For APRC
16th June 2013

APRC.13.06.**04**

University of Birmingham

Title	**Amendments to Regulations and Codes of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers and for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses**
Author / contact	Mrs C Evans, Research Student Administration Manager

Purpose	The Committee is invited ***to approve*** changes to Codes of Practice and related amendments to Regulations.

Executive Summary	The Committee is asked ***to consider*** and if thought appropriate, ***to approve*** changes to Regulations, the Codes of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers and for Assessment of Research Degree: i) <u>Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers</u> (a) Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" to include that it is the responsibility of the PGR to submit an electronic copy of the thesis submitted for examination for checking through TURNITIN. (b) Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" to include that it is responsibility of the PGR to comply with the University's Statement on editorial help for Postgraduate Research Theses. ii) <u>Code of Practice on the Assessment of Research Degree Theses</u> (a) To require a viva to be held in all cases for theses submitted for a research masters where the examiners are proposing that the thesis be revised and resubmitted. (b) To include the option of awarding a lower qualification of MA/MSc by research for a thesis submitted for a two year FT Master of Philosophy. The proposed changes have been endorsed by GSMB.

Timing	If approved the changes will be implemented from the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year.

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Amendments to Regulations and Codes of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers and for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses

1. **Background**

During the academic year a number of individual PGR cases have highlighted omissions and ambiguities in Regulations and Codes of Practice relating to postgraduate researchers. A number of amendments are therefore being suggested to Regulations and Codes of Practice as follows:

(i) Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers

(a) Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" to include that it is the responsibility of the PGR to submit an electronic copy of the thesis submitted for examination for checking through TURNITIN.

(b) Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" to include that it is responsibility of the PGR to comply with the University's Statement on editorial help for Postgraduate Research Theses.

(ii) Code of Practice on the Assessment of Research Degree Theses

(a) To require a viva to be held in all cases for theses submitted for a research masters where the examiners are proposing that the thesis be revised and resubmitted.

(b) To include the option of awarding a lower qualification of MA/MSc by research for a thesis submitted for a two year FT Master of Philosophy.

Insertions to existing Regulations and points in the Codes of Practice are underlined.

Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers

2. **To include in the Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" a point to confirm that it is the responsibility of the PGR to submit an electronic copy of their final thesis for checking through TURNITIN.**

2.1 Recommendation: To insert a point in Section 6 Responsibilities of PGRs in the Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs:

6.2.14 on submission of the thesis for examination at the same time to submit an exact copy electronically for checking through TURNITIN.

2.2 Background: The Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs includes points relating to the checking of the copy of the thesis submitted for examination through TURNITIN in Section 4 Responsibilities of Schools:

4.14 To have mechanisms in place for the checking of all theses submitted for examination via Turnitin.

and Section 5 Responsibilities of Supervisors, Academic Advisers and Mentors

5.1.9 On receipt of the Intention to Submit Form signing the form to acknowledge the intended submission and **ensuring the thesis is submitted to the appropriate School contact for checking via Turnitin.** Forwarding the signed Intention to Submit Form to the Research Student Administration Team. In signing the form the supervisor is not confirming that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful.

But there is no reference in Section 6 Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers that it is the PGRs responsibility to submit an electronic copy of the thesis for the TURNITIN check.

The Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses contains the following points:

2.2 The supervisor will make arrangements for the thesis to be forwarded to the appropriate School contact for checking via Turnitin.

2.4 On receipt of this form Research Student Administration will send a "Nomination of Examiners for Research Degrees" form to the postgraduate researcher's Head of School for their completion and approval. Where the latter is also the postgraduate researcher's supervisor, the nomination should be approved by the member of academic staff within the School with responsibility for postgraduate researchers. The completed form should be returned with any supporting documentation, where appropriate, to the Research Student Administration team. If any section of the form is incomplete, it will be returned to the relevant Head of School (or nominee). If any exceptional cases have been made (see paragraph 4.1 of this Code of Practice) Research Student Administration will be responsible for transmission to the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel for consideration. **Please note the thesis will not be sent for examination until the check via Turnitin has been completed and Research Student Administration informed of the outcome.**

2.3 The addition is recommended for completeness and to ensure that PGRs are aware that it is their responsibility to submit an electronic copy of the final examination copy for checking through TURNITIN.

