



Board of Graduate Studies  
Academic Division

## **Code of Practice**

### **Graduate research degrees and certificates of postgraduate studies**

**(PhD; EngD *research elements*; MSc; MLitt; MPhil ‘*thesis only*’  
*courses*; Certificate of Postgraduate Studies)**

**2009–10**

This *Code of Practice* sets out the University’s guidelines for those courses examined by scrutiny of an extended research dissertation and an oral examination only. It may also be applied to the research years and thesis examination for the EngD Degree. It should be read in conjunction with the Guide to Graduate Education.

There will be a separate *Code of Practice* for those courses for which the Board is responsible in which there is a significant element of taught coursework (MPhil other than ‘thesis only’ courses; MRes, MSt; Diplomas in Legal Studies, International Law, Economics).

This *Code of Practice* is a guide to good practice based upon the University’s Regulations and the reasonable expectations of students and the staff who teach them and of the University generally; any departures from the Code by any party require evidence of good reason.

It should be read in conjunction with the University Regulations concerning graduate students and degrees; the relevant *Course Handbook*; any other Department/Faculty guidelines; and the Board of Graduate Studies’ *Guide to*

Examiners and the Board of Graduate Studies' *Guide to Graduate Education: Research Degrees*. The Code of Practice provides a gloss on the University's Regulations as set out in the Statutes & Ordinances <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/>; it does not supersede the Statutes & Ordinances, which should be taken as definitive in case of doubt.

The Codes of Practice and Guides for students, Supervisors and Examiners can be found on the Board of Graduate Studies' website at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/>.

This *Code of Practice* is issued for new students starting their course in 2009–10 and applies for the duration of their course. However, the Code is updated annually and Supervisors of new students should make themselves aware of any amendments and changes in policy between issues.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 *Status of Guides, Handbooks, Codes of Practice and Regulations*

This *Code of Practice* is provided by the Board of Graduate Studies on behalf of the General Board for both students and the academic staff who teach and examine them. Supervisors and others involved in guiding and assessing research students should familiarise themselves with these documents and refer to them in case of difficulty. Students and staff will be deemed to be familiar with these documents in the event of any dispute or review.

The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with:

- the University Regulations, which set out rules that apply across the University and programme-specific regulations (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/>);
- the Board of Graduate Studies' Examiners Guides (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/>);
- the *course handbook*, which provides guidelines specific to a particular course;
- any other literature provided by Faculties/Departments for guidance.

The University is required to follow the Quality Assurance Agency's *Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes*

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section1/default.asp>)

# 2 Responsibilities and mutual expectations

## 2.1 *Graduate students*

Each graduate student is expected to:

- take full advantage of the facilities, teaching and supervision offered, and keep his or her Supervisor informed of any circumstances affecting his or her academic performance or participation in any part of the course;
- if full time, attend the course for c.40h per week for the duration of the course;
- obtain the permission of his/her Supervisor, Degree Committee, College and the Board of Graduate Studies prior to undertaking research outside Cambridge; (formal permission for leave to work from the Board of Graduate Studies away is not required for conferences and short research visits);
- meet regularly with his or her Supervisor keeping him or her informed of progress, and handing in work at the agreed times. Students experiencing difficulties in meeting with the Supervisor, or other staff members, should contact their Director of Graduate Education without delay;
- manage submission of his or her progress reports, dissertation and, if required, training log to an agreed timetable;
- access his or her own supervision reports through his/her CamSIS self-service pages and discuss them with the Supervisor;
- manage his or her applications for allowances, leave to work away and any other student applications administered through the Board of Graduate Studies and keep the University apprised of changes in contact details through his/her CamSIS self-service pages;
- take responsibility for the final quality of all his or her academic work submitted; the advice and guidance of the Supervisor carries no guarantee of success at examination, nor will encouragement or

the approval of a piece of work by a Supervisor constitute grounds for complaint in the event of failure in the examination;

- seek advice and help from the sources identified in this *Code of Practice* and elsewhere, should problems arise;
- inform his or her College and Supervisor promptly if he or she ceases to attend through ill health or other grave cause, or withdraws from the course;
- pay fees and College bills in a timely manner;
- abide by the University's regulations concerning Graduate Students, as set out in *Statutes & Ordinances* <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/>; including those concerning discipline and avoidance of plagiarism.

## *2.2 Faculty/Department arrangements for overseeing graduate education*

Research degree provision in a Faculty, Department or Institution should be overseen by a Director of Graduate Education, or similar role-holder(s). He or she will usually be supported by a Graduate Education Committee, or equivalent body.

Because Faculties, Departments and Institutions vary widely in size and organisation, the titles of these persons and bodies and the details of the arrangements vary. However, the existence of this structure and the roles performed by individuals and committees should be made clear to students through both induction and course literature. For example:

- in the Faculties of Biology and Clinical Medicine, Directors of Graduate Education also have the support of an overarching Graduate School; this body is a vehicle for co-ordinating training and promulgating good practice among the constituent Faculties,

Departments and non-University Institutions. Only the larger institutions making up the Graduate School also have a separate Graduate Education Committee;

- in some of the smaller Faculties that are not divided into Departments, and in certain non-Faculty institutions, the Degree Committee may perform the functions of a Graduate Education Committee and the Degree Committee Secretary or Chairman may take the role of Director of Graduate Education, or there may be a Director of the PhD Programme and a Director of the MPhil Programme etc.

