



Aston University

GRADUATE SCHOOL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

Applicable to students in all years of programmes

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1 Foreword

This document is one of a suite of inter-related documents which forms an overall institutional policy for the conduct of research degrees, and which includes the institutional response to the Expectation set out in the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11 Research Degrees (June 2012). University staff and students are expected to be familiar with the sections of the University Code of Practice that are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities. The University Code defines minimum standards for research degrees which may be supplemented at the School level by additional advice contained in School codes of practice/guidelines or in student handbooks.

Where Regulations are referred to in the text the references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis.

2 Definitions

2.1 Research

The definition of research in this document draws on the definition used in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)¹ which defines research as.

'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.'

'It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship²; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It **excludes** routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also **excludes** the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.'

'It **includes** research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports (as defined at paragraph 115 in Part 3, Section 2).'

2.2 Research Programmes

The University Code of Practice is intended to apply to the wide range of research qualifications offered by the University, including MPhil, PhD, professional doctorates, and the University award of MSc/MA (by Research), although not all sections of the document apply equally to all types of research programme.

¹ www.ref.ac.uk; REF 02.2011 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions'.

² Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.' Journal articles and monographs are also important forms of scholarship.

3 Institutional Arrangements

3.1 Regulations

Regulations cover:

- a requirements for admission to the programme;
- b procedures for considering claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or prior certificated learning (AP(E)L/APL);
- c the academic and procedural requirements for research awards, including supervisory arrangements;
- d the requirements for progression, including monitoring and review arrangements for the award, and the minimum and maximum periods within which the programme may be completed;
- e assessment methods, requirements and procedures, including the criteria for achieving the award;
- f procedures for dealing with research misconduct;³
- g information on the University's complaints and appeals processes.

In addition to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, there are also General Regulations for Research Degrees by Staff of Aston University and by Aston University Graduates. These Regulations cover staff candidates for MPhil and PhD, the degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Letters, and the PhD by Previously Published Work.

Regulations are available to staff, students, applicants, graduates and examiners via the University's intranet (<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/a-to-z-of-registry-services/researchregulationsandprocedures/>). They are also available on the My Aston Portal (MAP) homepage of enrolled students.

3.2 Target Setting and Monitoring

- a Recruitment targets for research degrees are proposed by the Schools and agreed by the University Executive.
- b Research degrees are reviewed on an annual basis by School Research Committees in accordance with the University annual programme review policy approved by the Senate. Factors to be considered in the annual programme review process by the School Research Committees include:
 - i recruitment profiles; submission and completion times and rates; pass, referral and fail rates; withdrawal rates;
 - ii analysis of comments from Examiners;
 - iii feedback from research students, graduates and external stakeholders;
 - iv feedback from the Equal Opportunities Advisor;
 - v provision of research and generic skills training;
 - vi any appeals or complaints dealt with at the School level.

The University's Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, ensures that these factors have been given due attention.

³ expanded in more detail in the University's Code of Practice for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct, REG/04/77, approved by the Senate in January 2004 at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/a-to-z-of-registry-services/researchregulationsandprocedures/>.

- c The University's Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, monitors the number of appeals referred to the Academic Appeals Committee by research students, examines the reasons for them and, from analysis of appeals upheld, ensures that any necessary follow up action is taken to prevent re-occurrence.

4 The Research Environment

The University is committed to only accepting research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring and where the appropriate conditions for admission can be met.

'Factors that can be used to indicate excellence in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or single-disciplinary research may include:

- demonstrable research achievement as recognised either through peer assessment as internationally excellent or above, or consistently recognised by the award of grants in open competition-with, in both cases, outputs such as journal publications, books and work produced in other media, including engineering, performing arts, sculpture, fine art and design, and other professional practice-based and clinical contexts;
- sufficient numbers of research-active staff, including postdoctoral researchers and research students;
- knowledge exchange and impacts (including knowledge transfer partnerships), with an emphasis on the practical impact of research outcomes and demonstrable ability to attract external funding' (from QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11: Research Degrees).

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University and all members of the University's research community are responsible for maintaining professional standards. The University's Research Code of Conduct (Appendix A), prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected by all persons engaged in research at the University.

5 Selection, Admission and Induction of Students

5.1 Selection and Admission

The selection of research students must follow the requirements set out in the Regulations and any additional criteria set by the School and approved by the appropriate School Research Committee and the Graduate School Management Committee. The admissions criteria should be available to applicants both via the web and in printed form.

