

RESEARCH DEGREE HANDBOOK 2026/27

Every effort is made to ensure that the information given in this Handbook is correct at the time of publication and that it accurately describes the programme offered by the University.

The online version of this Handbook is the current definitive one and takes precedence in the event of any discrepancy. It is located on the [Graduate School website](#).

(web address: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic-programme>)

(Updated September 2026)

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Welcome to the Graduate School

A warm welcome from the [Graduate School](#) and well done on achieving a place to carry out your research here at Westminster.

We are proud that research staff at Westminster produce important research across a wide range of disciplines, in Britain and across the world. In REF 2021 – the most recent government exercise used to assess university research – over 70% of the research produced by the University of Westminster was judged internationally excellent or world leading.

We are also proud of the experience of research we make possible for our doctoral researchers. In the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2025, 82% of our students rated the overall experience of their research degree positively (the 18th highest satisfaction rate nationally), and 89% were happy with their supervision. Both of these satisfaction rates were well above the sector average, and Westminster was also ranked in the top third of institutions globally for research degree progression.

We aim to continue to provide a distinctive, high-quality, and vibrant experience for our doctoral researchers, with opportunities to work within an exciting interdisciplinary research environment, attend tailor-made workshops and benefit from personal development planning guidance designed for you to gain experience and skills which will enhance your research.

For more details on these development opportunities, please see the dedicated website for the [Doctoral Researcher Development Programme \(DRDP\)](#).

Westminster is a large institution, and this handbook will help guide you through the academic and administrative arrangements for your research degree study. It tells you about the services available to you, the regulations that apply to your enrolment and gives advice about what to do at key points.

The Graduate School is here to support and encourage you through your life as a doctoral researcher and we hope you take the opportunity to engage actively with our research community.

We want to hear from you – about your successes and about what might not be working so well at times. You will find in this handbook information on all the ways you can keep in touch – we look forward to hearing from you!



Dr Margherita Sprio
Head of the Graduate School
E: M.Sprio@westminster.ac.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sources of advice and help for your research degree programme

Graduate School

Email: graduateschool@westminster.ac.uk

Web: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/graduate-school-team>

Linktree: linktr.ee/uowgraduateschool

The Graduate School is the administrative hub for all doctoral researcher activity. We support all Graduate School committees and work closely with academic colleagues and other Professional Services departments. The Graduate School also ensures the professional and effective management of the [research degree academic programme](#), the [Doctoral Researcher Development Programme \(DRDP\)](#), and the Graduate School calendar of events.

The [Graduate School website](#) contains the latest information regarding news and events taking place across the institution. We also circulate a regular *Graduate School Update* via email and regular news and updates are also posted via our [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

A [Research Students at the University of Westminster](#) Facebook group is also available to help doctoral researchers create better opportunities for networking and social activities. The Facebook group is now widely used by doctoral researchers to share ideas, answer questions about doing research at the University, find out the latest news, meet up and organise events. The group is for all doctoral researchers and has become very lively in sharing important information that doctoral researchers need to know, and helping doctoral researchers connect with others who have similar interests. Click the group name above to request to join. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/162658573826334/>

In [Section 4](#) of this handbook you will find details of the [University of Westminster PhD Society](#) and we encourage you to join the Society and participate in their events and activities.

We would also encourage you to regularly review [Career Zone](#) which contains a wealth of information on employability, volunteering, and job/career opportunities.

The Graduate School team consists of:

- **Dr Margherita Sprio**, Head of the Graduate School
- **Dr Aleka Psarrou**, Assistant Head of the Graduate School
- **Dr Elle Larsson**, Doctoral Researcher Development Manager
- **TBC**, Graduate School Manager
- **Rebecca Salter**, Doctoral Researcher Administration Officer
- **Lesley McDonagh**, Graduate School Events Coordinator
- **Nicholas Rousseau-Williams**, Doctoral Researcher Programme Administrator

The Graduate School offers both in-person and online appointments (via MS Teams). To make an appointment or for general enquiries, please contact the Graduate School via graduateschool@westminster.ac.uk. You can also drop into UG01 at any time where a member of the team will be happy to assist.

College and School Academic Contacts

The work of the Graduate School is supported by academic colleagues across the Colleges and Schools of the University.

Information about academic colleagues can be found in the [Our People](#) section of the website. Email addresses for all University of Westminster Colleagues can be found in the [Outlook People Directory](#).

College of Creative Arts and Technologies

School of Architecture & Cities	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Krystallia Kamvasinou
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Constance Lau
School of Computer Science & Engineering	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Alexandra Psarrou
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Alexander Bolotov
Westminster School of Arts	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Ozlem Koksai
School DRDP Coordinator	Professor Roshini Kempadoo / Dr Hannah Rumball-Croft
Westminster School of Media & Communications	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Alessandro D'Arma
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Ed Branchio-Polanco

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

School of Humanities	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Sylvia Shaw
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Alison Hess
School of Life Sciences	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Polly Hayes
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Polly Hayes
School of Social Sciences	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Adam Eldridge
School DRDP Coordinator	Prof Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos
Westminster School of Law	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Ruth Mackenzie
School DRDP Coordinator	Prof Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos

Westminster Business School	Contact
School PhD Coordinator	Dr Spinder Dhaliwal
School DRDP Coordinator	Dr Spinder Dhaliwal

Dr Spinder Dhaliwal performs the role of School PhD Coordinator and School DRDP Coordinator for all Schools in the Westminster Business School:

- School of Accounting, Finance and Economics
- School of Enterprise and Innovation

- School of Management, Marketing and Experience Industries

Research Leads	Contact
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Knowledge Exchange	Professor Andrew Linn
Assistant Head of College – Research & Knowledge Exchange (Creative Arts and Technologies)	Professor Gregory Sporton
Assistant Head of College – Research & Knowledge Exchange (Liberal Arts and Sciences)	Professor Miriam Dwek
Assistant Head of College – Research & Knowledge Exchange (Westminster Business School)	Professor Franz Buscha

Doctoral Tutor

This supporting role is in addition to your supervisory team, and the Doctoral Tutor will be another link person for you should you experience any problems that you feel might be better approached by somebody outside of your supervisory team. You can still contact your School Doctoral Co-Ordinator in the first instance should you want to, but the Doctoral Tutor is somebody who is completely independent although they may act as a mediator with your supervisory team if this is what is required.

The Assistant Head of the Graduate School is the Doctoral Tutor and is there to support you if you are experiencing any difficulties that you feel you want to be resolved for you and with you. The Doctoral Tutor's role is to treat any information that you provide in a confidential manner, and it is key that you feel able to trust them. Additionally, the Doctoral Tutor will be able to direct you to the appropriate Student Services should this be necessary.

The smooth running of your PhD experience at Westminster is at the heart of the Doctoral Tutor's role and they are there to help, act as a supportive friend, talk through a particular problem with you or anything else that you feel is more appropriately independently explored. Doctoral researchers can also email the Doctoral Tutor to arrange an on-line or on-site meeting outside the office hours. Details of how and when to contact the Doctoral Tutor can be [found here](#).

1.2 Committee Structure

The following University Committees are of particular relevance to you as a doctoral researcher. Many of these committees include a doctoral researcher representative:

Graduate School Board (GSB)

- Graduate School Board is responsible for oversight of all doctoral programmes and the support of doctoral researcher development.
- The Board meets 6 times per year, and reports to the University's Research & Knowledge Exchange Steering Group.
- The Board includes two PGR student representatives (one from the PhD Society and one from the wider postgraduate researcher (PGR) population).
- It is supported by two subcommittees, the Research Degree Progression Committee (RDPC), and the Doctoral Researcher Development Programme Committee (DRDP) (see below).

- GSB is chaired by the Head of the Graduate School, Dr Margherita Sprio.

Research Degree Progression Committee (RDPC)

- The Research Degree Progression Committee, acting on behalf of the Graduate School Board, considers the annual progress of doctoral researchers, submission of thesis and approval of examination arrangements.
- The Committee meets once a month to consider applications for mitigating circumstances, extension, suspension, exclusion, and withdrawal.
- Dr Alexandra Psarrou - Assistant Head of the Graduate School is Chair of RDPC for 26/27.

Research Ethics Committee

- The University Research Ethics Committee and local College Research Ethics Committees receive applications for approval for research projects, including research degrees, in accordance with the [University's Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research](#).

Doctoral Researcher Development Programme Committee (DRDP)

- The Committee is responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring, and review of the Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP), taking into consideration external best practice guidance.
- It oversees the promotion of the programme internally and externally and contributes to wider policy debate on researcher development.
- It supports staff involved in the delivery of the programme and actively shares best practice and opportunities for development.
- The Committee includes one PGR student representative.
- DRDP Committee is Chaired by the Doctoral Researcher Development Manager, Dr Elle Larsson.

Graduate School Assembly

- The Graduate School Assembly is an open forum to discuss any aspects of the Graduate School and all staff and doctoral researchers are welcome to attend.
- The Graduate School Assembly takes place twice a year.

1.3 Quality Assurance and Student feedback

The University is committed to providing opportunities for doctoral researchers to put forward their views and contribute to the enhancement of their degrees. The Graduate School values the contribution made by doctoral researcher representatives (including those from the [Students' Union PhD Society](#)) who play an active role in the Graduate School Board.

Your comments and views are also sought through surveys for example the [Postgraduate Research Experience Survey \(PRES\)](#), which is designed by [AdvanceHE](#) to help identify areas where improvements could be made to further enhance the experience of doctoral researchers.

The Graduate School undertakes regular reviews of its research degree programme measured against each of the Expectations and Practices outlined in the [Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](#). A report of this review

is presented to the Graduate School Board and the University's Research & Knowledge Exchange Steering Group.

Actions from these reviews are monitored and implemented in the next academic year.

2. YOUR RESEARCH DEGREE: ENROLMENT TO GRADUATION

2.1 Enrolment

When you have completed your formal enrolment, you can use the [Virtual Research Environment \(VRE\)](#) (see [section 3.1](#)), Library, Computing, and other University facilities. You will also receive a University ID card which includes membership of the [University of Westminster Students' Union](#).

In order to remain a doctoral researcher, you are required to re-enrol each academic year (including during the period of your examination following submission of your final thesis) by using the online enrolment system. You will be sent an email with a re-enrolment link and guidance each academic year (see [section 3.6](#)).

2.2 How we contact you

The University will contact you by email in the first instance, using your University of Westminster email address. Please be aware, if you do not regularly check your University email account, there is a risk you will miss important communications which may affect your enrolment status.

Should you need to be contacted by letter, correspondence will be sent to your term-time address, so please be sure to keep your personal information up to date on the Student Record System ([My Student Record](#)).

2.3 Self-generated student letters

If you need an official letter from the University of Westminster, please follow the steps below:

- Make sure you are fully enrolled on your programme
- Go to the [Official Letter Requests page](#)
- Visit [My Student Record](#) via the Student Hub and locate the Registry Services menu
- Click *Students Letters self-service*
- Provide the required addressee information for the letter you require
- Click *Generate new letter*
- Once generated, click the link to download in a pdf format. You can now print your letter
- If you require an official University stamp, please bring the printed letter to [Student Centre](#)
- If you require additional information to be provided in your letter, follow the instructions under the *Other Letter* option to contact the Graduate School.

2.4 Your academic supervisors and supervisory meetings

Supervision by subject specialists is a fundamental and indispensable element in the research degree process. As a doctoral researcher, you will have a Director of Studies (DoS) who will take the lead in the administration of your research progress, plus at least one secondary supervisor. All meetings with your Director of Studies and/or supervisory team must be written up in a Supervisory Log in the [VRE](#) (*My Project – Supervision Meetings*) and signed off by you and your Director of Studies.

You should have your first meeting with your Director of Studies and/or full supervisory team **within your first two weeks after enrolment** and this meeting should establish the schedule of supervisory meetings for at least the first six months of study.

This first meeting with your Director of Studies / supervisory team should also provide the opportunity for you to complete a [skills assessment](#) form, enabling your skills, training, and development needs for the coming year to be discussed, agreed, and planned for. This assessment will refer to the [Doctoral Researcher Development Programme \(DRDP\) website](#), detailing the development workshops being offered during the course of the year. The skills assessment will then be reviewed alongside your Annual Progress Review each year (or every other year for part-time students).

An early meeting should also address the need for any appropriate risk assessments to be undertaken – further guidance can be obtained from the University's Safety, Health and Wellbeing team (email: shw@westminster.ac.uk).

Formal supervisory meetings are an opportunity for you to discuss your progress, share your findings, and alert your Director of Studies and other supervisors to any problems. These meetings are an important part of your working relationship with your supervisory team, and it is important that you spend some time thinking about what you can do to make them as constructive as possible.

You are responsible for taking the initiative in planning and organising meetings with your supervisor. Go into the meetings with a clear idea of what you want to discuss and, where relevant, take work to show your progress so your they can provide feedback.

Before the meeting

- Take the initiative in agreeing a mutually convenient schedule of meetings with your Director of Studies.
- Prepare a short agenda (or email) of items that you would like to discuss and forward this to your Director of Studies a few days in advance of the meeting.
- Prepare some work for you to discuss at each meeting - as with the agenda, your Director of Studies may find it helpful to receive a copy of any work you intend to discuss before the meeting.
- If you are intending to send written work, that you would like feedback on, then make sure that you send this in advance of your scheduled meeting and give your DOS/Supervisory team reasonable notice.
- Think about how your skills, training and development needs are being progressed and supported, and any specific requests you would like to make to your Director of Studies.

During the meeting

- Be prepared and feel comfortable in directing the discussion and making sure it follows the agenda as much as possible - do not expect your Director of Studies to do all the talking, they will want to hear from you.
- Ask questions - formal supervisory meetings are the best place for more detailed questions as they provide a private and quiet space in which you and your Director of Studies can think together.

