

University of Birmingham

Changes to Regulations for Postgraduate Research DegreesTopic and Purpose of Paper

1. In order to ensure greater clarity and consistency, APRC is requested to **consider and approve** changes to Regulations where these are currently ambiguous, inconsistent or misleading.

Proposals

2. That the Regulations are updated to refer to "Registered Students" throughout.
3. That, where appropriate, a list of doctoral level degrees is replaced with the wording "doctoral degree" throughout.
4. That Regulation 7.4.1 Award Requirements be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

*7.4.1 (a) The Registered Student shall prepare and present as appropriate a report or reports, a dissertation or a thesis, based upon the Registered Student's own work, on the subject of the Registered Student's advanced study and research. A Registered Student may be required to complete further written or oral tests on the research training, the subject of the research or cognate subject(s) as determined by the Principal Academic Unit. **A Registered Student shall complete all the requirements and pass any taught credits as specified in the programme requirements approved by the Senate or under delegated authority.***

5. That Regulation 7.4.3 Submission of Thesis be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

*7.4.3 (c) Where a Registered Student does not submit the thesis within the prescribed maximum period of study he or she will be deemed to have withdrawn due to lapse of time. A Registered Student may apply **to the Senate or delegated authority** for an extension of the maximum period of study ~~in accordance with the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses~~. Applications from the Registered Student to allow submission of the thesis after this time shall be granted ~~by the Senate or delegated authority~~ only in exceptional circumstances. If an extension is granted, the Senate or delegated authority will also decide whether the Registered Student should ~~continue to~~ be normally registered or ~~should be in transferred to~~ writing up status. If an extension is not granted the student must submit his or her or her thesis within the prescribed maximum period of time or be judged to have voluntarily withdrawn.*

6. That Regulation 7.4.5(a) Oral Examinations be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

*7.4.5 (a) A Registered Student submitting a thesis for a masters degree by research (as specified in section 6) may be required to undergo an oral examination on the research and thesis. The decision on whether to hold an oral examination shall be taken with the agreement of both the internal and external examiners. **An oral examination must be held in all cases where examiners are proposing that the thesis be rejected.***

7. That Regulation 7.4.7(h) be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

*7.4.7 (h) Revision and resubmission of the thesis shall normally be completed by the Registered Student within one year of the date on which the letter informing the Registered Student of the result is issued by the University unless further time is permitted by the examiners. The Registered Student is liable to pay a resubmission fee. Revisions must be approved by the internal examiner and the external examiner. **A resubmitted thesis is subject to a full re-examination.***

8. That Regulation 7.4.8(f) be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

7.4.8 (f) Transfer from Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study to a PhD, or from a PhD to a Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study. between doctoral programmes

i) Transfer from a Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study to a PhD

*Transfer from a Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study to a PhD or from a PhD to a Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study may be requested by the Registered Student or recommended by the Head of Principal Academic Unit **School** at any time prior to the submission of the thesis provided the Registered Student has successfully passed any taught modules upon which he or she has been enrolled, and providing, in the case of transfers to MD or DDS, that the student meets the entry requirements.*

ii) Transfer from a PhD to a Professional Doctorate, MD, DDS or PhD with Integrated Study may be requested by the Registered Student or recommended by the Head of Principal Academic Unit at any time prior to the submission of the thesis provided the Registered Student is able to satisfy the requirements for the taught element of the programme and in the case of the MD & DDS that the registered student meets the entry requirements.

Background and Context

9. A number of regulations refer to a list of doctoral degrees. For ease of reference, it is proposed that where appropriate a list of degrees is replaced with “doctoral degrees”.

10. Regulation 7.4.1 Award Requirements only refers to the thesis element and not to taught elements or any other requirements for the award of the degree which may be specified in the programme requirements. It also infers that a School has the right to require the student to carry out further written or oral tests. Any amendments to the thesis or research reports would be on the recommendation of the examiners and requirements for reassessment of a module would be as set out in the module requirements.

The requirement from a School for a student to carry out specified work in connection with their research would fall until progression requirements and dealt with under Section 3 of the Code of Practice for Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students.

11. Regulation 7.4.3 Submission of Thesis is incorrect as the current wording indicates that the process for applying for an extension is set out in the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses. It is recommended that this is deleted as the Code of Practice does not include information on applications for extensions.

Extension requests for research students are subject to approval by the Research Progress & Awards Sub Panel.

12. Regulation **7.4.5(a)** states that a viva examination for a thesis submitted for a master's degree is held on the discretion and agreement of the examiners. A recent Primary Appeals Committee, which considered an appeal from a student whose master's thesis had been rejected without the opportunity for resubmission, have requested that consideration be given for a viva examination to be mandatory for all masters theses where the examiners independent reports indicate that the thesis should be rejected. This would enable examiners to make their final recommendation on the thesis having discussed areas of concern with the student and having given the student the opportunity to defend their thesis.
13. Regulation **7.4.7(h)** is ambiguous in that it does not explicitly refer to a resubmitted thesis being subject to a full re-examination. It refers only to the revisions being subject to approval by the internal and external examiners and this could be interpreted as the procedure being the same as for a thesis submitted for checking by the examiners following minor or major corrections.
17. Regulation **7.4.8 (f)** is confusing in its current state and so has been simplified to clearly refer to transfers between doctoral programmes and the requirements for each type of transfer.

Argument in Support of the Proposal

18. The proposed amendments to Regulations are recommended to ensure the consistent use of terminology throughout the regulations, to remove any ambiguities and to bring greater clarity in the interpretation of the regulations.

Consideration of the amendment to Regulation 7.4.7 Oral Examinations has been recommended by a Primary Appeals Committee.

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