

University of Wales
Code of Practice for the Award of Master of
Research

6th Edition

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1. Introduction

The award to which this Code of Practice applies are individual programmes at master's level, validated by the University of Wales and designed in accordance with that institution's 'Regulations for the Award of Master of Research' and this Code of Practice. They are awarded in recognition of the successful completion of Parts One and Two of an approved programme. Part One comprises a taught course, Part Two, further study and research, the results of which are judged to constitute originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline concerned.

This Code of Practice sets out the policy of the University of Wales (hereafter 'the University') on matters of good practice related to the award of Master of Research that are within the remit of the Degrees and Academic Awards Board. It applies to accredited and affiliated institutions (hereafter referred to as 'institutions') and collaborative and other approved centres (hereafter referred to as 'centres'). It is intended to provide information useful to members of academic staff, research students, administrators and members of examining boards. It elaborates on the framework for the management of masters' programmes provided by the Common Academic Regulations for the award of Master of Research at institutions and centres.

The Code of Practice aims to ensure that:

- i. the academic standards of the University are maintained, and
- ii. postgraduate research students have a fair and reasonable opportunity to achieve the full potential of their research.

The Code of Practice lays down administrative rules, which should be treated as having regulatory authority subordinate to the Regulations.

The exception is Appendix 3 *The University of Wales' expectations on supervision following an initial examination*. This sets out the University's expectations on supervision following an initial viva, but the stipulations within the appendix do not carry regulatory authority.

The code was initially drawn up after consulting various documents published externally, and has been kept under development by referencing wider developments and published work within the Higher Education sector as a whole, including:

- relevant *chapters of the QAA Quality Code*;
- QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristic (2011; Draft Consultation Document 2014);
- HEFCE October 2002 report "Improving standards in research degrees programmes";
- NPC Guidelines on Codes of Practice for Research;
- SET for Success (2003);
- Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales;
- NQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance;
- UK Council for Graduate Education;
- UK Research Councils;
- Universities UK ;
- Vitae.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- University of Wales Regulations;
- Institutional Programme Handbooks (see section 3).

Note: Every effort has been made to ensure consistency between the different documents produced by the University of Wales for the management of the award of Master of Research. However, where there appears to be a conflict between the guidance and regulations contained in these documents, the University of Wales Regulations for the award of Master of Research at institutions and centres take precedence over all other documents, including this Code of Practice. This code takes precedence over programme handbooks.

2. Regulations

The **University of Wales' Regulations (hereafter 'the Regulations')** are available to all staff and research students via the website. They can also be obtained upon request from the Academic Registry of each institution or centre (**hereafter the term 'Academic Registry' should be taken to mean the Academic Registry or its equivalent in the accredited institution or centre where the student is enrolled**).

The Regulations set out:

- the qualifications required for entry to the award of Master of Research, as well as qualifications or experience that may give exemption from part of the programme;
- the requirements for progression, monitoring and review of required periods of study;
- examination rules and procedures.

3. The Programme Handbook

A programme handbook must be available in both hardcopy and electronically and will include as a minimum:

- overall aims and objectives of the programme;
- admissions requirements;
- module specifications to the normal standards of the University for each component of Part One;
- detail of the requirement for progression from Part One to Part Two;
- detail of the assessment requirements for Part Two;
- information to support students undertaking Part Two.

4. The research environment

During the consultation process with applicants prior to entry, institutions and centres should ensure that there is adequate expertise available to provide supervisory support for the broad area to be pursued in Part Two within a research-active environment.

In some cases, taught programme assessments and/or the research element of a research **master's programme are rooted in the candidate's employment and institutions and centres** should ensure that the employer is willing both to provide access to relevant data and to permit its use.

Care should be taken to ensure that potential students are not isolated within their own project and that they have contact with other researchers, both from within and outside the University of Wales, so that they can share experiences and form networks.

Generally there should be:

- ready access to academic colleagues for advice and support;
- opportunity to develop generic, transferable skills;
- availability of adequate learning and research tools;
- the opportunity to develop peer support networks where issues or problems can be discussed informally;
- guidance on research ethics and good practice;
- an emphasis on the need to complete the research project within an agreed time-frame.

5. Selection and Admission

It is the responsibility of the Programme Director for a particular research master's award to ensure that only suitable qualified candidates are recommended to the Research Degrees Committee for admission to study for that award. In the case of candidates whose first language is not English or Welsh, this includes ensuring that **candidates will meet the University of Wales' English or Welsh language requirements**. All candidates should be interviewed, either in person or by telephone or video link.

5.1 Publicity

Institutions and centres should ensure that their promotional material, however provided, is clear, accurate and up-to-date, and of sufficient detail to be helpful and informative to potential candidates about the level of activity and focus of the programme. All publicity material must be approved by the University of Wales before distribution.

