National Open University of Nigeria

Policy Title	Policy on Postgraduate Research
Policy No:	NQSA/RIT/005
Owner:	National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
Approved By:	The University Senate
Manager/Driver:	Directorate of Research Administration (DRA)
Date of Approval:	
Date of Next Review:	The date will be 3 years from the date of approval (to be inserted after approval)

PART A: TRAINING, RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Responsibilities of the University

1. **Policy Framework**

   The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) intends that Faculties will provide a study environment which will facilitate the successful completion of research studies undertaken by postgraduate students. These matters are the responsibility of the Dean of the Faculty, Head of the Department, or person with suitable designated authority, who is expected to action the following matters.

2. **Adequate Supervision Arrangements**

   Ensure that, before accepting a student to read for a higher degree by research, there is a suitably-qualified member of staff in the Faculty/Department to act as *lead supervisor* and the essential facilities and resources which the postgraduate student requires to carry out his/her research are available and (as far as can reasonably be foreseen) that this supervision and these facilities and resources will continue to be available for the duration of the postgraduate student's registered period of study; for part-time students studying at a distance it is the responsibility of the University to ensure that the student has access to necessary facilities and resources at their place of study.

3. **Implement Equal Opportunities Policy**

   Implement the University's statement on equal opportunities insofar as it relates to admission for and pursuance of research study.

4. **Designate a University Postgraduate Student Adviser**

   Designate a full-time member of staff to act as an independent *University Postgraduate Student Adviser*.

5. **Allocation of Supervisor(s)**

   Ensure that prior to or, exceptionally, within 4 weeks of their initial registration, every research student is allocated a supervisory team, containing at least two supervisors (*Internal Supervisors 1 & 2*) who have suitable academic qualifications and appropriate

expertise in the agreed area of the student's research topic; have an acceptable level of supervision experience; are willing and able to undertake the job of supervisor; are aware of the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor and; have been suitably trained in supervision skills. Supervision should continue for the duration of the student's registered period of research.

6. **Provide Postgraduate Student Brochure**
Ensure that a SPGS Student Brochure is written and distributed for the University. This should supplement University documentation with information on special University facilities, services and local procedures, including information relevant to postgraduate study, such as research ethics and approval procedures, etc.

7. **Monitor Supervision Records**
Put in place a system for storing and monitoring supervision records to ensure that the requisite number of supervisions has occurred and with appropriate regularity.

8. **Make Arrangements for Seminars Presentation**
Organise and invite research students to colloquia, seminars and meetings relevant to their research work.

9. **Monitor Progress**
Monitor, from time to time, the supervision and progress of students in their Faculties with particular reference to the completion of theses and provide the University with such information if requested to do so.

10. **Approve Up-grading**
The Head of Department should receive, consider and approve as appropriate recommendations from supervisors and Internal Assessors that students' registration on doctoral programmes be confirmed or amended and shall make recommendations accordingly to the University.

11. **Allocate Internal Assessors**
Allocate Internal Assessors to research students specifically for the purpose of the Annual Reviews.

12. **Nominate External Examiners**
Submit the names of suitable individuals to the University for approval as Internal and External Examiners for research degrees.

Postgraduate Student Adviser (responsibilities)
1. **Policy Framework**
Every Department shall have at least one full-time member of academic staff designated to act as an independent University Postgraduate Student Adviser (UPSA) to advise research students and to deal confidentially with any concern raised by research students about their research studies and supervision.

2. **Appointment Procedure**
Deans of Faculties/Heads of Departments shall nominate an UPSA and shall inform the University of the Name of the UPSA, which should also be included in the Postgraduate

Brochure. The UPSA shall have responsibility for providing support as noted in 1 above to all Research Postgraduate students with the school including any based elsewhere.

3. **Role of the UPSA**
The UPSA is available to offer independent and strictly confidential advice and support to research students who, for example, have a query about University, Faculty and School regulations and procedures relating to research study; are concerned about the progress of their research work and the facilities or resources available to them; are having difficulties with the supervisory relationship (including a complete breakdown of that relationship); or who have any other query relating to their research studies at NOUN.

If the UPSA is the student's supervisor, the student should seek guidance from any other member of School academic staff.

The UPSA should advise the student as is required and, if s/he cannot answer the student's query, should indicate to the student what sources of expert advice and support exist within the University (eg. Counselling Service (see below), or Graduate School (see below).

4. **Record of Outstanding academic research load**
When a research student requests a meeting with the UPSA on a serious matter concerning his/her research studies and/or supervision, the UPSA should make a careful record of the problem and the discussions (the record should be agreed with the student), including the outcome and any proposed course of action. Where appropriate, the UPSA may offer to mediate between the student and other staff and students in the school, including the supervisor. Subject to the degree of confidentiality agreed with the student, the UPSA should report the problem to the Head of School and, if appropriate, Student Services Development (Academic Processes).

PG Student (responsibilities)

1. **Policy Framework**
Postgraduate research students (PGR) should participate fully and to some extent take the initiative in planning and executing their research studies and any necessary training, and will share with their supervisor the responsibilities involved in monitoring progress.

2. **Requirements**
Research students are expected to adhere to the following requirements:

2.1 Read relevant University and Faculty publications
Students must familiarise themselves with University, Faculty, and Department requirements and procedures for research study by reading the SPGS Brochure, the University "Guide for Students", and the Guide to Intellectual Property sub-policy of the overarching research policy.

