
The University's Academic Regulations: 2026/27

Section D: Research Degree Regulations

D1 Introduction

- D1.1 Section D: Research Degree Regulations sets out the specific regulations applying to this type of award. In applying this section of the University's regulatory framework, account must be taken of the regulations contained in Section A: General Regulations, which apply to all programmes of study offered by the University.
- D1.2 All research degrees are managed within the academic Schools, supported by the Doctoral College arrangements to ensure consistency
- D1.3 The Research Degrees Framework provides advice and guidance which must be followed on the application of Section D: Research Degree Regulations. The University's Code of Practice for the Supervision of Research Degrees should also be used in conjunction with these Regulations.

D2 Definitions

- D2.1 The following research degrees are considered in this section of the University's academic regulations:
- a) Master by Research (MRes)
 - b) Master of Laws by Research (LLMRes)
 - c) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
 - d) Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works (PhD)
 - e) Professional Doctorate (Doctor of Business Administration (DBA))
 - f) Professional Doctorate (Prof Doc)

D2.2 The following terms are used in these regulations:

- a) *Registration* refers to registering as a student of the University and formally commencing the programme of study (i.e. registering as a research student).
- b) *Approval of thesis topic and programme of study* is the process of confirming the area and scope of study and the proposed thesis title.
- c) *Confirmation of target degree* is the formal process of determining or confirming which award a student will progress towards.
- d) *Progress Review* is the review of progress towards a target degree.
- e) *Viva voce examination* refers to the oral examination by which the student defends their thesis.

D2.3 Research degree provision is managed on behalf of Academic Board by the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC), with much of the work delegated to the Research Degrees Examinations Board (RDEB). The role and responsibilities of the University Research Degrees Committee are defined in Academic Board remits.

D3 Research degree awards of the University

D3.1 In addition to meeting the requirements of Regulation D3, to receive any award of the University listed in Regulation A4.1d), a student must satisfy the requirements of Regulation A4.3.

D3.2 In addition to the standard periods of registration noted in D3.3 to D3.8, students may, at the discretion of the Research Degrees Examination Board be granted an additional grace period of no more than 12 months to complete their thesis.

D3.3 A **Master by Research** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award-specific requirements within 12 months following registration (20 months part-time) and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.

- D3.4 A **Master of Laws by Research** (LLMRes) will be awarded to a student, specifically in the field of law, who has satisfied all award-specific requirements within 12 months following registration (20 months part-time) and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.
- D3.6 A **Doctor of Philosophy** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award-specific requirements, completed within a period of between 36 and 42 months, following registration (between 60 and 70 months part-time), depending on the specific requirements of their studentship or as required by the terms and conditions set out by funders, and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree. The full agreed duration will be as stipulated on the student's formal offer letter.
- D3.7 A **Doctor of Philosophy (Graduate Training Assistants)** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award-specific requirements within 60 months following registration and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.
- D3.8 A **Professional Doctorate (Doctor of Business Administration)** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award-specific requirements within 36 months following registration and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.
- D3.9 A **Professional Doctorate** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award specific requirements within a period of between 36 and 48 months following registration and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.
- D3.10 A **Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all award-specific requirements within 12 months following registration and has been assessed as meeting the standard required for the degree.

D4 Admissions

- D4.1 The minimum entry requirement for admission to a programme of study leading to an award of the University listed in Regulation A4.1d) is possession of a first or second class honours degree of a University in the UK or a qualification regarded as equivalent to such an honours degree.
- D4.2 Except with the specific permission of the Convenor of the Research Degrees Examination Board, a student for a research degree may not, during the period of their registration, be a student for another award of any university.
- D4.3 In addition to meeting the requirements of regulation D4.1, applicants for a PhD by Published Works must provide evidence of a significant contribution to research and previous academic attainment.

D5 Progression through the Award

- D5.1 The periods of study dating from first registration for the various research degrees are:

Award	Mode of Attendance	Standard Period
MRes and LLMRes	Full-time	12 months
	Part-time	20 months
PhD (except Graduate Training Assistants)	Full-time	36 to 42 months
	Part-time	60 to 70 months
PhD by Published Works	Part-time	12 months
PhD (Graduate Training Assistants)	Full-time	48 months

Professional Doctorates	Part-time	36 to 48 months
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At the discretion of the Convenor of the Research Degrees Examination Board, students may be provided with a grace period of no more than 12-months in which to complete their thesis.