5.2 Selection

The Research Degrees Committee of the Institution or Centre should have in place a **selection process for research masters' candidates which ensures that applications are** considered fully and fairly in the light of legal requirements and the applicable policies on equality and diversity. The interview (whether face-to-face or at a distance) should, wherever possible, be conducted by at least two members of the programme team, at least one of whom should have had appropriate training in selection and admissions procedures.

The process should:

- i. ensure that there is sufficient motivation to cope with the rigours of the programme;
- ii. ensure that there are realistic prospects of having the resources to pay the required fees and to provide support throughout the programme
- iii. ensure that candidates have a clear picture of the:
 - fees to be paid;
 - working environment;
 - resources available and expectations concerning resource available from the **candidate's employer;**
 - **Institution's or Centre's expectations.**

The Programme Director is responsible for ensuring that all applicants for study have been treated according to this process. Where candidates have special needs, these should be identified and dealt with satisfactorily before an offer is made.

5.3 Entry requirements and procedures

Generally, the University expects that candidates seeking admittance to a research **master's** programme possess an honours degree from a recognised Higher Education Institution, with a classification of 2:ii or above *or a master's degree or a qualification* deemed by the University of Wales to be equivalent to this level.

Where candidates do not meet these requirements, the Programme Director must make a case to the Research Degrees Committee demonstrating that the candidate has equivalent academic ability, for example, that they have acquired the requisite skills, knowledge and training from their professional work.

It is therefore important that, in reaching its decision, the Programme Director documents the **features of candidates' professional work that evidence the acquisition** of the skills. For example, the work may use the academic skills developed during an undergraduate degree in a way which develops independent critical assessment of evidence, or formulation of plans, or use of methodologies which would have extended their undergraduate achievement. Clearly, candidates working in non-graduate positions will not easily be able to satisfy this requirement.

In addition, all candidates must supply the names of at least two authoritative referees. Where applicants do not meet the normal minimum entry requirements, the Research

Degrees Committee must ensure that two satisfactory confidential reports are received before offering the applicant a place.

In cases where the master's programme is based on activities and/or data or other resource accessed via the candidate's employment, then, in addition to the academic requirements for admission listed above, a formal agreement from the employer to permit access to such resource is required. This agreement should make clear how company data and other information might be used.

In addition to the above, candidates who are not graduates of the University are required to **matriculate before enrolment. Matriculation is the formal validation of candidates' qualifications for a scheme of study leading to a degree or other academic award of the University of Wales.** Details of the process of matriculation may be obtained from the Academic Registry, or equivalent, of the Institution or Centre.

5.4 The offer letter

Once an application recommended by the Programme Director for acceptance has been approved by the Research Degrees Committee, this body is responsible for communicating this to the appropriate authority at the Institution or Centre and for advising staff of admissions decisions.

Where an offer is to be made, details should be dispatched to candidates in accordance with the policies of the Institution or Centre concerned.

The offer letter for **research master's** applicants should contain the following information:

- the title of the degree programme;
- full-time or part-time study;
- minimum and maximum periods of study;
- expected total fees, including tuition fees and any other fees, charges or costs that candidates would be expected to meet;
- electronic links to the appropriate regulations and programme handbook;
- **any assumptions concerning resource available through the candidate's employer;**
- whether the offer is subject to matriculation and, if so, the process to be followed;
- the name of the person at the Institution or Centre whom they may contact in case of problems;
- a link to this Code of Practice and the applicable Programme Handbook, where further information (including information about arrangements for enrolment, registration and **induction, candidates' responsibilities, attendance and training** requirements, as well as any restrictions on hours of work outside the programme) can be accessed.

5.5 Conditions for enrolling external research students

Candidates who wish to conduct the research element of their research masters externally to the institution or centre may be allowed to enrol on the programme subject to:

- adequate arrangements being made for attendance;
- adequate research facilities being available externally;

- adequate supervisory arrangements.

Note: Candidates regularly using facilities at the institution or centre at which they are registered while conducting their research are internal candidates

6. Supervision

Research **master's candidates have a single supervisor, together with access to the** Programme Research Co-ordinator who has responsibility for ensuring that the supervision process is carried out as specified by the regulations and this code of practice. The name of the supervisor must be specified on the research proposal form and is confirmed when the research proposal is accepted.

Normally supervisors should be members of academic staff who are expected to remain in employment at the institution or centre for at least the minimum period of study for which candidates are being enrolled. They must be listed on either the University of Wales Register of Directors of Studies or the University of Wales Register of Supervisors (6.3 below) and have:

- evidence of recent research activity;
- possession of a higher degree by research;
- authorship of research publications in an area relevant to the proposed research project;
- experience of supervising research in an area relevant to the proposed research project.

Normally the supervisor should also have experience of:

- **supervising dissertation candidates at master's level or above to successful completion;**
- supervising research in an area relevant to the proposed research project.

In cases where a potential supervisor is lacking such supervision experience they may still be appointed, but should undergo appropriate staff development before the start of the dissertation research and be mentored by the Programme Research Co-ordinator or an experienced nominee (6.4 below).

