

Research Degrees – Generic Institutional Regulations

UPR AS10 version 11.02

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 11.01 of UPR AS10, with effect from 1 September 2024.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

Minor amendments have been made to update links and reflect changes in organisational structures.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Introduction

1.1 Generic regulations

The generic regulations set out in this document (UPR AS10) have been approved by the Academic Board¹. They may be amended only with the prior approval of the Academic Board.

1.2 Titles and standards

The titles and standards of the research degrees awarded by the University of Hertfordshire are determined by the Academic Board and are set out in UPR AS11².

1.3 Programme-specific regulations and notes for guidance

1.3.1 The generic institutional regulations set out in this document are supplemented by additional programme-specific regulations and the criteria to be met by candidates for the individual research awards. These are determined by the Research Degrees Board of the Academic Board³.

1.3.2 Programme-specific regulations are published by the Research Degrees Board in a series of Research Degree Schedules. Each Schedule provides for a range of research degrees. The criteria for each named award are published in an Appendix to those Schedules. These documents are published on-line at:

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/UHResearch/SitePages/Governance-and-Regulations.aspx>

¹ **Academic Board Minutes:** 41; 155.2; 455.8, 667, 10 March 2010, 680, 9 June 2010, refer. The amendments to version 01,0 of this document were for clarification and were approved on behalf of the Academic Board by the Standing Working Party on UPRs. **Academic Board Minutes:** 52.5, 15 June 2011; 123, 14 March 2012 282, 19 June 2013; 359, 12 March 2014, 797 14 March 2018, 819 27 June 2018, refer

² UPR AS11 ‘Schedule of Awards’

³ **Academic Board Minute:** 41, 10 March 2004, refers

- 1.3.3 Notes for guidance concerning the operation of the regulations are published on-line at:

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/UHResearch/SitePages/Research-Degrees---Notes-of-Guidance.aspx>

2 Scope

The regulations set out in this document apply to all research degrees awarded by the University of Hertfordshire other than Higher Doctorate Degrees (UPR AS02⁴, refers). They provide a common framework involving the registration of a programme of work leading to a submission for examination. The submission must contain a written document that presents and defends a thesis. A thesis is an intellectual position capable of being maintained by argument. A submission may also contain other works or artefacts on which the thesis and its defence are based.

3 Research Degrees Board

The Research Degrees Board of the Academic Board shall have full responsibility, at its absolute discretion, for the registration and examination of research degree candidates and the awarding of research degrees. It is the responsibility of the Research Degrees Board to monitor compliance with these regulations and associated Research Degree Schedules, to ensure consistent interpretation and to resolve any variance in interpretation.

4 Qualification

A candidate for a research degree shall normally hold at least a first or upper second class honours degree (or equivalent) from a recognised institution. Exceptionally, other persons, who are deemed by the Research Degrees Board to be suitably qualified, may be accepted as candidates for research degrees. Individual Research Degree Schedules may specify additional entry requirements.

5 Admission

Candidates will be admitted to the University in accordance with the requirements of UPR SA02⁵.

6 Enrolment

- 6.1 A candidate for a research degree must enrol as a research student of the University under a specific Research Degree Schedule providing for the award which is being sought

(UPR SA02⁵, refers).

⁴ UPR AS02 'Higher Doctorate Degrees'

⁵ UPR SA02 'Admissions – Research Students'

6.2 Intellectual property rights and confidentiality agreements

6.2.1 It is a condition of enrolment that candidates enter into an intellectual property agreement with the University unless they are already bound by a pre-existing agreement

(UPR CA04⁶, refers) in which case a copy of the pre-existing agreement must be submitted to the Senior Academic Services Officer (Research) (or nominee), prior to enrolment.

6.2.2 It is a condition of enrolment that candidates enter into a confidentiality agreement with the University (UPR CA04⁶, refers).

6.3 University regulations

6.3.1 Research students are subject to the University's regulations and procedures which are published on-line at:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs>

6.3.2 A candidate whose research programme includes studies involving the use of human participants shall abide by the University's regulations governing studies involving the use of human participants (UPR RE01⁷, refers). Failure to comply with these regulations may lead to a degree not being awarded or to the degree being withdrawn.

6.3.3 Candidates are required to comply with the University policy and regulations relating to Research Misconduct (UPR RE02⁸, refers). Failure to comply with these regulations (UPR RE02⁸) may lead to a degree not being awarded or to the degree being withdrawn.

