

Residential Workshop for Graduate Deans, Administrators and Research Supervisors
*Audit and Best Practice for Research Degree Programmes – QAA Perspectives,
Institutional Experience and Key Audit Issues.*
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Supplementary Handout
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Institutional Audit and Research Degree Programmes

1 Introduction

The University will undergo a QAA Institutional Audit during the Epiphany Term 2009. The Purpose of this paper is to brief Directors of Postgraduate Research on:

- The Institutional Audit Methodology
- The involvement of postgraduate research programmes in Audit
- Preparations for Audit.

2 Background

- 2.1. There is a general briefing document on Institutional Audit which forms section 8 of the Learning and Teaching Handbook¹. This document is intended to supplement the information provided in the Handbook and provide further specific details on the involvement of postgraduate research degree programmes in the Audit process.
- 2.2. The University last underwent Institutional Audit in February 2004. The audit report is available on the QAA web site². This Audit visit included 4 Discipline Audit Trails in: Anthropology, Computer Science, Music and Theology and Ministry. The main outcome of the audit report was that: *“broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards”*.
- 2.3. Since this Audit the QAA has developed a revised Institutional Audit methodology in partnership with HEFCE. This revised methodology includes a specific requirement to look at postgraduate research degree programmes reflecting changes in the requirements of the Funding Council, Research Councils and the QAA with respect to research degree programmes.
- 2.4. Section 1 of the QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education was revised following a series of consultations and published by the QAA on 30 September 2004³. This section of the Code covers the management of postgraduate research programmes. The Code contains 27 precepts which cover all aspects of a research degree programme. The QAA describe this section of the Code as being “written in a firmer style” to give institutions clear guidance on the expectations of all relevant external agencies referred to in paragraph 2.3. The QAA's intention is that this section of the Code informs the development of Institutional Codes of Practice⁴.
- 2.5. The 27 precepts are a set of over arching principles which guide the quality and management of all research degree programmes at Durham through our institutional Code. The QAA precepts are included as an appendix to this briefing document. It is worth considering the provision of research degrees at Durham in the context of these precepts in addition to the requirements of our own Institutional Code of Practice.
- 2.6. All relevant external organisations with an interest in research degree programmes have signed up to the QAA Code. This enables the QAA Code to be used as a single point of reference which incorporates the minimum standards required by HEFCE,

¹ Available at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/8/1/>

² Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/instReports.asp?instID=H-0116>

³ Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp>

⁴ Available at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/graduate.school/staff/qualityassurance/>

the requirements of the individual research councils and the requirements of the QAA.

- 2.7. During the academic year 2005/2006 HEFCE commissioned the QAA to undertake the Special Review of Research Degree Programmes. This was a one-off paper based exercise to measure progress across the entire HE sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland against the requirements of the revised section 1 of the QAA Code. Durham participated in the pilot of the Special Review programme which was held with three institutions to finalise and further enhance the methodology. The reports of the Special Review are confidential to the institutions, HEFCE and the QAA. The findings of the Special Review report for Durham were that: *“The reviewers concluded that the University had addressed all aspects of the RDP student’s experience, from application to qualification, with rigour. A high quality research environment was provided in a research-intensive institution.”* The report required further consideration in one area – regarding the composition of departmental review panels held to review student progress at the 12 month (full-time equivalent) point.
- 2.8. Part of the broader consideration our research degree provision includes our institutional qualification rates. These are now published by HEFCE on an annual basis for full time students⁵. The rates include all full-time research students who have been awarded their qualifications within seven years of commencing their programme, the rates are split into home/EU and overseas students. The rates for Durham have been reviewed and discussed at Graduate School Committee.
- 2.9. Research Councils and HEFCE are taking an increasing interest in the purpose and efficacy of postgraduate research degree programmes. There is an increased requirement to provide a broader range of training within a doctoral programme. It is against this backdrop that the QAA Institutional Audit will include scrutiny of research degree programmes.

3 Audit Methodology

- 3.1. The methodology and approach of the QAA Institutional Audit is covered in the Audit Handbook⁶. Section 3 provides a summary of the main features of Audit.
- 3.2. The stated aims of the audit process are: to meet the public interest in knowing that universities:
 - effective means of ensuring that the awards and qualifications in HE are of an academic standard at least consistent with those referred to in The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and are, where relevant, exercising their powers as degree-awarding bodies in a proper manner;
 - effective means of providing learning opportunities of a quality that enables students, whether on taught or research programmes, to achieve those HE awards and qualifications;
 - effective means of enhancing the quality of their educational provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external reviews, and feedback from stakeholders.
- 3.3. The stated outcomes of the audit process are to:
 - ensure that the academic standards of UK HE awards and qualifications are maintained and securely managed;

⁵ Available at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_29/

⁶ Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/default.asp>

- enable students and other stakeholders to have confidence in the proper management of the quality of learning opportunities offered through the programmes of study that lead to those awards;
- check that effective arrangements are in place to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes;
- contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms and agencies in HE, to the promotion and enhancement of quality in teaching, learning and assessment;
- ensure that students, employers and others can have ready access to easily understood, reliable and meaningful public information about the extent to which the HEIs in England and Northern Ireland are individually offering programmes of study, awards and qualifications that meet national expectations in respect of academic standards and quality of provision;
- ensure that, if the management of academic standards or of the quality of provision is found to be weak or seriously deficient, the process forms a basis for ensuring rapid action to improve it;
- provide a means of securing accountability for the use of public funds received by HEIs.

3.4. Institutional Audit is an evidence based process which focuses on the management of our degree programmes with a particular emphasis on student learning opportunities. Audit will focus on 6 main areas of our provision:

- 3.4.1. *Institutional management of academic standards* This will cover the use made of external examiners, internal and external reviews, assessment policies, the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, management information, and other relevant topics.
- 3.4.2. *Institutional management of learning opportunities* This will cover the use made of external examiners, internal and external review, students as partners in quality management, research activity to inform learning opportunities, other modes of study (such as workplace and flexible and distributed learning), the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, management information, learning resources, admissions policies, student support, staff appraisal and support, and other relevant topics.
- 3.4.3. *Institutional approach to quality enhancement* This will cover the use made of external examiners, internal and external review, the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, students as partners in quality enhancement, management information, dissemination of good practice, staff development and reward, and other relevant topics.
- 3.4.4. *Collaborative arrangements* This will cover the use made of external examiners, internal and external review of collaborative arrangements, the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, the use made of management information including feedback, and other relevant topics.
- 3.4.5. *Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students* This will cover the use made of external examiners, internal and external review of research provision, research students as partners in quality management, the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, management information including feedback, and other relevant topics.
- 3.4.6. *Published information* This will cover the approach to ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information, students' experience of published information and other information relating to their programmes of study, and

other relevant topics, and there will be a sample of the accuracy and completeness of TQI.

- 3.5. A member of the audit team will be specifically assigned to look at the provision of research degree programmes as described in section 3.4.5 above. A section of the final published audit report will be devoted to postgraduate research degrees.
- 3.6. Audit recognises that academic standards are defined levels of achievement described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (e.g. Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate). As such these levels can not be enhanced. However there are opportunities to further enhance and develop the learning opportunities provided to students. Audit does recognise that these opportunities can be enhanced. This distinction is recognised in the final judgements provided in the audit report. Two judgements are made on: *i)* the academic standards of our awards and *ii)* our management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. In this context academic quality is used as a term which encompasses all our activities and provision, or resources, which ensure that students have the best possible opportunities to successfully complete their programmes of study.
- 3.7. A key aspect of the new Institutional Audit methodology is a focus on enhancement. For the purposes of audit QAA defines enhancement as: “*the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities*”. This makes it clear that one area the auditors will be exploring is the steps taken at institutional level to bring about steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of our research degree programmes. This approach recognises that a key aspect of enhancement is the management process and structures in the institution. It also includes mechanisms where enhancements are brought about, supported and maintained. At this level Audit requires the involvement of academic departments and supervisory teams to provide evidence for the final judgements.
- 3.8. The Audit process involves a number of stages which involve:
 - 3.8.1. *Institutional briefing paper* Institutions are asked to prepare a briefing paper covering Introduction and Background as well as the areas described in sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.6 above.
 - 3.8.2. *Students' written submission* The Durham Students Union will be preparing a separate written submission covering the quality of the overall learning experience. The students have the choice of sharing their submission with the institution or keeping it confidential.
 - 3.8.3. *The briefing visit* Following scrutiny of the briefing paper and student submission the audit team (4 – 7 members) identify areas of potential interest. The briefing visit is used to inform the institution of these areas and have further discussions with senior staff and students. At the end of the briefing visit the institution is informed of the areas that will be covered by the Audit. The briefing visit is typically six weeks before the Audit visit.
 - 3.8.4. *The audit visit* The full audit visit will last five working days. The audit team will look in detail at the areas they have identified following the briefing visit. Institutions are invited to suggest possible areas for supplementary investigation. There is no expectation by QAA that an audit will include a supplementary audit trail.
 - 3.8.5. *Reports and follow-up* The institution will receive a draft report around 8 weeks after the audit visit with an invitation to correct errors of fact only. The final report will be published by QAA and will include an annex. We will be

invited to submit a one page statement to be published with the report. The main report will be aimed at an external audience. The annex will contain details which allow the follow-up to be undertaken effectively.