The selection of students should take into account any declared special needs the student may have, and consideration of how such needs may be supported.

Applicants should be interviewed, if necessary by telephone or other means (eg Skype), and should be invited to visit the University. Wherever possible, applicants should have the opportunity to meet with relevant staff and students. Interviews should be

conducted by the potential Supervisor and a person independent of the proposed supervisory team.

Consideration of applications should include: whether the proposed area of research will sustain the required level of investigation for the research degree concerned; whether the proposed research can be expected to be completed within the duration permitted for the research degree concerned; the continued availability of required resources, including appropriate supervision, throughout the degree.

Students may only be admitted to a research programme with the involvement of at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the School's Associate Dean Research or their nominee. Staff responsible for admissions must attend the requisite training provided by the University. Students may only be admitted to the University if their application has been approved by the School's Associate Dean Research or their nominee (Regulation 3.1).

Students must be sent a formal offer letter which should normally include the following information:

- a the expected duration of study;
- b the expectations of the student in terms of attendance, progress reports, contact with supervisors;
- c arrangements for enrolment;
- d references to the University's Regulations, Code of Practice for Research Degrees, student handbook, sources of funding;
- e a clear indication of the financial costs of the programme;
- f the requirements and conditions of any sponsor (if known);
- g reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information.

Other information to be provided early in the students' attendance includes:

- a details of health and safety procedures;
- b University Regulations and School guidelines/codes of practice;
- c an outline of any opportunities to undertake teaching or other duties and any conditions associated with these, including training requirements;
- d good practice in research and guidance on research ethics;⁴
- e guidance on intellectual property rights.

5.2 Induction

Students will be provided with an appropriate induction programme and introductory material providing details about where they can find essential information.

The student should meet his/her Supervisor at the earliest opportunity to discuss their respective responsibilities. For distance learning research students and other students who are away from the campus for a significant part of their research, appropriate arrangements for regular contact will be established and monitored by the Schools.

6 Supervision

⁴ See Appendix A, Research Code of Conduct

All research students must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff of the University, as defined in Section I of the Statutes of the University or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow (Regulation 6.1a). The Supervisor should have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively. A research student's supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor (Regulation 6.3). The role of any Associate Supervisor(s) will be clarified at an initial meeting with the student and documented in the Learning Agreement (see Section 6.2 of this Code).

No person may be the Supervisor for more than nine research students (maximum six FTEs) at any time without the prior agreement of the Associate Dean Research (Regulation 6.1f) who will review the situation, taking account of the overall workload of the member of staff concerned and the extent to which Associate Supervisors have been appointed. A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will not normally supervise more than three research students.

All new Supervisors who have not previously been involved in supervising research students at this University must attend the University's training session on supervision as provided by the Centre for Staff & Graduate Development. The Associate Dean Research in each School must appoint an Associate Supervisor for a Supervisor who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion. This Associate Supervisor must be a member of the Academic staff who has supervised and examined at least one successful candidate for PhD/professional doctorate.

The University expects that existing Supervisors will take the initiative to update their knowledge and skills on a regular basis and access 'update' training provided by the Centre for Staff and Graduate Development at least once every three years.

All research students must also be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of academic staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where a student finds that the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well. The second member of academic staff may be from outside the specific area of the student's research topic (eg Postgraduate Research Tutor or Associate Dean Research). The same appointments would normally be expected to continue throughout the duration of a student's research programme.

In the event that a Supervisor leaves the University during a student's research programme, every effort will be made to appoint an alternative Supervisor and, where possible and appropriate, to retain the involvement of the original Supervisor as an Associate Supervisor.

To facilitate contact in cases of concern, the names and contact details of a student's Supervisor, Associate Supervisor(s) and Postgraduate Tutor are displayed on the student's MAP homepage.

