



Senate

Paper Title	Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes: summary of proposed changes for 2016-17
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to comment on the proposed changes to the Code of Practice 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 to broaden its scope and to clarify questions often raised by Schools and Institutes. 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 Code.</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 (this will be specified in the Academic Regulations);• clarification of the delegation of responsibilities for research degree programmes and students to the Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and school/institute Directors of Graduate Studies;• clarification of admissions requirements and good practice;• specification of a 35 hour working week for research students;• revision of holiday entitlement to align with annual leave for staff;• monitoring study off campus and absence from studies;• clarification of the membership of a student's supervisory panel;• a new minimum of ten supervisory meetings per

	<p>academic year for full-time students (pro rata for part-time students);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervisor refresher training to be held every four years; • students who record 210 points before they submit their thesis for examination will receive the new QMUL Diploma in Researcher Development; • recording annual progress review in the second and third year of study; • during an interruption of study students may continue to work on their research and use library facilities (but not use laboratories), and may maintain contact with their supervisor if they and the supervisor agree this in advance; • permit students to apply for an extension to the registration period at any point in their studies and at the latest three months prior to the final end date; • permit students to apply for an extension to the registration period due to specific learning difficulties in the case of late diagnosis, to be considered case by case; • amend guidance on paid work; and • for internships and placements, clarify when an interruption of study may be required.
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

Code of Practice 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 to broaden its scope and to clarify questions often raised by Schools and Institutes, 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 Code of Practice.

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

The Board – the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board

RDPs - research degree programmes

DGS – school/institute Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Academic governance and delegation of responsibilities for research degrees

1. 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 award, such as the responsibilities of students and supervisors, and therefore its status as a companion document to the Regulations should be strengthened.

2. The delegation of responsibilities for research degree programmes (RDPs) in faculties by the Dean for Research to the Deputy Dean for Research is made clearer. In the main text of the Code references to RDP responsibilities have been changed from the faculty Dean for Research to the Deputy Dean.
3. The delegation of responsibilities for research degree programmes in schools/institutes by the Director of Research to the Director of Graduate Studies is made clearer. In the main text of the Code references to RDP responsibilities have been changed from the school/institute Director of Research to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

4. A summary of DGS responsibilities has been introduced (expanding on the previous list of responsibilities of Directors of Research for research students).
5. More information is provided about the role of the Doctoral College, the Director of the Doctoral College, and other QMUL committees involved in the governance of RDPs.

Admissions

6. The Academic Regulations for Research Degree Programmes specify the broad admissions requirements for research degrees, including the required level of competency in English. It is proposed to add the statement that “Schools and Institutes must adhere to the QMUL minimum requirements”.
7. The Board is considering stipulating a requirement for a minimum of two academic references for each applicant. Only one reference is specified in the current Code but the admissions requirements do require two references.
8. The DGS must approve all admissions offers. Decisions should be taken by two academic staff – one of these should not be a member of the potential supervisory team.
9. Applicants shortlisted for funding should be interviewed. Funding interview panels should be mixed gender if possible and include at least one member who is not the potential supervisor. It is recommended that academic staff who interview candidates should undertake the QMUL fair selection training course.
10. The section in the Code on the content of admissions offer letters will be deleted.

Induction

11. The Code will clarify the responsibilities for induction between the Doctoral College and schools/institutes.

Attendance and holidays

12. Working hours
The Code currently states that “All full-time students are expected to undertake a full working week on their research degree programme”. This will be expanded to specify a working week of 35 hours for full-time students in line with QMUL staff working hours.
13. Holiday entitlement
The previous Code stated that the holiday entitlement is normally up to a maximum of six weeks per year including public holidays. This will be changed to the annual leave entitlement for full-time staff of 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.
14. Study off campus and ill health
The monitoring of study off campus and absence from studies should be more rigorous. The student is expected to inform the supervisor(s) and the School/Institute of absences of one week or more. Concerning ill health, it is proposed that students should provide a doctor’s certificate for illness longer than seven days (including non-working days) in line with staff policy, and provide this to the School/Institute research programme administrator. Where a student is expected to be absent for more than one month, whether consecutively or cumulatively, the student should apply to interrupt their studies.