In addition, the Departments/Faculties assess applicants for admission and recommend any specific entry criteria. The Departments/Faculties receive and approve all progress reports submitted through the Cambridge Supervision Reporting System (CSRS).

### *2.2.1 Role of the Director of Graduate Education*

In this document, the term Director of Graduate Education is used in a generic sense to encompass local variation in nomenclature and practice (see above). The Director of Graduate Education will need to be fully conversant with the codes and regulations relevant to the programme and will need to be aware of the guidance provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for maintaining and enhancing the quality of research training and education (<http://qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp>).

The Director of Graduate Education normally:

- arranges for other members of the student's supervisory team (at minimum, the Advisor, and a second Supervisor if appropriate) to be assigned;



- makes necessary arrangements for academic and administrative facilities for the research students in the institution;
- works with the Degree Committee to ensure that back-up arrangements are made for absent Supervisors;
- acts as a first port-of-call regarding any difficulties that cannot be resolved between individuals directly and may act as an intermediary between a Supervisor and student when difficulties arise;
- provides advice to Supervisors on appropriate skills training for their students (<http://www.skills.cam.ac.uk/>);
- co-ordinates the institution's provision of Health & Safety information for graduate research students;
- ensures that the course literature makes students aware of the importance of acknowledging the work of others and how to avoid plagiarism;
- monitors the progress of the institution's research students generally;
- creates opportunities for student feedback on the content, delivery and administration of the programme, and ensures that this input is taken into account;
- provides information for the Education Section's Annual Quality Update  
(<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/statements/>).

He or she (or his or her team) is also responsible for:

- providing all necessary information about the course, including induction, in the course handbook; keeping the website up to date;

and providing any further information and guidance as needed at later stages in the degree;

- overseeing and coordinating periodic strategic reviews of the content and direction of the programme.

### 2.3 *Supervisory team*

The supervisory team for a research student will normally consist of a minimum of two people, the Principal Supervisor and the Advisor.

The Principal Supervisor is appointed by the Degree Committee. In some circumstances, where the project is interdisciplinary or involves an industrial partner, a second Supervisor may be appointed by the Degree Committee. The duties of a second Supervisor will be similar to those of the Principal Supervisor, but the main responsibility lies with the Principal Supervisor and it is with him/her that the Degree Committee and Board of Graduate Studies will normally correspond.

Throughout this *Code of Practice*, the term ‘Supervisor’ should normally be taken to refer to the Principal Supervisor.

The Supervisor(s) and Advisor are supported by the Director of Graduate Education and the Faculty/Department Graduate Education Committee and/or Degree Committee, who may appoint additional persons to the Team as required: for example, assessors of written work.

#### 2.3.1 *Role of the Principal Supervisor*

The person appointed as the Principal Supervisor of a graduate student is expected to:

- be familiar with the *Code of Practice*, course literature and advice provided by the Degree Committee and Board of Graduate Studies;

- attend training and support courses and events for Supervisors as prescribed by the Degree Committee;
- be aware of any minima for the number or frequency of supervisions set down by the Faculty or Department;
- participate in graduate admissions as required by the Faculty/Department;
- establish the suitability of the topic proposed for the degree sought, in the light of resource availability, the University's timescale for submission of the thesis, and the student's background and aptitude;
- if the student is to be part-time, establish at the interview the pattern of attendance to be followed to include supervisions, training etc.
- ensure that the terms of any sponsorship agreement and any implications regarding the ownership of intellectual property rights are made clear to the student at the outset and are honoured during the course and the examination of the thesis;
- guide the student in planning, focusing and developing the study by encouraging the student to make a written timetable and plan at a very early stage to ensure that a manageable piece of work is undertaken;
- establish an effective means of communication with the student; for example making clear the frequency and timings of meetings, making sure that the student knows how to make contact at other times. Supervisors should be aware that some students will not, on the strength of their previous experience, expect to make the first approach to set up a meeting, but will expect the Supervisor to take the initiative. Supervisors are advised to make firm appointments for students at least in the first instance and to be alert to the

possibility of misunderstanding if the student does not make contact regularly;

- respond promptly and appropriately to requests from students to meet and to comment on work at various stage of development; if a Supervisor is to be away from Cambridge for an extended period, he or she should ensure that students and the Director of Graduate Education are aware of this and should inform them of back-up supervisory arrangements;
- ensure the student's project is appropriate to the resources available;
- advise the student on relevant literature, methodology and academic conventions pertaining in the field (in particular, how to avoid plagiarism);
- where relevant, advise on ethical and safety implications of the work;
- advise on personal development planning and skills development;
- encourage students to attend training provided (and may *require* them to do so in the case of Health & Safety training);
- monitor progress against the agreed timetable and plan for the work and take appropriate action as laid down in the *Course Handbook* if the student does not keep in contact, or progress is poor;
- report termly on the student's progress through CSRS:
- report on CSRS as soon as possible if a student is in danger of failing an assessment or examination, or is not likely to make the standard for progression to the next stage (as required by regulation 8 of the General Regulations for Admission as a Graduate Student). The Supervisor should also inform the Director

of Graduate Education. Supervision reports will be considered by the Degree Committee and Board of Graduate Studies in evaluating any applications for examination allowances or in cases of dispute;

- read and comment on draft chapters; most Supervisors will specify that they wish to see at least some draft chapters at an early stage, as they are written, so that the student has the opportunity to incorporate any feedback into subsequent writing;
- provide an academic commentary on students' applications for allowances, such as: leave to work or reside away from Cambridge; intermission of studies; deferral of submission of the thesis; restriction of access to the thesis; and for funding etc;
- make sure that a Research Council or other major sponsor is informed promptly if a student's work is delayed or seriously affected by illness or other grave cause;
- advise on publication of the research and offer advice on further study or careers in the specific research area;
- respond promptly to reasonable requests for references for his or her students.