6.1 Responsibilities of Supervisors

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

- a introducing the research student to the research environment, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;

- b providing satisfactory and accurate guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of additional Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial as the student's research progresses;
- c being responsible for monitoring the student's progress, mindful of the timing of the student's progression points and thesis submission date;
- d establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student (normally at least every two weeks), and to include structured interactions at least every 3 months to discuss and agree progress, and to report it formally (Regulation 8.1);
- e ensuring his/her reasonable accessibility to the student at other appropriate times when the student needs advice;
- f having input into the assessment of a student's development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning;
- g providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, including his/her overall progress;
- h ensuring that the student is made aware of lack of satisfactory progress on the research programme and the implications of this for the student;
- i ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct his/her research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct⁵, including plagiarism;
- j providing guidance on the maintenance of research records applicable to the nature of the research;
- k providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support, including careers guidance;
- l helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, by encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences, supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events; and, where appropriate, to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
- m maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform the role of Supervisor satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities

6.2 Responsibilities of research students

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their theses within the periods of study as prescribed in Regulations for their particular degrees.

Students are also responsible for:

- a taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor or School Research Office;
- b ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with University Regulations and School guidelines and procedures relating to their degree, relevant Codes of Practice and other University and School requirements, health and safety advice, the monitoring of progress and terms of any sponsorship;

⁵ set out in detail in the University's Code of Practice for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct, REG/04/77 at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/a-to-z-of-registry-services/researchregulationsandprocedures/>

- c setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- d ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University's requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress;
- e discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings for which they adequately prepare;
- f maintaining regular contact, normally at least every two weeks, with their Supervisor and initiating supervisory meetings where necessary;
- g in conjunction with their Supervisor and informed by the Vitae Researcher Development Statement⁶, identifying their training needs and attending training on research methods and other relevant topics, including personal and skills development opportunities;
- h maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
- i deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of study and before the end of the maximum period of study specified in the Regulations), taking due account of the Supervisor's opinion;
- j ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor's responsibilities (see section 6.1 above);
- k advising their Supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances likely to affect their work;
- l where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner.

Supervisors and students will complete individual Learning Agreements as an aide memoire to covering these points and as a document for future reference. A Training Needs Analysis will be completed at the same time as the Learning Agreement and will be reviewed at least annually. Template forms are provided in the Student Handbook.

7 Progress and Review Arrangements

Students and Supervisors are expected to be in regular contact, meeting, or interacting over a distance, normally at least every two weeks on average. At least every three months a student's progress should be formally reviewed by the Supervisor. Prior to the meeting, the student will be expected to provide the Supervisor with a detailed report of the methods used and the results obtained from their research. Both the student and the Supervisor should keep a copy of the recorded outcomes of the meetings, or other interaction if students are studying at some distance from the University. A template Record of Supervisory meeting form is provided in the Student Handbook.

At the end of each year of research a report must be submitted to the Associate Dean Research on the performance of each research student for their consideration. The annual progress report will include details of research skills training undertaken during the year and a review of the student's training needs.

⁶ The Vitae Researcher Development Statement (RDS) is provided as an Appendix to the Student Handbook. Detailed information about the RDS and the associated Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is available on the Vitae website (www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf).

For MPhil/PhD students, the annual report before the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year of research will contain a recommendation concerning the student's progression to either the MPhil or PhD degree programme, based on the student's Qualifying Report on the research work and a *viva voce* examination (Regulations Section 8: Reports). A Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report is provided in the Student Handbook. Professional Doctorate students will have a similar progression point specified for their programme.

Before the end of the second year (fourth year for part-time students) MPhil/PhD and professional doctorate students are required to complete a minimum of *either* an oral presentation of all or part of their research *or* write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication). The Supervisor will consult with the student about which task he or she is expected to complete and structured feedback will be provided. The student is expected to write a brief report on what they have gained from completing the task. Template feedback forms for each of the progression tasks are included in the Student Handbook. All Schools should have clear and transparent procedures for the monitoring of student performance and students should be notified in writing by the School of their review timetable and of the outcomes of the key stages above.

8 Development of Research and Other Skills

The University will provide training in research and generic skills appropriate, wherever possible, to a student's individual needs and as defined in the Training Needs Analysis initiated at the beginning of the first year as part of the Learning Agreement and updated on an annual basis thereafter. Training will be provided by the Schools, and by the Graduate Development Team, co-ordinated by the Centre for Staff and Graduate Development. Provision of skills training will be kept under review by Schools as part of their annual review of research degrees programmes, and by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Guidance, support and training will be provided to, and will be expected to be undertaken by, students who have opportunities for teaching and/or assessing.

