



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



MPHIL/PHD CODE OF PRACTICE

— STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

- 1 This Code of Practice sets out the University's expectations of quality and standards in relation to the range of activities associated with MPhil/PhD provision validated by Staffordshire University. This provision is set out in the University's [MPhil/PhD Regulations](#) and stipulates a set of definitions, procedures, and responsibilities. In many cases, it would be inappropriate for the regulations to specify precise procedures and measures and therefore this Code of Practice (COP) is a supplement to these regulations and sets out the responsibilities of the University, Faculties, supervisors and students with respect to the MPhil/PhD provision, *where those are not already clear in the regulations*, alongside the high standards it expects to be met throughout this provision. In addition to these documents, the COP refers to a set of Guidance Notes, providing detailed information for all participants on particular issues or stages of the research journey. The COP also specifies the content of the Bucks MPhil/PhD handbook (see [MPhil/PhD Handbook](#) below) which will be made available to students.
- 2 The description of these responsibilities and standards draws upon good practice and regulatory frameworks both nationally and internationally. Throughout, this COP is benchmarked against chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 3 The COP will thus not seek to duplicate or rephrase the University's MPhil/PhD Regulations, but instead direct itself to underlying principles and good practice. Accordingly also, this COP should be read in conjunction with the regulations.

Principles

- 4 The provision of MPhil/PhD means the training of new, professional researchers of the highest quality and integrity, capable of contributing to knowledge in their discipline, and of having an impact beyond it. MPhil/PhDs are offered within the following principles:
 - a Excellence in research should be supported and enhanced. This means the provision of an appropriate research environment and culture, of research and professional training, of sufficient resources of the appropriate type, providing social and welfare support for students, and ensuring the transparency and accountability of institutional communications and procedures.
 - b All those involved in the research degree process should be treated in a professional, collegiate and supportive manner;
 - c Excellent research must be conducted with intellectual honesty, within closely watched ethical boundaries, within a legal framework both national and international, and ensuring the health and safety of all participants.
- 5 The manner in which these principles will be actualised is described in the sections that follow.

Recruitment

- 6 The recruitment of MPhil/PhD students involves three stages: promotion, followed by application and selection.

- 7 The promotion or marketing of MPhil/PhD opportunities will be such as to accurately represent the terms of any offer that might be made, the facilities or resources available, and the prospects of graduates. MPhil/PhD opportunities will only be promoted and offered in academic areas where an appropriate Research Environment is in place. Approval of academic areas to offer MPhil/PhD opportunities is ultimately the responsibility of Staffordshire University Research Degrees Sub- Committee on the recommendation of the University Research and Enterprise Committee.
- 8 The application process will be conducted according to the regulations. These paragraphs cover the minimum standards, a procedure for assessing applications, interviewing candidates and making decisions, and the responsibilities for decision-making.
- 9 At interview, the same principles of the accurate representation of the degree course, available resources etc., must be adhered to. Prospective students should also be made aware of their responsibilities, should they be accepted (See sections on Supervision, The Student's Responsibilities and External Organisations below).
- 10 The principles underlying the acceptance of an MPhil/PhD applicant are:
 - a The selection of successful applicants will be equitable (<http://bucks.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/>) and staff involved in the selection of candidates will be trained in the process.
 - b Selection will be based upon the merits of the applicant and his or her research proposal. A candidate will be assessed on the following: personal or professional experience and qualifications; existing knowledge and skills (including English language); capacity for high level independent thinking in the relevant academic field; ability to work in a collegiate manner with supervisors and other researchers; ability to cope with the demands of planning, organising, pursuing and completing a large-scale research project and associated written thesis or other artefacts of the appropriate scale, depth and originality.
 - c As MPhil/PhD study is primarily by supervised research, approval of an application is dependent upon the availability of a suitable supervisor who is both qualified and research active in the area. Likewise, acceptance will demand a scrutiny of the availability of other research resources (library, IT, studios, lab equipment, etc.) required for the proposed project.
 - d Selection may be guided by the University or Faculty's strategy, which may involve the promotion of certain research topics or units.
- 11 When an offer is made, an offer letter will be generated, which will include the following information:
 - a details of the exact programme/route for which the student has been accepted;
 - b theme/topic of the research project;
 - c initial supervision arrangements;
 - d the proposed start date;
 - e all relevant financial matters (including tuition fees, bench fees, and any other relevant costs);
 - f the date by which the candidate should confirm (or otherwise) acceptance of the offer;
 - g arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction;