- D5.2 A student may submit their thesis for examination any time from one month before the end of their standard period of registration and must submit before the expiry of their maximum period of registration (i.e. their standard period of registration plus any agreed grace period).
- D5.3 A student may apply to suspend their studies for a specified period of time. Any period of suspension must be agreed with the supervisory team and approved by the relevant School Research Degrees Committee (SRDC). The maximum length of time that may be approved is 12 months over the course of registration. Further periods of suspended study will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board. Time elapsed during a period of suspension will not count as part of the period of study in Regulation D5.1. The student's situation will continue to be monitored by the relevant SRDC to ensure that appropriate support is in place when study is resumed.
- D5.4 Under exceptional circumstances, a student may be permitted to submit earlier than one month before the end of their standard period of registration. Applications must be submitted for consideration by the Research Degrees Examination Board.
- D5.5 Under exceptional circumstances, a student may be permitted to extend their maximum registration period. Applications must be submitted for consideration by the Research Degrees Examination Board at least three months before the existing maximum end date.

- D5.6 Where a student has discontinued their research, they are required to notify the relevant School Research Degrees Committee detailing the reason for withdrawal. If a student has not been in contact with their supervisors for a prolonged period, and the supervisors have not been able to re-establish contact, the University may write to the student informing them that they will be deemed to have withdrawn unless this contact is re-established within one month.
- D5.6 Students must make satisfactory progress towards their research degree. Failure to do this may result in the termination of registration for the target degree. If the student is in receipt of a studentship, this will be withdrawn at the same time as registration for the degree is terminated.
- D5.7 Within the first 12 months of registration (18 months part-time) all students, apart from those registered for PhD by Published Works will have a formal review to confirm the target award.

D6 Assessment

- D6.1 Students will be assessed by *viva voce* examination for all research awards except for the Master by Research and Master of Laws (LLM) by Research.
- D6.2 Master by Research and Master of Laws (LLM) by Research will normally be assessed by thesis only, though examiners may request a *viva voce* examination as a means of helping to determine difficult or borderline cases.
- D6.3 The Director of Studies should make an application for approval of examination arrangements at least three months before the student is expected to submit their thesis. Applications should be submitted for scrutiny by the relevant School Research Degrees Committee before going forward to the Research Degrees Examination Board for approval.
- D6.4 The final decision to submit the thesis for examination rests with the student.

D6.5 After the thesis has been formally submitted for examination, no further version of the thesis may be submitted prior to the *viva voce*.

D6.6 At the end of the examination the examiners may recommend one of five outcomes:

	Decision	Subsidiary Criteria
i	Pass	The student is awarded the degree unconditionally.
ii	Conditional Pass with Minor Corrections	The student is required to implement minor corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners.
iii	Conditional Pass with Major Corrections	The student is required to implement major corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners.
iv	Fail Resubmit	The student is required to make substantial corrections to their thesis and submit it for re-examination. In all cases except the MRes and LLM, this will include a second oral examination
v	Fail	This decision is available only where the examiners determine that the thesis and/or underpinning research evidence academic misconduct. Any suspected academic misconduct will subsequently be investigated by an Academic Integrity Officer in line with the Student Conduct Regulations. The student is unlikely to be permitted to submit again if they are found, following the academic conduct investigation, to have committed academic misconduct. This decision will be confirmed upon conclusion of the academic conduct procedure.

D6.7 The student will be given formal notification of the outcome of the examination, and written guidance on any amendments required to the thesis, as soon as possible after the examination. The time allowed for completion of amendments will be calculated from the date of formal notification.

D6.8 In all cases, all examiners will review the submitted amendments and determine whether these are deemed adequate.

D6.9 Following the decision of Conditional Pass, the student will have a maximum of six months to complete required amendments. Following the decision of Fail Resubmit, the student will have a maximum of twelve months to complete required amendments. These timescales apply equally to full-time and part-time students. If, in exceptional circumstances, a student requires an extension to the agreed period, they must make an application in writing to the relevant School Research Degrees Committee stating the reasons for the extension and providing supporting evidence as appropriate.

D6.10 After consideration of the amended thesis, the examiners may recommend one of three outcomes:

	Decision	Subsidiary Criteria
i	Pass	The student is awarded the degree unconditionally.
ii	Conditional Pass	The student is required to implement further minor corrections to their thesis and resubmit this within six months for the approval of the examiners.
iii	Fail	The student is not permitted to submit again.

D6.11 Following the submission of minor amendments as in D6.8, the examiners may recommend only (i) or (iii).

D7 Student Conduct

D7.1 Academic and non-academic misconduct by research students will be dealt with in accordance with the [University's Student Conduct Regulations, Academic Integrity Regulations](#) and [Research Misconduct Policy](#).

D8 Academic Appeals and Complaints

- D8.1 Research students are entitled to make academic appeals in accordance with the [University's Academic Appeals Regulations](#).
- D8.2 Research students are entitled to make complaints in accordance with the [University's Complaints Handling Procedure](#).

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