The University of Wales Degrees and Academic Awards Board has determined that for an individual staff member, the **supervisory workload for research masters' dissertations should not exceed 8 full-time or 16 part-time students**. Whilst this allowance is in addition to that **for doctoral students as specified in the University's relevant codes of practice for such students**, institutions should bear in mind the total workload for individual members of staff and should not normally utilize both research masters and doctoral allowances to the full.

When candidates have submitted their dissertation, they no longer count towards this limit, and institutions or centres may (within reason) anticipate the submission date in planning supervisory responsibilities for expected student enrolments.

Normally members of staff who are themselves candidates for research degrees should not simultaneously be supervisors of other candidates, as this may give rise to a conflict of interest. Nonetheless, where members of staff are in the final stages of completing their own research award, and where they have special expertise relevant to the project not

available elsewhere in the centre, the member of staff may (with the approval of the Research Degrees Committee) be included as a second supervisor. In seeking such approval, the proposers must state which member of the proposed supervisory team is a research degree candidate, and the special expertise for which they are included in the supervisory team.

6.1 Degrees and Academic Awards Board Register of Directors of Studies and Supervisors

In the context of the Register of Directors of Studies, Research Degrees Committees may submit to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board at any time the names of proposed Directors of Studies who fulfil any of the following criteria:

i. Refereed outputs (publications/conference presentations/exhibitions)

In the previous five years, a minimum of three publications, of which two should be in journals or other publicly available research-related documents, e.g. an essay in a catalogue;

ii. Practice-based expertise

Demonstration in the past five years of national standing in discipline (e.g. keynote speaker at professional conference, election to senior position in national organisation, national award, appointment to national consultancy role such as membership of government committee) and three practice-based journal publications or published conference presentations, government evaluation reports, technical papers, or consultancy reports;

iii. Experience

Prior substantial track-record of research achievement (i.e. less than (a) in past five years but substantial prior publications etc) and, in the last six years, a track-record of at least two successful doctoral completions as a Director of Studies;

iv. Funded research/classic knowledge transfer expertise

At least two completed Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) in the main academic supervisory role, or other substantial grant-funded research activity. (Mini KTPs should not be counted here).

Where proposed Directors of Studies do not meet any of the criteria (i) to (iv), Research Degrees Committees may make a case to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board for them to be included on the Directors of Studies Register, for example, colleagues may possess a combination of elements from different criteria.

In the context of the Register of Supervisors, Research Degrees Committees may submit to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board at any time the names of proposed supervisors who fulfil any of the following criteria:

i. Holder of a higher degree by research in a relevant discipline at or above the level at which the person may supervise;

ii. Authorship of research publications in an area relevant to the proposed research programme;

iii. Track-record of research grant awards or refereed publications in the past five years;

iv. Practise-based journal publications or published conference presentations, government evaluation reports, technical papers or consultancy reports in the past five years;

v. Demonstration in the past five years of national standing in discipline (e.g. keynote speaker at professional conference, election to senior position in national organisation, national award, appointment to national consultancy role such as membership of government committee);

vi. Experience of recent supervision of research in an area relevant to the proposed research programme, e.g.

- in the past six years a track record of a successful supervision of a doctorate to completion
- at least one completed Classic KTP in the past six years in the main academic supervisory role.

Where proposed supervisors do not meet any of the criteria (i) to (vi), Research Degrees Committees may make a case to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board for them to be included on the Supervisors Register, for example, colleagues may possess a combination of elements from different criteria which are slightly outside the time-limits set above.

6.2 Professional development of supervisors

Professional development of supervisors **for Part Two of a research master's award** should be managed through a system of mentoring and workshops for new supervisors. All academic staff new to supervision must attend workshops for new supervisors, approved for the purpose by the centre, before the end of their first year as a supervisor. In addition, the Programme Co-ordinator, or an experienced nominee, should be assigned formally as their mentor for developing supervisory skills.

It is expected that experienced supervisors will attend workshops and other events to maintain and enhance their skills and to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the University and institution or centre, especially where new requirements are introduced. Attendance at such may be required.

6.3 Supervisory roles

The supervisor is recommended by the Programme Research Co-ordinator and approved **by the institution's or centre's Research Degree Committee**. The supervisor should carry the main responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the candidate.

The Programme Research Co-ordinator should:

- provide support for the supervisor;
- provide pastoral support for the candidate;
- arrange alternative supervisory support in the absence of the supervisor.

6.4 Formal and informal meetings

Meetings between supervisors and candidates are often informal. However, a proper record should be kept by candidates and supervisors of agreed actions. Meetings should be held at least weekly for full-time candidates, at least during the early stages of their study.

Supervisors should hold regular formal meetings with candidates (at least every month in the case of full-time candidates, or every two months for part-time candidates) to review achievements, progress, skills acquisition, and to establish objectives for the next period of research.

Supervisors will ensure completion of a supervision meeting record, and notify the Programme Research Co-ordinator when formal meetings have been held and whether, in their opinion, progress is satisfactory. It is particularly important, if progress is not satisfactory, that the Programme Research Co-ordinator is informed promptly, so that appropriate remedial action can be taken without delay.

