

Guidelines for Research Degree Students

2011/12

October 2011

All sections of this document, including the annexes and forms, are available on-line. Please visit Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site or the website address below:

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/rs/key-documents>

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
GUIDELINES for RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS
Effective from October 2011

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 These Guidelines are intended as a practical introduction to the University's regulations and procedures for research degree candidates. They explain in non-technical language the University's regulatory framework, including the key stages of research degree study. Advice on working effectively with your supervisors and other sources of guidance and support is also included, and you will have the opportunity to discuss the material in greater depth during the initial stages of your research training programme. The Guidelines inform and complement but do not supercede the University's key documents governing research degrees, which are:

- Regulations for the Award of the Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy (Research Degree Regulations)
- Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (Code of Practice)
- Code of Research Good Practice
- University Research Training Programme (URTP)
- Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research

1.2 Please note that together these documents comprise the overarching framework for research degrees at Westminster. Their individual provisions and paragraphs should not be read in isolation, but in the context of the framework as a whole. Further details on the material covered in these Guidelines may be found in the Regulations and Code of Practice.

1.3 You can find out more and can download copies of key documents, guidance and forms from the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site.

2 RESEARCH DEGREE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

The University and its Schools

- 2.1 The University is structured into a number of Schools, each covering a specific range of subject areas. You will be enrolled in a named School, which in most cases is the School where your supervisors are located. Research degree provision within the School is the overall responsibility of the Dean. However, day-to-day responsibility for running the research degrees programme in each School is delegated to the School Research Director, who is a senior member of academic staff appointed by the Dean.

The University Research Office

- 2.2 The management of research degrees at University level is the responsibility of the University Research Office, located within the Academic Services Department. This department has University-wide responsibilities related to quality assurance and enhancement, academic standards, and all aspects of student administration, from admissions to conferment of degrees. It also provides Secretariat services for the University committees. The Research Office is responsible for these activities in respect of research and research degree students. It is also responsible for the national external peer review processes, including the RAE2008, the Research Excellence Framework, and the research aspects of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Institutional Audit. The International Office is also part of Academic Services and provides support for applicants and scholarship candidates, as well as international students.
- 2.3 Key staff contacts for matters pertaining to current research students in the University Research Office are:

Mike Fisher, Research Degrees Manager

Ext 65733

E-mail: M.Fisher@westminster.ac.uk

Shila Panchasara, Research Office Secretary

Ext. 65731

E-mail: S.Panchasara@westminster.ac.uk

Official letters from the University (for example, for the Home Office, bank or local authority etc) are obtainable by request from the Research Office Secretary.

The other members of the University Research Office are:

Lindsay Martin, Research Administrator

Ext. 65052

E-mail: L.A.Martin@westminster.ac.uk

Huzma Kelly, Senior Research Officer (Policy & Governance)

Ext. 65051

E-mail: H.Kelly01@westminster.ac.uk

Lesley McDonagh, Senior Research Officer (Audit & Assessment)
Ext. 65717
E-mail: L.McDonagh@westminster.ac.uk

The team is led and managed by:

Fran Noonan, Head of the Research Office
Ext. 65117
Email: F.Noonan@westminster.ac.uk

The University Research Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer Committee

- 2.4 The University fosters, supports and manages its research provision through the University Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer Committee (REKTC). This Committee is responsible to the Academic Council of the University for: approving the registration, progression and examination arrangements for research students; monitoring the progress of research students; and the promotion, co-ordination and monitoring of their education and training. The REKTC is supported by the Research Degrees Sub Committee (RDSC) and the Research Students' Forum (RSF) in all work relating to research degrees.
- 2.5 The REKTC is the body that oversees research degree provision for the University. The Committee is responsible for maintaining academic standards and assuring the quality of the provision in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and the Research Degree Regulations. The REKTC oversees the arrangements for supporting your studies, including supervision, facilities and research environment. At each key academic stage in your studies, the Committee also makes decisions regarding your progress, in the light of comments and recommendations from expert assessors and senior academic staff.
- 2.6 The REKTC is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

The Annual Progress Review

- 2.7 In addition to the regular exercise of its responsibilities for research degree registrations, the REKTC is also responsible for ensuring that research degree provision across the University is of a high quality. It therefore obtains annual reports from School Research Directors and Directors of Studies, as well as feedback from students, in order to monitor student progress, supervisory arrangements and provision of facilities. The reports address headings such as academic progress; attendance on the University Research Training Programme; the regularity and frequency of supervision and recommendation as to whether you may progress to the next year of study. This process is known as the Annual Progress Review.
- 2.8 Most importantly, the Annual Progress Review provides a structured process by which your Director of Studies is required to record their academic judgment as to the satisfactory or unsatisfactory nature of your academic progress at the end of each academic year. The reports are then considered at both School and University level before progression to the next year of study is confirmed.

- 2.9 Satisfactory progress is defined as progress likely to result in a timely and successful completion of your degree (see paragraph 3.20 below). In making judgments about the adequacy of your progress, your supervisors will be evaluating your current rate of progress in relation to that required to achieve a successful completion within the required timescales. These are four years for full-time students and eight years for part-time students. Where progress is deemed unsatisfactory, the Annual Progress Review will trigger an improvement programme (sometimes known as a remediation programme), which must be successfully completed if you are to re-enrol in the next academic year. If your progress continues to be unsatisfactory you will not, normally, be allowed to re-enrol for the subsequent session and procedures will be initiated to withdraw the registration and/or discontinue your enrolment at the University.
- 2.10 In addition to the reports of the supervisors, each School Research Director writes an Overview Report describing and evaluating School and University provision in research degrees under a similar list of headings, for consideration at University level.