7 Expected and maximum time periods from enrolment to submission for examination

7.1 A candidate shall be enrolled as a research student of the University, and shall be liable to pay any prescribed fee, for a minimum period of one (1) year full-time (two (2) years part-time) prior to making a submission for examination for any research degree. A candidate may, exceptionally, apply in writing to the Research Degrees Board for permission to make an earlier submission; such permission, if given, shall not reduce the period during which the candidate is liable to pay fees under this regulation.

7.2 The maximum periods of enrolment prior to submission for examination, and the expected period for each named award, are specified in the Research Degree Schedule. Except where explicitly stated otherwise, in these regulations periods of time refer to full-time enrolment. For the purpose of calculating/measuring periods of enrolment, two (2) months of part-time enrolment shall be equivalent to one (1) month of full-time enrolment.

⁶ UPR CA04 'Intellectual Property'

⁷ UPR RE01 'Studies Involving the Use of Human Participants'

⁸ UPR RE02 'Research Misconduct'

8 Supervision

- 8.1 The supervision arrangements must be approved by the Research Degrees Board at the time of enrolment (section 6, refers).

(Note for guidance:

The Research Degrees Board has delegated authority to Associate Directors (Doctoral College) for the approval of Supervision Teams.)

8.2 Supervision Team

A candidate for a research degree shall have a Supervision Team of at least two (2) and normally not more than three (3) who will normally be members of the academic staff of the University. The supervision team will be identified prior to enrolment and named in the offer letter.

8.3 Composition of the Supervision Team

- 8.3.1 The Supervision Team will be trained and appropriately experienced (usually having a minimum of two (2) successful supervisions at doctoral level among the team) and will contain expertise appropriate to the candidate's programme of research.
- 8.3.2 One (1) member of the Supervision Team will be designated as Principal Supervisor.
- 8.3.3 The Research Degrees Board may, in addition, appoint an experienced supervisor as mentor to the Supervision Team.

9 Registration

- 9.1 Within the period of time specified in the relevant Research Degree Schedule, a candidate is required to obtain the approval of the Research Degrees Board for his or her proposed programme of work and to register his or her research programme with the Board in accordance with the specific Research Degree Schedule under which they are enrolled (section 6.1, refers).
- 9.2 The registered research programme approved by the Research Degrees Board shall identify explicitly the phased programme of work to be undertaken together with an indication of the award(s) sought.

10 Applications to change approved arrangements

10.1 Changing supervision arrangements

Applications to change supervision arrangements must be made in writing to, and ratified by, the Research Degrees Board.

10.2 Extending the period of time within which a candidate must submit for examination

Exceptionally, a candidate may apply in writing to the Research Degrees Board for an extension of the period of time within which they must submit for examination.

10.3 Suspension of registration

Where a candidate is prevented from working on his or her research programme, the candidate may apply in writing to the Research Degrees Board for a suspension of his or her registration. This will not normally be granted for more than twelve (**12**) months in total within the period of enrolment and cannot normally be granted retrospectively. Where a candidate is the subject of a Fitness to Practise investigation, they will be suspended for the duration of the investigation.

10.4 Change of mode of study

A candidate who wishes to change his or her mode of study from full-time to part-time (or vice versa) must apply in writing to the Research Degrees Board.

10.5 Withdrawal of a candidate's registration

A candidate who wishes to discontinue his or her research programme must notify the Research Degrees Board in writing.

11 Review

11.1 Monitoring

All research candidates (full-time and part-time), their programmes of work and their supervision arrangements will be monitored annually in accordance with arrangements determined by the Research Degrees Board.

11.2 Progress Assessment

11.2.1 All research candidates will be assessed periodically on their progress by an Assessment Panel appointed by the Research Degrees Board.

11.2.2 This assessment will take place in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Research Degree Schedule.

11.2.3 The Assessment Panel may amend the registered research programme.

11.2.4 Each Assessment Panel will contain at least one (**1**) member of the Supervision Team, and at least one (**1**) independent member. An independent member is someone who is independent of the Supervision Team and of the research programme. The Assessment Panel will be chaired by an independent member with appropriate experience of research degree supervision and examination. For the purposes of this regulation, 'appropriate experience' means at least two (**2**) successful supervisions at doctoral level and at least two (**2**) examinations at doctoral level.

