Education Committee

Approved by the Graduate Panel of Education Committee on 21 March 2014

General Regulations of the Education Committee governing research degrees, including: Regulations for Admission as a Probationer Research Student; Regulations governing the examination of students for the Degrees of M.Sc. by Research, M.Litt. and D.Phil., and concerning the maintenance of the Register of Graduate Students

This change reorders the general regulations for research degrees. It also removes the ‘Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students’ from the general regulations for research degrees following the incorporation of its content into Education Committee’s revised Policy on Research Degrees.

With effect from 1 October 2014

In Examination Regulations 2013

In Examination Regulations 2013, p. 817, delete ll. 2-4, and insert:

‘General Regulations Governing Research Degrees

§1 Probationer Research Students’

In Examination Regulations 2013, p. 822, after l. 35 insert:

‘§ 2 Register of Graduate Students

1. Suspension of Graduate Students from the Register

1. If, for good cause, a student is temporarily unable to carry out his or her research or coursework, the board concerned may grant him or her a request for a temporary suspension of status, for not less than one and not more than three terms at any one time. Applications for suspension of status should be made to the board concerned, c/o the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant; and should be accompanied by statements of support from a student's supervisor and society. No student may be granted more than six terms' suspension of status in this way by a board.

2. A board may for sufficient reason, and after consultation with the student's supervisor and college, temporarily suspend him or her from the Register on its own initiative.

2. Removal of Graduate Students from the Register

1. A board which considers that it may be necessary to consider the removal of a student
from the Register on academic grounds shall, except in cases requiring immediate action, follow the procedures for counselling and warnings set out in paras. 4-6.

2. A board shall not be required to follow the procedures for the removal of a graduate student from the Register where a student ceases to hold the status of a student for a degree through failure to meet the requirements laid down in the decrees and regulations governing that degree. In particular where a student fails to achieve transfer within the prescribed time his or her status automatically lapses, and his or her name is removed from the Register.

3. A board shall not be required to follow the procedures for counselling and warnings set out below in cases of particular gravity and/or urgency or where it considers, for whatever reason, that immediate action is required, and in such circumstances a board may immediately notify the Education Committee as set out at paragraph 6 below and the matter will proceed as set out in that and subsequent paragraphs. In these circumstances, the board should indicate to the Education Committee why the procedures for counselling and warnings are not to be followed in that instance.

4.1. Subject to para. 3 above, wherever practicable, the formal procedures for the removal of a student from the Register should be preceded by private and informal counselling involving the student's supervisor and college, with the object of establishing the cause of any problem and advising appropriate remedial action.

4.2. If informal means are not effective in producing the necessary improvement, the student will be invited to a formal interview. Written notice of a formal interview should be given at least seven days before it takes place. Such notice will include an indication of the nature and purpose of the interview and the problem or problems that the interview is intended to address. The student will have the right to put his or her case and to be accompanied by a friend. The formal interview will be conducted by the head of department or Director of Graduate Studies who on conclusion of the interview and if further action is considered necessary will issue either (a) a first formal warning, to be confirmed in writing to the student and to his or her supervisor and society, setting out the reason for which it is given, and specifying a period of time for improvement to be made (which period should in no case be less than one month or more than three months); or (b) a final warning as set out in 5 below.

4.3. If the student unreasonably fails to attend the formal interview, a formal warning in writing may be issued without interview, and the student shall be required to acknowledge receipt of the formal warning.

5.1. If the first formal warning issued under 4.2 above is not effective in producing the necessary improvement, the head of department or Director of Graduate Studies shall invite the student to a second formal interview. The procedure will be as for the first formal interview. At the conclusion of the interview the head of department or Director of Graduate Studies shall, if further action is required, issue a final warning, which shall be confirmed in writing to the student and to his or her supervisor and society.

5.2. Where a final warning is issued under 4.2 or 5.1 above the warning itself and the written confirmation should make it clear that if the necessary improvement is not achieved within the specified period, the board may initiate action for the removal of the student from the Register of Graduate Students.