After the meeting

- Submit, via the [VRE](#), a record of each meeting with your Director of Studies/supervisor(s), containing a mutually agreed summary of the key items discussed and agreed deadlines. These records will provide an invaluable reference that you can draw on as you prepare your thesis for submission and use to check that you have addressed all the suggestions made by your supervisors. Both you and your supervisor must confirm the meeting notes for it to be officially submitted to the VRE.

Please remember that if you are unable to work on your research due to sickness, you should notify your Director of Studies immediately – see [Research Degree Regulation B7.31](#) for further details.

2.5 Engagement and attendance monitoring

The Graduate School monitors the engagement and attendance of doctoral researchers to ensure that you are receiving sufficient supervisory support and are on course to meet key academic stages in a timely fashion. A key part of this monitoring is for regular meetings to take place between you and your Director of Studies and other members of your supervisor team, as appropriate – see [Research Degree Regulation B3](#). It is your responsibility to ensure these meetings are scheduled and documented in the [VRE](#).

2.6 Student Visa Information

Please see the guidance and information at [Appendix D](#).

2.7 Standard Visitor Visa

Please see the guidance and information at [Appendix D](#).

2.8 Studentships

If you are in receipt of a University of Westminster studentship, a Research Council (UKRI) studentship, or any other kind of studentship, which includes an annual stipend, you will receive your first monthly payment shortly after enrolment (normally 2 to 3 weeks after enrolment).

Subsequent monthly payments are then made directly to your bank account by the 1st of the month. Please note that unlike salary payments, stipend payments are made in advance of the month to which they relate. Payments will be made to reach your bank account towards the end of the month (normally around the 29th) preceding the month for which the payment is due. For example, December's stipend payment should reach your bank account on 29th

November. The payment dates shown below have been adjusted to take account of weekends, Bank Holidays and University closure days. Where the normal payment date falls on a weekend, payment will normally be made on the preceding Friday or the following Monday.

The monthly stipend payment schedule for 2026/27 is as follows:

Disbursement Date		Funds to be received by Stipendiary's bank account*	
Tuesday	1st September	Friday	28th August
Thursday	1st October	Monday	28th September
Sunday	1st November	Friday	30th October
Tuesday	1st December	Friday	27th November
Friday	1st January	Wednesday	23rd December
Monday	1st February	Friday	29th January
Monday	1st March	Friday	26th February
Thursday	1st April	Tuesday	30th March
Saturday	1st May	Friday	30th April
Tuesday	1st June	Friday	28th May
Thursday	1st July	Monday	28th June
Sunday	1st August	Tuesday	27th July

**while the University's Finance department are committed to these dates, this is dependent on the processing times of individual banks and this is beyond the University's control.*

If you change your bank account at any time, please notify the Graduate School so that we can amend your payment details.

If you [suspend](#) your studies during your studentship (including for maternity, paternity, adoption, parental, or shared parental leave), your studentship will also be suspended for the duration of your suspension. Please note that it is not always possible to suspend the stipend in correlation with the agreed period of suspension. In these cases, the Graduate School will be in touch with you to confirm the stipend payment pattern.

Once your studentship expires you are responsible for paying your tuition fees – please refer to the terms and conditions of your studentship in your offer letter.

Please Note: If you are funded by one of the UKRI research councils:

- you may be entitled to funding during any periods of sickness, maternity, paternity, parental or shared parental leave.
- Please contact the Graduate School for further information.
- Submission of your final thesis for examination will normally be expected by the end of the agreed funding period.

2.9 Researcher Development

Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP)

The Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP) is a suite of free, tailor-made workshops, specialist skills sessions and personal development planning activities, designed for doctoral researchers at University of Westminster.

The programme has been developed around the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#), a tool that helps researchers plan their professional development. This means that all of our provision has been designed to help you explore and develop the wide range of knowledge, skills and behaviours of researchers to support your doctoral studies and future career.

A dedicated [DRDP website](#) provides comprehensive information on each of the workshops and activities.

All DRDP workshops and activities can be searched and booked on the Inkpath platform. Inkpath helpfully recommends DRDP workshops based on your preferences. You can also build a personalised portfolio that records your DRDP attendance, as well as other internal and external training, including conferences, exhibitions, and publications. Inkpath can be accessed through the Inkpath Web App or by downloading the Inkpath mobile app (Android and iOS).

Together with your Director of Studies, you will plan the workshop sessions that you will be attending each year, based on your own specific project and development needs (this is known as the skills assessment process or audit).

Teaching Opportunities and Training

Doctoral researchers may be contracted by their School to undertake teaching duties. If you are asked to undertake teaching or are interested in taking on teaching duties, in the first instance, please liaise with your Director of Studies.

All doctoral researchers teaching on modules that require them to mark assessments are required to attend a University or College Assessment and Feedback workshop and/or to complete the [University Certificate of Special Study: Supporting Learning in HE](#). This must be done prior to the first assessment that requires marking and feedback. This is a 20-credit module managed by the University's [Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation](#) (CETI). To gain the 20 credits, you will need to have the required level of teaching hours/experience. The Certificate will be run 3 times a year (Semester 1, Semester 2, and over the summer period).

If you do not have the required level of teaching experience/hours to undertake the above Certificate, a series of sessions will be offered for those doctoral researchers wishing to gain teaching experience/knowledge as part of the DRDP.

Further information on teaching opportunities and training can be found on the [DRDP webpages](#).

Funding Opportunities

The Graduate School is proud to offer three funding schemes to support its Doctoral Researchers with their studies at the University of Westminster – the Globally Engaged Research Doctoral Scholarship Scheme, Professor Geoffrey Petts Memorial Fund and the Doctoral Researcher Hardship Fund.

Doctoral Researcher Hardship Fund aims to support doctoral researchers facing unexpected financial challenges, ensuring that PhD candidates, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed and thrive in their educational pursuits. The scheme aims to help and award doctoral researchers with funds to respond to unexpected or unforeseen costs. The scheme cannot be used to pay tuition fees. See our [Doctoral Researcher Hardship Fund page](#) for further information, including details on how to apply.

Globally Engaged Research Doctoral Scholarships are available for the following four activities 1) Participation in academic or professional conferences nationally or internationally, where doctoral researchers have been selected to present their research; 2) Attendance at and participation in training courses and workshops, to develop and enhance research methods skills; 3) Organisation of seminars and conferences at the University of Westminster. This funding is for doctoral researcher-initiated events which seek to foster and develop our research community both within the university and beyond it; 4) Doctoral researcher led training/development where funding is awarded for a specific piece of training or development activity that is not on offer at Westminster. Funds would cover costs of hosting a training event which would be open to all doctoral researchers See our [Globally Engaged Research Doctoral Scholarship Scheme page](#) for further information, including details on how to apply.

Professor Geoffrey Petts Memorial Fund was established in memory of the late Professor Geoffrey Petts, former Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Westminster, to recognise the distinguished contributions he made to interdisciplinary river science research and his belief that all students, regardless of their financial situation, should have the opportunity to succeed. The Professor Geoffrey Petts Memorial Fund offers two forms of financial support to doctoral researchers 1) Financial support to undertake fieldwork and 2) Financial support for the purchase of research equipment. The fund offers particular support for interdisciplinary research which addresses global challenges. See our [Professor Geoffrey Petts Memorial Fund page](#) for further information, including details on how to apply.

Doctoral Researcher Study Spaces

Doctoral Researchers have access to dedicated study spaces across the University:

Graduate School		
Graduate School	UG03, Regent Street	Kitchen, group table and comfortable chairs for unwinding for all PGRs.
Liberal Arts and Sciences		
Life Sciences	Room 3.05, 3 rd Floor, 115 New Cavendish	29 desks, some of which are used for hot desking
Humanities	Humanities Doctoral Researchers are encouraged to use UG03.	
Social Sciences	Sociology, Criminology, Politics and IR: Wells Street, 404 and 417.	12 desks
	Psychology – 7.108, 7 th Floor, Copland Building, 115 New Cavendish	10 desks, some of which are used for hot desking
	Psychology – G.01, Ground Floor, 115 New Cavendish	

Law	Little Titchfield Street, 1 st floor	16 spaces
Westminster Business School		
	Garden Room, Luxborough Annex, Marylebone	Hotdesking and has a little kitchen etc.
Creative Arts and Technologies		
Architecture and Cities	Garden Room, Luxborough Annex, Marylebone	Operates on a hot-desking basis.
Arts	JG41 and JG44, Harrow	Operate on a hot-desking basis.
Media and Communication	JG41 and JG44, Harrow	Operate on a hot-desking basis.
Computer Science and Engineering	2.101, 2 nd Floor, Copland Building, 115 New Cavendish	Approx 20 desks shared with Psychology. Some are used for hot desking.
General University Spaces		
New Cavendish	Dedicated Study room, 4 th Floor of New Cavendish Library	
Marylebone	Library, 1 st Floor and on the Learning platform in the main reception area on the ground floor	
You can alternatively book any room on campus via https://www.westminster.ac.uk/studies/library-and-study-spaces/study-spaces-on-campus		

2.10 Best Practice in Research: Guidance and Policies

Academic Regulations

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the current [Research Degree Academic Regulations](#). All doctoral awards operate in accordance with the University's Research Degree Academic Regulations and the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in 2008. Please also see [Appendix B](#) for Award Descriptors for Masters and Doctoral degrees.

Plagiarism Detection

Plagiarism is presenting the work of another as one's own without proper acknowledgement. It is a serious academic offence. Please refer to the [University's guidance on plagiarism](#).

This definition applies to written material, for example, encompassing direct quotations and summaries/paraphrases, and other forms of original work, for example, music, art and design works, images, drawings, diagrams, data, computer programmes, ideas, and inventions. It includes:

- published and unpublished sources, including the work of other students.
- the need to cite contributions of others to composite pieces of group work.
- reuse of one's own work.
- unacknowledged use of a wide range of ideas and materials, not just the written word.

As part of your final thesis submission, the submitted version of your thesis must be put through text-matching software Turnitin. You and your Director of Studies will be asked to

confirm that this has been done when submitting the thesis via the VRE. Please liaise with your Director of Studies in the first instance.

Use of Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLM)

While Generative AI tools and Large Language Models (LLM) can be useful for some aspects of your studies, doctoral research will always require your own original and distinctive input and critical thinking and analysis. The University of Westminster is committed to upholding responsible research practices, and we have [policies and procedures](#) in place which outline our commitment to high research integrity and accountability to a positive research environment. This also applies to the use of generative AI.

The University of Westminster distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate uses of GenAI and LLM by doctoral researchers. At the University of Westminster, the following is **NOT permitted**:

- Producing an AI-generated output for your drafts, Annual Progress Review (APR), Thesis or Viva Voce and passing it as your own work.
- Submitting a draft or other written output to a GenAI and requesting the system to rephrase it in proper English or restructure it.
- To include outputs from GenAI systems (such as ChatGPT) **without disclosure**.

Doctoral Researchers should consult both the University's [Guidance for students on the use of Generative AI](#) and [Guidance for Doctoral Researchers on the use of Generative AI](#) when considering using AI in their research.

Inappropriate use of GenAI and LLM risks contravening the principles of academic integrity and **can be deemed as [academic misconduct](#)**.

Research Integrity

All documents relating to Research Integrity can be found in the [University Research Framework](#). The University takes its responsibilities for research integrity seriously and expects all those engaged in research, including its doctoral researchers, to comply with the requirements of the University Framework for Research Governance, irrespective of the sources of their funding, or their area of research.

As a doctoral researcher you will be required to not only follow the [Research Degree Academic Regulations](#), but also adhere to both the [University Code of Research Good Practice](#) and the [University Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research](#).

Research Ethics

Research Ethics is a critical component of Research Integrity and is an ongoing process that needs to be considered, understood, and applied by the researcher through the entire research life cycle. This includes from project inception, proposal, data collection, analysis, writing-up, publication and dissemination of results, through to any post project archiving of research data. A project's ethical assessment and approval should be revisited as needed.

For this reason, you will be asked to assess the ethical implications of your research at each Annual Progress Review (APR) as a minimum. **The first ethics application must be submitted in time for APR1**. A review should also take place if there are any substantive

changes to the research protocol at other times of the year. For any questions on research ethics please email: research-ethics@westminster.ac.uk.

Information Compliance, Records Management, and Information Security

A variety of regulations govern what types of information the University can collect. These regulations also prescribe how the University should keep it and who the University should share it with. Further information and the associated policies can be found on the [Information Compliance, Records Management and Information Security web page](#).

Open Access and E-thesis

[Open access](#) is about making the products of research freely accessible to all. The University of Westminster is committed to open access research as a good principle.

An e-thesis is a digital copy of the completed, accepted thesis. It should reflect any changes made in the final stages of completion and should be your final thesis. These electronic versions are much more easily distributed and remove the problem of research being hidden from most users and available only on library shelves. Your thesis will be made available for immediate download, free of charge, to researchers worldwide via [WestminsterResearch](#) and the [British Library EThOS](#) service.

[WestminsterResearch](#) is an online digital repository that aims to capture the intellectual output of the University and be a resource containing details of all research and scholarly output. This enables the research output of the University to be available to a wider audience.

[WestminsterResearch](#) has been available since 2006 and already lists over 15000 research outputs produced by members of the University's academic community, including items such as books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers, artefacts, exhibitions and many more types of research. It is openly available to anyone, anywhere, through the internet, acting as a window to Westminster's research. Adding theses to the online repository allows all the products of research to be made available in one location, accredited by the University.

[WestminsterResearch](#) is included in national and global registries including the [Registry of Open Access Repositories \(ROAR\)](#) and the [Directory of Open Access Repositories \(OpenDOAR\)](#). Due to the software we use, WestminsterResearch results are highly ranked by popular search engines such as Google.

EThOS (Electronic Theses Online Service) is run by the British Library and aims to make all UK PhD and MPhil theses available to download from one central hub. More guidance and Frequently Asked Questions can be found on the [British Library EThOS database](#).