The Research Student Voice

- 2.11 The research student community is represented by the Research Students' Forum (RSF). The RSF operates through meetings and through a social networking site, currently on Facebook (search for *University of Westminster Research Students*). The Forum is concerned with formal business, such as consultations on proposed policy changes, consideration of annual monitoring material from the School Overview Reports, and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), conducted by the UK's Higher Education Academy. The Forum is designed to encourage networking with staff and students and opportunities for student development. In addition students may organise University-wide social events via the Forum. The Forum includes representation from each School.
- 2.12 The University encourages active student participation in these activities which develop valuable skills and provide opportunities for students to access a wider community of peers. If you are interested in participating in any element of the work of the Forum, including as a representative for your School, please contact Lindsay Martin at: L.A.Martin@westminster.ac.uk for further information.

The Local Context: The School

- 2.13 The School Research Director is responsible for overseeing admissions, enrolment, supervision and progression of research students, and for co-ordinating and monitoring the school's research training activities within the framework of the University Research Training Programme. You should approach your School Research Director for assistance with any issues that cannot be resolved by your Supervisor. Each School has one or more Student Representative/s on the Research Students' Forum, whom you should contact if you have any general issues you would like raised.

3 RESEARCH DEGREE STUDY – THE PROCESS

Admission to the University for Research Degree Study

- 3.1 The normal minimum entry qualifications for research degree students are a UK upper second class honours degree or overseas equivalent. For applicants whose secondary-level education has not been conducted in the medium of English language, an acceptable English Language qualification will also be required (see Regulations for the Award of the Degrees of MPhil and PhD 2011/12). In addition, a Masters' degree is preferred. Successful applicants are enrolled onto the programme *MPhil with transfer to PhD*, except in the most exceptional circumstances.
- 3.2 The University admits research degree applicants only in fields where suitable supervision and intellectual and physical facilities are available, and where the applicant has demonstrated their suitability in terms of the likelihood of successful and timely completion (within four years for full-time students, or eight years for part-time students). The proposed research should be capable of successful completion within these timescales, by a suitably qualified and diligent student who is properly supported and supervised.

The Orientation and Enrolment Programme

- 3.3 All new research students are required to enrol formally as students of the University (this includes members of staff who may, exceptionally, be undertaking a research degree here). The enrolment process is combined with the compulsory University Orientation, which also constitutes the first element of the University Research Training Programme. Orientation and Enrolment are organised by the University Research Office and new students are notified of the arrangements by this Office.
- 3.4 The enrolment process comprises the payment of fees, verification of qualifications, and, where applicable, proof of fees sponsorship. Orientation includes an introduction to the research degree process, the University Research Training Programme, supervisor and student experiences, the Research Students' Forum, Ethics and the Code of Research Good Practice, Student Services (including career advice) and to key University staff and departments. It is followed up soon afterwards by more detailed sessions on: Working with your Supervisor; Research Design, Ethics and Good Practice; the Application to Register; Intellectual Property; Data Protection and Health and Safety.
- 3.5 In each subsequent academic year all research students are required to re-enrol promptly, as notified by the Research Office. It is your responsibility as a student to make yourself available for enrolment and failure to do so may lead to the restriction of access to facilities and supervision. You will be issued with your student identity card (which is needed for the use of University facilities) only when the University Orientation and Enrolment requirements have been met.
- 3.6 It is your responsibility to ensure that the Research Office, in addition to your

supervisor, has a record of your current address and other contact details (telephone number, e-mail address etc.). You should also ensure that the Research Office is kept up to date with any circumstances which are affecting progress with your studies. Please contact the Research Office Secretary in the first instance (see Section 2 for contact details).

Registration for your Research Degree

- 3.7 The outline research proposal you provided at the point of application was the basis of the University's assessment of your suitability and the viability of the research. However, following your enrolment at the University you will spend some months engaged in preparatory work, with the guidance of your supervisors, to produce a developed project proposal. This forms the basis of your application to the REKTC for research degree registration. The final project proposal may differ quite significantly from the original outline. To register your research degree, you must complete an Application to Register (Registration Form) that contains details of your supervisory team and of your plan of work, and that must be signed by you, the members of your supervisory team, your School Research Director, and the Dean of School, before being formally submitted to the Research Office. As a full-time student, you must submit your Application to Register within four months of starting your programme (or six months if you are a part-time student).
- 3.8 Registration is an academic process. The purpose of the process is to allow the University to satisfy itself, by reference to an independent academic assessment of your application, that you are engaged upon a viable topic of study with appropriate supervision, resources and training, and that a successful and timely degree completion (please see Section 3.2 above) is the likely outcome.
- 3.9 Working with your supervisors, you should start the process of finalising your plan of work as soon as you have enrolled. Where any delay occurs in applying to register, you should ask your Director of Studies to contact the Research Office to explain the difficulty. It is important to recognise that the responsibility for the timely submission of the Application to Register lies with the student and not with the supervisors.
- 3.10 If you delay submission of the Application to Register, or if your application is not successful, the University is likely to deem that you are not making satisfactory progress and may initiate measures to discontinue your studies in accordance with the Annexe F procedures (see also Section 5.8.).
- 3.11 The table below sets out the dates by which the Application to Register must be received in the Research Office, duly signed by you, your supervisors, your School Research Director, and Dean of School.

