to a PGR's fitness to study will be addressed. It encourages early intervention and the use of a transparent process to involve the PGR in discussions about their fitness to study. The procedures apply to all PGRs, on any research degree route, on any University activities in and out of term time, living on or off campus.

Regulations

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Edge Hill University (the University) aims to be welcoming and inclusive by successfully admitting and supporting PGRs with a broad range of needs.
- 1.2. The University is therefore committed to supporting the wellbeing of PGRs and staff. We do this by providing an environment that is safe, conducive to research, and which fosters the ability to flourish.
- 1.3. In this context the University recognises that PGRs may experience a range of difficulties throughout their studies related to academic and personal factors and has several policies which are designed to address concerns about a PGR's academic progress or support needs.
- 1.4. This Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures (referred to as 'the Procedures') is intended for use where the progress, behaviour, disruption or risk presented by a PGR is perceived to be serious or potentially serious and where this is linked to the health or wellbeing of the PGR.
- 1.5. The Procedures are intended to be supportive rather than disciplinary in nature.
- 1.6. The Procedures apply to all PGRs, on any research degree route, on any University activities in and out of term time, living on or off campus.
- 1.7. The expression 'fitness to study' as used in these procedures relates to the whole PGR experience and not just a PGR's ability to engage with their research.

2 Guiding principles

- 2.1. The University is a community and as such, decisions will be made in the context of the whole community giving due regard to the health and wellbeing of staff and other PGRs.
- 2.2. The University has a wide range of support services and PGRs will be encouraged and supported to engage with those services.
- 2.3. All PGRs are allocated at least one supervisor and are encouraged to engage with that support and discuss any challenges with their supervisor as early as possible.
- 2.4. PGRs are encouraged to seek independent advice to support them through the procedures from the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 2.5. The University operates under General Data Protection Regulations 2018.
- 2.6. The University is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and all decisions will be proportionate and carefully considered.
- 2.7. Where appropriate, the PGR will be kept informed of progress and provided with a written explanation regarding any decisions or actions to be taken.
- 2.8. Where possible, decisions will be made in agreement with the individual PGR.
- 2.9. PGRs are able to make independent decisions about their own fitness to study at any time and can request advice about the options which may be available to support them (including, but not limited to, access to support services, requesting an extension or requesting an interruption of studies).
- 2.10. The University reserves the right to escalate matters to Stage 2 or Stage 3 of these procedures without passing through the intermediate stages if a PGR presents serious concerns or risks to their own wellbeing or that of others.
- 2.11. A member of staff at an appropriate level may be assigned to act on behalf of any role holder named in these procedures. The role holder can be substituted for any reason and this includes but is not limited to:
 - to replace someone who has previously made a decision under the same procedures with the same PGR;
 - to speed up a process where the role holder is unavailable.

3 Indicators for use of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures

3.1. Concerns about a PGR's fitness to study may occur for many reasons. Those could include, but are not restricted to the following examples:

- significant deterioration in physical or mental health;
- significant deterioration in attitude and/or attendance;
- disregard for one's own and/or others' health and safety;
- inability or refusal to communicate effectively with fellow PGRs, staff and professionals;
- inability or refusal to appreciate risks of physical danger to oneself or others;
- inability or refusal to engage effectively and independently in supervisory meetings, postgraduate researcher development sessions, and/or the conduct of one's research (with appropriate support mechanisms, physical and reasonable study support adjustments as necessary);
- inability or refusal to engage effectively and independently in one's duties as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA);
- inability to undertake assessment and engage with the assessment process (with appropriate adjustments as necessary);
- inappropriate emotional or psychological symptoms or behaviours;
- PGR self-declaration of being unfit to study and/or disclosure that ongoing study is having a detrimental impact on the PGR's health;
- concerns raised by a third party;
- behaviour, which would otherwise be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, where it is considered the behaviour may be the result of an underlying physical or mental condition;
- instances where an individual's condition, conduct or behaviour places unreasonable demands on staff or other members of our community;
- difficulties with living communally, disruptive behaviour and/or unrealistic expectations of support from other PGRs or students.

4 Other relevant policies and procedures

4.1. There are a number of other University policies and procedures that may be relevant. These include but are not limited to:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Disciplinary Regulations
- Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research
- Research Degree Regulations

4.2. Relevant staff with knowledge of the situation will determine the most appropriate procedure to be followed in each case.

