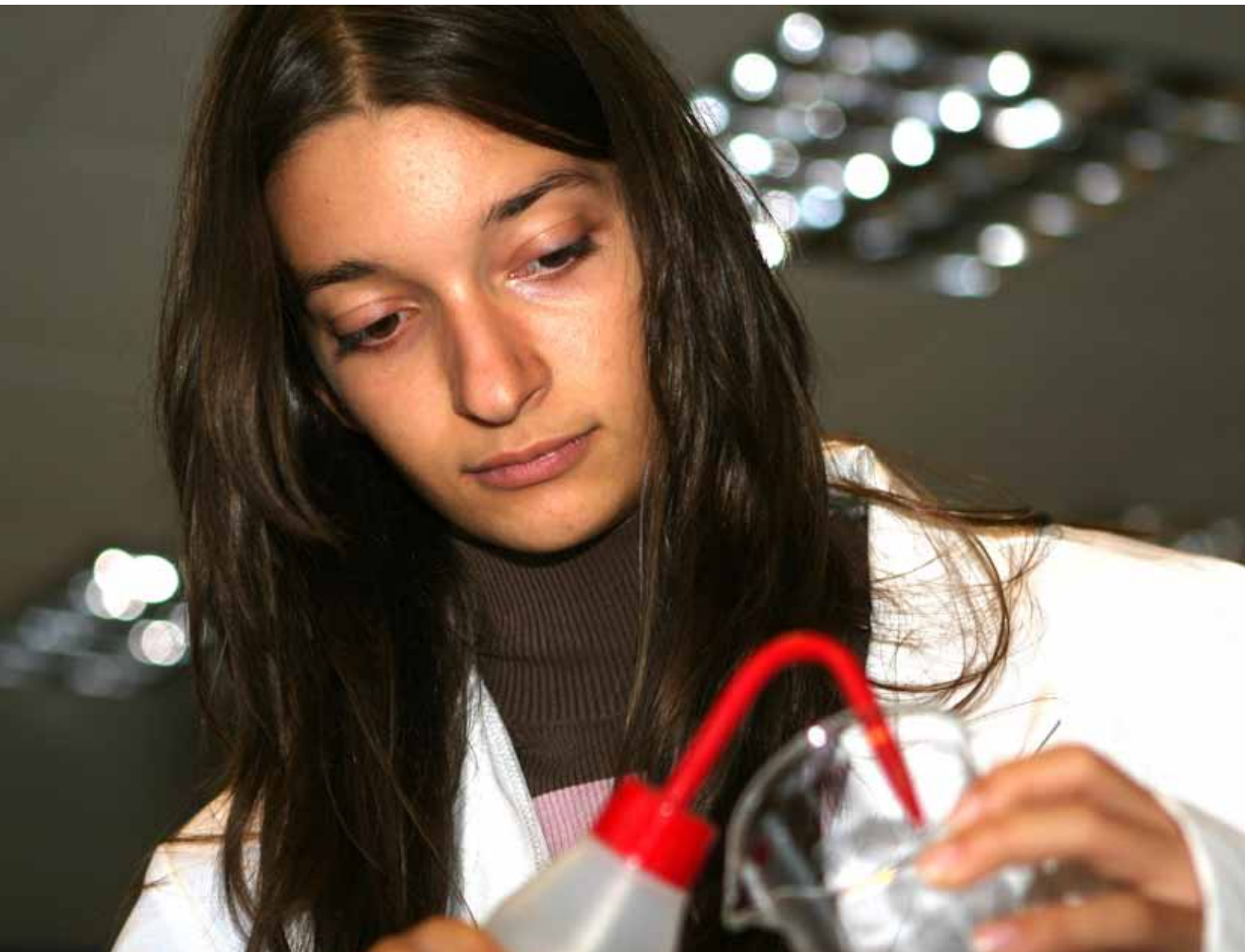


This handbook tells you about the services available to you, and offers advice about what to do if you have difficulties with your studies.



The Open
University

Research Degrees in Affiliated Research Centres



Student Handbook 2011–2012



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This handbook has been prepared by the Student Services Communications Team of The Open University.

While we have done everything possible to ensure accuracy, the information in this handbook may change during the life of this edition due to changes in regulations or policy, or because of financial or other constraints. When regulations and policies are updated, the most current edition will apply to all students irrespective of when you registered, unless special provision is made for particular groups or cohorts of students.

Please note that some telephone calls to the University may be monitored for staff training purposes.

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Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Website www.open.ac.uk

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Photo (cover): Dreamstime.com

Photo (page four): Andy Hendry

Printed in the United Kingdom by Cambrian Printers,
Aberystwyth

SUP 025808

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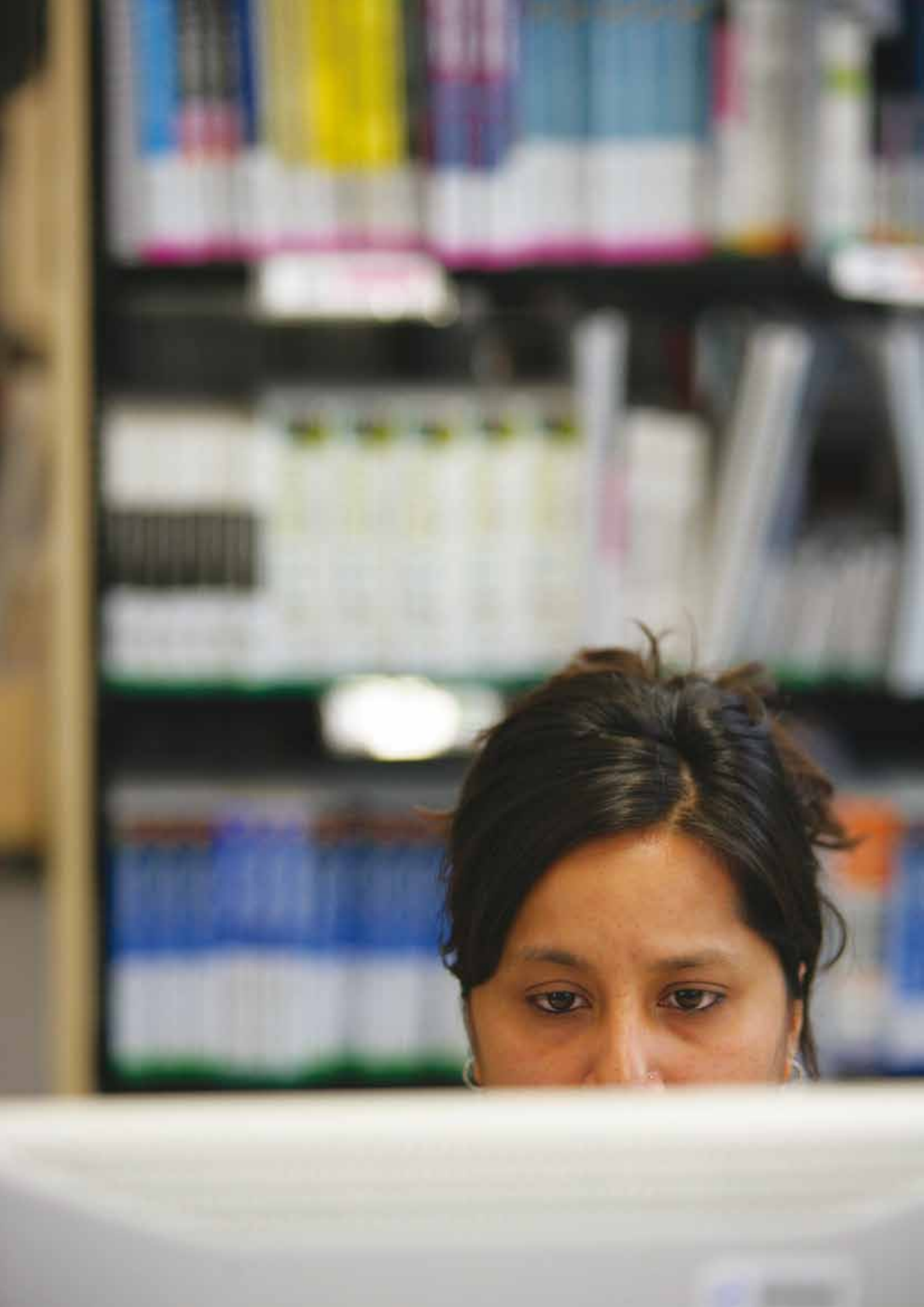
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Introduction



The Open University welcomes you into a vibrant and expanding research community. We aim to provide excellence in research through our support structures, intellectual endeavour and research facilities thus furthering the advancement of the University, staff and research students.

This handbook is your introduction to the University's academic and administrative arrangements for research degree study in affiliated research centres (ARCs). It tells you about the services available and offers advice about what to do if you have difficulties with your studies.

We suggest that you look quickly through the handbook before you start your studies, to familiarise yourself with its contents. You'll need to refer to it throughout your studies, whenever you need information about the ARC programme. The handbook will be revised regularly, usually annually.

Addresses of all the central offices and departments mentioned are in Section 11 of this handbook.

The handbook is available on the web for viewing on-screen or for downloading. You can reach it through the Research School home page at:

www.open.ac.uk/research.

It is divided into four parts:

Part 1 Research at The Open University

Part 1 provides an overview of important information about the University of particular interest to research students. It tells you about our support structures and describes our academic arrangements and some of the processes we use to help us administer your research studies.

Part 2 University regulations for research qualifications

Each qualification is governed by a set of regulations which forms part of the contractual agreement between the University and each student registered for that qualification. The **regulations** relating to research qualifications are set out in Part 2 of the handbook. Our Student Regulations which apply to **all** Open University students are not included in this handbook but are published on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Part 3 Codes of practice, procedures and policies

The **codes of practice** set out a framework for the conduct of research students and their supervisors, and serve as a standard for external audits and research degree appeals. Our **procedures** set out our formal framework for appealing against decisions made by the University and our **policies** set out the University's policy on a range of issues.

Part 4 Our contact details

Part 4 sets out some useful contact details for you to use should you wish to get in touch with us at any time during your studies.

Part 1

Research at The Open University

1 About the University

In this section

- | | |
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| 1.1 Our organisation | 1.5 Advice on career development |
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1.1 Our organisation

The University's central headquarters is at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, and it has 13 regional and national centres located in other parts of the United Kingdom. Walton Hall accommodates the central academic staff, the educational technologists and the administrative and operational centre of the University.

Registered research students are attached to an academic discipline housed within one or more of the University faculties – also called academic units or CAUs for short.

Also important to research students is the Research School, which is the policy and operational centre supporting research across the whole institution. It consists of five teams.

The Research Grants and Contracts

Team provides expertise and support for the development and submission of research grants and contracts.

The Innovation and Enterprise Team supports the OU's growing portfolio of 'third mission' activities and the management of intellectual property growing out of research.

The Policy, Governance and Information

Team has responsibility for managing our liaison and consultation with external policy bodies on matters relating to research and enterprise. It also manages the ethical conduct of research at The Open University.

The Research Career Development Team

is responsible for providing the framework for researchers at all stages of their career life cycle.

The Research Degrees Team is the main point of contact for Research Degree students (see below).

Administration of the research degree programme

Policy for the programme is formulated by the Open University Research Degrees Committee, which makes recommendations to the Senate through the Research Committee. The Research Degrees Committee includes representatives of the University's academic units, two directly registered research degree students (one full-time and one part-time external), and a representative from an ARC.

Administration of the research degrees in the ARC programme

The student administration of the ARC programme is handled by the Research Degrees Team in the Research School at Walton Hall.

Decisions about the admission, registration and progress of individual students are taken on the basis of recommendations from the ARC and the relevant Open University Research Degrees Committee Management Group or the Open University academic unit, as appropriate to the discipline of the student.

1.2 You can participate

The University has always been keen to give students an opportunity to take part in important matters of policy, and has developed a comprehensive system of consultation and representation.

Representation on University bodies

The Open University Students Association (OUSA) (more about that in Section 1.3 below) appoints student representatives to various University bodies, including:

- ▶ The Council, the University's executive governing body, which has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of all University affairs. Membership is drawn from both inside and outside the University.
- ▶ The Senate, the University's academic authority responsible (subject to the powers of the Council) for promoting the academic work of the University both in teaching and in research.
- ▶ Several of the committees and groups in the Senate substructure.
- ▶ The committees of the central academic units, i.e. the faculties and The Open University Business School (OUBS).

The University Committee year starts in September and we appoint student representatives during the summer for the start of the new year. However, vacancies can occur at any time throughout the year and we are always very happy to receive applications – especially from students who have not been in contact with us before. For more information, or to ask for an application form, please contact the OUSA office by phoning 01908 652026 or look on our website:

www.ousa.org.uk.

1.3 The Open University community

The Open University Students Association (OUSA)

The Open University Students Association (OUSA) is recognised by the University as the representative body for students. Its membership includes all currently registered OU students except those who exercise their right to opt out (you can do so by writing to the General Manager at the address in Section 11 of this handbook). There's no subscription. Your participation in OUSA is entirely voluntary, and how far you take part is up to you.

The association represents OU students' views, both within and outside the University, and campaigns for a fair deal for students. It works through a democratic structure of elected officers and representatives who are themselves

students. OUSA operates in accordance with Part II of the Education Act 1994. The relevant requirements are published on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

The association is run by a Central Executive Committee headed by the President and various other senior, elected student representatives. A smaller Board of Trustees, also comprised primarily of elected student representatives, carries ultimate responsibility for the association. OUSA has a biennial conference which elects these student leaders. OUSA also operates at the level of nations and regions where it broadly matches the university structure and facilitates students in setting up informal local groups. In addition, it encourages the formation of societies for special-interest groups and provides social activities for its members and their families. OUSA also runs its own private limited company (OUSA Services Ltd), selling OU-styled products, study aids and past exam papers, and has established a separate charity, OUSET, to help OU students in financial need.

Although not affiliated to the NUS, OUSA has a special relationship with them which includes collaboration on issues of importance to research students.

