



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

REGULATION FOR HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

September 2020

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SUMMARY

What is this document about?

The examination and assessment regulations are detailed academic rules that explain what a student must do to obtain the award for which they are registered.

Who is this for?

This document will be of most interest to new and existing students, academic staff and external examiners. It will be of interest to the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and it may also be of interest to the wider public.

How does the University check this is followed?

The Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships team within Department of Student and Academic Administration Registry is responsible for reviews and audits to ensure that the policy is followed. Additionally, there is an external examiner for every unit and every course in the University who ensures that this policy is followed.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

If you have questions about this document please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships, Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA) asqp@port.ac.uk

GENERAL

1. Fees

- 1.1. During their period of registration, students, or their sponsors, must pay the prescribed registration, tuition and other fees on or before commencing the course and annually during the course, including for any extension periods, periods of referral or periods of re-examination). Failure to pay fees shall result in the withdrawal of University services and if not resolved, students shall be excluded from the University.

2. Language of Assessment

- 2.1. All assessments including the thesis should be written, and defended, in English.

3. Notification to Students

- 3.1. Any information required by these regulations to be delivered to a student shall be deemed to have been received by the student if:
 - a) it is delivered by hand to a student in person, or to the latest address notified to the University as his or her local or home address, and the person delivering it has certified a copy of the document to that effect; or
 - b) it is located on the University web-site and the students are informed of the url address; or
 - c) it is sent to the student's University e-mail address; or
 - d) it is sent by first class mail to both the local address and the home address recorded on the University Student Records system, provided that 10 working days during term time or 15 working days during vacations shall elapse before receipt can be presumed.

4. Dual Registration

- 4.1. A student registered for this higher degree at the University of Portsmouth is also registered concurrently for a dual award with Maastricht University which has been approved through the Partnership Approval Process.
- 4.2. These regulations detail what is expected of the student from the University of Portsmouth in regard to annual appraisals, major reviews and examination. As it is a dual award, the student must also meet the relevant expectations of Maastricht University which will be given separately to the student.

Useful Links

[English Language Learning Support](#)

[Student Communication Policy](#)

ADMISSION

1. English Language Qualification

- 1.1. For applicants whose first language is not English it is necessary to demonstrate a satisfactory standard in English. This may be demonstrated either by holding a first degree from a UK University that has been taught and assessed in English or by reaching a satisfactory standard in an approved test in English. The approved test to be used is the IELTS or equivalent. A satisfactory standard is defined as achieving an IELTS score in band 6.5 or equivalent, providing that no component of the IELTS profile is more than 0.5 below the overall score. Applicants with a lower score may be admitted subject to the successful completion of a pre-sessional EAP programme.
- 1.2. Subject areas recognised by Academic Council as having a different linguistic standard, either higher or lower, will be required to have achieved an IELTS score different to that above. The Graduate School shall maintain a register of currently approved standards. Applicants shall be advised to enquire through the Graduate School for definitive programme requirements.

2. Admission

- 2.1. To register for a Higher Degree, an applicant must offer one of the following
 - a) an appropriate first or upper second class honours degree of any United Kingdom university or a recognised equivalent non-UK degree of the same standard; OR
 - b) an appropriate Masters degree of any United Kingdom university or a recognised equivalent non-UK degree of the same standard; OR
 - c) qualifications and/or appropriate professional training and experience which, in the opinion of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, are acceptable to the University as equivalent to **(i)** or **(ii)** above;
 - d) where the applicant seeks to register for the award of MD the first degree must be in clinical medicine.

3. Admission to a Research Programme

- 3.1. The admissions procedure for postgraduate research students requires the submission of a postgraduate application form to the Academic Registry Admissions division.
- 3.2. Postgraduate application forms are forwarded by Academic Registry Admissions division to the relevant Admissions section of the department who will:
 - a) Respond to the application by sending whatever information is necessary to proceed with the admissions process together with any other relevant information.
 - b) Ensure that all information required by the departmental Postgraduate Research Student Tutor and First Supervisor to make a departmental decision regarding admission is received. This required information comprises:
 - (a) a completed postgraduate application form;
 - (b) where appropriate an outline of a research proposal;
 - (c) photocopies of degree certificates.

