



Senate

Paper Title	Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes: summary of proposed changes for 2016-17
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to comment on the proposed changes to the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes.
Points for members to note and further information	<p>The Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board is reviewing the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and the Academic Regulations for Research Degrees. Substantive changes are being made to the Code of Practice, and there are associated changes to the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes. Schools and institutes are being consulted on the changes in a final request for comments following earlier discussions. Their comments will be incorporated into the final text for approval by Senate.</p> <p>As part of the consultation process the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board wishes to put forward to Senate for discussion a summary of the major changes to the regulations.</p> <p>The final text will be circulated to Senate for approval by email in July.</p>
Questions to consider	<p>Senate is asked to comment on the proposals.</p> <p>The major changes relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• compliance with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes is mandatory for students;• specification of a 35 hour working week for research students;• a new minimum of ten supervisory meetings per academic year for full-time students (pro rata for part-time students);• revising holiday entitlement to align with annual leave for staff;• specifying the outcomes for annual progress review in the second and third year of study;• permit the candidate to attend the viva remotely in exceptional circumstances;• revise the composition of the examination panel to consist of one examiner external to QMUL, and one internal to QMUL, or two external examiners;• requirement that examiner reports are submitted within

	one month of the viva date.
Regulatory/statutory reference points	QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and chapter B11 of the QAA Quality Code.
Strategy and risk	Compliance with the Quality Code will be assessed as part of the new HEFCE Annual Provider Review process replacing Higher Education Review.
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Sponsors	Vice-Principal (Research) Academic Registrar and Secretary to Council

Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes

Summary of proposed changes for 2016-17

Introduction

The Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board is reviewing the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and the Academic Regulations for Research Degrees. Substantive changes are being made to the Code of Practice, and there are associated changes to the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes. Schools and Institutes are being consulted on the changes in a final request for comments following earlier discussions. Their comments will be incorporated into the final text for approval by Senate.

As part of the consultation process the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board puts forward to Senate for discussion a summary of the major changes to the regulations.

Summary of the proposed major changes to the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes

Key:

Regulations – the Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes

Code – the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

Board – the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board

1. Academic governance

Compliance with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes is to be made mandatory.

The Code is currently a good practice handbook. However, it sets out many of the requirements necessary to achieve a research degree qualification, such as the responsibilities of students and supervisors and the role of Directors of Graduate Studies, and therefore its status as a companion document to the Regulations is to be strengthened.

2. Admissions

The Regulations set the overarching policy for admission requirements to research degree programmes. The Board is considering stipulating a requirement for a minimum of two academic references for research degree programmes to align the requirements with practice. Other advice on good practice in admissions is set out in the Code of Practice.

Senate is asked to note that a review of graduate admissions processes for entry to postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes is underway, and that changes to the admissions requirements specified in the Regulations may be proposed from that review.

3. Attendance

The Board proposes to specify in the Code and the Regulations a minimum number of supervision interactions between students and their supervisor(s) in each year, and to clarify that a full-time working week is 35 hours.

Attendance refers to QMUL's expectations with regard to the way in which students engage with their research studies programme. General expectations are that a student meets regularly with his/her principal supervisor and undertakes training and other specified activities that may also include the completion of taught modules.

It is proposed that:

- (i) there should be a minimum of ten supervisory meetings per academic year for full-time students (pro rata for part-time students) held at regular intervals up to submission of the thesis for examination. These must be recorded on the MySIS Supervision Log. Meetings may be held with any member of the supervisory team. The number of reports per annum has been chosen to align with Home Office guidance on monitoring Tier 4 student engagement with their studies and to ensure the policy can apply to all students;
- (ii) full-time students are expected to undertake a full working week of 35 hours on their research degree programme (pro-rata for part-time students). The Code explains how to manage the recording of ill health.

More information on the membership of the supervisory team is set out in the Code. First and second supervisors must be permanent members of QMUL research active staff with contract periods covering the expected duration of the student's programme. Postdoctoral researchers cannot act as second supervisors, but can be members of the broader supervisory team.