- 3.9. The methodology of Audit is to use audit trails to gather evidence for the eventual judgements. The auditors will have full access to all documentation including: regulations, policies, procedures and committee papers (for university, faculty and departmental committees). By reviewing documentation they will test the effectiveness of policies and procedures across the institution at institutional, faculty and departmental level. Audit recognises that we have an internal process which is designed to do this – Enhancement-led Review of departments. The auditors will pay particular attention to two Enhancement-led Reviews as a starting point for gathering evidence. The audit visit will include opportunities to meet with staff and students to gather further evidence about the effectiveness and operation of policies and procedures. Auditors will explore how our policies and procedures operate in practice.
- 3.10. The Audit team will reach a judgement on the standards of our awards and the management of academic quality based on our documentation and the evidence gathered during the audit visit.
- 3.11. Follow-up will occur at a time agreed as part of the audit and will be a paper-based exercise. The Audit will be formally signed-off when any recommendations have been acted on.

4 Management of Research Degrees at Durham

- 4.1. This section sets out the principle policies and procedures used to Durham to effectively manage the opportunities and academic quality of our research degree programmes.
- 4.2. The diversity of research student experience at Durham is managed by having an Institutional Code of Practice and Departmental Codes of Practice covering all aspects of the student experience. In developing these codes we recognised areas of good practice which were prevalent across the Institution and which have now been made explicit through Institutional and Departmental Codes. Further details of Departmental Codes are given in the sections below including the monitoring processes put in place by the Graduate School to review the management of Departmental policy. We have aimed for a suitable framework which is not overly prescriptive and which provides sufficient freedom to ensure a stimulating research environment for the diverse range of research students at Durham. The Institutional and Departmental Codes provide benchmarks for staff and research students in all disciplines.
- 4.3. Durham University has a single Graduate School for administrative purposes and academic oversight, which covers the whole postgraduate provision. The Graduate School is organised into teams to administer the postgraduate experience. The PGR Team now oversees all aspects of the research student experience from initial contact through admission, registration, progress monitoring, examination and graduation.
- 4.4. The Graduate School Committee, chaired by Dean of the Graduate School, is responsible to Senate via Research Committee, for all academic and policy aspects of the research student experience. Details of the role of the Graduate School Committee are given in our Institutional Code.

- 4.5. We have 1200 research students currently receiving supervision, in addition to those currently writing up and under examination. Approximately 60% are full time 40% part time, and UK research councils fund 18%. One of the primary indicators of the performance of our Research Students is our HEFCE Rates of Qualification (see section 2.8). Graduate School Committee reviews these on an annual basis as a quantitative measure of our effectiveness set against a national standard.
- 4.6. The Introductory section of our Institutional Code sets out the framework for the management of our Research Degree Programmes. There are four key elements to our approach: *i)* annual reviews of individual student's progress; *ii)* a range of metrics considered by the Graduate School Committee; *iii)* University Review of academic departments and *iv)* Departmental Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes
- 4.7. The annual review of our Institutional Code, policies and performance indicators by the Graduate School ensures that these continue to evolve in response to experience and the requirements of our research programmes.
- 4.8. The annual monitoring round and the regular cycle of Enhancement-led Reviews provides a mechanism to identify resource issues. All research students are required to complete an annual survey on resources as part of their annual reviews. This includes questions about the University IT service and University Library. Analysis of the returns is undertaken by the ITS and the Library to monitor the resourcing of all disciplines.
- 4.9. All applications for postgraduate admissions are received by the Graduate School through an on-line system. Application details and supporting documentation are distributed to the relevant academic departments for scrutiny and a preliminary decision. Consideration of any application will be affected by the availability of appropriate supervision and the viability of the student's proposed research topic, as well as the formal scrutiny of academic qualifications and personal academic references. Consequently, there is often a period of informal consultation between the applicant and the department(s) regarding clarification of the application and proposal, and the applicant's level of preparation to undertake the proposed research topic. All offers to applicants are made formally by the Graduate School so that departments' recommendations to offer or to reject are subject to scrutiny to monitor consistency and effectiveness of current policies and procedures. Training of departmental admissions advisers is on-going. Departmental admissions policies and criteria (which must be approved by the Graduate School) reflect the legitimate diversity amongst the academic requirements appropriate for different disciplines.
- 4.10. The Graduate School PGR student induction, at which attendance is mandatory for full time students, includes the distribution of information packs and general introductions to the University's central services and facilities, as well as providing the opening session in the University's programme of Research Skills Development programme.
- 4.11. Department induction policies and checklist, which must be approved by the Graduate School, reflect the legitimate diversity in the processes for socialisation of new junior members to the research cultures of their respective disciplines, as well as the practical issues of access to and use of departmental services and facilities, and introductions to support staff.
- 4.12. We have supervisory teams for all research students believing that this will provide the most supportive experience with access to a "multi-faceted support network". The Deputy Deans give formal approval on behalf of Graduate School for all supervisory teams and the team membership is included in the offer letter sent by the Graduate School. This allows the Graduate School to monitor the suitability of all supervisory

team members .The Graduate School must approve any subsequent changes to the membership of supervisory teams.

- 4.13. All new probationary members of academic staff are required to undertake sessions on supervision of research students. In addition, a programme of CPD including supervision of research students is available to all staff. These provisions, together with mandatory team supervision expose all staff to appropriate training and induction for the role of supervising research students. The roles and responsibilities of supervisors and research students are described in the Postgraduate Student Guide.
- 4.14. In recognition of the significant and valid variation of supervisory practice across disciplines, academic departments are required to have their own policies on the management of supervision. The Institutional Code details the requirements to be covered by departmental policies. These policies must be approved by the appropriate Deputy Dean on behalf of the Graduate School. This will enable Graduate School to monitor local practice in departments.
- 4.15. As part of Departmental Policy all students and supervisory teams are required to keep appropriate written records of progress and agreed actions. The nature of these records will vary depending on the subject. All academic departments are required to carry out student progress reviews at 6-month intervals for full time students (or part-time equivalents). The nature of these reviews is covered by departmental policy. Any issues identified in 6-month reviews will be expected to have been appropriately resolved by the time of the annual review undertaken by the Graduate School. Every research student will undergo a thorough review before progressing to the second year of their full-time doctoral programme (or part-time equivalent).
- 4.16. The research student annual report exercise is conducted by the Graduate School allowing the Deputy Deans to gain a detailed overview of research student provision in each department in their faculty, and take action where necessary. The Deputy Deans will each produce a report each year for Graduate School Committee.
- 4.17. The broader skills requirements of research students are covered by a University-wide skills programme that is owned by the Graduate School and which is open to all research students. The programme is benchmarked against sections C – G of the Joints Skills Statement⁷. The Training Needs Analysis and the Training Programme map all activities onto the Joint Skills Statement. Departments are required to contribute to the needs of their research students corresponding to sections A and B of the Joint Research Councils Skills statement of September 2001. Departments are required to submit a policy on this for approval to the Graduate School. The Graduate School reviews departmental training provision through the review mechanism described above. Students are expected to complete a Training Needs Analysis as part of their induction and identify which training opportunities are appropriate to their needs. Students are required to review their training needs periodically throughout their studies. Given the legitimate diversity of research student's skills needs on entry and during their studies, it is not appropriate to have mandatory training. The ethos of the training programme is that students are expected to be responsible (in partnership with the supervisory team) for identifying and ensuring their training needs are met. Our approach uses a Kolb-type learning cycle. Each student is required to complete a short reflective account of his or her year's training as part of the annual review process.

⁷ Available at <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/PostgraduateTraining/JointStatementOnSkillsTraining.htm>, and from all other Research Council's websites.

- 4.18. An initial PGR survey is conducted on-line shortly after completion of the induction period. The monitoring of individual student academic progress is also conducted on-line, as described above, and provides an opportunity to make their concerns known directly to the Graduate School in cases of dispute between student and supervisors.
- 4.19. Examiners reports are the major element in the University's assurance of the standards of its PGR awards, and are scrutinised by the Deputy Deans as part of the approvals procedures, and are the subject of their regular reports to the Graduate School Committee. Examiners' reports are circulated to departments to inform their monitoring of QA issues.
- 4.20. Noting the spread across the sector of the provision of an independent chair for each viva, the University consulted widely internally (including a postal survey of all students who had a viva in the previous year). The conclusion was that there was general satisfaction with current policy. For the present, existing good practice at Durham remains that an independent chair may be present in certain particular circumstances, but not as a formal requirement. University-wide criteria for examiners' appointments are set by the Graduate School and monitored in the approvals process. Supervisors' preparation of candidates for the viva is a requirement of departmental policy on training. Viva workshops are offered to all students as part of the University's skills programme.
- 4.21. Core regulations give criteria for assessment which are in line with the FHEQ but which necessarily preserve for the examiners the discretion to exercise their professional judgement. A system of appeals protects the interests of the candidate.
- 4.22. There are opportunities for student representation on many University level Committees: Graduate School Committee, PG Training Sub-Committee, Senate, Ustinov and other College Councils. At Departmental level University policy requires regular meetings of Staff-Student Committees. These are supplemented by the availability of Directors of PG Research.

5 Key Issues for Audit

- 5.1. This section sets out the issues that academic departments should consider during the current academic year. This is intended to highlight issues that audit teams will be looking for.
- 5.2. For our postgraduate provision Audit will take as its starting point the QAA Special Review report. The Special Review was conducted at a time when our policies and procedures were newly introduced. There was therefore little evidence available to demonstrate their operation or effectiveness. Audit will gather evidence from a range of academic departments to test the effectiveness of our research degree programme procedures. Audit will also compare their operation on the ground against their documented description. Auditors will be looking for effective operation of policies and procedures in line with our Institutional and Departmental Codes of Practice.
- 5.3. The Audit team may ask to see a variety of relevant documentation from any academic department. They may also wish to speak with staff and research students from any academic department.
- 5.4. The underlying assumption of the Audit process is that documentation at all levels (institutional, faculty, department) is up to date and can be produced at short notice for consideration by Audit teams. Auditors will test the effectiveness of our documented processes in significant depth. This includes departmental policies and

procedures on research degree programmes along with departmental records of research students.