OUSA's online services

OUSA has a considerable virtual presence, with a website (www.ousa.org.uk) that provides up-to-date information about activities and contacts. OUSA also organises and is responsible for an extensive student service on the online forum network. There are already around 1,000 online forums on all aspects of students' non-course interests, as well as module study areas set up with the agreement of module teams.

All these services can be reached from StudentHome.

NUS Extra card

OUSA is able to offer all its student members the opportunity to purchase the NUS Extra card. The card for 2011–2012 is available from August and costs in the region of £11. The card provides access to discounts on goods and services both on the High Street and online which are being added to all the time. The NUS Extra card also provides an instantly recognisable student identity when travelling and will be accepted as valid student identification at OU exams. Full details are available from the OUSA website.

OUSA also offers its own free membership card. Contact the OUSA office for further details or look at our website at:

www.ousa.org.uk.

The OU Alumni Association – your link to the OU

Joining The Open University is the beginning of a lifelong relationship. Even when you're not studying you remain part of the world's most vibrant learning community through The Open University Alumni Association, set up by the University and staffed by a professional team. All our graduates and everyone who has successfully completed an OU qualification have automatic free membership of the association.

You will be sent regular communications which contain the latest OU developments. You also have the benefit of a range of services, special offers, access to specialist groups and societies and events together with opportunities to 'give back' to your university through a volunteer programme or by donating to support the development of the University and widen access to education. If you're online, you'll have regular email newsletters and will have access to the association's website: www.open.ac.uk/alumni where you'll be able to access information on new courses, supporting the OU, OpenLearn, the OU on iTunes U and YouTube, member benefits, careers advice, updating your details and various social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

All you need is your OUCU and password (if you have lost or forgotten these details, please contact the alumni team below). Users will be able to access the site, set up groups, contribute in the forum areas, write blogs or simply look around at what's on offer. To find out more visit the website www.open.ac.uk/platform.

If you wish to contact us, please send your enquiry with your name, address and OU personal identifier to:

Alumni Relations Team

The Development Office
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653815

Fax +44 (0)1908 638145

Email alumni@open.ac.uk

www.open.ac.uk/alumni

Association of Open University Graduates (AOUG)

The Association of Open University Graduates (AOUG) is the independent, international organisation run by volunteer-elected OU graduates, for OU graduates. There's an annual membership subscription which allows full voting rights and the opportunity to attend the Annual General Meeting. As a member, you receive a copy of the Association's magazine **OMEGA**, currently produced every four months.

The Association's aims are:

- ▶ to promote members' interests; and the standing of their degrees
- ▶ to support the continuing development of the University
- ▶ to promote and encourage local groups of members
- ▶ to organise educational and social activities.

The strong regional structure also allows graduates to keep in touch with like-minded individuals who understand what achieving an OU degree means. Members act as the OU's ambassadors at degree ceremonies, civil receptions and course choice events and support the OU by giving awards to both new graduates in each region and nation and OU research students in each of seven faculties.

For more information, contact the clerical officer in the AOUG office at:

Association of Open University Graduates

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653316

Email aoug@open.ac.uk

www.aoug.org.uk

1.4 University news

Platform

We encourage you to visit Platform, the social media website for all students of The Open University. Here you can watch videos, listen to podcasts and read articles covering a wide range of topics – from OU academics' views on current issues and debates, to interviews with leading figures in their fields. You can also read blogs from fellow students, academics, alumni and more, and benefit from a range of discounts and competitions exclusive to Platform. You're encouraged to get involved too through our forums where you can chat to other students. Once you register, you can also rate and add comments to any of the items on Platform. If you have any article ideas or want to contribute, do get in touch.

Email platform@open.ac.uk

www.open.ac.uk/platform

1.5 Advice on career development

You can get advice on all aspects of career planning and development via the OU Careers Advisory Service website at:

www.open.ac.uk/careers.

On the site there is also a section specifically for PhD researchers under 'Applying for Jobs' on the 'Features' menu, containing information and advice on:

- ▶ enhancing your employability
- ▶ finding employment after a PhD
- ▶ CVs for PhD researchers
- ▶ applying for jobs in academia
- ▶ academic job interviews
- ▶ resources for PhD researchers.

The **Research Career Development** team delivers a programme of events aimed at enhancing research capabilities. Within this programme are events focussing on aspects of career management. A growing number of events are being made available via the internet to enhance access by external students.

For more information, visit our research website at

www.open.ac.uk/research.

1.6 Rights and responsibilities

The University's regulations

The University has formal student and qualification regulations covering all the main areas where you and the University come together.

The regulations include a code of practice for dealing with student discipline which tells you what the University classifies as disciplinary offences, what penalties may be imposed, and the arrangements available to you if you're in dispute with the University.

The qualification regulations are included in this handbook (see Section 9.2).

You can access the student regulations and the code of practice for student discipline on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Code of practice for supervisors and research students

The University's code of practice for supervisors and research students sets out guidelines for the conduct of the relationship between supervisors and students and serves as a standard for external audits and research degree appeals. The code of practice is in Section 10.1 of this handbook.

The Open University Research Degrees Committee reviews the use of the code of practice periodically and would welcome any comments you'd like to make about it. Please send them to the Research School. (You'll find the address in Section 11.)

Complaints

Each ARC is required to have a formal complaint procedure and make its details known to all research students.

The University's own complaints procedure for research students is included in Section 10.5 of this handbook.

If you make a complaint, the University's first concern is to ensure that you've exhausted all the appropriate internal procedures at your ARC. If a problem still remains, the next concern is to seek a resolution that's fair to both you and your ARC, and that preserves the standard of the University's research degrees. You can find out more from the Research Degrees Team (contact details are in Section 11).

Students or others who want to call into question an approved ARC's fitness to provide suitable facilities for the conduct and supervision of scholarly research leading to a research degree can complain to the University. The University will act in accordance with the complaints procedure on our website.

Public interest disclosure

The University has a statement setting out its policy on 'whistleblowing' (public interest disclosure). It offers guidance for students and staff who want to raise reasonable suspicions they may have about irregularities in the running of the University or about the activities of colleagues within the University. This statement is not intended to replace the University's other policies and procedures in relation to grievances, harassment, disciplinary matters or students' complaints.

The policy statement is intended to incorporate the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, January 1998, but is broader in two respects – it applies to students as well as to staff, and its scope goes beyond that of protected disclosure as defined in the Act. You can get a copy of the statement from our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

1.7 Equality and diversity

Our vision of a fair and just society

We are creating an inclusive university community and a society where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances so that everyone can achieve their potential.

Our equality and diversity principles

1. We value diversity and we recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture, and that this difference brings great strength.
2. We believe that discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics and experiences, such as age; disability; caring or dependency responsibilities; gender or gender identity; marriage and civil partnership status; political opinion; pregnancy and maternity; race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sexual orientation; socio-economic background; trade union membership status or other distinctions, represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for self-fulfilment.
3. We recognise that patterns of under-representation and differences in outcomes at The Open University can be challenged through positive action programmes.
4. We respect the rights of individuals, including the right to hold different views and beliefs. We will not allow these differences to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.
5. We expect commitment and involvement from all our staff, students, partners and providers of goods and services in working towards the achievement of our vision.

Student responsibilities

All students have the following responsibilities:

- ▶ to treat all members of the University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs.
- ▶ to challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying.
- ▶ to respond positively and inclusively to individual differences

Our policies, strategies, action plans, and codes

For further details about equality and diversity at The Open University, including our Equality Schemes, please visit our website.

www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity.

The University has two policies for dealing with incidences of bullying and harassment, one is for students and the other is for staff:

- ▶ Student Code for Dealing with Bullying and Harassment
- ▶ Bullying and Harassment Policy, Code of Practice on behaviour at work for staff

You will find the Student Code on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Contact the Research School for advice if you're not sure who to contact. Staff there will be pleased to help you, and your enquiry will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

You can also send equality and diversity policy enquiries to the OU Equality and Diversity Office (email: strategy-equality@open.ac.uk). The office offers **general** information and guidance on University equality and diversity policy. However, it cannot normally take an active part in issues of an **individual** nature, concerning cases involving staff or students where these are being handled by existing institutional complaints, appeals or grievance processes.



2 Affiliated research centres

In this section

- 2.1 Standards
- 2.2 The University's conditions
- 2.3 Outside the UK
- 2.4 Collaborating establishments

2.1 Standards

The Open University will ensure that the research degrees awarded to students at ARCs are consistent and comparable in standard with similar degrees throughout higher education in the United Kingdom, including those in the University's other three research degree schemes.

2.2 The University's conditions

Full-time and part-time students may undertake an Open University research degree at an ARC that has met the conditions set by the University, which are available on request.

The University needs to be satisfied that the environment of an ARC is a suitable one in which to undertake research leading to a research degree.

Formal agreement

Approved ARCs have entered into a formal agreement with The Open University. In the agreement the organisation has confirmed that it accepts responsibility for:

- ▶ the general arrangements under which each student's research is carried out, including arrangements for academic supervision and postgraduate study and the provision of adequate facilities and training to enable the student to conduct and complete the research programme efficiently and safely
- ▶ proposing examination arrangements to the University for approval
- ▶ the conduct of examinations.

The agreement requires ARCs to undergo periodic reviews, and to produce an annual report.

2.3 Outside the UK

Organisations outside the UK will have been approved as ARCs as long as:

- ▶ the students can be prepared for a UK research degree
- ▶ the students have sufficient command of English to produce and defend their theses in English
- ▶ the supervisory teams have had experience of supervising UK research degree students to successful completion
- ▶ the examiners have had experience of examining UK research degree students
- ▶ the students are required to undertake *viva voce* examinations in English.

2.4 Collaborating establishments

The University encourages cooperation between educational establishments and industrial, commercial, professional and research establishments for the purposes of research leading to the award of research degrees. The ARC may set up formal cooperation with one or more other bodies, known as 'collaborating establishments'. This cooperation is intended:

- ▶ to encourage outward-looking and relevant research
- ▶ to extend your own experience and your outlook on your work
- ▶ to provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of your project
- ▶ to be mutually beneficial.

Formal collaboration usually means that you'll use facilities and other resources, including supervision, provided jointly by the ARC and the collaborating establishment. You are expected to spend at least half your time at your ARC and be fully integrated into the ARC's research community, student training and pastoral systems.

A formal letter confirming the agreed arrangements and giving details of the facilities available and the time to be spent at the collaborating establishment, is submitted to the University from the collaborating establishment along with the application for registration.



3 Your record

In this section

- 3.1 Personal identifier
- 3.2 Names and addresses
- 3.3 Personal data
- 3.4 Freedom of information

3.1 Personal identifier

The 'personal identifier' that the University has given you is our means of finding you in our records, and it will stay with you throughout your studies. Any OU forms you complete will usually ask you for it, and you should quote it whenever you telephone, email or write to the University.

3.2 Names and addresses

If you change your name or address you must tell the research degree coordinator in your ARC in writing, even if you've already told your supervisor. If you're changing your name you must provide appropriate documentary evidence such as:

- ▶ a marriage certificate
- ▶ a birth certificate, or
- ▶ a deed poll.

If you're changing your name or address, write to the research degree coordinator in your ARC.

3.3 Personal data

The data we hold

The Open University is committed to the principles of data protection and best practice in handling information. All personal information is held in secure computer and manual files and will be processed only for the purposes you were told about when you registered.

Within the University, information is transferred only to those who need it for the purposes of our academic and other services to you.

If you are based in a UK ARC, some information about you may be sent to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). You'll find more information about this in our data protection policy published on our website at

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Access to your data

You can access information about your research degree registration on the qualifications page of your personalised *StudentHome* website at:

www.open.ac.uk/students.

Your username and password will have been sent to you following the acceptance of your registration, and you are strongly advised to make sure that you are able to sign on to view your student record at the start of your studies. Detailed onscreen help is provided.

You should find the following information on the qualifications page:

- ▶ your thesis title
- ▶ your mode of study
- ▶ your registered degree
- ▶ details of your supervision
- ▶ your registration deadline.

You have the right under the Data Protection Act 1998 to a copy of the personal data the University holds about you, and to information about its processing. You should make your request in writing to the Data Protection Coordinator (contact details are in Section 11).

Information and advice

Our full *Data protection policy* is published on our website at www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies but note that the policy covers our taught students as well as research students so you will find that not all of it is relevant to you.

If you need more information or advice about data protection matters, please ask the Data Protection Coordinator (contact details are in Section 11).

3.4 Freedom of information

We have a publication scheme which gives a general right of public access to many types of information. You can access the scheme at:

www.open.ac.uk/foi.

You can get information on the Freedom of Information Act 2000 from the Information Commissioner at:

www.ico.gov.uk.



4 Study support

In this section

- 4.1 The Research School
- 4.2 Research facilities
- 4.3 Students with a disability, health problem, mental health disability or specific learning difficulty
- 4.4 Supervision
- 4.5 Third-party monitoring
- 4.6 Annual progress reports
- 4.7 Appeals

4.1 The Research School

The Research School plays a major role in events, projects and initiatives to improve the quality of the University's research degree provision and the experience of its research students.

The Research Degrees Team in the Research School is responsible for the administration of the ARC programme and for implementing policy developed by the Research Degrees Committee. It is likely to be the main point of contact with the Research School for most postgraduate research students. Each adviser in the team supports one or more faculties for the whole of the student journey from application through to completion. You can contact your faculty adviser through the email address shown in Section 11.

Its main areas of activity are:

- ▶ registration of research students
- ▶ approval of supervision arrangements
- ▶ arrangements for monitoring research students' progress (the annual progress exercise and the probation assessment reports)
- ▶ approval of research degree examination panels
- ▶ ratification of research degree examination results. This includes advising the Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre that the research degree can be awarded
- ▶ providing administrative support for the quality assurance of the ARCs programme.

The Research Degrees Team is your first point of contact for questions about registration, fee liability and such matters that can't be answered by the research degree coordinator in your ARC. It can also refer queries to other parts of the University if necessary.

The Research School welcomes suggestions and comments about its role and how it can help to improve the quality of Open University research degree study. Contact details are in Section 11 of this handbook.

