



**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board Executive Summary March – May 2020</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the executive summary of business considered by the Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board (RDPEB).
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	This paper summarises business considered by RDPEB at meetings held in March – May 2020: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• proposals for changes to the Academic Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degrees in 2020-21. The details are in separate papers on the Senate agenda;</li><li>• Covid-19 - temporary changes to PGR processes.</li></ul>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	Senate is asked <b>to note</b> the report.
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Queen Mary Strategy 2030</li><li>• Queen Mary Academic Regulations</li><li>• Queen Mary Code of Practice for Research Degrees Programmes</li><li>• UK Quality Code for Higher Education</li></ul> <p>RDPEB has oversight of quality and standards issues relating to research degree programmes. The quality assurance framework is key to the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.</p>
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	
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## RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES AND EXAMINATIONS BOARD

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March – May 2020

#### Meetings and membership

1. The Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board meets monthly. The membership comprises:
  - Director of the Doctoral College [Chair]
  - Faculty Deputy Deans for Research (PGR)
  - One additional representative (a school/institute Director of Graduate Studies) from each Faculty

The secretariat is provided by the Research Degrees Office. The Doctoral College Manager is in attendance.

#### Examinations Business

2. The Board:
  - considers and approves nominations for internal and external examiners for research degrees;
  - considers and approves outcomes of research degree examinations and reviews all examiners' reports;
  - considers and makes decisions on applications to interrupt studies and extensions to the thesis submission deadline;
  - approves awards for research degrees on behalf of Senate.

Decisions are recorded in the minutes of the monthly meetings of the Board.

3. Requests to withdraw a thesis from examination

The Board has considered two requests to permit a submitted thesis to be withdrawn from examination under Academic Regulation 8.96.

“The examiners may reject a thesis which they consider to be incomplete or unacceptable without conducting an examination. Such cases will be reported to the Chair of the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board to determine the action to be taken. The candidate may be permitted to submit the thesis for examination on a subsequent occasion.”

This is a very rare occurrence. One was approved and one was declined. The details are recorded in the confidential minutes of the Board.

## Academic Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes for 2020-21

4. The Board's recommendations for changes to the Academic Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes for 2020-21 are set out in separate papers for Senate to consider.

### Covid-19 - temporary changes to PGR processes

5. The Covid-19 situation has required the Board and the Research Degrees Office to make temporary changes to processes for:
  - a. Supervision meetings.  
These are taking place online.
  - b. Annual progression  
Alternative arrangements may be made by a school/institute, for example for students to attend the progression meeting online, to pass a student without a formal meeting if the progression panel considers that work and progress are satisfactory, and to defer progression meetings if appropriate.  
If the panel raises concerns about academic progress and considers that progress is not satisfactory, a formal assessment meeting must be held with the student in person.
  - c. Thesis submission.  
Two bound copies of the thesis are required normally. During this period the thesis may be submitted by email to the Research Degrees Office or via the QMUL File Exchange Service on or before the thesis submission deadline. The date of the thesis submission recorded on MySIS is the date on which the electronic copy of the thesis is submitted to RDO.
  - d. The oral examination (viva).  
Research degrees oral examinations are being organised remotely with all participants attending online or deferred until health and travel guidance permit face to face examination meetings. A remote viva requires the appointment of an internal Independent Chair for the examination, and the agreement of all participants. If it is considered by the examiners that the viva may result in an outcome of Re-entry, MPhil, Not Pass or Fail, the Chair should discuss this with the examiners. The Chair decides if the online viva will proceed. If it is clear that the viva will not change these outcomes, the Chair should cancel the viva and defer it until a viva can take place in person. The Board has approved the remote viva policy here [Policy on remote vivas 19032020 \[PDF 393KB\]](#)
  - e. A Suspension of Regulations for the remote viva requests will be prepared in due course. Remote viva approvals are being recorded by RDO.

6. These and other changes have been documented in the Covid-19 FAQs for research students at <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctorscollege/covid-19-faqs---pgr/> prepared by the Doctoral College and Research Degrees Office.
  
7. PGR enrolment 1 April 2020  
There are three main enrolment points for PGR students in the academic year: September, January and April. Due to Covid-19 leading to the closure of Queen Mary campuses, applicants with a start date of 1 April were deferred to 1 July. Due to the ongoing situation applicants with a start date of 1 July will be deferred to September enrolment.

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