2.2 Follow safety advice
Students must follow safety codes and advice scrupulously.

2.3 Participate in planning and progress

Students are expected to participate in planning, progressing, and completing their studies, including preparing for reviews regarding confirmation of their doctoral registration. They must participate as required in the process of monitoring their progress.

2.4 Communicate with supervisor

Research students must share responsibility with their supervisor for keeping up good communications and arranging meetings with their supervisor, attend the agreed meetings and prepare for them, and take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties

2.5 Participate in research training

Research students must participate in designing a training programme and attend the recommended courses and other Department activities designed for postgraduate students. Students should also ensure that they are familiar with the content of *The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics* and obtain ethical approval if required for their research project.

2.6 Meet assessment deadlines and requirements

Research students must submit written work on time, undertake examinations, other assessments and progress reviews as required by the Department and Faculty.

2.7 Complete on time

Research students are expected to write up all or much of their theses by the end of their registered period of study.

The University recognises the importance of taking holiday for the health and wellbeing of students engaged in postgraduate research. This should be taken in line with Faculty expectations (for example not taking leave during postgraduate training courses, Faculty research events, seminars etc.), any contractual obligations (for example Research Council terms and conditions), and by arrangement with supervisors. As a guide, postgraduate research students may normally take up to 25 days holiday in each year plus public and University holidays.

Induction and Training of Research Students
All registered research students should receive appropriate training to enable them to undertake and present research effectively and efficiently.

An induction programme, the timing and content of which reflects the diversity of needs of specific groups of research students (including part-time and newly arriving international students) should be delivered at the most appropriate levels (ieFaculty or institutional level). Supervisors should ensure that new students will receive an induction programme appropriate to them.

The training programme should take account of an individual's needs and comprise subject-specific training as well as training which leads to the acquisition of relevant transferable skills and generic research skills.

2. Induction Programme

The information to be provided as part of the induction programme should include:

- general information about the institution and its postgraduate portfolio in the relevant subject(s);
- the institution's registration, appeals and complaints procedures, assessment requirements and research degree regulations;
- the names and contact details of the student's supervisor(s) and information about how supervisory arrangements work (see below);
- the institution's research ethics and codes and those of relevant professional bodies and discipline groups, including consideration of issues concerning authorship and intellectual property (see below);
- the institution's expectations of the independence and responsibilities of the student (see below);
- student support and welfare services such as counselling and advice centres (see below);
- a summary of the facilities that will be made available to the student, including the learning support infrastructure;
- relevant health and safety and other legislative information;
- where appropriate, a brief outline of the proposed research programme, together with the normal length of study and the facilities that will be made available to the student;
- reference to the challenges that will typically face research students during the course of their studies and where guidance may be sought in the event of difficulties;
- any opportunity for the student representative body to introduce themselves, including specific postgraduate representation;
- social activity, including that provided specifically for postgraduates;
- opportunities for postgraduates to be represented by the student body;
- details of opportunities and requirements for skills development.

3. Identification of Training Needs

It is the responsibility of Heads of Departments, in conjunction with supervisors and Department Postgraduate Student Advisers, to identify the training needs for individual students, to ensure that these needs are met and to determine the means by which they are met. It is recognised that needs will vary according to the student's registration status (doctoral, full-time or part-time) and according to each individual student's previous experience. The training needs of part-time students should be considered in planning and timetabling, and they should be encouraged to participate in suitable courses.

4. Subject Specific Training

Students must satisfy the faculty's requirements for research training. Failure to do so may result in the submission of an unsatisfactory annual report to the Head of Department.It is the responsibility of a student's faculty to provide subject-specific training by means of, for example, attendance at taught theory or practical courses (either undergraduate or postgraduate), seminars, colloquia, conferences, etc.

Departments should decide and inform the student at the outset of the training whether or not the student's knowledge will be formally assessed at the conclusion of any subject-specific training.

5. Generic Training

It is the responsibility of the SPGS to provide generic training which spans the needs of different disciplines. This provision will address the requirements identified by the Research Councils and Quality Assurance Agency in the Researcher Development Framework. Normally the generic skills training will not be formally assessed.

Students can download certificates confirming their attendance at SPGS training courses from the Central Short Courses website. The School of Postgraduate Studies will provide Departments with attendance information on students registered within the University.

6. Training Record

All research students, in collaboration with their supervisors, should establish a full training record or portfolio to keep a record of personal progress, assess skills needs, record development of research and other skills, and to supplement their curricula vitae.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING OF RESEARCH STUDENTS
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- social activity, including that provided specifically for postgraduates;
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It is the responsibility of Heads of Schools, in conjunction with supervisors and School Postgraduate Student Advisers, to identify the training needs for individual students, to ensure that these needs are met and to determine the means by which they are met. It is recognised that needs will vary according to the student's registration status (doctoral, full-time or part-time) and according to each individual student's previous experience. The training needs of part-time students should be considered in planning and timetabling, and they should be encouraged to participate in suitable courses.

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Resources and Facilities (PGR)

1. Policy Framework

Every research student should have reasonable access to the study facilities and equipment which are necessary to, and which will facilitate, the successful completion of his/her research studies.

2. Availability of Resources

Prior to the commencement of a research degree, the school should establish that the essential resources and facilities will be available when the student begins his/her research. These resources and facilities may be offered either within the Department or elsewhere within the University or (by agreement) in another institution or outside laboratory - and the student and supervisor shall have reasonable access to them.