Mode of Study	Enrolment date	Application to Register to be received by the Research Office not later than:
Full-time (including ERDS)	September	1st February
Part-time	September	1st April

- 3.12 Once you have obtained the signatures of your supervisors, your School Research Director and Dean, the completed Application to Register is considered by the REKTC in the light of an independent academic assessment. Usually this is provided by an internal assessor, though, where necessary, external assessors will be used. The assessment is then considered by your School Research Director, who, acting as Rapporteur, makes recommendations on the basis of the assessment and his/her own reading of the application.
- 3.13 Following assessment, your application, which incorporates your plan, will be considered by the REKTC and you will be notified by the Research Office of the outcome.
- 3.14 If the assessment indicates that further work is needed on the Application to Register, you will be provided with guidance as to the amendments required. If, following your amendments, your Application to Register is approved, you may proceed with the research degree. However, if your application is not approved at this re-submission stage, it will normally be deemed that you are not making satisfactory progress with your studies and the relevant unsatisfactory performance measures will be initiated. Please see Section 5.8 of these Guidelines for further information.
- 3.15 In some cases, supervisors may not be satisfied, prior to submission to the REKTC, that the Application to Register which you have prepared is of a quality that can be approved by the REKTC. In such cases, the University requires that the supervisors do not approve the application for submission to the REKTC, but instead indicate clearly to you the improvements that need to be made, and provide the appropriate support to you in bringing it up to a satisfactory standard. In rare cases, a supervisor may subsequently conclude, in the light of all the evidence, that the project being proposed is not capable of successful and timely completion as an MPhil or PhD, and will initiate the relevant procedures that may lead to the discontinuation of enrolment.
- 3.16 If your research project is of a confidential or sensitive nature, you must make this clear in your Application to Register, so that appropriate assessors can be appointed.
- 3.17 Students not having registered their degrees within one calendar year of enrolment will not normally be permitted to re-enrol for the following session.

Minimum and Maximum Registration Periods

- 3.18 You may apply to register for any of the pathways listed below:

a) MPhil only

This is appropriate for:

- Students on research programmes that are unlikely to lead to doctorates;
- Students with non-standard academic backgrounds;
- Students engaged on projects of limited scope;

- Students who wish to limit the time spent on research studies.

Please note that registering for *MPhil only* does not exclude the possibility of transfer to PhD at a later stage where sufficient progress has demonstrably been made in the course of the MPhil work.

b) MPhil with transfer to PhD

Other than in the most exceptional cases, this is the route on which you will be registered.

c) PhD Direct

Only in the most exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the University, are candidates permitted to register for PhD Direct.

3.19 Your academic progress is measured by the University in relation to the rate of progress that would be necessary for a successful and timely completion (see Section 3.1 above), within four years (for full-time students) or eight years (for part-time students). Where, in the judgment of the supervisors, your rate of progress is inadequate to meet these deadlines, your performance will be deemed to be unsatisfactory and procedures will be initiated to address this, which could lead to the discontinuation of your studies. Please see section 5.8 for further information.

3.20 The University's Research Degree Regulations stipulate the minimum and maximum periods of time permitted for the completion of your programme of work. The Period of Registration normally commences from 1st October each year, not from the date of your initial enrolment (although these normally coincide), and varies according to which degree you are registered for and whether you are a full-time or part-time student:

Full-Time Students		
Degree Registered for	Minimum Period of Registration Permitted	Maximum Period of Registration Permitted
MPhil	18 months	36 months
PhD Direct	24 months	48 months
PhD via MPhil	33 months	48 months
Part-Time Students		
Degree Registered for	Minimum Period of Registration Permitted	Maximum Period of Registration Permitted
MPhil	30 months	60 months
PhD Direct	36 months	96 months
PhD via MPhil	45 months	96 months

3.21 Research degree candidates holding funded studentships should aim to complete as soon as possible after the expiry of the minimum period of registration, as funding generally expires after three years of full-time study.

University Research Training Programme

- 3.22 In embarking on a research degree, you are seeking not only to produce a successful thesis by the end of the programme, but also to develop the relevant skills to equip you for a future career in academia or elsewhere. The University therefore has a mandatory Research Training Programme, which sets out the research and transferable skills that need to be developed. Training activities to develop these skills are provided at the University, School or supervisor level and co-ordinated and monitored within the framework of the University Research Training Programme and the Skills Training Log. Your supervisor will work with you throughout your period of study using these tools to specify your training needs and record your training activities. A review of your training should form part of the agenda for each of your formal supervision meetings, and you are encouraged to raise the subject should your supervisor overlook it. Your progress in your training activities will be formally reviewed at year-end as part of the Annual Progress Review. Further information on how the training framework operates can be found in the *University Research Training Programme* on the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site and on line at:
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/rs/key-documents/university-research-training-programme>
- 3.23 Please bear in mind that your work will benefit from the exposure of your research material to other people, for example at seminars, and Directors of Studies should encourage this. Similarly, the presentation of papers is a useful preparation for the oral examination of the final thesis and you are expected to contribute actively to the research culture and activities of the School.

Ethics Approval

- 3.24 The University's Research Ethics Sub Committee is responsible for ensuring that all work is conducted in compliance with the *Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research*. In designing your research project and preparing your Application to Register, you must ensure that you comply with this Code. Depending upon the nature of your project, you may be required to obtain formal, specific approval from the relevant ethical approval body, prior to commencement of work which may involve ethical issues. The relevant documentation for ethics approval (for submission to the University level Research Ethics Sub Committee) may be found on the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site and on line at:
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/rs/key-documents>. Please refer to Annexe G of the Regulations for information on the process for applying for ethical approval in parallel to your Application to Register.

Supervisory Arrangements

- 3.25 Your supervisory team is responsible for guiding you to the successful conclusion of your studies and therefore includes the necessary specialist subject expertise. The team is formally led by your Director of Studies (also known as 'first supervisor' or simply 'supervisor'), who has direct responsibility for your progress. S/he is assisted by a second supervisor, who may be

another member of the academic staff of the University or who may be an external person. A third supervisor may be appointed to strengthen the experience of the team, if necessary. Each supervisor has a different role to play within the team and you should not expect each of the supervisors to be equally active at all times, as their contributions will vary according to the changing needs of the project.