4.2 Research facilities

Make sure that your laboratory, computing and library needs are explored when you prepare your degree proposal, and that your application shows clearly how those needs will be met. You'll probably be using facilities provided by the ARC, but you'll need to arrange adequate access so that you can complete the proposed research project. The University can't provide laboratory or computing facilities for students registered through an ARC.

Library facilities for research students

The Open University Library

You will need to make use of library materials as part of your research.

The OU Library's world-class online library service is located at:

www.open.ac.uk/library.

This provides access via the internet to an extensive range of online resources such as, full-text journal articles, electronic books, databases of references to books and journals, images, videos and sound recordings. These databases allow you to search resources, perform a structured literature search, keep up to date with your subject, or read around a particular topic. Support for carrying out these tasks and improving your information-searching skills is available from Library Services' Information Skills for Researchers website at:

www.open.ac.uk/infoskills-researchers.

Library Services also offers a programme of online training sessions, including an introduction to the library services. Details of the full programme and dates and times for the sessions can be found at

http://www.open.ac.uk/library/help/online_ts/.

Both full-time and part-time research students can take advantage of the document delivery service which provides access to items that are not available through the Library Services' wide range of electronic resources. Library Services also supports the process of reference management and citation through bibliographic software packages such as EndNote and Refworks.

The OU's open-access database of peer-reviewed research (Open Research Online) shows the range and depth of recently published OU research. This can be browsed at:

oro.open.ac.uk.

Once you have started your studies you may wish to view examples of other theses including those from The Open University. EThOS, a service from the British Library, provides free online access to a selection of UK PhD theses from participating universities.

ethos.bl.uk

These will give you an insight into the structure of theses, different approaches to research, and how to set things out. Library Services also holds a selection of print theses which can be borrowed if you are able to visit the OU Library in Milton Keynes in person. You can use the Voyager Library Catalogue (voyager.open.ac.uk) to search for these. There is also a growing number of electronic OU PhD theses available through Open Research Online.

Using the Library at Walton Hall

The OU Library combines the best traditional library facilities and services with the latest technologies and learning opportunities to provide a modern, spacious environment for study, research and collaboration as well as access to books, journals, multimedia and the internet. The Library has a dedicated study room for researchers to use, incorporating a collection of research-methodology books. In addition, the Research School has a seminar room in the library for the use of researchers.

Access to other libraries

If you would like to use other libraries, you can find out about suitable libraries near you by checking the access arrangements at:

www.open.ac.uk/library/help/otherlibs.

Library Services is a member of a scheme called SCONUL Access which enables you to borrow

from over 160 university libraries throughout the UK and Ireland. It includes access for:

- ▶ postgraduate students on taught courses (non-research)
- ▶ postgraduate research students registered for a PhD, MPhil or similar qualification.

You can find further information about the SCONUL Access scheme and how to join, on the Library website.

National libraries

All OU research students are entitled to apply for a free pass to use the British Library's St Pancras, London reading rooms. You'll need to present documentary proof of the course you're taking and some form of personal identification. The National Libraries of Scotland and Wales also welcome OU students.

Getting advice and guidance

On the website you'll find our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a series of 'How do I...' guides.

The Library Helpdesk Team, which includes specialist information advice, is also available to support you with all your library needs seven days a week and can be contacted at:

Email lib-help@open.ac.uk

Phone +44 (0)1908 659001

Or through the live online 'webchat' facility available via the library website.

Research skills development

Students registered in the science disciplines are registered on the postgraduate module STM895 *Postgraduate research skills in science, technology, mathematics and computing*. This is an online module that allows students to identify and tailor their training requirements through a skills audit carried out at the beginning of their degree. The module material covers a variety of generic research skills and allows students to maintain an online portfolio of evidence of these generic skills acquired during the course of their research.

The training pack U501 *Doing research*, sent to all new research students (apart from those in science disciplines) has been produced to help you to complete your studies. You can use the pack independently and in individual training sessions with your supervisor(s). Take it with you when you meet your supervisor(s) at the beginning of your studies to discuss your training needs.

You can find the above resources and more on the following website:

<http://rdskills.open.ac.uk/>.

Statistics Advisory Service

Advice about statistical aspects of research is available to all registered Open University research students from the Statistics Advisory Service. A major aim of the service is to encourage students to learn to deal with the statistical aspects of their research effectively and efficiently, by providing statistical advice both at the planning and at the data analysis stages of research. At the planning stage, statistical advice can help to:

- ▶ ensure that the research study is designed to address the research objectives as efficiently as possible
- ▶ identify best practices for data management prior to the start of data collection.

At the data analysis stage, the service can help to:

- ▶ identify suitable statistical methods to properly address the research objectives
- ▶ understand outputs from statistical computing software
- ▶ ensure that evidence-based conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

Seek statistical advice as early as possible, preferably while planning your study and before collecting the data. Please visit the Statistics Advisory Service website for details:

http://statistics.open.ac.uk/advisory_service.

or send a message to:

Email stats-advisory@open.ac.uk

Safety in laboratories

The University wants to ensure the health and safety of all persons on site and, in order to do this and to comply with legislative requirements, the work you will be undertaking in laboratories must be risk assessed.

The risk assessment must be completed by your supervisor **prior** to any work commencing.

You must be informed of any significant risks which have been identified, what controls have been put in place and any specific instructions/procedures you must follow whilst working in the laboratory to prevent causing harm to yourself or others.

If you have any questions concerning safety whilst you are working, please speak to your supervisor immediately.

If you're based outside the UK, you must make sure that you're aware of, and adhere to, the health and safety legislation in force in that country.

Ethics approval for research with human participants

Any research involving the collection of data or tissue material from individual humans requires ethics approval, with the exception of research where 'any reasonable judgement would suggest that no harm could arise to any person, living or dead'.

Gaining ethics approval is important as a means of protecting participants, researchers, supervisors, the institution and any funding bodies and minimising the likelihood of legal action being taken against any parties involved.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), part of the Research Committee substructure, provides a mechanism for assuring the ethical integrity of research carried out by OU staff and directly registered research degree students.

Students at ARCs should obtain ethics approval from the appropriate ethics committee within their ARC, or workplace if applicable to the research to be undertaken. If there is no ethics committee at your ARC, you must gain ethics approval from the Open University HREC.

Applications for ethics approval need to be endorsed by your director of studies.

If you plan to gather data or tissue material from human participants as part of your research, you should discuss the ethics aspects with your supervisors at an early stage and ensure that well-prepared applications are made at appropriate stages.

Any research involving NHS premises, staff or patients will also require Local or Multi-Centre Research Ethics Committee NHS approval as well as agreement from the NHS locale(s) in which the research is to be conducted. Please note that this is often a lengthy process so you should allow sufficient time in the project plan to complete this stage.

You'll find a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and links to further sources of information and guidance on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human.shtml.

Indemnity insurance

The University does not have indemnity insurance for students carrying out research related to their studies (except for directly registered research students who are covered). If you require indemnity cover (e.g. to fulfil the conditions of an ethics committee), you will need to arrange this yourself or ensure that it is available through your ARC. An appropriate risk assessment should be carried out for all off-site filed work.

4.3 Students with a disability, health condition, mental health disability or specific learning difficulty

The University has a strong commitment to equal opportunities and welcomes people with disabilities or additional requirements as research degree students.

We can provide a range of support services for individual needs. Please contact the Research School for further information about the services that may be available to you, or if you have any concerns about how your disability or additional requirements may affect your ability to study.

If you are in a UK-based ARC you may be in a position to benefit from a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to help with extra study-related costs that arise as a direct result of your disability (see Section 6.2 for further details). If you are eligible for one of these allowances, the University will only provide study support that cannot be provided by the DSA.

We encourage you, no matter what your circumstances, to tell us as early as possible if you think you will need support as some services may take several months to arrange. The information you give us will be used only to help the University to assist you in your studies.

4.4 Supervision

Each research degree student in an ARC has at least two and usually not more than three supervisors. One supervisor, the director of studies, has the responsibility to supervise you regularly and frequently.

Supervisors report regularly on their students' work. It is on the basis of these reports that the University continues your registration. If you have not made satisfactory progress your registration may be terminated.

The number of meetings you have with your supervisors will vary according to the nature of the project, and whether you're studying full time or part time. The nature of the work your supervisors require of you will also depend on your research project. Regular written reports and draft thesis chapters may be specified, or you may spend a considerable period at the beginning of your project on a preliminary reading programme and literature survey before you produce a significant piece of written work.

Supervisors and students discuss the direction of the research project and the amount and nature of communication (meetings, correspondence, phone) at their first meeting.

Further information about supervisory good practice can be found in Section 10.

4.5 Third-party monitoring

You should have an opportunity, at least once a year, to discuss your studies with a third party – someone other than your supervisors. The arrangements for this will be made by your ARC, and you should be told about your third-party monitor during the first month of your registration.

Your first third-party monitoring session should take place by your fifth month of registration. Third-party monitoring should then take place at least annually in the first quarter of each calendar year.

You should feel free to discuss with your third-party monitor, in confidence, any matters that might affect your studies. Any records kept should be agreed by both parties.

Please contact the Research Degrees Team in the Research School if you have any queries or concerns about third-party monitoring. Contact details are in Section 11.

4.6 Annual progress reports

An annual progress report is produced for each research student, starting in the first (probationary) period of registration (see Section 5.4).

You should have at least one annual meeting with your full supervision team during the period immediately before the report is prepared.

Registration is subject to annual confirmation of satisfactory academic progress as demonstrated through the progress reports.

Further information about probation, progress reporting, and the requirements for continuing registration can be found in Section 5.

4.7 Appeals

You can appeal against academic decisions of the University, in particular against:

- ▶ termination of registration
- ▶ registration for a particular research degree
- ▶ refusal of permission to submit a thesis
- ▶ the result of examination of a thesis.

The appeal procedure is in Section 10 of this handbook.

5 Registration

In this section

- 5.1 Registration
- 5.2 Assignment of intellectual property rights
- 5.3 Degree registration
- 5.4 Probationary period
- 5.5 Period of study
- 5.6 Suspending registration
- 5.7 Withdrawal
- 5.8 Points-based immigration system



5.1 Registration

Dates

All registrations begin on the first day of the month. Registrations can't be backdated beyond the first day of the month in which the application was received.

5.2 Assignment of intellectual property rights

What is intellectual property?

The generic term 'intellectual property' (often abbreviated to 'IP') can allow you to own things you create in a similar way to owning physical property. You can control the use of your IP, and use it for commercial purposes. It can arise from many different activities within the University, including unfunded and publicly funded research activities. Furthermore it can be divided into that which existed prior to entering into a contract ('Background IP') and that which arises as a result of a defined project after entering into a contract ('Foreground IP').

The four main types of IP are:

- ▶ **Copyright:** protects material, such as literature, art, music, sound recordings, films and broadcasts.
- ▶ **Designs:** protect the visual appearance or eye appeal of products.
- ▶ **Patents:** protect the technical and functional aspects of products and processes.
- ▶ **Trade marks:** protect signs that can distinguish the goods and services of one trader from those of another.

However, IP also covers trade secrets, plant varieties, geographical indications, performers rights and so on. Often, more than one type of IP may apply to the same creation.

(Information extracted from the UK Intellectual Property Office)

Innovation and Enterprise Team

The Innovation and Enterprise Team in the Research School provides a range of services to Open University researchers relating to the evaluation and management of intellectual property and knowledge transfer. A short summary is included below, but you are advised to contact the Innovation and Enterprise team for more detailed information:

Phone +44 (0)1908 659783 or emailing
Email innovation-enterprise@open.ac.uk

Postgraduate research student policy on intellectual property (IP)

So that postgraduate research students can work under the same conditions of service as staff regarding intellectual property rights and benefit from this policy, all postgraduate research students are required to assign (transfer) their rights to intellectual property (IP) arising from their research to the University unless there is a prior arrangement in which the IP is assigned to your ARC. Postgraduate research students hold the copyright to the text in their thesis. Where appropriate, students are required to notify the University of the existence of any intellectual property, through the Innovation and Enterprise Team (Research School), and are required to complete an *Intellectual property disclosure form*.

If students are having discussions with external organisations these should be held under terms of confidentiality. The Innovation and Enterprise Team (Research School) can draft these agreements for you.

Before students publish they should consult with their supervisor or appropriate faculty member for approval to ensure that there are no intellectual property issues.

If research is sponsored by a third party other than a Research Council e.g. company, charity or other independent organisation, there will be a research contract between the University and that organisation which will define the ownership of the resulting intellectual property. For postgraduate students working at Affiliated Research Centres there may be a separate agreement which defines ownership of IP resulting from their research.

However, the University makes no claim on inventions, or other forms of intellectual property, developed by an employee, which have no connection with their University work.

The Open University recognises that intellectual property resulting from research carried out at The Open University may contain background intellectual property from other organisations due to newly appointed staff and/or postgraduate students continuing their research. In these circumstances the University aims to treat intellectual property rights issues fairly to reflect the origin of the IP.

5.3 Degree registration

On admission to the research degree programme, you will be registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). Before the end of your probationary registration you will be assessed and a recommendation about your continuing registration and degree registration will be made to the University's Research Degrees Committee.

If your probationary registration is confirmed, your registration will continue until your submission deadline, as long as a report of satisfactory progress has been received.

To maintain registration you must make progress to the satisfaction of your supervisors, your ARC and the Open University Research Degrees Committee, and comply with any non-academic requirements, including payment of fees.

Language

If you want to submit your thesis in Welsh or Gaelic you must ask permission to do so when you apply for admission to the University. Procedures for application and approval of registration to submit a thesis in Welsh or Gaelic are available from the Research School.

Non-text components to thesis

If you are intending to develop and submit a thesis with a non-text component in line with the relevant qualification regulations (RD 6.2.2, RD 6.2.9, RD 6.2.14), you should prepare for this eventuality from the beginning of your registration. Make sure you adhere to the requirements in the relevant guidelines which can be accessed through the Research Degrees website: www.open.ac.uk/research.