3. If Resources Become Unavailable

If in exceptional circumstances it becomes impossible to continue to provide these resources (for example, when a sponsor unexpectedly withdraws funding or equipment), the School should make reasonable efforts to identify alternative means of enabling the student to gain

access to suitable facilities so that s/he may continue his/her studies at NOUN. However, this may mean that in some circumstances it may be necessary to advise that the student carries on his/her research work in co-operation with another institution.

4. Study Space
Departments should ensure that a full-time research student (prior to entering the thesis pending period) should have an appropriate individual study space where s/he can work and keep his/her books.

5. Access to other Facilities
Research students should also have reasonable access to the following. In some cases, it may be possible to cover the costs from research grants relevant to the students' work:

5.1 Computing facilities: Department or Open-access University computing facilities: the opening hours of the University facility should be advertised in Departments and local arrangements concerning access to Department facilities should be listed in the SPGS Student Brochure.

5.2 Printing: Department should offer a minimum of N40,000.00 p.a. to full-time research students and N20,000.00 p.a. to part-time research students to assist with the cost of draft printing for required reports.

5.3 Photocopying: Departments should offer a minimum of N20, 000.00 p.a. to full-time research students and N10, 000.00 p.a. to part-time research students to assist with photocopying costs.

5.4 Inter-Library loans: Departments should offer a minimum of N20, 000.00p.a. to full-time research students and N10, 000.00 p.a. to part-time research students to assist with inter-library loans.

5.5 Telephones: Students should have access to a telephone which permits internal telephone calls and in-coming external calls.

5.6 Recreational area: Where sufficient space has been provided to a School by the University, and where there is no suitable University or Students' Union facility in the vicinity, the school should provide a recreational area. This need not be dedicated to research students but might be shared with other students and staff.

5.7 Other student services: The University will provide a range of other student services - for example, guidance and [counselling service](#).

PGR Supervisor – Appointment

1. Policy Framework
Every postgraduate research student will be guided during his/her period of registered study by a team of supervisors with suitable academic qualifications, appropriate expertise in the agreed area of the student's research topic and an acceptable level of supervision experience.

2. Adequacy of Supervision

Heads of Schools are responsible for arranging for research students in their School to receive appropriate and continuous supervision during the student's period of registered study.

A research student should only be admitted if the Head of Department is satisfied that:

- there is a member of staff in the faculty suitably academically qualified for the task and who has the academic expertise and supervisory experience to supervise the student;
- the member of staff is willing to supervise the student and that the student is willing to accept him/her as supervisor;
- the member of staff's other teaching and research commitments permit him/her to accept the additional supervisory role;
- the member of staff is aware of the role and responsibilities of supervisors;
- the member of staff has received appropriate advice/training in supervision skills.

3. Supervision Team

Students will be allocated a supervisory team containing at least two supervisors. This should normally occur prior to the student commencing his/her studies, but failing that and in exceptional circumstances supervisors must be allocated within four weeks of the commencement of their studies.

At least one member of the supervisory team will be currently engaged in research in the relevant discipline(s), so as to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up-to-date subject knowledge and research developments. The other member(s) need not necessarily have relevant discipline expertise, so long as the breadth of experience and knowledge across the supervisory team means that the student will always have access to someone with experience of supporting research student(s) through to successful completion of their programme.

Schools have the option to appoint joint or lead supervisors within the supervisory team. However, one of the supervisors in a joint supervisory arrangement must be designated as the prime point of contact between the University and the student. The respective roles and responsibilities of the lead and second supervisors should be agreed and the student advised.

Joint supervision is particularly suitable when, for example, two members of staff are engaged in collaborative work, when the student's topic of research extends beyond the boundaries of a single discipline, or when the student is spending all or part of his/her period of registration studying at another institution or in an outside laboratory.

If a supervisor is not going to be available throughout the whole registration period of a research student's study, this unavailability should be limited to a maximum of six months during the student's time at NOUN. In such an instance regular supervision will continue to take place with other member(s) of the supervisory team. If the unavailability is going to exceed six months, an alternative supervisor should be appointed.

4. Subject Expertise

Supervisors must have an appropriate level of joint expertise between them in the academic area of the student's area of research.

5. Student Agreement to Supervisor Arrangement

Research opportunities may be identified separately by a supervisor, a student or a sponsor, or following discussions between a sponsor and the supervisor or a sponsor and the student. The

key element linking student and supervisor must be interest in and appropriate knowledge of the proposed area of research. There should be mutual agreement on the specific research topic, following discussions between the two parties. The Head of Department should involve both the student and the member(s) of staff in the preliminary discussions about supervision and should seek their agreement to initial supervision arrangements. A form is available for use by faculties to notify changes to the supervision arrangements for a research student (see below), to be signed by the student, supervisor(s) and the Head of Department. Student Services Development (or equivalent) should always be notified in writing of changes to supervision arrangements and this will act as confirmation that the student has agreed to the change in supervisory arrangements.

6. Eligibility to act as Supervisor

Subject to the following sections, any member of staff currently undertaking research in the relevant discipline may be nominated to supervise a research student, provided that s/he intends to remain in post for the normal duration of the student's registered course of study. Staff who do not meet these criteria but who are Level 4 Research Officers (or equivalent) may normally act as supervisors in a joint supervisory arrangement.

