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009-RDP-24/10/21-P

**Education Committee**

**Approved at the Research Degrees Panel meeting in week 2 Michaelmas term 2024**

**Name of Regulation**

General Regulations Governing Research Degrees

**Brief note about nature of change:** Update of reporting requirements; reorganisation of regulations to improve ease of reference with associated minor edits; removal of binary gender references

**Location of change**

In *Examination Regulations 2024* [2024-25, General Regulations Governing Research Degrees \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

**Effective date**

**From Michaelmas term 2024**

**Detail of change**

Throughout, completely new text is underlined and deleted text struck through.

1. On the current page for the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees replace existing text with the following hyperlinked list

[General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 1 Probationer Research Students](#)

[General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 2 Admission of Candidates as Probationer Research Students](#)

[General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 3 Supervision of Probationer Research Students](#)

General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 4 Residence and other Requirements of Probationer Research Students

General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 5 Register of Graduate Students

General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 6 Students with Disabilities

General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 7 Examination of Graduate Research Students

2. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

**~~§1. Probationer Research Students~~**

**General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 1 Probationer Research Students**

1. Any person intending to work for the Degree of Master of Letters or of Master of Science by **R**Research or of Doctor of Philosophy must apply in the first instance for admission as a Probationer Research Student, except as provided in the appropriate regulation.
2. The Education Committee shall have power to make and vary such regulations as may be necessary for carrying out the duties laid upon it and upon the Registrar by this section.
3. For the purposes of this section the words 'board', 'faculty board', 'board of the faculty' or 'divisional board' shall include any body with powers to admit students to the status of Probationer Research Student.
4. A Probationer Research Student who is not a graduate of the University may wear the same gown as that worn by Students for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

3. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

**~~§2. Admission of Candidates as Probationer Research Students~~**

**General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 2 Admission of Candidates as Probationer Research Students**

1. The board to which a prospective student's branch of study belongs may admit any person as a Probationer Research Student provided that the board is satisfied:
  - (1) that the candidate is well-fitted and well-qualified to conduct work for a research degree,
  - (2) that the branch of study proposed by the candidate is one which may profitably be pursued under the superintendence of the board,

(3) that supervision will be available, and

(4) that the faculty board or department under whose aegis the research is to be conducted has adequate facilities to enable the research to be undertaken.

2. Applications for admission shall be forwarded to the Registrar, according to such timetables as the Education Committee shall determine. The Registrar shall be responsible for transmitting the candidate's application to the faculty board or department concerned, together with a statement of the branch of study which the candidate intends to pursue, and such evidence of ~~his or her~~ their fitness to undertake the proposed study as may be required by the board or department.

3. No person shall be admitted as a Probationer Research Student unless ~~he or she~~ they are ~~is~~ also a member of a college, and unless the application for admission as a Probationer Research Student has the approval of ~~his or her~~ their college. The Registrar shall forward the application to the candidate's college or to the college to which the candidate wishes to apply for membership, as appropriate; and admission by the board shall be conditional upon admission by an approved society.

4. It shall be the duty of the Registrar to notify candidates of the decision of the board as soon as may be and to inform a candidate whose application has been approved by the board of the term from which ~~his or her~~ their admission as a Probationer Research Student is to be reckoned.

5. It shall be the duty of the Registrar to keep a Register of those admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student.

6. A board may grant a student suspension from the Register or deprive a student of their status; and in such cases it shall at all times follow procedures determined by the Education Committee by regulation.

7. Exceptionally, it shall be open to a candidate whose name has been removed from the Register of Students to apply to the Board for reinstatement to the Register as a Probationer Research Student. The application should have the support of their society and supervisor, and such reinstatement fee as may from time to time be prescribed by Council should be paid. Permission for reinstatement to the Register of Students may be granted by the Board provided that:

(i) no more than twenty-four months have passed since the student's name was removed from the Register; and

(ii) the number of terms the candidate spent with the status of a Probationer Research Student did not exceed five terms in the case of a full-time student, or ten terms in the case of a part-time student.

8. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate who is not able to apply for reinstatement within the provisions above may make an application to Council's Education Committee for reinstatement to the Register of Students as a Probationer Research Student. Such candidates must meet the requirements for reinstatement by the Board and in addition must provide a statement explaining why it is reasonable for Education Committee to permit their reinstatement and outlining the circumstances that have prevented earlier submission. For such applications, Education Committee will consider the length of time since the candidate's name was on the Register of

Students, the seriousness of the causes for the delay, and the views of the student's department/faculty, supervisor and college.

4. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

### ~~§3. Supervision of Probationer Research Students~~

#### General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 3 Supervision of Probationer Research Students

1. Every candidate, on admission as a Probationer Research Student, shall be placed by the board concerned under the supervision of a member of the University or other competent person selected by the board, and the board shall have power for sufficient reason to change the supervisor of any student or to arrange for joint supervision by more than one supervisor, if it deems it necessary.

2. It shall be the duty of a supervisor to advise a student as to the courses of instruction and classes, if any, which ~~he or she~~ they should attend, and generally to direct and superintend the student's work. It shall also be the supervisor's duty to assist a student, when satisfied of ~~his or her~~ their competence, in the selection of a subject for ~~his or her~~ their thesis.

3. The supervisor shall submit a report on the progress of the student to the board ~~three~~ four times each year, and at any other time when the board so requests or the supervisor deems it expedient; and shall undertake such other duties as shall be from time to time set out in the relevant Policy and Guidance issued by the Education Committee. The supervisor shall communicate the contents of the report to the student on each occasion that a report is made, so that the student is aware of the supervisor's assessment of ~~his or her~~ their work during the period in question. In addition, the supervisor shall inform the board at once if ~~he or she~~ they are ~~is~~ of the opinion that a student is unlikely to reach the standard required for admission at least to the status of student for the Degree of Master of Letters or of Science.

The Registrar shall send a copy of each report by the supervisor to the student's college, and to the Director of Graduate Studies or other nominated person under the board concerned.

4. It shall be the duty of a Probationer Research Student to pursue any course of study preparatory to research recommended by ~~his or her~~ their supervisor, and in particular to attend such courses of instruction as the supervisor may advise or the board concerned may require. A board may award a certificate of graduate attainment at the end of the Trinity Term in the year of the student's admission as Probationer Research Student. Subject to the approval of the Education Committee, each board shall have power to determine by regulation what test or condition, if any, it may require before awarding such a certificate.

5. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

### ~~§4. Residence and other Requirements of Probationer Research Students~~

#### General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 4 Residence and other Requirements of Probationer Research Students

1. A full-time Probationer Research Student who has been admitted under the provisions of the preceding sub-section shall normally keep statutory residence and pursue ~~his or her~~ their course of study at Oxford during the period in which ~~he or she~~ they holds the status of Probationer Research Student. Time spent outside Oxford during term as part of an academic programme approved by Council shall count towards residence for the purpose of this clause.

2. A board may, on application from a candidate, and with the support of ~~his or her~~ their college and supervisor, grant dispensation from such residence in exceptional circumstances, on the grounds that it is necessary to the student's work that ~~he or she~~ they should be allowed to study at some other place than Oxford.

3. Part-time students holding the status of Probationer Research Student shall in each case be required to pursue their course of study for a minimum of four terms, and a maximum of eight terms. ~~(For students admitted before 1 October 2011, a minimum of six terms and maximum of twelve terms)~~, prior to an application for transfer of status, save that students who have completed the requirements for the Degrees of Master of Studies or Master of Science (by Coursework) by part-time study may, with the permission of the board or other relevant body, apply for transfer of status after three terms. Part-time students shall not be required to keep statutory residence, but must attend for such instruction as the board or other relevant body shall require, subject to the approval of the Education Committee. No student may apply to the relevant faculty board or other body for the appointment of examiners unless ~~his or her~~ their supervisor has certified that the student has fulfilled the requirements for part-time students laid down by the board or other relevant body.

4. Any student may, with the permission of the board, alter the subject of research approved by the board, provided that the conditions of suitability set out in ~~§2-Part 2~~, cl. 1 of this section continue to be met. In such cases the date of the student's admission for all the purposes of this section shall remain unchanged, unless the board shall determine otherwise.

~~For Probationer Research students admitted after 1 October 2011~~

5. A full-time student (other than students to whom cl.9 and 10 in this section may apply) may hold the status of Probationer Research Student for up to four terms and a part-time student for up to eight terms, including the term in which ~~he or she~~ they ~~was~~ were admitted.

6. A candidate whose first application for transfer to D.Phil. status is not approved shall be permitted to make one further application, following the procedures laid down in clauses 1-4 above, and shall be granted an extension of time for one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application.

