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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Union Theological College (UTC) is a small specialist College based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The College has a longstanding tradition in providing supervision for research degrees, awarded for most of its history by Queen's University Belfast. From 2020, the College will grant its own Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) award through the Royal Charter (1881) and Supplemental Charter (2020) of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI).

1.2 Postgraduate research opportunities are offered across all fields of Theology, allowing students to be part of a research environment in an institution that seeks to promote the highest standards.

1.3 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the PhD Regulations at Appendix 12. It has been developed to align with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Research Degrees (2018) and the QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristic Statement (2015).

Section 2: The Research Environment

2.0 UTC is developing a research environment which embeds a culture of research achievement amongst students and staff at the highest level.

2.1 In accepting students onto its research degree programmes, UTC is committed to:

- (i) Have an appropriate pool of research-active staff, adjunct staff and honorary research fellows who are able to fulfil the role of supervisor.
- (ii) Provide appropriate facilities and support.

2.2 UTC facilitates effective research by providing access and opportunities to interact with academic staff and other research students, for example, through research seminars and peer support networks. Residential students are invited to participate in social and academic events, and to demonstrate the skills they have acquired as a postgraduate student. Research seminars provide unique opportunities for students to present their research findings to peers and academics who can provide valuable feedback on the direction of their research. Non-residential students are encouraged to avail of academic events where they reside or online.

2.3 The Faculty oversees research within the College, delegating specific matters to the College Research Committee (CRC). The CRC is chaired by the Principal of the College and includes research-active members of Faculty and adjunct Faculty and external research-active members. (Appendix 1)

Resources and Training

2.4 UTC provides residential research students with appropriate facilities, normally including a desk in a shared room (for full-time students), and access to computing and library facilities. UTC provides distance learning students with online access to e-resources through the College Library. Distance learning students are encouraged to come to Belfast to work in the College Library (in line with any UKVI visa requirements.)

Plagiarism and Research Misconduct

2.5 Research students are provided with clear and concise advice (and training where relevant) in relation to good academic practice including how to cite their evidence. The consequences of plagiarism and any other form of research misconduct are outlined clearly in the College's Academic Integrity Policy ([AcademicIntegrityInPTFIOnlineProgrammesForPublication20.04.21.pdf \(union.ac.uk\)](#)) UTC makes use of Unicheck originality checking software, both to detect plagiarism and to help students avoid unintentional plagiarism.

Research Ethics

2.6 Research students who will be undertaking research with human participants will be required to apply for ethical approval through their supervisor to the College Research Committee. The College's Policy on the Ethical Approval of Research outlines issues to take into account when undertaking research with human participants. (See Appendix 2)

Section 3: Selection, Admission and Induction of Students

Admissions Procedures

3.1 Information on admissions procedures can be found on the College website at <https://www.union.ac.uk/courses/18/phd-theology>. Prospective students are requested to contact the member of Faculty whose research area is closest to their proposal. Members of Faculty discuss proposals with applicants and provide support during the admissions process. The criteria for admission are clearly set out on the College website. The admissions process is completed online and there is a non-refundable application fee.

Entry Requirements and the Decision-Making Process

3.2 The College applies standard criteria and procedures as part of a transparent admission process for all students and this is underpinned by the Admissions Policy for PTFI Programmes.

Decisions on the admission of PGR students are made by the Admissions Panel (comprising the Principal and the Head of Academic Administration) together with the relevant Head of Department.

Where applicants are required to complete an assessment or attend an interview, the College will ensure that any reasonable adjustments which the applicant may require as a result of disability or long-term condition are arranged in advance.

Offer Letter

3.3 The offer letter provides a range of information, including information relating to funding, support services, and immigration procedures, as appropriate. Students are advised in the correspondence that by accepting an offer of admission they are agreeing to meet the responsibilities for their academic studies and candidacy for a research degree as outlined below.

For unsuccessful applicants, a letter of rejection will be provided in a timely manner.

Responsibilities of Students towards the College and their Supervisors

3.4 At their initial supervisory meeting, students are advised of their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the supervisory team and work with their supervisor to devise a research plan.

Research students' responsibilities include:

- (i) Personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner.
- (ii) Maintaining regular contact with the supervisory team.
- (iii) Preparing adequately for the required formal meetings with their supervisor, completing the record (see appendix 3) and implementing any action points in a timely manner.
- (iv) Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required, and maintaining satisfactory progress with the RDP.
- (v) Raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work.
- (vi) Attending any development opportunities (research-related or other) that have been identified when agreeing development needs with supervisors.

The student is responsible for the submitted work, and the eventual success or failure of the RDP. Students are made aware that, in signing the Notice of Intention to Submit a Thesis form (Appendix 9), the principal supervisor and second supervisor do not confirm that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful.

Section 4: Supervision

The Supervisory Team

4.0 The Department will plan for the appointment of a suitable supervisory team. For each student who accepts a place and is admitted to the RDP, Faculty will formally appoint this team as soon as possible thereafter.

4.1 The supervisory team normally comprises a principal supervisor and secondary supervisor. A third supervisor may also be appointed where appropriate. The principal supervisor will be the initial point of contact for the student.

4.2 The College will consider whether appropriate supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the research period when admitting a student to a RDP. The College Principal is responsible for ensuring the appointment of appropriate supervision in the event of a supervisor being unavailable for a significant period of the student's research, or should a change in supervisor be required under different circumstances such as at the student's request.

4.3 It is the responsibility of the Faculty to appoint the supervisory team for each research student. The criteria are as follows:

Research supervisors will:

- Typically, be members of staff in an HEI or research institute, while allowing for situations in which qualified individuals are working in other roles; and
- Be experienced in and actively engaged in research; and
- Hold a research degree at the same level as, or higher than, the degree being supervised.

Research teams will include¹:

- At least one member who has successfully supervised a Doctoral thesis to completion, either individually or as part of a supervisory team
- At least one member of Faculty or adjunct Faculty.
- At least one member who is currently engaged in relevant or related research, so as to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up to date subject knowledge and research developments.

Given that the College is a small specialist institution, it is necessary to appoint external supervisors. Such supervisors are designated Honorary Research Fellows of Union Theological College. External supervisors will be expected to report annually to the College Principal on their role as supervisor and to comply with all the requirements for supervision laid out in this Code of Practice and in the regulations for RDP students. Supervisory teams are appointed under the procedures for the appointment of research supervisors.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor

4.4 The student is responsible for the eventual success or failure of the RDP. The supervisory team provides the student with advice, help and guidance over the course of the RDP, enabling access to relevant training and development opportunities, to support the completion of the RDP.

4.5 At an initial supervisory meeting the supervisor(s) and student agree the roles and responsibilities of the student and each member of the supervisory team; and the frequency, duration and format of formal meetings. In addition to the mandatory, recorded, eight formal meetings per year between the supervisor(s) and full-time student (pro rata for part-time students), there are normally additional, informal meetings as required, depending on the needs of the student and the supervisory team. All meetings are recorded on a template (Appendix 3). Students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained.

