

Regulations for the Award of MPhil and PhD by supervised research (Staffordshire University)

Contents

General principles.....	3
Admission of students	3
Registration.....	6
Placements.....	8
Supervision	8
Monitoring the progress of students.....	9
Induction.....	9
Early stage review.....	9
Late stage review	11
Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD	12
Transfer of registration from PhD to MPhil	13
Annual progress review	13
Examination arrangements	14
Examiners.....	16
The candidate’s responsibilities in the examination process.....	17
The thesis	17
The examination.....	19
PhD examination outcomes	21
MPhil examination outcomes.....	22
MPhil and PhD re-submissions.....	23
Publication of results and completion of the award.....	24
Final thesis	24
Certificates and ceremonies	24
Appeals.....	25
Academic Misconduct	25

Regulations for the Award of MPhil and PhD by supervised research (Staffordshire University)

Approved by: **Senate**

Version No. **1**

Owner: **Academic Quality Directorate**

Date first published: **Apr-2016**

Date updated: Enter date

Review Date: Enter date

This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Quality Directorate.

© 2014 Buckinghamshire New University

General principles

- 1 These research degree regulations apply to all Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programmes validated by Staffordshire University and delivered at Buckinghamshire New University (Bucks).
- 2 Regulations specific to Bucks New University pertaining to research degrees will be governed by and amended by Senate on the advice of the University Research and Enterprise Committee and approved by Staffordshire University.
- 3 The Research Degrees Committee, a sub-committee of the Research and Enterprise Committee, shall on behalf of Senate ensure that these research degree regulations are complied with in all matters relating to the registration, progress and examination of higher degrees by research.
- 4 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee shall on behalf of the University's Academic Board ensure that Bucks New University's research degree regulations are complied with in all matters relating to the registration, progress and examination of higher degrees by research.
- 5 The degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) are awarded to registered candidates who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research. These awards shall be consistent and comparable in standard with those of other institutions of higher education.
- 6 Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirement that the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners. All candidates for research degree programmes shall be considered for admission on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
- 7 Co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards is encouraged. Such co-operation will be intended:
 - a to encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
 - b to extend the candidate's own experience and perspectives of the work;
 - c to provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
 - d to be to the mutual benefit of the University and the co-operating establishment;
 - e where appropriate, to enable the candidate to become a member of a wider research community.

Admission of students

- 8 A person may apply to register as a research degree candidate for the degree of:
 - a Master of Philosophy; or
 - b Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy; or
 - c Doctor of Philosophy.

The University offers research degrees:

- a With attendance
- b By distance learning

- 9 Candidates may register either full-time or part-time on any of the above.
- 10 Distance learning research degree candidates are not normally required to attend the University, except normally for examination. Contact must be maintained during the registration period at the same frequency as if the candidate were in full attendance. The suitability of a candidate for the distance learning mode will be assessed as part of the admissions process. The interview panel will establish that the applicant has the motivation and aptitude for studying via this mode and that resources will be available to undertake study at research degree level.
- 11 In approving an application the University will satisfy itself that:
- a The candidate has the requisite educational qualifications;
 - b The candidate is eligible to study in the UK for those attending at the University;
 - c The candidate has met the stated minimum English proficiency qualification for the research degree programme and has provided evidence of sufficient command of written and spoken English to complete satisfactorily any programme of related studies, and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. The University's normal requirement is an overall IELTS score of 6.5 or equivalent with at least IELTS 6 obtained in each component. Each subject area has a minimum requirement, agreed with Staffordshire University, within a range of IELTS 6-7.5;
 - d The candidate is embarking on a viable research programme;
 - e The candidate is aware of the commitment required to undertake a research programme and is motivated and has the potential to complete the programme;
 - f The supervision arrangements are appropriate and likely to be sustained;
 - g The University is able to provide appropriate resources and facilities for the conduct of research in the area of the research programme;
 - h If applying to study by distance learning, the candidate has realistic expectations and the ability to succeed via this mode of study. The candidate must have access to adequate resources and facilities for the conduct of research activity in the area of the research programme.
- 12 All candidates will be asked to provide the names of two referees who can verify their academic qualifications and aptitude to study at research degree level.
- 13 All appropriate candidates will be interviewed by a panel normally consisting of:
- a A member of the Research Degree Committee who has undergone training in the admissions process
 - b the proposed Principal Supervisor

Where the Director of Research¹ is to be a supervisor, an additional person who has supervised to completion should be on the panel.