By adding your thesis to WestminsterResearch and EThOS, you will make your research available to a much wider audience and increase your visibility as a researcher.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

As the author of the thesis, ownership of the intellectual property (IP) of your thesis remains with you, unless you re-assign ownership.

For all doctoral researchers who have not assigned their IP to the University, copyright protection is automatically given once an idea is fixed, for example, when you submit your final thesis. This means that you do not have to apply for copyright although you may wish to assert

your copyright ownership with an obvious statement prominently displayed toward the beginning of your thesis, e.g. © John Smith, 2010.

By submitting your thesis to WestminsterResearch and EThOS (see [above](#)) you are giving permission for your work to be reproduced - this does not alter the ownership of the copyright.

Every thesis in WestminsterResearch will also include a top sheet with the following statement:

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners. Whilst further distribution of specific materials from within this archive is forbidden, you may freely distribute the URL of WestminsterResearch: <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/>

The University [Code of Good Research Practice](#) includes further information on the [University's Intellectual Property policy](#).

Third Party Copyright

Your thesis is likely to contain material where the copyright is owned by a person or body other than yourself. This may include extracts from publications such as books or journals, or illustrations such as images, maps, photographs, tables etc.

Traditionally it has been accepted that copyright material can be included in the print version of a thesis without the permission of the rights holder. However, the subsequent digitisation and online availability of the thesis means this is no longer the case.

To enable you to re-publish these works, you will need to gain permission from the copyright owner to include the material within your thesis, and this permission should include the right to publish your thesis electronically in both WestminsterResearch and EThOS.

It is likely to be much easier to gain the permissions you require as you write your thesis, rather than leaving this until you are about to submit as some publishers can take a long time to grant permission. To prevent delays in awarding degrees, doctoral researchers and their supervisors should consider potential copyright permissions at an early stage, for example, as part of the Annual Progress Review (APR) process - [section 3.2](#).

In all cases, sufficient acknowledgment should be given, and you should reflect carefully upon the contents of your thesis and whether any additional permissions be needed, or confidentiality protected before presenting it for deposit in WestminsterResearch.

When you write to gain permission, you should ensure you have the correct contact details of either the copyright holder themselves, if it is an individual, or the rights/permissions department of the publisher in question. Including a copy of the text extract or image will ensure there is no confusion over what it is that your request refers to.

For your final submission after the examination, if you are unable to gain permission for any third-party content included in your thesis, then you should submit a redacted electronic version with a separate Word/PDF document for University staff detailing what has been removed. You may wish to include a blank space in place of any missing illustration etc. stating, "this material is unavailable due to copyright restrictions".

In the unlikely event that a copyright holder contacts us reporting potential abuse or material appearing without permission, the thesis will be removed from public view whilst the complaint is investigated.

PhD by Published Work – by its very nature this type of PhD may include a great deal of content where the copyright is now owned by the publishers of the material. In this case we are able to use the accompanying commentary and contents list in WestminsterResearch. Readers would then be able to access the published materials from their original, published source.

More information on matters relating to copyright is provided by [The Intellectual Property Office](#).

Thesis Embargo and Confidentiality

As a public institution, the University is committed to the principle of open access publishing of research (theses, books, articles etc). This is in line with UK government policy aimed at ensuring open access to scholarly literature. Hence, the Graduate School expects that all doctoral theses upon completion are published online through WestminsterResearch, and Ethos.

However, the University recognises the need, in exceptional circumstances, to consider individual applications for thesis embargo. Sometimes it may be necessary to request that a thesis is not made openly available through WestminsterResearch and EThoS.

Where a candidate, the University or a sponsor wishes the thesis or part of the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, an application should be made to the Graduate School by no later than the application of approval for exam arrangements. However, to prevent delays in awarding degrees, doctoral researchers and their supervisors are advised to consider a possible embargo at an early stage.

If you wish to apply for an embargo, applications must be submitted via the [VRE](#). To start the application process, log on to the system and select: **My Project > Request Changes > Thesis Embargo**

An application may be considered for the purposes of:

- a) exploitation of Intellectual Property
- b) to permit the publication of a research output, e.g. monograph, or
- c) to protect the wellbeing of a person involved in politically or security sensitive research.

Evidence will be required to support an application for any of these purposes. The period of embargo is normally two years. However doctoral researchers who are awarded a University of Westminster Studentship or are externally funded may only be permitted an embargo for one year. All applications for embargoes are reviewed by the Research Degrees Progression Committee.

The following are possible types of embargo:

Electronic – both WestminsterResearch and EThoS

- Thesis is unchanged but is not published

Redaction

- Information has been deleted or blacked out

Pseudonym

- Thesis is unchanged but is published under a different name (a name must be provided by the doctoral researcher)

Pseudonym and redaction

- Thesis is unchanged but is published under a different name and information has been deleted or blacked out

Metadata only published

- A record giving details of the thesis is made available within Westminster Research and EThOS but the full text of the thesis is not attached. A hard copy of the thesis will be required and made available for readers to consult within the Library.

Academic Research Misconduct

The [University Code of Research Good Practice and Framework for Research Governance](#) sets out its expectations as to the proper conduct of research and applies to all members of the University who undertake research, including doctoral researchers.

Indicative examples of unacceptable conduct which may result in disciplinary action for misconduct include:

- Unethical behaviour in the conduct of research
- Plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources
- Producing a generative AI output and presenting it as one's own work.
- Fabrication, falsification, or corruption of research data
- Unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially

For more information, please refer to the *Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct* on the [Research Governance web page](#).

Research Degree Student Charter

The [Student Charter](#) sets out the University's responsibility to you and highlights what we expect from you in return. The University sets out its expectations in relation to behaviour in the [Student Code of Conduct](#). It is important that you make yourself aware of these rights and responsibilities.

The Graduate School's Research Degree Student Charter sets out these expectations within the doctoral research environment. The Graduate School's aim is to provide a distinctive, high quality, vibrant and inspiring experience for doctoral researchers, and within this spirit:

- **Mutual respect and courtesy:** There is an expectation that all members of the Graduate School community, including academic staff, professional services staff, and doctoral researchers, treat each other with mutual respect and professional courtesy in order to foster a supportive and inclusive environment.
- **Communication** from the Graduate School and other members of staff to research degree students is vital in ensuring that important information is effectively communicated. It is the responsibility of research degree students to make sure that they read email communications, whether from the Graduate School, individual

members of staff, or other students promptly and carefully. In turn, research degree students can expect a response from academic staff and professional services staff within 5 working days. Academic staff and professional services staff should be aware of the [effective use of email](#) guidance.

- **University regulations, policies and frameworks.** There is an expectation that doctoral researchers make themselves aware of policies and good practice within the University's research environment and as detailed within the [University's research framework](#). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of all doctoral researchers and supervisory teams to be familiar with the Research Degree Academic Regulations and Research Degree Handbook which can be found in the [Academic Programme section on the Graduate School web page](#).
- **Supervisory Team:** Doctoral researchers can expect to be supported by an experienced and appropriately qualified supervisory team who will provide advice and guidance in respect of the research project itself, the development of research skills and training, and pastoral support and signposting.
- **Attendance:** There is an expectation that where a meeting (including supervision meetings), training event (including DRDP workshops and sessions), or any other appointment has been scheduled and booked, that this will be attended. If due to unforeseen circumstances, it is not possible to attend any meeting, event or appointment, apologies must be sent to the organiser in advance with as much notice as possible. Non-attendance at prior booked meetings or events, without notification to the organiser, is impolite, costly, and impacts adversely on organisers and other attendees.
- **Hours of Work and Leave Entitlement:** Doctoral Researchers are expected to devote, on average, 35 hours per week (for full-time students) or 15 hours per week (for part-time students) to their research. Reasonable amounts of annual leave (up to 35 days for full-time students, pro-rata for part-time doctoral researchers) can be agreed between the doctoral researcher and their Director of Studies. Doctoral researchers are also entitled to maternity, paternity, adoption, parental and shared parental leave (details of which can be found in the [Research Degree Regulations and Research Degree Handbook](#)).
- **Teaching Duties:** Doctoral Researchers who undertake teaching duties which require them to mark assessments are required to complete a University or College Assessment and Feedback workshop or complete the [University Certificate of Special Study: Supporting Learning in Higher Education](#).
- **Teaching Hours:** The availability of teaching hours will be dependent upon resource and capacity issues within a specific College and School, and the University cannot guarantee that teaching hours will be available to all research degree students.
- **Research Integrity and Ethics:** Doctoral Researchers and their supervisory teams should be particularly aware of current policies and procedures in respect of plagiarism, research integrity, research ethics, research data management, and open access (see the [Research Degree Regulations](#), [Research Degree Handbook](#), and [Research Framework](#) for further information).

- **Annual Progress Reviews and Thesis submission:** There is an expectation that all Annual Progress Reviews (APR) submissions and thesis submissions will be made on time. Equally, there is an expectation that feedback and decisions from APR and thesis submissions will be provided in a timely manner.
- **Visas:** It is the responsibility of those Doctoral Researchers on Student Visas to ensure they comply with all requirements of their visa, and that they inform the University of any changes in circumstances that may have an impact on their visa status. Please contact the [Student Centre](#) with any questions relating to visa requirements or change in visa status.
- **Raise concerns in a timely manner:** If something goes wrong during the research degree programme, or circumstances change that impact on the project, this must be raised at the earliest possible time with an appropriate member of staff (usually the Director of Studies in the first instance, but this could also be the School Doctoral Coordinator, Doctoral Tutor, or the [Graduate School](#)). It is much easier to resolve any problems or concerns if these are highlighted as they occur rather than in retrospect.

2.11 Student Wellbeing

General Wellbeing

Undertaking postgraduate research is both a rewarding and challenging experience. You will be faced with many pressures and you may sometimes feel frustrated and anxious. It is important to realise that such feelings are common to many doctoral researchers and there is specialist support available, if you need it, through the University's Counselling Service (see [Section 4](#)).

The Graduate School also run regular Wellbeing When Writing workshops and further information and resources can be found on the [Wellbeing when writing resources](#) web page.

During 2026/27 the Graduate School will be offering one residential writing retreat, as well as one-day, campus-based writing days. Further information can be found on the [DRDP website](#).

Wellbeing Workshops for Doctoral Researchers

As part of the DRDP, workshops are offered to support doctoral researchers on a range of key topics such as supervisory relationships, imposter syndrome, isolation and work/life balance. For more information see the [DRDP website](#).

2.12 Disability Learning Support

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive research environment for doctoral researchers with disabilities and specific learning differences.

If you have a disability, long-term health condition, mental health condition or specific learning difference, you are encouraged to disclose this at the earliest opportunity. Early disclosure enables appropriate advice, guidance and support to be put in place from the outset of your engagement with the University.

To receive reasonable adjustments during your programme, you must register with [Disability Learning Support \(DLS\)](#).

How to register and book an appointment with DLS

1. Register – Log in [to SRS](#) with your University username, go to the Disability Support tab, and follow the steps to register.
2. Book an appointment – Once registered, schedule a meeting with a Disability Adviser via the [Engage Appointment Booking](#) link to discuss your needs and tailor your support plan.
 - We encourage you to upload any supporting documentation that states your disability (if you have it).
 - You will also need to provide written consent to receive support.

Reasonable adjustments will then be implemented as appropriate to support your studies.

Further information on Disability Learning Support is available in [Section 4](#).

Details of the individual examination and assessment arrangements are outlined in [section B4 of the Research Degree Academic Regulations](#).

2.13 Complaints and Appeals

Informal Complaints

The University works hard to provide a high-quality service to you at all times and in all areas and activities. However, if you ever feel that the standard of academic or service delivery falls short of what may reasonably be expected, where possible you should first discuss the problem with your Director of Studies or another member of your supervisory team.

If your Director of Studies cannot resolve the issue, or if you are unable - or would prefer not - to raise the issue with one of your supervisors, you can speak with your School Doctoral Coordinator, a Doctoral Tutor, or the Graduate School for further advice. See [Section 1.1](#) for contact information.

Formal Complaints Procedure

To find out how best to raise and resolve issues, please refer to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

As there are time limits for making complaints, we would encourage you to raise any concerns as early as possible. It is often easier to achieve a successful resolution if concerns are raised earlier rather than later. If you have any queries about this process, please contact the Student Complaints team at studentcentre@westminster.ac.uk.

Academic Appeals against a decision of the Graduate School Board

An academic appeal can only be submitted on the grounds that there has been demonstrable material irregularity in the conduct of the Graduate School Board in relation to an assessment, examination and/or a decision to exclude a candidate due to a lack of academic progress.

The procedure provides a framework within which a candidate may seek to challenge a decision in order to protect against potential unfairness resulting from an omission or error on

the part of the University - please see the [Research Degree Appeal Procedure](#) for further information.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

Some of the following sections contain references to the current [Research Degree Academic Regulations](#) and you are advised to refer to these when consulting this handbook.

Please Note: If you are in receipt of external funding from a UKRI Research Council, specific UKRI regulations and Terms and Conditions will take precedence over the University of Westminster's Academic Regulations for Research Degrees.

3.1 The Virtual Research Environment (VRE)

The [VRE](#) is the Graduate School's online system that operates on desktops, tablets and mobiles and allows you to manage your doctoral researcher record from anywhere in the world.

Part of the [VRE](#) is used to manage the administrative processes associated with the doctoral researcher lifecycle which includes:

- Annual Progress Reviews (APR) – [Section 3.2](#)
- Research Supervision meetings
- Submission of thesis for examination (and post-viva revisions and amendments)
- Degree conferment
- Change Requests - [Section 3.4](#)
- Project Information
- Research Ethics applications

To [login to the VRE](#) you must use your University of Westminster ID and password. Once logged in, click on the **My Record** button to access, and view your record. User guides and manuals to all processes within the [VRE](#) are available via the Guides button on the left-hand menu.