5.5. The Departmental Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes provides an opportunity for departments to review the effectiveness of their research degree provision. This review has only been undertaken twice by academic departments and there remains opportunity to develop this process further. The annual review is based on the classic audit questions:

- What are we trying to do?
- Why are we doing it?
- How are we doing it?
- Why is that the best way to do it?
- How do we know it works?
- How can we improve it?

Audit teams will therefore be likely to take a particular interest in the way that the annual review is conducted by departments, how reflective the approach is and how issues arising from the review are discussed and addressed.

5.6. A specific and very important focus of Audit is our approach to enhancement of research degree programmes as defined above. Enhancement is a pro-active approach taken at institutional level to develop our academic quality; it is not a collection of good practice identified in academic departments. However, there are opportunities for departments to work with Faculty Graduate Advisory Groups and Graduate School to inform our enhancement of research degree programmes. Academic departments should continue to work with the faculty and institutional management structures to contribute to this area.

5.7. Faculty Graduate Advisory Groups and Graduate School Committee provide opportunities for the development of our research degree programmes. Academic departments should continue to be responsive to developments communicated by the Graduate School and consider how they may best implement these as part of their continued development of their research degrees. Conversely academic departments should continue to communicate their own innovations for wider discussion and the potential enhancement for all departments.

6 Conclusions

Institutional Audit is an extremely important and rigorous external investigation of our academic provision. Research degrees are now an integral part of this process, and the audit process provides an opportunity for a wider discussion of our research degree provision. The outcome of this process is of benefit to all our research students.

Douglas Halliday
Dean of the Graduate School
24 January 2008

Appendix 1 – Precepts from the QAA Code of Practice

The 27 precepts below are taken from the QAA Code of Practice Section 1. These precepts inform the management of research degrees at Durham; our Institutional Code of Practice was developed in response to these precepts.

Institutional arrangements

1. Institutions will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes.
2. Institutional regulations for postgraduate research degree programmes will be clear and readily available to students and staff. Where appropriate, regulations will be supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school or department.
3. Institutions will develop, implement and keep under review a code or codes of practice applicable across the institution, which include(s) the areas covered by this document. The code(s) should be readily available to all students and staff involved in postgraduate research programmes.
4. Institutions will monitor the success of their postgraduate research programmes against appropriate internal and/or external indicators and targets.

The research environment

5. Institutions will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research¹ and where high quality research is occurring.

Selection, admission and induction of students

6. Admissions procedures will be clear, consistently applied and will demonstrate equality of opportunity.
7. Only appropriately qualified and prepared students will be admitted to research programmes.
8. Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the institution's staff who will have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. The decision-making process will enable the institution to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made, that support its admissions policy.
9. The entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme will be defined and communicated clearly.
10. Institutions will provide research students with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment in which they will be working.

Supervision

11. Institutions will appoint supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.

12. Each research student will have a minimum of one main supervisor. He or she will normally be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student.
13. Institutions will ensure that the responsibilities of all research student supervisors are clearly communicated to supervisors and students through written guidance.
14. Institutions will ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors.

Progress and review arrangements

15. Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress.
16. Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for formal reviews of student progress, including explicit review stages.
17. Institutions will provide guidance to students, supervisors and others involved in progress monitoring and review processes about the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

Development of research and other skills

18. Institutions will provide research students with appropriate opportunities for personal and professional development.
19. Each student's development needs will be identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate academic staff, initially during the student's induction period; they will be regularly reviewed during the research programme and amended as appropriate.
20. Institutions will provide opportunities for research students to maintain a record of personal progress, which includes reference to the development of research and other skills.

Feedback mechanisms

21. Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

Assessment

22. Institutions will use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define the academic standards of different research programmes and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees must be clear and readily available to students, staff and external examiners.
23. Research degree assessment procedures must be clear; they must be operated rigorously, fairly, and consistently; include input from an external examiner; and carried out to a reasonable timescale.
24. Institutions will communicate their assessment procedures clearly to all the parties involved, ie the students, the supervisor(s) and the examiners.

Student representations

25. Institutions will put in place and publicise procedures for dealing with student representations that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust and applied consistently. Such procedures will allow all students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present their case.

Complaints

26. Independent and formal procedures will exist to resolve effectively complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision.

Appeals

27. Institutions will put in place formal procedures to deal with any appeals made by research students. The acceptable grounds for appeals will be clearly defined.

Durham University quality management framework

Introduction

1. Durham University is committed to ensuring the excellence of its learning and teaching, and research degree programmes. Durham offers research-led programmes of study that are informed and enhanced by the University's status as a research-led learning institution, thereby meeting its strategic aim of providing an internationally distinctive student learning experience. To ensure that this commitment is met, the University has established a multi-functional framework for managing quality and standards.

Definitions

2. The University's quality management framework is informed by the following key definitions:

a. *Academic standards* are the level of academic achievement that must be attained in order for a student to gain an academic award or be awarded academic credit.

b. *Quality assurance* is the process of ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities are appropriate to enable students to meet the academic standards of the award for which they are studying;

c. *Quality enhancement* is the process of using systems and information to improve the quality of the student learning experience.

Principles

3. The University's quality management framework is based on the following principles:

a. that the University is responsible for the academic quality and standards of all awards made in its name;

b. that in exercising that responsibility the University will ensure that its academic standards are at least as high as those in comparable institutions, and meets external reference points such as the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (and thereby the European Higher Education Area's Qualification Framework); where appropriate relevant subject benchmark statements; and, where relevant, the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);

c. that the University is responsible for assuring itself that the quality of the learning opportunities provided for its students enable them to meet the standards of the awards for which they are studying;

d. that the University is responsible for enhancing the quality of the student learning experience by reviewing its systems and the information generated by them to enhance the quality of the student learning experience;

e. that the University's processes for the management of academic quality and standards should be fit for purpose in a research-led learning institution, and aligned

with the QAA's Academic Infrastructure (and thereby the European Higher Education Area's *European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education*);

f. that all levels of the University's processes for managing academic quality and standards should actively engage students in the assurance and enhancement of academic quality.

The institutional framework for academic standards

4. The University's academic standards are assured by:

a. a University framework (aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) that defines the academic standards of each type of award made by the University. All University awards must be aligned with the relevant University qualification descriptor, level descriptor and generic assessment criteria, and all operate within University-wide general and core regulations that govern student progression and the making of awards;

b. procedures for the approval of new programmes and modules that consider all proposals against the University's framework for academic standards, and where all such proposals are subject to consideration by subject specialists external to the University;

c. a robust external examiner system, whereby external examiners are asked to confirm that academic standards are consistent with academic standards at comparable institutions, the University framework, and external reference points such as the QAA Academic Infrastructure;

d. an annual review of learning and teaching carried out by all University departments, which includes the consideration of management information on student progression and achievement;

e. an annual review of research degree programmes carried out by all University departments, which includes the consideration of management information on research student progression and achievement;

f. and the periodic review of departments, where all taught and research degree provision is considered against the University's framework for academic standards by a review team external to the department under review and which includes an appropriate external subject specialist.

The institutional framework for quality assurance

5. In order to assure the quality of learning and teaching, the University has in place a range of quality assurance mechanisms:

a. initial professional development programmes all newly-appointed staff involved in the delivery of learning and teaching, which ensure that they are appropriately prepared for their defined roles in learning and teaching and research degree supervision, and can demonstrate that they have met the relevant level (as determined by the nature and extent of the learning and teaching responsibilities) of the UK Professional Standards Framework;

- b. processes for the recruitment of all staff who as part of their defined role will deliver learning and teaching and research degree supervision make appropriate provision for the quality of teaching;
- c. a programme approval process that requires full consideration at departmental and University level of all aspects of the learning opportunities to be provided in proposed new programmes, and which incorporates the views of an appropriate external subject specialist;
- d. policies and procedures for annual reviews of learning and teaching, and research degree supervision, that ensure that departments reflect on a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data relating to the quality of their provision, to review the quality of learning opportunities provided in the past and provide a basis for future action to enhance the quality of these learning opportunities;
- e. a periodic review process covering all academic departments, incorporating external subject specialists, that systematically considers the quality of learning opportunities across the full range of their provision on the basis of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, in order to assure the University that these learning opportunities are appropriate and enable students to meet the standards of awards;
- f. an effective external examiner system which provides reports that are used as a prompt for reflection on quality as well as standards, and which are considered at departmental, faculty and University levels;
- g. a wide range of mechanisms for incorporating student views on the quality of learning opportunities through the use of evaluation questionnaires; student involvement in the annual reviews of learning and teaching, and research degree provision; staff-student consultative committees; and student membership of boards of studies, FLTCs, LTC and Graduate School Committee (and its advisory groups);
- h. a periodic review process covering the colleges, which considers the support made available to students both to assure quality and to identify good practice and areas for improvement;
- i. a clear timetable for the consideration at University level of a range of quantitative and qualitative management information relating to the quality of learning opportunities provided by the University.