Records of meetings

Written records should be kept by candidates and supervisors of scheduled meetings.

At a minimum, the following information should be recorded:

- dates of meetings;
- those present;
- outcome of actions from last meeting;
- actions agreed;
- date of next meeting.

It may also be useful to record, where relevant:

- progress made by candidates since the previous meeting;
- developments which may have affected the progress of candidates;
- other developments (internal or external) relevant to candidates;
- concerns of either candidates or supervisors;
- review of planned time-scale;
- deliverables initiated by candidates.

These records should form part of candidates' professional development portfolios, and should be available to the Programme Research Co-ordinator and Research Degrees Committee for inspection.

Requirements for external candidates

The following information will be required by the Programme Director in addition to the normal research proposal, before approval of a programme of study for with full-time or part-time external candidates:

- a detailed account of all the resources required for the programme of research, and where the candidate will be able to access the resources. These include specialized sources (such as data holdings, analytical equipment, catalogues, etc.) as well as more general resources such as IT support, internet and library facilities;
- a detailed explanation of how the supervisor will manage the research project, including the means and frequency of access to supervision, the role of any external supervisors or advisors, arrangements for informal supervision, as well as formal reviews, and management of candidates' professional development portfolios (PDPs);

- agree a provisional timetable of attendance at the centre. Normally the expectation would be that at least 10 days per year should be spent at the institution or centre for supervision and course/seminar attendance.

Where a candidate has already enrolled and registered, and wishes to change their status to external, the Research Degrees Committee at the institution or centre must be satisfied that the above conditions can be met as appropriate for the candidate's stage of research.

6.5 Absence of Supervisor

Where a supervisor is expected to be absent for a period of more than one month, the Programme Research Co-ordinator should consult with the candidate and supervisor and appoint another supervisor (either for the period of absence of the current supervisor, or for the remainder of the programme (as appropriate).

6.6 Progress, review and monitoring

Supervisors play a critical role in ensuring that research **masters' students** are able to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to make progress on research projects at the rate required to allow completion within an appropriate period.

Candidates and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the research plan are reviewed at reasonable intervals (for example, every month for full-time candidates) and adjusted in the light of developments.

Supervisors are responsible for evaluating the progress of candidates in achieving these objectives, and advising them of the corrective action necessary where problems arise.

At an early stage (preferably prior to commencing Part Two) candidates should agree a research programme with the supervisor and submit a research proposal to the Programme Research Co-ordinator.

Where candidates have not submitted a project for approval within one month of commencing Part Two, this will be a cause of concern and, in such circumstances, the Programme Research Co-ordinator should ensure that satisfactory progress is being made and that supervisors have developed adequate plans to deal with any barriers to progress.

What constitutes satisfactory progress?

Satisfactory progress generally means making sufficient progress to maintain the likelihood of completion within the normal minimum period of enrolment. Unforeseen personal or professional problems may impede progress, and this advice is intended to provide general guidance, not to anticipate all possible eventualities.

Formal reviews

Part Two candidates and their supervisors should, wherever possible, agree and complete an on-line record of supervisory meetings or notify the Programme Research Co-ordinator when monthly reviews have been completed.

Normally no formal report of the outcome of the review is needed; however where serious and unresolved concerns about progress have been raised then Programme Research Co-ordinator should be notified of the nature of the concerns and the actions agreed to deal with them.

It is essential, where supervisors have raised concerns formally about progress, that every effort is made to ensure that candidates understand the basis for the judgment and have the opportunity to comment on it. The supervisor should give the candidate a written warning about the basis of their judgment of lack of satisfactory progress, setting out the agreed actions required to establish satisfactory progress, the time-frame of the plan, and the consequences of a further formal finding of lack of satisfactory progress. It is the responsibility of the Programme Research Co-ordinator to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to comment on the warning, and this may be done independently of the supervisor. It is particularly important that supervisors strike a balance between positive support of development and critical appraisal of progress. Where candidates do not show satisfactory development, despite the support and guidance of the supervisor and the Programme Research Co-ordinator, the expectation is that they will not be allowed to continue.

Suspension and Extension Requests

Candidates may apply for an extension to their maximum period of study if required. Where a candidate is unable to continue with their research or their performance is adversely affected by exceptional circumstances, they may apply for a suspension of studies.

All extension and suspension requests must be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for consideration, **prior to submission to the University of Wales' Special Cases Committee** for final consideration and approval.

Detailed guidelines on the management of suspension and extension requests can be found in Appendix 1 to this Code of Practice.

7. Assessment

The formal procedures for assessing the award of Master of Research are set out in the Regulations.

7.1 Part One

Assessment of Part One will comprise examinations of an advanced character in the fields of study prescribed by the programme. These examinations will include evaluation of any professional/industrial practice and training and may take the form of unseen written examination papers, or set projects or other forms of course assessment. Exemptions may be granted from specified components of Part One of the programme. The pass mark for Part One is 40%, compensation between modules may be allowed only where this has been agreed at validation (restrictions on compensation must be noted in the Programme Handbook).