Postdoctoral research staff are permitted to act as supervisors in a joint supervisory relationship provided that they have not indicated they will be leaving their post for the normal duration of the student's registered course of study. In such instances, the member of staff concerned must attend training in supervisory skills as offered by the SPGS and a co-supervisor should be assigned who has relevant experience and can act as a mentor.

Senior Research Fellows (Level 5) who have experience of successful supervision may act as lead supervisor provided that they intend to remain in post for the normal duration of the student's registered course of study.

Honorary Professors, Honorary Lecturers, recently retired staff and Emeritus Professors are not permitted to act as main supervisors but may be involved in a joint supervision arrangement as a second supervisor.

7. Academic Staff Supervising for the First Time

Staff who are appointed to act as supervisors for the first time are not normally permitted initially to act as the main supervisor, but should first be required to gain supervisory experience by acting in a joint supervision arrangement with an experienced member of staff. Staff in their first academic appointment will attend the course for the Postgraduate Diploma in Education offered by Professional Development which includes training in supervisory skills. Staff in their first academic post should also be assigned a mentor, from whom they may seek advice on any matter, including supervision matters.

Exceptionally, Heads of Departments may apply to the University for permission to allow a new member of academic staff to act as the main supervisor, if a good case can be made that the member of staff's experience makes it appropriate for him/her to act in this capacity.

8. Non-University Staff

Staff of outside institutions who are not members of the academic staff of the NOUN may, in appropriate circumstances, be appointed to act as second supervisors eg. industrial supervisors on a CASE award, supervisors for students registered under the regulations governing students registered in outside organisations (see below). Heads of Schools should consider the proposed

supervisor's expertise in the student's research topic and their research-standing and ensure that he/she is made aware of and enabled to fulfil the University's expectations of supervisors and are offered opportunities to engage in developmental activities.

9. Staff without Doctorates

Academic staff at Lecturer grade who does not hold a doctorate themselves should not normally be permitted to act as the main supervisor of a doctoral student. However, a Head of Department may apply to the University for permission to allow such a member of academic staff to act as the main supervisor if a good case can be made that the individual's research and professional background makes it appropriate for him/her to act in this capacity.

10. Maximum number of research students

The Head of Department has responsibility for determining the number of students an individual member of staff may supervise. It is recommended that there should be maximum number for efficiency and quality, but this should depend on the ability of the individual supervisor to deliver quality supervision as detailed in this Quality Manual under The Roles and Responsibilities of a Supervisor.

Supervisor (responsibilities)

1. Policy Framework

Supervisors will provide guidance and assistance to students so that they may carry out their research and present their results to the best advantage. Every supervisor and every research student will be provided with guidance on their respective roles and responsibilities.

2. Role of Supervisor

The general role of supervisors is to guide and assist students during their period of registered study. The roles of supervisor and Examiner are quite distinct and it is not one of the roles of the supervisor to assess the thesis. The specific roles of supervisors may differ depending on the academic discipline, departmental practice and whether the member of staff is acting as main, second, temporary or permanent supervisor. The main supervisor (or delegate) will also consider requests for annual leave in line with Departmental policy.

3. Continuing Professional Development

Supervisors should ensure that they undertake training as part of their continuing professional development, so that their work as a supervisor is supported. Supervisors should take the initiative in updating their knowledge and skills by participating in a range of appropriate activities and sharing good practice.

4. Documentation Check

At the outset the supervisor should check that the student has received information sent by the University concerning registration and that s/he has registered for that session. Before or at initial registration or, at the latest within four weeks of initial registration, supervisors should check that all their research students have received copies of essential documentation relevant to their research studies or have been informed where to locate them on the web. As a minimum, this should include: information about registration and services, the *SPGS Brochure*, and any relevant safety advice.

5. Research Plan

Supervisors will assist their students to plan their research studies, including helping students to define their research topic, to identify schemes and specific tasks, to identify the relevant research literature, data bases and other relevant sources, and to be aware of the standards in the discipline. The supervisor and student should design a programme of research in which (subject to research progress and taking into account special cases) the student aims to have written up all or much of the thesis by the end of his/her period of registered study (ie normally three years for a full-time doctoral student). For full-time doctoral students, aiming for this deadline will facilitate the completion of the entire doctoral examination process within four years. The student may need to register for some taught modules or attend research training courses - the supervisor will advise the student how to do this.

6. Advising on Regulations

Supervisors should have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the University's regulations governing research study and the University, Faculty and departmental procedures governing research study and supervision. They are required to advise their research students on these regulations and procedures or, if they feel a question is outside their knowledge, to direct their students to other sources such as Student Services (or SPGS General Office).
Supervisors also have a responsibility to ensure that other members of the supervisory team are kept informed of the student's progress, and any issues which may be having an impact on their programme.

7. Advising on Services and Facilities

Supervisors should have a reasonable knowledge of and be able to advise their research students on the availability of the University's academic services and facilities (for example library and computing facilities) and how to make use of them.The supervisor should keep under review with the student the facilities which the student requires in order to carry out his/her research and make these needs known to the Head of Department.

8. Minimum Number of Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for providing appropriate and regular supervision for their students during their period of registered study, and for being accessible at mutually convenient times to listen and offer advice. Supervisors must provide their part-time students with a minimum of 6 recorded supervisions a year and their full-time students with a minimum of 10 recorded supervisions a year, although it is expected that in many cases the actual number of meetings between supervisor and student may exceed these minima. These requirements may be modified under the rules for supervising students working off-site (see below).