4.6 Supervisory team responsibilities are as follows:

- (i) Responsibilities are normally shared out amongst members of the supervisory team. However, it is expected that the principal supervisor has overall responsibility with the second supervisor providing a supporting role.
- (ii) The principal supervisor must ensure the student is made aware of relevant policies and procedures, including the use of originality checking software, and specific policies, including gaining ethical approval where appropriate.
- (iii) The principal supervisor will ensure that the student understands the nature and requirements of postgraduate research, including progress requirements and deadlines, and is aware of the standards expected of him/her as a research student.

¹ Faculty Meeting 20 October 2021

- (iv) The supervisory team will agree with the student what training and development requirements need to be fulfilled as part of the requirements for the completion of the RDP.
- (v) The supervisory team will agree an initial research plan with the student, which may be subject to change during the course of the RDP.
- (vi) The supervisory team (and in most cases the principal supervisor) will provide timely and constructive feedback on the student's work and overall progress within the RDP, raising any concerns about progress at an early stage with the student.
- (vii) The supervisory team will ensure that appropriate records are maintained in relation to supervisory meetings, progress monitoring, and Annual Progress Review (including differentiation).
- (viii) The supervisory team will provide appropriate pastoral support as required, by providing advice and/or referring the student to other sources of support, including relevant support services. The principal supervisor normally undertakes the role of personal tutor.
- (ix) The supervisory team will help the student interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant seminars and conferences; supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events as required; and where appropriate supporting the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals.
- (x) In circumstances where support for the student from the principal supervisor becomes unavailable, the second supervisor may be required to deputise.

Supervisor Workload

4.7 The College Principal should ensure that the existing teaching, research and administration commitments of potential supervisors from the College are fully taken into consideration before they are appointed, allowing supervisors to have sufficient time to monitor and support the progress of the student's research, and to respond to the student in a timely manner. A supervisor may not normally be the principal supervisor for more than six full-time research students (or equivalent) at any one time.

Supervisor support and training

4.8 The College Principal will ensure that supervisors have the appropriate training and skills to perform the task of supervision satisfactorily and will review annually with supervisors their needs for additional training to offer the best supervision possible to research students. Feedback from students will be considered when assessing the training needs of supervisors. New supervisors will be mentored by other members of Faculty who already have experience in supervising research students through to the completion of their degree. The College will put in place any training that is deemed appropriate to enhance the skills of supervisors. The College will hold an annual staff training seminar devoted to best practice in postgraduate supervision.

Section 5: Progress and Review Arrangements

Monitoring and Supporting Student Progress

5.1 To support progress within the RDP, the College is committed to the following:

- (i) Effective supervision.
- (ii) The development and updating of the research plan.
- (iii) An initial review of the feasibility of the project and the research plan, taking account of the required timeframe for the RDP.
- (iv) Regular progress monitoring, including the requirement for a minimum of eight formal, recorded meetings per year between the supervisor(s) and student to monitor progress against the research plan; and mechanisms to identify and deal with progress issues at an early stage.
- (v) Annual Progress Review (including differentiation).

5.2 Students are admitted as Probationary Research Students and are required to confirm doctoral status (differentiate) at the end of their first year of study. Reviews are held within nine months to allow for any remedial actions arising from the review to be completed within the year.

Confirmation of status normally requires the submission of the following: an outline of the provisional research project (maximum 1000 words), a forward plan with a schedule and expected dates of completion, a supporting bibliography, and a sample of work such as a draft chapter (4,000 – 6,000 words).²These submissions will be assessed in an interview with one or more appointed examiners and a recommendation made to the College Research Committee (Appendix 7).

The criteria for the assessment are:

- Is the work presented by the student such as might reasonably be expected as a result of their having studied for the equivalent of around 12 months full-time for a PhD?
- Has the student shown that he / she is able to exercise independent critical judgement?
- Has the student demonstrated that he / she understands how his / her research topic is related to the wider body of scholarly literature?
- Has the student demonstrated the potential to produce an original contribution to knowledge?
- Is the student's work, and his / her understanding of it, of a standard that indicates that it will lead to the successful submission of a PhD thesis within 3-4 years full-time registration (or part-time equivalent)?

Where previous experience in research is deemed satisfactory by the Faculty, the prescribed period of study may be reduced to two academic years for applicants for full-time PhD study and three academic years for applicants to part-time PhD study.

Annual Progress Review: Year 2 and beyond

5.3 The Annual Progress Review contains the following three elements:

- (i) A written self-evaluative summary of work completed during the period of the review together with a sample of work.
- (ii) A meeting with the student, whereby the student can be questioned about his/her work by the Progress Review Panel.
- (iii) A documented outcome of the review and the progression decision (Appendix 8).

All returning students registered for RDPs must have their progress reviewed annually by independent progress review panel members, in a meeting at which they are present, in person or via video-conferencing, to discuss their work, prior to registration for the next academic year.

5.4 Registration at the beginning of an academic year shall be dependent on the completion of a satisfactory progress report at the end of the previous academic year, for returning students. The College can determine when in the second semester that APR shall take place for students. Timing may vary depending on the student's year of study/progress, but appropriate information should be disseminated to all students in advance to allow for the required preparations. All students who may need to register in the next academic year in order to have a final version of the thesis approved prior to graduation must complete the APR process.

Initial APR meetings will be held early enough to allow students to complete any remedial actions required for progression before they need to register for the next academic year.

² Faculty Meeting 20 October 2021

Panel Membership

5.5 The College will appoint a Progress Review Panel for each student. This should normally comprise two independent members of Faculty or adjunct Faculty. One of the independent members should be a senior member of staff within the College.

As it is expected that panel members will not have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work as a result of APR, panel members would be eligible to act as internal examiners at the final oral examination.

One member of the supervisory team, preferably the principal supervisor, may be present to provide input, but may not take part in making the final recommendation concerning the student's progress. If a supervisor attends a panel meeting, he/she should be asked to leave the meeting for a few minutes so the student can openly discuss the supervisory process.

Types of Meetings and Student Submissions

5.6 The type of meeting and the format for student submissions depends on the stage the student has reached. For external students, and those who are studying away from the College, it is acceptable to host the meeting between the progress review panel and student via Skype or alternative videoconferencing or teleconferencing approaches.

- (i) For full-time students in year two and beyond, APR meetings may comprise a student presentation on their research followed by a question and answer session. Students should normally submit a training record, an updated research plan/completion timetable, and one or more of the following: a progress report, PowerPoint presentation, chapter outline, thesis overview, and thesis chapter(s). The panel may also consider a report from the supervisor(s).
- (ii) For part-time students, the College may implement the approach outlined above at the end of the second, fourth and sixth years. A lighter touch approach (e.g. reduced student submissions regarding progress, and brief progress review meetings) could be implemented at the end of the first, third, and fifth years.
- (iii) For students who are very near submission (as acknowledged by the principal supervisor), or who have submitted their thesis but are awaiting a viva, a light touch approach would be appropriate. This is to act as a formal way of 'keeping in touch' in case there may be progress issues, whilst recognising that a full APR at this stage would not be appropriate. These students may benefit from submitting the outline of their thesis and one or more chapters for consideration by the panel.
- (iv) For students who are completing corrections within a deadline which occurs in the next academic year, a very light touch approach would be appropriate. Students who have been asked to revise and resubmit their thesis for re-examination may benefit from submitting draft revised work to the progress review panel, and experiencing a mock viva regarding the corrections. For students who are completing minor corrections or minor revisions, the student submission may simply be a brief report on progress with the corrections, and the expected date of completion and submission of the corrections, and the APR panel meeting could be a very brief meeting to ensure that the student is on track and that there are no issues that would delay the completion.
- (v) Any students who are completing minor corrections or minor revisions within a deadline which occurs in the current academic year will not have to complete the APR process. These students would be expected to register in the next academic year in order to graduate only.