4.3. In order to determine which procedure will be followed, it may be necessary for appropriate staff to arrange an additional meeting with the PGR or collect additional information/evidence.

5 Risk assessment and temporary conditions

- 5.1. In exceptional circumstances a PGR's ability to manage their health, wellbeing or behaviour may have reached a critical stage. There may be urgent, serious concerns raised about a PGR's wellbeing, actions or behaviour which put the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of themselves or other members of the University at immediate risk.
- 5.2. In these circumstances an immediate risk assessment will be conducted by the Director of Student Services to determine the immediacy and seriousness posed by the perceived risk.
- 5.3. Where possible, appropriate staff will be consulted and all information available will be considered to reach an informed decision.
- 5.4. The risk assessment is based on the information available at that point in time and has two possible outcomes:
 - the level of risk to the PGR and others is deemed to be within acceptable levels and the PGR can remain in accommodation and continue with their research until a Fitness to Study Panel can be arranged;
 - the level of risk to the PGR and others is currently unacceptable, and conditions need to be put in place until a Fitness to Study Panel can be arranged.
- 5.5. The temporary conditions that can be put in place under 5.4 above can include anything that is deemed reasonable and appropriate in an attempt to ensure the safety of the PGR or others. Temporary conditions may include but are not limited to any of the following:
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR not to attend sessions on campus;
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR to stop working on the research;
 - a temporary requirement for supervisory meetings to stop;
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR to avoid all contact with members of the supervisory team (confining contact to the Graduate School and appropriate central services);
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR not to enter specific areas of the campus;
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR to move rooms in their on-campus accommodation;
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR to leave the on-campus accommodation;
 - a temporary requirement for the PGR not to enter the campus at all.

- 5.6. Depending on the level of risk, the temporary conditions may need to be implemented immediately but where possible, reasonable notice will be given to the PGR.
- 5.7. If the outcome of the risk assessment is that the level of risk is unacceptable and temporary conditions are put in place, where possible this information will be delivered in person by a member of the Wellbeing Team or another nominated suitable person.
- 5.8. The following information will be presented in writing to the PGR within 24 hours of the risk assessment being conducted:
 - The outcome of the risk assessment.
 - Any/all conditions put in place and the timescales for implementation.
- 5.9. If considered necessary to protect or support the PGR or others, individuals such as flat mates or services staff may be informed of the outcome of the risk assessment. Minimum information will be shared to enable protection or support to be provided.
- 5.10. The risk assessment can be reviewed by the Director of Student Services at any time. This may be necessary if the PGR's health deteriorates, or if behavioural issues escalate.
- 5.11. If the Fitness to Study Panel cannot take place within 4 weeks from the date the outcome of the risk assessment is communicated to the PGR, a review of the risk assessment will be conducted to ensure all conditions imposed remain suitable and reasonable.
- 5.12. At the risk assessment review the Director of Student Services may maintain the conditions, amend the conditions (the number of conditions may be increased or decreased), or remove the conditions. The outcome of the review risk assessment will be communicated in writing to the PGR.

6 Emerging Concern – Informal Action

- 6.1. Early intervention when a PGR is struggling with health or behaviour management can often avoid a crisis and where possible these procedures should be commenced at Stage 1.
- 6.2. Any member of staff within the University may become aware of presenting issues affecting a PGR's health, safety, wellbeing or behaviour.
- 6.3. Where staff outside of Student Services invoke these procedures at Stage 1 this must first be discussed with a member of the Wellbeing Service to ensure any information about the PGR that is available within Student Services is also considered. In all cases the Graduate School must be consulted to ensure that any relevant information about the PGR is considered.

- 6.4. Working collaboratively, staff will agree who will contact the PGR.
- 6.5. A member of staff will meet the PGR¹ to discuss and consider;
- the health and wellbeing of the PGR;
 - the behaviour that is being displayed and the concerns this raises;
 - the limits of any support that can be provided;
 - an action plan that will support the PGR to reach agreed goals within an agreed timescale.
- 6.6. The member of staff will follow up with the PGR setting out all agreed actions and timescales in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.
- 6.7. Where the staff member writing to the PGR is from outside of Student Services the Wellbeing Service will be sent a copy of the communication. The Graduate School will be sent a copy of all communication relating to these procedures.
- 6.8. If the PGR engages positively at this stage and the situation improves, there may be no need for further action.
- 6.9. If the issues are not resolved within the agreed timescale or the situation deteriorates, the decision can be made to progress to Stage 2.