- 3.3. An Admissions Panel of at least two academic staff, nominally the potential First Supervisor and either the departmental Postgraduate Research Student Tutor or Chair of Faculty Research Degrees Committee, will evaluate the postgraduate application form, the qualifications of the applicant (including English language qualification where appropriate), the research training requirements and the supervisory requirement and decide whether the application is acceptable and the applicant interviewed.
- 3.4. If the application is unsuccessful, the Admissions Panel must ensure notification by letter is sent from Admissions, Academic Registry when the applicant was international, or from the school/department if the applicant was a home/EU applicant as soon as the decision has been made.
- 3.5. Where the research proposal is not pre-defined, additionally, evaluation of the research proposal should include the following:
 - a) negotiation with the applicant to improve the proposal to a standard sufficient for admission, if required;
 - b) availability of facilities and resources to undertake the project;
 - c) research training requirements;
 - d) ethical considerations;
 - e) identifying whether a Flexible Distributed Learning (FDL) arrangement is required.
- 3.6. An interview must involve the applicant, potential First Supervisor and at least one other person. The interview should be held in person, but if not possible by other electronic means or telephone. When the applicant is international, an interview may have to be replaced by extensive correspondence.
- 3.7. The interview should:
 - a) confirm the applicant has the correct qualifications, including English language qualification where appropriate;
 - b) discuss the proposal;
 - c) discuss the research ethics requirement for the project;
 - d) discuss any special needs;
 - e) check that the applicant is aware of the demands of a research degree, including particularly those regarding completion dates;
 - f) outline the work commitment, particularly the working hours and leave entitlement where appropriate;
 - g) ensure the applicant is made aware that leave and interruptions to the registration must be approved;
 - h) discuss and agree the requirement for research training and ensure the applicant is aware of the requirement to undertake research training;
 - i) confirm the financing of the research, particularly when the applicant is self financing;
 - j) outline the postgraduate research student entitlements and what they are, including resources, library rights, resources and support for fieldwork and conference attendance;
 - k) make clear the postgraduate research student right to publish prior to submission of the thesis.
- 3.8. The interview will result in either in rejection of the proposal or acceptance of a proposal, subject to receipt of two satisfactory academic references, on the basis of reasoned academic judgement.

- 3.9. If the applicant is rejected, the Interview Panel must ensure notification by letter is sent from Admissions, Academic Registry when the applicant was international, or from the school/department if the applicant was a home/EU applicant as soon as the decision has been made.

4. Approval Process

- 4.1. Should the interview process result in acceptance of the proposal, formal approval is required by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. The potential First Supervisor will submit a formal recommendation to admit the applicant as a postgraduate research student to the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee. The form will have the following supporting evidence:
 - a) postgraduate application form;
 - b) final research proposal;
 - c) references;
 - d) agreed training programme;
 - e) a copy of the approval document if the proposal will involve a Collaborative Arrangement or FDL (Flexible distributed Learning).
- 4.2. If an application is acceptable a letter will be sent to the applicant outlining what is being offered and the responsibilities of a postgraduate research student at the University. The letter is sent from Admissions, Academic Registry when the applicant was international, or from the department if a home/EU applicant as soon as the decision has been made
- 4.3. Where it is felt that ethical approval is required for the project, the applicant will be directed to the Ethics Policy of the University.

5. Change to the Approved Research Programme

- 5.1. Where a student wishes to make a substantial change in the academic discipline and/or expert supervision of the approved research project, the student will be required to withdraw from the programme of research. Provided the University is able to offer adequate expert supervision in the new area of research the student may re-register by submitting a new application as if it was a first application.

Useful Links

[Prospective students](#)

[Research Student Handbook](#)

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Collaborative Provision Policy](#)

[Ethics Policy](#)

[Research Degrees Section](#)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

1. A disabled person is legally defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial, long term and adverse impact upon his or her ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Within the specific University context, 'day-to-day activities' are taken to include those normally encountered by a student accessing the learning, assessment and other services offered by the University.
2. The Head of the Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC), in consultation with the Academic Registrar, is responsible for advising the Head of Department or School of any reasonable adjustments that should be made to ensure that a disabled student is able to undertake assessments without being placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled students by virtue of her/his condition.
3. Such advice will take account of any precedents and any formal assessments of additional needs known to ASDAC. The exact nature of any reasonable adjustments shall be determined by the specific needs of the student but may involve adjustments to:
 - a) Process of assessments - such as the provision of additional time, rest breaks, or assessment outside University premises.
 - b) Nature of all assessments – such as the substitution of an alternative assessment method where the maintenance of the existing method will place the student at a substantial disadvantage and such substitution will not compromise the rigour and comparability of the assessment.
4. When deciding upon the particular nature of the adjustment the views of the examiners in matters relating to academic rigour and comparability will be taken into account.
5. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the University of her/his condition in a timely fashion to ensure that the appropriate adjustment can be considered prior to assessment. Such notification must normally be substantiated by the provision of appropriate medical or other evidence to ASDAC before adjustments will be implemented.
6. The exact nature of the adjustments arrived at under **1.3** above will be agreed and confirmed with the student by ASDAC.
7. Exceptionally the Head of Department may consider that reasonable adjustments to assessments to avoid placing a student at a substantial disadvantage cannot be made because:
 - a) There is only one reliable assessment method.
 - b) There are explicit assessment criteria, based on particular outcomes that are core to the subject.
8. In such cases the Head of Department must consult with the Head of ASDAC and the Academic Registrar and, if confirmed, consider the options of changing the research topic or withdrawal through discussion with the individual student concerned.