11.2.5 Possible outcomes of the assessment process are set out in the relevant Research Degree Schedule. The Assessment Panel will notify the Research Degrees Board of the outcome of the Progress Assessment.

11.2.6 Failure to submit or attend a Progress Assessment – if this occurs, the Research Degrees Board has authority to deem, at its absolute discretion, that a candidate has failed a Progress Assessment in cases where the candidate has, without having obtained the prior written consent of the Research Degrees Board, either failed to submit a progress report by the due date, or failed to attend or participate in a meeting or viva with the Assessment Panel.

11.3 The University's right to withdraw a candidate

The Research Degrees Board may withdraw a candidate's enrolment if they fail to comply with any University regulations which make specific requirements of them, or fail to make satisfactory academic progress as determined at the point of assessment.

11.4 Permitted grounds for a request for the review of a Progress Assessment decision

11.4.1 The grounds on which candidates are permitted to lodge a request for the review of a recommendation or decision of an Assessment Panel are:

- a that there are exceptional circumstances affecting the candidate's performance which for valid reason could not be brought to the attention of the Assessment Panel or the Research Degrees Board at or before the Progress Assessment or were not known to the candidate prior to making his or her submission for Progress Assessment;
- b that there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the Progress Assessment (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity;
- c that there is evidence of unfair or improper conduct or assessment on the part of one or more of the members of the Assessment Panel.

11.4.2 Candidates may not challenge the academic judgement of the Assessment Panel or the Research Degrees Board. Inadequacy of supervision or of any other arrangements known, or which ought to have been known, to the candidate at any stage before making his or her submission for Progress Assessment shall be dealt with under the provisions of UPR SA16⁹ and are not admissible grounds for a review.

(Note for guidance: The procedure for the review of a Progress Assessment decision is given in UPR AS20¹⁰.)

11.4.3 Exceptional circumstances

Where it is believed that there are exceptional circumstances which should be drawn to the attention of the Assessment Panel, it is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the Chair of the Assessment Panel in writing, as early as possible and before the Assessment Panel meets with the candidate.

12 Payment of fees

A research degree candidate shall pay the appropriate annual fee. A candidate who is in default of payment is not entitled to supervision, monitoring, assessment, examination or the award of a degree and is at risk of his or her enrolment with the University being withdrawn on non-academic grounds.

⁹ UPR SA16 'Student and Applicant Complaints'

¹⁰ UPR AS20 'Requests for the Review of a Progress Assessment Decision – Research Degrees Candidates'

13 Public domain

All research submitted by a candidate for a research degree of the University should be in the public domain. Exceptionally, applications may be made to the Research Degrees Board for all or part of the submission to remain confidential. Such applications must be made no later than at the time of application for examination arrangements except where explicitly provided otherwise in the relevant Research Degree Schedule.

14 Examination arrangements

14.1 Application for approval of submission title

- 14.1.1 A candidate for a research degree shall apply to the Research Degrees Board for approval of his or her submission title concurrently with the approval of examination arrangements by the Research Degrees Board.
- 14.1.2 Following approval, the title of the submission may not be changed other than with the written permission of the Research Degrees Board.

14.2 Application for approval of examination arrangements

Prior to the candidate's submission for examination, the Principal Supervisor must apply to the Research Degrees Board for the approval of examination arrangements.

14.3 Examiners

- 14.3.1 In approving the examination arrangements, the Research Degrees Board will appoint at least two **(2)** and normally not more than three **(3)** examiners, of whom at most one **(1)** shall be an internal examiner. An internal examiner is defined as a member of staff of the University. This includes all full-time, part-time, visiting or honorary staff, or former members of staff who were employed within the five **(5)** year period prior to the approval of examination arrangements by the Research Degrees Board.
- 14.3.2 The Research Degrees Board shall not approve the appointment of a member of the Supervision Team, past or present, as the candidate's examiner.
- 14.3.3 Experience of the Examiners

At least one **(1)** examiner shall have experience of a minimum of three **(3)** examinations at doctoral level.
- 14.3.4 Conflicts of interest

Where it believes that a conflict of interests might arise or be perceived, the Research Degrees Board has discretion to appoint at least two **(2)** examiners who are not internal.
- 14.3.5 Candidate's prior association with examiners

An examiner shall not have had prior professional or personal association with a candidate that might cause doubt as to his or her independence in carrying out examination duties. A candidate and his or her supervisors must declare any relevant current or previous associations with prospective examiners.