- 3.26 If a supervisor is going to be absent from the University for an extended period or leaves its employment, s/he will normally be expected to continue to supervise existing students to completion. However, arrangements will be made to appoint a replacement or additional supervisor from the University if necessary. Where your Director of Studies leaves the University's employment, s/he may remain on the supervisory team, but is not permitted to continue as Director of Studies; alternative arrangements will be made in such cases. Adjustments to the supervisory team will need to be proposed by your School and approved by the REKTC.
- 3.27 At least one member of the supervisory team must have previously supervised research degree candidates through to successful completion (this does not need to be the Director of Studies), and the team as a whole must, between them, have supervised at least two PhD candidates to successful completion (though one supervisor may be exempted from this requirement if they have successfully completed the University's *Supervising Student Research* Module, provided the other supervisor has at least one actual completion). Supervisors with no previous supervisory experience will have provided a curriculum vitae showing their research experience and expertise before being approved as supervisors and are expected to engage with supervisor training and professional development activities.
- 3.28 Supervisors and advisors named on your Application to Register may not subsequently act as examiners for your project.
- 3.29 Where staff departures or changes to the original project necessitate changes to the approved supervision arrangements, the approval of the REKTC should be applied for using the Supervisory Changes Form (Form S).
- 3.30 In addition to supervisors, and subject to approval by the University, an advisor or advisors from the University or elsewhere may contribute either some specialised knowledge or exceptionally, where this is not otherwise provided, a link with an academic environment other than the University, as may be needed for certain overseas projects. Where the involvement of an advisor is critical to the viability of the project, this must be recorded in a formal collaboration and advice must be sought from the Research Office before entering into such an agreement.

Supervision - The Process

- 3.31 The object of supervision is to facilitate your progress through registration to the timely and successful presentation of your thesis, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a research degree of the University. It is intended to provide working arrangements that allow you to manage your own work,

while enabling the supervisor to exercise suitable guidance over your progress and to give direction to your research. However, it is essential that you recognise that in the case of study for a degree based solely on research, the responsibility for managing your learning, determining what is required and carrying it out within the required timescales, rests primarily with you.

- 3.32 You are entitled to receive a total of 36 hours per year (for full-time students) or 24 hours per year (part-time students) of supervisory input from your supervisory team, though in practice this annual entitlement is likely to be distributed across the entire registration period, in accordance with the varying needs of the project at different times: there will be times of both greater and lesser need of supervisory input.
- 3.33 There are a number of good practices that facilitate the management of the supervision process:
- a) Your Director of Studies should make suitable arrangements for your orientation, providing information on useful contacts and facilities needed, and ensuring that you understand and follow any agreed safety procedures, and any professional codes applicable in your area.
 - b) Your Director of Studies is also responsible for ensuring that you are competent in appropriate research methods and will work with you in the early stages of supervision to determine and subsequently monitor your personal programme of research training under the University Research Training Programme, using the Research Skills Training Log.
 - c) The student and supervisors should meet regularly in the course of the project, but it is advisable that in addition there should be a planned schedule of formal meetings each year, with a clear expectation, from meeting to meeting, of what is to be achieved and by whom. The frequency of such meetings may well change over the course of the research, but should in most cases be no less than six meetings a year for full-time students and three for part-time.
 - d) At least once a term there should normally be a meeting between the student, the Director of Studies, and the Second Supervisor. At this meeting, arrangements should be agreed to ensure your access between meetings to the supervisor(s) and advisors. Once a year your supervisors will confer for the purposes of reaching a recommendation on your progress within the scope of the Annual Progress Review.
 - e) You should provide your Director of Studies with regular, short written progress reports. This will help to keep the research project focused and keep your work on schedule.
 - f) It is the responsibility of your Director of Studies to make you aware of any lack of progress or unsatisfactory standard of work as soon as practicable after concerns arise.
 - g) Your supervisors may find it helpful if, with each package of material you

submit, you list what you are submitting, giving brief outlines and summaries of the contents and an indication as to particular points on which you would like comment. You should always keep a copy of anything you submit to a supervisor.

- h) A written record must be kept of formal supervision meetings (though this is not necessary in the case of informal, day-to-day contact with your supervisor/s). The University provides a proforma for this purpose, which is known as the Research Supervision Log (RSL). This is used to record the substance of the discussion, details of decisions made and actions to be taken, and is signed by you and your supervisor (who are jointly responsible for completing it) at the end of each meeting. Should your supervisor not complete the RSL or the Research Skills Training Log, you are encouraged to remind him or her to do so at the end of each formal meeting. The RSL also provides a separate space for your supervisor to record any concerns s/he may have in relation to your progress. Each of you should retain a copy of Section A of the RSL and your supervisor will lodge a further copy with the School Research Director. In the case of telephone, email or online supervision sessions, a similar record should be agreed by each party. The Research Supervision Log is available on the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site and on line at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/researchdegreereforms>
- i) Your supervisors should evaluate your work and provide comprehensive feedback in the form of detailed and specific comments as quickly as is reasonably possible, and preferably by dates previously agreed.
- j) Your Director of Studies is also responsible for making a recommendation to the REKTC each year with regard to your progression, including your progress with research training, and where performance is unsatisfactory, is responsible for initiating the procedures to address this (please see section 5.8 of these Guidelines for further information).

Transfer of Registration from MPhil to PhD

- 3.34 The transfer to PhD is the process by which the University finally establishes that your research is capable of meeting the criteria for the award of the PhD. Your work is assessed to ensure that you have sufficiently clarified the focus, direction and method of the research, that you have developed the necessary technical and other skills, and that you are capable of producing and defending a thesis evidencing an original and significant contribution to knowledge.
- 3.35 It is expected that transfer will normally take place:
 - For **full time** students not earlier than 12 months and not later than 24 months from the approved start date of your registration period.
 - For **part-time** students not earlier than 24 months and not later than 48 months from the approved start date of your registration period.
- 3.36 To apply to transfer, you must complete an Application for Transfer from MPhil to PhD (**Transfer Form**) in collaboration with your supervisors. This should

include a short abstract, a full progress report of approximately 3,000 words reviewing work to date and a discussion of proposed future work. Your submission should demonstrate how your work will produce an original contribution to knowledge in a timely and successful PhD thesis. Your application will be assessed by an expert in the field, who will generally (but not always) be a member of the University's academic staff.