7. Subject to the approval of the student's college and the responsible divisional board or the CE Board as appropriate, and for good cause, a full-time student may be permitted to hold the status of PRS (prior to the first application for transfer of status) for a further one or two terms, and a part-time student for a further one to four terms. A first application for transfer of status must have been submitted and assessed within the six term limit of PRS status. Any application outside those limits (other than in clause 6 above) must be approved by or on behalf of Education Committee.

8. A Probationer Research Student (other than a student to whom cl. 9 and 10 in this section apply) shall cease to hold such status if:

(i)

(a) ~~he or she~~ they shall not have gained admission to another status within four terms of admission as a full-time student to the status of Probationer Research Student, or within eight terms for a part-time student, and

(b) ~~he or she~~ they ~~has~~ have not been given approval under clause 6 above to hold Probationer Research Student status for a further one or two terms as a full-time student or one to four terms as a part-time student;

(ii) ~~he or she~~ ~~has~~ they have failed to gain admission to either doctoral status or to the status of the applicable lower degree after the two transfer applications allowed under clause 7 above;

(iii) the board concerned shall in accordance with provisions set down in ~~section 5.2 below~~ Part 5 section 2 of this section, and after consultation with the student's college and supervisor, have deprived the student of such status.

9. For a full-time Probationer Research Student registered on a doctoral training programme listed in the special regulations for the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences and the Medical Sciences Division. Found in the 'Research Degrees in the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division' and 'Research Degrees in the Medical Sciences Division' sections, the maximum number of terms for which ~~he or she~~ they may hold that status is specified in the special regulations.

10. A Probationer Research Student registered on a Doctoral Training Centre Programme or the Doctoral Training Partnership Programme shall cease to hold such status if:

(i)

(a) ~~he or she~~ they shall not have gained admission to another status within the number of terms specified in the special regulations for that programme and

(b) ~~he or she~~ ~~has~~ they have not been given approval as specified in the special regulations or under clause 7 above to hold Probationer Research Student status for a further one or two terms as a full-time student or one to four terms as a part-time student;

(ii) ~~he or she~~ ~~has~~ they have failed to gain admission to either doctoral status or to the status of the applicable lower degree after the two transfer applications allowed under clause 7 above;

(iii) the board concerned shall in accordance with provisions set down in and after consultation with the student's college and supervisor, have deprived the student of such status.

6. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

~~§5. Register of Graduate Students~~

## **General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 5 Register of Graduate Students**

### **1. Suspension of Graduate Research Students from the Register**

1. If, for good cause, a student is temporarily unable to carry out ~~his or her~~ their research, 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. No student may be granted any terms of retrospective suspension of status, including for the term in which they submit their thesis, after having submitted their thesis for examination.

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

### **2. Removal of Graduate Research 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 research 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~~ their status automatically lapses, and ~~his or her~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their right under paragraph 7.3 to present ~~his or her~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their 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~~ their status.

9.1. A student or ~~his or her~~ their 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 or [edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk)), 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~~ their 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 Research Students to the Register**

1. It shall be open to a candidate whose name has been removed from the Register of Students to apply to the Board for reinstatement to their former status on the Register. The application should have the support of their society and supervisor, and such reinstatement fee as may from time to time be prescribed by Council should be paid. Permission for reinstatement to the Register of Students may be granted by the Board provided that:

(i) no more than twenty-four months have passed since the student's name was removed from the Register; and

(ii) the number of terms the candidate spent on the Register of Students did not exceed the maximum number of terms allowed under the regulations governing that status.

The board shall determine the date from which any reinstatement granted under these provisions shall be effective.

2. Exceptionally, a candidate who is not able to apply for reinstatement within the provisions above may make an application to Council's Education Committee for reinstatement to the Register of Students. Such candidates must meet the requirements for reinstatement by the Board and in addition must provide a statement explaining why it is reasonable for Education Committee to permit their reinstatement and outlining the circumstances that have prevented earlier submission. For such applications, Education Committee will consider the length of time since the candidate's name was on the Register of Students, the seriousness of the causes for the delay, and the views of the candidate's department/faculty, supervisor and college.

7. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

### ~~§6. Students with Disabilities~~

#### General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 6 Students with Disabilities

1. This part is concerned with candidates for research degree assessments who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal activities.