¹ Director of Research refers to Research Lead in Faculty

- 14 All recommendations made by the interview panel will be ratified by Staffordshire University.
- 15 Successful applicants will receive an offer letter from the University's Research Unit.
- 16 A candidate may be permitted to register for another course of study concurrently with the research degree registration, provided that either the research degree registration or the other course of study is by part-time study and that, in the opinion of the University, the dual registration will not impede the progress of the research programme.
- 17 An applicant for registration on the degree of MPhil or MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD will normally hold either at least an honours degree of 2:1 or above in a relevant subject of a University in the UK or a qualification which is regarded by the University as equivalent to such an honours degree whether awarded in the UK or overseas.
- 18 An applicant holding qualifications other than those mentioned above will be considered on his/her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, the interview panel will look for evidence of the candidate's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment shall be taken into consideration.
- 19 Direct registration for the degree of PhD may be permitted to an applicant who holds a Master's degree awarded by either the University or another UK university or an overseas Master's degree of equivalent standard, provided that the Master's degree is in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed research and that the Master's degree included training in research and the execution of a research project. Direct registration for the degree of PhD may also be permitted to an applicant who, although lacking a Master's degree, has an honours degree of 2:1 or above (or equivalent) in an appropriate discipline and has had appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level, which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment.
- 20 A candidate may undertake a programme of research in which the candidate's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. Such creative work may be in any field (for instance, fine art, design, engineering and technology, creative writing, film), but will have been undertaken as part of the research programme. The application for registration will set out the form of the candidate's intended submission and of the proposed methods of assessment, which must be agreed with the proposed supervisors. The final submission will be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative work.
- 21 A candidate may undertake a programme of research in which the principal focus is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, or other original artefacts. The final submission will include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary, which set the text in the relevant historical, theoretical or critical context.

- 22 A candidate whose work forms part of a larger group project may register for a research degree. In such cases the programme of research to be undertaken by the candidate should in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the category of registration and level of award being sought. The application should indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.
- 23 Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, the interview panel will establish to its satisfaction that the terms on which the research is funded do not detract from the fulfillment of the objectives and requirements of the candidate's research degree.
- 24 All research degree candidates must adhere to the University's Intellectual Property and Ethics Policies.
- 25 An applicant may apply to transfer their registration to the University from another UK Higher Education Institution. In such cases the following additional evidence should be provided as part of the admissions process:
 - a A supporting statement from the candidate outlining the reasons for the transfer;
 - b A written statement from the former institution agreeing to the transfer and confirming the status of the student's registration and details of the student's progress;
 - c Where the candidate has had access to specialist equipment and resources, a written statement from the former institution confirming that these will be made available to the student in order that they can complete the research project.
- 26 Where the transfer of registration from another UK Higher Education Institution is approved, the minimum and maximum registration periods for a Direct PhD will normally apply. In exceptional circumstances a shorter registration period may be recommended by the Research Degrees Committee to the Staffordshire Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval, however in all cases a minimum registration period of one year will be required.
- 27 The University may approve an application from a person proposing to work mainly outside the UK, provided that arrangements are set out and agreed as part of the registration process.

Registration

- 28 Once a candidate has been accepted onto a research degree programme he/she must formally enrol with the University by the date specified in the offer letter. From the date of enrolment a candidate is considered to be registered for the research degree and must follow the minimum and maximum registration periods as set out in paragraph 30 below.
- 29 Registration begins from the date of enrolment with the University. The minimum and maximum periods of registration must be adhered to and are as follows:

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
MPhil		
Full-time	12 months	24 months
Part-time	24 months	48 months
PhD [via transfer from MPhil registration and including that period of MPhil registration]		
Full-time	30 months	48 months
Part-time	60 months	96 months
PhD [direct]		
Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months

- 30 A candidate must submit their thesis to the University before the expiry of the maximum period of registration.
- 31 Where a candidate changes from full-time to part-time study their minimum and maximum registration periods shall be re-calculated to take into account that they will be a part-time candidate for the remainder of their registration. Where a candidate changes from part-time to full-time study, their minimum and maximum registration periods shall be re-calculated to take into account that they will be a full-time candidate for the remainder of their registration.
- 32 Where a candidate has previously undertaken research as a registered candidate for a research degree at the University, the Research Degrees Committee may recommend to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval a shorter than usual registration period which takes account of all or part of the time already spent by the candidate on such research.
- 33 The majority of work submitted for examination for a research degree must have been undertaken after the initial registration for the research degree. Exceptions may only be permitted for a candidate transferring their registration from another institution (see regulations 26 and 27).
- 34 Candidates for the MPhil or PhD must also normally successfully complete a requisite number of skills development activities during their programme.
- 35 A candidate must enrol with the University as a research degree student each academic year. Failure to enrol each academic year will be viewed as evidence that a candidate has discontinued their programme of research.
- 36 A candidate will pay such fees as may be determined by the University. Non-payment of fees will result in the candidate's registration being withdrawn.

