

6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 Every Bournemouth University programme which leads to an award of the University, including the award of credit, is governed by a set of standard assessment regulations.
- 1.2 The regulations in this document govern degrees by research and are intended for Bournemouth University staff and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs). The regulations must be followed by the Research Degree Examination Team which is authorised to assess PGR candidates in accordance with the relevant assessment regulations, and to recommend that awards of the University be conferred on those who achieve the standards required for an award.
- 1.3 The standard regulations are applicable, without modification, unless exceptions have been approved by the University through the formal procedure of programme approval, review or modification. Exceptions may be required to accommodate the requirements of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or to accommodate research programmes with taught, credit-rated units of assessment. Where this is the case, the exceptions are recorded in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees* and must be clearly articulated to the Research Degree Examination Team at the beginning of the *viva voce* examination.
- 1.4 All PGRs sign up at enrolment to accept the assessment regulations prevailing at the time and any subsequent approved changes during their registration period. The assessment regulations are made available to PGRs on the BU website and are provided on enrolment. Each PGR is presented with a hard copy of the current *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees* on an annual basis and are notified of any changes made to the assessment regulations during their studies.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Senate:** to approve the standard assessment regulations and any amendments to these and to confirm awards to students.
- 2.2 **Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC):** to consider revisions to the assessment regulations periodically and recommend amendments to Senate.
- 2.3 **Research Degree Examination Teams:** to implement the assessment regulations and confer awards to students who have met the requirements of the award.
- 2.4 **The Doctoral College and Academic Quality:** to review the assessment regulations periodically and make recommendations for amendments.

3. ACCESSING OTHER BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#).
- 3.2 These regulations should be read in conjunction with *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees* which sets out the University's policy and procedural framework relating to research

degrees and defines a set of standard procedures and specific responsibilities covering the academic supervision, administration and assessment of research degrees for all Faculties within the University.

3.3 The functions and operations of the Research Degree Examination Teams are detailed in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*.

- *6J- Exceptional Circumstances: Policy and Procedure*
- *6M - Research Misconduct: Policy and Procedure*
- *11C - Academic Appeals Research Awards: Policy and Procedure*

Regulations

4. REGISTRATION

4.1 The maximum periods which a PGR may take to complete the programme of research, from first registration, are normally as follows:

		Minimum (months)	Maximum (months)
MRes	<i>Full Time</i>	12	18
	<i>Part Time</i>	24	36
MPhil	<i>Full Time</i>	18	36
	<i>Part Time</i>	36	72
PhD	<i>Full Time</i>	24	48
	<i>Part Time</i>	48	84
DBA	<i>Part Time</i>	48	84
DProf	<i>Full Time</i>	48	60
	<i>Part Time</i>	48	84
EdD	<i>Part Time</i>	48	84
EngD	<i>Full Time</i>	48	60
	<i>Part Time</i>	-	-

4.2 Where there are exceptional circumstances PGRs may request an extension to the maximum registration. Extensions cannot be granted retrospectively and applications must be made by the PGR in advance.

4.3 PGRs whose work forms part of a larger group project may register for a Research Award. In such cases each individually registered project must in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award being sought.

5. PROGRESSION AND TRANSFER

5.1 All PGRs registered for a research degree, including professional doctorates, will be monitored regularly to ensure satisfactory progress is maintained. Formal monitoring points are set out in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*, or appropriate Professional Doctorate Programme Specification/Handbook.

5.2 PGRs registered onto an MRes or MPhil, who make exceptional progress, may with agreement of their supervisory team, choose not to submit an MRes or MPhil thesis for examination, at the specified time, but to transfer to PhD. In such instances, the candidate

should prepare for the transfer examination as set out in the *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*.

- 5.3 Doctoral candidates who are enrolled onto a programme of PhD research are required to demonstrate their ability to complete a PhD thesis in a timely manner by successfully undertaking a Major Review. The Major Review should take place no later than 18 months following registration for full-time study (36 months part-time registration) and in line with processes set out in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*. Doctoral candidates on other programmes of research (e.g. DProf, EngD and EdD) are normally enrolled on the named award and progress in line with the relevant programme requirements.
- 5.4 Provision for candidates who fail to meet the required standard, is set out in *8A Code of Practice for Research Degrees*.

6. RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINATION

- 6.1 The University's policy and procedural framework for research degree examination is set out in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*. The process for submission and examination of a research degree thesis is the same at both MPhil and Doctoral level. Differences in process at MRes level are outlined below and in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*.
- 6.2 The examination of a research degree is in two parts (preliminary assessment of the thesis (or equivalent) and the *viva voce* examination. Candidates for an MRes award will be required to give a presentation as part of the *viva voce* examination. On completion of the examination, the Research Degree Examining Team may recommend one of the following:
- i) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made;
 - ii) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made subject to CORRECTIONS being made to the thesis;
 - iii) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made subject to AMENDMENTS being made to the thesis;
 - iv) that the candidate be permitted to RESUBMIT for the degree and be re-examined;
 - v) that the candidate be awarded the lower research degree of MPhil (*only available for candidates registered for doctoral examinations and subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the Examiners*);
 - vi) that the candidate NOT be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
- 6.3 Any corrections or amendments must be made to the satisfaction of the Research Degree Examining Team before the appropriate award can be made.

7. PROVISION FOR FAILED CANDIDATES

- 7.1 Where the Research Degree Examining Team recommends that the candidate resubmit (see regulation 6.2 iv above), the candidate will be permitted a re-examination on one occasion only.
- 7.2 If there are exceptional circumstances that prevent a PGR from meeting the deadline set for the re-examination, these circumstances must be made known to the Doctoral College at least one month prior to the due date. Such notification does not mean that an extension can be provided.
- 7.3 On completion of the re-examination, the Research Degree Examining Team may recommend one of the following:
- i) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made;

- ii) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made subject to CORRECTIONS being made to the thesis;
- iii) that the award for which the candidate is registered be made subject to AMENDMENTS being made to the thesis;
- iv) that the candidate be awarded the lower research degree of MPhil (*only available for candidates registered for Doctoral examinations and subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the Examiners*);
- v) that the candidate NOT be awarded a degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.

8. PROVISION FOR FAILED CANDIDATES WITH VALID REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

- 8.1 If it is established to the satisfaction of the Research Degree Examining Team that a PGR's absence, failure to submit work or poor performance in all or part of the assessment for an award was due to illness, or other cause found valid on production of acceptable evidence, the Research Degree Examining Team will act as follows.
- 8.2 Where exceptional circumstances are confirmed, a PGR may be reassessed as if for the first time in any or all of the elements of assessment, as specified by the Research Degree Examining Team. If an assessment affected by illness was itself a second attempt the PGR will be permitted to be reassessed as if for the second time.
- 8.3 In exceptional cases, where the PGR's ability to complete their programme of research is affected by serious circumstances (such as terminal illness of the student), and it is established that the PGR is likely to be unable to complete/return to complete their studies within a reasonable time period, the Research Degree Examining Team may act in one of the following ways:
 - i) where the Research Degree Examining Team is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of the PGR's achievement to determine an award, the PGR may be recommended on the basis of the available evidence for the award for which they are a candidate. The decision of the Research Degree Examining Team must be ratified by the Chair of Senate.
 - ii) an Aegrotat award may be recommended when the Research Degree Examining Team does not have enough evidence of the PGR's performance to recommend the award for which the PGR is a candidate. Before such a recommendation is made, the student must have demonstrated achievement at the level for which an Aegrotat award is considered. The Research Degree Examining Team must be satisfied that on the balance of probabilities but for illness or other valid cause the PGR would have reached the standard required. The decision of the Research Degree Examining Team must be ratified by the Chair of Senate. Where appropriate, the PGR must have signified that they are willing to accept the award.

9. RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

- 9.1 Where evidence of research misconduct in the preparation of the thesis, or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination, come to light prior to or subsequent to the recommendation of the Research Degree Examination Team, action will be taken, in accordance with the University's *6M - Research Misconduct: Policy and Procedure*. Where an allegation of research misconduct is confirmed, the Examiners will be notified of any required action and whether the candidate is eligible for any recommendation as outlined in Section 6.2 iv-vi above or will be withdrawn from the University.

10. TERMINATION

- 10.1 Should the PGR fail to maintain appropriate contact; make satisfactory progress or pass formal milestones as outlined in the Code of Practice, the PGR's enrolment may be terminated subject to the appropriate termination procedures outlined in *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees* being followed.

General

11. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 11.1 *8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees*
- 11.2 Details of the Appeals Procedure are given in the current version of the University's *11C - Academic Appeals Research Awards: Policy and Procedure*.
- 11.3 Full listing of the University's [Academic Policies and Regulations](#), including the following:
- *6J - Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*
 - *6M – Research Misconduct: Policy and Procedure*
- 11.4 The QAA's [Advice and Guidance](#) (incorporating the Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)) describes the level and achievement represented by all taught and postgraduate research awards (other than honorary degrees and higher doctorates) granted by the University.
- 11.5 The QAA's [Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](#) which guides University principles and process for the assessment of PGRs.
- 11.6 Further information:
Doctoral College, Bournemouth University
e-mail: DoctoralCollege@bournemouth.ac.uk
- 11.7 This policy was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) (BU Equality Analysis Procedure) in July 2019.