The Progression Board for Part One of the programme will comprise:

- i. Chair;
- ii. Programme Director;

- iii. Programme Research Co-ordinator;
- iv. Members of the Programme Team;
- v. For Centres, the University of Wales Moderator for the programme;
- vi. For Centres, an administrative representative of the University of Wales;
- vii. **At least one external examiner appointed according to the University's regulations for taught programmes.**

Re-examination possibilities for students who fail any or all the modules in Part One are specified in the regulations.

Part One of the programme must be successfully completed prior to submission of assessment material for Part Two.

7.2 Part Two

In Part Two, the examination of a candidate on the basis of his or her dissertation, and, where appropriate, portfolio, forms the assessment, and criteria for the award of the appropriate degree are included in the Guide for the Examiners and Chairs of Examining Boards.

Submission of the dissertation and portfolio

To be eligible to submit a dissertation, research **masters'** candidates must be enrolled on the degree for which submission is intended, have successfully completed Part One and have paid all fees due (including any re-examination fee required) and satisfied all other financial obligations.

The intention to submit a dissertation or, where appropriate, a dissertation together with a portfolio of other work for examination is given by the supervisor submitting the nominations for the examining board initially to the Research Degrees Committee.

Where a candidate and supervisory team disagree as to whether a thesis is ready for submission and examination, and the candidate wishes to submit the thesis against the advice and judgement of his/her supervisory team, the candidate must provide a written declaration to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee before submission noting their intention to submit. The Chair of examining board will make examiners aware of **the supervisory team's views prior to the examination taking place.**

Within the maximum enrolment period, candidates should submit to the centre two copies of the temporarily or permanently bound dissertation and separate material, as well as an additional loose copy of the abstract transcribed onto the appropriate form. Where the nature of the work makes it difficult to comply with the requirement for copies of separate material, candidates should seek advice from the Academic Registry on numbers of copies.

Candidates may not withdraw, amend, add to, or delete from the dissertations after they have been submitted and prior to examination. However, should candidates find that material has been left out of the copies of the dissertation sent to the examiners, the Chair of the examining board may take action to permit the missing material to be sent to the examiners.

Arrangements for the examinations and all associated correspondence are made by the Academic Registry.

Examination of dissertation and portfolio

Candidates for Part Two of the award of master of research are examined on the basis of their research project. This involves the examiners independently reviewing and reporting on the dissertation and any associated portfolio. An oral examination is not normally required.

7.3 The Examining Board

An examining board for Part Two of the award of master of research is normally made up of an experienced, trained and independent Chair (it is considered good practice to seek a Chair from outside the subject area in which the award is based), an internal examiner and an external examiner. However, if a candidate is a member of academic staff at the institution or centre concerned, the examining board should be made up of the Chair (as above) together with two external examiners.

Internal examiners are staff of the institution or centre or of other accredited institutions or centres. Whilst there is no specified limit on the number of times a member of staff can act as an internal examiner, it is good practice to vary the person appointed to the role. External examiners are from outside the University of Wales and the centres.

The composition of the examining board is arranged by the Programme Research Co-ordinator after consultation with candidates and supervisors, and subject to ratification by the Research Degrees Committee. Submission of the proposed examining board to the Research Degrees Committee should be done about one month prior to the expected submission of the dissertation.

The responsibility of the Chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted in an appropriate manner, according to the established procedures in place.

Should it prove impossible to appoint an appropriate internal examiner from within the institution or centre, Research Degrees Committee may appoint an internal examiner from another institution or centre. If, in exceptional circumstances, it proves impossible to appoint an internal examiner either from the staff of the centre or an accredited institution within the University of Wales, the Degrees and Academic Awards Board may, on the recommendation of a Research Degrees Committee, appoint a second external examiner in lieu of an internal examiner.

7.4 Criteria for the appointment of examiners for Part Two

The Research Degrees Committee should ensure that the proposed examiners:

- have been made aware of the nature and purpose of the degree for which candidates are being examined and the criteria by which the candidates are assessed;
- have received a copy of the abstract to the dissertation;
- possess specialist knowledge and expertise in the subject of research as well as experience in examining research degrees;
- are prepared to examine the whole dissertation.

It is not acceptable to appoint an examiner who is not prepared to make a judgment on the whole dissertation, even if his or her particular expertise is more relevant to some parts of the work than to others.

The Research Degrees Committee should also ensure that the external examiner:

- is (or has until recently been) a member of academic staff at a recognised Higher Education Institution in the UK, or elsewhere, but not at an institution or centre, *or* holds a role which is deemed to be equivalent of an academic role in the discipline area (e.g. curator of major museum or gallery, holder of high office in religious organisation, member of research staff at a university-recognised or government-recognised research institute). If the External Examiner has recently retired, they must remain active within their field;
- has not had direct or indirect communication with candidates concerning their research;
- is not enrolled on a higher degree;
- is a recognised authority in the field, with evidence of recent advanced scholarship or research;
- has extensive publications in refereed journals in the general subject area of the dissertation;
- has experience of examining postgraduate research degrees;
- has not examined more than 5 candidates for research masters' at the institution or centre in the previous twelve months and not more than one half of any cohort.