For candidates with a Student Visa the VRE is also used to record and monitor your engagement with the University, which is part of our statutory obligations to the UK Home Office.

For any further questions or advice on how to use the [VRE](#) please contact the [Graduate School](#).

3.2 Annual Progress Review (APR)

Our research degree programme follows a structure designed to support you through your research, to enable you to submit your thesis within your enrolment period and allows you to reflect on your progress so far and plan for the following year.

PhD via Published Work - Please note that Doctoral Researchers on this route **do not have to undertake Annual Progress Reviews as part of their programme structure**. Those on

this route are encouraged to meet with their Director of Studies to review progress as and when required.

The progress of all doctoral researchers is assessed through our **Annual Progress Review (APR) process** annually (full-time) or biennially (part-time) until you submit your thesis for examination. The process also gives doctoral researchers and supervisors the opportunity to raise and address any concerns so that appropriate support can be agreed and arranged. In addition to your School/College, the Graduate School may make its own assessment and overturn School/College decisions on the outcome of an APR submission.

At the beginning of the year, you should meet with your Director of Studies to discuss the requirements of your forthcoming APR to ensure that you are prepared and on track to submit by the deadline. You can find which APR you are due to submit through the [VRE: My Project](#) > **Annual Progress Review**

You should use the APR process to get into the habit of writing from the start of your research by building on each APR chapter(s) every year so you are writing your thesis as you go along. Writing your thesis is part of the process of research and analysis rather than something to do once your research is finished.

It can be tempting to leave a substantial part of your writing until the end of the doctorate, but be wary of doing this as:

- writing is a skill that needs to be practised - the more you write the easier it will become;
- writing helps you to think through what you are doing and forces you to analyse and make connections;
- a doctoral thesis is a long document and better tackled in small blocks.

APR submission dates

You will be required to complete the APR via the [VRE](#).

- **September starters submit an APR on 1 May each year.**
- **January starters submit an APR on 1 October each year.**

If this date falls on a weekend, a bank holiday, or during a University holiday closure period, submission must be made by the next working day.

You can track the progress of your APR in the [VRE](#) and you will be informed of your APR outcome via the VRE, normally by 8 weeks of the submission deadline date.

Earlier APR submission: If you are progressing well with your research, and are planning your next APR submission, your Director of Studies can apply for you to submit your APR at an earlier APR point of up to one year before your original APR deadline date (for example if your APR 3 is due on 1st May 2026, a request can be made to bring this APR forward to 1st May 2025, 1st August 2025, 1st October 2025, or 1st March 2026). Please be aware that you can start your APR at any time of the year, but your submission will only be assessed in line with your deadline.

Early Upgrade: MPhil/PhD doctoral researchers recommended to undertake early upgrade to PhD on the advice of their Director of Studies would follow the APR 2 process in year 1.

Suspension: To ensure parity across all doctoral research assessment periods, your APR schedule will be altered if you take a suspension or change your mode of attendance. This may result in your APR deadline changing to either 1 October, 1 March, 1 May or 1 August and will be determined by the Graduate School. Your [VRE](#) record will be updated to reflect these changes for the remaining enrolment period.

Extension: If you have been granted an extension at the end of your enrolment period (see Requesting an Extension - [Regulation B7.22](#)), you will normally be required to repeat APR4. This will be determined by the Graduate School.

Remediation: If the APR (1-3) decision is for a period of remediation to be undertaken before progress is agreed, you should contact your supervisory team to discuss the outcome of your APR and the work you need to complete by the resubmission deadline. *Please be aware that the period of remediation does not affect future APR dates nor your registration end date – these remain unchanged.*

When resubmitting work associated with remediation, you should submit a commentary to identify how the required changes have been completed. Please see [Regulation B6.5](#) for details on possible remediation outcomes.

If the APR 4 decision is unsatisfactory a supportive plan should be put in place with your Director of Studies to ensure timely completion of your thesis. This should be recorded in the [VRE](#) as a supervisory meeting.

Once you have submitted your thesis for examination you are no longer required to submit any future APRs.

APR Structure

The tables below show which year APRs take place for each Research Degree Programme. **There is no APR required for PhD by Published Work.**

Full time

Programme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
MPhil/PhD	APR1	APR2	APR3	APR4
PhD Direct	APR1	APR2	APR3	APR4
MPhil only	APR1	APR2	APR4	-

Part time

Programme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
MPhil/PhD	-	APR1	-	APR2	-	APR3	-	APR4
PhD Direct	-	APR1	-	APR2	-	APR3	-	APR4
MPhil only	-	APR1	-	APR2	APR4	-	-	-

Requirements for each APR

The tables below detail the requirements of each specific APR.

Annual Progress Review 1

APR1 Aim - Assess the progress of the doctoral project since enrolment

APR requirements

1. An overview progress report (3000 words) which must comprise of the following:
 - a) Research objectives
 - b) Research question(s)
 - c) Literature overview
 - d) Methodology
 - e) Time plan
 - f) Research governance: ethics, ATAS, insurance, copyright
 - g) Contribution to knowledge (Not MPhil only)
2. One draft chapter, report, paper, or equivalent depending on the discipline. This should be between 7,000-15,000 words in length depending on discipline and the nature of the project. The contents of this chapter should be agreed with the candidate's supervisory team. (The MPhil is only 3,000-7,000 words)

3. A completed Skills Assessment Form

You should complete the [Skills Assessment Form](#) to identify the areas of development you would like to focus on and the activities and training you will aim to complete. To prepare, we suggest meeting with your Director of Studies (DOS)/Supervisory team early in the term to discuss and identify your training and development needs for the year ahead. This will include relevant workshops offered within the Doctoral Researcher Development Programme and taking advantage of other opportunities such as attending conferences and external training.

Your Skills Assessment Form needs to be completed in time for your APR 1 and uploaded with the APR1 submission.

APR assessed by

- Report from the Director of Studies
- Independent Assessor (normally University staff)
- School Doctoral Coordinator
- Graduate School Board

APR outcome

1. Successful progression and continuation on the intended route (MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD Direct)
2. Unsuccessful progression. A three-month period of remediation will be instigated.

Remediation outcome

1. Successful and continuation on the intended route (MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD Direct)
2. Unsuccessful and exclusion

Annual Progress Review 2

APR2 Aim - Upgrade to PhD (MPhil/PhD) or assess progress and check on course to achieve intended award (MPhil only and PhD Direct)

APR Requirements

1. An overview progress report (3000 words) which must comprise of the following:
 - a) Research accomplished to date
 - b) Time/work plan for further research
 - c) Methodological/other challenges
 - d) Any significant change to project design
 - e) Research governance: ethics, ATAS, insurance, copyright
 - f) Contribution to knowledge (Not MPhil only)
2. Two to three draft chapters, reports, papers or equivalent dependent on the discipline (20,000-40,000 words (or equivalent) whose contents have been agreed with supervisors. (The MPhil is 15,000-30,000 words.)
3. A completed Skills Assessment Form

You should review and update your completed [Skills Assessment Form](#) from APR 1 to identify the areas of development you would like to focus on and the activities and training you will aim to complete for the forthcoming year. This will then need to be uploaded with the APR submission.

APR assessed by

- Report from the Director of Studies
- Independent Assessor (normally University staff)
- Viva
- School Doctoral Coordinator
- Graduate School Board

APR outcome

1. Successful progression and upgrade to PhD (MPhil/PhD) or Successful progression (MPhil only & PhD Direct)
2. Unsuccessful progression. A three-month period of remediation will be instigated
3. Unsuccessful progression. A six-month period of remediation will be instigated

Remediation outcome

1. Successful and continuation on the intended route (MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD Direct)
2. Unsuccessful and exclusion

3. Unsuccessful and continuation on MPhil only route (MPhil/PhD and PhD Direct route)

Annual Progress Review 3

APR3 Aim - Review the draft thesis (Not MPhil only – move straight to APR 4)

APR requirements

1. An overview progress report (500 words) which must comprise of the following:
 - a) Draft chapters completed
 - b) Work plan for finalisation of thesis
 - c) Research governance: ethics, ATAS, insurance, copyright
 - d) Time schedule for submission
2. Three to four draft chapters, reports, papers or similar (30-60,000 words or equivalent) depending on discipline and nature of project whose contents have been agreed with Supervisors.
3. A completed Skills Assessment Form

You should review and update your completed [Skills Assessment Form](#) from APR 1 to identify the areas of development you would like to focus on and the activities and training you will aim to complete for the forthcoming year. This will then need to be uploaded with the APR submission.

APR assessed by

- Report from the Director of Studies
- Independent Assessor (normally University staff)
- School Doctoral Coordinator
- Graduate School Board

APR outcome

1. Successful progression. Continue towards final submission and examination
2. Unsuccessful progression. A three-month period of remediation will be instigated

Remediation outcome

1. Successful and continuation on the intended route (MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD Direct)
2. Unsuccessful and exclusion
3. Unsuccessful and continuation on MPhil only route (MPhil/PhD and PhD Direct route)

Annual Progress Review 4

APR4 Aim - Assess the ability of the candidate to submit their completed thesis before the end of their enrolment period

APR requirements

1. A completed draft thesis
2. Research governance: copyright, thesis embargo

APR assessed by

- Report from the Director of Studies
- School Doctoral Coordinator
- Graduate School Board

APR outcome

1. Satisfactory. Continue towards final submission and examination
2. Unsatisfactory. Continue towards final submission and examination with a supportive plan.

Remediation outcome

Not applicable

3.3 Remediation (Regulation B6)

If your Director of Studies and supervisory team feel that you are not making satisfactory progress, they may make the decision to enter you into remediation, normally for a period of three or six months. You can also be entered into remediation as part of the Annual Progress Review. The aim of the remediation process is to support you to complete your research programme. The requirements of the period of remediation are recorded in the [VRE](#). Full details are available in [Regulation B6](#).

Please be aware that the period of remediation does not affect future APR dates nor your registration end date – these remain unchanged.

3.4 Changes to your enrolment or personal circumstances

Requests to change aspects of your enrolment should be initiated by the doctoral researcher or supervisory team through the [VRE](#) for the following: **My Project > Change Requests**

- Application to defer Viva
- Change Project Mode of Study
- Change to MPhil
- Extension
- Mitigating Circumstances
- Other Change Request
- Suspension
- Thesis Embargo
- Withdraw from programme
- Writing Up status (part-time only)

Applying for a shorter minimum period of enrolment ([Regulation B2.6](#))

The minimum and maximum periods of enrolment are detailed below.

FULL-TIME STUDY

Degree	Minimum Enrolment Period	Maximum Enrolment Period
MPhil	18 months	36 months
PhD Direct	24 months	Determined upon application*
PhD via MPhil	33 months	48 months

PART-TIME STUDY

Degree	Minimum Enrolment Period	Maximum Enrolment Period
MPhil	30 months	60 months
PhD Direct	36 months	Determined upon application*
PhD via MPhil	45 months	96 months
PhD via Published Work	12 months	24 months

*see [Research Degree Academic Regulations, Section B, B1.10](#)

An application to submit a thesis before the minimum period of enrolment should be submitted by the doctoral researcher no later than the submission of the Application for Approval of Examination Arrangements – [Section 3.7](#) - through the [VRE: My Project > Change Requests > Other change request](#)

PhD via Published Work Doctoral Researchers – you cannot submit your thesis before the minimum enrolment period of 12 months. The earliest possible submission date will be one day following the first anniversary of your initial enrolment (i.e. 12 months plus one day). Please also see [Appendix C](#) in respect of fee liability for thesis submissions during the second year of study.

Change to thesis title, project, or programme

You should ensure that your thesis title is entered into the [VRE](#) (on your project page) when you first enrol. Any agreed changes to your thesis title should be updated in the [VRE](#) promptly. If you are considering changing any aspect of your approved research programme, it is important that you discuss this with your Director of Studies prior to submitting any such request.

If you are considering changing your research programme at any stage of your enrolment, e.g. PhD to MPhil, your end date will be changed in accordance with the enrolment periods detailed in the above table.

If you are on a funded studentship you may be in breach of the terms and conditions of your studentship, should you change any aspect of your agreed research programme, and this may result in your funding ending.

Doctoral researchers in the Schools of Computer Science & Engineering and Life Sciences who are in possession of a visa should be aware of potential visa and ATAS implications if changes are made to their research, e.g. changed thesis title, project or programme (PhD to MPhil). In the first instance, you should contact the [Student Centre](#).

Change in personal circumstances

If your personal circumstances change you may need to consider applying for mitigating circumstances, a suspension, an extension or to defer your examination to ensure you can complete your programme. Whilst we expect all doctoral researchers to keep to deadlines, we do appreciate that occasionally, despite the best planning, unforeseen events may occur.

The University operates a fit-to-sit policy for assessment. This means that if you submit an APR assessment or thesis, or attend any viva examination, you are deemed to have declared yourself fit to attempt the assessment and must accept the result of the assessment or examination.

The table below outlines the options available to you. Full details of the types of application are detailed and should be read in conjunction with [section B7 in the Research Degree Academic Regulations](#).

In addition, you may consider changing your mode of attendance. [See section 3.4](#).

Summary of Changes to Personal Circumstances

<u>Before thesis submission for examination</u>	Mitigating circumstances	Suspension	Extension	Defer examination
Cannot submit APR by deadline	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cannot attend APR 2 viva	Yes	No	No	No
Cannot submit thesis by the end of the enrolment period	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

<u>After thesis submission for examination but before examination</u>	Mitigating circumstances	Suspension	Extension	Defer examination
Cannot attend examination	No	No	No	Yes

<u>After examination</u>	Mitigating circumstances	Suspension	Extension	Defer examination
Cannot submit amended thesis by deadline (includes minor amendments, revisions, re-examination, and further amendments)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Mitigating Circumstances ([Regulation B7.2](#))

Mitigating Circumstances (MCs) are defined as a short term circumstance which stops you from:

- submitting your APR (including submission of your APR following a period of remediation)
- attending your APR 2 viva
- submitting your thesis for examination
- submitting your amended thesis following examination

If you are prevented from meeting your deadlines (as outlined in the above box) due to short term circumstances outside of your control you must apply for MCs.