6. Where a final written warning is issued to a graduate student, a copy of the written warning shall be sent to the Education Committee. Where, following a final written warning, the necessary improvement is not achieved within the specified period and further action is indicated, the Education Committee shall be informed by the Secretary of the board concerned. A full report of the action taken by the board in relation to the student shall be made to the Proctors who shall decide whether further action should be taken and, if so, whether under the relevant disciplinary procedures of the University or under the board's
power to remove a student from the Register of Graduate Students on academic grounds. The Proctors' ruling (which may include a decision that no further action is to be taken) shall be taken without reference to the Education Committee, and shall be final.

7.1. Where the Proctors determine that it is appropriate for the matter to be considered under the board's power to initiate action for the removal of a student from the Register of Graduate Students, the board shall seek the approval of the Chair of the Education Committee to undertake any such action. Where such approval is given, the board shall inform the student and the student's college and supervisor, in writing, with a minimum of seven days' notice, of its intention to consider the removal of the student from the Register, set out its reasons and invite comments. In particular the board shall inform the student of his or her right under paragraph 7.3 to present his or her case.

7.2. A board shall delegate the task of hearing the student's case to a panel comprising at least three of its members and shall set out the terms of reference to be followed by the panel. The board shall not appoint any member who has had a previous connection with the student or his or her work.

7.3. The student may be accompanied by a friend and shall have the right to hear and to challenge any evidence presented to the panel. The student may present his or her case in writing or orally, or both, as the student wishes, and the student's society and supervisor shall have the same rights. (All written evidence shall be circulated to the student, the student's supervisor, and the student's college not less than four days before the panel considers the case.) In conducting a hearing, the panel shall ensure that the student has every opportunity to hear and to challenge the case made out by the board for the removal of the student from the Register including any evidence (written or oral) which the panel will consider in reaching a conclusion. Where the student fails to appear without good cause, the panel may proceed in the student's absence.

8. The panel shall then determine its decision as to whether the student's name shall, or shall not, be removed from the Register of Graduate Students. The decision shall be communicated to the student, college, and supervisor. The student shall also be advised in writing of the reasons for the decision and of his or her rights of appeal. The board shall also inform the Education Committee of all cases where the board has decided to deprive a student of his or her status.

9.1. A student or his or her society may appeal in writing against the decision of the faculty board within fourteen days of the date of the letter from the board conveying its decision. The appeal shall be addressed to the Education Committee (c/o the Secretary, Education Committee, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford ox1 2jd), which shall appoint a sub-committee to conduct a hearing of the student's appeal.

9.2. The sub-committee shall include a minimum of three members of the Education Committee, which shall appoint one of the chosen members as chair, with the power to cast an additional vote if necessary. The sub-committee may seek such legal advice as it believes to be necessary for the proper conduct of its duties, and shall have power to require any members of the University to assist it in the hearing.

9.3. The sub-committee shall give the board, the student, the student's college, and the student's supervisor, not less than seven days' notice in writing, of the date and time of the hearing, and shall give them the opportunity to make representations to the sub-committee orally and/or in writing. The student may be accompanied by a friend and shall have the right to hear and to challenge any evidence (written or oral) presented to the sub-committee; the student may present his or her case in writing, or orally, or both, as the student wishes: the board, the student's college, and the student's supervisor shall have the same rights. (All written evidence shall be circulated to the faculty board, the student, the student's supervisor, and the student's college not less than four days before the sub-committee considers the case.)
9.4. At the conclusion of a hearing, the sub-committee shall have power to:

(i) confirm the board's decision to remove the student's name from the Register of Graduate Students;

(ii) uphold the student's appeal and direct that the student's name shall remain on the Register of Graduate Students;

(iii) impose such lesser penalty or requirement in place of the removal of the student's name from the Register of Graduate Students as it deems appropriate.

9.5. In reaching its decision, the sub-committee shall have regard to:

(a) whether the board correctly followed the required procedures, and, in the case of procedural irregularity or irregularities, whether any irregularity or irregularities were such as to have materially prejudiced the board's inquiry;

(b) whether the board's decision could reasonably have been reached on the evidence before it;

(c) any evidence presented to the sub-committee which was not available to the board's panel;

(d) any mitigating circumstances offered by or on behalf of the student;

(e) any other factors which in the opinion of the sub-committee are relevant to a fair consideration of the student's appeal.