9 Feedback Mechanisms

As part of the annual programme review process, Schools will consider and where necessary respond to feedback from research students, graduates, examiners, employers, sponsors and other external stakeholders, and the University's Equal Opportunities Advisor. School Annual Programme Review Reports are subsequently considered by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Students will be given the opportunity to provide confidential individual feedback as well as the opportunity to take part in research committee meetings or staff-student consultative meetings. Students will be informed of actions taken in response to their feedback.

10 Assessment

The assessment of students is on the basis of an appropriate body of work, as specified in the Regulations for that award and a *viva voce* examination conducted according to the guidance set out in Appendix B, Conduct of the *Viva Voce*.

Two Examiners are appointed to consider the candidate and one Examiner must be external to the University. In the case of staff candidates, both Examiners must be external to the University. The Internal Examiner may not be the student's Supervisor, the Advisor to the Supervisor (if appointed), an Associate Supervisor, or be otherwise involved in the supervision of the student (eg a member of a supervisory team).

All Examiners must be appropriately experienced in research as judged by the Associate Dean Research and the Senate, and the External Examiner must have previous experience of successful PhD supervision. The External Examiner should also normally have experience of PhD examination but where this is not the case, the Internal Examiner must have such experience. Recommendations for the appointment of Examiners must be submitted using the form designed for this purpose. Neither the Internal nor the External Examiner should have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work, and neither of the Examiners' own work should be the focus of the student's thesis/portfolio.

All Examiners' appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

Examiners must submit individual independent written reports on the student's thesis before the *viva voce* and a joint written report after the *viva voce*.

For all *viva voce* an independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed from within the relevant School, except for staff candidates when the Chair should be from a different School. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment (see Appendix B for further guidance).

11 Complaints and Appeals

The University has approved procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals which may be found on the Registry website. Research students who are required to withdraw because of lack of satisfactory progression, including as a result of the examination of the Qualifying Report, are provided with the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research (Regulation 11).

RPS/SJDQSC working parties/research/2004
Last updated July2013/REGISTRY/AJB

References and Acknowledgements

- QAA (2012) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11 Research Degrees
- Cranfield University, Code of Practice on Postgraduate Training and Research
- QAA (2004) Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes.
- HEFCE (2003) Improving standards in postgraduate research degree programmes, consultation paper May 2003/23, and consultation responses.
- Aston University, School Codes of Practice and Learning Contracts.
- University of Bath, Regulations 2004/05.
- University of Birmingham Regulations and Codes of Practice 2004/05.

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University's commitment to research, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University's research community to maintain professional standards. This Code of Conduct prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected by all persons engaged in research at the University.

Researchers should, in all aspects of their research:

1. Observe legal and ethical requirements laid down by the University or any other bodies properly laying down such requirements, including those of any countries outside the UK where the research is being conducted;
2. Ensure that methods and results should, subject to appropriate confidentiality commitments to individual privacy or commercially protected information, be open to independent scrutiny through appropriate documentation of methods and storing of data;
3. Demonstrate honesty, accountability, integrity and professionalism, observe fairness and equity, and avoid, or declare, conflicts of interest;
4. Ensure clear and honest attribution and acknowledgement of the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others;
5. Ensure the rights, safety and wellbeing of those associated with the research, both as researchers and subjects of research, including that there are suitable additional insurance provisions in place where necessary (eg where clinical intervention with a subject is required).
6. Comply with guidance concerning the funding of the research project issued by the University, funding body/ies and/or other relevant organisational body/ies, including guidelines for purchasing resources and employing staff, and requirements for monitoring and audit;
7. Raise any concerns (eg risk or harm to participants, financial irregularities, potential conflicts of interest) with the Executive Dean of the School as soon as they become aware of them.

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) has compiled a checklist of key good practice points which should be considered when embarking on any research project and researchers are strongly advised to use this and keep a brief record of their responses.

The checklist may be particularly helpful for **collaborative projects** involving researchers from partner organisations, including outside the UK, in order to ensure that all parties involved have considered the key points and reached agreement on standards and procedures to be followed. The checklist is provided in Section 4 below and is also available at www.ukrio.org.

Further advice on collaborative provision, including a risk assessment *pro forma*, is available on the University website at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/collaborativeprovision/>

* title changed from Research Code of Practice, June 2005

2. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senate of the University, through its Research Committee, has general responsibility to ensure compliance with the Code across the University. Executive Deans have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the Code in their Schools. All staff and students undertaking research must familiarise themselves with the Code and ensure that its provisions are observed. The University will ensure all newly appointed researchers and research students are made aware of the Code, and the Supervisors of students involved in research will seek to ensure that students comply with the Code.