A Supervisor must not:

- participate in formal examination for the degree;
- normally participate in the assessment of work submitted by his or her student as part of a registration exercise or for the degree.

### 2.3.2 *Role of the Advisor*

The Advisor is appointed by the Department or Faculty. He or she need not be in exactly the same research area as the student and Supervisor, nor necessarily in the same Department or Faculty, but should be able to bring sufficient expertise to the team in order to carry out the following:

- act as a second point of contact for academic advice for the student (after the supervisor);
- make him/herself available to read work and discuss progress as reasonably agreed with the Supervisor and student;
- provide supervisory cover in the absence of the Principal Supervisor.
- The Advisor may participate in the formal assessment of progress and registration exercises but, in the case of a PhD student, would not normally be appointed the internal Examiner for the student's thesis.

The Advisor is *not* normally expected to:

- provide regular, formal supervision;
- write supervision reports in CSRS;
- provide pastoral support for the student or Supervisor, or act as go-between them, although he or she may offer advice to either party if asked to do so.

### 2.4 *Roles of Faculties, Departments and other institutions*

The Head of the institution

- is the 'line manager' of staff within the institution with respect to personnel matters and may expect to be involved in resolution of any difficulties that fall into this category between staff and students at a local level;

- considers applications from University staff within the institution who wish to study for a research degree and decides whether their request can be supported for either full- or part-time study;
- in those Faculties where the Degree Committee oversees a number of different institutions, the Head of each institution confirms, when giving his or her consent to the admission of a research student, that any reasonable resources envisaged at the outset as being necessary for the study are available, either within the institution or by arrangement elsewhere, and that suitable supervision is available.

## 2.5 *Degree Committees*

The conduct and governance of each course is under the oversight of the Degree Committee for the Faculty concerned. The Degree Committee reports to the Board of Graduate Studies in the following respects:

*With respect to research students:*

- Recommends candidates for admission and setting suitable entry criteria, special conditions etc (on recommendation of Head of institution);
- Monitors students' progress;
- Recommends continuation to a research degree from a masters or other course;
- Recommends registration of a probationary research student to the PhD, MSc/MLitt or MPhil degree or Certificate of Postgraduate Studies;
- Recommends/comments on applications for allowances (such as intermission, or leave to work outside Cambridge) and exemptions;

- Recommends candidates for a qualification (on recommendation of the Examiners).

*With respect to Supervisors and Examiners*

- Appoints Supervisors, bearing in mind the existing load carried by the individuals concerned;
- Ensures that new Supervisors attend an induction event and that Supervisors in general are aware of, and encouraged to attend, courses for Supervisors;
- Registers new Supervisors on CamSIS/CSRS;
- Manages students' progress through their registration and other reports;
- Exercises academic 'line-management' with respect to Supervisors, including resolution of academic problems between students and Supervisors if not resolved at a more local level;
- Appoints Examiners (in some Faculties, on recommendation of Head of institution) and provides them with advice and all documentation as required;
- Investigates and responds to complaints about examinations, supervision etc, (this may be carried out at the request of the Board of Graduate Studies, or not, as part of the local stage of the relevant complaints/review procedures).

*With respect to administration*

- Deliberates on, and responds to consultations by the Board of Graduate Studies and others, on matters of policy for graduate education in its field;
- Brings to the Board proposals for modification of existing courses, suppression of existing courses or provision of new ones (on recommendation of the Faculty and School concerned);



- Ensures that communications from the Board of Graduate Studies regarding policies and process are disseminated appropriately among the institutions for which the Degree Committee is responsible.

The ultimate responsibility for these graduate qualifications lies with the Board of Graduate Studies and, through them, the General Board.

## 2.6 *Colleges*

The 31 Colleges have adopted their own Code of Practice with regard to graduate students, (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/committee/seniortutors/guidance/provision.pdf>) which sets out the common core of provision that all Cambridge Colleges make for their graduate students. It explains how this provision works in the college setting, indicating at the same time the diversity that is built into the system. The document also sets out the responsibilities of graduates as members of colleges.

## **3 Academic support and skills development**

### 3.1 *Supervision*

Each student is assigned to a Principal Supervisor. This is the person who assumes responsibility for guiding the student in his or her studies and writing a termly report on progress for the Board of Graduate Studies. For more details of the Principal Supervisor's duties, see 2.3.

All research students and their Supervisors are, however, supported by other individuals, who make up the supervisory team (which *may* include a Second Supervisor in the University, an Institute, in another University, in an industrial setting, or where fieldwork is undertaken; in addition some Departments may appoint a mentor). These other members of the team offer

advice and support, and may be assigned to make assessments of the student's progress according to a timetable set by the Degree Committee in consultation with the Department or Faculty.

The regularity with which graduate students meet with their Principal Supervisor varies widely according to subject. In the arts, humanities and social sciences, students may work alone for sustained periods and may meet their Supervisor only at formal supervisions. However, in the sciences and technology, group research may be the norm and a Supervisor, his or her students and post-doctoral researchers work alongside each other on a daily basis; in some cases, students may be supervised on a day-to-day basis by postdoctoral members of the team while the Head of the team takes the formal role of the Principal Supervisor. In this case, the postdoctoral researchers should be registered as the Second Supervisor.