9. Format for Supervisions

A 'supervision meeting' may be defined as involving contact between supervisor(s) and student which is simultaneous, which may include face-to-face meetings, but can also include Skype, video-conference sessions, or the use of other packages which enable contemporaneous dialogue between the parties involved. It is important that at the supervision meetings students' progress to date and the future direction of their research is discussed.

There is no specified format for these meetings so, for example, a group meeting of research students or a progress seminar with the supervisor would be acceptable for some but not all of the formal meetings. In exceptional circumstances where meetings are not feasible, contact should be maintained, for example by telephone or e-mail.

10. Supervision Record

In order that proper audit of supervision provision can be carried out and so that supervisors may undertake continuous monitoring of their students' progress, supervisors are required to ensure the maintenance of a supervision record of at least the minimum 6 or 10 minimum supervisions/meetings a year (as appropriate).

Supervisors should advise their students on the procedures for monitoring their progress which are described in the section of this Quality Manual entitled Annual Review of Research Students

These include:
 (i)   Supervision Records - attendance at supervision sessions and completion of supervision records;
(ii) Annual Reviews - annual review of progress and completion of the Annual Report Forms;

(iii) Doctoral registration - procedures for upgrading or downgrading students and for confirming doctoral registration.

Supervisors may, from time to time, be required to provide reports on their students' progress for other purposes and to other agencies, for example, the Research Councils and other sponsors. Such reports should be provided within the required deadline to ensure, in particular, that the continuation of students' funding by outside agencies is not compromised.

11. Training Needs
The supervisor should discuss with the student what personal, academic and professional skills training the student require in order to complete his/her research studies and to provide a skills base for a future career. The supervisor should agree with the student a research training programme (see below) which is compatible with the student's needs and which is achievable in relation to the student's research commitments within the limits of his/her registered period of study, making it clear where attendance at training courses is compulsory or voluntary. This programme should be reviewed each year. The supervisor should take reasonable steps to ensure that the student's training needs are met - normally such training will be delivered within the University and the supervisor should, therefore, be aware of any research training offered through the SPGS, the Faculty and the Department.

The supervisor should also ensure that the student receives adequate training in research ethics and is given assistance in applying for ethical approval if appropriate.

12. Safety
The supervisor should be aware of and advise the student of the correct safety procedures pertaining to his/her research and, if in doubt, should seek advice from the Head of Department, School Safety Officer or SPGS General Administration Office as appropriate.

13. Meetings, Conferences and Publication
Where appropriate the supervisor should encourage and facilitate meetings between the student and academics in the field, through departmental colloquia, seminars, external meetings and conferences and should encourage the student to publish the results of his/her research.

14. Written Work
The supervisor should request written work as appropriate, and read and provide constructive criticism on it within a reasonable time.

15. Supervision during Thesis Pending Period
During the thesis pending period students are entitled to a minimum of six meetings (either face to face or electronic) with their supervisor and for the supervisor to read and comment on one draft of the student's thesis prior to submission. There is no entitlement to supervision with regard to the resubmission of a thesis. Guidance on the use of proof readers is available here.

16. Thesis Presentation
Supervisors should advise students on the timing, construction and form of presentation of their thesis and should check that the student receives a copy of the University's guidance on presenting a thesis, from Student Services (or Central Administration at School of Postgraduate Studies).

17. Examination of Thesis
The Supervisor is responsible for advising the Internal Examiner whether the electronic version of the thesis can be shared with the External Examiner.

18. Submission of Data
Supervisors should ensure that, in circumstances where it is appropriate to the student's discipline, the student is aware of the requirement to submit all data collected during the period of study as a research student of this University, to their department prior to arrangement of the viva voce examination.

Change of Supervisor

1. Policy Framework
From the academic session 2020, new students will be allocated a supervisory team containing at least two supervisors. Departments have the option to appoint joint or lead supervisors within the supervisory team. These regulations apply to any member of that supervisory team.

If a supervisor is unable to continue with the supervision, the postgraduate student is entitled to have a new supervisor who is suitable for the task assigned promptly to him/her on either a temporary or permanent basis to ensure that s/he is not subject to undue periods of unsupervised study. Students and supervisors will also have the opportunity to request a change to the supervision arrangements in the event of insuperable difficulties arising from that relationship.

2. Responsibility of the Head of Department
The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that students are provided with continuous supervision from the beginning of and throughout their period of registered study. Therefore, if a supervisor is unable to continue supervising a student or if the supervisory relationship breaks down, the Head of Department must take all reasonable steps to find a replacement supervisor with the appropriate expertise and supervisory experience who is acceptable to the student (and, if appropriate, to the student's sponsor). Where a student is funded on a studentship awarded to a particular supervisor or on a specific research grant, it may not always be possible to change the supervisor. When there is a change to the arrangements for a student's supervision, the Head of Department should inform Student Services or equivalent.

3. Short-term and Temporary Absence of a Supervisor
In the case of the short term and temporary absence of a supervisor (for example, through illness) the Head of Department must nominate a temporary supervisor who has the

qualifications and qualities to meet the immediate needs of the student. "Short-term" supervisory arrangements should not normally exceed 3 months. If a longer term but still temporary absence is anticipated the Head of Department should discuss with the student (and if appropriate) the original supervisor, the relative benefits of operating extended temporary supervision arrangements up to but not exceeding 6 months, or allocating a new permanent supervisor.