The institutional framework for quality enhancement

- 6. In order to enhance the quality of the student learning experience, the University:
 - a. provides all newly-appointed staff involved in the delivery of learning and teaching with initial professional development programmes that enhance their teaching practice and ensure that they are appropriately prepared for their defined roles in learning and teaching and research degree supervision, and can demonstrate that they have met the relevant level (as determined by the nature and extent of the learning and teaching responsibilities) of the UK Professional Standards Framework;
 - b. provides all established staff involved in the delivery of learning and teaching and research degree supervision development opportunities that support them in developing their practice in ways that both support the achievement of departmental,

faculty and institutional learning and teaching strategies, and further their professional development. Where appropriate, these development opportunities will be aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework in order to provide staff with the opportunity to demonstrate the alignment of their teaching and supervisory practice with the relevant level of this framework;

c. provides all staff with a mechanism regularly to reflect on the effectiveness and development of their teaching and supervisory practice through the Annual Staff Review process;

d. incorporates contributions in relation to learning and teaching within the promotions criteria for academic staff, and provides defined and appropriate career pathways for specialist staff on teaching-only contracts;

e. provides an annual Excellence in Learning and Teaching award scheme that recognises the excellence of teaching staff, and provides support to allow these award winners to continue to develop their teaching practice in ways that both support their own professional development and enhances the learning opportunities available to their students;

f. operates an annual Enhancing the Student Learning Experience awards scheme, intended to support the development of innovative learning and teaching projects intended to enhance the student learning experience;

g. provides an annual Excellence in Doctoral Supervision award scheme that recognises excellence in the supervision of doctoral students, and provides support to recipients of this award to continue to develop their practice in innovative ways and effectively disseminate their individual supervisory strategies and achievements to academic staff;

h. requires faculties and departments to have learning and teaching strategies that include proposals for enhancing the learning experiences of their students;

i. requires that departmental learning and teaching strategies, as well as other data relating to the student learning experience, are reviewed annually, and that good practice and areas for improvement are identified in reports that go to faculty and University levels;

j. requires that departments review annually their research degree provision to identify good practice and areas for development which are reported at faculty and University level;

k. as part of its periodic reviews of academic departments considers the effectiveness of departmental learning and teaching strategies, and departmental approaches to annual review, with a particular emphasis on the way that departments use these to promote the dissemination of good practice and quality enhancement at departmental level;

l. undertakes annual overviews of external examiners' reports, and of its processes for annual review and periodic review of academic departments, and a bi-ennial overview of its periodic reviews of colleges. This allows the University to identify good practice and any issues of strategy, policy or practice emerging from the operation of these processes, and to ensure that these processes are fit for purpose;

m. reviews all external and internal examiners reports on research degree examinations at faculty level with a mechanism to report issues of note at University level for further discussion;

n. undertakes an annual review of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes to identify areas of good practice and areas for further enhancement;

o. considers a range of quantitative and qualitative management information relating to the student learning experience, in order to identify opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided.

Overview of the University's quality management framework

7. Many of the policies and procedures detailed above address more than one of the three elements of quality management. This is summarised in the table below:

	Academic standards	Quality assurance	Quality enhancement
University framework for academic standards	•		
University overviews of quality management processes	•	•	•
Consideration of management information at University level	•	•	•
Programme approval	•	•	
Annual review	•	•	•
Periodic review of academic departments	•	•	•
External examiners	•	•	•
Departmental learning and teaching strategies		•	•
Periodic review of colleges		•	•
Student participation in quality management		•	•
Procedures for appointment and development staff			•
Processes for the reward of staff			•

Responsibilities

8. Responsibility for academic quality and standards of the University's awards clearly rests with the University through Senate. Senate delegates a number of its responsibilities to other bodies within the University within a clear structure (codified in the terms of reference of Senate and its sub-committees, and the standing orders of boards of studies) that ensures that it is aware of the way in which these delegated authorities are used.

9. The University also recognises that the responsibility for academic quality and standards is a shared one, between those University bodies with formal

accountability for academic quality and standards and all staff engaged in the delivery and support of learning and teaching and research degree supervision. The quality management framework is therefore based on the following shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each level of the University.

Individual staff

10. All staff involved in the delivery and support of learning and teaching and research degree supervision will:

- a. reflect on the effectiveness of their practice and the ways in which this might be enhanced (for example, on the basis of the day-to-day observation of the impact of teaching). This will include consideration of their practice in relation to their designated role in learning and teaching and research degree supervision as part of Annual Staff Review;
- b. where appropriate, consult with students prior to or following a change being made (for example, through informal discussions with students and/or staff student consultative committees);
- c. evaluate the effectiveness of changes (for example by checking in a subsequent session, via peer observation or as part of annual module evaluation), and (where appropriate) where these have been effective to disseminate this (for example within department, more widely within the University via staff development workshops/learning and teaching fora/the University's quality enhancement website, or externally at regional, national or subject conferences);
- d. share and discuss practice with colleagues through processes such as mentoring, the peer observation of teaching and participation in supervisory teams for research students.

Departments

11. Boards of studies will routinely reflect on and review taught programmes in order to:

- a. assure the academic standards of this provision, and that the quality of learning opportunities enable students to attain these academic standards and the defined learning outcomes of their programme;
- b. identify examples of good practice in learning and teaching for dissemination (both within the department and, where appropriate, more widely);
- c. identify opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (and thereby the student learning experience); implement changes; evaluate them, and where they have been effective seek to disseminate them (both within the department and, where appropriate, more widely).

12. Boards of studies will routinely report to their respective faculties, as required by the University's policies and procedures as detailed in the *Learning and Teaching Handbook*, on the outcomes of this reflection.

13. Boards of studies will routinely reflect on and review their research degree provision in order to:

- a. assure the academic standards of this provision, and that the quality of supervision and other provision enable students to attain these academic standards;
- b. identify examples of good practice in research degree supervision for dissemination (both within the department and, where appropriate, more widely);
- c. identify opportunities to enhance the quality of research degree provision (and thereby the student experience); implement changes; evaluate them, and where they have been effective seek to disseminate them (both within the department and, where appropriate, more widely).

14. Boards of studies will routinely report to their respective faculties and Graduate School Committee, as required by the University's policies and procedures as detailed in the *Institutional Code for Research Degree Programmes* on the outcomes of this reflection.

Faculties

15. Faculties will act as a forum for the discussion and dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching and research degree supervision, and the identification (and where appropriate the implementation) of opportunities to enhance learning opportunities. They will provide annual reports to LTC and GSC on quality enhancement activity undertaken within the faculty, on taught and research degree provision respectively.

16. Faculties will monitor and review the reports of boards of studies on the operation of quality management policies and procedures in order to:

- a. ensure that these policies and procedures have been implemented appropriately by boards of studies (and where this is not the case to ensure that timely action is taken to address this), and to report to LTC and/or GSC on the operation of policies and procedures both to assure the University that academic standards and quality are appropriate and to identify issues of strategy, policy and procedure for further consideration at University level;
- b. collate areas of good practice identified by boards of studies in order to disseminate these within both the faculty and the wider University, and where appropriate to inform the development of strategy, policy and procedure at University level.

17. Faculties will also act as a forum for the consultation with departments on the development of learning and teaching strategy, policy and procedure.

Learning and Teaching Committee

18. Learning and Teaching Committee will:

- a. recommend to Senate policies, procedures and regulations designed to ensure that the academic quality and standards of taught provision are assured, and that

systematic steps are taken at all levels of the University to enhance the quality of learning opportunities offered within taught programmes;

b. consider the outcomes of the implementation of all policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards, in order to allow it to assure Senate about these outcomes and to inform the development of learning and teaching strategy, policies and procedures;

c. regularly review the implementation of the University's policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards, in order to assure the University that these are fit for purpose and, where appropriate, make recommendations for the enhancement of these policies and procedures.

Graduate School Committee

19. Graduate School Committee will:

a. recommend to Senate (reporting through Research Committee) policies, procedures and regulations designed to ensure that the academic quality and standards of research degree provision are assured, and that systematic steps are taken at all levels of the University to enhance the quality of learning opportunities offered within research degree programmes;

b. consider the outcomes of the implementation of all policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards, in order to allow it to assure Senate (reporting through Research Committee) about these outcomes and to inform the development of research degree strategy, policies and procedures;

c. regularly review the implementation of the University's policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards, in order to assure the University that these are fit for purpose and, where appropriate, make recommendations for the enhancement of these policies and procedures.

Senate

20. Senate will ensure that:

a. a clear framework for academic standards is in place, which ensures consistency in the academic standards both externally (in relation national and international frameworks, and comparable UK HEIs) and internally (i.e. between all awards at a given academic level across all departments);

b. appropriate policies and procedures are in place to both assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities within the University's taught programmes;

c. it is assured by LTC of the effective implementation of all policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards;

d. it is assured by GSC (reporting through Research Committee) of the effective implementation of all policies and procedures for managing academic quality and standards for research degree programmes.

Annex 1 Overview of the consideration of management information

The University's Quality management framework is underpinned by the consideration at each of its organisational levels (department/faculty/University) of a wide range of management information relating to academic standards and quality (relating to both assurance and enhancement). This annex summarises the way in which management information is considered.