Other study

Unless you're undertaking a programme of related study, you may not study for any other degree or qualification at The Open University or any other institution at the same time as your research degree study. You should outline the programme of related study in your application to register as a research degree student. If it becomes clear once you've started your research that further courses are necessary, you should ask the Research School for a waiver of this regulation.

Conditions for use of Open University computer systems

Once you have been registered we will give you an Open University computer username (OUCU), and a preset password that allows you to access some of our systems. When you first sign on to our systems, we will ask you to change your preset password. It is your responsibility to keep your password secure and confidential. In particular, you must:

- ▶ never tell anyone else your password, even University staff
- ▶ never write your password down in such a way that it can be easily identified
- ▶ use your password in line with the best-practice advice given at:

www.open.ac.uk/students.

If you think that someone else knows your password, tell the OU Computing Helpdesk by phoning +44 (0)1908 653972

You are expected to comply with the University's *Computing Code of Conduct*, which is published on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Conditions for use of Library facilities

If you access the University's Library Services (described in Section 4.2 above) you will be bound by a copyright declaration. The declaration can be found at:

www.open.ac.uk/library/about/policies/copyprint/.

A copy can also be obtained direct from:

Library Services

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 659001

Email lib-help@open.ac.uk

5.4 Probationary period

Full-time students

For full-time students the first year of registration is considered the probationary period. The Research Degrees Committee requires a detailed report that reviews your project and plans, assesses your skills development and makes a recommendation about your continuing registration and degree registration. You are also required to undertake a 'mini viva' as part of the probationary assessment. The deadline for probation reports to reach the Research Degrees Team is 11 months from the date on which your registration commenced. It is important that you prepare the probation assessment in plenty of time.

Part-time students

For part-time students the first two years of registration are the probationary period. The Research Degrees Committee requires a detailed report that reviews your project and plans, assesses your skills development and makes a recommendation about your continuing registration and the degree for which you are registered. You are also required to undertake a 'mini viva' as part of the probationary assessment. The deadline for probation reports to reach the Research Degrees Team is 23 months from the date on which your registration commenced. It is important that you prepare the probation assessment in plenty of time.

5.5 Period of study

The tables below show the required periods of study for full-time and part-time students.

Table 1 Full-time students

Degree	Minimum	Maximum before submission
MPhil	1 yr 3 m	4 yrs
PhD	2 yrs	4 yrs

Table 2 Part-time students

Degree	Minimum	Maximum before submission
MPhil	2 yrs	6 yrs
PhD	3 yrs	6 yrs

There are no exemptions from the minimum periods of study, and registration can't be backdated to take account of research you've already done.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council in Wales under the auspices of the Research Councils sets the benchmarks for good practice in timescales for completion of research degrees. It recommends that research degrees should be structured with the expectation of completion in the stated study period. You should therefore aim to complete your research degree within your funded period if full time and within six years if part time.

You should note that if the completion of your probation report is delayed beyond the one year allowed for full-time students and the two years allowed for part-time students, you will be using up precious study time from your second/third year of study. The registration clock does not stop apart from the specific circumstances described below.

Extensions to maximum study periods

Exceptionally, the Open University Research Degrees Committee may consider requests from ARCs for extensions to the maximum periods of study for part-time students. Requests must be made in writing to the Research School by means of an ARC8 Form or the Annual Progress Report, and should include the length of extension required and a timetable for completion. The length of time you ask for should be realistic (to allow time for completion and submission), as further extensions are unlikely to be granted. The maximum extension is two years.

Full-time students have a maximum registration period of four years. After four years, the Research Degrees Committee may exceptionally approve a case from your ARC for extended registration.

5.6 Suspending registration

In certain circumstances, on the recommendation of your ARC, the University will consider a request to suspend your studies if you are registered part time. You can ask for a suspension of one or more months. Periods of suspension, which you should, wherever possible, ask for in advance, don't count towards the maximum permitted periods of study. You should normally discuss suspension of your studies with your supervisors in the first instance. The maximum period of suspension permitted is two years in total for students registered part time. Whatever the circumstances, part-time students, who are unable to study for more than 24 months in total, are required to relinquish their registration.

During periods of suspension, registration is put on hold and the thesis submission date is extended by a corresponding period.

If you want to suspend your studies, contact the research degree coordinator in your ARC as soon as possible. Suspensions cannot be approved retrospectively.

Full-time research students are not usually allowed to interrupt their studies unless they have serious health problems. Whatever the circumstances, full-time students, who are unable to study for more than 12 months in total, are required to relinquish their registration.

5.7 Withdrawal

If you decide to withdraw from the programme, your ARC must tell the Research School on the appropriate form. The fees for the year are not refundable. The date of your withdrawal is usually the date certified on the form by your ARC.

5.8 Points-based immigration system

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) introduced new immigration regulations for non-EEA full-time students studying in the UK on 31 March 2009. These regulations and subsequent amendments to the regulations cover all new students enrolling from October 2009 onwards and all existing students seeking to extend their current student visa. The full details of the immigration regulations for students can be found on the UKBA website at

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk.

If you are a full-time student and you need to extend your student visa, you should read the guidance notes and application form on the UKBA website very carefully. You should contact your research degree coordinator in your ARC at the earliest opportunity.

6 Fees and financial support

In this section

- 6.1 Fees
- 6.2 Disabled Students' Allowances
- 6.3 Debts
- 6.4 Points-based immigration system



6.1 Fees

Registration fees are paid as a single composite fee. The amount is the same whether you're studying full time or part time.

The fee is payable on initial registration and then, in advance, on 1 October each year. It's payable every year or part-year throughout registration, up to and including the year in which you submit your thesis for examination. You will be liable for the whole year's fee and should pay this within 30 days of receiving the invoice even if you are intending to submit your thesis part-way through the academic year.

If you registered on or after 1 October 2007, and submit your thesis part-way through an academic year, you may be entitled to a proportional fee reimbursement as indicated in the following table.

Period of submission	Percentage refund
1 October – 31 December	75%
1 January – 31 March	50%
1 April – 30 June	25%
1 July – 30 September	No fee reimbursement

You will only be eligible for reimbursement if:

- the Research School has received a satisfactorily completed ARC13 Student Declaration form **within one month** of the stated thesis submission date (otherwise the fee will be reimbursed at the rate relevant to the quarter in which the completed ARC13 Student Declaration form was received); and
- you have been invoiced for the full year's fee for that academic year.

The annual composite student fee is not refundable to students who withdraw from registration.

There is no reduction of the fee if you suspend your studies (see Section 5.6) for a period shorter than 12 consecutive months.

Responsibility for payment

You are responsible for paying your fees, but your ARC is responsible for collecting them and sending them to the University. Invoices are issued to the ARC by the University's Finance Division, and payments should be accompanied by a reference to the appropriate invoice number.

Resubmission fee

If you're registered to resubmit a thesis you'll be required to pay fees. Any students who are examined and required to resubmit their theses for re-examination will automatically be charged further fees, after notification of the result until they resubmit.

Crowther Fund (OU graduates only)

The Crowther Fund was set up as a tribute to the late Lord Crowther, our first Chancellor. It's intended to help OU graduates build upon their OU degrees, either by formal study or research or by generally broadening their experience through a period of voluntary work. The fund doesn't take account of financial circumstances. The application closing date is 28 February each year.

You can download a PDF version of the Crowther Fund guidelines, which include further details on eligibility criteria, and a copy of the application form from the financial support website

www.open.ac.uk/financialsupport.

Alternatively, please email ou-crowther-fund@open.ac.uk for an application pack.

6.2 Disabled Students' Allowances

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are government grants for students in higher education who are obliged to incur additional study-related costs because of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty.

The Disabled Students' Allowance Office (DSAO) acts as a local authority for students studying with the OU and as such is separate to the University itself.

DSAs are not means tested and are not dependent upon your income or any savings you may have. If you are eligible for a DSA, it will not affect any state benefits you may be receiving. You may still be eligible for a DSA if you are studying part time.

If you are unsure if you are eligible, contact the DSA Office for the latest information.

The DSA Office

The Open University
Hammerwood Gate
Kents Hill
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BR

Voice phone 01908 654136

Email DSA-queries@open.ac.uk

or look at our website guide to services for disabled students:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/disability/applying-for-a-dsa.php>.

Students in Scotland

To find out if you are eligible and to apply for a DSA you should either:

- ▶ email Scotland@open.ac.uk

or

- ▶ phone our Disability and Additional Requirements Team on 0131 226 3851.

6.3 Debts

Failure to pay fees as and when required is a breach of the regulations. If you repeatedly fail to pay your fees on time, your research degree registration will be terminated.

When a fee is overdue, a reminder will be sent to the ARC. The University reserves the right to refer recovery of a debt to a debt-collecting agency.

The University also reserves the right to withhold degrees, to cancel registration and to refuse further registration if you haven't paid all your fees by the appropriate dates.

6.4 Points-based immigration system

All students who have applied for a student visa under the new immigration regulations or who are seeking to extend their student visa under the new immigration regulations will be required to demonstrate that they can meet strict financial requirements. Students applying for a Tier 4 visa must have the required competence in the English language as specified by the UK Border Agency.

Full details of the financial requirements and the evidence that you must provide along with the requirements for competence in English can be found on the UKBA website at

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Please contact your research degree coordinator in your ARC at the earliest opportunity if you have any queries about the financial requirements of the new immigration regulations.

7 Examinations and theses

In this section

- 7.1 Eligibility
- 7.2 Examinations
- 7.3 Theses
- 7.4 Intellectual property rights



7.1 Eligibility

To be eligible to submit a thesis for a research degree you must:

- ▶ be registered for the research degree you intend to submit for
- ▶ have satisfactorily completed the minimum period of study specified for the degree
- ▶ have satisfied your supervisors that your thesis is of an adequate standard for submission to examiners
- ▶ have paid all fees due.

7.2 Examinations

Candidates for research degrees are examined on the basis of their theses. The examination process is initiated by you giving the research degree coordinator in your ARC (at least) three months notice of the intended date for submission of your thesis. Theses can be submitted at any time during the year, although those submitted during the summer may be subject to some delay if examiners aren't available for oral examinations.

When your notice is received, arrangements for the nomination of examiners will be made by your ARC, in consultation with your supervisors. You should have no contact with the examiners before the examination. A minimum of one external examiner and one internal examiner (a member of staff at your ARC or collaborating establishment, or a member of Open University staff) may be appointed. An Independent Chair may also be present during the examination to ensure the appropriate procedures are followed.

The Research Degrees Committee will expect one of your supervisors to be present as an observer at the oral examination.

Guidelines to the examination process are available from the Research Degrees Team and should be provided to you by your ARC when you give notice of your intention to submit your thesis for examination.

Oral examinations should, if possible, be held within six weeks of submission (as long as the correct period of notice has been given), although this can't be guaranteed as examiners may not be available. It will almost certainly be longer during the summer.

7.3 Theses

Originality and joint work

Material included in a thesis you submit for a research degree must be your own original work. If you've been working with others on a research project, the thesis must indicate which parts are your independent contribution.

Publication of papers

Before you're awarded a degree you may publish papers arising from your research – part-time students, particularly those working in similar fields to full-time researchers, may want to publish in order to establish their results as their own original work. You must make a note in your thesis of any material that's been published. You may submit a reprint with the thesis if you wish.

Length

Theses should not exceed:

- ▶ 60,000 words for an MPhil
- ▶ 100,000 words for a PhD

These are the maximum lengths and include all written material you submit (all footnotes, bibliographies and appendices). External examiners would expect considerably less in most subject areas. You may submit a longer thesis only if approval has been given in advance by the Open University Research Degrees Committee.

Format of theses

There are no set specifications for the internal structure of theses, but it should be appropriate to the subject area. You should discuss this with your supervisors. Examiners will of course require your thesis to be neat and well presented, and the system of indexing and referencing to be consistent within the work. For some disciplines, non-text content is allowed (read clauses RD 6.2.2, RD 6.2.9, RD 6.2.14 in Section 9 of this handbook). Make sure you refer to the relevant guidelines if you will be submitting a thesis with a non-text component.

There's no regulation for the position of footnotes. They should normally be at the foot of pages, the ends of chapters or the end of the thesis.

For examination

The format of theses is set out in Qualification regulation RD6, which you'll find in Section 9.2 in this handbook. You submit three copies to your ARC for examination. Full binding isn't required at this stage (to allow for corrections), but you should read clause RD 6.2.10 of the regulations carefully and note in particular the methods of presentation that **aren't** acceptable. The various methods of presentation of theses for examination don't need to be carried out by professional binders. You should consult your supervisors about suitable binding.

For deposition in the University Library

Two copies of the thesis are required for deposition in the University Library. One copy should be fully bound to the specification in Regulation RD 6.2.11, the other to the less rigorous specification in RD 6.2.12. You can do this less rigorous binding yourself, leaving only one copy requiring professional binding.

Language

A thesis may be written in the Welsh or Gaelic language only if permission was given when you registered – see Section 5.3.

Access to theses

Access to a thesis for which a research degree has been awarded can't be restricted, unless permission for a limited period of restriction is given when you were first registered. For this reason you're strongly advised to take advice before including any material that you're not entitled to make public.

7.4 Intellectual property rights

You hold the copyright to the text of your own thesis.

You'll find information about the University's policy concerning the management and exploitation of intellectual property in Section 5.2 of this handbook.

8 Qualifications

In this section

- 8.1 Research degrees
- 8.2 Results
- 8.3 Award of degrees
- 8.4 Directory of graduates



8.1 Research degrees

The University awards four higher degrees by research:

- ▶ Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- ▶ Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- ▶ Doctorate in Education (EdD)*
- ▶ Master of Research (MRes)*

*These degrees are available only to students directly registered with The Open University.

MPhil

For the Master of Philosophy you undertake a research programme leading to the submission of a thesis that must include a critical review of the literature and give evidence of research ability. It must be a distinct contribution to scholarship in your field.

PhD

A thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy must be a significant contribution to knowledge, worthy of publication and giving evidence of your ability to undertake further research without supervision.

PhD by published work

You may apply to submit published work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy if you are:

- ▶ a member of the University's staff of at least three years' standing
- ▶ an Open University associate lecturer of at least three years' standing
- ▶ a member of salaried staff of at least three years' standing in an Open University accredited institution.