- h opportunities to take up teaching, or other duties, associated with the offer;
- i links to the research degree regulations and code of practice;
- j links to any sources of funding for which the candidate may be entitled;
- k practical information concerning travel, accommodation or finance;
- l any other relevant conditions attached to the offer: for example, conditions attached by a sponsor, agreement to undertake specific training, submission of progress reports, attendance at the University and contact with supervisors, the involvement of external collaborating parties, English language requirements or any financial guarantees required.

Induction

- 12 The induction of newly enrolled and registered research students will serve not only to supply essential information, but to welcome new students into the research environment. An induction programme will be provided which will be mandatory for all new students. This programme will normally be offered within three weeks of the date of registration. The programme will cover at minimum the following:
- a provision of the University Handbook for Research Students;
 - b important contact names and details, including all those involved in management of both research, MPhil/PhDs and research ethics; complaints and appeals procedures;
 - c resources and facilities and how to access them (including where appropriate, the training, or health and safety procedures associated with them);
 - d relevant specialist resources and facilities, especially the library (physical and digital) as a research tool, and IT services.
 - e academic/pastoral support available with contact details;
 - f availability of funding and application procedure for conference attendance, research consumables, and related expenses;
 - g the schedule of events for the succeeding few months, and in general other opportunities for networking with researchers;
 - h who the current MPhil/PhD representatives are;
 - i Information about where to find regulations, code of practice, guidance notes, and forms;
 - j introduction to MPhil/PhD regulations; key moments, procedures and dates;
 - k introduction to: the ethical approval process; issues of data protection and storage; intellectual property; health and safety; research integrity; and plagiarism.
 - l good practice within the supervisory relationship;
 - m the principles of reflective skills appraisals using the Vitae RDF, for personal and professional development;
 - n the schedule of university-wide research training opportunities;
 - o the principles and standards of doctoral level research (definitions of research and the research process; literature review; methodological models and choices);
 - p overview of review stages, especially the Early Stage Review, including implications of their possible outcomes;
 - q the criteria to be used for making decisions about the extension, suspension or termination of a research student's registration;

- r the circumstances in which research student appeal mechanisms may be used and how to use them.
 - s University and Student Union services for welfare and support.
- 13 This induction period should also include meetings with the full supervisory team to:
- (i) agree the specific roles and responsibilities of the supervisory relationship, and agree a timetable of meetings;
 - (ii) perform an initial skills appraisal using the Vitae RDF tool, and develop a provisional development plan;
 - (iii) develop an outline plan of work for at least the first few months of the research; and
 - (iv) finally, develop a schedule working towards the progress reviews outlined in the regulations.
- 14 Students on distance learning routes, or international students who are unable to be present for one or the other workshops, must be supplied in a timely manner with equivalent material from the induction programme in either paper or electronic form. Equivalent supervisor meetings should be held as soon as possible, and should include a review of all the above topics so that the research student is aware of them and is provided with necessary contact details if further information is required.
- 15 The induction workshops are only the first stage in a research student's research, personal and professional development. Please see 'Research Environment' and 'Research and Professional Training' below.