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
1.	ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT	Undergraduate and integrated masters	University	LTC	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of previous year's admissions cycle Decliners' survey
2.				LTC	March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim report on current admissions cycle Annual report on admissions
3.				LTC	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the activity of Access and Student Recruitment
4.	Taught postgraduate		Department	Departmental annual review	June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of previous year's admissions cycle
5.			University	GSC	At each meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional and Faculty level data comparing to previous cycles Considerations for Entry report comparing current performance with previous admission cycle and predicting registration in relation to targets
6.				GSC	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decliners' survey
7.			Faculty	Graduate Advisory Groups	Termly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional and Faculty level data comparing to previous cycles Considerations for Entry report comparing current performance with previous admission cycle and predicting registration in relation to targets

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
8.				Graduate Advisory Groups	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decliners' survey
9.			Department	Departmental annual review	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of previous year's admissions cycle
10.				Graduate School webpages	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly reports published on GS webpages showing the status of pg applicants
11.		Research degrees	University	GSC	At each meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional and Faculty level data comparing to previous cycles Considerations for Entry report comparing current performance with previous admission cycle and predicting registration in relation to targets
12.				GSC	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decliners' survey
13.			Faculty	Graduate Advisory Groups	Termly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional and Faculty level data comparing to previous cycles Considerations for Entry report comparing current performance with previous admission cycle and predicting registration in relation to targets
14.				Graduate Advisory Groups	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decliners' survey
15.			Department	Research degree annual review	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of previous year's admissions cycle
16.				GS webpages	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly reports published on GS webpages showing the status of pg applicants
17.	STUDENT PROGRESSION	Undergraduate and	University	LTC	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report on progression and

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
	AND ACHIEVEMENT	integrated masters				completion rates
18.				LTC	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty reports on keeping of term, concessions and appeals
19.				LTC	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report on undergraduate and integrated masters degree classifications
20.				LTC	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report from Senate Academic Appeals Committee on appeals and complaints
21.				LTC	March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report from Senate Academic Appeals Committee on appeals and complaints
22.			Faculty	FLTCs	November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty reports on keeping of term, concessions and appeals
23.				FLTCs	November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University report on undergraduate and integrated masters degree classifications
24.				FLTCs	November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University report on progression and completion rates
25.			Department	Departmental annual review	June – October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progression and completion data
26.				Departmental annual review	June – October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate and integrated masters degree classification data
27.				Departmental annual review	June – October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module mark profiles
28.		Taught postgraduate	University	GSC	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals and complaints data
29.						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University report on progression and completion rates
30.			Faculty	Graduate Advisory Groups	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University report on progression and completion rates
31.			Department	Departmental	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progression and completion data

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
32.				annual review Departmental annual review	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate and integrated masters degree classification data
33.				Departmental annual review	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module mark profiles
34.		Research degrees	University	GSC	November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of Postgraduate Student Annual Report Exercise
35.				GSC	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeal and complaints data Consideration of HEFCE Qualification rates at GSC
36.			Faculty	?	?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of GSC minutes at Faculty Graduate Advisory groups
37.					November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of Postgraduate Student Annual Report Exercise
38.			Department	Research degree annual review	June - October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of statistical data (submission and completion rates, complaints and appeals data) as part of departmental annual review of research degree programmes.
39.	STUDENT FEEDBACK*	Undergraduate and integrated masters	University	LTC	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial report on the outcome of the NSS
40.				LTC	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed report on the outcome of the NSS
41.				LTC	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty reports on the consideration of NSS at departmental level
42.				SESC	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of the Colleges' Division's Student Experience Survey
43.				SESC	February and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports on the results of the International

* This excludes student feedback gained via the committee cycle through SSCCs, and student representation on boards of studies, FLTCs, LTC and GSC.

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
44.			Faculty	FLTC	October February	Student Barometer Survey ▪ Faculty overview of NSS results across constituent departments
45.			Department	Departmental annual review	May – October	▪ Module questionnaire results
46.				SSCC and departmental LTC	October – November	▪ Departmental NSS results
47.		Taught postgraduate	Department	Departmental annual review	May – October	▪ Module and programme questionnaire results
48.		Research Degree	University	GSC	October	▪ Results of PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey)
49.					January - February	▪ Results of Initial Student Survey ▪ Results of PGR Exit Questionnaire
50.					May	▪ Results of PGR Viva Voce Questionnaire
51.			Faculty	Graduate Advisory Groups	October	▪ Results of PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey)
52.					January - February	▪ Results of Initial Student Survey ▪ Results of PGR Exit Questionnaire
53.					October	▪ Results of PGR Viva Voce Questionnaire
54.			Department			▪
55.	LEARNING RESOURCES	Undergraduate and integrated masters[†]	University	LTC	December	▪ Report on past activity and future plans from Library, ITS and Estates and Buildings
56.			Faculty	FLTC learning	November	▪ Reports from Library, ITS and Estates

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
57.			Department	resources meeting Departmental Annual review	May - October	and Buildings, informed by feedback from departmental representatives ▪ Student feedback, the outcome of module reviews and consideration of departmental learning and teaching strategy
58.		Taught postgraduate	University			▪
59.	Faculty					▪
60.	Department		Departmental Annual review	May - October	▪ Student feedback, and the outcome of module reviews and consideration of departmental learning and teaching strategy	
61.		Research Degrees	University	GSC	November	▪ Annual reports on duo capture resource issues- discussed in Deputy Deans reports
62.			Faculty			▪
63.			Department	Research degree annual review	June - October	▪ Departmental annual review of research degree programmes considers resources – report by Deputy Deans to GSC
64.	DESTINATION OF LEAVERS	Undergraduate and integrated masters	University	LTC	December	▪ University report on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey
65.			Faculty	FLTCs	November	▪ Faculty specific report on the DLHE outcomes
66.			Department	Annual review	June - October	▪ Department specific report on the DLHE outcomes
67.		Taught postgraduate	University	LTC	December	▪ University report on the DLHE outcomes
68.			Faculty	FLTCs	November	▪ Faculty specific report on the DLHE

Ref.	Area	Type of provision	Level	Where?	When	Type of information
69.			Department	Annual review	June - October	outcomes ▪ Department specific report on the DLHE outcomes
70.		Research Degrees	University			▪
71.	Faculty					▪
72.	Department		Research Degree Annual review	June – October	▪ Institutional information on employment destination	
73.	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY[‡]	Undergraduate, integrated masters and taught postgraduate	University	LTC	March or May	▪ Consideration of extracts from annual Equality and Diversity Report to Council on student-related learning and teaching issues
74.			University	LTC	October or December	▪ Consideration of extracts from annual Equality and Diversity Report to Council on staff-related learning and teaching issues
75.		Research Degrees	University			▪

[‡] In addition to the consideration of these reports, the KPIs supplied to departments as part of annual review includes data relating to diversity issues, so that the consideration of diversity issues is embedded within the annual review process.

Annex 2 Quality enhancement schedule

The following table details the schedule for the consideration of reports at faculty and University level, where the consideration is intended to prompt discussion and debate in order to further the development of learning and teaching strategy, policy and procedures and thereby promote quality enhancement.

Ref.	Area	Level	When	Where?	Action
1.	EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS - UNDERGRADUATE	Department	October – December	Departmental LTCs and SSCCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration of reports by departments, and preparation of departmental responses to faculties
2.		Faculty	January	Faculty Dean/Deputy Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responses from departments considered by faculties, and faculty overviews of external examiners' reports prepared
3.		Faculty	February	FLTCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty overviews considered by FLTCs, to highlight key issues both for the faculty and for referring to University level
4.		University	March	QSSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty overviews and University overview considered
5.		University	March	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcome of process reported to LTC, including any recommendations on University strategy, policies and procedures
6.	EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS – TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE	Department	December – February	Departmental LTCs and SSCCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration of reports by departments, and preparation of departmental responses to faculties
7.		Faculty	March	Faculty Dean/Deputy Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responses from departments considered by faculties, and faculty overviews of external examiners' reports prepared
8.		University	April	QSSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty overviews and University overview considered by QSSC
9.		Faculty	April	FLTCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty overviews considered by FLTCs

Ref.	Area	Level	When	Where?	Action
10.		University	May	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of process reported to LTC, including any recommendations on University strategy, policies and procedures
11.	EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS – RESEARCH DEGREES	University	Ongoing	GSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Deputy Deans are responsible for reviewing all internal examiners reports received in the Graduate School and should they come across any strategic issues in the course of doing so, these will be reported to Graduate School Committee.
12.	ANNUAL REVIEW OF LEARNING AND TEACHING – TAUGHT PROGRAMMES	Department	October	Departmental LTC/board of studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental reports submitted to LTC
13.		Faculty	November – December	Faculty Dean/Deputy Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of reports by departments, and preparation of faculty overview (including a faculty overview of quality enhancement activity)
14.		Faculty	February	FLTCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty overviews considered by FLTCs, to highlight key issues both for the faculty and for referring to University level
15.		University	March	QSSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty overviews and University overview considered
16.		University	March	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome of process reported to LTC, including any recommendations on University strategy, policies and procedures
17.	ANNUAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES	Department	October	Research degree annual review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental report submitted to GSC
18.		Faculty	November – December	Deputy Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of reports by departments, and preparation of faculty overview
19.		Faculty	January	Graduate Advisory Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty overviews considered by Graduate Advisory Groups, to highlight key issues both for the faculty and for referring to University level

Ref.	Area	Level	When	Where?	Action
20.		University	February	GSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty overviews considered
21.	ENHANCEMENT-LED REVIEW[§]	University	October	QSSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview report of the outcomes of the previous year's ELRs in respect of taught provision considered
22.		Faculty	November	FLTCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview report of the outcomes of the previous year's ELRs in respect of taught provision discussed, to disseminate good practice
23.		University	November	GSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview report of the outcomes of the previous year's ELRs in respect of research degrees
24.		University	December	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QSSC reports consideration of overview of previous year's ELRs in relation to taught provision, including any recommendations on University strategy, policy and procedures
25.		University	June	QSSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the conduct of the current year's ELRs considered
26.				June	LTC
27.	COLLEGE REVIEW	University	November	SESC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biennially, an overview report of the outcomes of the previous two year's college reviews considered
28.		University	December	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SESC reports consideration of overview of last two year's ELRs, including any recommendations on University strategy, policy and procedures

[§] Enhancement at departmental level resulting from ELR takes place on a cycle whose detail varies according to the precise timing of the review, through the departmental response to the review report. These responses are considered by faculty level panels, and each ELR is 'signed-off' at University level by QSSC.