The frequency of meetings will also change over time and are likely to be more frequent to start with, during the planning stages, and during the writing-up phase. In any case, the Board recommends that formal progress meetings ('supervisions') take place between the Principal Supervisor and the student at *least twice a term*.

Students and Supervisors should agree

- the pattern of formal meetings;
- what will be required at meetings (for example, discussion of written work);
- who is expected to initiate a meeting.

Many Faculties and Departments specify their expectations for the frequency and form of supervisions in their *Handbook*; students and Supervisors are advised to make themselves aware of these expectations.

If a student requests a formal meeting with the Supervisor, he or she should not be kept waiting more than a week before a meeting is arranged. If it is

not possible for the Principal Supervisor to fulfil this commitment, another member of the supervisory team should make him or herself available.

### 3.2 *Study skills*

Departments/Faculties should provide additional information, support and training in academic skills to help students to complete their degrees. Much of this training takes place informally, as an integral part of coursework, supervision or tutorial support.

Graduate students are expected to be proactive and self-directed in all aspects of study and to make independent use of library and other available resources including laboratory facilities where appropriate.

## **4 Graduate Research**

A research degree involves a practical or investigative project or an extended piece of scholarship in which a student has the opportunity to study in depth a topic chosen on the basis of the student's own interests, the staff available to supervise, and the feasibility of the topic proposed in the light of resources and time available. It must demonstrate the qualities set out in the relevant QAA descriptors in order to qualify the candidate for the degree sought. The output is an extended piece of written work, the dissertation or thesis.

The milieu in which graduate students undertake research varies widely between subjects. Students in some subjects will find themselves engaged in highly individualistic, largely solitary, investigations and may meet their Supervisor and other scholars only at fixed times and in seminars, while students in other areas will be embedded in busy laboratory research groups, working in day-to-day contact with their Supervisor, postdoctoral researchers and other graduate students. The challenges the students and

their Supervisors have to meet vary accordingly, but all research students are subject to the same basic rules and guidelines for the conduct of their research and examination.

#### *4.1 Appointment of the Supervisor*

The Principal Supervisor is appointed by the Degree Committee normally on the recommendation of the Head of the institution, although the Board of Graduate Studies may question an appointment.

A candidate for admission to a research degree may specify in his or her admission if he or she wishes to study with a particular Supervisor. Due regard will be given to the candidate's wishes in attempting to identify a Supervisor who has specific expertise in the field or topic chosen, and is available and willing to support the student for the full duration of the period of study.

Candidates should note that an offer to study with a given Supervisor is made in good faith, but his or her availability cannot be guaranteed. If the assigned Supervisor leaves before or after the student starts the course, alternative arrangements will be considered and offered if possible. If a Supervisor leaves towards the end of a student's studies, the University may make arrangements for the student to transfer to another institution with the Supervisor while remaining a candidate for the Cambridge degree. Alternatively, a new Supervisor may be sought to allow the candidate to remain in Cambridge; this might involve an external Supervisor if one cannot be found internally, providing a member of University staff is appointed as part of the supervisory team to attend to matters on a day-to-day basis. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

Degree Committees should also note that:

- members of staff whose contract is known to end before the end of the minimum period required for the candidate's course should not normally be appointed to supervise, unless special arrangements

are likely to be made for them to continue to supervise after the end of the current contract and only if a co-supervisor from within the Faculty/Department is also appointed; (only those students supervised by an academic member of staff currently employed by the University or by one of the Colleges can be included in the annual HEFCE Research Activity Survey);

- due regard should be given to the load the proposed Supervisor is already carrying (number of graduate students currently supervised, and other duties, such as undergraduate and masters teaching loads);
- the QAA advises that a member of staff will normally be Principal Supervisor to no more than about eight doctoral students at any one time; this may be exceeded under arrangements for working in a research team with the day-to-day oversight of postdoctoral researchers at the discretion of the Degree Committee;
- The Board of Graduate Studies expect all new Supervisors to attend induction and support sessions at the earliest opportunity (see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/cppd/> for details of courses); Degree Committees are asked to confirm that an induction session has been booked when registering a new Supervisor for CSRS;
- experienced Supervisors, especially those new to Cambridge, and post-doctoral researchers should also be made aware of this provision and encouraged to attend appropriate sessions;
- A Supervisor should not be appointed if it is likely to result in a conflict of interest, for example if the student is in a relationship with the potential supervisor.

## 4.2 *The dissertation*

The Board of Graduate Studies provides information for candidates (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/current/submitting/>) and Examiners (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/examiners/>) on the requirements for the thesis and its examination in online guides.

### 4.2.1 *What is a dissertation?*

A research dissertation must have at its core a clear research thesis, that is, a *'proposition laid down or stated, esp. as a theme to be discussed and proved, or to be maintained against attack'*. (OED)

The work must be focused, with definable objectives and boundaries, achievable in the time and word limit available. It requires investigation, analysis, comprehension and critique at a high level.

Students, Supervisors and Examiners should be aware that the masters dissertation is not intended to be a medium for the presentation of research outcomes to public and peers, whereas the doctoral dissertation should generate material of a standard for publication (it is not, however, expected that a PhD dissertation is publishable in its existing form, although parts of it may be).