MPhil/PhD Handbook

- 16 New students will be provided with a Handbook at induction. The main purpose of this Handbook is to reinforce information introduced in induction, and be a supplement to MPhil/PhD regulations and the COP, giving information on personnel, procedures, resources, etc. The handbook contains:
- a An introduction from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise;
 - b An outline of structures and personnel for both the management of research, research ethics, and of MPhil/PhDs;
 - c An outline of the University's research portfolio, including research centres or institutes;
 - d Mechanisms for student feedback;
 - e Information about the availability and use of resources, equipment, software, research services, work spaces, etc.; including health and safety information;
 - f Procedures for access and the availability of relevant training. Information about specialist library and IT resources;
 - g Availability of funding and application procedure for conference attendance, research consumables, and related expenses;
 - h Channels of communication and how they will be used; where to find information (seminars, workshops, etc.);
 - i Complaints and appeals processes;
 - j Where to find regulations, code of practice, guidance notes, and forms.

Research Environment

- 17 It is vital that the research environment provides a suitable context for the conduct of research and is capable of supporting the range of students being recruited. We hold that the research, advanced scholarship and enterprise environment maintained for staff is coextensive and mutually supportive of the environment offered to research students. As indicated above in Recruitment, the University will only offer research degree opportunities in subject areas that have an appropriate environment. Minimum conditions for a subject area constituting such an environment are:
- a The subject area will include researchers actively producing work judged excellent in the area (on the basis of REF results, prizes, or journal ratings, etc.), and/or successful in achieving research grant income, or equivalent activity (consultancy research, for example);
 - b It will contain researchers who also have capacity and qualifications to supervise; and this must be taken account of when determining capacity. In addition, a supervisor who is primary supervisor to seven full-time students, or ten part-time students, or on the supervisory team for fourteen students, whether primary or secondary, and whether part time or full, must provide to the Research and Enterprise Committee both a note of support from his or her Faculty, as well as specific justification of their supervisory capacity, before accepting new students.
 - c It will be able to offer the facilities and resources in place to pursue research, and learn about research. These will include relevant specialist spaces, texts or instrumentation, as well as office space with a computer (this may be hot-desking).
 - d The subject area, Faculty and University will provide
 - o a programme of induction for new students (see 'Induction' above);
 - o a set of research-oriented training opportunities (e.g. in project management, research methods, specific training in pieces of software, equipment or techniques, etc.); as well as additional training concerning ethical conduct in research, career and employment skills (e.g. presenting at conferences; writing papers for publication; teaching training, etc.), and Intellectual Property and commercial exploitation. (Please see the section 'Research and Professional Training');
 - o a broader programme of conferences, speakers, seminars, exhibitions and other such events – both internal and involving external individuals or organisations – in order to bring researchers together in a collegiate atmosphere, expose students to researchers working in other areas, and allow them to forge peer and professional networks.
- 18 The wider environment will also include:
- a funding available to research students for development activities, such as conference attendance (see [MPhil/PhD Handbook](#));
 - b provision for the health and welfare support of students (see section below);
 - c a clear complaints and appeals procedure (see section below);
 - d regular mechanisms for gathering feedback from students (see section below);
 - e regular progression checks (see sections below).

Social and Welfare Services

- 19 In general, the research student's supervisory team will offer pastoral advice, although in many cases this will consist primarily of guiding the student to Student Services who can provide additional support and guidance
(http://bucks.ac.uk/home_eu_students/student_services/)
- 20 All submission guidelines for MPhil/PhDs (e.g. format, font size, etc.) may be modified where necessary under the University's equality. Similarly, the research student's supervisor should liaise with the appropriate department to ensure arrangements for review stages and examination are suitable to the student's needs.