Ref.	Area	Level	When	Where?	Action
29.	STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND REWARD	University	January	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to LTC on the Excellence in Learning and Teaching Awards (incorporating details of the current round of awards, and an overview report of how/when/where good practice identified in the awards was being disseminated at faculty/University levels).
30.		University	January	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to LTC on the Enhancing the Student Learning Experience Awards
31.		University	June	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflective reports on initial and continuing professional development from ASDO and CLTRHE
32.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to LTC on the Excellence in Doctoral Supervision Awards
33.	e-LEARNING	University	June	LTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflective report to LTC on e-learning support, from LTT

Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes

Introduction

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to set out the University's standards for its research degree programmes.

All postgraduate research students and their supervisors should be provided with a copy of this document.

Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes refers to all research based postgraduate programmes offered by Durham University including:

- Doctor of Philosophy
- Doctor of Philosophy with Integrated Studies
- Professional Doctorate
- Master of Philosophy
- Master of Letters
- Master of Music
- Master of Education
- Master of Jurisprudence
- Master of Theology
- Master of Science
- Master of Arts
- Master of Professional Practice Research

The Graduate School Committee is responsible to Senate for the achievement of the University's agreed aims and objectives in relation to postgraduate provision and related aspects of the student experience. This includes:

- (a) university policies and procedures in respect of postgraduate research provision;
- (b) university arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality of provision of postgraduate research programmes;
- (c) ensuring that systematic, institutional level processes are in place to bring about steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of the learning opportunities available to students in the University's postgraduate degree programmes, including the monitoring, review and application of the University's Code of Practice on Research Degree Programmes.;
- (d) university policies and procedures for:
 - (i) the recruitment, selection, admission and induction of postgraduate research students;
 - (ii) the supervision of postgraduate research students;
 - (iii) the initial review and subsequent progress of research students;
 - (iv) the development, management and delivery of postgraduate research and other skills training and responsibility for and oversight of funding to support postgraduate research and other skills training;
 - (v) feedback from postgraduate research students;
 - (vi) assessment and examination of postgraduate research students;
 - (vii) resources for postgraduate research degree programmes.
- (e) taking action as required when any aspects of quality or standards in any postgraduate research programmes are considered to be at risk;
- (f) the oversight of funding to support postgraduate research students;
- (g) approval of the duties of Directors of Postgraduate Research.

- (h) under delegated responsibility from Senate and within the existing awards framework approved by Senate, approving the introduction of new postgraduate research programmes, including Professional Doctorates and PhDs with Integrated Studies and associated amendments to regulations; the amendment of existing postgraduate research programmes; and the withdrawal of postgraduate research programmes. The Committee will report to Senate on all action taken under the powers so delegated.
- (i) recommending to Senate approval of the introduction of new postgraduate research awards.
- (j) recommending to Senate approval of the introduction or amendments of collaborative provision or dual awards with respect to postgraduate research degree programmes.

In carrying out these duties the Committee also:

- (a) consults with Faculty Graduate Advisory Groups on matters on which it requires comment from faculties and departments;
- (b) refers to Senate any issues of policy which require the approval of Senate and/or which the attention of Senate should be drawn that are not otherwise considered by an alternative committee.
- (c) engages with Research Committee for consideration of all strategic issues relating to Postgraduate research policy. Formal recommendations approved by Research Committee will then be forwarded directly to Senate.
- (d) engages with Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for consideration of all strategic issues relating to relevant aspects of postgraduate programme policy. Formal recommendations approved by Learning and Teaching Committee will then be forwarded directly to Senate.
- (e) engages with the Student Experience Sub-Committee of LTC in relation to supporting the student experience of postgraduate taught and research students.
- (f) The Dean of the Graduate School is a member of both Research Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee.

The Committee has the following Advisory Groups:

- (a) Faculty of Arts and Humanities Graduate Advisory Group;
- (b) Faculty of Science Graduate Advisory Group;
- (c) Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Graduate Advisory Group;
- (d) Postgraduate Awards Advisory Group;
- (e) Advisory Group on Researcher Development;

It appoints working groups and other groups for the purposes of consultation and discussion as it requires from time to time.

The Graduate School is the administrative department which supports postgraduate students, supervisors, examiners and Directors of Postgraduate Research.

The Dean of the Graduate School is responsible for the strategic development of postgraduate education at Durham University. The Dean chairs the Graduate School Committee which has responsibility to Senate for the achievement of the University's agreed aims and objectives in relation to postgraduate provision and related aspects of the student experience. The Dean also represents the postgraduate interest on other internal committees and represents the University externally to ensure the University is at the forefront of national initiatives in the postgraduate area.

The Deputy Deans are responsible for the quality assurance and development of postgraduate provision in their Faculty. This includes working closely with departmental Directors of Postgraduate Research who are all members of the relevant Graduate

Faculty Advisory Group which is chaired by the relevant Deputy Dean. The Deputy Dean also takes action on behalf of the Graduate School Committee on a daily basis taking decisions concerning student progress.

The Director of Postgraduate Training is responsible for the development and delivery of postgraduate research and other skills training. This includes chairing the Advisory Group on Researcher Development.

Directors of Postgraduate Research act as departmental representatives on the Faculty Graduate Advisory Groups and are responsible for promoting and ensuring best practice within their Board of Studies with regard to the selection, admission, enrolment and induction of research students, supervisory arrangements for research students, initial review and subsequent progress of research students, the development of research and other skills for research students and feedback from research students. They are also responsible for overseeing the Graduate School annual monitoring of research student progress, coordinating the implementation of the University's postgraduate recruitment strategy including departmental management of schemes such as the Doctoral Fellowship scheme and identifying the resources required to support the University's and department's strategy on postgraduate research student recruitment.

Institutional Arrangements

1. The University will regularly review the quality and standards of its Postgraduate Research Programmes through:
 - an annual review of its Code of Practice on Research Degree programmes by the Graduate School Committee;
 - an annual review, at institutional level of appropriate indicators and targets as listed in section 2 by the Graduate School Committee with specific departmental issues of concern raised with academic departments through the Annual review process;
 - the Annual review process;
 - the six year cycle of the University Review Process which includes external reviewers;
 - the postgraduate research student annual reporting exercise;
 - an initial Postgraduate Research Degree student questionnaire conducted by the Graduate School shortly after completion of the induction period;
 - an annual student satisfaction survey conducted by the Graduate School;
 - an exit questionnaire for all students on completion of their programme conducted by the Graduate School.
2. As part of the Annual review process, the Graduate School will provide academic departments with appropriate indicators and targets as follows:
 - submission and completion times and rates;
 - pass, referral and fail rates;
 - withdrawal rates;
 - the number of appeals and official complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are allowed;
 - analysis of any issues raised in the examiners reports;
 - recruitment profiles;
 - feedback from research students, supervisors, sponsors and other external funders;
 - information on employment destinations¹.
 - an analysis of completion rates as supplied to the institution by HEFCE.

¹ Information from publicly available information taken from the UK GRAD first destination survey.

3. The Graduate School Committee requires academic departments to consider the information provided by the Graduate School and to provide an annual report on Postgraduate Research Programmes from all Boards of Studies.
4. The Deputy Deans are responsible for reviewing the Annual reports and for taking up with Boards of Studies any questions arising from the documentation. The Deputy Deans are responsible for providing a summary on the outcome of the review of the Annual reports to their Faculty Graduate Advisory Group during the Epiphany Term. Issues of concern will be raised with the Graduate School Committee via the Faculty Graduate Advisory Groups if necessary.

The Research Environment

5. The University will only accept research students into academic departments where it is confident that students can be trained and supported within an environment which is supportive of research.
6. The University defines such an environment as one where the University can offer facilities and equipment necessary to enable students to complete their research programmes successfully and where an academic department or school:
 - has been successful in the University Review Process;
 - is able to demonstrate significant international research excellence as judged by a national or international assessment process (e.g. RAE, REF);
 - where staff, including post-doctoral researchers, and research students provide a robust, invigorating and sustainable research community;
 - has suitable academic staff who are available to act as supervisors;
 - has acceptable submission and completion rates in line with Research Council guidelines.

Selection, admission and Induction of students

Pre-entry Information

7. The Graduate School will make clear and accurate admissions information readily available to applicants and staff involved in the admissions process.
8. The University requires all departments to have at least two designated Postgraduate Admissions Advisers who must be academic members of staff. Each Postgraduate Admissions Adviser is required to undertake appropriate initial training on selection and admissions procedures and encouraged to undertake continued professional development.
9. The University will provide staff involved in the Admissions process with guidance on selection and admissions procedures.
10. Departments must provide clear, accurate and comprehensive pre-entry information to potential applicants. This should include:
 - information on research opportunities;
 - training;
 - resources;
 - completion times;
 - expectations and demands upon research students;
 - entry requirements;
 - admissions process;
 - financial information including information on funding opportunities and costs;
 - appropriate contacts.
11. The University requires all Academic departments to have clearly defined admissions and selection criteria for each programme of study.
12. The University will publish clear and accurate information on postgraduate admissions on its website and in printed form.