2.4 The RSA team have recently dealt with a case where a PGR submitted the soft bound copies of the thesis for examination but did not submit the electronic copy for the TURNITIN check. He was requested to do so by both the School and the RSA Team and there was several weeks delay before he submitted the electronic copy.

3. To update the Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" to include that it is responsibility of the PGR to comply with the University's Statement on editorial help for Postgraduate Research Theses.

3.1 Recommendation*:* To include in the Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs Section 6 "Responsibilities of PGRS" a line to confirm that it is the responsibility of the PGR where a third party editor has been used, to comply with the University's Statement on editorial help for Postgraduate Research Theses.

6.2.15 Where a 'third party' editor has been used, to comply with the University's statement on the use of Third Party Editors, available at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/rsa/submittingyourthesis.aspx.

3.2 Background: The University's statement on the use of Third Party Editors was introduced from the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year and information is available on the web pages relating to thesis submission and examination at: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/rsa/submittingyourthesis.aspx.

3.3 Although PGRs are required to comply with the guidance there is no reference in Section 6 Responsibilities of PGRs in the Code of Practice for Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs.

Code of Practice on the Assessment of Research Degree Theses

4. Vivas for research masters where the examiners are proposing that the thesis be revised & resubmitted

4.1 Recommendation: To amend Regulation 7.4.5 Oral Examinations and point 5.2.2 from the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses to include that a viva examination is compulsory for masters degrees where the examiners are proposing that the thesis should be revised and resubmitted:

- Regulation 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 revised and resubmitted or rejected.

- Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degree Theses: 5.2 .2

  For masters degrees, 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

masters thesis be revised and resubmitted or rejected.

4.2 Background: An appeal was supported by the School and upheld by the Primary Appeals Prima Facie Panel for a research masters thesis where the examiners recommended that the thesis be rejected at resubmission following an initial decision of revise and resubmit. As required by regulations a viva was held for the resubmission where the examiners were proposing that the thesis be rejected, but a viva was not held at the initial examination where the decision was for the thesis to be revised and resubmitted. The PGR was permitted a further opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis for the original qualification and the Prima Facie Panel recommended that Regulations be reviewed to ensure that examiners have clear and concise guidance on when a viva should be held.

The decision to uphold the appeal was reached on the basis that the student did not fully understand the changes recommended by the examiners following the initial examination and that the student should have been given the opportunity to defend the thesis and obtain a clear steer from the examiners at a viva on the proposed changes.

4.3 The School and Prima Facie Panel were also of the opinion that in cases where major revisions are required that generally examiners prefer to hold a viva prior to making their final recommendation as this provides an opportunity to discuss the thesis with the PGR and helps the PGR to understand the changes that are being recommended.

4.4 Introducing a requirement for vivas to be held for research masters would add an additional burden on examiners and result in additional costs to Schools as they would be required to pay for any expenses incurred by the external examiner in attending a viva.

5. To include option of awarding a lower qualification of MA/MSc by research for a thesis submitted for a two year full time Master of Philosophy

5.1. Recommendation*:* an additional recommendation is inserted in Section 6.8 Examiners' recommendations where the thesis has failed to satisfy the examiners: One-year MA/MSc by research and two-year MPhil to permit examiners to award the lower qualification of MA/MSc for a thesis submitted for a two year MPhil. Point 6.8.3 should also be updated to include where the thesis is being rejected reference to the opportunity for a PGR to submit an appeal.

6.8 .2 That the postgraduate researcher, having submitted a thesis for the award of a two year MPhil degree be awarded an MA/MSc by Research, as appropriate, if necessary after the postgraduate researcher has made minor or major corrections or revisions to the satisfaction of the examiners. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9.

6.8 .3 That the thesis be rejected without opportunity for resubmission and the postgraduate researcher not be awarded the degree for which the thesis was submitted. The postgraduate researcher shall be given the opportunity to submit an appeal in accordance with Regulation 7.9

5.2 Background: The University's masters structure for degrees by research only was amended with effect from the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year and is now:

MA/MSc	One year full time (2 years part time)
Master of Philosophy	Two years full time (4 years part time)

The recommendations available to examiners set out in the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses was not updated to indicate that an alternative qualification of an MA/MSc by Research can be awarded for a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

5.3 The award of an MA/MSc by Research is not open to those who were admitted to the one year MPhil (admission before the 2012-13 academic year) and if the examiners recommended that the thesis be rejected no alternative qualification would be available.