You should be aware that for an approved MC, the deadline is normally deferred for no longer than two weeks and **your enrolment period is not extended**. If you have missed a significant part of your studies due to ill health or other personal problems, you must speak to your Director of Studies to discuss whether a [Suspension of Studies](#) would be a more suitable option (see below). You will be asked to request a deferral date on your MC application. Any request to extend a period of enrolment must be made through an [Extension request](#) (see below).

Once a new deadline date has been agreed by RDPC, submission/attendance must take place by that date, as you are only permitted to defer your deadline once.

All MC applications must be submitted via the [VRE](#). To start the application process log on to the system and select: ***My Project > Change Requests > Mitigating Circumstances***

All claims must be supported by original independent documentary evidence, such as a medical certificate or official documents relating to your circumstances. You are able to submit a request via the above [VRE](#) workflow for self-certification for reasons of illness covering the first 5 working days after the relevant submission deadline (and the self-certification request must be submitted within these first 5 working days, stating the nature of the illness). Applications for a period longer than the first 5 working days after the relevant submission deadline must be submitted with independent documentary evidence. Documents in a foreign language should include a translation which, in the first instance, can be translated by the student, but an official translated version may also be required.

You must upload a copy of this evidence to the [VRE](#) - any claim submitted without evidence will be rejected outright.

Submitted MC claims will be considered by the RDPC. A claim should be submitted as close as possible to the relevant assessment deadline, normally within 10 working days of the circumstances occurring.

For a claim to be accepted you must demonstrate that the circumstances were:

- Unforeseen
- Out of your control and could not be prevented
- Relate to the timing of your deadline

The outcome of your claim will be communicated to you via an email from the [VRE](#), normally within 5 working days after the next RDPC meeting.

If your claim is unsuccessful you have the right to submit additional evidence to support one further claim and this must be submitted within one month of receiving the outcome notification.

If the further claim is not accepted, and your APR or thesis is not submitted by the stated deadline, you will be deemed to have become inactive and risk exclusion - see [Regulation B7.37](#).

If your claim is successful you will not be charged any additional fees.

Suspension of Studies ([Regulation B7.11](#))

Suspension is defined as a period of time when you are inactive and cannot participate in your research. By suspending, your deadline will change for:

- submitting your APR
- submitting your thesis for examination
- submitting your amended thesis following examination

The University expects you to complete your studies in one continuous period of study. However, we do understand that serious, unforeseen, or unpreventable situations may arise that require you to take a formal break from your research. In these circumstances you may apply for a suspension of studies. All applications must include a statement from your Director of Studies and School PhD Coordinator before being submitted for approval by the RDPC.

If you are in the UK on a Student Visa, the University is required to notify the Home Office if you suspend. If you are no longer attending your programme, you will not be meeting the terms of your student visa and the Home Office will therefore normally shorten your visa and expect you to leave the UK. Before suspending, speak to your Director of Studies and the Student Advisers for guidance.

Doctoral Researchers on student visas are permitted to suspend studies but will have to return to their home country. You may be able to take **a sixty-day authorised absence**; however, you must remain enrolled on the programme. The number of permitted days will be added to your enrolment end date. We strongly recommend anyone on such a visa to discuss their situation with the Graduate School before seeking further information from the student advisors.

All applications for suspension must be submitted via the [VRE](#). To start the application process log on to the system and select: **My Project > Change Requests > Suspension**

All claims must be supported by independent documentary evidence, such as a medical certificate or official documents relating to your circumstances. The period requested for suspension should be supported by the information contained within the independent evidence, e.g. a GP certificate for one month being unfit for work would provide a suspension period of one month. Documents in a foreign language should include a translation which, in the first instance, can be translated by the student, but an officially translated version may also be required. You must upload a copy of this evidence to the [VRE](#); any claim submitted without evidence will be rejected outright

You should submit your application as soon as it becomes apparent that you are unable to carry out any work, normally within one month of any situation arising. Longer retrospective suspensions will not be accepted, so it is important that you raise any issues with your Director of Studies or the [Graduate School](#) as soon as possible so we can advise and support you.

Candidates are not normally permitted a period of suspension longer than 12 months over their whole period of enrolment, and similarly during the period permitted to complete thesis amendments after examination. You may apply for a one year suspension or different periods of time that do not exceed 12 months. Any request for additional time away will only be considered under very exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your thesis, it may be possible to find alternative ways to support your situation, such as a change to mode of study. Please contact the [Graduate School](#) with any questions regarding suspensions.

Wherever possible, approved suspensions will be calculated from the 1st of each month and, where relevant, your fees will be adjusted on a pro-rata basis. See [Appendix C](#) for fee liability information.

You will receive notification of the outcome of your application via an email from the [VRE](#) normally within 5 working days of the RDPC meeting. If your application is successful, your

status and enrolment end date will be amended, and you will not be expected to be undertaking any research during your approved break.

If your claim is unsuccessful you have the right to submit additional evidence to support one further claim and this must be submitted within one month of receiving the outcome notification. If the further claim is not accepted, your APR or thesis is not submitted by the stated deadline, you will be deemed to have become inactive and risk exclusion - see [Regulation B7.37](#).

We encourage all suspended doctoral researchers to remain in touch with their Director of Studies during any period of absence.

Returning from Suspension

When you re-commence your studies, your APR schedule will have been updated to take account of your suspension. This may result in your APR deadline changing to either 1 October, 1 March, 1 May, or 1 August - this will be determined by the Graduate School. Your [VRE](#) record will be updated to reflect these changes for the remaining enrolment period. Please Note: a suspension starting on an APR submission date will mean that the APR is due for submission on the first day back following the suspension period. If you wish the APR to be remapped, then please consider starting the suspension before the date the APR is due.

A supervisory meeting should also take place within one month of your return to review the work plan and timetable in line with the new end date. You should also take this opportunity to review and plan your engagement with forthcoming DRDP sessions – the [Graduate School](#) can be contacted for further guidance.

If you re-enrol later than the return date, your end date will not be changed accordingly as that period of non-enrolment has to be considered as non-engagement and not continued suspension.

Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental & Shared Parental Leave ([Regulation B7.32](#))

Maternity and adoption leave of up to 12 months can be requested through the suspension process detailed above.

Paternity, parental and shared parental leave (in line with the entitlement for employees of the University) can be arranged through your Director of Studies. The [Graduate School](#) must be informed of the arrangement so that your enrolment end date can be amended accordingly. You will need to provide evidence to support the application. If the Graduate School are not informed, your end date will not be amended, and retrospective application of paternity leave is not permitted. Apply through the [VRE: My Project > Change Requests > Suspension](#)

If you are pregnant, it is recommended that a risk assessment is undertaken for your own health, safety, and wellbeing. Therefore, you are advised to consider informing your School at the earliest opportunity.

Doctoral researchers funded by UKRI should refer to the Terms & Conditions of their studentship in respect of entitlement to maternity and paternity pay.

Extension Request ([Regulation B7.19](#))

Extension is defined as an event which occurs towards the end of your enrolment period or amended thesis deadline which means you require more time to write up your thesis or complete your practical work. By taking an extension it will extend your deadline for:

- your enrolment period and the deadline to submit your thesis for examination
- submitting your amended thesis following examination

The expectation is that all doctoral researchers will:

- submit their thesis for examination within the permitted period of enrolment; and
- submit their amended thesis following examination by the set deadline

However, we do understand that there are rare occasions where a serious or unforeseen event may impact on your progress towards the end of your enrolment or amended thesis deadline. In such situations you may be eligible to apply for an extension.

Please be aware – if an extension is approved, additional tuition fees will normally apply. See [Appendix C](#) for fee liability information.

All applications must include a statement by your supervisory team and School before being submitted for approval to the RDPC.

All applications for extension must be submitted via the [VRE](#). To start the application process log on to the system and select: **My Project > Change Requests > Extension**

All claims must be supported by independent documentary evidence, such as a medical certificate. The period requested for an extension should be supported by the information contained within the independent evidence e.g. a GP certificate for one month being unfit for work would provide an extension period of one month. Documents in a foreign language should include a translation which, in the first instance, can be translated by the student, but an official translated version may also be required. Please note that reasonable adjustments made for any disability cannot be used as your evidence for an extension request (see 2.12). You must upload a copy of your evidence to the [VRE](#). Any claim submitted without evidence will be rejected outright.

You must submit your application before the end of your enrolment period or your amended thesis submission deadline. You will normally only be permitted an extension of up to a maximum of 12 months to your period of enrolment or to your amended thesis deadline. Longer extensions are only granted in very exceptional circumstances that are supported by strong independent evidence.

Only in very exceptional circumstances can a further application for extension be submitted. Exceptional circumstances are defined as a new unexpected or unforeseen event, and not a continuation of the reason for the initial extension. If it is a continuation of the previous event you should instead suspend in line with suspension requirements.

You will receive notification of the outcome of your application via an email from the [VRE](#) normally within 5 working days of the RDPC meeting. If your application is successful, your enrolment end date will be amended to represent the permitted additional time.

If your claim is unsuccessful you have the right to submit additional evidence to support one further claim and this must be submitted within one month of receiving the outcome notification. If the further claim is not accepted, your thesis is not submitted by the stated deadline, you will be deemed to have become inactive and risk exclusion - see [Regulation B7.37](#).

In some situations where you need an extension to your enrolment period, a suspension of studies or change of mode of attendance from full-time to part-time may be a better option for you. Therefore, it is important that you discuss any problems with your supervisory team and the [Graduate School](#) as soon as possible so we can advise and support you.

Request to defer an examination ([Regulation B7.26](#))

Once you have submitted your thesis for examination, if you encounter issues which mean that you cannot attend your examination, you will need to apply to defer your viva.

As soon as you are aware that you cannot attend your examination, you should inform your Chair of Examiners and the [Graduate School](#) and apply to defer your viva.

All applications must include a statement by your Director of Studies and School PhD Coordinator before being submitted for approval by the RDPC.

All applications must be submitted via the [VRE](#). To start the application process log on to the system and select: **My Project > Change Requests > Application to Defer Viva**

All claims must be supported by independent documentary evidence, such as a medical certificate or official documents relating to your circumstances. Documents in a foreign language should include a translation which, in the first instance, can be translated by the student, but an official translated version may also be required. You must upload a copy of this evidence to the [VRE](#). Any claim submitted without evidence will be rejected outright.

If your claim is unsuccessful you have the right to submit additional evidence to support one further claim and this must be submitted within one month of receiving the outcome notification. If the further claim is not accepted, and you do not attend your examination, you will be deemed to have become inactive and risk exclusion - see [Regulation B7.37](#).

If you make an application to defer your examination more than once, the Graduate School Board will make an assessment about whether you are capable of attending an oral examination and take appropriate action.

Change of Mode of Attendance ([Regulation B2.8](#))

In some instances, you may need, or want, to change your mode of attendance part-way through your enrolment period (e.g. full-time to part-time study).

If you are on a Student visa you are unable to change your mode of attendance.

If you are on a funded studentship you may be in breach of the terms and conditions of your funding should you change mode, which may result in your funding ending – see your offer letter and terms and conditions for details.

For these reasons it is important that you discuss the implications of changing mode of study with your Director of Studies or [Graduate School](#) prior to submitting any request.

Applications must be submitted through the [VRE](#). To do so, log on to the system and select: ***My Project > Change Requests > Change Mode of Attendance***

If approved, you will receive an email from the [VRE](#); your study mode will be updated, and your enrolment end date and future APR requirements amended to reflect the new duration allowed to submit your thesis. Tuition fee liability and stipend levels will also be updated.

Annual Leave

The Graduate School supports reasonable amounts of leave for all doctoral researchers. The parameters of 'reasonable' are based on the leave allocations of staff, i.e. 35 days (pro-rata for part-time). Annual leave is negotiated at a local level between the doctoral researcher and their Director of Studies.

Postgraduate Research Study continues throughout the year (with reasonable amounts of leave supported as highlighted above) and does not follow the University's standard undergraduate or postgraduate taught term dates.

Change of Supervisory Team

There may be instances where the arrangement of your supervisory team needs to change. You may require support from an additional supervisor with specific expertise or the direction of your research may change, and different supervisors need to be allocated.

Supervisory teams can request the change in the [VRE](#) via *Request Changes on Your Project*. ***Any changes to the supervisory team must be requested via the [VRE](#) by a member of the supervisory team, not by the research degree student themselves.***

Withdrawing from your degree ([Regulation B7.35](#))

Should you wish to end your enrolment and leave your programme of study at the University voluntarily you must complete a formal request to withdraw.

We recommend that you discuss any potential decision to withdraw with your Director of Studies, supervisory team or the [Graduate School](#) before completing the process in case we can advise and support you in any way that will allow you to continue with your studies.

All requests to withdraw must be made via the [VRE](#). To start the process log on to the system and select: ***My Project > Change Requests > Withdrawal from Programme***

Once processed you will receive written confirmation from the Graduate School.

Should you wish to return to the University at a later date you can reapply through the normal application process.

If you are in the UK on a Student Visa, the University is required to notify the Home Office if you withdraw. If you are no longer attending a course, you will not be meeting the terms of

your student visa and the Home Office will therefore normally shorten your visa and expect you to leave the UK. Before withdrawing, speak to the Student Advisers for guidance.

3.5 Writing Up Status

Full-Time Doctoral Researchers

Full-time PhD Doctoral Researchers will automatically be entered into a writing-up mode of attendance as you enrol for Year 4 of your research programme of study (if you have previously suspended or changed mode of study, this may be at a later point). By this point, full-time Doctoral Researchers entering Year 4 are expected to be solely engaged in writing-up their research project/completing their practice work rather than still actively undertaking research.