Links to useful information

[Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre](#)

REGISTRATION

1. Registration Period

- 1.1. The period of registration for research degrees is detailed in the Awards of the University of Portsmouth. Unless an extension has been granted, the thesis must be submitted within the approved period of registration

2. Mode of Study

- 2.1. The mode of study is full-time.

3. Suspension of Study

- 3.1. A Faculty Research Degrees Committee, may, at its discretion, permit a student to suspend registration for up to one year and adjust the registration period accordingly. Only in exceptional circumstances would further suspension be approved. In all cases where suspension of study is considered, the grounds for exercising such discretion, or not exercising it, shall be stated and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 3.2. During a period of suspension, a student pays no fee to the University, receives no supervision or other support for their research and may not use the University facilities.

4. Extension to Registration Period

- 4.1. Faculty Research Degrees Committee may, at its discretion, approve an extension of registration of one year, provided the registration period has not already elapsed.
- 4.2. Only in exceptional circumstances and with the recommendation of the student's First Supervisor, could the Faculty Research Degree Committee approve a further extension.
- 4.3. Separately and in addition to the above, a 12 month extension will be agreed if the examiners refer a student or require a student to be re-examined.

5. Exceeding Registration Period

- 5.1. The Academic Registrar shall terminate the registration of a student who fails to submit the thesis by the end of the registration period, recalculated as necessary following approved changes in the mode of study, suspension of study, or extension of registration period. A thesis presented after termination of registration will not be accepted for submission without the specific consent of the University Research Degrees Committee, although submission up until 6 weeks after the expiry date of the period of registration recalculated as necessary following approved changes in the mode of study, suspension of study, or extension of registration period may be accepted at the discretion of the Academic Registrar.

6. Termination of Registration

- 6.1. A student's registration shall terminate on fulfilment of one of the following conditions:
 - a) submission of the final bound copy of the thesis ;
 - b) a decision that the student's programme of research is discontinued;
 - c) a decision that no award will be recommended;

- d) at the end of the current registration period, unless the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee has either confirmed to the Academic Registrar that the student has maintained contact with his or her First Supervisor above and may therefore re-register, or approved a suspension of the student's programme of research;
- e) the time limit set for referral or resubmission including any extensions has elapsed,;
- f) the student has reached the end of the period of registration defined in the Awards of the University of Portsmouth and has not submitted a thesis.
- g) the student has been excluded from the University following a procedure described in another regulation of the University;
- h) the student has withdrawn from the programme of research by the submission of form UPR4.

7. Submission for Lesser Award

7.1. A student registered for the degree of PhD may choose to submit for the MPhil degree.

Links to useful information

[Induction Information](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

[Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Degrees Section](#)

SUPERVISION

1. Number of Supervisors

- 1.1. A student registered for a higher degree shall have at least two but not more than three supervisors with at least one Supervisor from the University of Portsmouth and one supervisor from Maastricht University. The Faculty Research Degrees Committee shall approve the supervisory team at the admissions stage. The role of the supervisors at the University of Portsmouth is contained within the Handbook for Postgraduate Research Degree Supervisors.

2. First Supervisor

- 2.1. As part of the appointment of supervisors procedure, one supervisor from the University of Portsmouth must be proposed and approved as the First Supervisor for the purpose of the University of Portsmouth regulations. The First Supervisor shall be responsible for supervising the student on a regular and frequent basis.
- 2.2. The 'First Supervisor' as defined in these regulations should be a member of University of Portsmouth staff.
- 2.3. If the First Supervisor leaves the team during the period of the student's registration, then the University through the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee shall attempt to find another member of staff with the appropriate expertise to act as a replacement. If necessary, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee shall adjust the period of registration for the affected student to include the search period involved. If the University is unable to find another member of staff with the appropriate expertise to replace the First Supervisor, it will use its best endeavours to attempt to facilitate a transfer for the student to another University.

3. Experience of Supervisors

- 3.1. The University of Portsmouth supervisor or supervisory team should have combined experience of supervising no fewer than two higher degree candidates at the appropriate level to successful completion.

4. Advisers

- 4.1. In addition, an adviser, or advisers may be nominated to contribute specialised knowledge or to provide a link with an external collaborating body.