4. Vacations

The Regulations state that "A full-time student is normally permitted to take up to six weeks vacation in a year including public holidays. The timings of vacations are agreed by the student's principal supervisor." (Reg. 8.50).

It is proposed to revise this statement in line with annual leave for staff. The annual leave entitlement for full-time staff is 30 working days, plus eight public holidays and the four QMUL closure days. This will be pro rata for parts of a year and for part-time students. The Code explains the process for approval of annual leave.

5. Progression

The Regulations state that a formal assessment of research student progress should take place at least once per academic year (Reg. 8.63). For full-time students this takes place at 6-9 months, 18-24 months, and at 36 months after registration (the 36 month review takes place if examination has not occurred). The Regulations include a description of the 6-9 month progression process and outcomes, but do not specify the outcomes for later annual progress reviews. This will be amended to specify that the formal outcomes apply to annual progression in all years. The content of progression is determined locally, and decisions must be made by a member of academic staff other than the supervisor, normally the Director of Graduate Studies. The outcomes are progress; referral for a second progression review within three

months with the possible outcome of transfer to MPhil; fail to progress after which the student's registration is terminated.

6. Writing Up status

It is proposed to include a requirement that students must have passed the third year progression assessment to transfer to writing up status.

7. Examinations

- (i) It is proposed to permit the candidate to attend the viva remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as difficulties in obtaining a visa to attend the viva in the UK. Occasionally one member of the examination team may also attend a viva by video-link when circumstances prevent travel to London, and with the agreement of the student. The Board has considered several cases in the last year.

The Board proposes that if the student cannot attend in person, the viva may take place remotely via a video-link. The student must attend suitable premises, e.g. a university or British Council premises. A member of staff of the institution must attend the viva to certify the student's identity and the proper conduct of the viva. Examiners should attend the viva together on QMUL premises usually. All requests should be approved by the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board.

The revised draft proposes:

8.xx The examination process is held in private, and is not a public examination. Normally, the oral examination will be held at QMUL with the candidate and both examiners present. If agreed by the candidate, Senate or its delegated authority may under exceptional circumstances permit one of the examiners to attend the examination by video-link. In such cases an Independent Chair must be appointed.

8.xx If requested by the candidate, Senate or its delegated authority may under exceptional circumstances permit the candidate to attend the examination by video link. Both examiners must be present in person at QMUL. The candidate must attend the examination from an approved location in a recognised University or other approved body, such as the British Council, and a member of that University's or body's academic or professional staff must be present in the room with the candidate for the duration of the examination.

- (ii) Proposed changes to the appointment of examiners.

The proposal is to revise the composition of the examination panel in light of QMUL's implementation of its degree awarding powers. The panel may consist of one examiner external to QMUL, and one internal to QMUL, or two external examiners.

The internal examiner would no longer be required to be a member of another college of the University of London (required under the regulations governing University of London awards), and may be a member of QMUL staff. A school/institute may choose to appoint two external examiners if academically desirable. This will align the appointment of examiners with the practice of the majority of UK universities.

The revised draft proposes:

8.90 The Panel of Examiners normally comprises two examiners appointed by Senate or its delegated authority:

- one internal examiner from Queen Mary academic staff who is not a member of the candidate's research group or involved in the student's work; and
- one external examiner.

Neither examiner should have had any significant and recent research or other contact with the candidate or their supervisor(s) which might inhibit a completely objective examination, such as joint publications and joint grant-holding.

8.91 Where the criteria above cannot be met or a school/ institute considers it to be academically desirable, two external examiners may be appointed.

8.92 In some cases an independent chair may be appointed to the Panel of Examiners. The independent chair must be a senior academic (Senior Lecturer, Reader or Professor) with experience of examining at least one UK PhD (or equivalent for other awards) not from the same school or institute as the candidate. In such cases, the responsibility of the chair is to manage the process and ensure adherence to the regulations. The chair does not contribute to the decision regarding whether or not the standards for award have been met.

(iii) Examiners' reports

The Board wishes to introduce a requirement that examiner reports are submitted within one month of the viva date. Occasionally receipt of examiner reports is delayed by several months.