Entering writing-up mode will permit you to a six-month period where no tuition fees are due. The writing-up mode will not alter your end date, and the normal expectation is that you will submit your thesis for examination by the end of your six month no-fee period.

Should you not have submitted your thesis for examination by the end of the six month no-fee period you will be charged a fee of £1,500 (regardless of the time then taken to submit within the next 12 months). You will be charged a further £1,500 should you not have submitted within the next 12 months, and for each additional 12 month period that is then required to submit (regardless of the time taken to submit within that 12 month period), unless the additional 12 month period results from an agreed suspension, extension, or mitigating circumstances request related to ill-health (when the fee will be deferred for the period of the agreed request).

Once you have submitted your thesis you are no longer charged fees.

Part-Time Doctoral Researchers

As a part-time PhD student, you will automatically be entered into a writing-up mode of attendance as you enrol for Year 7 of your research programme of study (if you have previously suspended or changed mode of study, this may be at a later point). By this point, part-time doctoral researchers entering Year 7 are expected to be solely engaged in writing-up their research project/completing their practice work rather than still actively undertaking research.

Entering writing-up mode will permit you a twelve-month period where no tuition fees are due. The writing-up mode will not alter your end date, and the normal expectation is that you will submit your thesis by the end of your twelve month no-fee period.

Should you have not submitted your thesis for examination by the end of the twelve month no-fee period, you will be charged a fee of £1,500 (regardless of the time then taken to submit within the next 12 months). You will be charged a further £1,500 should you not have submitted within the next 12 months, and for each additional 12 month period that is then required to submit (regardless of the time taken to submit within that 12 month period), unless the additional 12 month period results from an agreed suspension, extension, or mitigating circumstances request related to ill-health (when the fee will be deferred for the period of the agreed request).

Once you have submitted your thesis you are no longer charged fees.

Additionally, as a part-time doctoral researcher, you may apply for writing-up status before Year 7 of your programme if you have completed the active research of your project and will solely be engaged in the writing up of your work/completion of your practice work for the remainder of your programme AND you have successfully completed APR 3 Under these circumstances, there will be two opportunities during the year to apply for writing-up status.

- **September starters** can apply for writing up either by the 1st October, or the 1st April.
- **January starters** can apply for writing up either by the 1st February, or the 1st August.

Applications for writing-up must be received before the above dates. Late applications will not be accepted, and you will have to wait for the next application date.

To apply to enter writing up you must submit an application online via the [VRE](#). Once you have logged on to the system go to: **My Project > Change Requests > Writing Up Status**

You will be notified by email via the [VRE](#) once accepted and your status altered accordingly. Your tuition fees will also be varied to reflect the no-fee period of enrolment (see above).

Please note: Writing Up mode is not applicable to students on the MPhil only study route.

If you have any questions regarding the writing up process, please contact the [Graduate School](#).

3.6 Re-enrolling in a timely fashion

You will be asked to re-enrol each year including during the examination period following the final submission of your thesis. You must re-enrol as soon as you are notified as ***if you do not re-enrol (for whatever reason) you may jeopardise your status as a doctoral researcher and risk exclusion***. Please be aware, late re-enrolment will not result in your programme end date being extended.

3.7 Submission and Examination ([Regulation B8](#))

Arranging the examination and date

Your Director of Studies is responsible for proposing examiners and applying for the Graduate School Board's approval through the [VRE](#).

The examination panel and the examination arrangements should be in place at least 3 months before you submit your thesis.

As such, please ensure your Director of Studies is aware when you aim to submit your thesis for examination, so they can begin the examination arrangements process in a timely fashion. Every effort will be made to confirm the examiners and viva date at the earliest opportunity but will be dependent on the availability of the examiners.

In issues of thesis confidentiality, this is the latest stage you should apply for thesis embargo – see [section 2.10](#).

When the examiners - including the Chair of Examiners, who is responsible for arranging the examination data and time - is approved, you will receive notification through the [VRE](#). At this stage, if you have any further queries, please contact the Chair of Examiners.

You can view the status of your examination in the [VRE](#): **My Project > Examination**

Thesis Format and Submission for Examination

Your submission must be made before your enrolment end date. If this date falls on a weekend, a bank holiday, or during a University holiday closure period, submission must be made by the end of the next working day.

The final version of your thesis for examination – and a declaration of the originality of your work - must be uploaded online through the [VRE](#). To do this log on and go to: **My Project > Examination > Examination Record > Create New**

The format of your thesis must be as detailed below.

The [Research Degree Academic Regulations](#) specify that the text of the thesis should **not normally exceed approximately 80,000 words for PhD** and **40,000 words for MPhil and Practice-based PhDs** – this includes footnotes, but does not include appendices, table of contents, tabulated and statistical data, diagrams and analogous illustrative material (maps, documents etc) and the bibliography.

These figures are intended only as an approximate guide and may vary according to either specific projects or discipline. You should not feel that your thesis must necessarily be as long as the indicated word limit.

Please refer to [Regulation C1.13](#) for guidance on submission of work for **PhD by Published Work**.

The thesis should be organised in the following format:

- Title page
- AI Declaration cover page (see Appendix F)
- Abstract (approximately 300 words, on a separate page)
- List of contents
- List of tables, illustrations, etc
- List of accompanying material (if any)
- Preface (if appropriate)
- Acknowledgements
- Author's declaration (suggested wording: I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.)
- Definitions
- Text of the thesis, divided into chapters, sections, etc
- Appendices
- Glossary
- List of references
- Bibliography

In addition:

- Theses shall normally be in A4 format, saved as a PDF document.
- The thesis shall be saved in a legible form with the size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, normally in 12-point font size.
- The thesis copy shall be set so that if printing is required this will be on one side of the page only.
- The margin at the left-hand edge of the page shall not be less than 40mm; other margins shall not be less than 15mm.
- Double or one-and-a-half spacing shall be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used.
- Pages shall be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages.

The thesis title page must contain the following information - see also [Appendix A](#):

- full title of the thesis
- full name of the author
- that the degree is awarded by the University of Westminster
- the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements
- the collaborating establishment (if any)
- month and year of submission (for examination copies only, final submission copies must contain the month and year of award).

You must also complete a Declaration of AI Contribution and include this in your thesis after your title page (see Appendix F). These declarations are intended to give context to the examiners and to ensure that doctoral researchers can use and acknowledge external support confidently.

Failure to declare contributions may result in being referred to Academic Misconduct Panel under our [Plagiarism or Generative AI](#) use policies.

If failure to declare is discovered after award, candidates may instead be referred to a Research Misconduct panel under our [Research Integrity policy](#).

Further guidance on the acceptable use of Generative AI can be found on the [Guidance for students on using generative AI webpage](#).

It is important that, if you have not already done so, any issues surrounding thesis embargo and confidentiality are considered - [Section 2.10](#). If an embargo application is approved, you will still be required to submit an EThOS agreement (see Open access and E-thesis) at the time of final submission.

If you have any queries relating to your thesis content you should, in the first instance, contact your Director of Studies.

The University operates a policy of e-only submission of doctoral theses. This contributes to the University's sustainability goals and reduces costs for doctoral researchers.

Should an examiner have a specific need for a hard copy of the final thesis, the Graduate School will arrange for the printing and dispatch of a hard copy thesis to the examiner and will

cover these costs. We will ask for your consent before we print and dispatch a hard copy of your thesis.

Should you wish to have a hard copy of your final thesis, you will be responsible for the printing and any associated costs (the [Graduate School](#) can provide details of Printing Companies on request).

If there are any additional non-documentary materials that are to be submitted with the thesis (for example filmed materials) these should be uploaded to the [VRE](#) alongside the thesis itself. If there are non-documentary materials that cannot be uploaded to the [VRE](#), please make an appointment with the Graduate School to arrange for their submission.

Preparing for your oral examination

To help you prepare for your final viva examination, a one-hour workshop takes place twice each year, as part of the DRDP programme. You are strongly encouraged to attend one of these – please see the [DRDP website](#) for further information.

Your Director of Studies can only attend your viva if you and the examiners have agreed this in advance through the Chair of the Examiners. Please see [Research Degree Academic Regulation Section B8.16](#) for further details. If in attendance, the Director of Studies cannot speak during the course of the viva unless given specific permission to do so by the Chair of Examiners.

Normally, the oral examination (viva) will take place in-person on campus. However, with your agreement, it is possible for the viva to take place online. You should discuss the preferred format of your viva with your Director of Studies. Please see the [Research Degree Academic Regulations Section B8.14](#).

What happens after your examination

The examiners' recommendations – and any required amendments - will be forwarded to the Graduate School to approve. In due course you will receive email notification from the [VRE](#) as to the examination outcome and what you are now required to do.

Please note, if following your examination, you have been advised that you have to undertake minor amendments, revisions or undertake a re-examination, the new submission deadline will start from the date of the official notification from the [VRE](#).

Amended thesis submission following the examination

If amendments are required to your thesis, it is a requirement that you refer to the amendments report from the [VRE](#) and, as well as submitting your amended thesis you should provide a list or commentary to explain the amendments you have made. It is also good practice (although not a requirement) to provide a version of your corrected thesis which includes tracked changes.

If you are required to resubmit your thesis for re-examination you are not required to provide a list or commentary.

All documents relating to the amended thesis should be uploaded through the [VRE](#).

Please be aware - it is not the intention for examiners to review multiple copies of the amended thesis, and the University would not condone on-going dialogue and/or email communication between doctoral researchers and examiners in order to achieve an amended thesis submission. If there are any queries surrounding the amendments required following the viva, please liaise with the Chair of Examiners in the first instance.

What happens after you have submitted your amended thesis

If amendments were required to your thesis, once the revised thesis and commentary have been uploaded on the [VRE](#), the Graduate School will send the documents to the examiner(s) and ask them to review and make a final decision on the award. Examiner(s) are asked to respond in one month, although this is dependent on their availability.

In due course you will receive email notification from the [VRE](#) as to the outcome and what you are now required to do.

If you resubmitted your thesis and are required to be re-examined, the same procedure is followed as for the first examination.

Final thesis submission for conferment of award ([Regulation B8.47](#))

Candidates are required to submit an electronic copy via the VRE of their final approved thesis, updated with the month and year of award, in order for their work to be published on WestminsterResearch and EThOS and for the degree to be conferred. You will also be required to complete a conferment task on the [VRE](#) at the time of final submission.

Should your thesis contain explicit content a warning needs to be included after the title page.

PhD by Published Work candidates should also upload the following alongside their final thesis (if not already included in the appendices of the thesis itself)

- PDF versions of the publications referred to in the thesis.
- Electronic files of any publications/practice work, or
- Links to online versions of these publications, including any film links with passwords. These online versions must be openly available to the reader of the thesis.

If there are any publications or practice-based works that cannot be either uploaded to the [VRE](#), nor can be accessed via an open weblink, please make an appointment with the [Graduate School](#) to arrange for their submission.

If you have an approved thesis embargo the above submission(s) apply and will be securely held by the Library until the embargo period expires.

All final copies of thesis must be formatted in the same manner as the copies submitted for examination.

If you have redacted anything from your thesis for reasons of third party copyright (or as a result of an approved embargo) you must submit, electronically, both the un-redacted and redacted versions of your final thesis (however, only the redacted version will be made publicly available via the University's repository).

ALERT: Access to University systems (email, VRE – including your research diary) will cease 18 months after your award date. You are strongly advised to retrieve any necessary information from these systems before you submit your final thesis, and to complete the conferment process as soon as possible following your award being confirmed (see [Conferment and Graduation](#) below)

Conferment and Graduation

The final degree conferment and certificate will only be arranged once all the requirements have been submitted and the award confirmed. The conferment certificate will contain the degree, e.g. Doctor of Philosophy, and the thesis title; it will not include the subject area or College/School name.

The conferment letter will normally be issued within one week of final thesis submission, however, at busy times of the year this may take longer. The conferment letter will be produced using your official name and address as it is held within the student record system (therefore any changes to these details must be updated before final thesis submission).

Conferment reports are sent monthly by the Graduate School to the Student Lifecycle team (who are responsible for graduation ceremonies) whereupon certificates are produced.

Details of the Graduation Ceremony dates can be found on the [Graduation web page](#).

You will be invited to your graduation ceremony by email (this will be sent to your University email account). Once you receive this invitation you will be able to book your place, purchase guest tickets and, if required, apply for a visa support letter. Further details can be found on the [Graduation web page](#).

If you have any queries about graduation, please email the [Student Lifecycle team](#).

4. UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES

4.1 Details of University Support Services

Our [Library and Student Centre](#) is designed to provide all of the support and information that you need in one place. The Student Centre contact information is available on the University's [Student hub website](#), including email, live chat and on-campus contact points and opening times.

The Student Centre can provide guidance on a diverse range of services to support your wellbeing and to help you succeed. This includes financial support, health and wellbeing, academic support, Students' Union Academic Advice Service, study skills and training, student advice, careers and employability service, faith and spirituality, sport and leisure and many other services.

4.2 University of Westminster Students' Union

When you enrol at the University, you automatically become a member of the [University of Westminster Students' Union \(UWSU\)](#) – an independent organisation that is run by students, for students.

The Students' Union is there to represent your needs as a student, protect your rights and make sure your voice is heard when key decisions are made at the University.

The Union is also home to a range of sports clubs and societies, as well as Smoke Media (Smoke magazine, Smoke Radio and Smoke TV). It boasts a bar and nightclub in Harrow and has two shops that stock various student essentials – one at our Harrow campus and one at our Cavendish campus.

4.3 University of Westminster PhD Society

The [PhD Society](#) is a social society formed under the auspices of the [Student's Union](#) (see above). The PhD Society offers a social and supportive space for the doctoral researcher community. Being part of the PhD Society means that you can share the research you are passionate about, learn from the research of others, and practice presenting at the annual school symposium, Graduate School Festival, etc. You can improve your skills and knowledge by attending researcher-led workshops on topics chosen by the Society, plus gain teaching experience by running and designing workshops yourself. The PhD Society is also a space to communicate any worries you have to your colleagues or to the University, as well as providing the opportunity to get to know your colleagues in an informal environment.