Material included in the dissertation will vary according to subject, but may include: critical review; reworking of existing material, providing the provenance of such material is clearly identified (this may include data collected by the candidate during a research-preparation master's degree); and the results of original investigation carried out during the course. Published papers may be presented as an integral part of the dissertation providing the work is set in the context of an overall thesis, with suitable introductory and concluding passages to link them to the rest of the work.

The candidate must make clear in the preface, in notes or in a bibliography:

- the sources from which information has been derived;

- the extent to which use has been made of the work of others; this is particularly important for students working in research groups where several individuals may contribute to the same experimental work and intellectual property may be shared; where collaborative work has been carried out, it must be clear to the Examiners exactly what the candidate has contributed to the research;
- any material included in the dissertation that the candidate has previously submitted or is submitting for any other qualification at this or any other institution (a thesis will not be accepted if it is substantially the same as one submitted for another qualification).

Conventions for doing this will vary according to the subject area and should be made clear in the *Course Handbook*.

The Board's guidelines and the *Course Handbook* set out the formal requirements for the dissertation such as word length, style, structure, format, deadline and arrangements for submission. Submission of material that varies from these requirements is at the discretion of the Degree Committee and candidates should apply well in advance of submission. Currently, all dissertations must be written in English, except for quotations and proper names that would normally be rendered in the original language.

For further details see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/current/submitting/>

#### 4.2.2 *Responsibility for submission of the dissertation*

A student and Supervisor should together consider drafts of the dissertation and confer on the state of readiness for submission.

Where a Supervisor is unable to comment, for good reason, on drafts of the work in reasonable time, the assistance of other members of the supervisory team should be drawn upon by the student.

However, where it is not possible, for whatever reason, for the Supervisor and student to come to a mutual decision about the readiness of the work for examination, the candidate has the right to submit without the Supervisor's consent and if he or she does so, is responsible for that decision.

Ultimate responsibility for the academic quality of the dissertation and the timing of submission lies with the student.

#### 4.2.3 *Access to the dissertation during and after the examination*

The University requires that each dissertation approved for the PhD, MSc, MLitt, together with its summary, shall be available for consultation in the University Library and that photocopies shall be made available by the Library to those who wish to consult them elsewhere. To protect the interests of students, the staff of the University Library, before allowing a dissertation and summary to be consulted, require each person wishing to consult it to sign a declaration that he or she recognises that the copyright of the dissertation and summary belongs to their author, and that, in accordance with the Law of Copyright, the dissertation or a substantial part of it may not be copied without the author's written consent. In addition, the dissertation and summary themselves, and any photocopy supplied by the Library, will contain a prominent notice drawing attention to the same points.

The University Library is also authorised to make available copies of dissertations for those wishing to consult them elsewhere, including micro-filming for the British Library inter-library loan service. The dissertation will be considered to be in the public domain as soon as it has been catalogued by the University Library, unless the Board has granted restricted access.

A candidate having good reason for not wishing the dissertation and summary to be generally available for consultation must apply for restricted access in writing to the Secretary of the Board at the point of submitting the dissertation for examination. The Supervisor must support the application.



The candidate and Supervisor must familiarise themselves with any terms of a studentship or project sponsorship that might affect the release of the dissertation to third parties. If necessary, the candidate and Supervisor should apply in good time for restriction of access to the thesis or for the Examiners to sign a confidentiality agreement for the duration of the examination and any period of restriction thereafter.

The Board is not obliged to approve an application for restriction and indeed is obliged under the Freedom of Information Act to make theses available if requested. The Board will therefore not normally agree to restrict access to a dissertation unless:

- there is a contract with a sponsor that specifies restriction; or
- the Supervisor confirms that arrangements for the exploitation of IP are under way;
- publication would cause the student or third parties mentioned in the text to be open to legal challenge or racial, political or other type of persecution.

The Board expects candidates to make every effort to publish the results of their work and regards the preparation of work for publication as an integral part of the training for a research degree. They will not normally therefore accept limiting the scope for other scholars to publish on the subject of the thesis as a valid reason for restricting access to the thesis after the degree is approved and would not agree to more than a few months' restriction if this were the only reason given for restriction.

If an application for restricted access is approved, it usually covers a limited period only (typically up to two years from the deposition of the dissertation in the Library); the dissertation and summary would then become generally available unless the student applies to the Board for the period of restriction to be extended and the Board has approved the application prior to the expiry date.

#### 4.3 *Good practice in research*

All research students are expected to comply with the conventions that pertain in their subject with respect, for example, to scholarly writing, use of archives and collections, integrity in collecting and analysing data, health and safety, ethical matters and intellectual property rights. Particular attention should be given to the matter of proper attribution of the work of others and the avoidance of plagiarism.

Where the research project is likely to involve working with children or vulnerable adults, the Supervisor and student should make themselves aware of the relevant University policy (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/protection/>) and ensure that they have taken appropriate advice in the Department or Faculty before proceeding. Any supervisor intending to offer admission to pursue a research programme which will involve the student in regular and unsupervised personal contact with children or vulnerable adults, or regular and unsupervised access to information on children or vulnerable adults, should note that ISA registration and a Criminal Records check may be necessary. Contact Student Records and Administration in the first instance, or see the website at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/students/crb/index.html>.

#### 4.4 *Intellectual Property (IP)*

The University's IP policy allows it to fulfil its duty of care to employees and students by requiring disclosure, setting conditions for ownership of intellectual property arising from collaborative environments, and specifying a dispute resolution procedure to which all parties within the University have access.