4. Supervisor Leaves

If a supervisor permanently ceases supervision (for example, through moving to a post at another institution) then the Head of Department should discuss with the student the options available and beneficial to the student. One option will be to allocate a new permanent supervisor and the Head of Department should make all reasonable efforts to identify another member of staff at NOUN with the appropriate academic background and supervisory experience. However, it may not always be possible or in the student's best interests to allocate a new supervisor. Other options which then might be considered are to ask the supervisor who has moved to another institution to continue to supervise at a distance and to appoint a second local supervisor at NOUN, or to seek to facilitate the student's transfer to the supervisor's new institution.

5. Problems with Supervisor

Research students who find themselves without supervision or who are unhappy with their supervision for any other reason should discuss the matter with their supervisor and/or joint/lead supervisor in the first instance - or (if this is inappropriate) with the School Postgraduate Student Adviser or the Head of Department, (or member of staff with delegated authority at NOUN) - and should ask that appropriate action be taken to resolve the difficulty. These discussions must be undertaken in confidence and without fear of recrimination with the aim of resolving the difficulty amicably.

6. Postgraduate Student Adviser for the Department

Heads of Schools should designate a full-time member of academic staff to act as an independent School Postgraduate Student Adviser to advise research students about general procedures and, in particular, to deal confidentially with any concern raised by a postgraduate student about his/her studies and supervision. If the supervisory relationship has broken down, the School Postgraduate Student Adviser should be available to advise and support the student. If appropriate, the School of Postgraduate Student Adviser should also offer to mediate between the student and the supervisor and, subject to confidentiality, should be prepared to advise the Head of School on a possible solution.

7. Supervisor brings Research Students to NOUN

Where it would be beneficial for a new member of staff to bring with him/her to NOUN the research students who were under his/her supervision at the previous institution, Heads of Departments should be sympathetic to such requests and, where appropriate, seek to facilitate the transfer.

8. Withdrawal

On rare occasions, it may not be possible to make replacement supervision arrangements, and as a consequence the student may have to withdraw from their course.

Students Studying in Outside Organisations
1. Policy Framework
The research study of any student may in appropriate cases take place in an outside organisation. The outside organisation may be another higher education institution or a research laboratory within a non-academic organisation. Such arrangements may apply equally to full-time and part-time students and may cover all or part of the total period of directed study. The following procedures apply to those arrangements which involve research students spending more than six months over a three-year period (or eight months over a four-year period) away from the National Open University of Nigeria.

2. Application of Regulations
All students who study for part or all of their period of registration away from Nottingham are subject to the normal regulations and procedures covering research students. In addition, the following special considerations should be incorporated into the management of the student/programme.

2.1 Information relating to programme of study and appointment of supervisors
All students accepted for admission to a research degree which will involve periods of time to be spent away from the University must be informed of their outline programme of study at the time the offer of admission is made. In addition, it would normally be expected that supervisors (both at Nottingham and at the collaborating institution) had been identified and the student notified at the same time as the offer of admission is made.

2.2 Availability of facilities for study away from The University
In accepting students who will be required to study away from the University for extended periods, it is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that the essential facilities, including laboratory and library facilities, at the collaborating organisation are suitable and will allow the student to conduct his/her research at a satisfactory level. In addition, the Head of Department should ensure that, as far as can reasonably be foreseen, the facilities and resources will continue to be available for the duration of the student's period of registered study.

3. Collaborative Arrangements
Many collaborative arrangements will arise from a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (either at Department or institutional level) with another institution. In such cases the MOA should outline the supervisory arrangements and programmes of study for the students involved in the collaborative agreement, and may include special arrangements for examination. In other cases the collaboration will be between individual members of academic staff and in such cases the supervisory arrangements and programme of study should be considered on an individual basis.

4. Allocation of Supervisors
All students who are permitted or required to spend periods away from the University will normally be allocated at least two supervisors based at The NOUN as well as a supervisor in the outside organisation.

The internal supervisor will normally be based in the outside organisation in which the student will be working and must have an appropriate level of understanding in the academic area of the student's topic of research. The local supervisor would normally be expected to be a postdoctoral member of staff, or of equivalent status, at the outside organisation concerned and may in some instances be a Professor of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

The Department shall forward the names and qualifications of the supervisors, together with details of the arrangements for supervision, to the University for approval.

5. Identification of Training Needs

It is the responsibility of the Department, in conjunction with supervisors, to identify the training needs of individual students, to ensure needs are met and to determine the means by which they are met. Where possible research training should be undertaken at Nottingham, especially the generic training modules offered by the SPGS, but subject-specific training may be more appropriate at the outside laboratory/institution.

6. Level of Support

In all cases the school should assure itself that the arrangements for study and supervision at the external institution/organisation provide an appropriate level of support and reflect the ethos of the University's quality assurance framework. Where practice varies between the University and another institution the school should ensure that the support provided is at least equivalent to that defined in the Quality Manual although the detail may vary. Students should be made aware of the individual arrangements that apply to them and where the precise Quality Manual arrangements will not apply.

Annual Review of Research Students
1. Introduction

All students registered on research degrees lasting more than one year full-time or two years part-time (eg Doctorates) are subject to review annually.[1]

The basic principles of Annual Review are common to all research students and all years of their programme. There are specific requirements relating to PhD students and to the Annual Review preceding submission, and variations dependent on the length and stage of the student's programme of study. In all cases submission must be within four years of first registration unless the student holds an award with terms and conditions that vary this maximum period.