Details are available from the Research School.

Higher doctorates

The University awards two higher doctorates on the basis of published work:

- ▶ Doctor of Letters (DLitt)
- ▶ Doctor of Science (DSc)

You must show that you've made an original and substantial contribution to a significant field of study over a considerable period of time. The published work you submit must demonstrate that you are a leading authority in your field and have taken part in important innovations and developments in it.

Candidature for these degrees is limited to:

- ▶ Open University salaried staff, associate lecturers and graduates
- ▶ graduates of the Council for National Academic Awards who aren't otherwise eligible to register with a degree-awarding institution
- ▶ members of salaried staff in Open University accredited institutions.

Details of higher doctorates are available from the Research School.

Second degrees

If you're awarded one research degree and want to take another, you must apply again for admission to the University.

Your second research programme may build on the work for your first thesis, but your submission for the qualification must contain entirely new material. Clearly indicated references to the contents of the first thesis are permitted.

8.2 Results

Examination reports must be ratified by the Research Degrees Examination Results Ratification Committee. You'll be given a decision:

- ▶ pass
- ▶ pass subject to corrections and modifications to your thesis
- ▶ pass subject to substantial amendments to your thesis (but without re-examination)
- ▶ resubmission for re-examination after major revision of your thesis.
- ▶ fail.

In exceptional cases a PhD candidate may be awarded an MPhil.

Resubmission

Only one resubmission is permitted (see Qualification Regulation RD 7.4). If you're required to resubmit, you'll be charged further registration fees, as explained in Section 6.1.

8.3 Award of degrees

The degree is awarded with effect from the date of the University's decision to approve the examiners' recommendations, or from the date of receipt of confirmation that the required corrections or amendments have been completed.

When the Open University Research Degrees Committee confirms that your thesis meets the requirements for the award of a degree, you must submit bound library copies (see Section 7.3 above) before the degree can be conferred. The degree and title of Doctor or Master of Philosophy are conferred in absentia by Congregation.

Degree ceremonies

The University holds an annual series of degree ceremonies for the presentation of graduates. Most of these are held in April – June and in September – October in towns and cities across the UK. Graduates are presented to the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, one of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors or the Director, Students. You may, if you wish, be presented at one of these degree ceremonies. They are always memorable and inspiring occasions. Details will be sent to you when you become eligible.

You can find out more about degree ceremonies by visiting the ceremonies website at:

www.open.ac.uk/ceremonies.

or by telephoning the Credit, Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre (CQCC). Contact details are in Section 11.

Information about hiring academic dress at your ceremony is also available on the ceremonies website or by telephoning the Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre.

8.4 Directory of graduates

Names (but not addresses) of graduates are printed in an official *Directory of Graduates*, with the degree awarded. The directory is produced each autumn, and includes all graduates whose qualifications have been conferred in the preceding twelve months. Abridged lists are produced for the presentation of graduates at each degree ceremony. The directory itself and the lists are all public documents. The University may also release names (but not addresses) of graduates, to be printed in national or regional newspapers and other publications.

If you do not want your name to appear in any of these publications, you must tell us by writing to the Manager (Ceremonies) in the Credit, Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre. If you do not do so, the University will consider that it has your consent to include your name.

Part 2

University regulations for research qualifications

9 University regulations

In this section

9.1 Student regulations

9.1 Student regulations

Our Student Regulations, which include the Code of Practice for Student Discipline, apply to all our registered students. They are not included in this handbook but are published on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

As these regulations form part of your contract with the University, it is important that you read them.

As research students, you are also bound by the Research Degree Qualification regulations which are set out below.

9.2 Research degree qualification regulations

Master of Philosophy / Doctor of Philosophy

RD 1 Degree name

RD 1.1 The following research degrees by thesis are conferred by the University: Master of Philosophy (referred to as MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (referred to as PhD). The awards will be made on the successful completion of programmes of advanced study and research. Holders of these qualifications are permitted to use the letters MPhil (Open) or PhD (Open) as appropriate after their names.

RD 2 Registration

RD 2.1 To be registered as a research student of the University you must comply with regulations RD 2.1.1 to RD 2.1.6.

RD 2.1.1 You must satisfy regulation OU 8 (see our *Student Regulations* at www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies).

9.2 Research degree qualification regulations

RD 2.1.2 You must show evidence of suitable preparation for postgraduate study. The normal entrance requirement is a good honours degree or a higher degree of a UK university or other recognised degree-awarding body.

RD 2.1.3 If you do not satisfy Regulation RD 2.1.2 but can show that your qualifications, professional experience or previous research are an appropriate preparation for postgraduate work within the proposed field of study, your application will, in certain circumstances, be considered.

RD 2.1.4 Unless you are registered through an affiliated research centre you must be resident in the UK. In exceptional circumstances your application will be considered if you are a UK citizen whose topic of study necessitates residence overseas. If you are a part-time student and have already commenced your studies and are making satisfactory progress, you may apply to continue your studies overseas.

RD 2.1.5 You must be accepted as a student for a course of advanced study or research in a field approved by the University and for which arrangements have been made or approved by the University in respect of supervision and research facilities.

RD 2.1.6 You must assign your intellectual property rights to The Open University unless you are bound by an intellectual property agreement with a third party.

RD 2.2 You may be registered as a full-time student or a part-time student. How the type of registration affects your work is set out in regulations RD 2.2.1 to RD 2.2.4.

RD 2.2.1 If you are registered as a full-time internal student, you will work on a research project directed by member(s) of Open University academic staff at the Open University headquarters.

RD 2.2.2 If you are registered as a part-time external student, you will work part-time in your home area using research and study facilities there.

RD 2.2.3 If you are a member of the University full-time staff reading for a research degree, you will be registered as a part-time internal student.

RD 2.2.4 If you are registered as a student in an affiliated research centre, you will work on a research project through an affiliated research centre which will provide suitable facilities.

RD 2.3 While registered as a research student of this University, you may not study for any other degree or qualification at this University or at any other institution, unless granted permission to do so as part of your research degree training.

RD 2.4 On admission to the research degree programme you will be registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). Your registration is governed by either regulation RD 2.4.1 or regulation RD 2.4.2 and regulation RD 2.4.3.

RD 2.4.1 If you are a part-time student, your first two-year period of registration will be probationary.

RD 2.4.2 If you are a full-time student there will be a major review of your academic progress before the first anniversary of your registration.

RD 2.4.3 Before the end of your probationary registration your progress will be assessed against established benchmarks and a recommendation will be made to the Research Degrees Committee about whether:

a your probation and registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) should be confirmed

or

b your probation should be confirmed and you should be registered for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

or

c your probationary registration should be terminated for failure to make satisfactory academic progress.

RD 3 Fees

RD 3.1 If you are a full-time internal student, a single composite fee is payable annually throughout the period of your registration.

RD 3.2 If you are a part-time external student, your liability for the registration fee is incurred annually until you submit your thesis or formal notice of withdrawal from your registration.

RD 3.3 If you are a part-time internal student, there are separate arrangements for your fees.

RD 3.4 If you are a student registered through an affiliated research centre, a single composite fee is payable annually throughout the period of your registration. The affiliated research centre is responsible for collection and payment of the fees, however you remain liable for payment.

RD 3.5 If you are awarded the result of permission to resubmit a thesis, your fee liability will be resumed as from the date of this result, up to and including the quarter in which you notify the University of withdrawal or resubmit your thesis for examination.

RD 4 Credit

RD 4.1 Credit regulations do not apply to these unitary qualifications.

RD 5 Progress towards the degree

RD 5.1 The University provides research facilities for internal students only.

RD 5.2 You must be allocated to supervisors appointed by the Senate.

RD 5.3 You are required to attend regularly for supervision.

RD 5.4 You must spend a minimum period of study before submission of your thesis. The following table sets out the required period of study for full-time and part-time students.

	Qualification	Minimum	Maximum
Full-time students	MPhil	1 yr 3 m	4 yrs
	PhD	2 yrs	4 yrs
Part-time students*	MPhil	2 yrs	6 yrs
	PhD	3 yrs	6 yrs

(* Registration extensions will only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances.)

RD 5.5 Research or other work undertaken before registration as a research student cannot count as part of the minimum period of study required before the submission of a thesis for the award of a research degree.

RD 5.6 If you fail to make satisfactory progress you will cease to be a registered student of the University.

RD 5.7 If you are a full-time student your research degree registration may be suspended, usually only on grounds of certified serious ill-health, for a maximum of 12 months in total. Periods of suspension do not count towards the maximum four-year registration period.

RD 5.8 If you are a part-time student your research degree registration may be suspended for a maximum of 24 months in total. You may request a suspension of your registration on grounds of serious ill-health or because of personal,

family or work-related difficulties. Suspensions will normally only be approved by the Research Degrees Committee in periods of one or more months. Periods of suspension do not count towards the maximum six-year registration period.

RD 5.9 You must give three months' notice, in writing, of your intention to submit a thesis for the award of a research degree.

RD 5.10 If your supervisors report that you have completed the normal minimum period of study required for the degree, but have not developed the topic of your thesis to a level which justifies its submission to examiners, the Senate may require you to undertake further research.

RD 6 Thesis

RD 6.1 You will be required to submit, within the appropriate maximum period of study, three copies of a thesis on the research or study completed. Your thesis must conform to Regulation RD 6.2 and must also conform to Regulation RD 6.1.1 or RD 6.1.2 as appropriate.

RD 6.1.1 MPhil Your thesis must show evidence of:

- a your proficiency in the methods and techniques of research
- b good style and presentation
- c an adequate knowledge and/or understanding and critical evaluation and discussion of a field of study in an appropriate context
- d initiative and independence of thought.

Your thesis must also be a distinct contribution to scholarship. You will be required to attend a *viva voce* (oral) examination on your thesis.

RD 6.1.2 PhD Your thesis must:

- a be of good presentation and style
- b be a significant contribution to knowledge and/or to understanding
- c demonstrate your capacity to pursue further research without supervision
- d contain a significant amount of material worthy of publication or public presentation.

You will be required to attend a *viva voce* (oral) examination on your thesis.

RD 6.2 Regulations RD 6.2.1 to RD 6.2.14 apply to any thesis submitted for a research degree.

RD 6.2.1 The work must be written in English unless:

- a you have been given permission, under the terms of your letter of registration as a student of the University, to submit the work in Welsh

or

- b you have been given permission, under the terms of your letter of registration as a student of the University, to submit the work in Gaelic.

Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted.

RD 6.2.2 The length of your thesis must be appropriate to the subject area covered and must not exceed 60,000 words (including footnotes) for the Master of Philosophy or 100,000 words for the Doctor of Philosophy. If you want to submit a thesis of greater length, you must apply for approval to the Research Degrees Committee well in advance of the notification of submission of your thesis.

Non-book media (i.e. material in non-text form such as digital media, film, software, audio-tape, etc.) containing original work, which exemplifies and locates the ideas developed in the thesis, may be submitted for examination in conjunction with the written part of the thesis. If you wish to submit a doctoral thesis in this mode, you should (i) refer to the institutional guidelines for advice on word length; and (ii) submit your proposal for the substitution of non-book media in your thesis along with your original research proposal.

RD 6.2.3 You must submit for examination:

- a three copies of your thesis, including supporting material (e.g. diagrams and non-book media)
- b four copies of an abstract of the thesis, not exceeding 300 words, in a form suitable for publication; one copy must be placed at the front of each copy of the thesis and bound with the text (if you are awarded the degree, the University may publish this abstract in any manner approved by the Senate)
- c a statement as to what part, if any, of the material offered has previously been submitted by you for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution, and, if joint work is submitted, what part of it is your independent contribution.

RD 6.2.4 You must indicate, in the thesis and in the accompanying statement, any material which has been published.

RD 6.2.5 You may not submit for a research degree material that has been incorporated in a previous submission for a degree of this or any other awarding body. However, reference may be made to such material provided that this is clearly acknowledged within the thesis and in the accompanying statement.

RD 6.2.6 You are required to submit your work in a condition suitable for preservation in the University Library.

RD 6.2.7 If you are successful, two copies of your thesis and any supporting material (e.g. diagrams and non-book media) will be deposited in the University Library. The third copy will be held by your academic unit. However, if you are registered through an affiliated research centre, you will, instead, be required to deposit the third copy in the library of that establishment, and, if you have a collaborating establishment or establishments, you may also be required to deposit a copy in the library of each of those establishments.

RD 6.2.8 There must be no restriction of access to a thesis for which a research degree has been awarded. You must submit, together with your thesis, a statement in which you agree that the work, if approved for the degree in question, be deposited in the University Library and:

- a may be made available at the discretion of the Director of Library Services
- b may be photocopied at the discretion of the Director of Library Services.

Under exceptional circumstances, and subject to the approval of the Senate, you may restrict access to your thesis for a maximum period of two years from the date of the award of the degree. Approval for restriction must be obtained before you register for a research degree.

RD 6.2.9 The text of the work must be typed on international A4 (297 mm x 210 mm) paper of good quality; it may be typewritten or printed on both sides of the paper. The typescript must have double spacing. The minimum widths of margins must be as follows:

- ▶ inside margin 40 mm
- ▶ top and outside margins 15 mm
- ▶ bottom margin 20 mm.

The pages must be numbered consecutively. A contents list and a table of illustrations (if any) must be provided. Any supporting digital media must accompany the thesis in a suitable form and a list of all separate items appended must be provided. The work must carry on its title page:

- ▶ your full name and degrees
- ▶ the title
- ▶ the degree for which it is offered
- ▶ the discipline or disciplines to which it pertains
- ▶ the date of submission
- ▶ the name of the affiliated research centre and collaborating establishments, if registration has been on this basis.

An abstract of the thesis, as specified in regulation RD 6.2.3b, must be placed at the front of each copy and bound with the text.