Placements

- 37 A research degree student may apply to the Research Degrees Committee to undertake a work placement as part of their programme of study. A placement may take place in another university, a research laboratory, a research institute, a Local Authority Public Health Department, an NHS Department, or an industrial research division.
- 38 The work placement should be an integral part of the candidate's programme of study. Following completion of the placement the candidate must produce a written post-placement report showing how the experience has contributed to their research programme and how this experience will be included in the final thesis. This report must be submitted to the student's supervisor within one month of the completion of the work placement and should also be considered by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 39 The candidate must still complete their research degree programme within the maximum period of registration.

Supervision

- 40 A candidate registered for a research degree will normally have a supervision team consisting of a Principal Supervisor, who can offer expertise in the proposed field of study, and one or more additional supervisors.
- 41 A Principal Supervisor must be an employee of the University or Staffordshire University, have a Level 8 qualification and have previously supervised to successful completion a minimum of one postgraduate research degree (at least at the level they are intending to supervise), or have successfully completed a development programme agreed by Staffordshire University and be actively engaged in research and/or consultancy at an appropriate level for the supervision of the award. In exceptional circumstances an employee of the University without the above requisite qualifications or experience may apply to the Research Degrees Committee to be appointed to a Principal Supervisor role. The Research Degrees Committee will recommend the appointment to Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee for approval.
- 42 A second supervisor must have a record of research activity in an area relevant to the research degree candidate's work.
- 43 A member of the University's staff who is registered for a postgraduate research degree shall be eligible to supervise another research degree candidate, as a second supervisor only, providing that he/she can satisfy the Research Degree Committee that no conflict of interest will arise between the proposed supervisor's body of work and the programme of research put forward by the candidate for registration.
- 44 All new supervisors will undergo appropriate supervisory development.
- 45 In addition to the supervisory team, an adviser or advisers may be appointed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.

- 46 If a supervisor leaves the University's employment or is unable to continue in that role, all reasonable endeavours will be used to identify another member of staff to take over the supervisory role. However, there may be cases in which there is no-one within the University who has the relevant subject expertise. In such circumstances, the Director of Research will discuss with the student all possible options, which may include arranging for a supervisor who has left to continue as an additional supervisor, appointing a new external supervisor or facilitating the student's transfer to the supervisor's new institution or another institution if appropriate.
- 47 Any change proposed to a candidate's supervision arrangements must be approved by the Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

Monitoring the progress of students

- 48 The Research Degrees Committee will monitor the progress of candidates and has responsibility for ensuring that Early Stage Review, Late Stage Review and Annual Progress Reviews occur for each candidate at the appropriate time and for considering and approving the outcomes. The Staffordshire University Research Degrees Sub-Committee will also monitor the progress of all candidates.

Induction

- 49 Induction of new students will be carried out within the first term of registration. Induction will include planning the anticipated dates for Early Stage Review and Late Stage Review based on the timescales outlined below. These dates will be reported to the Research Degrees Committee and noted by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee. Induction will also include introduction to the requirements of the University's skills development programme for research degree students.

Early stage review

- 50 All candidates will normally undertake Early Stage Review (ESR) within six to 12 months of initial registration (12-24 months for part-time candidates). The purpose of ESR is to ensure that the candidate is progressing in line with the plan of work agreed with their supervisors. For candidates registered for an MPhil with possibility of transferring registration to PhD, the ESR will additionally consider whether the candidate has made sufficient progress for their registration to be transferred from MPhil to PhD.
- 51 The ESR will incorporate the following:
- a The submission of an Early Stage Portfolio prepared by the candidate. The Portfolio will be 5000 words maximum, not including references, which will include the following:
 - i a literature review;

- ii. the research proposal and plan of work detailing progress so far (for candidates registered for an MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD the plan should also outline how the project has evolved so as to be suitable for a PhD);
- iii. confirmation that ethical approval has been obtained for the research, where required;
- iv. results to date (if any);
- v. a skills appraisal.

b An interview.

52 The interview will normally take place on one of the University's campuses. The Research Degrees Committee may approve the ESR Interview to take place via video link, subject to the written agreement of the candidate and the interview panel and to the technology being of a satisfactory standard. In the event that the technology does not permit the interview to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the interview should be stopped and rearranged.

53 The Research Degrees Committee will approve the ESR Interview Panel, which will comprise:

- A member of the Faculty with expertise in the general subject area.
- A member of another Faculty who is actively involved in the supervision of PhD students.
- The Director of Research in the Faculty (or nominee)

54 Where the candidate is also a permanent employee of the University, an additional member of the ESR Panel, drawn from a different Department, will be appointed.