The Management of MPhil/PhDs by Faculty and University

- 21 The management of MPhil/PhDs is stipulated in the [regulations](#).
- 22 The key body responsible for this management is the Research and Enterprise Committee (RDC), chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise. This Committee is a sub-committee of the University's Research & Enterprise Committee.
- 23 A Higher Degrees Tutor works with colleagues in the Research & Enterprise Development (RED) Unit to ensure that all processes relating to the recruitment, development and completion of the Faculty's postgraduate research (PGR) candidates are undertaken in an efficient and effective manner.
- 24 The principal responsibilities of the Higher Degrees Tutors are to:
 - a Work with marketing to ensure up to date and accurate information about the areas in which Faculty teams can support PGR applications
 - b Consider research degree applications in the Faculty and participating in the Research Degree Admission Panel meetings.
 - c Provide input into the induction offering,
 - d Act as the main academic point of contact for enrolled PGR candidates in their Faculty
 - e Work with the RED Unit to ensure all quality processes relating to PGR student are conducted in a timely fashion
 - f Contribute to Faculty and University PGR student and staff training and development.
 - g Chair annual reviews and other reviews as required
 - h Monitor the progress of research degree students in conjunction with the Red Unit.
 - i Ensure that students can access those facilities needed to support their programmes of work.
 - j Ensure that supervisors monitor the progress of students
 - k Ensure that a regular series of internal and external events are in place, supporting the research environment of the University. Regular opportunities for students to present their own work should also be provided.
- 25 The principal responsibilities of the RED Unit are to:
 - a Be responsible for the integrity of the process by which applications are scrutinised and offers made.

- b Coordinate and publicise an annual programme of research development events, monitoring their effectiveness and revise as needed.
 - c Produce the University annual monitoring report on MPhil/PhDs in conjunction with the Higher Degree Tutors which will be presented for discussion and action at the Research and Enterprise Committee.
 - d Create and maintain the MPhil/PhD Handbook
 - e Ensure that all supervisory staff attend at least one development opportunity annually, relevant to their skills as a supervisor; and keep records concerning this which are passed on to Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee.
- 26 The University through the Research and Enterprise Committee:
- a Is responsible for approval of key documents in the MPhil/PhD journey (as specified in the regulations) and for general oversight of the quality and integrity of the process.
 - b Authorises individual discipline areas to offer MPhil/PhDs, based upon the principles outlined in the Research Environment section above; in practice this means that where concerns are raised, it can ask Faculties for evidence of research environment, and where necessary withdraw the discipline's right to make new MPhil/PhD offers until such time as the environment is improved.
 - c Will ensure that the University's MPhil/PhD Regulations and procedures are observed and will promote good practice in the induction, supervision, assessment and training of research degree students.
 - d Will oversee the processes that have been put in place to monitor the progress and performance of research students.
- 27 Staffordshire University is responsible for:
- a Approval of admission recommendations from the University.
 - b Approval of supervisory teams on the recommendation of the University
 - c Monitoring the progress of students through receipt of documentation and reports from the University as outlined in the regulations.
 - d Agreeing examination teams and arrangements and formally appointing the examination team.
 - e Awarding degrees to those MPhil/PhD students who have passed through their examination, or withdrawing research students who have failed to make adequate progress in their studies.
- 28 The above list is not intended to be a full list of all the duties that each area must carry out – these are specified in full in the regulations and guidance notes.

Research and Professional Training

- 29 In addition to the programmes for induction discussed above and events contributing to the broad research culture of the University (see Research Environment), a programme of research and professional training will be provided. The aim of this is to ensure a high level of research, professional, generic and careers skills among the postgraduate research population, and develop a research community that includes all research colleagues.