3. RESEARCH PRACTICES

3.1 Guidance from Professional Bodies

1. Where available, researchers will observe the standards of research practice set out in guidelines and codes of practice published by scientific and learned societies, relevant research councils, sponsoring charities, regulatory bodies, the Department of Health/National Health Service and other relevant professional bodies.
2. All researchers should be aware of the legal requirements which regulate their work and should ensure that all participants, including those from outside the UK, are also aware of them.

3.2 Research Methods and Data

1. There should be clarity at the outset of each research programme as to the ownership of, where relevant, data and samples used or created in the course of the research, and the results of the research. This is particularly important in the case of collaborative research projects.
2. Research methods adopted in the conduct of the research must be fully documented in a manner that would facilitate their replication by independent researchers.
3. Experiments should be conducted in accordance with the University Health and Safety Policy Document.
4. Research data must be recorded in a durable and auditable form so that they can readily be recovered. They must be retained intact normally for a period of at least five years (or the minimum period defined by research sponsors or relevant professional or statutory bodies, whichever is the longer) from the date of any publication based on it. Back-up records should always be kept for data stored on a computer or electronically. Research Groups, Institutes or Schools must establish procedures for retention of research data in a form which would enable retrieval by a third party, subject to any limitation imposed by the confidentiality of individuals or commercially sensitive data. Research data related to publications should be available for discussion with other research workers, except where confidentiality provisions prevail.
5. It is the duty of any principal investigator in any research project to comply with the Data Protection Act, and to ensure that copyright is not breached.
6. Confidentiality provisions relating to publications may apply in circumstances where the University or the research worker has made or given confidentiality undertakings to third parties or confidentiality is required to protect intellectual property rights. It is the obligation of the research worker to enquire as to whether confidentiality provisions

apply and of the head of research group/institute, or School, to inform research workers of their obligations with respect to these provisions.

3.3. Ethical Practice

The University's Ethics Documentation is available on the University website at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/ethics-policy-and-procedures/>.

3.3. a. Research Involving Human Participants

1. All research involving human participants should be registered via the University online ethical registration system and, where appropriate, be considered and approved either by the relevant School Research Ethics Committee or, for projects carrying a higher risk, the University Ethics Committee. Approval from other regulatory bodies such as the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority or the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee of the UK should also be sought where necessary.
2. Researchers should ensure the consent of participants in research, along with the confidentiality of any personal information, and that the research fulfills any legal requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.3. b. Research Involving Animals

1. Research involving animals should have approval through the appropriate Ethical Review Process, and may require Home Office licenses for the institution, the investigator and the project.
2. Researchers should consider, at an early stage in the design of any research involving animals, the opportunity for reduction, replacement and refinement of animal involvement.

3.4 Supervision

1. It is the responsibility of Executive Deans to ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided. Training in supervisory skills should be provided where appropriate.
2. Supervision of research must be in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and with any requirements which may be prescribed from time to time by the Senate through its Learning and Teaching or Research Committees.
3. A person must only accept appointment as a member of the Supervisory team for a research student if that person expects to be able to discharge their responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

3.5 Publication of Results

1. Anyone listed as an author on a publication should accept responsibility for ensuring that he/she is familiar with the contents of the paper and can identify his/her contribution to it. The practice of honorary authorship is unacceptable.
2. Any person who has participated in a substantial way in conceiving, executing or interpreting at least part of the relevant research should be given the opportunity to be included as an author of a publication derived from that research.
3. A publication must contain appropriate reference to, and acknowledgement of, the contributions made by all participants who have made what might reasonably be regarded as a significant contribution to the relevant research. In particular the work of

research students, research staff and support staff should be recognised in any publication derived from research to which they have made a significant contribution.