55 The Principal Supervisor may attend with the agreement of the candidate, but may not contribute to discussions, unless specifically asked to do so by the Panel.

56 The candidate will submit the Early Stage Portfolio at least two weeks ahead of the ESR Interview date.

57 The possible outcomes of the ESR are:

For candidates registered on an MPhil:

- Continue on MPhil registration
- Continue MPhil with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before the ESR is complete.
- Recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

For candidates registered on an MPhil with possibility of progression to PhD:

- Transfer to PhD
- Transfer to PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before transfer can be progressed.
- Continue on MPhil and write up thesis for submission.
- Recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

For candidates on direct PhD registration:

- Continue on PhD registration
- Continue PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before the ESR is complete.
- Transfer to MPhil registration and write up thesis for submission.
- Recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

58 The ESR Interview panel will complete a report, outlining their recommendation, for approval by the Research Degrees Committee.

59 The interview panel may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the ESR to the candidate but they will make it clear that the final decision rests with the Research Degrees Committee/ Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee as appropriate.

60 The Research Degree Committee will forward the ESR report to the next available meeting of Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for information.

61 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee will make the final decision as to whether a candidate should be withdrawn.

Late stage review

62 All PhD candidates will undertake Late Stage Review (LSR) 18-24 months following initial registration for full-time candidates and 36-48 months following initial registration for part-time candidates.

63 The purpose of LSR is to ensure that the candidate is progressing to agreed timescales and to prepare them for the PhD examination.

64 The LSR will incorporate the following:

a An LSR Portfolio prepared by the candidate to include:

- i. a brief overview report of between 1500 and 3000 words not including references and appendices. The overview report should be an evaluation of the work so far, including a summary and evaluation of results and plans for completion of the programme of study. References should be made to completed chapters, which should be included as appendices;
- ii. completed chapters and/or articles; and
- iii. an updated Skills Appraisal.

b An interview.

65 The Research Degrees Committee will approve the LSR Interview Panel, which will comprise:

- A member of the Faculty with expertise in the general subject area.
- A member of another Faculty who is actively involved in the supervision of PhD students.
- The Director of Research in the Faculty or nominee

Where the candidate is also a permanent employee of Bucks New University, an additional member of the Panel, drawn from a different Department, will be appointed.

- 66 The Principal Supervisor may attend with the agreement of the candidate, but may not contribute to discussions, unless specifically asked to do so by the Panel.
- 67 The candidate will submit their Late Stage Portfolio at least two weeks ahead of the LSR Interview date.
- 68 The interview will normally take place at one of the University's campuses. The Research Degrees Committee may approve the LSR Interview to take place via video link, subject to the written agreement of the candidate and the interview panel and to the technology being of a satisfactory standard. In the event that the technology does not permit the interview to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the interview should be stopped and rearranged.
- 69 The possible outcomes of the LSR are:
 - Continue on PhD registration
 - Continue PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the LSR Panel before the LSR is complete.
 - Transfer to MPhil registration and write up thesis for submission.
 - Recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.
- 70 The LSR Panel will complete a report, outlining their recommendation, for approval by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 71 The LSR Panel may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the LSR to the candidate but they will make it clear that the final decision rests with the Research Degrees Committee / Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee as appropriate.
- 72 The Research Degrees Committee will forward the report to the next available meeting of Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for information.
- 73 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub Committee will make the final decision as to whether a candidate should be withdrawn.

Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD

- 74 Following successful completion of the ESR a candidate on an MPhil award with possibility of transfer to PhD award will have their transfer to PhD confirmed by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 75 A candidate registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to transfer their registration to PhD. In such cases the candidate should apply to the Research Degrees Committee to have their registration extended to PhD. Such applications should be submitted together with a separate statement from the Principal Supervisor explaining the circumstances that have prompted the request to change the candidate's registration. If the Committee approves the candidate's application in principle, transfer of registration will only be confirmed following:

- For candidates yet to undertake an ESR: successful completion of an ESR
- For candidates who have already undertaken an ESR as an MPhil only student: successful completion of a LSR

The candidate will be required to demonstrate how the project has evolved so as to be suitable for a PhD.

Transfer of registration from PhD to MPhil

- 76 A candidate who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to the Research Degrees Committee for a change of registration to that of MPhil. When approving such an application, the Research Degrees Committee will also approve the new registration timeframe.
- 77 Where a candidate has had their registration transferred to MPhil following a LSR they should normally complete the MPhil within six months of the date of the LSR (12 months for part-time candidates).