2. Candidates may apply for alternative arrangements where the impairment which they have significantly affects their ability to undertake the following assessments in the manner in which they are normally undertaken by candidates.
3. Research degree assessments are taken to include interviews, presentations, and oral examinations for Transfer of Status, Confirmation of Status, and the final oral examination for the degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil.
4. Candidates may apply for alternative assessment arrangements to the appropriate Board in advance of, or at the same time as, submitting their application for assessment.
5. The relevant Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will determine whether the arrangement is one that they can approve, or one that must be approved by the Proctors. The Proctors shall issue guidance periodically on the adjustments to assessments that the DGS may approve, and those that should be referred to the Proctors.
6. The application must be supported by evidence as set out on the application form. If the DGS is not satisfied that the evidence supports the request, the application must be forwarded to the Proctors for determination.
7. Decisions on applications shall be communicated to the department or faculty who shall be responsible for putting the approved arrangements into place.
8. Alternative assessment arrangements approved by the DGS or the Proctors under these regulations shall normally apply to all assessments for the duration of the candidate's course of study. It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to apply for any subsequent change to these arrangements which ~~he or she~~ they may wish, and to inform the DGS of any material change in ~~his or her~~ their circumstances which might affect the suitability of these arrangements.

### **Appeals**

9. A candidate who is dissatisfied with any decision made by the Proctors under these regulations, may appeal against it in accordance with the following provisions.
10. An appeal must be made in writing within 14 days of the date of the Proctors' decision, addressed to the Chair of the Education Committee.
11. The appeal shall be determined expeditiously by the Chair or another member of the Committee, other than one of the Proctors, nominated by the Chair.

8. Create new webpage. Plain text indicates existing text from General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, underlined/struck through text indicates amendments to text.

### **~~§7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students~~ General Regulations Governing Research Degrees: Part 7 Examination of Graduate Research 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 word-processed with a margin of 3 to 3.5 cm on the left-hand edge of each page. The main text should be double-spaced with quotations and footnotes in single spacing. Double spacing should be taken to mean a distance of about 0.33 inch or 8 mm between successive lines of text. Text should be typed using an easily readable font, with a minimum font size of 11 pt. Footnotes should be font size 10 pt.

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, a separate pdf of footnotes should be uploaded to the Research Digital Thesis Submissions (RTDS) application under "Additional Materials", 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 thesis.

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 thesis must have an abstract included (see vii below), and the pages of the thesis must be numbered.

*(ii) Proof-reading*

Work submitted for examination must be solely the work of the candidate, except where otherwise clearly indicated. It is not permitted for a student to ask or allow someone else to make material changes to their work, for example, by rewriting passages of text or rewriting formulae or code. Failure to adhere to these regulations could constitute a breach of academic integrity and contravene the Proctors' Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examination.

Candidates are responsible for the proof-reading of their work. Proof-reading by a third party is acceptable provided it constitutes no more than advice on the following: spelling and punctuation, formatting, grammar and syntax. A third party may not be used to change the text of the thesis so as to clarify, develop or change the ideas and arguments, reduce the length of the thesis, provide help with referencing, correct information within the thesis, or translate the thesis into English.

*(iii) Examiners' copies*

At the time of their examination, candidates must submit a digital pdf copy of their thesis via RTDS. Additional materials (footnotes, appendices, image files, etc.) should be saved within a single zip file and uploaded at the same time. The thesis may be subject to scanning by text-matching software.

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 contained within the written portion of the thesis but can be uploaded as a separate file under "Additional Materials" if necessary. Where this is not possible, two copies of additional items should be submitted to the Research Degrees Team, Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG.

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that their examiners have no difficulty in communicating with them. Any change in address or contact details since application for the appointment of examiners must be notified immediately to the Research Degrees Team ([researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk)).

Examiners may request a soft-bound copy of the thesis from the Research Degrees Team.

*(iv) Date of submission of examiners' copies*

Candidates may submit the digital examination copy 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' copy 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. In order for a thesis to be considered as having been submitted during a particular term, it must be submitted at the latest on the Saturday (in UK time) of the last week before the following Full Term.

*(v) Library copies: binding and presentation*

Once the board has granted a candidate leave to supplicate, they must submit an electronic version of their finalised thesis, as approved by the examiners, to the Oxford Research Archive. This 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. No corrections, changes or additions of any kind shall be made to the thesis after the board has granted a candidate leave to supplicate.

Fine Art candidates offering studio practice as part of their submission must submit the written portion of their thesis electronically using the Oxford Research Archive together with documentation in appropriate form of their exhibition or portfolio of works.