The full text of the IP policy is to be found at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/2009/chapter13-section2.html>

#### 4.5 *Plagiarism and use of unfair means in examinations*

Plagiarism (the passing off of the work of others as your own), is, depending on the intention of the writer, either poor scholarship or cheating. In either case, the work of both the student and the original author is severely devalued and, if plagiarism is detected by the s, the outcome of the examination will be in serious doubt. All staff and students should be aware of the University's statement on plagiarism (*Statutes & Ordinances* 2009 p 197-198)

Cheating by deliberately plagiarising or by falsifying data is an offence against University discipline and will be treated very seriously. The University's statement regarding the Use of Unfair Means in examinations can be found in the *Statutes & Ordinances* 2009 p 197 (Regulation 6).

Information on the nature of plagiarism and how to avoid it, together with guidance for Examiners on how to deal with cases of suspected plagiarism and other resources can be found at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/>

Supervisors must make sure that their students are aware of both the requirement for scrupulous honesty in presenting their research and the conventions required for acknowledging the work of others in their particular subject. These requirements should be made clear in the *Course Handbook* and during induction.

Students are required to comply with these conventions. Ignorance of the rules will not be accepted as a defence, unless it is demonstrated that the relevant information has not been made available. The University reserves the right to require the submission of work in both electronic and paper format and to submit work to examination with plagiarism detection software.

The University strongly disapproves of the activities of commercial 'ghost-writing' services and 'essay banks'. The submission of material purchased from these sources for examination will be regarded as use of unfair means.

Graduate students should be aware that the university will regard supplying such material as collusion in potential plagiarism.

#### 4.6 *Discipline*

The University's Regulations regarding discipline and its provisions for dealing with breaches of these regulations are set out in the *Statutes & Ordinances* 2000 pp 196–209 and in the *Student Handbook*: <http://www.cam.ac.uk/staffstudents/studenthandbook/univ/discipline.html>

The University will treat any breach of its disciplinary codes very seriously and may prosecute a student in the University's Courts. Students who are suspected of breaking the law will be referred, by their Senior Tutor, to the police.

The Human Resources Division's *Dignity at Work* guidelines and procedures are also relevant to graduate students as well as to staff. All students and staff are expected to be aware of the University's policy regarding bullying and harassment, which apply equally to students and to staff (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/dignity/procedure.html>).

Staff and students are also required to abide by the rules laid down for the health and safety of themselves and others.

## **5 Progress**

### 5.1 *Cambridge Supervision Reporting System (CSRS)*

CSRS replaced CamGRAD as the University's online progress reporting system for graduate Supervisors in October 2009.

The reports, once submitted, are available to the student who may also comment on the report. They are also read by the Department/Faculty, Degree Committee, College and Board of Graduate Studies, who all take an interest in the student's progress. Supervisors are encouraged to give

an honest appraisal of the student's progress but to do so in a manner that can be used positively to provide useful feedback.

The Board of Graduate Studies expects Supervisors to submit progress reports on a termly basis.

Students should proactively seek to read their supervision reports and to discuss any concerns with their Supervisor. Not having read the reports will not be accepted as a reason for ignorance of their contents in cases of dispute.

Faculties, Departments and Institutes have local requirements for feasibility reports and progress reports at certain points during the course; students must be made aware of this timetable and will be expected to organise their work to meet the deadlines set.

## *5.2 Registration for the PhD Degree*

All candidates for a PhD, MSc or MLitt are admitted on a probationary basis. They may be registered in the first instance for a Certificate of Postgraduate Studies, for an MPhil by research only, or may not be registered for any qualification.

At the end of the first year (or second year for a part-time student), a formal assessment of progress will be made:

- if the candidate has been registered for a qualification in the first year (CPGS or MPhil), the examination may form part of the assessment for continuation; candidates should be aware, however, that a pass in the examination is not in itself sufficient to guarantee continuation, as the academic requirements for continuation are invariably higher than a basic pass and include other requirements such as an acceptable research proposal and

availability of a suitable Supervisor and resources to support the research;

- for certain PhD students continuing after a masters degree or certificate, a further year of probation will be required; in which case, a further formal assessment for the purposes of registration for the PhD will take place at the end of the probationary period;
- if the candidate has not been registered for any qualification in the first year, a formal assessment will normally be carried out of a piece of written work, which sets out work in progress and includes a proposal for further research. The manner of the assessment varies according to local practices, and may include a viva. It will be carried out by at least two assessors, *neither of whom is normally the Principal Supervisor*. Where the norm is for students to be embedded in research groups, at least one assessor should be from outside the candidate's immediate group. A report will be made by the assessors on the outcome of the assessment, their recommendation on registration/progression, and any feedback they wish to provide for the student and Supervisor.

The Supervisor should comment on the candidate's progress in the light of the assessors' feedback and make his or her own recommendation on the outcome through CSRS as a 'registration report'.

The Degree Committee considers the assessors' reports together with the Supervisor's recommendation and, on the strength of these, recommends the outcome to the Board of Graduate Studies.

If the recommendation is favourable:

- where a financial guarantee has not already been made to cover the whole period of the research degree, continuation will be made subject to a further guarantee of finances being provided;

- where a candidate has been admitted on condition that a certain level of English language ability must be reached before registration, proof will now be required by the Board;
- when all conditions have been met, the Board will register the candidate accordingly.