Feedback after the APR Meeting

5.7 Both the Student and his/her supervisory team will receive written feedback from the progress review panel once the progress recommendation has been approved by the College Research Committee. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the progress review may appeal using the Academic Appeals (Research Degrees) Procedure.

Section 6: Development of Research and Other Skills

Developing the Research, Personal and Professional Skills of Research Students

6.1 Full-time research students are expected to undertake 20 days of training and development activity throughout the course of their RDP. The College will offer advice and support concerning opportunities for personal, professional and skills development.

6.2 Through their supervisor, PhD students may request purchase by the Gamble Library of e-books in support of their research, use of inter-library loans facilities and the posting of hard-copy books. UTC will cover costs up to £50 per student.

6.3 Whilst opportunities for skills development are integrated in the RDPs, the College may provide additional subject-specific training. Students will also be made aware of training opportunities which may be delivered by Research Councils or other Professional Bodies. Subject to available funding and through agreement with the student's supervisor, the College will encourage students to attend or participate in conferences and seminars which further their research as well as enhancing their professional skills.

Section 7: Assessment

Criteria for the Award of a PhD

This section should be read in conjunction with the PhD regulations (Appendix 12)

7.1 Students are required to submit a thesis, the length of which should not normally be fewer than 75,000 or greater than 90,000 words. Footnotes are included in this total but the bibliography and any appendices deemed essential support for the thesis are not. The first page of the thesis must include the author's full names; degrees held by the author; title of thesis; degree for which it is offered; and date of submission (month/year). The minimum margins should be a left margin of 4 cm (to allow for binding) and right, top and bottom margins of 2.5 cm. The pages and illustrations must be numbered consecutively. The text may be presented in either one-and-a-half or double-line spacing.

The assessment includes a thorough review of the submitted thesis followed by a *viva voce* oral examination, normally conducted by two examiners. Supervisors have no role in the examination of doctoral awards that they have supervised. At least one of these examiners will be external.

7.2 Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.
- ii. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
- iii. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
- iv. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Roles and Responsibilities

7.3 Examiners have an obligation of confidentiality regarding the thesis and the examination. The Faculty appoints the external examiner, the internal examiner and the independent convener. The College sends the formal appointment letter to the external examiner, along with appropriate regulations and guidance. The external examiner is a specialist in the subject area of the thesis and will take the lead in the examination. The internal examiner is a full examiner, and is expected to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the topic to enable him/her to judge the quality of the thesis and contribute accordingly to the examination.

7.4 A chair is appointed by the Faculty as an independent convener of the oral examination panel. The independent convener is in attendance to monitor the conduct of the examination and provide a report.

The following guidelines outline the role of the independent convener:

- (i) The convenor is responsible for ensuring that the oral is conducted in a fair manner, and must be present for the duration of the examination. However, the convenor is not one of the examiners and will not participate in the examination of the student, nor is there a requirement to read the thesis.
- (ii) The convenor introduces those present at the oral examination, and ensures that all parties understand the procedures to be followed, and the expectations of each member. The convenor offers assistance and facilitation where necessary.
- (iii) The convenor is responsible for ensuring that the oral is of a reasonable duration. Where the oral is longer than two hours, it is recommended that the student be offered a short intermission. Where difficulties arise, the convenor will decide whether an adjournment is required.
- (iv) The convenor intervenes if there is a danger of unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.
- (v) Towards the end of the oral examination, the convenor asks the supervisor to withdraw so that the student has an opportunity to say anything he/she would prefer to say without the presence of the supervisor.
- (vi) At the end of the oral examination, the convenor asks the student to withdraw while the examiners deliberate.
- (vii) If the examiners wish to advise the student of their recommendations, the convenor ensures that the student knows that this recommendation is provisional only. The student must await a formal letter from the Principal.
- (viii) The convenor is required to submit a report on covering the procedural conduct of the examination.
- (ix) Only one supervisor may attend the oral, with the agreement of the student, and may speak only with the examiners' agreement. The supervisor's main role is to comment on any practical or administrative difficulties in the pursuit of the research raised by the student.

The College Office will make the arrangements for the oral examination, in consultation with the student and the examiners.

Appointment of examiners

7.6 The role of the examiners is to ensure that the thesis meets the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. Examiners are appointed for the entire examination process, which includes any re-examination.

The supervisor (on behalf of the Supervisory Team) should approach potential external and internal examiners and Independent Chairs informally with a view to them being nominated to conduct the examination of the thesis. Formal nominations will be submitted by the College Research Committee to Faculty. All examiners and Independent Chairs will be appointed by the Faculty.

The appropriate form (Appendix 4) for appointing an external examiner should be completed, together with a curriculum vitae of the proposed external examiner, a minimum of 12 weeks before the expected submission date. This period is necessary to allow for all the necessary checks, including the suitability of examiners and for appointment packs to be sent out.

There must be an appropriate balance of experience across the examining team. The CV of the potential external examiner must demonstrate previous experience of research degree supervision and/or examination. Should the proposed external examiner lack significant experience, a strong case needs to be made for their appointment and evidence provided of how the Panel as a whole will be able to discharge its duties.

The supervisor should not propose internal examiners who have been part of the candidate's supervisory team at any stage (Appendix 6).

Independent Chairs must normally be permanent members of academic staff of the College with experience of supervision and examining of research degrees and knowledge of the Regulations for Research Degree Programmes and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees (Appendix 5). The Independent Chair must not have been involved in the supervision of the candidate. It is not necessary for the Independent Chair to be a subject expert.

The Preparatory Period Prior to the Viva

7.7 The College Office provides the thesis to the examiners, along with the examination report templates in electronic format.

The research and the written submission must be the student's own work. An examiner who, in reading a thesis, discovers evidence of plagiarism, fabrication of results or other research misconduct should report the matter immediately to the Principal, who will instigate an investigation under the College academic offences procedure and inform the examiners of its outcome in due course. The Principal arranges for an investigation under the College academic offences procedure, and informs the examiners of the outcome in due course. The examination will not continue until this process is complete, and may not continue at all if the student is found to have committed a serious academic offence.

Each examiner is required to complete an Independent Report (Appendix 10) on the thesis before the oral examination, without consulting the other examiner(s). Each examiner indicates in this preliminary report whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements for the research degree, and makes an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.

The internal examiner contacts the external examiner(s) a few days before the oral to discuss how the examination is to be handled. This enables them to identify the major issues which will be raised in the examination.