An external examiner can be appointed to **no more than five research master's** examining boards in any twelve month period and for not more than one half the examining boards of any one cohort.

Research Degrees Committees should avoid at all time appointments which suggest reciprocity. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that individual members of academic staff at any particular Centre or academic department in an institution are not normally appointed as an internal examiner for research degree examinations more than twice in any 12 month period.

Where an internal examiner has a managerial relationship with the supervisor, care must be taken to ensure the complete independence of the examiner. In any case, there should be no discussion of the research project or candidates between examiners and the supervisor **or the candidate following the internal examiner's agreement to serve in the role.**

7.5 The examination process

The written reports

Each examiner is required to forward to the Academic Registry an independent written appraisal of the dissertation using the form provided for the purpose. Examiners should not communicate directly between themselves prior to their independent reports being received by the Registry.

If an examiner has a concern about the dissertation before the submission of the independent reports it should be discussed only with the Chair of the examining board. In addition, prior to the submission of the report, an examiner should not see the report on the dissertation from another examiner.

The raising of concerns

Supervisors have the right to convey to the Chair of the Examining Board any concerns **relevant to a candidate's research projects, the resulting dissertation or its examination** which the board should take into account prior to reaching its decision. In particular, **supervisors should convey to the Chair information relating to a candidate's illness or disability** which examiners will need to take into account. In such cases, supervisors should convey these concerns, in writing, both to the Chair and to the candidate as soon as practicable after the presentation of the dissertation and in any event, in good time to permit a candidate to consider the points made and prepare a response prior to the examination taking place.

In their reports, examiners are requested to state:

- i. that the candidate be approved for the degree of master of research; *or*
- ii. that the candidate be approved for the degree of master of research subject to the satisfactory completion of such corrections and amendments as may be required by the examining board. The examining board may stipulate that the corrections made shall be scrutinised by either or both examiners prior to the award process being initiated. Normally, corrections shall be completed within six working weeks from the date of official notification to the candidate of the outcome of the examination; *or*
- iii. that the candidate be allowed to modify the dissertation and any portfolio and re-submit it for re-examination for the degree of master of research on one further occasion, upon payment of any required re-submission fee. The re-submission is to take place within a period not exceeding one year from the date of the official notification to the candidate of the outcome of the examination. (This option is not available in the case of a candidate who has resubmitted a dissertation and any portfolio for examination); *or*
- iv. that the candidate be not approved for the degree of master of research, but be approved instead for an appropriate postgraduate diploma as specified in the relevant Programme Handbook and based on Part One of the programme; *or*
- v. that the candidate be not approved for the award of the degree.

In cases (i) and (ii) those candidates who achieved 70% or more in Part One may be considered by the examiners for an award with distinction.

If the examiners' independent reports propose different outcomes, the Chair should facilitate discussion in order to reach agreement. Should this not prove possible, a second external examiner should be appointed.

Guidance for examiners on resubmitted theses

Candidates' research degree awards of the University are examined on the basis of their work. This involves examiners independently reviewing and reporting on the thesis, followed by an examining board conducting an oral examination. Where a candidate has **resubmitted their thesis for examination, examiners' reports must be fully comprehensive** and as detailed as possible. This is especially important where a second oral examination **is not required, as the examiner's reports will constitute the evidence for a recommendation for an award to be made.** In particular, examiners must make explicit

and detailed reference to the corrections, amendments and modifications that were required following the first submission, and indicate whether the modified thesis now meets the requirement for an award to be made.

8.0 Rights and responsibilities of candidates

8.1 Entitlements and responsibilities

Institutions and centres shall be responsible for informing candidates of their entitlements and responsibilities at registration annually. Such information shall take account of the expectations of QAA, NPC as well as legislative or other requirements.

8.2 Prohibition on the use of Professional Proof Readers

Candidates' submitting theses for a research degree award of the University must include in the thesis a statement, signed by the candidate, showing to what extent the work **submitted is the result of the candidate's own investigation. The award of a research degree shows the ability of the holder to create and interpret new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.**

As such, the University does not permit the use of professional proof readers, or recourse to the services of 'ghost-writing' agencies (for example in the preparation of theses), or of outside word-processing agencies which offer correction or improvement of English. Any candidate who makes use of the services of such agencies render themselves liable for an **academic penalty in accordance with the University's regulations** and unfair practice procedure.

8.3 Leave

Internal full-time candidates are expected to be engaged in their research programmes for 35 hours during the normal working week.

Where candidates are away from the campus without prior notification to the supervisor, then they should inform their supervisor of the duration of the absence, and any reason for it. For part-time candidates, the same rules apply, except that attendance requirements are reduced; the expectation is that they will be undertaking work related directly to their **research, for 17 hours during the normal working week, to be agreed with the candidate's supervisor.**

The attendance requirements for external candidates are detailed in section 6.5.