5. Eligibility of Candidates to act as Supervisors

- 5.1. A candidate registered for a higher degree may not act as a First Supervisor to another higher degree student but may, with Faculty Research Degrees Committee approval, act as a second or third supervisor.

Links to useful information

[Supervisors Handbook](#)

MAJOR REVIEW

1. Application Procedure

- 1.1. A PhD student must apply for major review within 12 months of their initial registration.
- 1.2. A PhD student who fails to submit for major review within the time limits set out at **1.1.**, will be excluded from the course.
- 1.3. The application will include:
 - a) a short review of previous work by others in the area of study;
 - b) a review and discussion of the planned work and the methods to be used;
 - c) a brief discussion of any work completed and any results obtained;
 - d) a resource plan and timetable for the remaining work;
 - e) a statement identifying the original contribution to knowledge which the final stage to PhD or MD will make;
 - f) a statement of the formal training completed;
 - g) a supporting statement by the First Supervisor;
 - h) confirmation, where applicable, as to whether ethical approval has been sought.
- 1.4. The student must electronically submit the application to the Academic Registry.

2. Major Review Assessment Procedure

- 2.1. The purpose of the assessment procedure is to assess whether the student has the capability to complete satisfactorily, within the prescribed time limits, a PhD.
- 2.2. An assessment panel will consider the application and make the decision at a Review Meeting.
- 2.3. Faculty Research Degrees Committee shall approve a list of assessors, who shall be members of academic staff of the University of Portsmouth with appropriate experience of supervision of Higher Degrees and/or expertise in a relevant subject area, who may act as members of assessment panels to determine whether students registered upon a programme of research have the capability to complete satisfactorily a PhD. Membership of an assessment panel shall be:
 - a) one independent assessor from the approved list nominated by the student's supervisors;
 - b) a second independent assessor from the approved list nominated by the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Committee;
 - c) the First Supervisor.
- 2.4. Members of the panel will receive the application and decide after meeting with the student either:
 - a) unanimously, that the student does have the capability to complete satisfactorily a PhD; or
 - b) that the panel could not agree unanimously that the student has the capability to complete satisfactorily a PhD thesis and that a Final Review Meeting will need to be held to determine the outcome of the application.

- 2.5. If the panel could not agree unanimously that the student has the capability to complete satisfactorily a PhD thesis, the First Supervisor shall arrange a Final Review Meeting of the panel to determine the outcome of the application. The First Supervisor shall inform the Academic Registry in writing of the time, date and venue of the meeting. Academic Registry shall convey that information in writing to the student. The meeting shall not take place less than seven days after the date on which the notice is sent to the student. The student will submit further work as specified by the panel within an agreed deadline prior to the Final Review Meeting. The student is entitled to attend the meeting and may ask questions of any other person present. All three members of the panel must be present and the Final Review Meeting shall be chaired by the independent assessor nominated by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.
- 2.6. The panel at the Final Review Meeting shall reach a decision, which must be supported by a majority of the panel and will be one of the following:
 - a) that the student may continue their registration; or
 - b) that further supporting evidence is necessary - in which case the recommendation must make clear:
 - (a) what the nature of this evidence must be
 - (b) the deadline for its submission to the Academic Registrar
 - (c) which member(s) of the panel will determine whether or not the further supporting evidence is sufficient; or
 - c) that the student's programme of research is discontinued forthwith.
- 2.7. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will informally convey the decision to the student with an outline of the reasons for it.
- 2.8. The Chair of the Panel will convey the decision in writing, accompanied by a brief rationale, to the Academic Registry, who will formally notify the student. That notification shall include the decision, the brief rationale and the student's right of appeal.
- 2.9. The student has the right to appeal against the decision.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Application Procedure

- 1.1. Until they submit their thesis, all students must submit for an Annual Review in every academic year that they do not apply for a Major Review.
- 1.2. Where a student fails to submit for an Annual Review within the time limits set out by the Faculty Research Degree Committee, they will be excluded from the course.
- 1.3. At initial registration, and again at the start of each academic year, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee will inform all research students in their Faculty of the format of the Annual Review and any evidence that students must submit.
- 1.4. The student must electronically submit the application to the Academic Registry.