Examiners meet before the oral examination starts in order to exchange, and discuss, the Independent Reports.

The student and the examiners may not communicate with each other about the thesis before the examination.

A period of six to eight weeks is normally allowed for reading and examining a thesis, including the oral examination of the student.

The Oral Examination

7.8 An oral examination is compulsory for all RDPs, and is normally held in the College. It may serve a number of different functions including the following:

- (i) It provides the student with the opportunity to defend the thesis through high-level debate with experts in the subject.
- (ii) It gives the examiners an opportunity to explore any doubts they may have about the material presented in the thesis.

It can be used to determine that the student is the author of the written materials submitted.

It enables the examiners to check that the student has a thorough understanding of the theoretical framework, issues, methods and statistical analysis involved.

Communicating the Result

7.9 An agreed Joint Report, signed by all the examiners, is completed after the oral examination, and submitted to the College Office normally within five working days of the oral examination (Appendix 11). The Joint Report reflects the examiners' assessment of both the written submission and the student's performance at the oral examination, and includes a recommendation as to the outcome of the examination. It need not repeat comments already made in the Independent Reports. The Joint and Independent Reports taken together should be of sufficient length and provide sufficient evidence to justify the examiners' recommendation.

The independent convener submits a report covering the procedural conduct of the examination, to the College Office, normally within five working days of the oral examination.

After considering the Independent Reports, the Report of the Independent Convener, and the Joint Report, the Principal, or nominee, signs the Joint Report to confirm that the result has been approved. The Principal may refer the case back to the examiners if the Joint Report does not justify the recommendation made.

The College Office notifies the student of the outcome of the examination, and sends the student a copy of the examiners' reports, normally within two weeks of the oral examination. The possible outcomes are listed in the RDP regulations.

Following approval of the amendments (for minor corrections or minor revisions), received within the deadline set by the examiners, the internal examiner completes the Completion Report indicating that all amendments

have been completed within deadline, and submits it to the Principal for approval on behalf of the PTFI. The Principal then notifies the student that the award has been approved.

Students who fail to submit a corrected or revised thesis by the date set by the examiners will normally be regarded as having failed the examination and the decisions of the examiners will lapse. If the student has advised of exceptional circumstances in advance of the deadline, an extension may be granted by the examiners, following approval of the College Research Committee.

Section 8: Research Student Complaints and Appeals

Complaints and Appeals Procedures

8.1 It is in the interests of research students and the College to resolve problems at an early stage. Clear explanations should be provided to students regarding academic and progress outcomes. Appeals regarding academic and progress matters will be considered under the Academic Appeals (Research Degrees) Procedure. Complaints will be considered under the Student Complaints Procedure.

Section 9: Mechanisms for Quality Assurance and Evaluation

Collecting and Responding to Evaluations of Research Degree Programme.

9.1 The College ensures there are mechanisms in place for a variety of stakeholders to be able to provide feedback on the delivery, assessment and outcome of RDPs.

Student feedback is collated in a number of ways from formal questionnaires to informal feedback sessions with supervisors. This feedback is reviewed, acted upon, and reported back to stakeholders both informally at College support area level, and more formally through College governance structures.

Feedback from supervisors, review panels and internal examiners will be collated and acted upon, by the College Research Committee. Feedback is gathered from external parties in a number of ways, including through the examination process, from external examiners.

All of this feedback, and the resultant actions, will be reviewed as part of the College's Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes process, a key quality assurance mechanism to review academic standards and quality. The Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes will take place in December 2021.

College Research Committee

Terms of Reference:		
<p>The Faculty has oversight of research degree programmes within the College and has delegated the following matters to the College Research Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Monitoring student progress through the Annual Progress Review (ii) Approving Progress recommendations (iii) Identifying and monitoring research student development opportunities (iv) Ensuring that examination procedures align with the RDP regulations and Code of Practice (v) Making recommendations to Faculty regarding the composition of the oral examination panel (vi) Reviewing the RDP regulations and Code of Practice on an annual basis (vii) Receiving the report of the Annual Programme Review for Research Degree Programmes (viii) Approving student temporary withdrawals and changes of status (ix) Consideration of applications for ethical approval 		
Membership:		
Composition		Current Members
Chair:	Principal of Union Theological College	
	One research-active member of Faculty Two external research-active members	
In attendance	Head of Academic Administration	
Quorum	Three	
Serviced by:	Union College	
Reports to:	Faculty	
Receives reports from:	n/a	

Union Theological College

POLICY ON THE ETHICAL APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

1. The College is committed to ensuring that all research undertaken by its staff and students is conducted to the highest standard of integrity. The College requires that all research involving human participants must receive ethics approval from the College Research Committee prior to commencing and comply with the legal requirements of the UK. The College Research Committee may seek expert advice on the ethical implications of the proposed research.
2. The College expects that all human participant research is undertaken with respect for all persons or groups involved, either directly or indirectly. Further, these persons and/or groups should not suffer either undue advantage or disadvantage in respect of age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, lifestyle or any other significant social or cultural differences.
3. Harm or burden to those involved in or affected by research must be minimized. Participants must be warned in advance about any potential risks of harm.
4. The most important principle, in human participant research, is that of free and informed consent. Whilst the form of consent may vary according to the circumstances, informed consent generally requires the participant to have:
 - 4.1 Capacity to consent;
 - 4.2 Have been provided with all information regarding the research that may affect their willingness to participate. This must be provided (normally as a participant information sheet) in a language/format that is clear and easy to understand;
 - 4.3 Have been made aware that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time. This includes the right, in the light of experience of the investigation or as a result of debriefing, to withdraw retrospectively any consent previously given and to require that their own data, including recordings or material, be destroyed. However, the right to withdraw consent retrospectively has limitations – for example, it cannot be fully given after a report has been published. Also, in some circumstances the right of the participant to withdraw consent may be outweighed by the public or scientific interest of the relevant information. It should be made clear to participants at what point, if any, they are no longer able retrospectively to withdraw their participation;
 - 4.4 Have understood that not participating or withdrawing will have no effect on their subsequent treatment or standing;
 - 4.5 Have been asked to participate without undue pressure or inducement. It is important to recognise the extent to which research participants may be inconvenienced, and that they should be appropriately rewarded for this, e.g. payment of travel expenses. However, payment of participants should not be used to induce them to risk harm beyond that which they risk without payment in their normal lifestyle;
 - 4.6 Have understood they may ask questions and receive answers regarding their participation.
 - 4.7 There may be cases where deception or withholding of certain information is necessary, until after data has been collected. An example might be where a hypothesis is being tested, that participants will react in a particular way to being given certain information. If the participants were informed of the hypothesis before the experiment this may influence their responses and hence the validity of the study.
 - 4.8 Alternatives to the use of deception should be considered and demonstrated to be ineffective. The use of deception to induce severe physical pain or emotional distress is not justified. Researchers should inform participants regarding their deception as soon as possible after their participation in the study and usually not later than at the conclusion of the data collection. Participants should, in most circumstances, be given the opportunity to withdraw their data.