Annual progress review

- 78 The academic progress of candidates will be monitored on an annual basis either through the ESR, LSR, or through the completion of an Annual Progress Review report, which will be considered by the Research Degrees Committee and noted by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub Committee.
- 79 Through these processes the Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee will establish whether each candidate is still actively engaged on the research programme, is maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisors and is making satisfactory progress. The Committees will take appropriate action, which may include the recommendation that the candidate's registration is withdrawn, if the supervisors and the Faculty indicate that there has been a lack of academic progress. Unless the candidate can provide satisfactory evidence to the Committees to justify the continuation or extension of the registration, the Research Degrees Committee will formally recommend to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee, that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.
- 80 Where the candidate is prevented, by ill health or other cause, from making progress with the research, their registration may be suspended by the Research Degrees Committee normally for not more than one year at a time. In making a decision as to whether registration may be suspended the Research Degrees Committee will take into account the currency of the candidate's research.
- 81 Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee may extend a candidate's period of registration, on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Committee, normally for not more than one year at a time. A candidate seeking such an extension should apply to the Committee before the maximum period of registration has expired.

In making a decision as to whether registration may be extended the Research Degrees Committee will take into account the currency of the candidate's research.

- 82 Where a candidate has discontinued their research and withdrawn from the programme this shall be notified to the Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

Examination arrangements

- 83 The examination for the MPhil and PhD will have two stages: firstly the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by oral or approved alternative examination.
- 84 The Principal Supervisor shall nominate on the appropriate form the examiners whom it is proposed shall conduct the examination. The form must be submitted for consideration by the Research Degrees Committee for recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval. The examination must not take place until the examination arrangements have been approved.
- 85 An application for approval of research degree examination arrangements shall be approved for a period of two years. If an examination has not taken place within two years of the date of approval of the application, then an application for renewal of the examination arrangements shall be submitted to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 86 A copy of the thesis will be sent to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report form, the University's regulations and notes of guidance to examiners.
- 87 Following submission of the thesis, the examiners may require the candidate to display or demonstrate the supporting material that is the product of the programme of research and referred to in the thesis. Equally, candidates may request the opportunity to display or demonstrate the supporting material.
- 88 The examiners will complete and return their preliminary reports to the University at least five working days before the oral examination is due to take place. The second stage of the examination shall not take place until the preliminary reports of the examiners have been submitted.
- 89 An Independent Chair selected from the list approved by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee must attend each MPhil and PhD viva examination to ensure the examination is conducted and recommendations of the examiners are presented, wholly in accordance with the regulations.
- 90 A candidate will normally be examined orally 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 Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be recommended to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval. Such approval will not be given on

the grounds that the candidate's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.

- 91 The oral examination will be held in English and normally on a campus of the University.
- 92 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee, on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Committee, may exceptionally give approval for an oral examination to be held elsewhere in the UK or abroad. Any decision to hold an oral examination off campus is subject to the appointment of an experienced internal examiner and the written agreement of the candidate, all the examiners and the Independent Chair. Where it is proposed to hold an oral examination off campus, the candidate and Principal Supervisor should submit an application for consideration by the Research Degrees Committee and recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval.
- 93 In exceptional circumstances, Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub Committee may, on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Committee, give approval for an oral examination to be held by video link. Any decision to hold an oral examination by video link is subject to the appointment of an experienced internal examiner and the written agreement of the candidate, all the examiners and the Independent Chair. Such examinations should normally be held at a British Council office. Where it is proposed to hold an oral examination by video link, the candidate and Principal Supervisor should submit an application to the Research Degrees Committee for approval by the Staffordshire University Research Degrees Sub-Committee. In the event that the technology does not permit the oral examination to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the viva should be stopped and rearranged.
- 94 A supervisor may, with the consent of the candidate, attend the oral examination but cannot participate in the discussion unless specifically asked to do so by the Chair of the examination panel. The supervisor must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.
- 95 The examination panel will make a recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee on the outcome of the candidate's examination and will make a final recommendation to Staffordshire University on the candidate's revised or re-examined thesis. All recommendations will be noted by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 96 In any instance where Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.
- 97 The power to confer the degree of MPhil or PhD will rest with Staffordshire University; this power is delegated by Staffordshire University's Academic Board to its Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 98 The degree of MPhil or PhD may be awarded posthumously on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate, which is ready for submission for examination. In such cases the Research Degrees Committee will seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the oral examination taken place, and

make a recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

- 99 Where evidence of cheating or plagiarism in the preparation of the thesis or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee will consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners, and take appropriate action in accordance with Staffordshire University procedures.

Examiners

- 100 A candidate will be examined by at least two and normally not more than three examiners, of whom at least one will be an external examiner.