2. Annual Review Assessment Procedure

- 2.1. The purpose of the assessment procedure is to assess whether the student is actively engaged in the research programme and making satisfactory progress.
- 2.2. An assessment panel will consider the application and make the decision at an Annual Review Meeting.
- 2.3. Faculty Research Degrees Committees shall approve a list of assessors, who shall be members of academic staff of the University of Portsmouth with appropriate experience of supervision of Higher Degrees and/or expertise in a relevant subject area, who may act as members of assessment panels.
- 2.4. The assessment panel to determine whether a student registered upon a programme of research is actively engaged in the research programme and making satisfactory progress shall be at least two members of academic staff from the list of assessors approved by Faculty Research Degrees Committee, one of whom must be independent of the supervision team.
- 2.5. Members of the panel will receive the application and decide after meeting with the student either:
 - a) unanimously, that the student can continue with their programme (either with or without recommendations); or
 - b) that the panel could not agree unanimously that the student could progress and that a Final Review Meeting will need to be held to determine the outcome of the application.
- 2.6. If the panel could not agree unanimously that the student is actively engaged in the research programme and making satisfactory progress, the First Supervisor shall arrange a Final Review Meeting of the panel to determine the outcome of the application. The First Supervisor shall inform the Academic Registry in writing of the time, date and venue of the meeting. Academic Registry shall convey that information in writing to the student. The meeting shall not take place less than seven days after the date on which the notice is sent to the student. The student will submit further work as specified by the panel within an agreed deadline prior to the Final Review Meeting. The student is expected to attend the meeting and may ask questions of any other person present. All members of the panel must be present and the Final Review Meeting shall be chaired by the independent member. Should there be an even number on the assessment panel, a further independent assessor from the Faculty Research Degrees Committees approved list will be nominated by the student's supervisors.

- 2.7. The panel at the Final Review Meeting shall reach a decision, which must be supported by a majority of the panel and will be one of the following:
- a) that the student may continue their registration; or
 - b) that further supporting evidence is necessary - in which case the recommendation must make clear:
 - (a) what the nature of this evidence must be
 - (b) the deadline for its submission to the Academic Registry
 - (c) which member(s) of the panel will determine whether or not the further supporting evidence is sufficient; or
 - c) that the student must change their PhD registration to a MPhil registration with any appropriate decrease of the registration period; or
 - d) that the student's programme of research is discontinued forthwith.
- 2.8. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will informally convey the decision to the student with an outline of the reasons for it.
- 2.9. The Chair of the Panel will convey the decision in writing, accompanied by a brief rationale, to the Academic Registry, who will formally notify the student. That notification shall include the decision, the brief rationale and the student's right of appeal.
- 2.10. The student has the right to appeal against the decision.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

INTERIM EXAMINATION

1. Basis

- 1.1. Where, in the judgement of the supervisory team, a student appears to be making unsatisfactory progress a formal assessment will be made so that the student may provide evidence that their work is of sufficient merit to be allowed to continue. In such cases, the supervisory team must report the cause for their concern, together with the proposed form of the assessment, to the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Committee. That Committee will decide whether to arrange an interim examination, and if so, will determine the form it will take, specify the arrangements for it, and state the membership of any panel including nomination of the Chair.

2. Informing the Student

- 2.1. On written request from the First Supervisor, Academic Registry shall inform the student in writing that they are to take a formal assessment. The request to Academic Registry must include details of the arrangements made for the assessment, especially time-scales, the form of the assessment, what is required of the student, and the membership of any assessment panel. Academic Registry's notice to the student will explicitly state that, if the interim examination judges the standard to be unsatisfactory, the programme of research will terminate. In order to allow the student sufficient time to prepare for the assessment the examination shall take place no less than 10 working days after the date on which Academic Registry sends the meeting notice to the student.

3. Panel Membership

- 3.1. The Assessment Panel will comprise no fewer than two members of the academic staff of the University and will include, if possible, the independent assessor nominated by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee who acted as an assessor during the student's Major Review or Annual Review.

4. Decision

- 4.1. At the conclusion of the Interim Examination, the Panel will decide one of the following:
 - a) the student may continue the programme of research for the award of a higher degree;
 - b) the student's programme of research is discontinued forthwith.
- 4.2. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will informally convey the decision to the student with an outline of the reasons for it. The Chair of the Panel will convey the decision in writing, accompanied by a brief rationale, to Academic Registry, who will formally notify the student. That notification shall include the decision, the brief rationale and the student's right of appeal. Academic Registry shall send a copy of the notification to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

PRESENTATION OF THE THESIS

1. Submission

- 1.1. A candidate for the award of a higher degree by research shall submit to Academic Registry the appropriate number of copies of a thesis embodying details of the study and research undertaken during the period of registration.
- 1.2. Submission of the thesis in accordance with these regulations means that the candidate or their sponsors shall not have to pay any further tuition fees than those already due unless the candidate is referred or required to be re-examined.

2. Content and Length

- 2.1. The work and results embodied in the thesis should be reported concisely and the maximum length of the thesis should not exceed 80,000 words for a PhD
- 2.2. The thesis shall acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and any other assistance received during the programme of research. Any bibliography submitted does not count towards the maximum length of the thesis.