The PhD Society can be contacted via phd.soc@su.westminster.ac.uk and the 2026/2027 committee are:

President: Aysha Ali, School of Media and Communications

Vice President: Matthew Knowles, School of Humanities

Treasurer: Busra Akcan, School of Accounting, Finance and Economics

4.4 University of Westminster Disability Learning Support

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive research environment for doctoral researchers with disabilities and specific learning differences.

If you have a disability, long-term health condition, mental health condition or specific learning difference, you are encouraged to disclose this at the earliest opportunity. Early disclosure enables appropriate advice, guidance and support to be put in place from the outset of your engagement with the University.

To receive reasonable adjustments during your studies, you must register with [Disability Learning Support \(DLS\)](#).

4.5 Fieldwork and Offsite Working

Doctoral researchers who, as part of their research programme, plan to travel away from the University – either in the UK or internationally should ensure they have valid travel insurance and risk assessments in place. Please refer to the [fieldwork and working offsite website](#) for further information.

Before finalising your arrangements, you should:

- Discuss your proposed fieldwork with your Director of Studies
- Review the above resources for fieldwork and offsite working
- Confirm whether ethical approval is required

You must ensure that all documentation, including the [risk assessment](#) and [travel insurance request form](#), is completed and uploaded to the VRE prior to travel. All fieldwork must be approved in advance by your Director of Studies. Approval must be recorded as a VRE supervisory log and should include the location and dates of your fieldwork.

Researchers on a student visa who are planning to travel overseas must also contact Visa Compliance via the Student Centre prior to making arrangements. Further guidance is available in [Appendix D](#) of the Research Degree Handbook.

Doctoral researchers on Student Visas are able to request a letter confirming their enrolment details on the research degree programme should this be required for fieldwork or offsite working. This letter can be requested from [Official letter requests](#).

However, Student Visa holders must check their visa eligibility with [Student Advice](#) before arranging fieldwork or other offsite working if overseas travel is required (and follow the guidance at [Appendix D](#)).

APPENDIX A - Specimen Thesis Title Page

(See next page for Specimen Spine and Cover)

THE ORIGINS OF THE FARMERS'
CO-OPERATIVE IN WESSEX

JENNIFER ARCHER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Westminster
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This research programme was carried out
in collaboration with the Borchester Farmers' Club

April 2026

Please note

The date is the month and year that you were awarded (not conferred).

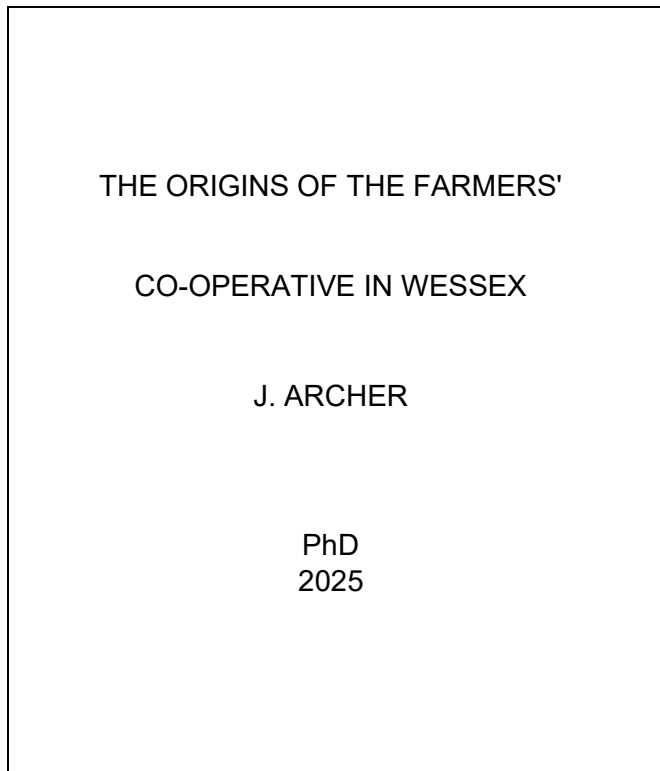
If you are unsure of this date, you can find it on your [VRE](#) record. An example is outlined below:

Thesis submitted for examination: 12 December 2024

Viva date: 1 February 2025

Award date: 12 April 2026

Specimen Thesis Cover



APPENDIX B – Masters and Doctoral Award Descriptors

The following are reproduced from the [Quality Assurance Agency Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#), second edition, 20 February 2024.

Level 7 Master's Degree

4.17 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 on the FHEQ: master's degree.

The descriptor provided for this level of the Frameworks is for any master's degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at Level 7 on the FHEQ/SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS, including postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues - both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

a) Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees is at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Successful students show originality in the application of knowledge, and they understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They are able to deal with complex issues - both systematically and creatively, and they show originality in tackling and solving problems. They have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

b) Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, courses of research or a mixture of both. Longer, research-based courses may lead to the degree of MPhil. The learning outcomes of most master's degree courses are achieved on the basis of study equivalent to at least one full-time calendar year and are taken by graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours (or equivalent achievement).

c) Master's degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this framework level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development courses and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master's degrees, in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas, typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.

d) Some master's degrees - for example, in science, engineering and mathematics - comprise an integrated course of study spanning several levels. Such courses typically involve study equivalent to at least four full-time academic years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and five in Scotland. Of this, study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year is at Level 7 of the FHEQ/SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS and the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7 of the FHEQ/SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS in full. Study at bachelor's level is integrated with study at master's level and the courses are designed to meet the qualification descriptors in full at Level 6 of the FHEQ/SCQF Level 10 on the FQHEIS as well as those at Level 7 of the FHEQ/SCQF Level 11 of the FQHEIS. Such qualifications are often termed 'integrated master's' as an acknowledgement of the prior period of study at lower levels (which typically meets the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 6/Level 10).

e) First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science comprise an integrated course of study and professional practice spanning several levels. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7/Level 11, these qualifications may often retain, for historical reasons, titles of Bachelor of Medicine or Bachelor of Surgery; Bachelor of Dental Surgery; Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine or Bachelor of Veterinary Science, and are abbreviated to MBChB or BM BS, BDS, BVetMed and BVSc respectively. The use of the title 'Dr' by medical doctors is a historical

abbreviation for the profession; it does not indicate a qualification at doctoral level (Level 8 on the FHEQ/SCQF Level 12 on the FQHEIS).

f) In Scotland, a small number of universities (Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews - the Scottish Ancients) have a long tradition of labelling certain undergraduate academic degrees as Master of Arts 'MA'. This title reflects historic Scottish custom and practice; there is no implication that the outcomes of the courses are at SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS. These courses are at SCQF Level 9 or 10 on the FQHEIS.

g) The Master of Arts (MA) awards granted by the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge are not academic qualifications. The MA is normally granted, on application, to graduates of these universities with a bachelor's degree. No further study or assessment is required, but the recipient may be required to pay a fee. At the University of Oxford, the MA may be granted during or after the twenty-first term from matriculation, and at the University of Cambridge, the MA may be granted six years after the end of the first term.

Level 8 Doctoral Degree

14.8 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ: doctoral degree.

The descriptor provided for this level of the Frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other Level 8/Level 12 qualifications.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

a) Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.

b) Holders of doctoral degrees are able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

d) The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.

e) Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.

f) Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically, a portfolio of work that has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment. Most degree-awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or their own academic staff of several years' standing.

APPENDIX C – Tuition Fees, Fee Liability and Debt Management

Research degree tuition fees 2026/27

All fees are expected to increase annually by 3%, in keeping with expected inflation.

Doctoral Researchers within the Schools of Computer Science & Engineering and Life Sciences may be required to pay bench fees in addition to the fees outlined below – these can vary from £1,000 to £10,000.

MODE OF ATTENDANCE	HOME	OVERSEAS
Full Time	£5,006	£17,000
Part Time	£2,503	£8,500
Distance Learning full time	£5,006	£17,000
Distance Learning part time	£2,503	£8,500
PhD by Published Work	£2,503	£8,500
Writing Up	£1,500	£1,500
Extension to Submission Date	£1,500	£1,500

Research Degree Fee Liability 2026/27

Fee liability for Doctoral researchers is calculated on a pro-rata basis. This means that if you withdraw (or are excluded) 14 days after enrolment, your fee liability will be calculated on a monthly basis. For example, if you enrol in September but withdraw in December, you will be liable for 3 months of your total annual tuition fee.

If you suspend your studies, your fee for that academic year will be reduced on a pro-rata basis by the number of months for which the suspension has been agreed. University finance policy states that, at the time of starting a suspension, no fees are refunded but are instead credited against the tuition fee liability when studies are resumed.

If you change your mode of attendance, your fee will be adjusted according to the number of months studied under each mode of attendance.

The fee liability pro-rata basis is not applicable to Writing Up, Extension or Re-examination fees. You will be required to pay the full Writing Up or Extension fee raised for that academic year, no matter when you submit your thesis.

PhD via Published Work Students – if you submit your thesis in your second year of study, but before the final submission/registration end date, your fees for that second year will be reduced on a pro-rata basis according to the number of months enrolled before submission. You cannot submit your thesis before the minimum enrolment period of 12 months (the first year of enrolment) has been completed.

Research Degree Debt Management 2026/27

At the date of re-enrolment each year, if you have an outstanding tuition fee debt originating from the previous academic year your enrolment with the University will be excluded.

If you are an international student whose immigration permission is dependent on your enrolment at the University, you will be reported to the UKVI if you fail to enrol due to non-payment of fees, or if your enrolment is terminated.

If you have an outstanding debt at the point of submitting your doctoral research project, you will not be invited to attend the viva examination. The Graduate School will not forward your thesis to the examiners until the debt is paid. You will not be permitted to graduate, attend a graduation ceremony, or receive any results certificate, diploma, or official transcript in relation to the programme of study to which the debt relates.

For full details of the University's debt management policy, please refer to [Section 7 of the Student Fees and Other Charges Policy](#).

APPENDIX D – Information and guidance for doctoral researchers studying on student visas (2026/27)

This information must be read in conjunction with the full [University visas and advice guidance](#).

Section A - Requirements

The requirements outlined below must be adhered to throughout the doctoral researcher's programme of study. If any circumstances are likely to arise that mean one or more of these requirements cannot be met, the doctoral researcher must contact the immediately for further advice and signposting to the relevant student advice teams.

- A1. Postgraduate Research Students (referred to as PGRs, Doctoral Researchers or students throughout this guidance) with **Student Visas** sponsored by the University of Westminster are expected to be studying in the UK for the full duration of their research degree programme.
- A2. **Temporary short-term absences** from the UK are permitted for '**reasonable circumstances**'. Reasonable circumstances would include visits to the student's home country and holidays*. These short-term absences should not exceed 60 days for each occasion of absence. Temporary short-term absences must be approved following the process highlighted in A4. below.

**In respect of holidays or 'annual leave', the Graduate School supports reasonable amounts of annual leave for all doctoral researchers. The parameters of 'reasonable' are based on the leave allocations of staff, i.e. 35 days for full-time doctoral researchers (pro-rata for part-time). Annual leave is negotiated at a local level between the doctoral research student and their Director of Studies.*

- A3. Additionally, doctoral researchers are permitted to be **temporarily absent from the UK** for a period of up to 12 months during the duration of their research degree programme to undertake **approved fieldwork** related to their research project. Temporary absences from the UK to undertake approved fieldwork must be approved following the process highlighted in A4. below.
- A4. Temporary short-term absences (see A2. above) and temporary absences to undertake fieldwork (as at A3. above) **must be agreed between the doctoral researcher and their Director of Studies in advance of the period of temporary absence**. Agreement to the temporary absence should be recorded in the relevant supervisory meeting notes on the [VRE](#), with the actual dates of the temporary absence detailed (and these supervisory meeting notes must be approved by the Director of Studies).
- A5. When undertaking a period of short-term temporary absence (as at 2. above) or a temporary absence to undertake fieldwork (as at A3. above), the **doctoral researcher must update the [VRE](#) with their location during the period of absence**. This must be done via the *My Project > Location* field in the [VRE](#). On return from the period of

absence, this field must then be updated by the doctoral researcher to show they are back in the UK.

- A6. In order to apply for the **3 Year Graduate Route** visa (for those doctoral researchers wishing to remain in the UK after the completion of their research degree programme), doctoral researchers must be studying in the UK during the final year of their programme. Applications for the Graduate Route must be made from the UK and only once the award conferment process has been completed. If it is likely that the conferment process will not be completed before the expiry of the Student Visa, then an extension to the Student Visa must be applied for. *See also the information and guidance related to the [Graduate Route webpage](#).*
- A7. Doctoral researchers who receive an **extension to their enrolment period**, or whose viva is scheduled to take place after their current visa expires, may be eligible to apply for an extension to their existing Student Visa. Doctoral researchers will need to request a further Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) to enable an application for an extension to be made. *Further information on the CAS process can be found on the [CAS webpage](#).*
- A8. Extensions to existing Student Visas (as per A7. above) will be calculated on the following basis:

Stage	New Student Visa End Date
Prior to submission of final thesis	New enrolment end date plus 6 months
Final thesis submitted but viva date not yet confirmed	Submission date plus 6 months
Final thesis submitted and viva date known but not yet taken place	Viva date plus 5 months
Final thesis submitted, viva has taken place, but revisions required	Revisions due date plus 2 months

- A9. Doctoral researchers in the Schools of Computer Engineering and Life Sciences may have been required to obtain an [Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\) Certificate](#) prior to applying for their Student visa. If this is the case your ATAS statement will appear against the doctoral researcher project record in the [VRE](#). In the event that you require a new Student visa to extend your stay in the UK, you will also require a new ATAS certificate. The ATAS application will take at least 6 weeks, so please plan accordingly.