3.6 Conflict of Interest

1. A conflict arises when a person's judgement concerning a primary interest, such as scientific knowledge, could be unduly influenced by a secondary influence, such as financial gain or personal advancement.
2. A researcher must make full disclosure of any personal potential or actual conflict of research interest. Conflict of interest includes any personal or close family affiliation or financial involvement with any organisation sponsoring or providing financial support for a research project undertaken by a research worker. Financial involvement includes direct personal financial interest, provision of personal benefits (such as travel and accommodation) and provision of material or facilities for personal use. The provision of sponsored studentships, or elements of travel/accommodation for a student, is excluded from this definition.
3. A disclosure of a personal conflict of interest must be made to the Executive Dean as soon as reasonably practicable.
4. A researcher must comply with a direction made by the Executive Dean in relation to a personal conflict of interest in research. Executive Deans may seek advice from the Chief Operating Officer in cases of doubt.

3.7 Misconduct in Research

1. Misconduct in research is constituted by a failure to comply with the provisions of the Code, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Fraud: deliberate deception, including fabrication or falsification of research data, and the omission from analysis and publication of inconvenient data
 - Plagiarism and piracy: the copying or deliberate exploitation of another person's ideas, work or research data, without appropriate acknowledgement
2. The University has a separate policy and Code of Conduct covering misconduct. This code must be adhered to at all times:
 - *Aston University: Code of Practice for dealing with allegations of Research Misconduct*

4. UKRIO's RECOMMENDED CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCHERS

The following Checklist is included in the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)'s *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct* (<http://www.ukrio.org/ukR10htre/UKRIO-Code-of-Practice-for-Research1.pdf>).

The Checklist lists the key points of good practice in research for a research project and is applicable to all subject areas.

Before conducting your research, and bearing in mind that, subject to legal and ethical requirements, roles and contributions may change during the time span of the research:

- 1 Does the proposed research address pertinent question(s) and is it designed either to add to existing knowledge about the subject in question or to develop methods for research into it?

- 2 Is your research design appropriate for the question(s) being asked?
- 3 Will you have access to all necessary skills and resources to conduct the research?
- 4 Have you conducted a risk assessment to determine:
 - a whether there are any ethical issues and whether ethics review is required;
 - b the potential for risks to the organisation, the research, or the health, safety and well-being of researchers and research participants; and
 - c what legal requirements govern the research?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines, including those from other organisations and/or countries if relevant?
- 6 Will your research comply with all requirements of legislation and good practice relating to health and safety?
- 7 Has your research undergone any necessary ethics review (see 4(a) above), especially if it involves animals, human participants, human material or personal data?
- 8 Will your research comply with any monitoring and audit requirements?
- 9 Are you in compliance with any contracts and financial guidelines relating to the project?
- 10 Have you reached an agreement relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?
- 11 Have you reached an agreement relating to collaborative working, if applicable?
- 12 Have you agreed the roles of researchers and responsibilities for management and supervision?
- 13 Have all conflicts of interest relating to your research been identified, declared and addressed?
- 14 Are you aware of the guidance from all applicable organisations on misconduct in research?

When conducting your research:

- 1 Are you following the agreed research design for the project?
- 2 Have any changes to the agreed research design been reviewed and approved if applicable?
- 3 Are you following best practice for the collection, storage and management of data?
- 4 Are agreed roles and responsibilities for management and supervision being fulfilled?
- 5 Is your research complying with any monitoring and audit requirements?

When finishing your research:

- 1 Will your research and its findings be reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?
- 2 Will all contributions to the research be acknowledged?
- 3 Are agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship being complied with?
- 4 Will research data be retained in a secure and accessible form and for the required duration?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal, ethical and contractual requirements?

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Code of Conduct draws upon the following documents:

- UK Research Integrity Office (2009) *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct*

- Office of Science and Technology (2002) *Statement by the Director General of the Research Councils and the Chief Executives of the Research Councils on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice*
- The Wellcome Trust (2002) *Guidelines on Good Research Practice*
- EPSRC (1999) *Good Practice in Scientific and Engineering Research*
- Medical Research Council (2000) *MRC Good Research Practice*
- BBSRC (2004) *Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice*
- Aston University (2004) *Statutes; Codes of Practice; Terms of Reference of Committees*
- Birmingham University (2002) *Code of Research Practice*

Approved by the Senate January 2004 (REG/04/76); updated in line with Senate approval of new institutional Code of Practice for Research Degrees June 2005. Approved by the Senate October 2010 following revisions to take account of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)'s *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct*.

Appendix B: Conduct of the *viva voce* examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio

The following paragraphs present guidance for the arrangements for and conduct of the *viva voce*.