14.3.6 Independent Advisor to the Examination Team

Where deemed appropriate, the Research Degrees Board may appoint an individual of appropriate standing who will not act as an examiner but will act as an independent observer and advisor.

- 14.3.7 In the case of a submission for a dual award (paragraph 15.5 refers), the Research Degrees Board may, at its discretion, approve examination arrangements which do not comply with the requirements of paragraph 14.3.1. Examination arrangements which do not comply with the requirements of paragraph 14.3.1 shall include the appointment of at least two (2) examiners who are not internal.

14.4 Communication between examiners and candidates

Other than during the examination itself, there shall be no direct contact between the candidate and the examiners on matters relating to the examination (other than administrative arrangements) from the time of the appointment of the examiners by the Research Degrees Board to the conclusion of the examination process.

14.5 Confidentiality

Where the Research Degrees Board has agreed the confidential nature of the candidate's submission (section 13, refers), the examiners will be required, as a condition of appointment, to sign a confidentiality agreement at the time of appointment to cover the period during which the examination process is being conducted and any subsequent period of confidentiality.

15 Submission of work for examination

15.1 Responsibility for submission

A candidate who has passed their Doctoral Review Assessment is permitted to submit for any research degree within the relevant Research Degree Schedule. A candidate who has failed their Doctoral Review Assessment may, exceptionally, submit for a Masters by Research or MPhil award provided these are available within the relevant Research Degree Schedule. It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure that his or her submission for examination is made for an appropriate research degree and in accordance with the relevant regulations.

15.2 Compliance with individual Research Degree Schedules

Submissions must comply with the requirements set down in the relevant Research Degree Schedule.

15.3 Language

Other than with the prior written consent of the Research Degrees Board, sought at the earliest point possible and no later than at the point at which the examination arrangements are approved, the thesis shall be presented and defended in English.

15.4 Abstract

Each submission shall contain an abstract in English that will provide a synopsis of the work, stating its nature, scope and significance.

15.5 Concurrent submissions

A candidate shall not submit work that is being submitted concurrently for another award of the University or any other awarding body or institution, except where the candidate is making a submission for a dual award. Submission for a dual award shall require the prior consent of the Research Degrees Board, sought at the earliest possible point and no later than at the point at which the examination arrangements are approved.

15.6 Previously submitted work

A candidate may incorporate research undertaken as part of a previous degree or research programme provided that any such research is identified clearly in the submission. The submission must contain a substantial body of work that has not previously been submitted successfully for an award of the University or any other awarding body or institution.

15.7 Collaborative research

- 15.7.1 The candidate may include the results of other researchers' work, provided due acknowledgement is made in the submission.
- 15.7.2 Where joint or collaborative work constitutes a part of the submission, the candidate shall confirm the nature and extent of his or her own contribution. The Research Degrees Board may invite collaborators to verify the candidate's assertions in this respect.

15.8 Declarations

- 15.8.1 The candidate shall confirm by means of a declaration form that, except where indicated otherwise in the submission, the submission is his or her own work and that it has not previously been submitted successfully for an award.
- 15.8.2 Where substantial components of a submission have been published previously and/or submitted for another award, these shall be declared.
- 15.8.3 The declaration form shall also state if the candidate has discussed with the relevant Disability Adviser any special circumstances of which the examiners should be aware. A copy of the declaration form shall be provided to the examiners by the Director of Academic Services (or nominee).

16 Examination

16.1 Process

- 16.1.1 The examination for a research degree award shall have two stages: firstly, the submission and preliminary assessment of the submission by the approved examiners and secondly, its defence by an oral examination.
- 16.1.2 Where for reasons of medically certificated sickness, disability or comparable valid cause, the Research Degrees Board is satisfied that a candidate would be disadvantaged if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of, and protocols for, examination may be approved.

- 16.1.3 The oral examination shall normally be held on University premises. Exceptionally, the Research Degrees Board may give approval for the examination to take place elsewhere, or to be conducted remotely where appropriate.

16.2 Preliminary reports

Each examiner shall complete an independent preliminary report and submit it to the Doctoral College prior to the oral or alternative form of examination.