- 30 Some of these workshops will be offered by the RED Unit or other Services directly, others will be offered by Faculties but – in coordination with the RED Unit – workshops will be open to all research degree students and staff University-wide. Other workshops (most obviously, those that are narrowly specialised in nature) may be offered by Faculties or individual subject teams to their own students. A programme for the year, for all such activities offered University-wide, will be maintained by the RED Unit. Importantly, ‘development opportunity’ does not refer only to formal training workshops offered by Faculty or University, but to any discrete event or series of events that (i) demonstrably serve to enhance relevant skills, or provide relevant experience and (ii) result in reflection upon that experience as to what was learned and its value. So, for example, attendance at an external conference or training workshop, organising/curating an exhibition, acquiring additional teaching experience, language tuition, giving a first paper, or preparing a first paper for publication, could all be counted.
- 31 The Faculty or Service that offers the opportunities will track student attendance and participant feedback, and will feed these back to the RED Unit who will use the information to inform the annual monitoring process. The programme of training will be reviewed annually by the Research and Enterprise Committee as to its suitability, range and strategy of provision.
- 32 Students with their supervisors will perform *at least annually* a skills assessment, using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework as an enabling tool. This assessment will determine a provisional schedule of the student's attendance at relevant workshops for the year ahead. Research, professional or related training opportunities undertaken during the year should be reported and commented on by the student in the formal review stages as appropriate. Adequate pursuit of development is a requirement of progression.
- 33 The annual programme of training provided will include a number of mandatory sessions designed to equip students with fundamental tools for researchers. In addition sessions will be provided on topics such as:
- a Advanced level or specialised research strategies, methods or techniques; introduction to new research in an area; newly available techniques, equipment or resources;
 - b Interdisciplinary or comparative research workshops and presentations;
 - c Practical skills of research project management (e.g. using referencing software; project management skills);
 - d Intellectual Property and commercial exploitation;
 - e Networking, publishing, conferencing; making use of external opportunities (e.g. Erasmus).
 - f Careers development (e.g. the PhD and your CV, the academic job market, interview guidance, teaching training workshops, useful tools from Vitae and others);
 - g Ethical research, research integrity;
 - h Health and safety with respect to specific equipment, environments, etc.
 - i Research degree procedures related workshops (e.g. guidance on early or late stage review, writing up strategies, preparing for your viva).

- j Generic skills, e.g. academic writing, report writing, presentation skills, computing skills, etc.

Supervision

- 34 The roles and qualifications of supervisors are specified in the MPhil/PhD regulations. The responsibilities of supervisors are to:
- a beyond induction, introduce the research student to the subject team (or equivalent), its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;
 - b develop with the student research plans that include: the initial objectives of the research, taking account of the sponsor's requirements where appropriate; the identification and meeting of the training needs of the research student; the means by which the research student and supervisors will communicate, how they will arrange regular meetings, the character of these meetings, and on average how frequent these meetings will be (please see below for minimum frequency guidance);
 - c provide professional and accurate guidance and advice on the student's research programme;
 - d assess and monitor the progress of the research student's research programme;
 - e ensure that the student is aware of the technical requirements of progression on the degree: e.g. what is part-time or full-time study; what are the attendance requirements; Visa restrictions (in conjunction with International Student Support Services); fees and when and how must they be paid;
 - f establish and maintain regular contact with the research student, and complete the supervision form; when a supervisor is to be away from the University for a significant period of time, all supervisees and all others on the supervisory teams should be informed, and alternative arrangements made.
 - g be accessible to the research student to give advice (by whatever means is most suitable, given the research student's location and mode of study)
 - h contribute to the assessment of the research student's development needs;
 - i ensure the research student is aware of wider intellectual and social issues pertaining to research (e.g. methodological choices, research impact, etc.), understands the nature of doctoral-level research, and is able to identify his or her place in both wider and narrower research conversations.
 - j provide timely (normally within ten working days; longer for more substantial pieces of writing), constructive and effective feedback on the research student's work and overall progress within the programme;
 - k ensure the research student is aware of progression and review stages and understands their roles, procedures and possible outcomes; aids student in preparation for these; assembles and forwards the paperwork for these stages (including the nominating of panel members);
 - l ensure that the research student is aware of the need to exercise probity and conduct his or her research according to ethical principles, including intellectual property rights, and of the implications of research misconduct;
 - m exercise just such probity, for example by publicly acknowledging a research student's contribution to a research project that was in any way conducted jointly.