- 101 An internal examiner shall:

- a be a member of staff of the University; or
- b be a member of staff of Staffordshire University; and
- c shall normally be an expert in the subject area.

External examiners shall:

- a be independent of the University; and Staffordshire University;
- b not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor or adviser;
- c not have been a member of staff or student of the University or Staffordshire University within the last five years;
- d not be an employee of a University partner or Staffordshire University partner;
- e not be a member of the University's Board of Governors or Staffordshire University's Board of Governors;
- f not be an examiner for a taught course of the University;
- g not have a close personal connection (for example relative) with or be a close working colleague with any member of the supervisory team;
- h not have published within the previous five years with any of the candidate's supervisors.

- 102 An external examiner should normally hold, or have recently held, an academic appointment in a recognised university. In certain circumstances, however, it may be appropriate to appoint from outside the higher education system e.g. industry or the professions. In such cases two external examiners shall be appointed, one with appropriate academic experience.
- 103 The candidate's current or former supervisors or advisers cannot be appointed as examiners.
- 104 Where the candidate is also a member of the permanent staff of either the University or Staffordshire University, a second external examiner will be appointed.
- 105 Examiners will be qualified to at least the level they will be examining, be experienced in research in the general area of the candidate's thesis and have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined. The examination team should have a minimum of three previous examinations at the level to be examined.

- 106 The Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee will ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that his/her familiarity with the School/Faculty might prejudice objective judgment. External examiners should not be appointed twice consecutively from the same institution for any one Faculty.
- 107 Once the examination team has been appointed by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee the supervisors and the candidate must not have any contact with the examiners regarding the examination.
- 108 The fees and expenses of the examiners will be determined by Staffordshire University.

The candidate's responsibilities in the examination process

- 109 The candidate will ensure that the thesis is submitted before the expiry of the registration period.
- 110 At least six months prior to the anticipated submission date, the candidate will notify the Research Degrees Committee of their intention to submit their thesis. This will also be noted by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee. The title of the thesis will be finalised at this point. Any exceptional subsequent changes to the thesis title will require approval from Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-committee.
- 111 The submission of the thesis for examination will be at the sole discretion of the candidate. While a candidate would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Equally, candidates should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.
- 112 The candidate will take no part in the arrangement of the examination and will have no formal contact with the examiners.
- 113 The candidate will confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award. The candidate will not be precluded from incorporating in the thesis work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award at the University or another institution, provided that it is indicated in the thesis which work has been incorporated.

The thesis

- 114 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the thesis format is in accordance with the requirements of Staffordshire University, as outlined in Appendix A. Where a candidate wishes to submit in a format which deviates from Staffordshire University's requirements, this will require the express permission of Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 115 All higher degrees by research must reach a standard of written English and academic communication appropriate for the topic and the level of award, and examiners will be

asked to approve this element of the candidate's work. All theses must be presented in English.

- 116 There shall be an abstract of approximately 300 words bound into the thesis, which will provide a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated.
- 117 The thesis will include a statement of the candidate's objectives and will acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted and any assistance received.
- 118 Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis will indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
- 119 The candidate will be free to publish material in advance of the thesis submission but reference will be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of published material should either be bound in with the thesis submitted for examination, or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis.
- 120 The text of the thesis should not exceed the following length (excluding ancillary data in appendices):

For a PhD 80,000 words

For an MPhil 40,000 words

Candidates should appreciate that the word limits shown above are maxima and that a well-written thesis may contain fewer words than the maxima, particularly when the thesis is supported by other material not in a written form.

- 121 Where the submission is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, a written thesis should normally be included.
- 122 Theses should be submitted for examination in a temporarily bound form which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. An electronic copy of the thesis should also be submitted. The copies of the thesis submitted for examination will remain the property of the University but the copyright in the thesis will be vested in the candidate.
- 123 Where a candidate or the University wishes the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, application should be made to the Research Degrees Committee either at the time of initial registration, at Early Stage Review or Late Stage Review, who will make a recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee. An application for confidentiality will normally only be approved in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. A thesis will not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission should be made immediately to the Research Degrees Committee for recommendation to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

- 124 The normal maximum period of confidentiality permitted is two years from the date of the oral examination. However, in exceptional circumstances Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may approve a longer period on receipt of an appropriate rationale and supporting evidence.
- 125 Where the Research Degrees Committee and Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee have agreed that the confidential nature of the candidate's work is such as to preclude the thesis being made freely available in the Library of the University and Staffordshire University and, in the case of a PhD, the British Library, the thesis will immediately on completion of the programme of work be retained by the University on restricted access and, for a time not exceeding the approved period, will only be made available to those who were directly involved in the project.