16.3 Role of supervisor in the oral examination

At the request of the candidate, one (1) supervisor may attend the oral examination in the role of the candidate's friend. The candidate's friend may speak with the permission of the examiners in the oral examination but shall withdraw with the candidate prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.

16.4 Examiners' final report(s) and recommendations

- 16.4.1 Following the completion of the oral examination, the examiners shall have open to them recommendations as set out in the relevant Research Degree Schedule.
- 16.4.2 The examiners may recommend any award within the relevant Research Degree Schedule commensurate with the standard of work and will not be constrained by the level of award for which the work was submitted.
- 16.4.3 Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they shall make it clear that the decision rests with the Research Degrees Board.
- 16.4.4 The examiners shall, where they are in agreement, submit a final joint report and recommendation relating to the award, including an agreed signed statement of the reasons for their recommendation which shall be forwarded to the candidate by the Secretary and Registrar (or nominee) after it has been approved by the Research Degrees Board.
- 16.4.5 Where the examiners are not in agreement, each examiner shall submit a separate recommendation.

16.5 Final decision on examination

- 16.5.1 Following the completion of the examination process by the examiners, the Research Degrees Board shall consider the examiners' preliminary reports and final recommendations including any suggested amendments and take a decision on the outcome of the examination. The candidate, supervisors and examiners shall be informed of the decision.
- 16.5.2 Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Research Degrees Board may either:
- a accept a majority recommendation or
 - b appoint an additional external examiner or
 - c where there are more than three (3) examiners, accept a recommendation that is endorsed by a majority of the external examiners.

16.6 Role of additional examiner in the examination process

Where an additional external examiner is appointed under regulation 16.5 the additional external examiner shall prepare an independent preliminary report on the submission, conduct an oral or approved alternative form of examination and make recommendations to the Research Degrees Board. The additional examiner shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners.

16.7 Re-examination

Where re-examination is recommended by the examiners, the Research Degrees Board shall determine the form of that re-examination. A candidate may be re-examined only once.

16.8 Posthumous awards

A research degree may be granted posthumously on the basis of a submission, completed by a candidate, which is ready for examination.

17 Re-enrolment for re-examination

The candidate must re-enrol as a part-time research student of the University during any resubmission period and pay the appropriate fee.

18 British Library

A candidate who has been awarded a doctoral degree shall comply with the requirements of the British Library Doctoral Thesis Scheme as a condition of the award.

19 Compliance with University regulations regarding the examination process

19.1 In any instance where the Research Degrees Board is made aware of a failure to comply with the regulations regarding the examination process, it may, exceptionally, declare the appointment of the examiners, the submission or the examination null and void.

19.2 Any action that a candidate may take in order to gain an unfair advantage in the examination process (including plagiarism) will constitute a breach of regulations.

19.3 In the case of any breach of regulations, the Research Degrees Board may refuse to award a degree or, if it has already been awarded, may withdraw the degree.

20 Complaints

Candidates who are dissatisfied with any aspect of their supervision or the resources provided at the University of Hertfordshire to support their research should address the issue by reference to the complaints procedure (UPR SA16⁹, refers).

21 Request for the review of an examination decision

- 21.1 Following the completion of the examination process, candidates have the right to request a review of the decisions taken by the Research Degrees Board upon the recommendations made by the examiners. A request for a review of a particular decision may be based on one or a combination of any of the following grounds:
- a that there are exceptional circumstances affecting the candidate's performance which could not for valid reason be brought to the attention of the examiners or the Research Degrees Board at or before the oral examination or were not known to the candidate prior to making his or her submission for examination;
 - b that there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity;
 - c that there is evidence of unfair or improper conduct or assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners or of unfair or improper conduct on the part of any independent chair.
- 21.2 Candidates may not challenge the academic judgement of the examiners or the Research Degrees Board. Inadequacy of supervision or any other arrangements known, or which ought to have been known, to the candidate at any stage before making his or her submission for examination shall be dealt with under the provisions of UPR SA16⁹ and are not admissible grounds for a review.
- 21.3 The procedure for the review of an examination decision relating to the award of a research degree is given in UPR AS16¹¹.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Date: **1 August 2024**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.

¹¹ UPR AS16 'Requests for the Review of Examination Decisions – Research Degree Candidates'