- n ensure that the research student is aware of sources of advice, including careers guidance;
 - o help research students understand health and safety responsibilities;
 - p provide effective pastoral support and/or refer the research student to other sources of such support, including student advisers, or others within the research student's academic community;
 - q help the research student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example encouraging the research student to attend relevant conferences and supporting him/her in seeking funding for such activities;
 - r give encouragement and guidance to the research student on the submission of conference papers, articles to refereed journals, or other research outputs and modes of dissemination;
 - s approve annual leave (see Guidance Notes on annual leave for MPhil/PhD students);
 - t maintain the necessary supervisory expertise to perform all of the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities; by such expertise is meant both discipline-specific research knowledge and activity, and the generic knowledge and skills of a good supervisor (Research Supervisor development workshops will be offered at least annually by the RED Unit).
- 35 Full time MPhil / PhD students must normally undertake formal supervision sessions with their Principal Supervisor at least once a month (every 2 months for part time students). For students in attendance, these meetings must normally take place face-to-face, although meetings between these times may be held electronically. For Distance Learning students, the sessions can be held using Skype or an alternative method of communication. Discussions and outcomes from these sessions must be documented on the Student/Supervisor Meeting Record Form.
- 36 Discussions and outcomes from these sessions must be documented on the Student/Supervisor Meeting Record Form available on Blackboard.
- 37 Copies of the completed forms should be emailed to all Supervisors, the Higher Degree Tutor and the PGR Registrar.
- 38 The effectiveness of the University's supervisors is monitored and ensured by:
- a Research student feedback (see Quality Assurance and the Student Voice below);
 - b The timeliness of students' progression and their success at examination (these data are collected through annual monitoring reports and through the data held by the RED Unit);
 - c The Supervisor's line manager, and/or the Faculty's Higher Degrees Tutor will be known to the student, and are the first port of call for an issue with supervision that cannot be solved within the supervisory team;
 - d Principal supervisors must either have experience, or have completed the Research Supervisors course; and all supervisors must attend some relevant form of supervisory development training *on at least an annual basis*.

The Student's Responsibilities

- 39 Research students are responsible for:
- a their own personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;
 - b maintaining regular contact with supervisors (this is a joint responsibility with supervisors); preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors, and generally preparing an agenda for the meeting; keeping notes from meetings, in particular action points, and agreeing the wording of these with the supervisor(s);
 - c being aware of the work, attendance, financial, Visa and other technical requirements of progression: e.g. what is meant by full or part-time study, or how often an attendance student should meet his or her supervisor;
 - d setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
 - e maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
 - f raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
 - g attending any development opportunities (research-related or other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors;
 - h being proactive in identifying and pursuing opportunities to present or publish research work; identifying and acknowledging supervisors and the University in any such outputs;
 - i completing required monitoring and progression documents in a timely manner;
 - j speaking with supervisors about and obtaining approval for annual leave (see below);
 - k conducting their work to the highest ethical standards, and standards of intellectual integrity (e.g. avoiding anything that could be construed as plagiarism, the fabrication of data, deliberate misinterpretation of data or source materials, mishandling of confidential or sensitive information, or theft of intellectual property). Students must also ensure that permission has been obtained before including any third party copyrighted material in the online version of the thesis.
 - l being familiar with the regulations and policies that affect them, including those relating to their qualification, health and safety, intellectual property, data protection and storage, electronic repositories, and ethical research.
- 40 All full-time MPhil / PhD students (studying in attendance) carrying out research degrees validated by Staffordshire University, will receive an annual leave entitlement of 25 days per academic year, in addition to the fixed University Closure dates.
- 41 The holiday records will be managed by the PGR Registrar and records must be kept for each MPhil/PhD student. Holidays can only be taken with the prior agreement of the student's Principal Supervisor.

Research Ethics, Research Integrity, Health and Safety

- 42 The University's research ethics policy and procedures are detailed at:
http://bucks.ac.uk/research/research_ethics_integrity/
- 43 Any instances of academic misconduct will be considered through Staffordshire University's Procedure for Dealing with Breaches of Assessment Regulations - Academic Misconduct. This can be found at:
http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/academic_misconduct_tcm44-26770.pdf

External Organisations

- 44 The MPhil/PhD Regulations include guidance on the approval of and management of relations with external organisations that cooperate in the provision of MPhil/PhDs.