3. Collaboration

- 3.1. Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis shall indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the nature and extent of the collaborations.

4. Published material

- 4.1. The candidate shall be free to publish material in advance of the thesis but reference, as appropriate, should be included in the thesis. The candidate should liaise with the First Supervisor to assess any implications of publication for the intellectual property rights.

5. Abstract

- 5.1. An abstract of approximately 300 words shall be bound into the thesis and should provide a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and of the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject area under investigation.

6. Final Text

- 6.1. Following the *viva voce* examination and the recommendation of the examiners for an award the candidate shall provide one PDF copy of the corrected and approved thesis. This copy will be lodged in and be the property of the University Library.

7. Copyright and IPR

- 7.1. All students registering at the University agree to abide by the University of Portsmouth Regulations, as they apply to their research degree registration.
- 7.2. Students have an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of any confidential information which may be disclosed to them as a result of their research work.

- 7.3. If a student is sponsored by the University or an external sponsor, they may be required to assign any intellectual property rights in the work which they generate to the University or such sponsor.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. The Faculty Research Degrees Committee may approve an application for a thesis to be made confidential. Any application must be complete before the thesis is submitted for examination. Approval would normally only be given to enable a patent to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. The maximum period of confidentiality will be two years from the date of submission, but in exceptional circumstances the University Research Degrees Committee may approve a longer period. Where confidentiality is approved, the Academic Registrar shall retain the final thesis throughout the approved period of restriction, after which it will be lodged in the University library in accordance with regulation **1.6** above.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

[Intellectual Property \(IP\) Policy](#)

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

1. General

- 1.1. Examination for the award of a Higher Degree by Research shall have two stages.
 - a) submission of the thesis and its independent preliminary assessment by each of the approved examiners;
 - b) an oral examination of the candidate by the examiners which may be preceded by a presentation.
- 1.2. Following the second stage, the examiners shall submit their recommendation in respect of the candidate to the Academic Registrar. The authority to grant academic awards of the University rests with Academic Council. If the recommendation is that the University confer an award, then the signature of the Academic Registrar on the Examiners' Report Form shall be deemed to represent, in his or her capacity as Secretary of Academic Council, the conferment of that award.

2. Candidate's Responsibilities

- 2.1. The candidate shall ensure that sufficient copies of the thesis are submitted to the Academic Registry within the approved period of registration.
- 2.2. Submission of the thesis is done by the candidate after obtaining permission from all of the supervisors.
- 2.3. The candidate shall confirm that the thesis has not been and is not being submitted for any other comparable academic award.
- 2.4. The candidate must notify the First Supervisor if they wish the appointment of an Independent Chair for the Examination.
- 2.5. The candidate shall confirm that the thesis is his/her own work.
- 2.6. The candidate must ensure that all tuition fees due have been paid.
- 2.7. The candidate shall provide confirmation, where applicable, that ethical approval has been granted.

3. Appointment of Examiners

- 3.1. Examiners shall be appointed by the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee on the basis of nomination by the First Supervisor; nominations should be made approximately 6 months before the anticipated date of the formal examination. The external examiner will normally be the external examiner for both the University of Portsmouth and the Maastricht University and will also need to be approved by the Maastricht University.
- 3.2. A candidate shall be examined by at least two and not more than three examiners of whom at least one shall be an internal examiner and one an external examiner. Academic Registry shall notify the candidate, on request, the number of examiners appointed.
- 3.3. An internal examiner shall be a member of staff of the University or of an affiliated or associated institution or of the candidate's collaborating establishment.

- 3.4. An internal examiner should not have examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.
- 3.5. Internal examiners should not normally have published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval
- 3.6. If the candidate is on the permanent academic staff of the University or of an affiliated or associated institution, a second external examiner shall be appointed.
- 3.7. Examiners shall have appropriate subject, research and/or professional expertise in the general area of the candidate's research topic and one external examiner shall normally have experience as a specialist in the topic to be examined.
- 3.8. At least one external examiner shall have experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this where the internal examiner has experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **1.6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.
- 3.9. External examiners:
 - a) shall be independent of the University and of any affiliated or associated institution or collaborating establishment;
 - b) shall not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor;
 - c) should not have published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration;
 - d) should not have examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years.
 - e) should not have been a member of the staff of the University of Portsmouth during the candidate's period of study.
 - f) must not have published with the supervisory team within the previous five years.
 - g) must not be from the same institution, where more than one is required.
 - h) must not have held a position of Honorary, Adjunct, Emeritus or Visiting Professor with the University at any time during the candidate's period of study.
- 3.10. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive **3.9.(d)** but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.
- 3.11. External Examiners should not have been a member of the staff of the University of Portsmouth during the candidate's period of study.
- 3.12. No candidate currently registered for a higher degree by research shall act as an examiner.