- 3.37 As part of the transfer process, and prior to submitting the Application to Transfer for REKTC approval, you will also be required to undergo a Transfer Interview with a Panel convened by your School and consisting of the Chair of the Transfer Panel (your School Research Director or their nominee), your supervisor/s, and the assessor who will have provided a written assessment of your application. Upon completion of the Transfer Interview, the Chair of the Transfer Panel will either recommend to the REKTC that your transfer be approved, or will refer it back to you for further work in liaison with your supervisors.

The Examination of your Thesis

- 3.38 In examining your thesis, the examiners will apply the criteria for the award as set out in the regulations at paragraphs 1.7 and 1.8.

For the degree of Master of Philosophy they will consider the extent to which the thesis:

- shows evidence of sustained independent effort by the candidate;
- demonstrates competence in the investigation of the chosen topic **or** competence in undertaking a critical study of the chosen topic(s);
- is satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness;
- indicates clearly, in the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration; and
- abstract is acceptable

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy they will consider the extent to which the thesis:

- represents a significant contribution to knowledge of the subject by (i) the discovery of new facts and/or (ii) the exercise of independent critical powers;
- provides evidence of originality;
- is satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness;
- (in the case of a candidate who has completed a programme of formally assessed course work), demonstrates that the candidate has benefited from the course of postgraduate study;
- indicates clearly, in the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration; and
- the abstract is acceptable;

And, for both PhD and MPhil, that in the oral examination (viva):

- The candidate shows a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of:
 - a) Matters relating to the thesis
 - b) Background studies to the subject of the thesis
- In the case of a candidate whose research programme was part of a collaborative group project, the candidate demonstrates that his/her own contribution is worthy of the award.

Examination Arrangements

- 3.39 The REKTC must satisfy itself that the arrangements proposed by your supervisory team for the examination of your thesis are appropriate and meet the requirements of the Research Degree Regulations. At least three months before the expected date of the oral examination (the *viva voce* exam, which is more commonly known as, simply, the viva), your Director of Studies should complete an Application for Approval of Examination Arrangements (**Examination Form**), proposing the names of the examiners. If this is submitted later than three months before the desired viva date, the viva may have to be re-scheduled. You will be notified along with the supervisors and examiners when the REKTC has approved the proposed arrangements. You must then submit your thesis to the Research Degrees Manager (or nominee) in the Research Office at least four weeks prior to the date of the viva. Again, if there is a delay, the viva might have to be postponed.
- 3.40 Your examination will normally take place in the United Kingdom, although in special cases approval may be given for the examination to take place abroad.
- 3.41 Prior to your viva, you will be invited by the Research Degrees Manager to a briefing about the viva, including preparation for the viva and follow-up to it.

Examiners

- 3.42 The detailed Research Degree Regulations set out who may and may not be an examiner, but in summary:
- You will be examined by at least two examiners. One must be external to the University and the other will usually be a member of staff of the University (or member of staff of your Collaborating Establishment, if applicable) who is not your supervisor or advisor;
 - If you, the candidate, are a member of the permanent academic staff of the University, **two** external examiners must be appointed;
 - An external examiner must be independent of both the University and any Collaborating Establishment and may not normally have had any supervisory or advisory input into your work;
 - No person who is registered for an MPhil/PhD degree may act as an examiner;
 - Your supervisor/s may not act as examiner/s;
 - The Examining Team must, between them, have expertise in the subject area of the thesis and of experience in research degree examining;

- The Examining Team includes an independent Chair, who does not participate in the examination process, but whose role is to ensure and attest to the proper and fair conduct of the examination.

Submission of your Thesis and the Examination Process

- 3.43 The format of your thesis must comply with University Regulations and the following guidance is for indicative purposes only. It is essential that you study the Research Degree Regulations relating to this.
- 3.44 Submission of your thesis shall be defined only as the delivery of the thesis to the Research Office for dispatch to the examiners. Delivery to any other office or member of staff of the University does not constitute submission. You will be asked to sign a Candidate's Declaration Form stating that you have pursued any other required course of study, that you have not offered your thesis for examination for any other award, and that the thesis is your own work.
- 3.45 You must prepare sufficient copies of the thesis for each of your examiners and the Chair, either in permanently bound or secure, temporarily bound form. Please contact the Research Degrees Manager if you are not sure how many copies will be needed, and remember that you will also need your own copy for the oral examination.
- 3.46 Your thesis will then be circulated to the examiners, who examine your work independently of each other and submit to the University preliminary reports and recommendations regarding the award of the degree. This usually takes no longer than three months.
- 3.47 Your oral examination (viva) then takes place on a date agreed by the examiners, following which they make joint recommendations by completing an examiners recommendation form and returning it to the University.
- 3.48 Your supervisor(s) may, with your permission, be present at the oral examination. However they may not participate unless invited to do so by the examiners and must withdraw before the examiners' deliberations on the outcome of the examination. If you do wish your supervisors to be present, please consult with them well in advance of the viva date to make sure they are available on the day.
- 3.49 The conduct of the viva is customarily determined principally by the external and not by the internal examiner. The examination of the thesis, including the viva, is conducted in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations and the Code of Practice, and is overseen by the Chair of Examiners.
- 3.50 Acting through the REKTC, the University then determines the award of the degree or otherwise, acting on the recommendations of the examiners. You are advised to read the regulations governing examination and re-examination carefully, so that you understand the outcomes that are available to the examiners and the requirements you will need to meet at examination, or re-examination, in order to achieve your award.