7 Stage 2 Continuing Concern – referral to the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing

- 7.1. If the informal action taken at Stage 1 has not been successful, or the matter is too serious, Stage 2 (or exceptionally Stage 3) of the procedures may be initiated.
- 7.2. To begin Stage 2 the member of staff will discuss their concerns with the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing. If deemed appropriate these procedures will be invoked at Stage 2 by the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing.
- 7.3. The PGR will be invited to attend a review meeting with the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing and other members of staff as appropriate to review the concerns raised.
- 7.4. Other members of staff who may attend the meeting may often include (but not be limited to):
- members of the Inclusion or Wellbeing team;
 - members of the Graduate School team;
 - the relevant Graduate School Research Degree Contact;

¹ At all stages, and for all meetings, there will be an additional member of staff present to record the outcome(s) of the meeting.

- the Director of Studies and other members of the supervisory team, and
 - members of staff from the department in which the PGR is based for supervisory purposes.
- 7.5. The following information will be presented in writing to the PGR:
- meeting date, time and location;
 - a summary of the concerns raised relating to the PGR's fitness to study;
 - those who will attend the meeting;
 - the right of the PGR to be accompanied to the meeting, including information about the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre;
 - that the meeting is being dealt with under Stage 2 of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures, and
 - a copy of the procedures.
- 7.6. The PGR will be given at least 48 hours' notice of the meeting where possible.
- 7.7. The PGR should make all reasonable endeavours to attend the arranged meeting and if there are good reasons why it is not possible for the PGR to attend, reasonable efforts will be made to find a more suitable time for all attendees.
- 7.8. If the PGR refuses to co-operate, fails to attend or cannot engage with the process, the meeting may still take place without the PGR being present.
- 7.9. During the meeting the PGR will be encouraged to reflect on whether they feel they are fit to study and/or wish to continue on their programme of research.
- 7.10. If the PGR makes a decision during the meeting that they wish to take a break from their studies then they will be given an opportunity to discuss their options and complete appropriate paperwork. Any further decisions under the procedures will then be postponed pending the processing of the requested amendment to their registration status.
- 7.11. Interruption of study (as outlined in section N11 of the Research Degree Regulations) may be an option for a PGR who feels that would be an appropriate course of action in the circumstances and who has not already had the full period of interruption of studies permitted by the Research Degree Regulations.
- 7.12. In cases where the PGR has already had the full period of interruption of studies permitted by the Research Degree Regulations please see section 9.
- 7.13. If the PGR states that they wish to request an interruption of their studies but does not complete the appropriate paperwork, or changes their mind after the meeting, a decision will then be taken by the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing as described in 7.21 below.

- 7.14. Any PGR who is granted an interruption of studies at this stage will need to meet the requirements of the Return to Study section of these procedures (as described in section 10) at the point they wish to return.
- 7.15. Following the meeting, and where neither interruption of studies nor withdrawal is the outcome, one of the following decisions will be made by the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing;
- the PGR is fit to continue with their research, subject to a formal commitment to an agreed action plan with an agreed timescale;
 - the PGR is fit to continue with their research, but not fit enough to continue to live on campus, or
 - the PGR is not currently fit to study and the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing escalates this to Stage 3 of the procedures.
- 7.16. Where the decision made is that the PGR is fit to continue with their research, further meetings will be put in place to monitor the PGR's progress. The timescale of the review meeting will be decided based on the specifics of each case. If the PGR's health deteriorates, or behavioural issues escalate, before the review meeting date, this meeting may be brought forward, temporary measures may be put in place via a risk assessment and/or the case may be escalated to Stage 3.
- 7.17. Where the decision made is that the PGR is fit to continue with their research, but not fit enough to continue to live on campus, further meetings will be put in place to monitor the PGR's progress. The timescale of the review meeting will be decided based on the specifics of each case. If the PGR's health deteriorates, or behavioural issues escalate, before the review meeting date, this meeting may be brought forward, temporary measures may be put in place via a risk assessment and/or the case may be escalated to Stage 3.
- 7.18. Where the decision made is that the PGR is fit to continue with their research, the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing will inform the PGR of the outcome of the meeting along with any agreed action plan within 5 working days of the meeting date. A confirmation letter will be sent shortly thereafter.
- 7.19. Where the decision made is that the PGR is not fit to study, the Head of Counselling and Wellbeing will refer the case to the Director of Student Services (or their nominee). The Director of Student Services will then follow section 5 of these procedures to ensure a risk assessment is carried out before this then moves to Stage 3 and a Fitness to Study Panel meeting is arranged in line with section 8 of these procedures.

