

University of Birmingham

Changes to Code of Practice on the Assessment of Research Degree Theses**Topic and Purpose of Paper**

1. In order to ensure greater clarity and consistency, APRC is requested to **consider and approve** changes to the Code of practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses where these are currently ambiguous, inconsistent or misleading.

Proposals

2. That the Code is updated to refer to "Registered Students" throughout.
3. That point 2.8 of the Code of Practice be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

2.8 ~~No formal letter of appointment will be sent to the examiners.~~ The confirmation of appointment as an examiner is included in a the letter providing ~~further~~ details concerning the examination of the thesis. This letter accompanies the thesis when it is despatched to examiners, together with Guidance Notes on the Examination of Research Degree Theses.

6. That points 6.5.2, 6.5.4, 6.5.6, 6.7.2, 6.7.4, and 6.10 and 6.10.3 of the Code of Practice be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text crossed through).

6.5.2 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~. If the Registered student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~, then the degree of MMus, MRes or MPhil will not be awarded.

6.5.4 Where thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~.

6.5.6 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MMus, MRes or one-year MPhil (Mode B) as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~.

6.7.2 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~. If the Registered student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the degree of PhD, then the degree of MPhil will not be awarded.

6.7.4 Where the thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after minor corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~.

6.7.6 Where thesis is a qualifying thesis, that the Registered Student be awarded the degree of MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil as appropriate after major corrections to the thesis with or without the option of proceeding to further work for ~~the~~ a doctoral degree ~~of PhD~~.

6.10 Following the initial submission and examination of the thesis for ~~the a~~ doctoral degree of ~~PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD, MD or DDS~~, where the registered student has failed to satisfy the requirements for the degree as set out in Regulation 7.4.1, examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, either:

6.10.3 That the student, having submitted a thesis for the award of ~~the a~~ doctoral degree of ~~PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD or MD~~ the thesis be returned to the Registered student for revision and resubmission for ~~the a~~ research masters degree of ~~MPhil~~.

7. That points 6.6.2, 6.10.2, 6.10.4, 6.13.3, and 6.13.4 amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text cross through).

6.6.2 That the thesis or one or more reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the Registered student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The Registered Student shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

6.10.2 That the registered student, having submitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree ~~the degree of PhD, PhD with integrated study, a professional doctorate, EngD or MD~~ be awarded ~~the a~~ research masters degree of ~~MPhil or MRes~~ or the related taught Master's degree, as appropriate, if necessary after the Registered student has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the satisfaction of the examiners. The Registered Student shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

6.10.4 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the Registered student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The Registered Student shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

6.13.3 That the Registered Student, having resubmitted a thesis for the award of a doctoral degree, be awarded the lower alternative research masters or taught masters degree, as appropriate after completion of minor corrections to the satisfaction of the internal examiner; (The Registered Student shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.)

6.13.4 That the thesis or other reports be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the Registered Student not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The Registered Student shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

8. That points 6.7, 6.8, 7.1 and 7.2 of the, Code of Practice be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text cross through).

6.7 Examiners' recommendations: One-year MPhil (mode A) and two-year MPhil Following the initial submission and examination of the Registered student's work for the degree of MPhil (one-year (mode A) or two-year) and where the Registered student has satisfied the requirements for the relevant degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award ~~Chapter 4.1~~, Chapter 7.4 examiners shall decide on behalf of the Senate either:

6.8 Following the initial submission and examination of the Registered student's work for the degree of ~~MPhil, MPhil (Mode A) or two-year MPhil~~ where the Registered student has failed to satisfy the requirements for the relevant degree as set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Award ~~Chapter 4.1~~ 7.4 the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations to the Senate or delegated authority, either:

*7.1 In cases where the original examiners (i.e. those appointed as ~~per~~ **set out in Regulations Assessment, Progression and Awards Chapter section 4 7.4.4)** ~~Examiners and subsection 4.4 Examiners~~) are unable to reach agreement on the recommendation on the outcome of the examination the following shall apply.*

*7.2 The **Registered** student shall be re-examined by new examiners. The new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with **Regulation 7.4.4 section 4 Examiners and section 4.4 Examiners** except that two external examiners may be appointed if no suitable internal examiner is available. None of the new examiners shall have been an original examiner and the Head of School shall not be appointed as a new examiner.*

8. That point 6.7.1 of the Code of Practice be amended as follows (inserted text underlined, deleted text cross through).

*~~6.7 .1 That the Registered student chooses the former and is subsequently awarded the degree of PhD, then the degree of MPhil will not be awarded. That the~~ **Registered** student be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted.*

Background and Context

10. Regulation 2.8 is contradictory as it implies that examiners of research degree theses are not formally appointed but that confirmation of appointment as an examiner is included in a letter when the thesis when it is sent for examination. The first line has been deleted to remove any ambiguity.
11. Points 6.5.2, 6.5.4, 6.5.6, 6.7.2, 6.7.4, 6.7.6, 6.10 and 6.10.3 refer only to progression to the degree if PhD. In some cases, progression may be to a degree other than PhD. PhD has been removed and replaced with “doctoral” to cover all eventualities.
12. In other parts of the Code of Practice the student's right of appeal against a particular decision or recommendation is pointed out. For consistency, points 6.6.2, 6.10.2, 6.10.4, 6.13.3 and 6.13.4 have been amended to include this.
13. Points 6.7, 6.8, 7.1 and 7.2 refer to a Section in the cohort based Regulations which were replaced at the beginning of the 2008-09 academic year. This amendment updates the reference to Chapter 7.4 of the current regulations.
14. Point 6.7.1 is ambiguous as it is incomplete. Appropriate text has been inserted to complete the sentence.

Argument in Support of the Proposal

15. 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.

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