9.6. The sub-committee shall communicate its decision to the student, to the student's society and supervisor, and to the board, in writing, within two months of the conclusion of any hearing. The decision of the sub-committee will be final, subject only to a complaint to the Proctors.

3. Reinstatement of Graduate Students to the Register

A student who has lapsed from the Register or has withdrawn or whose name has been removed from the Register by the board concerned may apply for reinstatement to his or her former status on the Register. Such applications shall be addressed by the student to the board concerned, and shall be accompanied by written statements commenting on the application from the candidate's college and former supervisor. The board shall reach a decision on such applications and shall determine the date from which any reinstatement granted under these provisions shall be effective. No reinstatement may be granted under these provisions if the student's name has been on the Register of students of the relevant status for the maximum number of terms allowed under the decree governing that status.

§ 3 Regulations Concerning the Examination of Graduate Students

1. Regulations governing the content and length of theses

(i) Material for transfer or submission

Material submitted for transfer to, or for the award of, the degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil., shall be wholly or substantially the result of work undertaken while the student holds the status of Probationer Research Student or the status of a student for the degree concerned, except that a candidate may make application for a dispensation from this requirement to the Education Committee.
(ii) Prior publication

Prior publication of material arising from research undertaken while holding the status of Probationer Research Student or the status of a student for the M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, or D.Phil., is fully acceptable, but the inclusion of published papers within a thesis may be subject to special regulation by the board concerned. Candidates should note that the acceptance of such material for publication does not of itself constitute proof that the work is of sufficient quality or significance to merit the award of the degree concerned. This remains a judgement of the relevant board on the recommendation of its examiners.

(iii) Thesis length

If a thesis exceeds the permitted length, the board concerned may decline to appoint examiners or to forward the thesis to examiners already appointed, and may return it to the candidate for revision. If the examiners find that a thesis which has been forwarded to them exceeds the permitted length, they should report the fact to the relevant board and await further instructions before proceeding with the examination.

2. Preparation and submission of theses for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil.

(i) Text and footnotes

Candidates should note that the purpose of these regulations is not only to ease the task of the examiners (which is obviously in the candidates' interests), but also to ensure that the copy finally deposited in the Bodleian or other university library is of a standard of legibility which will allow it (subject to applicable copyright rules) to be photocopied or microfilmed if required in future years.

The thesis must be printed or typed with a margin of 3 to 3.5 cm on the left-hand edge of each page (or on the inner edge, whether left-hand or right-hand, in the case of a thesis which is printed on both sides of the paper). Theses in typescript should present the main text in double spacing with quotations and footnotes in single spacing. In the case of word-processed or printed theses, where the output resembles that of a typewriter, double spacing should be taken to mean a distance of about 0.33 inch or 8 mm between successive lines of text. Candidates are advised that it is their responsibility to ensure that the print of their thesis is of an adequate definition and standard of legibility.

Footnotes should normally be placed at the bottom of each page. Where they are given at the end of each chapter or at the end of the thesis, two separate unbound copies of footnotes should also be presented, for the convenience of the examiners.

Candidates should carefully note the regulations concerning word limits which individual boards have made. In such cases, candidates should state the approximate number of words in their theses.

Theses must be submitted in English unless for exceptional reasons a board otherwise determines in the term in which the candidate is first admitted as a research student.

The pages of the thesis must be numbered. Each copy should have an abstract included (see below).

(ii) Examiners' copies: binding and presentation

At the time of their examination, candidates must submit two copies of their thesis, which must be securely and firmly bound in either hard or soft covers. Loose-leaf binding is not acceptable. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that examiners' copies are securely
bound and should note that theses which do not meet this requirement will not be accepted.

Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission must submit, together with the written portion of their thesis, documentation in appropriate form of the exhibition or portfolio of works to be examined. Wherever possible, this documentation should be bound with the written portion of the thesis.