8 Stage 3 Critical, Serious Concerns – Fitness to Study Panel meeting

- 8.1. Where concerns raised about a PGR are of a sufficiently critical, or serious nature, where a risk assessment has been conducted under these

procedures or where the outcome at stage 2 is for escalation to stage 3, a Fitness to Study Panel meeting will be arranged.

- 8.2. The members of the panel will usually include:
 - the Director of Student Services (or nominee), who will act as Chair;
 - a representative of the Graduate School;
 - the Director of Studies;
 - an appropriate senior representative from Student Services who has not been involved in supporting the PGR.

- 8.3. Where the Chair feels it may be appropriate they may also invite any other member of University staff to sit on the panel and this may include, but is not limited to:
 - an appropriate representative from the Inclusion team;
 - an appropriate representative from the Accommodation team.

- 8.4. The member of Student Services who has been supporting the PGR may be invited to attend the meeting to give information but will not be part of the decision-making process.

- 8.5. The following information will be presented in writing to the PGR as soon as possible:
 - the date, time and location of the Fitness to Study Panel;
 - a summary of the concerns raised in relation to the PGR's fitness to study;
 - those who will attend the Stage 3 meeting;
 - the right of the PGR to be accompanied to the meeting including information about the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre;
 - that the meeting is being dealt with under Stage 3 of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures, and
 - a copy of the procedures.

- 8.6. The PGR should make all reasonable endeavours to attend the arranged Fitness to Study Panel and if there are good reasons why it is not possible for the PGR to attend, reasonable efforts will be made to find a more suitable time for all attendees.

- 8.7. If the PGR refuses to co-operate, fails to attend or cannot engage with the process, the Fitness to Study Panel may still take place without the PGR being present.

- 8.8. If the PGR cannot, or chooses not to, attend, they have the opportunity to submit a written representation to the Fitness to Study Panel.

- 8.9. As in Stage 2, a PGR may apply for an interruption of studies at this stage if the full period of interruption permitted by the Research Degree Regulations

has not already been taken. In cases where the full period of interruption has been taken please see section 9.

- 8.10. Any PGR who is granted an interruption of studies at this stage will need to meet the requirements of the Return to Study section of these procedures (as described in section 10) at the point they wish to return.
- 8.11. At the Fitness to Study Panel, those present will examine all relevant information, including as necessary, medical reports and/or risk assessments. The PGR's understanding of the issues/concerns that have been raised will be ascertained. The impact of the PGR's health and/or behaviour upon them or on other members of the University community will be discussed.
- 8.12. Following the Fitness to Study Panel one of the following decisions will be made by the panel. The Chair has the power to make the final decision if the Panel is unable to make a unanimous decision:
 - the PGR is fit to study, subject to a formal commitment to an agreed action plan with an agreed timescale;
 - the PGR is fit to continue with their research, but not fit enough to continue to live on campus;
 - the PGR is not currently fit to study and should be required to suspend their studies on the research degree and at the University for a specified period. The relevant period may be in addition to the maximum period of interruption of studies permitted by the Research Degree Regulations but may not exceed an additional twelve months.
 - The PGR is not fit to study and a recommendation should be made to the Vice-Chancellor that the PGR's registration be terminated.
- 8.13. The Director of Student Services will inform the PGR of the outcome of the meeting together with any agreed action plan and/or conditions for continued attendance within 5 working days of the date of the meeting. A confirmation letter will be sent shortly thereafter.
- 8.14. Where a PGR is required to suspend their studies, the timescale for the suspension will be based on the judgement of the panel but may not exceed twelve months plus any outstanding period for which interruption of studies is permissible within the Research Degree Regulations. The PGR's return to study will then be subject to the return to study procedure detailed in section 10. Any academic considerations about the appropriate options available to resume study will be considered at the time the suspension is lifted.