- 3.51 After the oral examination, your thesis must be presented both in permanently bound print and in electronic form. The University's policies promote the widest possible dissemination of its research for the public benefit. A digital copy of your thesis will be deposited online through WestminsterResearch (the University's Online Repository) and in the British Library's Electronic Thesis Online Service (EThOS). Given this wide dissemination, it is essential that you ensure that any issues of third party copyright or confidentiality within the thesis are addressed as soon as you are aware of them, and, without fail, before you submit the final version.

4 GENERAL

Confidentiality

- 4.1 The question of confidentiality may arise if a project has external financial support and there is a possibility of findings needing to be held back from general circulation until an invention or similar can be protected. It may also apply to University-funded projects. Where the candidate, University or sponsor wishes the thesis, or part of the thesis, to remain confidential for a period after the award of the degree, application should immediately be made to the REKTC. Normally, the Director of Studies determines the need for confidentiality and this must be applied for at the time of the Application to Register for a Research Degree, (or immediately the confidentiality requirement is known), with the reasons clearly stated in a covering letter. The usual period of confidentiality permitted is two years, during which time the thesis, or confidential part of the thesis, is withheld from the library and WestminsterResearch (the University's Online Repository) and from general distribution, including in EThOS (the British Library's online open access repository) (see paragraph above). Longer periods of confidentiality may be permitted where necessary. Confidentiality status can be revoked at any time.

Data Protection

- 4.2 The University uses information supplied on the student enrolment form, the REKTC forms and from the Annual Progress Review of Research Degree Provision, to create and maintain student records over the duration of your programme of study (and after you leave). These records are used to monitor and inform decisions on student progress, evaluate the quality of the provision, and provide statistical and funding returns. These records will be stored on computer and manual file in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. For further information with regard to Data Protection issues, please visit the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site or look on line at: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about/information-compliance/data-protection>

Intellectual Property

- 4.3 Guidance on the University's Intellectual Property Policy, as it applies to research degree students, may be obtained from Huzma Kelly, Senior Research Officer (Policy & Governance), (see Section 2 for contact details).

Research Student Expenses

- 4.4 Occasionally the cost of consumables and other research expenses may be met by the University. These must have the advance approval of the appropriate authority, which you should seek via your Director of Studies.
- 4.5 Responsibility for the cost of producing the thesis copies required by the University Regulations lies with the student.

Writing-Up Fee

- 4.6 The University operates a writing-up fee scheme for students who have completed the active research stages of their projects and are engaged solely in writing up their work. The scheme consists of a six-month grace period (during which no fees are payable), followed by an annual fee (£670 per annum in 2011/12) for each subsequent year spent writing up. This amount may increase slightly from year to year. You will be accorded writing-up fee status subject to the approval of your Director of Studies and School Research Director and through formal, written notice to the REKTC, using the Writing-Up Form. You should normally complete and submit within six months (full-time) or twelve months (part-time) of being accorded writing-up status.

External Research Degree Study (ERDS) Scheme

- 4.7 In some Schools, full-time international students may study for research degrees whilst remaining (for the majority of their studies) in their home countries under the scheme known as External Research Degree Study (ERDS). External Study students are required under the regulations to spend a minimum of two months per calendar year at the University of Westminster (and preferably longer), at such times as to allow full access to supervisors, facilities and the local research community, and to undertake research training as required under the University Research Training Programme. Certain schools may require a longer attendance period each year. An initial period of residence at the commencement of the programme is recommended. Such students may be researchers in overseas collaborating institutions, students whose projects are most appropriately undertaken within their home country or region, or students who for cultural, family or employment reasons are unable to live abroad for three years.
- 4.8 Once accepted as an External Study student, you should formulate a work-plan with your Director of Studies. The plan should indicate periods in and out of residence at the University of Westminster, dates of supervisory visits to your home country and estimated supervisory travel and subsistence costs. This work-plan will be finalised in collaboration with the Research Degrees Manager, who will calculate your annual tuition fee on the basis of the pattern of residence.
- 4.9 For further details of the External Research Degree Study Scheme, please refer to the Research Degree Regulations, Annexe C.

5 UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS

- 5.1 Where problems arise that affect your study, you should discuss these in the first instance with a member of your supervisory team. If this does not resolve the difficulty, you should approach your School Research Director or, where applicable, the Programme Director or PhD Tutor for your School. For advice on regulatory aspects, you should contact the Research Degrees Manager in the Research Office (see Section 2 for contact details).
- 5.2 The University provides a wide range of services for students, including counselling and advice, student health, careers and student employment, and international student advice. Further details of these and other services, including web links, may be found in the University publication *Essential Westminster*, available on the Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site and on line at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-18977> . Research Students are also entitled to access the services provided by the University of Westminster Students' Union and further details may be found at <http://www.uwsu.com/>.
- 5.3 The most important thing to remember, if you are experiencing difficulty or delay, is that you should act to address the matter as quickly as possible. If you are unsure as to who can assist, please contact the Research Office Secretary in the first instance. If the problems you are experiencing are hindering your academic progress and cannot be resolved in the short term through any of the student services listed above, the following options may be open to you, provided you act promptly:

Extension of Registration Period

- 5.4 If it appears that the maximum period of registration will expire before you have completed your thesis, you may apply to the REKTC for an official extension of the registration period. This must be done before your registration period expires and you should use the Application for Extension of Period of Registration form (Extension Form). The REKTC may approve extension periods of up to one year, provided the circumstances justify this. Further extensions require re-approval by the REKTC and will normally be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Suspension of Registration

- 5.5 Should you experience problems of an academic, personal, social, or medical nature which hinder the progress of your research, you are encouraged to try to resolve them at an early stage by discussing them with your supervisors. Where work on a thesis is actually prevented by illness or other unavoidable cause, you may apply to the REKTC to suspend your registration for a period, using the Application for Suspension of Period of Registration form (Suspension Form). It is important that you apply formally to suspend your studies as soon as possible, as otherwise your registration period will continue to expire, whilst you are unable to progress your work, and you may run out of time as a result. Please note that periods of suspension will not normally be approved retrospectively, so it is important to act promptly if you foresee a possible need to suspend studies – otherwise you could find yourself facing procedures to address unsatisfactory progress. You should also note that it will

not normally be possible to allow periods of suspension of less than six months.