4. Preliminary Assessment and Referral

- 4.1. The preliminary assessment and any referral will be done through the regulations for Assessment Committees at Maastricht University. The external examiner will be a member of the Assessment Committee.

5. Examination

- 5.1. The examiners approved by the University shall examine the candidate orally on the subject of the thesis and on the field of knowledge or learning within which the thesis falls.
- 5.2. The First Supervisor shall arrange for the examination to take place in the University at a time mutually acceptable to the examiners. In exceptional circumstances and with the prior agreement of the examiners, the University Research Degrees Committee may allow the examination to be held elsewhere. Such a decision and the reasons for it shall be recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Any or all supervisors may be permitted to attend the examination with the agreement of the candidate. The supervisor(s) will take no part in the examination

6. Independent Chair

- 6.1. If a candidate requires an Independent Chair, they shall inform their First Supervisor when they submit their thesis to Academic Registry.
- 6.2. The University will also appoint an Independent Chair should any of the following circumstances exist:
 - a) If the external examiner does not have experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level;
 - b) If the candidate has submitted the thesis against the advice of their First Supervisor;
 - c) The supervisory team or Faculty Research Degree Committee identify concerns that require the presence of an independent authority to oversee the examination process.
 - d) The internal examiner has examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years;
 - e) The external examiner has examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years.
- 6.3. The role of the Independent Chair is to chair and maintain a record of the examination and assist the examiners in following University procedure. The Independent Chair will not act as an examiner of the thesis.
- 6.4. The Independent Chair will be appointed by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and will be a member of staff who:
 - a) is not from the candidate's department;
 - b) has not been involved with the candidate's research at any stage.
 - c) Has experience of 3 previous research oral examinations (as an internal or external examiner)
 - d) Has experience in the supervision of research degree students.
- 6.5. No member of University staff will serve as an Independent Chair of an examination more than three times a year.

7. Examiners' Report and Recommendation

- 7.1. Following the oral examination, the examiners shall complete a joint report, which will include one of the following recommendations agreed unanimously by the examiners:
- a) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to confirmation that it has also been awarded by the Maastricht University; or
 - b) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to minor amendments or corrections to the thesis and subject to confirmation that it has also been awarded by the Maastricht University and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be three months). The report must also identify how many and which of the examiners will signify satisfaction with the minor amendments or corrections; or
 - c) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to major amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months). The nature of amendments are more substantial than minor corrections and typographical errors, but are not of the extent that the learning outcomes have not been met, and the thesis would not require a significant rework. The recommendation must also be accompanied by a clear and explicit written summary of the amendments suggested. All examiners will signify satisfaction with the major amendments or corrections; or
 - d) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded but that the candidate should amend and re-submit the thesis and be re-examined once only. In this case, the recommendation must state clearly whether or not the re-examination shall be by means of a formal oral examination (*viva voce*). The recommendation must also be accompanied by a clear and explicit written summary of both the amendments suggested and the shortcomings of the original thesis. A candidate required to re-submit the thesis for re-examination must re-register and pay the repeat fee. Their period of registration shall be extended for 12 months from the date of the formal oral examination (*viva voce*); or
 - e) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded and the candidate should not be permitted to submit for re-examination.; or
 - f) in the case of a candidate who had submitted for PhD, that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the any minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be three months).
- 7.2. Should the examiners be unable to unanimously agree a decision they should follow the procedures below.

8. Failure to Reach Unanimous Recommendation

- 8.1. Where the examiners are not able to agree a unanimous recommendation, they should submit individual reports and recommendations. In this event, the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, with support from Academic Registry shall:
- a) uphold a majority recommendation, provided that the majority includes at least one external examiner; or
 - b) uphold the recommendation of the external examiner; or

appoint an additional external examiner and require that the *viva voce* examination be repeated. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, the thesis will be submitted to the additional external examiner who will complete a Preliminary Assessment as detailed at 4 before the *viva voce* examination.

- 8.2. The second oral examination will be arranged at a mutually convenient time to ensure all the examiners are in attendance. The University will uphold the majority recommendation.

9. Examination at Maastricht

- 9.1. Following the examination at Portsmouth, the candidate will then undertake their examination at Maastricht University.