During their first year of registration, the status of PhD students as doctoral candidates is probationary and their Annual Review includes the Confirmation Review of their status. Confirmation Review requires the involvement of an Internal Assessor while the basic Annual Review may be led by the Principal Supervisor. Annual Review should take place by the end of each completed year of study, though it is strongly recommended that preparations (e.g. submission of the written report) should commence before the student has completed nine months of each year of study and that reviews are held around the nine-month period to allow for any remedial actions arising from the review to be completed within the year.

2. Minimum Elements of Annual Review

Departments must ensure that the following elements are included in their Annual Review process:

For all students:
• Production of a written report by the student on his/her progress.
• In response to the student's written report, a commentary by the principal supervisor on the student's progress and attendance.
• Confirmation by the principal supervisor[2] that the required minimum number of supervision sessions has taken place and that supervision records are available.

- Where student is sponsored and a report has been submitted to the sponsor during the year the content of that report should form part of the consideration.

Departments have discretion to appoint an Internal Assessor in this process as well as the principal supervisor if they wish to do this.
And

For PhD students undergoing Confirmation Review (ie normally in their first year of study):

• An interview of the student by an Internal Assessor and (if the faculty wishes) other staff who have not previously been closely associated with the student's work. The Internal Assessor must not be the student's supervisor or joint supervisor. The student may request the opportunity to meet with the Internal Assessor without the supervisor(s) being present.
• Provision of evidence to the Internal Assessor that the student has attended any modules and passed any assessments that form a compulsory part of his/her research programme.
• In light of the review, a recommendation to the student's Head of School[3] agreed jointly by the Internal Assessor and the principal supervisor as to the outcome.

Where students are on four-year PhD programmes containing a substantial taught element, Confirmation Review should take place prior to the end of the second year (and the review processes thereafter on an annual basis). Recommendations on the registration of such students may still occur at an earlier stage (e.g. after one year), depending on the progress with the mandatory taught element of the programme.

or

For other research students in all years of study and PhD students after their Confirmation Review has been completed:

• Provision of evidence to the principal supervisor that the student has attended any modules and passed any assessments which form a compulsory part of his/her research programme.
• In light of the review, a recommendation to the student's Head of Department from the principal supervisor as to the outcome.

3. Final Annual Review
The final annual review of all research students (if they have not already completed their thesis) should include a detailed consideration of progress, including progress made with writing up, and a plan to ensure that the thesis is submitted within a maximum of four years from initial registration.

In addition to the minimum elements of Annual Review the final review before submission should include the following elements:

• A detailed plan for submission within the maximum period.
• In light of the review, a recommendation to the student's Head of School from the principal supervisor as to the outcome.

4. The possible outcomes of Annual Review are:

• Re-registration in the following academic session on the same degree subject to the length of the programme. In the case of PhD students this would act as confirmation of their doctoral status for re-registration in the following session.

• Entry of the student to the thesis pending period within the next year, subject to satisfying the requirements for the minimum period of study and having completed the research.

• With the agreement of the student, transfer of registration to another degree (e.g. from MSc to PhD). In this instance, an interview of the student by an Internal Assessor as required in the Confirmation Review process should also be held and a transfer form completed.

• A recommendation by the School to the University that the student be required to transfer to another degree (e.g. from MSc.).

• A recommendation by the School to the University that the student's registration be terminated (which should be supported by evidence that the student has received written warnings on lack of progress during the period of study).

In the case of PhD students, the following further outcomes are possible:

• Re-registration as a PhD student in the following academic session but with continuation of the student's probationary status (in which case, the next Annual Review for that student takes the form of a Confirmation Review) should be with an agreed plan of supportive or corrective action being put in place). However, the maximum number of Confirmation Reviews a student may be permitted is normally limited to two.

• Re-registration as a PhD student in the following academic session (with a corrective action plan being put in place if this is necessary).

• A recommendation by the School to the University that the student be re-registered as an MSc student or on some other degree instead of PhD (supported by evidence that the student has received written warnings on lack of progress during the period of study).

In the case of the Final Annual Review the following further outcome is possible:

• A recommendation by the School to the University that the student's registration be exceptionally extended for up to one further year. In such a case submission will still be expected within the four-year maximum period.

5. Appeals

Where the outcome of any of the above reviews is that a student be required to transfer to another degree, has his/her registration terminated, or is required to register for an additional period beyond the normal length of the degree, the student may lodge an appeal against that decision if grounds for appeal exist.

Thesis Pending Period

1. Scope of Policy

This policy only applies to students on doctoral level and Master of Philosophy degrees who are **eligible** for a thesis pending period. Students on one year research degrees (for example, Master of Research) do not have a thesis pending period.

2. Enrolment in the Thesis Pending Period

Students who have completed their research and the period of registered study as required by regulations may enter the thesis pending period. In this period of 12 months (for students who were registered full-time) or 24 months (for students who were registered part-time) or less, the student will be entitled to the use of library facilities and University computing facilities but not to facilities for research. The student will also be entitled to a minimum of six meetings

(either face-to-face or electronically) with their supervisor and for the supervisor to read and comment on one draft of their thesis prior to submission.