13. The University will provide applicants with a declared medical condition or disability with appropriate information and a contact in Durham University Service for Students with Disabilities (DUSSD).

Entry Requirements

14. The University will normally admit only those students who meet the entry requirements as outlined in:
- the Core Regulations for Research Degrees by thesis or composition,
 - or the Core Regulations for Doctor of Philosophy with Integrated Studies,
 - or the Core Regulations for Professional Doctorates.
 - and/or the Programme Regulations for Research Degrees by Thesis or Composition,
- Exceptions to this are dealt with by concession as considered by the relevant Deputy Dean.
15. The University requires all applicants to submit the names of two referees, normally academic referees, who can comment knowledgeably upon their suitability to undertake research in the relevant field.

Selection

16. The University requires academic departments to operate rigorous selection policies and procedures.
17. The criteria for selection should be put in writing. They should include:
- evidence of the suitability of the candidate to undertake research in the relevant field, including, where appropriate, proficiency in the English language;
 - evidence of the suitability of the candidate to undertake a research project in the proposed field of study within the allotted time span;
 - evidence of the availability of a supervisory team which is qualified to supervise the candidate in the research project;
 - evidence of the availability of resources to support the candidate's research project to a successful conclusion.
18. The University requires that departmental selection policies and procedures should be put in writing and a current copy lodged with the Graduate School.
19. All decisions related to the admission of applicants to Postgraduate Research Degree programmes will normally be taken by the Supervisor(s) and a Departmental Postgraduate Admissions Adviser.

Admission

20. The Graduate School will issue the formal offer letter to applicants which contains information on the postgraduate research programme, the fees, the field of study, the plan of study and arrangements for supervision. This formal offer letter will be supplemented by an offer booklet containing a range of general information on postgraduate study at Durham.

Induction

21. The Graduate School will provide an Induction programme at the beginning of the Michaelmas and Epiphany terms.
22. The Induction programme includes:
- general information about the institution and its postgraduate portfolio in the relevant subject(s);
 - the institution's registration, enrolment, appeals and complaints procedures plagiarism procedures, assessment requirements and research degree programme regulations;
 - information about how supervisory arrangements work;

- the institution's research ethics and codes and those of relevant professional bodies and discipline groups, including general information on intellectual property and intellectual property rights, University regulations on ownership, awareness of commercial considerations, confidentiality agreements and information on where to obtain help and advice;
 - the institution's expectations of the independence and responsibilities of the student;
 - student support and welfare services such as counselling and advice centres;
 - a summary of the facilities that will be made available to the student, including the learning support infrastructure;
 - relevant health and safety and other legislative information;
 - where appropriate, a brief outline of the proposed research programme(s), together with the normal length of study and the facilities that will be made available to the student;
 - reference to the challenges that will typically face research students during the course of their studies and where guidance may be sought in the event of difficulties;
 - any opportunity for the student representative body to introduce themselves, including specific postgraduate representation;
 - social activity, including that provided specifically for postgraduates;
 - opportunities for postgraduates to be represented by the student body;
 - details about opportunities and requirements for skills development.
23. The Graduate School will make available on the web, information provided at the Induction programme.
24. The Graduate School will provide all new students with a postgraduate information pack at the start of their studies.
25. The Graduate School Committee will record attendance at the Induction programme.
26. The Graduate School will collect feedback from students and other stakeholders on the Induction programme which will be used to evaluate the programme. A report on this evaluation will be considered by the Graduate School Committee.
27. The University requires all academic departments to have in place an agreed induction programme for new students, attendance at which should be monitored.
28. The departmental Induction programme should include:
- the academic standards of the programme;
 - standards and skills as outcomes of the programme including the learning outcomes of any taught modules;
 - the curriculum including the skills training programme and the research element;
 - methods of teaching and learning;
 - plagiarism;
 - assessment;
 - regulations governing progression;
 - subject related research codes and ethics and IPR;
 - programme related health and safety requirements.
29. The University requires all supervisory teams, at an early supervisor meeting, no later than three months from the start of supervised study, to have completed an Induction with each of their new students.
30. The supervisory Induction should include the completion of a checklist which is filed in the student's departmental file and the completion of a Training Needs Analysis.

Supervision

Appointment of Supervisors

31. The University requires that all research degree students are supervised by a team made up of at least two supervisors with one designated as the 'principal' supervisor.

32. The 'principal' supervisor must be a member of academic staff of the University, and must normally:
 - be post probation;
 - have gained a doctoral degree or have equivalent experience of research;
 - be demonstrably research-active;
 - have had previous experience of at least one successful supervision.
33. The 'additional' supervisor must normally:
 - have gained a doctoral degree or have equivalent experience of research;
 - be demonstrably research-active.
34. The University requires that supervision should be undertaken by those staff who have appropriate skills and subject expertise.
35. At least one member of the supervisory team will be engaged in research in the relevant field of research.
36. Supervisors for all approved candidates are formally appointed by, and are responsible to the Graduate School Committee as well as to their Board of Studies or Board of School.
37. The University requires that staff who have not previously supervised research students undertake appropriate initial training and development and that experienced supervisors are encouraged to undertake continued professional development.
38. The Graduate School will maintain a current register of academic staff who are qualified to act as principal research supervisors.

Management of Supervision

39. The University requires each academic department to have a departmental policy on the management of supervision. Departmental policies must be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval by the appropriate Deputy Dean on behalf of the Graduate School Committee. Any subsequent changes to this policy must also be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval on behalf of the Graduate School Committee.
40. The University requires the policy on the management of supervision to include the following:
 - departmental structure and lines of responsibility for overseeing the management of supervision. This could be undertaken by the Head of department or by other specifically agreed arrangements such as by a Departmental Postgraduate or Research Committee;
 - a clearly defined policy which states the maximum number of research students which a supervisor may supervise at anyone time. The case for taking on a student above the maximum number must be made to and approved by the Deputy Dean on behalf of the Graduate School Committee;
 - procedures for checking that supervisors and students comply with Graduate School Committee and University requirements;
 - a clearly defined policy to ensure that adequate progress is being maintained;
 - a clearly defined policy on the minimum frequency of scheduled meetings;
 - a clearly defined policy to ensure that if a supervisor ceases to be available to a student under supervised study, for a period of more than 3 months e.g. while on extended leave away from Durham or due to retirement or ill-health, that arrangements are made for continued academic supervision to be given.
41. If a student has any worries about his or her supervision which it is not possible to discuss with the supervisor, he or she can approach the Director of Postgraduate Research/Chair of the Departmental Postgraduate or Research Committee, Head of Department, or the Deputy Dean of the Faculty.
42. The Graduate School has clearly defined responsibilities for supervisor and student which are made available to all staff and Postgraduate Research Degree students.
43. At the beginning of each term, the Graduate School will provide an information pack including this document, a copy of the Postgraduate Student Guide, the

responsibilities of supervisor and student and details of training opportunities for staff and students.

44. The University requires that all research supervisors and students adhere to these defined responsibilities of supervisor and student.

Progress and Review Arrangements

45. Supervisors and students are required to keep agreed written records of progress and a projection of activity resulting from supervision.
46. All students are required to 'keep term' in accordance with University General regulations, which state that postgraduate students are required to engage in research and /or advanced study to a standard satisfactory to their supervisor. Students who fail to keep term without good cause will be issued with a formal warning from the relevant Deputy Dean.
47. For students registered on research programmes lasting more than one full-time year, the University requires all academic departments to have progress reviews at intervals of six, eighteen and thirty months (or part time equivalents) following the beginning of the research programme or from the beginning of the period of independent research in the case of students registered on professional doctoral programmes. The University requires departments to have a policy on the structure and format of the reviews which must be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval by the Deputy Deans on behalf of the Graduate School Committee. Any subsequent changes to the departmental policy must also be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval by the Deputy Deans on behalf of the Graduate School Committee.
48. The University requires all students who are registered on programmes lasting more than one full-time year to take part in a Departmental review twelve months (or part time equivalents) after the beginning of the research programme or twelve months (or part time equivalents) from the beginning of the period of independent research in the case of students registered for taught doctoral programmes. This may also include a formal upgrading to PhD, but must be a significant achievement to ensure the student is working at the correct level. This twelve month review will normally be the submission of a written piece of work of at least 5,000 words or equivalent considered by a panel of two independent members of academic staff and, if appropriate, the student's main supervisor (appointed by the Head of Department). The student will normally be required to make an oral presentation of his/her work, with questions put by panel members.
49. The criteria relating to the review, and any resulting documentation, should be held on the student's departmental file.
50. Following the panel meeting an appropriate recommendation should be made to the Board of Studies. The Board of Studies will consider whether to endorse a positive recommendation and what action to take in the case of a negative recommendation. Any recommendation from the Board of Studies will be considered by the relevant Faculty Deputy Dean.
51. The Graduate School Committee requires all research students and their supervisor(s) to complete an Annual Report on progress each summer, while they remain registered – this includes the time when they are on continuation, i.e. writing up their thesis following the end of supervised study. Annual Reports should also be completed for students under exam, with the exception of those who have just received a positive recommendation from the examiners. Students registered for taught doctoral programmes are only required to complete an Annual Report on progress once they have registered for the period of independent research under supervision.
52. The Annual Reports will be reviewed by the Director of Postgraduate Research in the student's Department (or the Head of Department if the Director of Postgraduate

Research is the student's supervisor) and then by the Deputy Deans of the Faculty concerned.

53. The Deputy Deans are responsible for reviewing the Annual reports and for taking up with Boards of Studies any questions arising from any annual report. The Deputy Deans will provide a summary on the outcome of the Annual report exercise to the Graduate School Committee during the Michaelmas Term.