If the recommendation is unfavourable:

i.e. that the candidate should not be registered for the degree sought, the Degree Committee should consider whether the candidate should:

- be registered for a lower degree in the first instance with the possibility of further assessment with a view to upgrading in due course (e.g. a student seeking a PhD may be registered for the MSc/MLitt or MPhil at this stage); or
- be allowed to revise and resubmit their registration report after a defined period (normally not more than one year) for a second assessment; or
- be removed permanently from the register of graduate students.

In the last case, the Degree Committee will need to make a full case to the Board of Graduate Studies, who shall be the deciding body on removal from the register.

### *5.3 Unsatisfactory progress*

The Supervisor should submit a report on CSRS and alert the Director of Graduate Education at any point if he or she is concerned about the progress of a student. If the Director of Graduate Education feels it necessary, a meeting with the student should be set up with the Supervisor and the Director of Graduate Education or another member of the student's supervisory team. Advice should be sought at this stage from the Degree Committee Secretary.

The concerns should be put to the student and possible remedies explored. Notes should be taken of the meeting and a record of the meeting given to the student. If deadlines have been set for work to be submitted, or patterns of required attendance set out, or any other reasonable requirements stated, these should be specified in writing. The consequences of non-compliance should be made clear (these may range from a warning that the candidate is in danger of failing the examination, through to the possibility of removal from the register of graduate students, depending on the severity of the problem).

If it is evident that the student is suffering from ill health or other personal difficulty, he or she should be referred to the College Graduate Tutor, who may then work with the Supervisor to try to help the student's progress. In some circumstances, the University's Occupation Health Service or Counselling Service may be consulted.

Reasonable time should be allowed for improvement. However, should unsatisfactory progress or non-compliance with the reasonable requests of the supervisory team persist, the Director of Graduate Education should assemble full documentation of the problem and inform the student that the matter will be referred to the Degree Committee with a recommendation that he or she should not continue on the course. The student concerned should be invited to respond in writing to the case made by the Director of Graduate Studies. The student's response should be submitted with the other material to be considered by the Degree Committee.

#### *5.4 Permanent removal from the register*

Students should be aware that Board of Graduate Studies has power to remove a student from the register if the Degree Committee have satisfied the Board:

- (i) that the student has not been working to their satisfaction; or



(ii) that the student has not complied with the conditions laid down in his or her case; or

(iii) that, in their opinion, the student is 'not likely to reach the standard of the MSc, MLitt, MPhil, or of any other qualification for which he or she might be registered as a candidate.'

(Regulation 10e of the General Regulations for the Admission of Graduate Students, *Statutes & Ordinances* 2009 p 438).

In view of the third of these provisions, Degree Committees must consider whether the research student might be re-registered for a lower qualification than the one currently sought (including, where available, the MPhil by research or CPGS), before making a case to remove him or her from the register. A student may at this point be re-registered permanently or, if the Degree Committee considers that there are prospects for improvement, on a probationary basis.

A student who is taken off the register loses his or her student status. If the student considers that he or she has been unfairly treated, provision exists for representations under the Student Complaints Procedure.

## **6 Examinations**

Supervisors, Directors of Graduate Education and Degree Committees are expected to be familiar with the requirements set out in the Regulations for the Degrees as set out in the *Statutes & Ordinances* as follows (2009 page references): MPhil: pp 495-532 PhD, MSc & MLitt: pp 489-493 CPGS: pp 558-565.

### *6.1 Appointment of Examiners*

The Degree Committee appoints two Examiners for research degrees:

an external Examiner (for duties, see External Examiner, below) and an internal Examiner who co-ordinates the examination. The appointment of an internal person as the second Examiner is highly desirable but not essential and, where no suitable internal Examiner can be found, a second external Examiner shall be appointed:

- where the candidate is a member of staff of the University, both Examiners will normally be external to the University;
- neither Examiner should be a Supervisor of the dissertation;
- for the CPGS, both Examiners are normally internal to the University;
- An Examiner should not be appointed where there is a potential conflict of interest with either the student or Supervisor.

The Examiners will normally be expert in one or more aspects of the thesis. It is not expected that either will be expert in the whole field covered by the thesis; the Examiners' expertise will normally be complementary. An Examiner need not hold a doctorate; but if not, the Degree Committee should consider whether or not the appointee would be recognised by peers as being of equivalent academic standing.

The Degree Committee should seek information from any person nominated as an Examiner who has not previously been appointed by the Degree Committee about his or her previous experience of examination of doctoral theses. An Examiner who has not examined for the University before should be paired with an experienced Examiner.

The Degree Committee will normally consult the Department/Faculty concerned about the suitability and availability of Examiners..

The candidate may not choose the Examiners, but should be informed at the earliest opportunity of the identity of those who have been nominated to examine the thesis. If he or she has good reason to object to any given individual as an Examiner, he or she should make this known and the

Degree Committee should consider any such objection on its merits when making an appointment.

The Degree Committee will make available to the Examiners as soon after submission as possible: the dissertation; the Board's *Guide to Examiners*; and the relevant forms for recommendations and fee payments. If any confidentiality agreement is required, the Degree Committee shall arrange this as part of the conditions of appointment of the Examiner.

The Degree Committee Secretary or his or her administrator will be the Examiners' main point of contact throughout the examination period.

## 6.2 *Internal Examiner*

An Internal Examiner should not have been the Supervisor (or second Supervisor) of the candidate. However, in exceptional circumstances, an Advisor, or an assessor of an earlier progress report, would not be precluded from examining the dissertation providing the Degree Committee is satisfied that their involvement in the development of the thesis was not so great as to prejudice their role as Examiner.