1. The Chair of the *Viva Voce*

An independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed for all *viva voce*. The Chair should be selected by the School's Associate Dean Research from a pool of suitably qualified Academic Staff who have experience of research degree assessment and are familiar with the regulatory requirements.

The Chair should be independent in that he or she should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners.

The Chair must be impartial and cannot therefore be a member of the student's supervisory team or the Internal Examiner, and must be from a different research area. The Chair must not be nominated by the Supervisor or the Internal Examiner. In the case of a staff candidate, the Chair should be from a different School.

2. The Role of the Chair

The role of the Independent Chair is to:

- i) ensure the *viva voce* examination is conducted in an open, professional, and non-intimidating manner by all parties involved;
- ii) be prepared to intervene in the process if the above requirements are not complied with;
- iii) ensure that only those parties who should be actively involved in the *viva voce* process are participating and that other attending parties (such as a Supervisor) do not take an active role and leave the meeting at the appropriate time, ie with the student;
- iv) suggest appropriate breaks in particularly long examinations and be mindful of the impact of a long examination on those attending;
- v) provide an opinion on points of order or University Regulations if requested to do so by the Examiners or the student and in circumstances where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure that appropriate procedures are not breached;
- vi) sign at the end of the *viva voce* examination to confirm that the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias.

3. Arrangements for the *Viva Voce*

The Supervisor should notify the Examiners, the student, and the Independent Chair, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending the *viva voce* examination.

The Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis.

4. Purpose/Aim of the *Viva Voce*

- i) Provides the student with an opportunity to defend his or her thesis;
- ii) assists the Examiners in their decision as to whether or not the student has met the requirements for the degree;
- iii) examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies;
- iv) allows detailed discussion of the thesis;
- v) explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis;
- vi) clarifies points of ambiguity;
- vii) satisfies the Examiners that the thesis is the student's own work.

5. Conduct of the *Viva Voce*

- i) The *viva voce* should be held in a suitable room without interruptions from others;
- ii) if any of those who should be attending are unable to be present, then the *viva voce* must normally be re-arranged;
- iii) time should be made available on the day of, and before the *viva voce*, for the Examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary reports and to discuss the approach to the examination;
- iv) the Chair should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the form the *viva voce* will take and what happens afterwards. The Chair will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding (including of regulatory matters), unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour, but should not hesitate to do so if this is the case;
- v) each Examiner should contribute, but with the External Examiner taking the lead;
- vi) there are no rules governing the length of the *viva voce*. It is at the Examiners' discretion to make the *viva voce* as long or as short as they think necessary but around 2 hours is typical and it should not normally be expected to exceed four hours. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/requested;
- vii) there may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the questioning becomes aggressive, he or she should intervene;
- viii) the Supervisor may, exceptionally, be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions;
- ix) no-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

6. After the *Viva Voce*

- i) The student and Supervisor (if present) should be asked to withdraw. The Supervisor must not be involved in any of the deliberations or decision-making;
- ii) the Examiners should deliberate;
- iii) the Examiners may invite the student and Supervisor to hear the recommendation (noting that this is provisional only). Care should be taken to convey the recommendation clearly and in accordance with the Regulations. For the first submission of a PhD, the recommendation may be one of the following:

Satisfactory,

- that the degree of PhD be awarded;
- that the degree of PhD be awarded on completion of minor revisions within three or six months [period for correction to be specified by Examiners].

A satisfactory recommendation should only be made in cases where the Examiners are satisfied that the quality of the thesis and the defence of it at the *viva voce* examination have met the requirements for the degree.

Unsatisfactory

- that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination within one year for the degree of PhD [Examiners will determine, in due course, whether another *viva voce* examination is needed]
 - that the degree of MPhil be awarded
 - that the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of minor revisions within three or six months [period for correction to be specified by Examiners]
 - that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis within one year for re-examination for the degree of MPhil
 - that no degree be awarded.
- iv) the Examiners' Reports on the *viva voce* examination and the Joint Recommendation should be completed and submitted to the appropriate School Research Office, together with an outline of any revisions or required amendments, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the *viva voce*. The Examiners must also provide the student with a copy of any revisions or required amendments, usually within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination;
- v) the Independent Chair should sign the Examiners' Joint Recommendation on the *viva voce* examination to indicate whether or not the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias;
- vi) there must be formal approval of the Examiners' recommendations by the University's Senate or Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

REG/SJD

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