A new ATAS certificate will also be required if a) your primary supervisor changes or b) the content of your research changes significantly, in which case you will require a new ATAS statement, approved by your supervisor to apply.

Further information on ATAS can be found on the [Documents required for a student visa webpage](#).

- A10. Doctoral researchers on Student Visas are also entitled to **suspend their studies** for a period of up to 60 days under certain circumstances. An approved suspension will

extend the doctoral researcher enrolment end date by up to 60 days (i.e. the number of days' suspension approved), in distinction to a temporary absence as detailed in Section A2. which will not extend the enrolment end date. As the student is suspended during this period, they will not be able to access University resources, facilities, or supervision during this period of suspension (again in distinction to the temporary absence as detailed in Section A2. Where access to resources, facilities and supervision remains in place). The University is required to report all such periods of suspension to the UKVI. If a period of suspension exceeds 60 days this may result in the UKVI ending the Student Visa and requiring the student to leave the UK. *Further information related to suspension of study requests can be found in the [Research Degree Handbook](#).*

- A11. Doctoral Researchers on Student Visas are permitted to **work in the UK**. However, the number of hours they are permitted to work is restricted, normally to 20 hours per week (the student's Visa will confirm the number of hours that can be worked). Although the Student Visa permits doctoral researchers to work a restricted number of hours, doctoral researchers should be aware that the Student Visa has been issued for the purposes of study, and therefore work should not be undertaken that impacts adversely on the requirements of the research degree programme.

Section B – Monitoring and Reporting

The University of Westminster is required, by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Department of the Home Office, to have robust processes in place to ensure that the requirements detailed in Section A of this document are met, monitored, and reported. The University and Graduate School will meet this requirement as detailed below.

- B1. **Engagement with the research degree programme will be monitored**, and the University may be required to report to UKVI any doctoral researcher studying on a Student Visa if at least ten contact points are not recorded during any one 12 month rolling period. The following interactions will be considered as valid contact points (and these may take place in-person or online):
- *Enrolment at the start of the research degree programme (for new starters only)*
 - *Re-enrolment at the beginning of each year of the research degree programme (for continuing students)*
 - *Annual Progress Review (APR) submission*
 - *Annual Progress Review (APR) re-submission (following a period of remediation)*
 - *Supervisory meetings (these must be logged in the VRE)*
 - *APR 2 mini/upgrade Viva*
 - *Submission of final thesis for examination*
 - *Final Viva*
 - *Submission of post-viva amendments/revisions*
 - *Attendance at Doctoral Researcher Development Programme Workshops (these must be logged in [Inkpath](#) by inputting the attendance code for the workshop that you have attended).*

- B2. The Graduate School will **audit VRE records** twice each academic year to ensure that the requirement for at least 10 contact points per enrolment year is being met by those doctoral researchers studying on a Student Visa (the first audit to show the student is on track to meet the required number of contact points, the second to show this requirement has been met). Failure to demonstrate the required minimum number of contacts without valid explanation can lead to cancellation of a student's visa.
- B3. Additionally, at the beginning of each academic year/enrolment period, the Graduate School will require School Doctoral Coordinators to provide a **report of the expected location** of each of the doctoral researchers on Student Visas in their School for that academic year/enrolment period.
- B4. As outlined in Sections A4 and A5, any temporary short-term absences from the UK, or temporary absences to undertake approved fieldwork outside the UK, must be agreed by the PGR's Director of Studies, and then recorded in the relevant supervisory meeting notes on the [VRE](#). The Doctoral Researcher must also update the Location field on the [VRE](#) during any periods of absence from the UK.
- B5. The University/Graduate School may be required by the UKVI to report on the engagement record of any doctoral researcher studying on a Student Visa at any point.
- B6. The University is required to report to the UKVI if a doctoral researcher on a student Visa **withdraws** from their programme of study or **completes their programme of study earlier** than the enrolment end date (as the Student Visa will then be ended).

Section C – Other Visa Types

- C1. Overseas doctoral researchers studying by the **Distance Learning** (DL) Route or by the **Published Work** route may be required to come to the UK for the following activities during their research degree programme:

- *Enrolment at the start of the research degree programme*
- *Initial University and School DRDP workshops (DL only)*
- *APR 2 mini/upgrade viva (DL only)*
- *Final Viva*

In order to visit the UK for the above activities, doctoral researchers will be expected to obtain a **Standard Visitor Visa**. *Further information can be found on the [Standard Visitor Visas webpage](#).*

- C2. Doctoral researchers who are **EU nationals** should also refer to the [information for EU nationals webpage](#).

Doctoral researchers who are EU nationals and who have not qualified for the EU Settlement Scheme will be required to hold a Student Visa, and the requirements, monitoring and reporting detailed in Sections A and B will apply.

APPENDIX E - Guidance for Doctoral Researchers on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence as approved by Graduate School Board, January 2026.

Please note this guidance is due to be updated twice per academic year and doctoral researchers should consult the version published on the [Guidance for students on using Generative AI webpage](#) for the most current version.

University of Westminster Graduate School November 2025

The Graduate School provides the guidance below for doctoral researchers on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). It should be read in conjunction with the [Guidelines for Using Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) in Academic Research \(2025\)](#) and the [University of Westminster's Policy in Relation to the Safe Use of Generative AI \(2024\)](#).

This guidance is subject to amendment, revision, or replacement to reflect developments in Generative AI. Doctoral Researchers are required to adhere to the latest published version.

This guidance will help you navigate the opportunities and responsibilities that come with using AI tools in your university studies. By the end of reading this document, you will understand better how to use AI ethically and effectively to enhance your learning while maintaining academic integrity.

1. What is Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)?

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) creates new content through prompts such as text, images, video and code. Examples of GenAI include ChatGPT for text and DALL-E for images. Some GenAI is standalone (e.g. ChatGPT) while some is integrated into software such as Microsoft Office or Google Apps.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools generate new content, analysis, or solutions based on your prompts. In your academic work, you may encounter:

Text Generation

- ChatGPT, Claude, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot
- Writing assistants like Grammarly and QuillBot

Creative Tools

- Image generators (DALL-E, Midjourney, Adobe Firefly)
- Music and audio creation tools
- Video editing with AI features

Research and Analysis

- Translation tools (DeepL, Google Translate, YouDao)
- Data analysis and visualisation tools
- Citation and reference managers with AI features

Technical Applications

- Code generation and debugging tools (GitHub Copilot, CodeWhisperer)
- Mathematical problem solvers
- Design and modelling software with AI capabilities

University of Westminster doctoral researchers can access GenAI, including Adobe suite, Microsoft Copilot and GrammarlyGO. Many other GenAI tools are available publicly. While GenAI tools offer benefits, they also pose risks.

2. Issues and Risks of Using GenAI for the Doctoral Researcher

As a doctoral researcher, you must differentiate between the exploratory use of generative AI to enhance understanding and the use of generative AI for producing content for your doctoral research, including your assessments (i.e. Annual Progress Reviews (APR), Thesis, Viva Voce examination and research outputs). This is essential for maintaining the academic integrity of your research.

Currently, GenAI systems pose limitations relating to trust and accuracy. They may generate false information confidently, so there is a need for the user to verify the content against reliable sources. They also cannot think critically, assess sources or provide nuanced interpretations as a human researcher could.

GenAI systems also pose significant risks around copyright, intellectual property, and plagiarism of your research. As a doctoral researcher, you should not upload any writing to be used for your APRs thesis, or future publications into publicly accessible or commercial generative AI platforms as doing so may result in the system owning that work, reusing the work in training GenAI models and therefore becoming reused by others.

GenAI systems also pose a risk to data protection and confidentiality of your research data. You should not upload any confidential or sensitive information, such as unpublished research, personal details, or data marked as private into publicly accessible or commercial generative AI platforms. Once shared, this data would be treated as public and may be stored, accessed, or reused. Specialist AI tools that protect privacy may exist but will require careful research and permissions from the University.

GenAI systems further present ethical concerns such as inherent biases in training data, which reinforces stereotypes, as well as structural concerns including sustainability, resource demands, unequal access, and lack of accountability for mistakes. Integrating AI into daily life as a researcher demands ongoing scrutiny and caution, alongside ethical and responsible use.

3. Using Generative AI in your Doctoral Studies

The University of Westminster is committed to upholding responsible research practices, and we have [policies and procedures](#) in place which outline our commitment to high research integrity and accountability in a positive research environment. This also applies to the use of Generative AI.

While Generative AI (Gen AI) tools can be useful for some aspects of your studies, doctoral research will always require your own original and distinctive input and critical thinking and analysis. Any assessment submitted by a doctoral researcher must be their own work and one of the purposes of the final Viva Voce examination is to confirm that the thesis is genuinely the work of the doctoral researcher.

3.1 Acceptable Uses of Gen AI

There are some possible legitimate uses of GenAI for your doctoral studies. These can include:

- Assisting with grammar and spelling checks.
- Using Generative AI to identify keywords for a search.
- Using translation tools to understand academic texts.
- Practice academic writing with AI feedback
- Study support to help understand complex concepts or advise on study strategies such as time management.
- Specific AI-Assistive software use identified in the Student Support Plan agreed between doctoral researcher, Disability Learning Support and Supervisor

In drafting questions or prompts to GenAI, with some of the acceptable uses above in mind, the university has published a prompt guide for BA and MA students that you may find helpful. You can access the guide [via this page](#).

We recommend that you discuss GenAI with your supervisors to help clarify acceptable approaches for doctoral research and how it relates to your research design. Throughout your doctoral studies, if you are unsure if an intended use of GenAI is appropriate and legitimate for your doctoral studies, you should speak to your supervisor beforehand. You should record details of your discussion and agreement on your Gen AI use for your doctoral research in your supervision meeting notes on the [VRE](#).

Doctoral researchers can also develop their research skills and writing confidence through engagement with the [Doctoral Researcher Development Programme \(DRDP\)](#) and support services such as the [Academic Engagement Librarians and Learning Development Team](#)

3.2 Unacceptable Uses That Constitute Academic Misconduct

According to the University of Westminster:

“Academic misconduct is where a student [doctoral researcher] gains, or seeks, attempts or intends to gain, advantage in relation to assessment, either for themselves or for another person, by unfair or improper means”

The University of Westminster distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate uses of GenAI by doctoral researchers. At the University of Westminster, the following is NOT permitted:

- Producing an AI-generated output for your drafts, Annual Progress Reviews (APR), Thesis or Viva Voce and passing it as your own work.
- Submitting a draft or other written output of your work to a GenAI tool and requesting the system to rephrase it in proper English or restructure it.
- To include outputs from GenAI systems (such as ChatGPT) within your doctoral research without disclosure.

Inappropriate use of GenAI (as highlighted above) risks contravening the principles of academic integrity and will be deemed as academic misconduct following the procedures set out in the [Student Research Misconduct Regulations](#).

Even where GenAI outputs are reworded into the doctoral researcher's own words, this would still be considered poor practice. The information may be superficial, incomplete or inaccurate, risking a poor outcome in the Viva Voce (for APR 2 and final examination).

As highlighted in section 2, caution must also be taken in what content and data is submitted into publicly accessible or commercial generative AI platforms as this risks contravening the principles of data protection and research integrity.

University of Westminster provides institutional access to GrammarlyGO and Microsoft CoPilot with commercial data protection (using your University account).

4. How to acknowledge the use of GenAI tools

In cases when GenAI use was deemed necessary by the supervisory team, a declaration should be added to the thesis:

- Name and version of GenAI
- A brief description of how this GenAI was used
- Date(s) the outputs were generated
- Confirmation that this use was approved by your supervisory team

Where it is deemed appropriate to include a GenAI output in your doctoral work, the GenAI technology or software must always be attributed, both at the appropriate point in the text and in the bibliography at the end of the piece of work, using the same referencing style that you have used throughout your thesis.

For greater reproducibility and precision, include the AI model, subscription level and engine, as well as the full date of use. Treat the GenAI as personal correspondence in citations.

Example (Harvard style):

In-text citation: "This content was generated using ChatGPT-4o mini (Plus), accessed 2 May 2025 (OpenAI, 2025)."

Reference list: OpenAI. 2025. ChatGPT-4o mini (Plus) response to [Your Name], 2 May 2025. OpenAI.

For different referencing styles, please check [Citethemright](#).

With any assessment or thesis submission, the doctoral researcher should complete a declaration that they are submitting their own work and have complied with the University's regulation on use of GenAI.

5. In summary

Using GenAI to generate content for your doctoral research without agreement and disclosure is unethical and violates academic and research integrity. Doing this is academic misconduct.

As a doctoral researcher, you are developing your expertise and creating an original contribution to knowledge. While GenAI can support certain areas of study, it cannot do the learning for you. It is important that you have ownership over your doctoral research and the knowledge developed. Importantly, your doctoral assessments and research outputs must be your own original work. To do this, give yourself time for critical thinking, problem solving, writing and developing.

APPENDIX F - Declaration of AI Contribution Cover Page Template

Declaration of AI Contribution

Please declare any contributions from other sources under the bold below. If not used, please write 'n/a' under the heading.

These declarations are intended to give context to the examiners and to ensure that doctoral researchers can use and acknowledge external support confidently.

Further guidance on the acceptable use of Generative AI can be found here:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/study-skills-and-training/guidance-for-students-on-using-generative-ai>

Declarations

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Software code, instrumentation development, etc: Describe support received to write code (from human or AI), build bespoke equipment, and any other shared work.

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AI: include any use of AI, including generative AI, not already included in the above categories where it has been used as a functional tool to assist in the process of creating the academic work.

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Other: Include any other material contributions to your thesis not already included in the above categories. Declare any contributions to proofreading other than standard editorial support, such as professional editing or substantial changes made by AI.

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