Candidates should pack each copy of the thesis intended for the examiners into a separate but unsealed parcel or padded envelope, ready in all respects, except the address, to be posted to the examiners when appointed. Each parcel should bear the candidate's name and society and the words 'M.LITT./M.SC./D.PHIL. (as appropriate) THESIS AND ABSTRACT' in BLOCK CAPITALS in the bottom left-hand corner. A slip giving the address to which the examiners should write in order to contact the candidate about arrangements for the oral examination should be enclosed with each copy of the thesis. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that their examiners have no difficulty in communicating with them. The separate copies thus packed should be submitted to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford. If sent or posted they should be enclosed in one covering parcel.

The theses of candidates who fail to follow this advice are liable to delay in being forwarded to the examiners.

(iii) Date of submission of examiners' copies

Candidates may submit the examiners' copies of their thesis, prepared as described above, at the same time as they apply for the appointment of their examiners. If they intend, however, to submit the examiners' copies at a later date, they will be required to state, at the time of their application for appointment of examiners, the date by which they will submit. This should be as soon as possible after the date of application and may in no case be later than the last day of the vacation immediately following the term in which application for the appointment of examiners has been made.

(iv) Library copies: binding and presentation

Once the board has granted a candidate leave to supplicate, he or she must submit a finalised copy of the thesis, as approved by the examiners, to the Examination Schools for deposit in the relevant university library. [For candidates admitted on or after 1 October 2007: The candidate must also submit an electronic copy to the Oxford Research Archive. (Candidates whose thesis has been prepared in non-standard media such as to make electronic submission impracticable may apply to the Proctors for exemption from this requirement.)] These should incorporate any corrections or amendments which the examiners may have requested of the candidate. The examiners must confirm in writing in their report to the board that any corrections required have been made.

The library copy of the thesis must be in a permanently fixed binding, drilled and sewn, in a stiff board case in library buckram, in a dark colour, and lettered on the spine with the candidate's name and initials, the degree, and the year of submission.

Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission must submit the written portion of their thesis together with documentation in appropriate form of their exhibition or portfolio of works. Wherever possible, this documentation should be bound with the written portion of the thesis.

Candidates should note that leave to supplicate is conditional upon receipt by the Examination Schools of the library copy of their thesis and [for candidates admitted on or after 1 October 2007, receipt by the Oxford Research Archive of an electronic copy and [for candidates supplicating on or after 1 July 2013] receipt by the Examination Schools of the library copy of the thesis and receipt by the Oxford Research Archive of the electronic copy of the thesis no later than by the end of the fifth day before the date of the degree ceremony booked by the candidate for conferral of their degree and that candidates may
not proceed to take their degree until they have fulfilled the requirement [by the stipulated deadline for those supplicating on or after 1 July 2013] to submit a library copy of the thesis and [for candidates admitted on or after 1 October 2007]: an electronic copy (unless an exception to the requirement to submit an electronic copy of the thesis has been granted by the Proctors).

(v) Abstracts

The abstract of the thesis should concisely summarize its scope and principal arguments, in about 300 words. It should be printed or typewritten, on one side only, of A4-sized paper. Each copy of the abstract should be headed with the title of the thesis, the name and college of the candidate, the degree for which it is submitted, and the term and year of submission.

One copy of the abstract prepared at the time of the examination should be bound into each of the examiners' copies of the thesis. Subsequently, when the examination is completed, candidates should also arrange for a copy of the abstract to be bound into the library copy of their thesis, and should submit with the library copy a separate, unbound copy of their abstract which may be despatched to ASLIB and published. The copy of the abstract which is earmarked for dispatch to ASLIB should be presented separately in a form suitable for microfilming, i.e. it should be (1) on one side of a single sheet of A4 paper, (2) a typed, single-spaced top copy, a clear photocopy, or a printed copy (i.e. it should not be a carbon or poor photocopy), and (3) headed up with name, college, year and term of submission and the title of the thesis.

It should be noted that some boards have made regulations requiring the submission of more detailed abstracts in addition to the general requirement of an abstract not normally exceeding 300 words.