In all cases, arrangements for taking leave should be discussed with the supervisor.

8.4 Employment

Where candidates undertake placements as part of their research master's programme, the conditions governing the placement, including any remuneration, should be clearly specified and agreed in writing by the candidate, the centre and the placement provider.

In addition, engaging in academic work may be helpful to the career development of candidates, provided it does not interfere with the progress of their programme of study. With the agreement of the supervisor, full-time candidates may undertake up to six hours of paid work during the normal working week. International candidates must also ensure that they meet any requirements stipulated by their visa.

8.5 Appeals

Candidates have a right to appeal against the termination of studies or the recommendation of an examining board and should seek advice from the Academic Registry as to the correct procedure for this purpose.

8.6 Complaints

Candidates may make complaints which will be heard by the institution or centre in accordance with the procedure approved for the purpose. The Academic Registry shall be responsible for ensuring that information on how complaints may be made, and heard, is made available to all candidates for research degrees.

9. Annual Institutional Reports

Research Degrees Committees should receive annually written reports from the responsible officer of the institution or centre on the overall progress of candidates **following research masters' programmes**, including registrations, completions, and withdrawals/suspensions, attendance at training programmes by supervisors and candidates, drawing attention to any innovative practices or training that they feel has helped the quality of their programmes, and highlighting any general quality problems in the research environment that need to be addressed. The Research Degrees Committee will submit an overview report annually to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board on these matters.

Appendix 1

Guidelines on Managing Extensions and Suspensions

Extension and Suspension Requests:

Candidates may apply for an extension to their maximum period of study if required. Where a candidate is unable to continue with their research or their performance is adversely affected by exceptional circumstances, they may apply for a suspension of studies.

All extension and suspension requests must be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for consideration, prior to submission to the University of Wales' Special Cases Committee for final consideration and approval.

For further information on the grounds by which the University will grant a request, please **consult the University's Guidelines on Extension and Suspension requests:**

<http://www.wales.ac.uk/en/Registry/CollaborativeCentres/RegulationsandProtocols/SpecialCasesCopy.aspx>

Role of the Research Degrees Committee

The RDC plays a critical role in elevating the evidence and rationale for extension and suspension requests, and making a recommendation to the University as to whether it supports the request. The RDC also has responsibility for managing the process of extensions and suspensions and ensuring that both candidates and supervisory teams are working effectively towards a timely completion and submission.

Candidates and supervisory teams should note the following:

- The University will receive and consider extension requests sympathetically, but extension requests are not granted automatically and as of right and the case has to be made;
- The University would expect best practice to show that one extension or suspension request should suffice in most circumstances and, where multiple and ongoing requests are made, the documentation must be explicit and address the reasons for this;
- Requests must be well considered and be able to demonstrate and convince the RDC and the Special Cases Committee that they are both proportionate and fair;
- All paperwork submitted to the RDC and the Special Cases Committee must be complete, comprehensive, accurate and clear;
- Requests must show clear evidence for the nature of the request and contain appropriate supporting documentation;
- Supervisory teams must explicitly indicate their support or otherwise for a request. With extension requests, the supervisory team should clearly articulate how the period requested is feasible to allow a student to complete and submit their thesis in a timely

manner, bearing in mind the evidence of the research completed to date and the research to be completed;

Candidates are also eligible to apply to the RDC and Special Cases Committee for an extension during the continuation or resubmission period.

Resumption of Research following a Suspension:

It is important that candidates' who have been granted a period of suspension are supported back into their programme of research, particularly where the absence has been for a period of time exceeding 6 months. When resuming their programme of research, candidates should follow an action plan which clearly articulates the steps candidates will take to fully re-engage with their research and to ensure that they will complete within a timely manner.

To help this process and drawing upon best practice within the sector, the University requires that both the candidate and supervisory team develop an action plan to facilitate the process of re-engagement for an initial period of 6 months. The University has in place a pro-forma (SC1) specifically for this purpose.

The role of the RDC is to proactively monitor the process of resumption of studies and ensure that both candidates and their supervisory teams are working effectively.

Appendix 2

Guidelines for the Conduct of Oral Examination (*Viva Voce*) by Electronic Means

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the appropriate University of Wales Common Academic Regulations and Codes of Practice for research degrees.

Introduction

The oral examination (commonly referred to as the *viva*) is an integral feature of the examination process of candidates for research degree awards of the University of Wales. To this end, the Common Academic Regulations of the University require such an examination to be held for its research degree awards. The function of the Examining Board is to ascertain that the thesis submitted for award is at the appropriate standard; that it is the work of the candidate who is being examined and that the candidate displays the attributes expected of holders of the award. In order to ensure the integrity of the examining process, the University requires the oral examination to take place on a face-to-face basis, with candidate, Chair and examiners in the same room. The relevant Regulations and Codes of Practice for research programmes can be accessed via the [University's website](#).