Changes in Mode of Study (FT to PT and vice versa)

- 5.6 It is sometimes appropriate for students to change their mode of study. If you wish to change your mode of study, you should first discuss the implications for your supervision arrangements and your programme of work with your Director of Studies, whose agreement to the proposed change must be obtained. You should then make a formal request for approval for a change of mode to the REKTC, using the Application for Change in Approved Mode of Study (Form M/S).

Supervision Problems

- 5.7 Where problems arise that prove impossible to resolve within the supervisory team, your School Research Director should be consulted. Please see <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/rs/areas-of-study> for contact details. If problems persist, you may arrange to contact the Chair of the University Research Degrees Sub Committee, through the Research Office.

Unsatisfactory Progress and Withdrawal of Registration

- 5.8 The REKTC carefully monitors the progress of students and, where there is evidence that progress is unsatisfactory, may withdraw the student's registration for the degree. The University has established clear procedures to govern the withdrawal of a registration and these may be found in the Research Degree Regulations, Annexe F. These procedures require that upon reaching a judgment that your work is unsatisfactory (i.e. it is unlikely to result in a timely and successful PhD completion – see Section 3.14 above), your supervisors meet with you and formally communicate that progress is unsatisfactory. You are then issued with an improvement plan and timetable to bring your work back on track. Failure to complete this programme by the deadline and to the satisfaction of your supervisors will result in your School initiating procedures to withdraw your registration and terminate your research degree studies at the University.

Withdrawing from the Programme

- 5.9 Students who themselves intend to withdraw from their studies should notify the Research Degrees Manager in writing, preferably indicating their reasons. Before doing so, however, students are encouraged to discuss the issue with their supervisors, as there may be other means of addressing the problem. If not, a Withdrawal Form (Form W) explaining the reasons for the withdrawal should be completed by the Director of Studies, endorsed by the School Research Director and submitted to the REKTC via the Research Office.

Complaints

- 5.10 The University has an approved Complaints Procedure, which may be found at <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=18749>

Requests for a Review of Assessment and Examination Decisions

- 5.11 Procedures exist for appealing against adverse progress assessment decisions or against examination decisions and you should refer to the Research Degree Regulations Sections 15 and 16 for details of these. In the case of appeals against examination decisions, the only grounds for review are those listed below and candidates may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the examiners:
- That there were circumstances affecting the candidate's performance, of which the examiners were not aware at the oral examination; and/or
 - That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity; and/or
 - That there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.
- 5.12 You are advised to familiarise yourself with the regulations governing requests for review (Research Degree Regulations, Section 15). Should you believe you have grounds for review, you must notify the Head of the Research Office in writing of your intention to request such a review within three months of notification of the result. Notification of the result is defined as the date of the official letter from the Research Office informing you of the result of your examination.
- 5.13 The procedures for appealing against assessment decisions (decisions to withdraw registration or discontinue enrolment) taken following unsatisfactory performance procedures may be found in the Research Degree Regulations, Section 16.

6 Library and IT Services

Please note that this information is under review at time of publication. An updated version will be published in Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site.

- 6.1 The University has four libraries managed by Information Systems and Library Services (ISLS) which all offer a variety of user support including: induction and more focused information skills sessions; electronic services both on- and off-campus; specific subject information. The University has expert liaison librarians who provide enhanced support for researchers and who run regular training events for researchers.
- 6.2 ISLS offers self-service access to a very large number of electronic databases, journals and newspapers, via the infoLinX portal. The guides to infoLinX (available from any library) include help with creating your own e-library and keeping up to date with the latest research by using alerts. The IDD (Inter-lending and Document Delivery) service can obtain material from other libraries for all users.
- 6.3 There are non-book collections in a number of our libraries, notably Marylebone Road (maps and slides), Little Titchfield Street (videos, slides, language cassettes), and Harrow (DVDs, videos and slides).
- 6.4 Library staff can advise research students on the availability of specialist collections and can facilitate access to other university and national research collections, including the British Library. The University is a member of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries in London and of the SCONUL Access scheme. Details of all such arrangements can be found on the library web pages (<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/library-and-it-services>). University of Westminster students are asked to be careful when using other libraries to look after any material used or borrowed, as failure to do so could result in a ban for any future students from our institution. It is a requirement of our Regulations that they observe the rules of any such host library.
- 6.5 The University Archive is housed at Little Titchfield Street.
- 6.6 ISLS manages the University's centrally run IT systems, with the majority of the University's computing services available through 2000+ open access workstations located in the 30+ open access labs and in the libraries across all sites. Workstations are available for Windows and Macintosh, with some Unix also available. The equipment provided is appropriate to the levels required to support professional, research and postgraduate work. A wide range of software covers word processing, spreadsheets, statistics, databases, CAD and graphics packages, and a number of specialist applications. Laser printing and photocopying services are available at reasonable cost in most major buildings, including libraries.
- 6.7 We run an extensive number (250+) of Unix, MS Windows and Novell servers supporting desktop systems. These servers provide file space, mail, Web, Blackboard (for teaching material), the student record service, backup, Intranet and Internet services. Some 140+ applications are available in the baseline

configuration which is augmented by specialist software for each faculty, including numerous language compilers, statistical packages, database management, cross compilers and assemblers, as well as several graphics packages.