Candidates should note that leave to supplicate is conditional upon receipt by the Oxford Research Archive of the electronic copy of this finalised 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. Candidates may not proceed to take their degree until they have fulfilled this requirement.

Students who have been granted dispensation from consultation of their entire thesis (see (vi) below) should, in addition to the finalised copy of the thesis submitted to the Oxford Research Archive, submit a finalised hard copy of their thesis to the university by the means advertised on the University website for deposit in the relevant University library.

*(vi) Dispensation from Consultation of Thesis (D.Phil, M.Litt. M.Sc. by Research)*

A candidate may apply to the relevant board for dispensation from consultation of thesis for all or part(s) of the hard copy and/or digital version of their thesis if a good reason is presented. Applications should be submitted to the relevant board and should be supported by the student's supervisor. If dispensation from consultation is granted, access to the hard copy and/or digital thesis will be restricted from the date of deposit, and will not be made available for consultation until the approved end date.

In exceptional circumstances, a candidate's supervisor may apply to the relevant board for dispensation from consultation of thesis, or an extension to an existing dispensation from consultation. Every effort should first be made to consult the candidate on the proposed application. The board has the power to grant the supervisor's request provided it is satisfied that the request is appropriate and relevant.

*(vii) Abstracts*

The abstract of the thesis should concisely summarise its scope and principal arguments, in about 300 words. It should be placed within the thesis, generally immediately following the Table of Contents. When the examination is completed, the abstract should be included in the library copy of their 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.

**3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil.**

(i) The oral examination shall be held **at in** Oxford in a suitable university or college building, unless in exceptional circumstances the board concerned gives special permission for it to be held at some other place. Such permission shall only be granted

where the candidate and both the examiners have agreed in writing to the proposed arrangements. 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.

(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. The relevant board may decide (either at its own discretion or at the request of the candidate or the supervisor or department) to forbid the attendance of any person or all persons (other than the examiners and the candidate) or to impose any condition on attendance if and to the extent that such action is in their view necessary to protect the interests of the University or the candidate or both, and the examiners shall be informed accordingly and shall include this information in the notice of examination.

(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 four weeks after the date on which the thesis was uploaded to the RTDS or after the date on which the examiners have formally 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.

If, for any reason, examiners wish to hold a viva within four weeks of receiving their copy of the thesis, a request should be sent to the relevant board which shall decide whether to grant it. The reasons for the request should be provided, along with an assurance that both examiners will have sufficient time to consider the thesis before the viva. The request shall only be granted where the candidate and both the examiners have agreed in writing to the proposed date of the viva. Requests for vivas to be held fewer than 14 days after receipt of the thesis by the examiners should only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances.

(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 Submissions and Research Degrees Team in writing; and

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

(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 normally be held in Oxford as prescribed in clause (i). In exceptional circumstances, application may be made to the relevant board for special permission to hold the examination using audiovisual electronic communication. Such circumstances will normally relate to the ability of the external examiner to take part in an Oxford-based oral examination, but in exceptional circumstances, special permission may be granted for any or all of the candidate and examiners to take part in the examination using audiovisual electronic communication. The board concerned may approve the application 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, all of whom have agreed to them in writing;

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

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

(v) 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.

### **Explanatory Notes**

These changes to regulations support the implementation of revised outcomes for PGR students that were originally agreed by RDP in MT19 and which RDP has previously agreed should come into force for students submitting their PGR thesis for the first time in MT25 or later, i.e. theses



submitted on or after Sunday 12 October 2025. These regulations cover submissions for DPhil, MSc(Res) and MLitt examinations.

The Research Degrees Management System Board has continued to have regular meetings about the project which includes the systems implementation of the revised outcomes for PGR students and is satisfied that the project will be able to deliver the necessary system updates to support the implementation of these regulation changes for students submitting from MT25.

The opportunity has also been taken to change the presentation of the regulations relating to PGR awards in the Examination Regulations so that they are easier to search and to link to. The model for presentation is that currently used for the [Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations](#) and introduced in 2024 for the [Regulations on Financial Matters](#). Each of the four current regulations relating to PGR awards will be split into eight or nine separate pages, with a separate page for each of the current sections which will be renamed Parts. In addition to minor changes to support the new regulatory structure, the regulations have been updated to remove binary gender references and to reflect that there are now four rather than three reporting periods each year.