Employment

- 45 In accordance with national regulations, full-time study is normally defined as 37 hours per week spent on the central activities of an MPhil/PhD, or related activities (the latter could include required teaching, professional development, field work, travel, etc.). Part-time is variable, but should not normally be less than ten hours per week (averaged over a full year), nor more than 20.
- 46 All MPhil / PhD students studying at Bucks New University on a Tier 4 visa should be aware of their employment restrictions as detailed on the information sheet provided by the University's international compliance team.

The Monitoring of Progress

- 47 The key principles behind the University's monitoring of MPhil/PhD students' progress are:
 - a The University should provide all students with timely support in their degree, personal and professional development, or related life circumstances;
 - b The University should reassure itself at regular intervals of the appropriateness and viability of a research students' work.
 - c The University should monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of its own MPhil/PhD provision against the standards it sets itself in this COP and elsewhere.
- 48 Research Students' progress is monitored through two principal mechanisms: 1. supervisory records feeding into a central database of information; and 2. formal progression and review stages.
- 49 All MPhil / PhD students have formal review and progression stages throughout their studies. Please refer to the appropriate set of regulations for further information.

Quality Assurance and the Student Voice

- 50 The University should monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of its own MPhil/PhD provision against the standards it sets itself in this COP and elsewhere.
- 51 Quality Assurance of MPhil/PhD provision has a number of elements:
- a The Research and Enterprise Committee has oversight of the activities of students and supervisors, and writes an annual monitoring report of its provision; Staffordshire University Research Degrees Sub-Committee has oversight of the work of the Research and Enterprise Committee.
 - b The student voice is fed into quality assurance by way of: (i) progress review (ii) clear opportunities to provide confidential feedback directly to the Chair of the Research and Enterprise Committee; (iii) representation of MPhil/PhD students and an officer of the Students' Union on the Research and Enterprise Committee; (iv) PRES results, which will be discussed and acted upon at both Faculty and University levels.
 - c The University's overall MPhil/PhD provision is subject to a 5-year cycle of review.
 - d Any subject area currently supervising students at doctoral level will be assumed to be providing the minimum research environment specified above and thus are entitled to recruit new students. Annual monitoring and the University 5-year review cycle are moments where this entitlement is reviewed and, potentially, withdrawn.
- 52 More specifically, the annual monitoring report will provide data on, comment on, and propose a set of actions pertaining to:
- a submission and completion times and rates, with account taken of any variations
 - b pass, referral and fail rates at the various review stages, and at the final exams.
 - c withdrawal rates
 - d the number of appeals and complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are upheld
 - e comments from examiners
 - f recruitment profiles
 - g feedback from research students (as individuals, by way of annual reviews and reports; and collectively, through the PRES),
 - h feedback from employers, sponsors and other external partners
 - i various training or development opportunities, their content, attendance and feedback,
 - j changes to the supervisory profile or other aspects of its provision (i.e. loss of staff, new areas opening up, new partnerships and facilities available)
 - k information on subsequent employment destinations and career paths of research students who have achieved the qualification
 - l awareness of and the University's compliance with its own regulations and COP
 - m system-wide issues that may be affecting student's progress or satisfaction (e.g. the availability of various types of resources, training or support).
- 53 For further information, please refer to the Blackboard organisation for research students.

Examination

- 54 The final assessment stage of the MPhil or PhD is by an oral examination. The procedures, standards and possible outcomes are described in full in the regulations. These are designed to ensure that the process is carried out with equity and probity. It is the supervisor's responsibility to inform the research student about the nature of the examination, its possible outcomes, and to prepare the student for the event.
- 55 Examinations are chaired by an experienced member of the research and supervisory staff, selected from a list approved by Staffordshire University Research Degrees Sub-Committee. The Chair will not be in the same Faculty as the student, and must not have any connection with the project that would impede independence. Training for new examination chairs will be offered by the RED Unit as part of its programme of development.
- 56 Additional Guidance on the examination process can be found on the Blackboard organisation for research students.