The examination

- 126 The examination shall have two stages:
- a The candidate's submission of the thesis and the examiners' independent preliminary assessment of it;
 - b The defence of the thesis by the candidate by oral examination or approved alternative assessment.
- 127 In making a judgement on both the thesis and the oral examination (viva voce), examiners will consider the following criteria:
- Whether the thesis represents a significant contribution to knowledge of the subject through:
 - the exercise of independent critical powers
 - competence in the investigation of the chosen topic(s)
 - competence in undertaking a critical study of the chosen topic(s)
 - Whether the thesis provides evidence of originality.
 - Whether the presentation of the thesis is satisfactory and the standard of written English and academic communication is appropriate to the discipline and the level of award.
 - Whether the title of the thesis is appropriate.
 - Whether the thesis abstract is acceptable.
 - In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, whether the thesis indicates clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
- 128 The MPhil shall be awarded to a candidate:
- a who has carried out original work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge;
 - b whose thesis demonstrates an appreciation of the relation of the research to existing work in the field;
 - c whose thesis demonstrates an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field;

- d who has presented and defended the thesis by oral examination, or approved alternative examination, to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 129 The PhD shall be awarded to a candidate:
- a who has made an original contribution to knowledge, through the production of new knowledge and/or by the exercise of independent critical thought;
 - b whose thesis demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the relation of the research to existing work in the field;
 - c whose thesis demonstrates an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field;
 - d who has presented and defended the thesis by oral examination, or approved alternative examination, to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 130 Each examiner will read and examine the thesis and will submit, on the appropriate form, an independent preliminary report at least five working days before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner will consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible will make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination. Preliminary reports will be circulated amongst the examining team but will not be made available to the candidate.
- 131 Where the examiners are of the opinion that the thesis is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination, they may recommend, that Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee dispense with the oral examination and refer the thesis for further work. In such cases the examiners will provide Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee with written guidance for the candidate concerning the deficiencies of the thesis and the candidate will be required to resubmit in line with regulations 144-148 below. No subsequent resubmission will be permitted. The examiners will not recommend that a candidate fail outright without holding an oral examination or other approved alternative examination.
- 132 The oral examination of the research thesis will normally involve one or two external examiner(s) and an internal examiner and will be chaired by an independent Chair taken from the list approved by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee. The oral examination will normally be held on one of the University's campuses in accordance with regulations 91-93 above.
- 133 Following the oral examination the examiners will, where they are in agreement, submit, on the appropriate form, provide a joint report and recommendation relating to the award of the degree to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee and for note at the Research Degrees Committee. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners will together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee to satisfy itself that the recommendation chosen is correct. Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations will be submitted.

PhD examination outcomes

134 Following the completion of the examination for a PhD the examiners will make one of the following recommendations to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee:

1. *Direct award.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of doctoral standard. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD without making any changes to his or her thesis.
2. *Revisions required.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of doctoral standard, however the thesis requires revisions. These are normally to be completed within 6 months of the examination, although if numerous, the examiners can recommend up to 12 months. In such instances the following outcomes are available to the examiners:
 - i. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
 - ii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the external examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
 - iii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of both examiners. It is for the examiners to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degree Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
3. *Resubmission.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of the thesis and/or its defence, but believe this standard may be reached with further work.

In such instances significant revisions of the thesis are required, and the candidate should resubmit the work, normally within 12 months of the first examination. A further oral examination will then be held. Only one resubmission is permitted.

4. *Change of registration.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained. However, the Examiners do believe that the candidate has achieved some recognisable level of research which may be of the level appropriate to the degree of MPhil.

In such instances a revised thesis is to be submitted within 12 months of the first examination. On receipt of the thesis the examiners will determine whether a further oral examination is required.

5. *No award.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained.

The candidate should not be granted the degree of PhD and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

- 135 Where amendments to the thesis are required these should be made in accordance with the specific requirements of the examiners.
- 136 Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they will make it clear, through the Chair, that the final decision rests with Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 137 Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may:
- a accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - b accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- 138 Where Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee decides that the degree should not be awarded and that no resubmission be permitted, the examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which will be forwarded to the candidate.

MPhil examination outcomes

- 139 Following the completion of the examination for an MPhil the examiners will make one of the following recommendations to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee:
1. *Direct award.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of MPhil standard. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil without making any changes to his or her thesis.
 2. *Revisions required.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of MPhil standard, however the thesis requires revisions. These are normally to be completed within six months of the examination, although if numerous, the examiners can recommend up to 12 months. In such instances the following outcomes are available to the examiners:
 - i. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
 - ii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the external examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
 - iii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of both examiners. It is for the examiners to review these amendments, and to indicate to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.