The University recognises that it may be necessary - under very exceptional conditions - for arrangements to be made for oral examinations to take place through electronic media. (The University will not give approval to the use of telephone links alone for the purposes of examinations). Accordingly, the University may give approval to requests that electronic media be used, in exceptional circumstances, as defined below:

- i. where conditions have arisen under which it would not be possible otherwise to proceed with the oral examination (e.g. where a student cannot return to the UK because of visa or other restrictions) *or*;
- ii. where agreed arrangements for a face to face oral examination have had to be terminated because of unexpected circumstances (e.g. sudden illness of one of the participants). *Note: where such circumstances arise, the University would expect that, normally, the oral examination should be postponed, rather than be held through electronic means, but it is accepted that - exceptionally - it will be necessary for electronic means to be used instead (e.g. where the student would suffer disproportionately as a result of postponement).*

Approval Process

The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) is responsible to the University for Examination Board arrangements within Institutions and Collaborative Centres. All requests for an oral examination to be conducted in any form other than on a face-to-face basis must be submitted to the RDC for consideration. After considering the request, and as with all examination board arrangements, the RDC will make a recommendation to the Degrees and Academic Awards Board (DAAB) at the University who will consider whether to approve the request.

The RDC and DAAB will consider each case placed before it on its individual merits, although it will also expect to see the following:

- i. written confirmation from the intended participants, including the candidate that they have no objection to the examination being held through electronic means;
- ii. confirmation from the RDC that the oral examination will be held within a maximum of 12 weeks of submission of the thesis;
- iii. a written statement from the candidate that he/she has waived any right to appeal against the outcome of the examination *on the grounds of the use of the electronic medium or consequences arising from the use of such medium*;
- iv. confirmation that the proposed use of electronic medium will not impact or constrain the time allotted for the oral examination itself;
- v. confirmation that arrangements are in place for the participants to familiarise themselves with the scope and limitations of the medium in use;
- vi. confirmation the RDC is satisfied that the medium proposed is effective and sufficient for the examination to be held;
- vii. confirmation the candidate will be given an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the medium and be given clear instructions on how the examination will be conducted;

In addition, the RDC should ensure the following:

- viii. that due consideration is given to time-zone differences;
- ix. that consideration is given to the location in order to ensure the security of the examination. Upon commencement of the Examining Board, the members of the Board should be satisfied that the candidate does not have anyone else present. The University would recommend the use of British Council premises and in cases where it is not used, the reasons for not doing so must be provided and put forward to DAAB for consideration;
- x. that the Examining Board members are fully briefed on the appropriate conduct of the examination, for example:
 - that if the examiners should repeat any questions, they do so calmly and clearly;
 - if there should be a break in communication, the Chair recaps proceedings and any questions/comments interrupted are repeated as soon as communication is restored;
 - the Chair should ensure that the candidate has heard and understood each question, if necessary.

Where such arrangements are given approval by the RDC and subsequently DAAB, it is suggested that provided that the candidate is in agreement, the supervisor should be invited by the Chair of the Examining Board to be present with the examiners.

The University, via DAAB will report to the Academic Board at the University on each case in which it has given approval to the use of electronic media for research degree examinations.

Appendix 3

The University of Wales' expectations on supervision following an initial examination

The University recognises that where an initial examination has resulted in Option C (modification and resubmission of the thesis) or option E (modification and resubmission for consideration of an MPhil award) it is likely that the candidate will need further supervision and guidance from their supervisory team as appropriate. The University also recognises that **the candidate's circumstances during the resubmission period may have changed and thus** may affect the amount of time they wish to devote to the thesis and the resubmission. As such, the University has the following expectations that candidates and centres/institutions should follow on supervision during this period.

Once the University's Degree and Academic Award Board has confirmed the outcome of Option C (or E), candidates and their supervisory team will be required to meet within 6 weeks to determine what level of supervision is appropriate for the resubmission. A brief written report from that meeting, detailing that both candidates and supervisory teams have considered the outcome and have agreed to a schedule and level of supervision for the resubmission period, should be considered and noted by the Research Degree Committee. This report should also be included in the standard Research Degree Committee papers **considered by the University's Degree and Academic Award Board.**

Where a resubmission is anticipated to take between 6 months and 2 years the University would expect a minimum of 1 formal supervisory meeting to be held every 3 months up to the point of resubmission (and as per current pre-submission requirements), unless the initial report to the Research Degree Committee explicitly noted less supervision was required. A written record of these formal meetings should be produced and signed off by both candidates and supervisory teams.

A resubmission anticipated to take less than 6 months should have at least 1 formal supervisory meeting during this period, excluding the initial meeting, with a written record produced.

For resubmissions estimated to take between 6 month and the maximum of 2 years, a monitoring form should be produced at the 12 month and 20 month date from the confirmation of the initial result, and detailing progress towards resubmission.

Fees for supervision and access to centre/institutions during the resubmission period will be a matter to be determined between the candidate and the centre/institution concerned.