9 Election to withdraw

- 9.1. In cases where a PGR has already had the full period of interruption of study, as part of stages 2 and 3 of this procedure, a PGR may elect to withdraw from the research degree (see section 7.12 and 8.9). Where that decision is reached as part of the operation of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures, the University will undertake to consider one re-application for entry to the same research degree on which the PGR was previously registered, to work on the same research project, within a period of three years from the date of withdrawal.
- 9.2. This is distinct from termination of registration (where the University brings registration to an end). In cases of termination of registration, or in cases of withdrawal on the part of a PGR where the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures have not been invoked, the University will not undertake to consider a re-application proposing the same research project.
- 9.3. Withdrawal under the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures is, therefore, an option designed to support PGRs who have encountered long-term mental or physical health problems or behavioural problems associated with such health problems to overcome those difficulties and return to their research.
- 9.4. While the University will undertake to consider a re-application, the offer of a place cannot be guaranteed. The Graduate School will, inter alia, consider the following factors in making a decision:
 - the quality of the research proposal (given that the field may have developed in the intervening period);
 - supervisory capacity;
 - the capacity of the department in which the PGR would be based;
 - the timeliness of the proposed contribution to knowledge;
 - resource requirements necessary to allow completion of the research, and
 - whether there is good reason to think that the problems which precipitated initiation of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures have been resolved and are unlikely to recur within the period necessary to complete the research.
- 9.5. Any PGR who elects to withdraw at this stage will need to meet the requirements of the Return to Study section of these procedures (as described in section 10) at the point they wish to return if, following re-application, they are offered a place.
- 9.6. Any re-application under the provisions of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures must propose essentially the same, or a very similar, project. Resumption of the research at a suitable stage will be considered.

- 9.7. An offer of a place cannot be made if the research has subsequently been used to gain an award at any higher education institution.
- 9.8. The Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures cannot be used to facilitate withdrawal on any other grounds (including financial, practical or academic grounds). Any withdrawal on grounds not covered by the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures will not involve a commitment on the part of the University to consider a re-application.

10 Return to Study

- 10.1. Any PGR who has been required to suspend their studies under Stage 3 of these procedures, or any PGR who has had an interruption of studies or withdrawn at any point within Stages 2 or 3 of these procedures will need to follow the return to study procedure detailed below when returning to the University.
- 10.2. The return to study procedure is in place to ensure that PGRs returning to study following an enforced or elected break are fit to study and live on campus and have appropriate support in place.
- 10.3. The PGR is expected to notify the Director of Student Services and the Graduate School in writing of their wish to return to study.
- 10.4. The Graduate School will review the viability of the research project as originally conceived in order to identify any adjustments to the project and/or supervisory arrangements that may be necessary. Any such adjustments will be considered in reviewing the PGR's request to return.
- 10.5. After reviewing the PGR's request to return the PGR will be invited to attend a return to study review meeting with the Director of Student Services and other members of staff as appropriate.
- 10.6. Other members of staff who may attend the meeting may include (but not be limited to):
 - members of the Inclusion or Wellbeing team;
 - members of the Graduate School team;
 - the relevant Graduate School Research Degree Contact;
 - the Director of Studies and other members of the supervisory team, and
 - members of staff from the department in which the PGR is based for supervisory purposes.
- 10.7. The following information will be presented in writing to the PGR:
 - meeting date, time and location;
 - those who will attend the meeting;

- the right of the PGR to be accompanied to the meeting including information about the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre;
 - that the meeting is being dealt with under the Return to Study section of the Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures, and
 - a copy of the procedures.
- 10.8. In all cases a return to study will require satisfactory medical evidence of the PGR's fitness to engage with university life and research. Medical evidence will only be accepted from a GP or relevant health professional who has enough knowledge of the PGR's circumstances to make an informed assessment of the PGR's fitness to study.
- 10.9. The University would expect the PGR to set out their renewed ability to study and where appropriate to live independently at Edge Hill University.
- 10.10. Following the meeting one of the following decisions will be made by the Director of Student Services:
- the PGR is fit to return to their research, subject to a formal commitment to an agreed action plan with an agreed timescale;
 - the PGR is fit to return to their research, but not fit enough to live on campus;
 - the PGR is not currently fit to return to their research and should be required to suspend their studies for a further specified period;
 - the PGR is not fit to study and a recommendation should be made to the Vice-Chancellor that the PGR's registration be terminated.
- 10.11. The Director of Student Services will inform the PGR of the outcome of the meeting together with any agreed action plan and/or conditions for continued attendance normally within 5 working days of the meeting. A confirmation letter will be sent shortly thereafter.
- 10.12. A suspension or any previous conditions imposed will remain in place until the outcome of the meeting is communicated to the PGR.
- 10.13. Each situation will be different, and it may not be possible for the PGR to resume their research immediately. Suitable arrangements that reflect the particular case will be made by the Graduate School.
- 10.14. The PGR will be written to within 15 working days of the date on the decision letter to inform them of the options available to them to return to their research. The financial implications of each available option will be explained, and the PGR will need to make a decision about their return taking these into consideration.