3. *Resubmission.* The examiners are not confident of the MPhil standing of the thesis and/or its defence, but believe this standard may be reached with further work.

In such instances significant revisions of the thesis are required, and the candidate should resubmit the work, normally within 12 months of the first examination. A further oral examination will then be held. Only one resubmission is permitted.

4. *No award.* The examiners are not confident of the MPhil standing of the thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained.

The candidate should not be granted the degree of MPhil and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

- 140 Where amendments to the thesis are required these should be made in accordance with the specific requirements of the examiners.
- 141 Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they will make it clear, through the Chair, that the final decision rests with Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 142 Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may:
- a accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - b accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- 143 Where Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee decides that the degree should not be awarded and that no resubmission be permitted, the examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which will be forwarded to the candidate.

MPhil and PhD re-submissions

- 144 One resubmission may be permitted subject to the candidate resubmitting within 12 months from the date of the notification of the outcome of the first examination.
- 145 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may require that an additional external examiner be appointed, or that alternative external examiner(s) be appointed for the re-examination.
- 146 Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may exceptionally approve an extension to the resubmission period.
- 147 In all other respects the re-examination shall be conducted as the first examination.
- 148 Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend in accordance with the provisions set out in paragraphs 134 or 139 above, excepting that the option for a further resubmission shall not apply.
- 149 Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may:

- a accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
- b accept the recommendation of the external examiner.

Publication of results and completion of the award

- 150 The final recommendation of the examination team will be submitted to the next available meeting of Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee which has the authority on behalf of Staffordshire University to award the degrees of PhD and MPhil.
- 151 The results of the candidate's assessment and the award for which they are recommended shall be published in an approved form and signed by the Chair of Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub Committee.
- 152 The candidate shall have been deemed to have completed his/ her award on the date that Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee approves the final recommendation of the examiners.

Final thesis

- 153 Following the award of the degree the candidate must submit one electronic copy of the final version of the thesis accompanied by the completed British Library Electronic Thesis On-line System (Ethos) form.
- 154 The final thesis shall include the following copyright text:

"This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement."
- 155 The electronic copy will be stored in the University and Staffordshire University Library repositories for use by current students and staff and for dissemination and promotion of academic achievement to the wider community through the British Library Electronic Thesis On-line System (Ethos). Where approval has been given for a thesis to remain confidential, the publication details will be recorded in the repository and through Ethos but the content will remain embargoed until such time as it can be released.
- 156 Procedures restricting access to a thesis may only be applied where previously agreed by the Research Degrees Committee and approved by Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub Committee.

Certificates and ceremonies

- 157 Following receipt of the electronic copy of the final thesis the award certificate will be produced and the candidate will be invited to the next available award ceremony.

Appeals

- 158 Students have a right to appeal to Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee against the termination of studies or refusal of transfer to a PhD
- 159 Candidates have the right to appeal against the outcome of the examination. Appeals will be considered by Staffordshire University in accordance with the Procedure detailed in Staffordshire's Regulations for the Award of the University's Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy by Supervised Research.

Academic Misconduct

- 160 Any instances of academic misconduct will be considered through Staffordshire University's Procedure for Dealing with Breaches of Assessment Regulations – Academic Misconduct.

Appendix A – Format of Thesis

The following requirements shall be adhered to in the format of the submitted thesis for examination:

- a Theses shall normally be in A4 format; Staffordshire University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee may give permission for a thesis to be submitted in another format where it is satisfied that the contents of the thesis can be better expressed in that format; a candidate using a format larger than A4 should note that the production of microfiche copies and full-size enlargements may not be feasible;
- b copies of the thesis shall be presented in a permanent and legible form either in typescript or print; where copies are produced by photocopying processes, these shall be of a permanent nature; where word processor and printing devices are used, the printer shall be capable of producing text of a satisfactory quality; the size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall not be less than 2.0 mm for capitals and 1.5 mm for x-height (that is, the height of lower-case x);
- c The thesis may be printed on both sides of the paper, which shall be white and within the range 70 g/m² to 100 g/m²;
- d The margin at the left-hand binding edge of the page shall not be less than 40 mm; other margins shall not be less than 15 mm;
- e Double or one-and-a-half line spacing shall be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used;
- f Pages shall be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages;
- g The title page shall give the following information:
 - 1 the full title of the thesis;
 - 2 the full name of the author;
 - 3 that the degree is awarded by Staffordshire University;
 - 4 the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements;
 - 5 Buckinghamshire New University and
 - 6 the month and year of submission.