10. Re-Examination

- 10.1. A candidate required to submit a corrected or revised thesis but who fails to do so by the date set by the examiners shall be regarded as having failed the examination.
- 10.2. Where the examination of the thesis, whether by means of a formal oral examination or otherwise, is a second examination, the examiners shall complete a joint report which shall also include one of the following recommendations agreed unanimously by the examiners:
- a) that the degree for which the candidate submitted, should be awarded subject to confirmation that it has also been awarded by Maastricht University; or
 - b) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to minor amendments or corrections to the thesis and subject to confirmation that it has also been awarded by Maastricht University (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be three months); or
 - c) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to major amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months). The nature of amendments are more substantial than minor corrections and typographical errors, but are not of the extent that the learning outcomes have not been met, and the thesis would not require a significant rework. The recommendation must also be accompanied by a clear and explicit written summary of the amendments suggested. All examiners will signify satisfaction with the major amendments or corrections; or
 - d) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded and the candidate should not be permitted to submit for re-examination; or
 - e) in the case of a candidate who had submitted for PhD, that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the any minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be three months)
- 10.3. Re-examination shall concentrate on the extent to which the candidate has adequately addressed the originally identified shortcomings of the thesis and how effectively the candidate has responded to the amendments suggested.
- 10.4. Should the examiners be unable to unanimously agree a decision they should follow the procedures below.

11. Failure to Agree Unanimous Recommendation After Re-examination

- 11.1. Where the examiners are not able to agree a unanimous recommendation, they should submit individual reports and recommendations. In this event, the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, with support from Academic Registry, shall:
- a) uphold a majority recommendation, provided that the majority includes at least one external examiner; or
 - b) uphold the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c) appoint an additional external examiner and require that the oral examination be repeated. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, the revised thesis will be submitted to the additional examiner with the examiners report and recommendations from the first oral examination. The revisions required from the first oral examination cannot be modified. The additional examiner will submit a report regarding the standard of the revisions to the resubmitted thesis and their adequacy in meeting the objectives set by the original examiners. The second oral examination will be arranged at a mutually convenient time to ensure all the examiners are in attendance. The University will uphold the majority recommendation.

12. Award Date

- 12.1. The award date of a candidate shall be defined as one of the following:
- a) the date of a successful examination at Maastricht University, where successful means a recommendation for an award being made, including a recommendation that requires minor amendments or correction to the thesis; or
 - b) in the case of re-examination where the re-examination is not by means of a formal oral examination, the final date on which the examiners make the recommendation, at either the University of Portsmouth and/or Maastricht University, of the award as signified by the date on which they sign the UP7 form.

13. Completion Date

- 13.1. The date of completion shall be defined as the date on which the final bound copy of the thesis is submitted.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

APPEALS

1. A student registered for a higher degree by research may request a review of the decision of the assessment panel for his or her application for Major Review, of the decision of the assessment panel for his or her application for Annual Review, of the decision of the assessment panel for an interim examination or of the decision of the examiners of the final thesis. The appeal shall be made in accordance with the University's approved procedure for appeals except that all references to Unit Assessment Boards and Boards of Examiners shall be construed as meaning the Assessment Panel or the Examiners, and the procedure shall follow the procedures set out therein. Requests for review cannot be made on the basis of disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners. The only valid grounds for appeal will be:
 - a) that there has been a significant and material administrative error in the information received and considered by the examiners or assessment panel; or
 - b) that the examination had not been conducted in accordance with the University's regulations for higher degrees by research or assessment panel; or
 - c) that some other material irregularity had occurred in the examination or assessment panel procedure; or
 - d) that the student's performance was adversely affected by illness or other good cause that related to the student's personal circumstances, that she or he had been unable, for a sound and acceptable reason related to the circumstances themselves, to divulge before the meeting of the examiners and which might have had a bearing on the examiner's decision.

Links to useful information

[Appeals Procedure](#)

[Student Services](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances relating to your health and /or personal life which are of a sufficiently serious nature to result in your being either:
 - a) unable to submit documentation by a required deadline; or
 - b) unable to attend a review or examination. .
2. For postgraduate research students undertaking a higher degree by research, you will only be able to submit extenuating circumstance for one of the following:
 - a) Major reviews
 - b) Annual reviews
 - c) Interim examinations
 - d) *Viva voce* examinations
3. Should you feel that you have extenuating circumstances, you should contact your First Supervisor at the earliest opportunity and before the affected review or examination. Should your extenuating circumstances be agreed, the outcome will be to defer your review or assessment to a future date, as agreed with your First Supervisor.
4. The University does operate a fit to sit policy so should you attempt your major review, annual review, interim examination or viva voce examination, you will not be able to claim you were affected by extenuating circumstances after the event.
5. Problems with the research programme management that have affected your performance should be remedied by following the student complaints procedure.
6. If you are affected by extenuating circumstances while the review or examination is taking place, you will need to notify the examiners immediately and a decision will be made in conjunction with your First Supervisor as to whether to continue.