(i) The oral examination shall be held at Oxford in a suitable university or college building, unless the Proctors give special permission for it to be held at some other place. In the case of Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission, where it does not take place in the presence of the exhibition or portfolio of works, the candidate's supervisor must arrange for the examiners to view this part of the submission prior to the commencement of the oral examination. It shall, except in special circumstances, begin not earlier than 9 a.m. nor later than 5 p.m. and may be held in term or vacation. The student or his or her college, other society, or approved institution, may within fourteen days of the date of the Proctors' decision in respect of the granting of consent, appeal in writing to the Chair of the Education Committee (who may nominate another member of the committee, other than one of the Proctors, to adjudicate the appeal).

(ii) The examination may be attended by any member of the University in academic dress. No person who is not a member of the University may attend it except with the consent of both examiners.

(iii) The place and time of the examination shall be fixed by the examiners, who shall be responsible for informing the candidate of the arrangements made. It shall be the duty of candidates to ensure that any letter addressed to them at their college or any other address which they have given is forwarded to them if necessary. The examiners shall allow reasonable time for receiving an acknowledgement from the candidate of their summons.

(iv) Except as provided in clause (v) below, the day shall be fixed by the examiners to suit their convenience. So that candidates may know what arrangements for absence from Oxford they may safely make, the examiners shall inform candidates within a reasonable time of the date fixed.
(v) Candidates may apply to the board concerned for the oral examination to be held not later than a certain date, provided that this date shall not be earlier than one calendar month after the date on which the thesis has been received at the Examination Schools or after the date on which the examiners have agreed to act, whichever is the later. If the board is satisfied that there are special circumstances justifying this application, it will ask the examiners to make arrangements to enable the oral examination to be held within the period specified.

In such cases the examiners, when invited to act, will be informed that the candidate has asked that the oral examination should be held not later than a certain date, and acceptance of the invitation to examine will be on the understanding that they would seek to meet this request. If it is not practicable to meet the student’s request, then the board shall decide how to proceed.

(vi) Notice of the examination shall be given in one of the following ways:

1. it may be published in the University Gazette not later than the day before it is due to take place;

2. Not later than two days before the examination the examiners may

   (a) inform the Graduate Studies Office in writing; and

   (b) post a notice in the Examination Schools; and

   (c) if the examination is to be held at a place other than the Examination Schools, post a notice also at the place of the examination.

The notice shall state the name of the candidate, the subject of the thesis, the place, day, and hour of the examination, and the names of the examiners.

If an examination is held without the giving of the notice required by this regulation it shall be invalid, unless the Proctors, on receipt of a written application from the examiners, shall determine otherwise. The student or his or her college, other society, or approved institution, may within fourteen days of the date of the Proctors’ decision in respect of the granting of consent, appeal in writing to the Chair of the Education Committee (who may nominate another member of the committee, other than one of the Proctors, to adjudicate the appeal).

(vii) If, owing to illness or other urgent and unforeseen cause, an examiner is unable to attend the examination, it shall be postponed to a later date, provided that, if the Proctors are satisfied that postponement would be a serious hardship to the candidate, they may authorize another member of the board concerned to attend the examination as a substitute, but such substitute shall not be required to sign the report. The Proctors shall determine what payment, if any, the substitute examiner shall receive.

(viii) Candidates are strongly recommended to take a copy of their thesis to the examination. In the case of Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission, where the oral examination is not taking place in the presence of the exhibition or portfolio of works, it is recommended they attend with the written portion of their thesis together with documentation of the work.

(ix) An oral examination shall be held in Oxford as prescribed in clause (i). In exceptional circumstances, normally affecting the ability of the external examiner to take part in an Oxford-based oral examination, application may be made to the relevant board for special permission to hold the examination using audiovisual electronic communication with the external examiner concerned. The board concerned may approve the application only where:
(i) it accepts that no alternative and timely arrangements may reasonably be put in place;

(ii) the proposed arrangements are acceptable to both examiners and to the candidate;

(iii) it involves remote communication with only one of the examiners (normally the external);

(iv) it is content to bear the additional cost of the necessary arrangements;

(v) an oral examination of this type takes place according to arrangements and in premises approved by the Proctors;

(vi) the oral examination takes place according to the protocol approved by the Education Committee;

(vii) in the event of any technical or other problems, the validity of the process used to conduct the oral examination and to determine the outcome will be decided by the Proctors.’