11 Appeals

- 11.1. PGRs have the right to appeal against any decision taken under Stage 2, Stage 3 or the Return to Study section of these procedures.
- 11.2. Appeals will only be accepted if based on one of the following grounds:
 - that there was a material procedural irregularity which may have affected the outcome;
 - that there is evidence which was not considered by the Investigating Officer which may have affected the outcome and which the PGR could not reasonably have been expected to have submitted at the time, or
 - that the decision is not one which, given the evidence, could be reasonably sustained.
- 11.3. PGRs may wish to seek advice from the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 11.4. Appeals against a decision made at Stage 2 must be made in writing to the Director of Student Services within 10 working days of the date on the decision letter, clearly stating the grounds for appeal.
- 11.5. The Director of Student Services or nominated representative will review the stage 2 appeal. They can consult with any member of staff that may be able to provide relevant information which can include, but is not limited to, the original decision maker, the PGR's supervisors, the Head of the department in which the PGR is based, the Dean of the Graduate School and/or the PGR's Students' Union representative.
- 11.6. The Director of Student Services will make one of the following decisions regarding a stage 2 appeal:
 - dismiss the appeal;
 - uphold the appeal and decide how the correct decision should be made. This could include referring the matter back to an earlier level of these procedures for reconsideration, making an alternative decision, referring to another relevant member of staff to make the decision, or any other reasonable course of action.
- 11.7. The Director of Student Services decision will be final.
- 11.8. Appeals against the decision at Stage 3 of the procedures (not including a decision to terminate registration) must be made in writing to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), within 10 working days of the date on the decision letter, clearly stating the grounds for appeal.

- 11.9. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominated representative will review the stage 3 appeal. They can consult with any member of staff that may be able to provide relevant information which can include, but is not limited to, the original decision maker, the PGR's supervisors, the Head of the department in which the PGR is based, the Dean of the Graduate School and/or the PGR's Students' Union representative.
- 11.10. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominated representative will make one of the following decisions:
- dismiss the appeal;
 - uphold the appeal and decide how the correct decision should be made. This could include referring the matter back to an earlier level of these procedures for reconsideration, making an alternative decision, referring to another relevant member of staff to make the decision, or any other reasonable course of action.
- 11.11. The decision made by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) will be final.
- 11.12. Appeals against decisions at Stage 3 or the Return to Study section of the procedures to terminate registration must be made in writing to the Vice-Chancellor within 10 working days of the date on the decision letter, clearly stating the grounds for appeal.
- 11.13. The Vice Chancellor or nominated representative will review the appeal. They can consult with any member of staff that may be able to provide relevant information, which can include, but is not limited to, the original decision maker, the PGR's supervisors, the Head of the department in which the PGR is based, the Dean of the Graduate School and/or the PGR's Students' Union representative.
- 11.14. The Vice Chancellor or nominated representative will make one of the following decisions:
- dismiss the appeal;
 - uphold the appeal and decide how the correct decision should be made. This could include referring the matter back to an earlier level of these procedures for reconsideration, making an alternative decision, referring to another relevant member of staff to make the decision, or any other reasonable course of action.
- 11.15. The Vice Chancellor's decision will be final.
- 11.16. If, after exhausting the appeals processes, a PGR believes there has been an error of judgement or that due process has not been followed the PGR has the right to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education – www.oiahe.org.uk

11.17. PGRs may also wish to seek advice from the Edge Hill Students' Union Advice Centre.

Key to Relevant Documents

As covered in section 4 there are a number of other University policies and procedures that may be relevant. Those include but are not limited to:

- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#)
- [Code of Practice for Research](#)
- [Research Degree Regulations](#)

Annexes

There are no annexes to this policy.

Endmatter

Title	Research Degree Fitness to Study Procedures
Policy Owner	Dean of the Graduate School
Approved by	Academic Board
Date of Approval	September 2021
Date for Review	July 2022 (last reviewed August 2021)