- 6.8 All desktop systems and servers are connected together with a sophisticated and resilient network infrastructure (JANET), running a Gigabit backbone and fast-Ethernet technologies. Access to the Internet and JANET is via a connection to the LondonMAN.
- 6.9 All students are automatically given computer accounts, which include University Google for e-mail, and access to the Web from within the University (open access labs, wireless) as well as from home. This account is also used for access to electronic library facilities and learning & teaching resources. Most of the communal space at the University (including all libraries) is a wireless zone supporting the use of the student's own equipment or laptops available for loan from ISLS.
- 6.10 An extended hours remote IT support service is available together with 'core time' face to face services in the main buildings. There are also extensive web pages which include an online IT problem reporting service <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/its>. Telephone support for IT is available internally or externally (+44 (0)20 7915 5488).
- 6.11 There is a team dedicated to student IT training who manage an extensive list of classes and certification, such as ECDL.
- 6.12 Our printed WISE Guide (available free) gives more detail about all information services.

7 FURTHER INFORMATION ON SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Please refer to Westminster Research Students' Blackboard site for further information, guidance, key documents and forms. The following web links may also be useful.

- 7.1 University advisory and support services, such as Careers Development Centre, and the Counselling and Advice Service:
<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-595>
- 7.2 University facilities and resources, sports and leisure:
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/business/sports-facilities>
- 7.3 University research policies and regulations:
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/rs/key-documents>
- 7.4 Information for research students, including Research Students' Forum:
<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/researchstudentsforum>
- 7.5 Blackboard for Research Students:
<http://learning.westminster.ac.uk/webapps/login>
- 7.6 Research Training Programme:
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/rs/key-documents/university-research-training-programme>
- 7.7 Additional general information may be found in Essential Westminster, the student guide. Please visit: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-18977>

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY FORMS FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

For electronic copies of these forms, please visit:

<http://www.wmin.ac.uk/researchdegreeforms>

Form R - Application to register for a research degree of the University (**Registration Form**)

Form T - Application for transfer of registration from Master of Philosophy to Doctor of Philosophy (**Transfer Form**)

Form S - Application for change in approved arrangements of Supervision (**Supervisory Changes**)

Form M/S - Application for change in approved mode of study (**Mode Change Form**)

Form Ext - Application for extension of period of registration (**Extension Form**)

Form SU - Application for suspension of period of registration (**Suspension Form**)

Form W - Notification of withdrawal of registration (**Withdrawal Form**)

Form WU - Writing Up Status Form (**Writing-Up Form**)

Form E - Application for approval of examination arrangements (**Examination Form**)

Form PhDA* - Preliminary report and recommendation of an examiner on a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (**Examiner Report 1A**)

Form MPhilA* - Preliminary report and recommendation of an examiner on a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy* (**Examiner Report 1B**)

Form PhDB* - Recommendation of the examiners on a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (**Examiner Recommendation 1A**)

Form MPhilB* - Recommendation of the examiners on a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy* (**Examiner Recommendation 1B**)

Form Decl - Candidate's declaration form (**Declaration Form**)

Form CF -Chair of Examiners' Declaration Form (**Chair's Form**)

Form ESF – ERDS Scheme Agreement Form (**External Study Form**)

RSL - Research Supervision Log

Form SE – Supervisory Experience

***Also available for re-submissions**

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE APPLICATION TO REGISTER AND THE APPLICATION TO TRANSFER

These Guidelines may be helpful when considering the preparation of the Application to Register and the Application to Transfer. It is important to recognise that each of these documents is individual to a particular candidate's studies and that perhaps not all of the items below apply in all cases. However, they should offer an insight into the type of evidence that is sought by those responsible for assessing and approving applications.

Guidelines for Application to Register

When completing the Registration form:

- Fill in all the sections
- Include details of all relevant publications, training and experience
- Especially for overseas candidates, a Collaborating Establishment should be sought
- Where the project specifies links with other establishments, evidence of these links should be provided
- Where the project is to be carried out in the workplace, evidence of the employer's permission for this should be provided
- Where specific Ethics Committee approval has been received, evidence of this must be provided
- Where Ethical Approval is required, but still outstanding, this should be stated.

The plan of work should be concise (3-4 pages plus references), clearly presented (word processed) and contain:

- Statement of the problem/hypothesis to be investigated
- Statement of the aims and objectives of work
- Details of links to existing work
- Where the candidate is working within a research team, a clear statement of their role in the team programme
- Information on the intellectual significance of the work
- Statement of how the work will make a contribution to knowledge
- Statement of the methods to be employed
- Time-plan; the project should be possible within 3 years (FT), 5 years (PT)
- Consideration of factors which may affect the project
- Contingency plan in the event that work (especially of an experimental nature) does not go to plan
- Nature of links with other Collaborating Establishments
- Details of access to relevant data sources, specialist facilities
- References, Bibliography

You should also enclose information on your personal Research Training Plan for the year.

Guidelines for Application to Transfer

When completing the Transfer form:

- Fill in all the sections
- Relate the material presented to the Application to Register
- Include copies of any work published to date

The report should be well written, 3,000 words in length, and needs to provide evidence of the PhD calibre of the candidate. It should contain:

- A background section with reference to the Application to Register, indicating how the candidate has reached this point in the project
- A description of the work done so far and an indication of where innovation has already occurred
- A clear statement of the candidate's contribution within the programme s/he is working on in a research team
- Reference to any papers/chapters/posters/oral conference presentations/exhibitions/invited seminars/reviews presented by the candidate
- Information on the training undertaken since the Application to Register and training yet to be undertaken
- A statement of how the candidate is going to make an original contribution to knowledge
- Time-plan for work to be completed