RD 6.2.10 The examination copies need not be fully bound until after the examination; this will enable you to complete any corrections required by examination panels without having to unbind and rebind the thesis. For the examination, all copies should have the leaves securely fixed within a folder or binder or by a spine (i.e. fixed so that the pages remain secure in the cover when the volume is opened fully). Folders which release the pages when opened are not acceptable, nor are loose pages submitted in a wallet folder. Care should be taken if ring binding is used that the holes punched in the pages do not make binding after the examination impossible. Three copies of the thesis must be submitted for examination. If you are successful, two copies will be deposited in the University Library, one fully bound (as specified in Regulation RD 6.2.11 and one bound to a less rigorous specification (as specified in Regulation RD 6.2.12).

RD 6.2.11 One of the two copies to be deposited with the University must be sewn with thread and bound in a fixed binding of black boards with cloth or in full cloth in the manner of a book. The volumes should bear on the spine, in lettering running from the top to the bottom:

- ▶ the full or abbreviated title
- ▶ your name
- ▶ the name of the degree
- ▶ the year of submission.

The leaves of the typescript should be clean and not mutilated by dog-ear folding, manuscript comments, underlining, etc.

RD 6.2.12 The second copy for deposit in the University Library need not conform to the full binding specifications given in Regulation RD 6.2.11. Its leaves must be secured in order, by some means which ensures that they remain firmly in place when the volume is in use. Stapling is an adequate means of securing leaves up to a thickness of 1.5 inch (40 mm). If the leaves are more than 40 mm thick, the thesis should be divided into more than one volume. Each volume should be marked to show its position in the set (e.g. if there are three volumes, they should be marked Volume 1 of 3, Volume 2 of 3 and Volume 3 of 3 respectively). The stapled volumes should be cased in stout card covers to protect them adequately when in use. Comb bindings and the use of spring binders or plastic slide clips to grip unstapled sheets are not satisfactory as they fail to hold the sheets together during use. The leaves of the typescript should be clean and not mutilated by dog-ear folding, manuscript comments, underlining, etc.

RD 6.2.13 The third copy (to be held by your academic unit or affiliated research centre) should also be securely bound to the lesser specification given in Regulation RD 6.2.12.

RD 6.2.14 Work submitted in other forms (e.g. non-book media such as film, slide, audio tape, etc.) should be recorded by a suitable process on good quality stock. The system used should produce a durable item suited to preservation over a long period without excessive deterioration of the message. The item should be suited to digital media, such as images, audio files, drawings, software, etc. and be provided in a suitable format for viewing or playback on technology in use at the University. The item should be provided with an appropriate container approved by the Director of Library Services and bear on its exterior the particulars listed in regulation RD 6.2.11. (You should consult the Director of Library Services about the specifications for any such items that you intend to submit as part of your thesis.)

RD 7 Examination

RD 7.1 A thesis submitted for the award of a research degree will be submitted to internal and external examiners appointed by the Senate. The examiners may find the thesis to be:

- a acceptable
- b acceptable after corrections and modifications which you must implement satisfactorily before the degree may be awarded
- c acceptable after substantial amendment which you must implement satisfactorily before the degree may be awarded
- d acceptable after major revision and resubmission
- e unacceptable.

RD 7.2 Where corrections and/or modifications to a thesis are required after the examination, these must be completed within two months of the date of the examination result letter; where major revisions are required, the revised thesis must be submitted within six months of the date of the examination result letter.

RD 7.3 Where major revision and resubmission of a thesis for re-examination is required after the examination, this must be completed within 12 months of the date of the examination result letter.

RD 7.4 You are permitted only one resubmission of your thesis where an examination panel is re-examining your thesis after major revision and resubmission (see Regulation RD 7.1d). This result recommendation may not be made again.

RD 8 Appeals

RD 8.1 You may appeal against the following academic decisions of the University:

- a termination of registration to read for a higher degree
- b registration for a particular higher degree
- c refusal of permission to submit a thesis
- d the result of the examination of a thesis.

RD 8.2 The procedure relating to appeals must be published in the *Research Degrees Student Handbook*.

Part 3

Codes of practice, procedures and policies

10 Codes, procedures and policies

In this section

10.1 Quality Assurance Agency code of practice

10.2 OU Code of practice for supervisors and research students

10.3 Research degree appeals procedure

10.4 Complaints procedure

10.5 Other policies and statements

10.1 Quality Assurance Agency code of practice

The QAA code of practice for postgraduate research programmes applies to all UK higher education institutions. It is one of a suite of inter-related documents which forms an overall *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*) for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency).

The *Code* is a statement of good practice that has been endorsed by the higher education community. As such it is used as the relevant bench mark in the Agency's audit and review processes that consider the extent to which an institution, in developing and implementing its own policies, has taken account of the *Code* and its precepts.

It is intended to give institutions clear guidance in respect of the management, quality and academic standards of research programmes.

The precepts and explanations below are intended to cover the many different types of students undertaking research programmes in the UK, including full and part-time, students of all ages and with different needs, UK and international, and from all backgrounds. From the OU perspective, they apply equally to directly registered students and those registered through the ARCs.

The website below provides further explanation about the code and the specific precepts:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice

The Precepts

Institutional arrangements

- 1 Institutions will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes.
- 2 Institutional regulations for postgraduate research degree programmes will be clear and readily available to students and staff. Where appropriate, regulations will be supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school or department.
- 3 Institutions will develop, implement and keep under review a code or codes of practice applicable across the institution, which include(s) the areas covered by this document. The code(s) should be readily available to all students and staff involved in postgraduate research programmes.
- 4 Institutions will monitor the success of their postgraduate research programmes against appropriate internal and/or external indicators and targets.

The research environment

- 5 Institutions will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring.

Selection, admission and induction of students

- 6 Admissions procedures will be clear, consistently applied and will demonstrate equality of opportunity.

- 7 Only appropriately qualified and prepared students will be admitted to research programmes.
- 8 Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the institution's staff who will have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. The decision-making process will enable the institution to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made, that support its admissions policy.
- 9 The entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme will be defined and communicated clearly.
- 10 Institutions will provide research students with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment in which they will be working.

Supervision

- 11 Institutions will appoint supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.
- 12 Each research student will have a minimum of one main supervisor. He or she will normally be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student.
- 13 Institutions will ensure that the responsibilities of all research student supervisors are clearly communicated to supervisors and students through written guidance.
- 14 Institutions will ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors.

Progress and review arrangements

- 15 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress.
- 16 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for formal reviews of student progress, including explicit review stages.

- 17 Institutions will provide guidance to students, supervisors and others involved in progress monitoring and review processes about the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

Development of research and other skills

- 18 Institutions will provide research students with appropriate opportunities for personal and professional development.
- 19 Each student's development needs will be identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate academic staff, initially during the student's induction period; they will be regularly reviewed during the research programme and amended as appropriate.
- 20 Institutions will provide opportunities for research students to maintain a record of personal progress, which includes reference to the development of research and other skills.

Feedback mechanisms

- 21 Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

Assessment

- 22 Institutions will use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define the academic standards of different research programmes and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees must be clear and readily available to students, staff and external examiners.
- 23 Research degree assessment procedures must be clear; they must be operated rigorously, fairly, and consistently; include input from an external examiner; and carried out to a reasonable timescale.
- 24 Institutions will communicate their assessment procedures clearly to all the parties involved, ie the students, the supervisor(s) and the examiners.

Student representations

- 25** Institutions will put in place and publicise procedures for dealing with student representations that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust and applied consistently. Such procedures will allow all students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present their case.

Complaints

- 26** Independent and formal procedures will exist to resolve effectively complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision.

Appeals

- 27** Institutions will put in place formal procedures to deal with any appeals made by research students. The acceptable grounds for appeals will be clearly defined.

10.2 OU code of practice for supervisors and research students

The Open University Research Degrees Committee, which includes representatives from the University's academic units, an ARC, and full-time and part-time research students, is responsible for the formulation of the University's research degree policy. The Committee takes decisions about the admission, registration and progress of individual students on the basis of recommendations from supervisors and heads of discipline, who have a general responsibility for the progress of research students in their areas.

The Research Degrees Team in the Research School is responsible for the implementation of research degree policy and for the administration of the research degree programme. It welcomes enquiries from students and supervisors who want advice about aspects of research degree policy or information about the services and support available. Please ask:

Research School

The Open University
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653808

Email research-degrees-team@open.ac.uk

The Open University Research Degrees Committee welcomes comments on the code of practice from students, supervisors and ARCs. They should be sent to the Research School.

The publications that contain information about supervision arrangements for research students are:

- ▶ *Research Degrees in Affiliated Research Centres Student Handbook*, which includes the University's student regulations and the research degree qualification regulations, and is sent to all registered students and to supervisors.
- ▶ *Research Degrees in Affiliated Research Centres Guidelines for Supervisors*, which should be sent by the ARC to all supervisors when they are offered appointment, gives information about supervisors' duties and about monitoring students' progress.
- ▶ *Annual Progress Report Guidelines*, sent to ARCs each January, to explain the annual progress report procedures.

The code of practice

This code of practice sets out guidelines for the conduct of the relationship between research students and supervisors. It defines the responsibilities of students and supervisors, suggesting what each can reasonably expect of the other, and gives examples of good supervisory practice. If the code of practice is to be effective, there must be a continual process of negotiation between students and their supervisors. The code is intended to provide a framework for research in an atmosphere of scholarship and collegiality.

The code is designed to enable students to complete their degrees successfully within the time limits. Full-time PhD students should aim to complete their degrees within three years, which is the period of most studentship awards, and certainly within four. The maximum period of registration for part-time students is six years.

These maximum periods should not be regarded as the norm. Students should work towards completion times within these periods.

Responsibilities of the supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for the academic progress and pastoral or personal support of their students, and for dealing with administrative matters. They should provide the guidance and support necessary for successful completion of the research project.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- ▶ Establishing, at the beginning of the student's research, a framework for supervision, including arrangements for regular supervisory meetings. The stages that the student will be expected to complete by certain points in the research should also be agreed.

- ▶ Defining the role of each supervisor.
- ▶ Meeting the student regularly and frequently, at the intervals agreed at the beginning of the research project.
- ▶ Giving assistance in defining the topic of research. It is important that this is agreed between the student and supervisors at an early stage.
- ▶ Making sure that the project:
 - falls within the supervisors' area of expertise.
 - can be completed with the resources available.
 - can be completed within the prescribed period of study.
 - is suitable for the degree that the student intends to take.
 - for full-time students, can be completed within the period of the studentship (usually three years).
- ▶ Making sure that students know about research training provided by the ARC, and are aware of attendance requirements.
- ▶ Seeing that the safety policies of the ARC are brought to students' attention and explained.
- ▶ Discussing any hazards associated with the research work and how they can be dealt with, and ensuring that safety procedures are followed.
- ▶ Ensuring that adequate cover is arranged if the supervisors are going to be absent for a significant period.
- ▶ Responding promptly and constructively to written work, within the schedule agreed at the beginning of the project.
- ▶ Keeping to the monitoring and reporting timetable agreed at the beginning of the project. This will include the annual progress reports that are required by the Open University Research Degrees Committee.
- ▶ Ensuring that examiners are nominated in good time, so that the examination can go ahead as soon as possible after submission of the thesis.
- ▶ Ensuring that at the beginning of their studies students understand the requirements for submitting non-text content as part of their thesis and guiding them through the process in line with relevant guidelines.

Students can also reasonably expect their supervisors to:

- ▶ Treat them professionally, and see that they get proper credit for their work.
- ▶ Give advice about the proposed research project and the standard expected for the degree the student intends to take.
- ▶ Arrange a supervision meeting as soon as possible after registration. This would usually be within the first week for full-time students, but may take longer to arrange for part-time students.
- ▶ Make sure that the first meeting covers the areas set out in *Good supervisory arrangements and practice* below or, if that is not possible, that those areas are covered in another way.
- ▶ Suggest some directed reading before registration. This might be general background reading so that the student can discuss the topic with the supervisors soon after registration, or it might be the beginning of a literature review.
- ▶ Offer advice about literature sources and other research resources.
- ▶ Deal promptly with any research problems.
- ▶ Take an active role in introducing the student to meetings of learned societies, seminars and so on, and to other researchers in the field.
- ▶ Offer advice about the publication of research work, and make sure that attribution is discussed before publication.
- ▶ Provide support by encouragement and constructive advice, as well as criticism and adverse comment.

Responsibilities of the student

Students are expected to:

- ▶ Work conscientiously and independently within the guidance offered. While it is important to keep supervisors informed and to show work to them, students should be self-directed.
- ▶ Participate fully in research training provided by the ARC.
- ▶ Come to supervisory meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda.
- ▶ Before the end of the first year (the first 24 months for part-time students), have the area of research defined, be acquainted with the necessary background knowledge, complete the literature review and have a provisional framework for the progress of the research, with a timetable for the rest of the research period.

- ▶ Maintain progress according to the timetable agreed with the supervisors at the outset.
- ▶ Present written material in time for comment and discussion before going on to the next stage. As groundwork for the thesis, students should write rough drafts of potential chapters as soon as possible. Those in the sciences should keep a systematic record of all experimental work attempted and accomplished.
- ▶ Ensure that their English is good enough for the presentation of a thesis. Those whose first language is not English should seek advice. (This does not apply to students who have permission to submit their theses in Welsh or Gaelic.)
- ▶ Write regular reports, as agreed at the outset, on the progress of the project.

Supervisors can also reasonably expect students to:

- ▶ Produce a substantial amount of written work, even if only in draft form, before the end of the first year (24 months for part-time students). The interpretation of 'substantial' should be agreed between supervisors and students at the outset.
- ▶ Tell their supervisors about other people with whom they discuss their work.
- ▶ Discuss with their supervisors the form of guidance and kind of comment they find most helpful.
- ▶ Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary or trivial they seem. Students as well as supervisors have a responsibility to initiate contact and raise questions.
- ▶ Recognise that supervisors may have many other demands on their time. Students should hand in work in good time and give adequate notice if they ask supervisors for unscheduled meetings or to provide references.

Good supervisory arrangements and practice

The following points are recommended to students, supervisors and ARCs as good supervisory arrangements and practice.

Supervision

At their initial meeting the supervisors and the student should draw up a written agreement on the role of each supervisor and arrangements for supervisory support.