Supervision

15. The Code will clarify the membership of a student's supervisory panel. First and second supervisors must normally 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.
16. Supervisor refresher training will be held every four years (rather than five years) to match the four-year PhD registration period.
17. It is proposed that 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. Full-time students must record a minimum of ten supervision reports on the MySIS Supervision Log p.a. (six reports for part-time students). Supervisors should respond ideally within one week of the report being logged. Meetings may be held with any member of the supervisory team. (The Code currently specifies six meetings per annum once every 2 months if FT, and three meetings once every 4 months if PT). Reports should also be recorded on the Supervision Log during a period of making corrections to the thesis identified by the examiners. For international students with Tier 4 visas, the supervision reports will provide useful evidence of engagement with their studies and the number of reports aligns with Home Office guidance on engagement monitoring.
18. A definition of "Supervision" is being consulted on to include in the Code.

Training

19. Students are encouraged to record training and research activities on the Doctoral College Skills Points System, and to take part in at least 210 hours of development activities over the course of their studies (equivalent to 210 points). Students who record 210 points before they submit their thesis for examination will receive the new QMUL Diploma in Researcher Development in recognition of the student's achievements. The diploma is not accredited or assessed.

Progression

20. The section on annual reviews of progression will be expanded to set out the framework for the assessment of progression in each academic year. Only the requirements for first year progression currently are set out in the Code.

Interruption of Studies and Extensions of Registration

21. The section on "Interruption of study and extension of registration" is to be divided into two separate sections to provide more information and clarity to students.
22. It is proposed that
 - a. Students may apply for interruption of study during the writing up period (this is already possible but the current guidance is not clear on this);
 - b. during an interruption of study students may continue to work on their research and use library facilities (but not use laboratories), and that they may maintain contact with their supervisor if they and the supervisor agree this in advance.

(The current Code states that students must not continue to work on their research during interruptions of study and should not have access to the library. They should only have limited contact with academic staff during a period of interruption.)

23. Extensions to the registration period beyond four years (full-time) are only granted in exceptional circumstances on application to the Board. Extensions are normally only authorised for students who are in writing up status. It is proposed to permit students to apply for an extension to the registration period at any point in their studies and at the latest three months prior to the final end date (this is a new deadline).

Internships and Placements

24. This is a new section.
25. In some programmes of study there may be opportunities for students to undertake an internship or placement with an external organisation or within QMUL. If the internship is linked directly to the research studies programme there is no change to the programme length. If the opportunity is not directly related to the student's research studies they should apply for an interruption of studies.

Paid work

26. The Board is considering adopting the RCUK guidance on paid work.
27. Students may undertake paid teaching or demonstrating work when this is compatible with their training and with the approval of their supervisor. The total time spent (including preparation and marking) should not interfere with the progress of the PhD. It is recommended that this is normally no more than six hours per week averaged over the year. The work must be supported by appropriate training. Students may also undertake a small amount of other paid work, provided the supervisor gives consent and it does not delay or interfere with the research training.
28. Following a comment from a school, the Board is considering whether in exceptional cases students may work for more than six hours a week for their school/institute (but not more than 20 hours in line with Home Office regulations on paid work for students holding Tier 4 visas) at the discretion of the DGS and after consulting the students' supervisors about the student's progress and schedule for thesis submission.

New section on making reasonable adjustments for specific learning difficulties and disability

29. The Board has discussed with the Disability and Dyslexia Service the question of making reasonable adjustments to thesis submission deadlines due to specific learning difficulties. It proposes that there should not normally be any extension except in the case of late diagnosis, and that such applications will be considered by the Board on a case by case basis seeking advice from the Disability and Dyslexia Service.