4.9 Researchers should be cognizant of the difference between consent as part of an ethical process when conducting a study and consent to hold and process data with respect to the General Data Protection Legislation. Where possible, participants should be advised that, as a publicly-funded organization, it is most likely that the research is being conducted in the public interest and it is on this basis that personal data is collected and processed.

4.10 Researchers must consider and obtain enduring consent for the sharing, archiving and re-use of data once it has been fully anonymized.

5. Research involving children, vulnerable adults or dependent persons

5.1 In circumstances where the participant lacks the capacity to provide consent, the research team should consider the justification and merits of involving the particular research group.

5.2 Where participants are children, vulnerable adults or dependent persons, the researchers should: (i) Explain the research and the participants' role and requirements; (ii) Seek the participants' agreement; (iii) Ensure the person's best interests are served; (iv) Obtain assent from the participants' legal guardian.

5.3 Any research involving children should comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. Article 12 requires that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity.

5.4 Any member of staff or student intending to undertake research with children must comply with relevant legislation. The Head of Department remains the person responsible for checking and complying with such legal requirements. However, the researcher (or supervisor in the case of students) must ensure that they have considered the legislation.

5.5 A vulnerable adult may be someone who is incapacitated, or a dependent person. Particular care should be exercised when conducting research involving vulnerable groups or dependent persons, to ensure that they have not been subjected to undue influence to participate. Their decision to participate may be influenced by their reliance on those who may be requesting or offering their participation in research. Such persons include: students; those deprived of their liberty; recipients of health care dependent on their health care provider for continued care; those in military service; health care workers or other employees (particularly those in junior positions).

5.6 Whilst all human beings enrolled in research may be said to be vulnerable to harm, as research, by definition, involves a level of uncertainty, some individuals may be more vulnerable than others to the risk of being treated unethically in research. Potential research participants can be classified as vulnerable due to cognitive, situational, institutional, deferential, medical, economic, and social factors.

6.0 Privacy

6.1 The privacy of individuals who have agreed to participate in research must be respected. Even though they may have agreed to participate, they should not be expected to divulge information on every aspect of their lives, particularly on areas considered sensitive and personal to them.

6.2 It should be made clear to participants that they are free to decide what information they wish to share with the researcher and that they are under no pressure or obligation to discuss matters that they do not wish to.

6.3 In cases where a researcher has already developed a relationship with an individual or group of people before inviting them to participate in a research study, they have a special responsibility to protect the privacy of those concerned. More specifically, they should obtain their explicit consent if they wish to use information that the individuals may have shared with them prior to their participation in the study.

6.4 Observational studies are sometimes conducted in naturalistic settings in which the 'participants' are unaware that an investigation is taking place. Unobtrusive observation raises significant ethical questions regarding informed consent and invasion of privacy. Before conducting unobtrusive

observational studies, it is essential to undertake an assessment of the extent to which human dignity may be jeopardized, and that threat must be weighed against the value of the study. Such research is only acceptable in situations where those being observed would expect to be observed by strangers. Particular account must also be taken of local cultural values and of the possibility of intruding upon the privacy of individuals who, even while in a normally public space, may believe they are unobserved.

7.0 Confidentiality, Anonymity and Data processing/storage

7.1 Data relating to research should be stored for a minimum period of five years following the completion of the study. However, legislation and funders' terms and conditions take precedence. Researchers must ensure all research data is processed and stored in a secure manner and in accordance with obligations outlined in Data Protection legislation.

7.2 Confidentiality of personal data relating to research participants is essential and it is of paramount concern that this is protected. All personal information must therefore be encoded or made anonymous, as far as possible, and as early as possible after collection; ciphers should be held separately.

7.3 Even with anonymised data, care must be taken to ensure that any variables or combination of variables, particularly group or location identifiers (such as postcodes), cannot lead to the identification of individuals (or small groups of individuals).

7.4 When seeking consent from potential participants, researchers should inform them of measures taken to ensure their confidentiality and to protect their anonymity. They should also make clear any potential limits associated with these measures. In particular:

- (i) In research involving children, should the researcher have any concerns regarding the safety or well-being of a child participant, they have a duty under the Children Order (NI) 1995 to report their concerns to a relevant authority;
- (ii) Where there is sufficient evidence for the researcher to have serious concerns about the safety of a participant (adult or child) or about others who may be at significant risk because of the behaviour of that participant, then they have a moral obligation to inform an appropriate third party;
- (iii) Information provided in confidence to a researcher does not enjoy legal privilege, and may be liable to legal subpoena in court, under section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967. The possibility of such disclosure should be explained to the participants.

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Checklist for research ethics review involving human participants

The College is committed to ensuring that all research undertaken by its staff and students is conducted to the highest standards of integrity. Central to this is the consideration of ethical issues arising from research involving human participants and data. The College's policy is that all such research should undergo appropriate ethical scrutiny, to ensure that the rights, dignity, safety and well-being of all those involved are protected.

This research ethics checklist should be completed **for every research project that involves human participants**. It is used to determine the amount of risk of harm entailed in a proposed study and to identify whether an application for ethical approval needs to be submitted. Before completing this form, please refer to the College Policy on the Ethical Approval of Research. The principal supervisor is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

Ethical approval, where required, must be obtained before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

		Yes	No
1	Does the study involve human participants or data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Are you sourcing participants or data through an external source?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (eg children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (eg students at school, members of self-help group)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (eg covert observation of people in non-public places)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Will the study involve the discussion of sensitive topics (eg sexual activity, drug use)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Will the study involve the recruitment of patients or their relatives/carers through Health and Social Care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Will the study involve patients who are cared for in private and voluntary sector nursing homes and/or residents of residential care homes (Northern Ireland only)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Union Theological College

Summary of PhD supervision meeting

Present at meeting	Name		Status
Date of meeting		Nature of meeting	formal / informal (delete as appl.)
Summary of discussion			
Action points			

Form completed by student on _____

Form completed by supervisor on _____

Union Theological College

Nomination of External Examiner for PhD Oral Examination

Name of Student	
Name of Principal Supervisor	
PROPOSED EXTERNAL EXAMINER	
Name	
Address	
E-Mail Address	
Institution/Employer	
Post held	
Rationale for Proposal The external examiner must demonstrate previous experience of research degree supervision and/or supervision, and must be a subject specialist in the subject area of the thesis. CV must be attached to nomination form.	
Signed	
Date	

Approved by Faculty Yes/No

Signed

Date

Comments:

Union Theological College

Nomination of Independent Convener (Chair) for PhD Oral Examination

Name of Student	
Name of Principal Supervisor	
Proposed Independent Convener	
Name	
Rationale for Proposal The independent convener must normally be a permanent member of academic staff of the College with experience of supervision and examining of research degrees, and must not have been involved in the supervision of the candidate	

Signed:

Date:

Approved by Faculty: Yes/No

Date:

Comments:

Union Theological College

Nomination of Internal Examiner for PhD Oral Examination

Name of Student	
Name of Principal Supervisor	
Proposed Internal Examiner	
Name	
Rationale for Proposal The internal examiner should not have been part of the candidate's supervisory team at any stage	

Signed:

Date:

Approved by Faculty: Yes/No

Date:

Comments:

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW (DIFFERENTIATION)