Supervision meetings

Students and supervisors should have regular meetings at which academic advice is given and through which progress is monitored. This is particularly important at the beginning of the research, so that the project makes a good start.

It cannot be too strongly stressed that the success of research projects depends largely on the help and guidance offered by supervisors, especially in the early stages of the work. Close contact at that time is essential if later difficulties are to be avoided.

Frequency of meetings

This will depend on the student's circumstances (full-time or part-time) and the nature and stage of the research project. Meetings should be more frequent for full-time students and in the early stages of the research.

In the first term full-time students should normally meet their supervisors at least once a week. After that, monthly meetings could suffice. Part-time students should ideally meet their director of studies at least six times a year. At important stages in the project, particularly in the first year, meetings may be more frequent and should be supplemented by regular phone calls, email or written correspondence. The student should meet all the supervisors together at least once a year.

Arrangements for supervisory support, including the frequency of meetings, must be agreed at the first meeting, and the schedule must be adhered to by students and supervisors.

The first meeting

The first meeting between student and supervisors is particularly important in establishing a provisional framework for future support and getting the student's academic work off to a good start. The following areas should be covered in the first meeting:

Supervision

- ▶ Role of each supervisor.
- ▶ Frequency of future meetings.
- ▶ Timetable for early meetings.
- ▶ Arrangements for seeing and commenting on written work.
- ▶ Monitoring arrangements and timetable.
- ▶ Safety.

Academic support

- ▶ Research facilities available.
- ▶ Training programmes in the ARC and attendance requirements.
- ▶ General framework for the whole research project.
- ▶ Detailed plan for the early stages of the research project.

Subsequent meetings

Regular meetings, in accordance with the agreed schedule, are essential to monitor progress and agree timetables for the future. The research timetable should be committed to paper so that supervisors can see whether deadlines have been met. Examples of supervisory schedules are given below.

The length of meetings will vary. For full-time students meetings of an hour or so are usual. For part-time students, whose meetings are less frequent, they will be longer.

Monitoring progress

Supervisors use different methods to monitor their students' progress, and they should agree with the student at the initial meeting how it is to be done. Supervisors are required by the Open University Research Degrees Committee to submit an annual report to the ARC research degree coordinator on the progress of their students; this should be taken into account when working out a monitoring schedule. Examples are given below.

The Open University Research Degrees Committee requires a substantial review of progress for full-time students shortly before the end of the first year, for part-time students at the end of the probationary period (after two years). The timetables agreed at supervision meetings should be used to see whether deadlines are being met and progress is being made.

Students should prepare progress reports for their supervisors at regular agreed intervals. The timing should be linked to the annual report supervisors are required to make.

Research degree coordinators in ARCs also have responsibilities for monitoring students. They are required to ensure that students in their ARCs make adequate academic progress each year, and to take any action required to enable students to meet their submission dates. They are also responsible for making sure that students receive copies of their progress reports when they have been endorsed.

Examples of supervision and monitoring schedules

For a full-time student

	Supervision schedule	Monitoring schedule
Year 1		
First term	Weekly meetings with supervisors	Report on progress at end of first term.
Second term	Monthly meetings with supervisors	Supervisors report to ARC. Report on progress at end of second term.
Third term	Monthly meetings with supervisors	End of first-year report prepared. This will include an oral presentation or assessment by a member of academic staff other than the supervisors. Agreement to proceed or withdraw.
Years 2 and 3		
	Monthly meetings with supervisors	Reports of progress in December, April and June. Supervisors report to ARC annually.

The completed and signed probation report must be submitted to the Research Degrees Team by the 11th month. This is to ensure progress to the 2nd year of study is approved prior to the start of the next year.

For a part-time student

	Supervision schedule	Monitoring schedule
Year 1	Early meeting with supervisors.	At least six meetings with supervisors, and regular phone calls, email or correspondence. End-of-year meeting with supervisors. Supervisors report on progress to ARC.
Year 2	At least six meetings with supervisors, and regular phone calls, email or correspondence.	End-of-year meeting with supervisors. Probationary period report prepared and submitted to research degree coordinator in the ARC, with recommendation of degree for which student should be registered.
Year 3 onwards	At least six meetings with supervisors, and regular phone calls, email or correspondence.	Supervisors report on progress to ARC annually.

The completed and signed probation report must be submitted to the Research Degrees Team by the 23rd month. This is to ensure progress to the 3rd year of study is approved prior to the start of the next year.

Changes in supervision

Students have the right to discuss and criticise the supervision they are receiving. Initially, any concerns should be raised with supervisors at the regular supervision meetings. If they cannot be resolved, the student should discuss the difficulties with the contact in the ARC or the Head of Research Degrees.

If the problem cannot be resolved a new supervisor may be appointed, but there may be difficulties in finding a replacement supervisor who has experience of the thesis subject area.

Appeal procedures

Students have the right to appeal against decisions of the Open University Research Degrees Committee, such as an examination result or a decision not to continue registration. Appeals have to be lodged within one month of the decision, or two months for appeals against an examination result.

The appeal procedure is available from the Research School and is included below.

10.3 Research degree appeals procedure**1 Scope of appeals**

1.1 Registered research degree students may appeal against the following academic decisions of the University:

- a** termination of registration to read for a research degree for failure to make satisfactory academic progress
- b** registration for a particular research degree*
- c** refusal of permission to submit a thesis for examination
- d** the result of the examination of a thesis.

1.2 For authoritative guidance on the applicability and operation of the research degree appeal procedures, write to the Head of Research Degrees, c/o Research School, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, or send an email for the attention of the Head of Research Degrees to:

Research-School@open.ac.uk

Does not apply to EdD students

2 Termination of registration

2.1 Appeals against the termination of registration are permitted only on the following grounds:

- a** that there were circumstances affecting your academic progress of which the supervisors and head of discipline were unaware
- b** that there is evidence of procedural irregularity (including administrative error) in the monitoring and assessment of your progress, such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the decision to terminate registration would not have been made
- c** that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment of your academic progress.

You may not on any other grounds challenge the academic decision to terminate registration.

2.2 There are three stages to the appeal procedure if your registration has been terminated for failure to make satisfactory academic progress.

First stage appeal procedure

2.3 The first stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

2.4 First stage appeals against the termination of registration to read for a research degree must be submitted, in writing, to the University through the Head of Research Degrees. You must state fully the grounds of your appeal and provide evidence of satisfactory academic progress or explain why satisfactory academic progress has not been achieved.

2.5 You must submit your appeal to the University within one month of being notified of the decision to terminate registration for failure to make satisfactory academic progress.

2.6 The University will use recorded delivery for all correspondence relating to appeals, and you should do the same.

2.7 On receipt of your appeal, an independent advisory panel will be convened to make a recommendation to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee as to whether the appeal should be upheld

2.8 The advisory panel will consult the head of discipline, supervisors and other appropriate people (e.g. the third-party monitor and/or other members of the academic staff who have had a role in your studies). Those consulted will be asked to submit comments in a form that can be made available to you if the appeal goes to the second stage.

2.9 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

2.10 Following consultation with the advisory panel, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee will either:

- a** uphold the appeal and reinstate registration for a specified period; or
- b** reject the appeal and confirm the decision to terminate registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

If your appeal is upheld, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee may stipulate appropriate conditions.

2.11 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the first stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Second stage appeal procedure

2.12 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a first stage appeal to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage two. The second stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Head of the Research School.

2.13 To take your appeal to stage two you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the first stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the second stage.

2.14 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the second stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the second stage.

2.15 You have no right of personal hearing at stage two.

2.16 A delegated member of the Research School may discuss your appeal with you or with your nominated friend.

2.17 Following a review of earlier correspondence and in the light of the advice provided by the other staff, the Head of the Research School will:

- a** uphold the appeal and reinstate registration for a specified period; or
- b** reject the appeal and confirm the decision to terminate registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

If an appeal is upheld, the Head of the Research School may stipulate appropriate conditions.

2.18 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the second stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Third stage appeal procedure

2.19 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a second stage appeal to the Head of the Research School, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage three. The third stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship).

2.20 To take your appeal to stage three you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the second stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the third stage.

2.21 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the third stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the third stage.

2.22 In a third stage appeal you have the right to be heard in person and to be accompanied by your nominated friend. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will sit with one or more appropriately qualified external assessors.

2.23 In the light of the advice provided by the external assessor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will:

- a uphold the appeal and reinstate registration for a specified period; or
- b reject the appeal and confirm the decision to terminate registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

If an appeal is upheld, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor may stipulate appropriate conditions. The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) is final.

2.24 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the third stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

3 Registration for a particular research degree

3.1 Appeals against registration for a particular degree are permitted only on the following grounds:

- a that there were circumstances affecting your academic progress of which the supervisors and head of discipline were unaware
- b that there is evidence of procedural irregularity (including administrative error) in the monitoring and assessment of your progress, such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the decision about degree registration would have been different
- c that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment of your work.

You may not on any other grounds challenge the academic decision about your degree registration.

3.2 There are three stages to the procedure for appeals against registration for a particular research degree.

First stage appeal procedure

3.3 The first stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

3.4 First stage appeals against registration for a particular research degree must be submitted, in writing, to the University through the Head of Research Degrees. You must state fully the grounds of your appeal.

3.5 You must submit your appeal to the University within one month of being notified of the decision about registration for a particular research degree.

3.6 The University will use recorded delivery for all correspondence relating to appeals, and you should do the same.

3.7 On receipt of your appeal, an independent advisory panel will be convened to make a recommendation to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee as to whether the appeal should be upheld.

3.8 The advisory panel will consult the head of discipline, supervisors and other appropriate people (e.g. the third-party monitor and/or other members of the academic staff who have had a role in your studies). Those consulted will be asked to submit comments in a form that can be made available to you if the appeal goes to the second stage.

3.9 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

3.10 Following consultation with the advisory panel, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee will either:

- a uphold the appeal and change the degree registration; or
- b grant permission for the degree registration to be reconsidered once specified conditions have been fulfilled; or
- c reject the appeal and confirm the degree registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

3.11 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the first stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Second stage appeal procedure

3.12 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a first stage appeal to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage two. The second stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Head of the Research School.

3.13 To take your appeal to stage two you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the first stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the second stage.

3.14 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the second stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the second stage.

3.15 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

3.16 A delegated member of the Research School may discuss your appeal with you or with your nominated friend.

3.17 Following a review of earlier correspondence and in the light of the advice provided by the other staff, the Head of the Research School will:

- a uphold the appeal and change the degree registration; or
- b grant permission for the degree registration to be reconsidered once specified conditions have been fulfilled; or
- c reject the appeal and confirm the degree registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

3.18 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the second stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Third stage appeal procedure

3.19 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a second stage appeal to the Head of the Research School, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage three. The third stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship).

3.20 To take your appeal to stage three you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the second stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the third stage.

3.21 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the third stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the third stage.

3.22 In a third stage appeal you have the right to be heard in person and to be accompanied by your nominated friend. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will sit with one or more appropriately qualified external assessors.

3.23 In the light of the advice provided by the external assessor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will:

- a uphold the appeal and change the degree registration; or
- b grant permission for the degree registration to be reconsidered once specified conditions have been fulfilled; or
- c reject the appeal and confirm the degree registration. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) is final.

3.24 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the third stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

4 Refusal of permission to submit a thesis

4.1 Appeals against refusal of permission to submit a thesis are permitted only on the following grounds:

- a that there were circumstances affecting your academic performance of which the supervisors and head of discipline were unaware
- b that there is evidence of procedural irregularity (including administrative error) in the assessment of your thesis, such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the decision to refuse permission would not have been made
- c that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment of the thesis.

You may not on any other grounds challenge the decision to refuse permission to submit a thesis for examination.

4.2 There are three stages to the procedure for appeals against refusal of permission to submit a thesis for examination.

First stage appeal procedure

4.3 The first stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

4.4 First stage appeals against refusal of permission to submit a thesis for examination must be submitted, in writing, to the University through the Head of Research Degrees. You must state fully the grounds of your appeal and provide evidence of satisfactory academic progress or explain why satisfactory academic progress has not been achieved.

4.5 You must submit your appeal to the University within one month of being notified of the decision to refuse permission to submit your thesis for examination.

4.6 The University will use recorded delivery for all correspondence relating to appeals, and you should do the same.

4.7 On receipt of your appeal, an independent advisory panel will be convened to make a recommendation to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee as to whether the appeal should be upheld.

4.8 The advisory panel will consult the head of discipline, supervisors and other appropriate people (e.g. the third-party monitor and/or other members of the academic staff who have had a role in your studies). Those consulted will be asked to submit comments in a form that can be made available to you if the appeal goes to the second stage.

4.9 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

4.10 Following consultation with the advisory panel, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee will either:

- a** uphold the appeal and grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination; or
- b** grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination once appropriate revisions have been made; or
- c** if you are registered for the degree of PhD, require the degree registration to be changed to allow the thesis to be submitted and examined for the degree of MPhil; or
- d** reject the appeal and confirm the decision to refuse permission to submit the thesis for examination. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

4.11 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the first stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Second stage appeal procedure

4.12 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a first stage appeal to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage two. The second stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Head of the Research School.

4.13 To take your appeal to stage two you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the first stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the second stage.

4.14 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the second stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the second stage.

4.15 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

4.16 A delegated member of the Research School may discuss your appeal with you or with your nominated friend.

4.17 Following a review of earlier correspondence and in the light of the advice provided by the other staff, the Head of the Research School will:

- a** uphold the appeal and grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination; or
- b** grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination once appropriate revisions have been made; or
- c** if you are registered for the degree of PhD, require the degree registration to be changed to allow the thesis to be submitted and examined for the degree of MPhil; or
- d** reject the appeal and confirm the decision to refuse permission to submit the thesis for examination. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

4.18 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the second stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Third stage appeal procedure

4.19 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a second stage appeal to the Head of the Research School, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage three. The third stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship).

4.20 To take your appeal to stage three you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within one month of being notified of the outcome of the second stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the third stage.

4.21 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the third stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the third stage.