Development of research and other skills

54. The University provides a Postgraduate Training Programme consisting of an Induction Day followed by a series of courses over the academic year. The learning outcomes of this programme are consistent with sections C to G of the Joint Research Councils Skills statement.
55. The University requires academic departments to provide training opportunities consistent with sections A and B of the JRC Skills statement and a current policy statement on departmental provision should be lodged with the Graduate School.
56. The University requires all postgraduate research students to complete a Training Needs Analysis in the first month of their studies, a copy of which should be maintained on the student's departmental file.
57. Students will choose appropriate courses from those available to meet the needs identified in their Training Needs Analysis.
58. Students will review their training needs on an annual basis.
59. The University requires that all postgraduates employed in teaching must be inducted, trained and monitored. Students are also encouraged to participate in other activities in their department. Additional duties must be negotiated between the students and the supervisory team.

Feedback Mechanisms

60. The University will collect feedback from current Postgraduate Research Degree students through an initial Postgraduate Research Degree student questionnaire submitted by the end of the Induction period within three months of registration and annually through a Postgraduate Research Degree student annual survey.
61. The University will collect feedback from all recently completed research degree graduates through an exit questionnaire.
62. The Graduate School will consider feedback from other stakeholders, including supervisors, review panels and internal examiners; external parties including external examiners, sponsors and collaborating organisations.
63. The Deputy Deans are responsible for reviewing all internal examiners reports received in the Graduate School and should they come across any strategic issues in the course of doing so, these will be reported to Graduate School Committee.
64. The Deputy Deans are responsible for reviewing all external examiners reports received in the Graduate School and should they come across any strategic issues in the course of doing so, these will be reported to Graduate School Committee.

Assessment

Appointment of Examiners

65. The University requires that all research degrees are examined by an Internal Examiner and an External Examiner. Where a candidate is also a member of staff within the University, or where appropriate examining expertise can not be found within the University, a second External Examiner will replace the Internal Examiner. Staff candidates include those who have become staff since completing supervised study.
66. The University will offer training and guidance to internal and external examiners of research degrees.

67. All examiners:

- must normally be post probation, members of staff who are on probation may be nominated if they have had previous appropriate examining experience;
- must normally be a current member of academic staff of a University or Research Institute;
- must normally have gained a doctoral degree or have equivalent experience of research. Experienced members of staff who do not themselves hold a PhD qualification may be considered as examiners provided they have the relevant subject expertise;
- must have subject expertise;
- must be demonstrably research active;
- staff who have acted in any formal supervisory capacity for a candidate cannot be considered for appointment as examiners;

Examiners are nominated by the Board of Studies, for approval by the Graduate School Committee, on the forms issued by the Graduate School Office. Supervisors should be consulted about the nominations.

In addition to the above, external examiners:

- must have standing within their own academic community.

68. The two examiners must between them have experience of at least three successful supervisions and have examined three students at postgraduate research degree level.
69. Professional experts may be appointed as advisers to the two examiners, to serve on the examination panel if the relevant Deputy Dean approves the nomination from the Board of Studies.
70. The Board of Studies is required to provide the Graduate School with a nomination for the appointment of examiners three months prior to the submission of the thesis. The nomination should include confirmation from the Head of Department that the examiners meet the criteria as outlined in section 67. Academic departments are not required to provide the Graduate School with evidence; however academic departments are required to retain evidence that examiners meet the criteria outlined in section 67, which may be required by the Graduate School for audit purposes.
71. If an examiner does not meet these criteria, a case must be made by the Head of Department which will be considered by the Deputy Dean of the relevant faculty and approved on behalf of Senate by the Chair of the Graduate School Committee.
72. Once nominations are received and approved (where appropriate), the Graduate School will notify academic departments. A letter of appointment to the Examiners will be sent to examiners with the thesis once it is submitted.

The Thesis

73. A thesis is expected to form a coherent whole, with a consistent argument or series of arguments running through it. The incorporation of material published by the candidate during the period of registration for the degree is permitted, but the footnoting/end noting must make clear which sections of the thesis are based on published material and how much individual responsibility the candidate has for any jointly authored work. Such material must be properly and stylistically incorporated into the thesis.
74. During the continuation period, the supervisor is expected, as part of their normal duties, to offer the student advice and constructive criticism on the preparation of the thesis without compromising the independence of the candidate's work.
75. The supervisor is expected to read the final draft of the thesis before it is prepared for submission, to offer an opinion to the student and, if appropriate, to advise that modifications are made. However the supervisor is not an examiner and the student should be made aware that the final decision rests with the examiners and that the supervisor's opinion is not part of the examination process. If the supervisor considers that a thesis has serious shortcomings which will jeopardise its likely

success, he or she should put that opinion in writing to the student. The decision on when to submit a thesis is however entirely the student's own.

Submission

76. When the thesis is ready, the student must submit two copies to the Graduate School Office with the submission documents and two loose copies of the abstract (one copy of the abstract should also be bound with each copy of the thesis).
77. The Graduate School Office will send the copies of the thesis to the appointed examiners with the Guide to Examiners and Internal Advisors and the Report Forms.

Oral Examination (viva voce)

78. Preparation for the oral examination should be given via the supervisor. The supervisor should ensure that the student understands the requirements and purpose of the oral examination and is prepared for this.

Examination

79. The criteria and requirements by which a candidate is assessed are specified in the Core Regulations for Research Degrees by thesis or composition, and/or the Programme Regulations for Research Degrees by Thesis or Composition, or the Core Regulations for Professional Doctorates. Examiners are requested to complete the examination within three months of their receipt of the thesis, and to contact the Graduate School Office if this is not possible.
80. An oral examination is required for all Doctoral degree candidates and higher Master's degrees (MLitt, MPhil, MEd), but is at the examiners' discretion for first Master's candidates.
81. After reading the thesis, each examiner should independently write an individual report answering some specific questions designed to emphasize the criteria for the award of the degree and provide a general report of his or her opinion of the thesis.
82. A copy of the individual report should be sent to the Graduate School in advance of the oral examination.
83. The arrangements for an oral examination will be made by the internal examiner, or the supervisor where there are two external examiners; this will include notification of the details to the candidate and the Graduate School Office. In all cases where an oral examination is held, the supervisor will be consulted by the two examiners, and should be available for the oral examination, and may, at the invitation of the examiners, attend all or any part of the oral.
84. The University requires that oral examinations should be conducted in accordance with the procedures as set out in the Guide to Examiners and Internal Advisors of Research Degrees.
85. The oral examination may be held outside the University with the approval of the Deputy Dean of the Faculty concerned. If the circumstances require it, the candidate's expenses should also be refunded.

Outcome of the Examination

86. The recommendations of the examiners may, at their discretion, be reported informally to the candidate at the oral examination.
87. Report Forms are completed by the Examiners and returned to the Graduate School Office for final approval by the Deputy Dean.
88. Candidates will receive a letter notifying them of the result of the examination. If unsuccessful, students will be referred to their supervisor for information on what further action is required or available to them.
89. If the decision is that the degree be awarded forthwith, the candidate should send two hardbound copies of the thesis to the Graduate School Office.
90. Where minor corrections are required, these must be completed, normally within one month of notification.

91. Where the examiners consider that a thesis is unsatisfactory the following options are open:
- to recommend that the candidate should fail and should not be permitted to resubmit, i.e. that the failure be outright (this would be where the thesis falls very short of the required standard);
 - where the shortcomings are considered capable of correction within either six months or twelve months, and when it is the first examination of the thesis, they may recommend that the candidate should be permitted to resubmit the thesis in a revised form;
 - that they be awarded a lower degree forthwith on the basis of the thesis as submitted, or that the thesis be resubmitted for second examination for a lower degree;
 - in cases where the thesis was satisfactory, but the oral examination was not, the candidate will be allowed to have a second oral examination or take a written examination within six months.
92. The procedures for submission for re-examination are similar to those for the original examination. In addition, candidates have to pay the appropriate resubmission and continuation fee at the time.

Conferment of the Degree

93. Once the hard-bound copies of the thesis have been submitted to the Graduate School Office students will be issued with a letter and Pass List confirming that they have met the requirements of the degree, subject to conferment at congregation and being free from debt. Until the degree has been officially conferred, the Graduate School Office can provide successful candidates with a statement confirming that they have satisfied the examiners, should copies of the Pass List not be considered adequate by other authorities.
94. Students with any outstanding debts to the University (e.g. tuition fees, accommodation charges, library fines, overdrawn printer credit account) will not be able to go through congregation until the debts have been settled. Students can not claim to have been awarded the degree until they have gone through congregation, either in person or in absentia.

Student representation

95. Senate Standing Orders require academic departments to have in place staff student consultative committees and where there are postgraduate students, at least one postgraduate student must be elected to represent their views. Graduate School Committee includes student representation.

Complaints

96. The University has a comprehensive Complaints procedure for students. The procedure clearly defines the various stages of the procedure including who is involved at each stage. The Complaints procedure is available in the University Calendar and on the University web-site. Reference to this website is provided in the Postgraduate Guide.

Appeals

97. The University has comprehensive Appeals Regulations for all students. These regulations clearly define the grounds for appeal, and clearly define the stages of an appeal process including who is involved at the various stages. The Appeals regulations are available in the University Calendar and on the University web-site. Reference to this website is provided in the Postgraduate Guide.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Responsibilities of the Supervisor and Student
- The Guide to Examiners of Research Degrees
- Postgraduate Training Handbook
- Postgraduate Student Guide