Name of Student	
Principal Supervisor	
Recommendation of Annual Progress Review Panel (Differentiation) to College Research Committee	
The Panel recommends that this student may/may not differentiate to PhD student status.	
Rationale for decision	
Where, appropriate, conditions for differentiation and further review date.	
Annual Review Panel (Differentiation)	
Name	
Name	
Signed	
Signed	
Date	

Recommendation approved/not approved by College Research Committee

Signed:

Date:

Comments:

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW

Name of Student	
Full-time/Part-time	
Year of Study	
Principal Supervisor	
Recommendation of Annual Progress Review Panel to College Research Committee	
The Panel recommends that this student may/may not proceed.	
Rationale for decision	
Where, appropriate, conditions for progression and further review date.	
Annual Review Panel	
Name	
Name	
Signed	
Signed	
Date	

Recommendation approved/not approved by College Research Committee

Signed:

Date:

Comments:

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SUBMIT

Name of Student	
Principal Supervisor	
Title of Thesis	
Submission Deadline	
Proposed Date of Submission	
Signed (student)	
Date	
Signed (Principal Supervisor)	
Date	
Signed (Second Supervisor)	
Dated	
Note In signing this form, the Principal Supervisor and Second Supervisor do not confirm that the thesis is fit for submission or that submission will be successful	
Date Received by College Office	

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

EXAMINER'S PRELIMINARY INDEPENDENT REPORT

Name of Student	
Title of Research Thesis	
Name of Examiner	
Internal or External Examiner	
Report of the Examiner on the Thesis	
Provisional Recommendation	
Signed	
Date	

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Recommendation of Examiners: Joint Report

Name of Student	
Title of Thesis	
The Examination Board	
External Examiner	
Internal Examiner	
Independent Convener (Chair)	
Report of the Examiners on the Thesis	
Report of the Examiners on the Oral Examination	
Report of the Independent Convener (Chair) on the Conduct of the Oral Examination	
Unicheck Similarity Report	

There is a formal requirement for the College to process each candidate's submission through Unicheck software for the purposes of identifying potential plagiarism. The Board of Examiners will discuss the report at the pre-meeting regardless of the similarity results obtained through Unicheck.

In this section the Independent Convener should report on the discussion held and provide comments on the Unicheck results:

Similarity results obtained:

Internet Sources:

Publications:

Student Papers:

Board of Examiners Comments:

Recommendation: (note that all instances of plagiarism should be dealt with in accordance with the framework of penalties detailed in the Academic Misconduct Procedures for PTFI Programmes)

If there is established evidence of plagiarised material in the thesis please discuss this with the student at the end of the examination and provide a summary below:

Recommendations

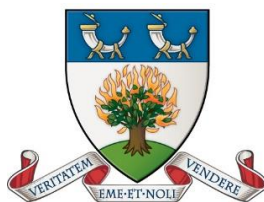
The Examiners are requested to check the recommendation which applies:

1. The Doctoral degree be awarded as the thesis stands.
2. The Doctoral degree be awarded subject to corrections* being made to the thesis that must be completed within three months of the oral examination.
3. The Doctoral degree be awarded subject to corrections* being made to the thesis that must be completed within six months of the oral examination.
4. The thesis be revised and resubmitted for the Doctoral degree* within twelve months.
5. A Master of Philosophy be awarded as the thesis stands.
6. No degree be awarded and no resubmission permitted.**

*A typed list of these amendments should be attached to this form.

** A typed list of the deficiencies should be attached to this form.

Signed	
External Examiner	
Internal Examiner	
Independent Convener	
Date	
Recommendation Approved/ Not Approved by College Principal	
Signed	
Date	
Comments	



UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

PhD REGULATIONS

Registration

1.1 Students must register at the start of research and at the beginning of every subsequent academic year. Registration in the second and subsequent years shall be subject to satisfactory progress reports.

1.2 The following registration statuses are applicable:

- i. Full-time - Full-time registration is for students who intend to complete the programme within the normal full-time period of three years. This incurs the full-time fee.
- ii. Part-time - Part-time registration is for students who intend to complete the programme within the normal part-time period of six years. This incurs the part-time fee.
- iii. Graduation Only - Once a thesis has been submitted/resubmitted for examination, the student's status will be changed to Graduation Only. No further tuition fee is incurred.
- iv. Thesis Resubmission - Where a student is required to revise and resubmit a thesis, the status is changed to Thesis Resubmission and the student will be liable for a resubmission charge.

1.3 Students who have registered for a particular period as full-time or part-time must apply through their supervisors to the College Research Committee (CRC) for permission for any change in registration during that period.

2. Period of Study

2.1 Time spent in achieving a Master's degree does not count as part of the time allowed for completion of a Doctorate.

2.2 The minimum, normal and maximum periods of full-time (FT) or part-time (PT) study in years permitted for submission of research degree programmes shall be:

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Minimum Period	Normal Period	Maximum Period
	2 (FT) or 4 (PT)	3 (FT) or 6 (PT)	4 (FT) or 8 (PT)

2.3 The maximum period within which students must submit all research elements required for the degree for examination is calculated from the date of first registration. These periods exclude suspension, but not extension, of studies.

2.4 Students shall be expected to submit within the normal period of study. Any requests to submit earlier (within the minimum period), or later (within the maximum period) must be submitted to the CRC for consideration and approval. In exceptional circumstances, a request to allow an extension beyond the maximum period must be endorsed by the CRC, and approved by the Faculty.

2.5 For any extension beyond the normal period, an action plan shall be agreed with the student setting out what needs to be achieved during the extension period.

2.6 Students who are granted an extension beyond the normal period and are in receipt of funding for their programme should confirm the impact this may have on their funding.

2.7 For students permitted to transfer from full-time to part-time registration, and vice versa, one unit of full-time registration shall be considered equivalent to two units of part-time registration.

3. Temporary Withdrawal

3.1 Students may apply to withdraw voluntarily from their programme on a temporary basis, subject to consultation with their supervisors and the approval of the CRC.

3.2 A person on temporary withdrawal does not possess entitlements to any rights or privileges associated with student status, unless this is expressly stated in a letter from the College stipulating the person's status and entitlements.

3.3 The CRC may permit students to withdraw temporarily from the programme for a period of up to one year at a time, up to a cumulative maximum of two years, where it is satisfied that good cause exists or continues to exist.

3.4 A period of permitted temporary withdrawal shall not count as part of the time allowed by the College for submission or completion.

3.5 Students who do not resume at the appropriate time, and who do not seek permission to withdraw temporarily shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the College.

3.6 Any suspension or extension to the period of study of visa-holding students must be reported to the Head of Academic Administration as soon as it is known, for report to UK Visas and Immigration.

4. Progress

4.1 Supervision

4.1.1 It is the responsibility of the Faculty to appoint the supervisory team for each research degree student. The team will consist of a principal supervisor, a second supervisor and, if appropriate, a third supervisor. In no circumstances may a student have more than three supervisors at any one time. The principal supervisor shall have overall responsibility for the student and the research. It is the responsibility of the student to interact with the team, normally through the principal supervisor.