4.22 In a third stage appeal you have the right to be heard in person and to be accompanied by your nominated friend. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will sit with one or more appropriately qualified external assessors.

4.23 In the light of the advice provided by the external assessor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will:

- a uphold the appeal and grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination; or
- b grant permission for the thesis to be submitted for examination once appropriate revisions have been made; or
- c if you are registered for the degree of PhD, require the degree registration to be changed to allow the thesis to be submitted and examined for the degree of MPhil; or
- d reject the appeal and confirm the decision to refuse permission to submit the thesis for examination. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) is final.

4.24 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the third stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

5 Result of an examination

5.1 Appeals against the outcome of an examination are permitted only on the following grounds:

- a that there are circumstances affecting your performance of which the examiners were not aware at the oral examination
- b that there is evidence of procedural irregularity (including administrative error) in the conduct of the examination, such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the result would have been different
- c that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.

You may not on any other grounds challenge the academic judgement of the examiners.

5.2 There are three stages to the procedure for appeals against the result of an examination.

First stage appeal procedure

5.3 The first stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

5.4 First stage appeals against the result of an examination must be submitted, in writing, to the University through the Head of Research Degrees. You must state fully the grounds of your appeal.

5.5 You must submit your appeal to the University within two months of being notified that your examination result has been ratified on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee.

5.6 You may appeal against the result of an examination but, because there are procedures for complaint and grievance during study, alleged inadequacy of supervision or other arrangements during the period of study does not constitute grounds for an appeal.

5.7 On receipt of your appeal, an independent advisory panel will be convened to make a recommendation to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee as to whether the appeal should be upheld.

5.8 The advisory panel will consult the examiners, the head of discipline, supervisors and other appropriate people (e.g. the third-party monitor and/or other members of the academic staff who have had a role in your studies). Those consulted will be asked to submit comments in a form that can be made available to you if the appeal goes to the second stage.

5.9 You have no right of personal hearing at stage one.

5.10 Following consultation with the advisory panel, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee will:

- a if policy has been breached refer the thesis for re-examination under the procedures set out in paragraphs 5.24–5.29 below; or
- b with the agreement of the examiners, uphold the appeal and change the result of the examination; or
- c reject the appeal and confirm the examination result. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

5.11 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the first stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Second stage appeal procedure

5.12 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a first stage appeal to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage two. The second stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Head of the Research School

5.13 To take your appeal to stage two you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within two months of being notified of the outcome of the first stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the second stage.

5.14 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the second stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the second stage.

5.15 You have no right of personal hearing at stage two.

5.16 Following a review of earlier correspondence and in the light of the advice provided by the other staff, the Head of the Research School will:

- a** with the agreement of the examiners, uphold the appeal and change the result of the examination; or
- b** refer the thesis for re-examination under the procedure set out in paragraphs 5.24–5.29 below; or
- c** give you permission to revise your thesis and resubmit it for examination, either for the degree for which it was originally submitted or for another research degree; or
- d** reject the appeal and confirm the result of the examination. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

5.17 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the second stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Third stage appeal procedure

5.18 If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a second stage appeal to the Head of the Research School, you may ask for the appeal to go to stage three. The third stage of the appeal process is conducted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship).

5.19 To take your appeal to stage three you must write to the Complaints and Appeals Office, within two months of being notified of the outcome of the second stage appeal, to confirm that you want the appeal to proceed to the third stage.

5.20 You may, if you wish, be assisted in the third stage appeal process by a nominated friend, whose name you must give to the University in the letter to the Complaints and Appeals Office confirming that you want the appeal to go to the second stage.

5.21 In a third stage appeal you have the right to be heard in person and to be accompanied by your nominated friend. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will sit with one or more appropriately qualified external assessors.

5.22 On the basis of the advice provided by the external assessor(s), the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will:

- a** with the agreement of the examiners, uphold the appeal and change the result of the examination; or
- b** refer the thesis for re-examination under the procedure set out in paragraphs 5.24–5.29 below; or
- c** give you permission to revise your thesis and resubmit it for examination, either for the degree for which it was originally submitted or for another research degree; or
- d** reject the appeal and confirm the result of the examination. If so you will be informed, in general terms, of the reason(s) for rejecting the appeal.

The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) is final.

5.23 The University will write to tell you the outcome of the third stage appeal, not later than five working days after the decision has been reached.

Re-examination of theses on appeal

5.24 Theses submitted for re-examination under 5.10a, 5.16b or 5.22b above will be examined by a panel consisting of an internal examiner (or an internal assessor) and two external examiners, none of whom may be members of the original examination panel.

5.25 You will have a viva voce examination, which your internal supervisor will be required to attend.

5.26 The examiners will be told that they are re-examining a thesis on appeal but will be given no information about the previous examination.

5.27 If you are permitted to have your thesis re-examined you are not permitted to make any amendments to it before the second examination. If appropriate, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort by examiners, an appendix of purely typographical errors may be attached to the thesis and submitted for re-examination.

5.28 If the result of the re-examination is less favourable to you than that of the first examination against which a successful appeal has been made, then the result of the original examination will stand subject to the original corrections, amendments or revisions.

5.29 If your thesis is referred for re-examination in accordance with either 5.10a, 5.16b or 5.22b, or if you are granted permission to revise and resubmit your thesis for re-examination in accordance with 5.16c or 5.22c, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) determines the right of appeal against the result of the re-examination.

10.4 Complaints procedure for postgraduate research students

1 Definition of a complaint

The University defines a complaint as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, when the complainant has drawn his or her concern to the attention of the University and is not satisfied with the response’. This definition does not include complaints that are covered by the following separate University procedures.

- ▶ Code of practice on student discipline
- ▶ Dealing with bullying and harassment – code of practice for students
- ▶ Staff disciplinary code
- ▶ Code on personal relationships between staff and students.

Formal appeals are also excluded from the complaint procedures. We define a formal appeal as ‘a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or academic body charged with making decisions on students’ progression, assessment and awards’.

2 Time limits

If you experience problems with any aspect of our academic or administrative services, you should contact your supervision team, your third party monitor, your faculty or school or the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible so that we can act quickly to put things right.

It is essential that you act immediately if there is a possibility that your studies will be affected by any problem you have experienced.

In most cases, a letter, phone call or email to the Research Degrees Team will get you the help and advice you need.

We cannot accept responsibility for problems that affect the outcome of your studies if you delay telling us about them until it is too late for us to put things right.

If you have told us about problems and you are not satisfied with our response, you are entitled to make a formal complaint.

You must make your complaint within a reasonable time following the matter that prompted your complaint. This should be no more than three months after completion of or withdrawal from the course of study in which the complaint arose, after which your complaint will be considered to be ‘out of time’, save in exceptional circumstances that prevented you from submitting it.

Once you have received a formal response to your complaint, if you are still not satisfied, you have 28 days from the date of the response in which to take the complaint to the next stage.

The University is committed to dealing with all complaints as quickly as possible and will normally follow the time limits set out in this procedure. You will be informed of any delay and the reason for it if one should arise.

3 Rights and responsibilities

The University will:

- ▶ deal with all complaints within the time limits set out in this procedure;
- ▶ make sure that we deal with all the points you raise, and that our replies explain the outcomes clearly;
- ▶ handle your complaint confidentially and only give people the information that is needed to carry out a proper investigation and make a full response;
- ▶ keep records of complaints separate from other records;

- ▶ make sure that no complaint you have made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in the future; and
- ▶ always be polite.

If you want to make a formal complaint against the University you should:

- ▶ give us full details of your complaint;
- ▶ deal sensitively with issues that involve other students or staff, and not name them unless it is necessary; and
- ▶ always be polite.

Please note that the University reluctantly operates a policy for dealing with Habitual and/or Vexatious Complaints/Appellants. The policy is available on request from the Complaints and Appeals Office. Students with genuine complaints or appeals of substance (whether they are eventually upheld) need not be concerned by this policy.

The University does not accept complaints made by third parties on behalf of a student unless we have written confirmation from the student that they are happy for the third party to make a complaint on their behalf.

4 Stage one

Contact the Head of Research Degrees. If you want to complain about more than one area, you should either contact each area separately or write to the Complaints and Appeals Office. If you are not sure which office to contact, the Complaints and Appeals Office will be able to advise you.

The complaint should be submitted in writing by post, fax or email, to ensure that we record your complaint accurately. If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to send a written complaint, please contact the Complaints and Appeals Office to discuss alternatives.

Concise numbered points can be a helpful way to set the situation out clearly and you should provide any supporting evidence available to you.

Your complaint will be considered by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

You should expect to receive a reply within ten working days of the University receiving your complaint. If we can't give you a full reply within that time, we will tell you when we will be able to do so. We will normally reply using the same method you used when sending your complaint to us i.e. letter, email or fax.

5 Stage two

If, when you receive our reply to your complaint, you are not satisfied that we have done everything possible to answer it, you can ask the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) to review your case. You must put your complaint in writing and send it to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) within 28 days of the date of our response to your stage 1 complaint (if you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to send a written complaint, please contact the office to discuss alternatives).

You should include:

- ▶ full details of your complaint and all matters related to it;
- ▶ details of other areas of the University that you have had contact with in relation to your complaint; and
- ▶ copies of any previous correspondence with us related to your complaint, or enough information to help us trace this correspondence quickly.

You should explain why the response you have received at stage one has not answered your complaint. You should also tell us what you think we should do to resolve your complaint.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will send you an acknowledgement of your complaint within three working days of receiving it, and will tell you which senior officer or officers have been asked to reply. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) will send you a full reply within 10 working days of the date of his or her acknowledgement letter or, if that is not possible, contact you again to let you know when you can expect a full reply.

6 Stage three

If, when you have a full reply from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) or the senior officer or officers asked to consider your complaint, you are still not satisfied that we have done everything possible to answer your complaint, you can ask the Complaints and Appeals Office to refer it to the Director, Students.

You must clearly set out the reasons for requesting a review and enclose any additional evidence in support of your complaint. You should also explain what you would like to happen to resolve your complaint. This request should be sent within 28 days of the date of our response to your stage two complaint.

The Complaints and Appeals Office will acknowledge your request within three working days. The Director will investigate whether we have handled the matter fairly in line with our policy and procedures, and whether we should do anything else. The Director will send a reply to your complaint within 10 working days of the date of the Complaints and Appeals Office's acknowledgement letter or, if that is not possible, contact you again to let you know when you can expect a full reply. This stage may take longer because the Director will need to see

previous correspondence and may get advice from several departments. The reply from the Director, Students will explain the basis of his or her decision. The Director's decision is the final decision on behalf of the University. If you remain dissatisfied with this decision, you are then entitled to apply for an independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). You'll find contact details for the OIA (including details of their website) in *Sources of Advice* below and we will explain the procedures to you once you have exhausted our internal procedures.

Complaints procedure	
Initial problem	Discuss with the supervision team, the third party monitor, the faculty and/or the Research Degrees Team
Formal complaint	Complaint must be made within three months
Stage 1	Complaint submitted to Head of Research Degrees Complaint considered by Chair of Research Degrees Committee Reply should be received within 10 days of complaint being received
Stage 2	Complaint must be made within 28 days of response to Stage 1 complaint Complaint submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) Complaint considered by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) or delegate Reply should be received within 10 days of complaint being received
Stage 3	Complaint must be made within 28 days of response to Stage 2 complaint Complaint submitted to the University's Complaints and Appeals Office Complaint considered by Director, Students Reply should be received within 10 days of complaint being received
Final decision	The Director, Students' decision is the final decision on behalf of the University Student can apply for independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

7 Sources of advice

If you need help at any point in the complaint procedure, you can contact one of the following offices.

The Head of Research Degrees

The Research School
The Open University
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Phone: 01908 654882

Fax: 01908 653999

Email: research-degrees-team@open.ac.uk

The Complaints and Appeals Office

The Open University
PO Box 5155
Milton Keynes
MK7 6YJ

Phone: 01908 659535

Fax: 01908 659536

Email: complaints-appeals@open.ac.uk

The Open University Students' Association (OUSA)

Central office at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes

Email: ousa@student.open.ac.uk

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Fifth Floor Thames Tower Station Road
Reading
RG1 1LX

Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

Helpdesk phone: 0118 959 9813 (Calls to and from this Office may be monitored for quality control and training reasons.)

10.5 Other policies and statements

You can access the University's other policies and statements on our website at:

www.open.ac.uk/our-student-policies.

Part 4

Our contact details

11 How to contact us

The Research School

Research School

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 654411

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

To contact specific areas of the Research School:

Research Ethics

Phone +44 (0)1908 654858

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

Email research-ethics@open.ac.uk

Research Grants and Contracts

Phone +44 (0)1908 652006

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

Email research-grants-contracts@open.ac.uk

Innovation and Enterprise

Phone +44 (0)1908 659783

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

Email innovation-enterprise@open.ac.uk

Research Degree

Part-time study +44 (0)1908 653806

Full-time study +44 (0)1908 654882

Doctorate in Education (EdD) +44 (0)1908 659616

Fax +44 (0)1908 653999

Email research-degrees-team@open.ac.uk

Research Career Development

Phone +44 (0)1908 653677

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

Email research-training-development@open.ac.uk

Other areas of the University

Credit, Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre

The Open University
PO Box 123
Milton Keynes
MK7 6DQ

Phone +44 (0)1908 653003

Email acc-gen@open.ac.uk

Complaints and Appeals Office

The Open University
PO Box 5155
Milton Keynes
MK7 6YJ

Phone +44 (0)1908 659535

Fax +44 (0)1908 659536

Email complaints-appeals@open.ac.uk

Data Protection Coordinator

The Open University
PO Box 497
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AT

Email data-protection@open.ac.uk

The Open University Library

Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 659001

Fax +44 (0)1908 653571

Email lib-help@open.ac.uk

OU Computing Helpdesk

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653972

www.open.ac.uk/students/helpdesk

Disability Resources Team

The Open University
Hammerwood Gate
Kents Hill
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BR

Phone +44 (0)1908 653745

Textphone +44 (0)1908 655978

Fax +44 (0)1908 655547

Email disabled-student-resources@open.ac.uk



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