The Internal Examiner has an equal role with the External Examiner in relation to the academic assessment of the thesis and its defence in the oral examination.

The Internal Examiner is also expected to organise the oral examination by contacting both the candidate and the External about their availability. The date for the oral should be fixed as soon as possible after submission and the examination held, if possible, within six to eight weeks.

The Internal Examiner also takes responsibility for making sure the External Examiner is aware of the requirements for the examination and for ensuring that reports are sent to the Degree Committee promptly after the oral.

If no suitable Internal Examiner can be found and a second External is appointed, the Degree Committee Secretary should adopt the role of advising the Examiners of their duties and arranging the oral examination.

### 6.3 *External Examiner*

The Board of Graduate Studies expects the External Examiner to:

- provide an external view of the merits of the thesis and its defence in the oral;
- set the thesis and its examination in the context of the standards for the degree in the UK.

The External Examiner should therefore not have a recent significant connection (such as employment or a College Fellowship) with the University of Cambridge nor with its approved non-University institutions. The Degree Committee should consult the Board of Graduate Studies in case of doubt.

The appointment of an Examiner from outside the UK will normally be permitted by the Board of Graduate Studies only if:

- there is no suitable Examiner in the UK;
- it is clear that the Examiner is aware of, and is willing to work to, the conventions of the PhD as it is understood in the UK with respect, in particular, to the length of the course and the format and status of the dissertation as an unpublished document.

The Board of Graduate Studies should be consulted before an Examiner from outside the EU is to be appointed in order to ensure that the travel costs are within reasonable limits. Those Examiners who require a visa to enter the United Kingdom are excluded by law for payment for their services. For payments to Examiners and Assessors, see *Statutes & Ordinances* (2009 pp 241–244).

#### 6.4 *Independent Chair*

At the discretion of the Degree Committee, an Independent Chair may be appointed to oversee examinations for the PhD degree. An Independent Chair will normally be appointed:

- where two External Examiners have been appointed neither of whom are experienced Cambridge Examiners in the view of the Degree Committee;
- where the Internal Examiner is inexperienced in the view of the Degree Committee;
- in cases of re-examination;
- for any candidate for whom the Degree Committee has identified concerns regarding the examination;
- if the candidate has satisfied the Degree Committee that a Chair is required;
- In any other circumstances where the Degree Committee has satisfied the Board that the appointment is required.

The role of the Chair is to ensure that:

- the examination process is rigorous, fair, reliable and consistent;
- the candidate has the opportunity to defend the thesis and respond to all questions posed by the Examiners;
- questioning by the Examiners is conducted fairly and professionally;
- the Examiners adhere to the University's regulations and procedures, giving advice regarding the regulations to both the Examiners and the candidate if required;
- the Examiners' preliminary independent reports have been completed prior to the examination;

- that the Examiners' joint report is completed at the end of the examination and that the reports are submitted to the Degree Committee in a timely fashion.

The Chair is not expected to question the student about the work being examined and it is not expected that the Chair should receive or read a copy of the thesis in preparation for the examination.

In the case of disagreement between the Examiners, the Chair's role is confined to advising the Examiners on their options; the Chair does **not** have an additional casting vote but should use his/her best endeavours to help the Examiners to reach an agreed position.

## **7 Problems and complaints**

There are two principal rules for solving problems:

- Do not delay – try to sort the problem out locally at the earliest opportunity;
- Try the most direct approach possible in the first instance.

Most problems can be resolved quickly by simple discussion with the right person, such as the Supervisor, Advisor or Director of Graduate Education, who might be able to solve the problem direct or offer suitable advice about how to proceed.

### *7.1 Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications*

Complaints regarding the outcome of the examination may be considered under the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications (Statutes & Ordinances 2009, pp 440-443), provided that

- the candidate has failed the examination;
- the letter of complaint is received within **three months** of the date of the letter from the Board of Graduate Studies which gives the outcome of the examination;
- the complaint is demonstrated to fall within at least one of the following criteria:
  - (a) that there existed material circumstances relating directly to the examination (excluding circumstances relating to the candidate's course of research or course of study) of which the Examiners were not aware;
  - (b) that procedural irregularities occurred in the conduct of the examination, which were of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the Examiners would have reached the same conclusion had the irregularities not occurred;
  - (c) that there is demonstrable evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate assessment in the examination process.

## 7.2 *Harassment*

If the problem falls within the definition of harassment, the complaint would be considered in accordance with the University's Dignity at Work Policy (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/dignity/>)

## 7.3 *Student Complaints Procedure*

Any matter not covered by the above procedures may be dealt with through the University's Student Complaints procedure, detail of which are available in the Student Handbook <http://www.cam.ac.uk/staffstudents/studenthandbook/complaints.html>

If a student is not satisfied with the final outcome of a complaint considered through either the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications or the Student Complaints Procedure they may forward the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

A complaint regarding matters of academic judgement about a candidate's performance will not be considered under either the Regulations for the Review of Examinations for Postgraduate Qualifications or the Student Complaints Procedure nor will it be considered by the OIA.

#### 7.4 *Examination Allowances (restricted to MPhil, CPGS only)*

(Statutes & Ordinances 2009, p. 439)

If a student is able to demonstrate that their preparation for the examination has been hindered due to circumstances beyond their control, e.g. due to ill health, bereavement or religious observance etc., then the College Tutor may apply to the Board of Graduate Studies for an examination allowance.