4.1.2 Research supervisors will:

i. Typically, be members of staff in a Higher Education Institution or Research Institute, while allowing for situations in which qualified individuals are working in other roles: and

ii. Be experienced in and actively engaged in research: and

iii. Hold a research degree at the same level as, or higher than, the degree being supervised.

4.1.3 Research Teams will include:

i. At least one member who has successfully supervised a Doctoral thesis to completion, either individually or as part of a supervisory team.

ii. At least one member of Faculty or adjunct Faculty.

iii. At least one member who is currently engaged in relevant or related research, so as to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up to date subject knowledge and research developments.

4.1.4 Given that the College is a small specialist institution, it will be necessary to appoint external supervisors. Such appointees will be designated as Honorary Research Fellows and receive remuneration for their supervisory duties in line with fees agreed by Faculty.

4.1.5 If, for any reason, a principal supervisor shall be unavailable for contact by a student for a significant period which impinges negatively on the progress of the student's project, a permanent replacement shall be appointed as a main supervisor.

4.1.6 A supervisor may not normally be the principal supervisor for more than six full-time (or equivalent) research students at any one time.

4.1.7 Supervisory responsibilities can be changed at the request of a student or a supervisor. Normally, any change of supervisor shall be by mutual agreement between the student and the College, by application to the Principal. If, for any reason, a change of supervisor(s) is required during the period of the research, the above criteria shall apply to the appointment of the new supervisor(s).

4.1.8 At an initial supervisory meeting between the student and the principal supervisor or representative of the supervisory team, the following shall be agreed:

- i. Roles and responsibilities of the student and each member of the supervisory team.
- ii. The frequency, duration and format of formal meetings.
- iii. Any requirements for ethical approval of the proposed research which is obtained through application to the College Research Committee in line with the College Policy on the Ethical Approval of Research.

4.2 Research Plan

4.2.1 Both full-time and part-time research students must agree a research plan with their supervisors at the outset of the research (which should be updated as appropriate throughout the period of study), and attend courses and perform research work as specified in the research plan.

5.1 Regular Progress Monitoring

5.1.1. There shall be eight formal meetings per year between the principal supervisor and full-time student (four for part-time students) to monitor progress against the research plan. All members of the supervisory team shall attend at least half of these meetings. Minutes of the meetings shall be retained as records.

5.1.2. A supervisor who has concerns about a student's progress at times other than the normal Annual Progress Review period outlined in x.x, shall inform the student in writing of the areas of concern and invite the student to a meeting to discuss the concerns. Following the meeting, and taking account of all known circumstances, the supervisor(s) may do one of the following:

- i. Agree a plan of action for the student, with a review date, and monitor the student's attendance, progress and performance during that period. If the student's performance has not improved within the specified period, the supervisors shall notify the Principal or nominee and submit a report for review by the CRC.
- ii. In exceptional circumstances, notify the Principal or nominee and submit a report for review by the CRC, without undertaking a period of monitoring.

5.1.3. In either case, where a supervisor report is made to the CRC for review of the student's progress, the student shall also be given the opportunity to submit a report. The CRC shall inform the student of the outcome of the progress review, and the appropriate registration status.

5.2 Annual Progress Review: Differentiation

5.2.1 Students are admitted as Probationary Research Students and are required to confirm doctoral status (differentiate) at the end of their first year of study. Reviews are held within nine months to allow for any remedial actions arising from the review to be completed within the year.

5.2.2 Confirmation of status normally requires the submission of the following: an outline of the provisional research project (maximum 1000 words), a forward plan with a schedule and expected dates of completion, a supporting bibliography, and a sample of work such as a draft chapter (4,000 – 6,000 words). These submissions will be assessed in an interview with the Progress Review Panel (5.3.1).

5.2.3 The Progress Review Panel shall make one of the following recommendations to the CRC regarding progression:

- i. That the student be permitted to differentiate to Doctoral status.
- ii. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a second attempt at differentiation be held within a specified period (normally 3 months FTE) may be made. Students may not make more than two attempts at differentiation. Students shall normally be offered a second attempt before recommendation iii is made.
- iii. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and they may not differentiate and registration on the programme ceases. In such a case, the CRC shall invite any student who has received this recommendation to appear before it before the decision is confirmed.

5.2.4 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of differentiation may submit an academic appeal (research degree programmes) if a ground for appeal is evidenced.

5.3 Annual Progress Review (Year 2 and beyond)

5.3.1 The College shall appoint a progress review panel for each student. This should comprise two academics not involved in the student's supervision. One member of the supervisory team, preferably the principal supervisor, may be present to provide input, but may not take part in making the final recommendation concerning the student's progress. The progress of each student must be reviewed annually until the research degree is awarded. The Faculty may specify more frequent reviews at its discretion. The normal outcome of the Annual Progress Review is that the student progresses to the next year, unconditionally or subject to the completion of specific targets.

5.3.2 The Annual Progress Review must contain the following three elements:

- i. A written self-evaluative summary by the student of work completed during the period under review, together with a sample of work.
- ii. A meeting with the student, where the student discusses their work with the progress review panel.
- iii. A documented outcome of the review and the progression decision.

5.3.3 The progress review panel shall make one of the following recommendations regarding progression, for the approval of the CRC:

- i. That the student's performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage.

- ii. That, notwithstanding some concerns, which the student and supervisory team should act upon, the student's overall performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage.
- iii. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory, and that a further assessment be held within a specified period (normally 3 months FTE) to determine whether progress on the programme shall be recommended. Students may not make more than two attempts at Annual Progress Review. Students shall normally be offered a second attempt before recommendation iv is made.
- iv. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Doctoral degree examination be recommended, and that registration be terminated.

5.3.4 For students who are completing the final year of their normal period of study, the progress review panel shall confirm whether or not the student has completed all the necessary research and is on track to submit.

5.3.5 The CRC shall consider progress review panel recommendations and shall invite any student who has received a recommendation under iv above to appear before it before the decision is confirmed. The College Office shall inform each student of the outcome of the progress review exercise.

5.3.6 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the progress review may submit an academic appeal (research degree programmes) if a ground for appeal is evidenced.

6.1 College Research Committee

6.1.1 The Faculty has oversight of research within the College and has delegated certain matters to a College Research Committee, chaired by the Principal and comprising both internal and external research-active members. A quorum shall comprise the Chairperson and two other members. The Head of Academic Administration shall be in attendance. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of CRC meetings, and retained.

6.1.2 Students asked to appear before the CRC may be accompanied by one person. The individual who accompanies the student will not act as the student's representative or have either a professional or academic legal qualification.

6.1.3 On consideration of any case referred to it, the CRC shall have the power to do any one or more of the following as it considers appropriate:

- i. To advise students of the course of action considered to be in their best interests with a view to completing a degree or other programmes of the College. This may include temporary withdrawal or transferring to another programme, if appropriate.
- ii. To require students to follow a specified course of action to meet specified targets, provided such targets do not normally exceed what would be required for the student to restore his/her good academic standing.
- iii. To require students who have persistently failed progress review to withdraw from their current pathway, or transfer to another programme.
- iv. To require students who have persistently failed progress review to withdraw from the College.

6.1.4 Where students fail to satisfy a requirement imposed under ii, the College may either impose a further requirement under ii, or require students to withdraw from the programme or College as appropriate to the circumstances of the case. In such cases the student shall have the right to appear before the CRC meeting at which the withdrawal decision is taken or confirmed. All CRC decisions shall be confirmed in writing to the student concerned within five working days of the decision being made.

6.1.5 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the examination process may submit an academic appeal (research degree programme) if a ground for appeal is evidenced.

7. Assessment/Award

7.1 Notice of Intention to Submit

7.1.1 Students shall prepare a detailed timetable for final preparation and submission of the thesis, in consultation with the supervisors, at least six months before the end of the normal period of study.

7.1.2 Students must give at least three months' notice to the CRC of intention to submit their thesis. The College Office will provide thesis submission deadlines regarding eligibility for graduation.

7.1.3 Students must be registered as research students in the academic year in which the thesis is submitted.

7.1.4 Students who anticipate being unable to submit by the notified date must apply to the CRC for a new date of submission, after consultation with their supervisors.

7.1.5 The principal supervisor must ensure that appropriate sections of the draft thesis have been submitted to the College-recognised similarity checking service, and the report used for feedback purposes, prior to the submission of the thesis.

7.2 Title and Format of Thesis

7.2.1 Students shall specify the title of the thesis when giving notice of intention to submit. The title may not be changed thereafter, except with the permission of the CRC.

7.2.2 All theses must be written in English.

7.2.3 The length of the thesis should not normally be fewer than 75,000 words and not exceed 90,000 words (including footnotes but excluding the bibliography and any appendices deemed essential support for thesis).

7.2.4 The layout of the thesis must conform to the format described in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

7.2.5 The first page of the thesis must give the author's full names, degrees, the approved title of the thesis, the degree for which it is offered, and the date of submission.

7.3 Requirements for the Master of Philosophy³ (as an exit award available to examiners following a PhD viva)

7.3.1 Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i. A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice.
- ii. A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
- iii. Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.
- iv. Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - a. To evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline.
 - b. To evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

7.3.2 Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

³ UK Quality Code for Higher Education: The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014)

- i. Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- ii. Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level.
- iii. Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

7.3.3 Holders will have:

- i. The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - a) The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility.
 - b) Decision making in complex and unpredictable situations.
 - c) The independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

7.4 Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy⁴

7.4.1 Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a) The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication
- b) A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
- c) The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
- d) A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

7.4.2 Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a) Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- b) Continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

7.4.3 Holders will have:

- a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

7.5 Procedure for Submission

7.5.1 Students must submit to the College Office two electronic copies of the thesis, (PDF and Word files) to be issued to the internal and external examiners.

7.5.2 On submitting a thesis, students must sign a statement that:

- b) The thesis is not one for which a degree has been or will be conferred by any other institution.
- c) The thesis is not one for which a degree has already been conferred by this College
- d) The work for the thesis is the student's own and that, where material submitted by the student for another degree or work undertaken by the student as part of a research group has been

⁴ UK Quality Code for Higher Education: The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014)

incorporated into the thesis, the extent of the work thus incorporated has been clearly indicated.

- e) The composition of the thesis is the student's own work.

7.6 Appointment of Examiners

7.6.1 The CRC shall nominate internal and external examiners to be formally appointed by Faculty.

7.6.2 Where the student is a member of staff, or in any other case where personal interest might be involved, a second external examiner must be appointed in lieu of the internal examiner. The two external examiners must each come from different institutions or organisations.

7.6.3 In any instance where an internal examiner is not appointed, the College shall appoint an independent member of the internal staff to co-ordinate the examination process.

7.6.4 Only persons of seniority and experience within the area of research concerned shall be appointed as examiners.

7.6.5 The examiners shall not have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work, nor examine a thesis whose focus is the examiner's own work, nor have any links, including personal links, with the student which could be perceived to influence their judgement.

7.6.6 The external examiner shall be appointed from amongst the current professors, fellows, readers, or senior lecturers (or equivalent) from an external university. External examiners from outside the higher education system, for example from a research institution or religious body, shall be recognised experts in the area of the research. An external examiner must not have been a member of staff or a student of the College at any time during the three years prior to appointment.

7.6.7 The internal examiner shall be appointed from amongst the current professors, senior lecturers or lecturers (but not lecturers on probation) or adjunct faculty.

7.6.8 The principal, second or third supervisor may not be appointed as an examiner.

7.7 The Examination Process

7.7.1 The examiners shall each prepare an independent report on the thesis before the oral examination.

7.7.2 There shall be an oral examination attended by the internal and external examiners and independently convened by a Chair who is appointed by the CRC.

7.7.3 The oral examination shall normally take place in the College.

7.7.4 The student may not communicate with the examiners about the thesis or examination before the oral examination.

7.7.5 After the oral examination, the examiners must send the College Office all the independent reports plus a joint report which includes one of the following decisions:

- a. The Doctoral degree be awarded as the thesis stands.
- b. The Doctoral degree be awarded subject to corrections* being made to the thesis that must be completed within three months.
- c. The Doctoral degree be awarded subject to corrections* being made to the thesis that must be completed within six months.

- d. The thesis be revised and re-submitted** for the Doctoral degree within twelve months. Students are only permitted to revise and re-submit a thesis once, not counting corrections outlined in ii or iii above. When making this decision, examiners may also propose one of v, vi, or vii below as a possible alternative. The student must confirm the preferred option.
- e. A Master's degree be awarded as the thesis stands.
- f. No degree be awarded.

* The internal examiner must submit to the College Office, written notification of the corrections required, along with the completed examination forms, within eight working days of the oral examination. Students must complete the corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within three or six months (as determined within the Joint Report) from receipt of the examination outcome letter and notification of the corrections required.

** Revision and re-submission reflects that substantial revisions are required to make the thesis acceptable. The internal examiner must submit to the College Office, written notification of the major revisions required, along with the completed examination forms, within eight working days of the oral examination. Students must complete major revisions and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, within twelve months of receipt of the examination outcome letter and notification of the major revisions required. A new oral examination shall be required for the resubmission. Normally, the same examiners as for the original submission shall examine the resubmission.

7.7.6 Students who fail to submit a corrected or revised thesis by the date set by the examiners shall be regarded as having failed the examination and the decisions of the examiners shall lapse.

7.7.7 If the examiners cannot reach agreement on a decision, the internal examiner shall notify the Chair of the CRC, who shall arrange for an additional external examiner to be appointed following the procedures set out in 7.6. The additional external examiner shall be informed that the original examiners have been unable to reach agreement and shall be sent the independent reports. The decision of the new external examiner shall be final.

7.7.8 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the examination process may submit an academic appeal (research degree programme) if a ground for appeal is evidenced.

7.8 Library Regulations

7.8.1 Where the examiners decide to award a degree and before the result is officially posted, the student must submit to the College two copies of the thesis bound in the manner of a book and certified by an examiner as being the accepted copy of the thesis (containing any amendments required by the examiners) and the approved summary of the work. One of these copies shall be deposited in the Gamble Library and one given to the Department concerned.