3. Procedure for applying for an extension to the Thesis Pending Period

All applications should be submitted with **supporting evidence** to Student Services or equivalent for consideration on behalf of Quality and Standards Committee. The aim will be to notify you of the outcome of your application within 2 weeks.

Other than in exceptional circumstances applications will only be considered if received by Student Services **no less than 3 months in advance** of the end of the thesis-pending period. All applications require the **support** of your principal supervisor and your Head of Department.

All applications should include a **plan** detailing:
- Which thesis chapters are complete
- What work remains to be done on incomplete chapters
- A time-line for the completion of outstanding work and a date for submission of the completed thesis.

Requests for extensions will only be considered as a result of circumstances **affecting the thesis pending period**, and not the period of registered study.

Students on **Ph.D, MSc and MA by Research** degrees are not entitled to a thesis pending period, but nonetheless must use this procedure if they need to apply for an extension to their submission deadline.

If an extension request is granted, the **fee** listed in the University's [Fees Schedule](#) will be payable.

4. Procedure for applying for an extension to a resubmission or period of time allowed for minor corrections

Students who have already completed their examination and have further corrections or a re-submission to undertake should also use the procedure above (see 3) to apply for extra time.

5. Reasons for extensions

The following have been agreed by the University as circumstances that would normally result in an extension being granted and those which would normally not.

Examples of circumstances which would normally lead to the approval of an extension to the thesis-pending period:
- Exceptional personal circumstances (eg illness, hospitalisation, accident) if significantly impacting on the writing-up process
- Maternity
- Paternity
- Death of close relative, or illness of close relative where student is the carer
- Illness or death of partner
- Prolonged jury service
- Expeditions for sport of national significance (providing the extension is acceptable to your funding body)
- Requirement for a student to undertake military service

Examples of circumstances which would not normally warrant an extension to the thesis pending period:

- Taking up employment during the thesis-pending period
- Voluntary service overseas

PART B: EXAMINERS AND ASSESSMENT

1.0 ROLE AND APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

2.0 Policy Framework

Every research thesis will be evaluated by Examiners who have appropriate academic qualifications, relevant expertise in the area of research being examined, and a suitable level of experience in examining research degree submissions.

Every member of academic staff of this University or another institution who is appointed to act as an Internal or External Examiner will receive information on the role of the Examiners.

3.0 Notification of Intent to Submit

The submission by the student of a Notification of Intent to Submit form (available in the Submission Pack) which has been signed by the supervisor will trigger the procedure for nomination of Examiners.

The Notification form should be submitted at least three months in advance of the proposed submission of the thesis so that there is sufficient time to organise the appointment of Examiners before the thesis is submitted.

On receipt of the Notification form, the Head of Department will nominate individuals whom s/he wishes to act as Internal and External Examiners for the research submission. The Head of School may involve the supervisor(s) and candidate in discussions on suitable examiners, but will be responsible for making the final decision on the nomination.

Once discussions are completed, the nomination should be sent by the Head of School on the standard form to Student Services or equivalent for approval by the University. There should be no contact between candidates and examiners from the appointment of the examiners up to the date of the viva voce examination, other than to make arrangements for the viva to take place.

4.0 Internal and External Examiners

Normally each research submission will be examined by one Internal Examiner who is a member of staff of the academic Department at NOUN to which the student belongs (or, if appropriate, a member of staff of another academic Department), and one External Examiner who is a member of staff of another academic institution.

Alternative arrangements (except that the examining board for any research submission **must** include at least one External Examiner) may be approved. For example, it is possible that in a small academic School there is no member of staff (apart from the supervisor who, of course, is disqualified from acting as an Examiner) with the expertise to act as Internal Examiner in the research area. In this case it would be appropriate for the Head of School to recommend to Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) that the submission be examined by two External Examiners, with a member of the internal staff acting as a co-ordinator of the

examination proceedings. One of the two External Examiners should be identified as the chair of the *viva voce* proceedings. Where a candidate has a contract of employment with the NOUN, Departments should consider whether the appointment of an Internal Examiner would risk the introduction of the perception of bias into the examination process. Where such a risk is identified, Schools should always take the option of appointing two External Examiners.

The role of the coordinator will be to organise and operate the administrative arrangements for examination of the student's thesis and to facilitate the smooth-running of the *viva voce* examination.

The examiner appointments will last for the duration of the examination process, including re-submissions where this is the outcome of the first examination, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

5.0 Role of Examiners

The role of the Examiners is to consider whether the information, arguments and results of the student's research work as presented in the thesis and as defended in the *viva voce* examination (if appropriate) meet the academic standards relevant to the degree.

The Examiners are required to submit independent reports on the thesis, a joint report on the *viva voce* examination (if a *viva voce* examination is required by the regulations), and a joint recommendation regarding the award of the degree.

6.0 Role of the Internal Examiner

The Internal Examiner must read the student's thesis and participate in the student's *viva voce* examination, and come to a view as to whether the student's research work and knowledge meet the standard which would normally be expected of a student in the School submitting for that degree, and the University's criteria for the award of the degree.

S/he will receive the PDF version of the examination copy of the thesis and where appropriate share this with the External Examiner, subject to the agreement of the Supervisor(s).

In addition s/he should act as the facilitator of the administrative arrangements for the examination of the thesis and of the *viva voce* examination.

S/he should seek to ensure that, during the *viva voce* examination, the student is given a fair opportunity to defend his/her work and that the External Examiner is aware of any extenuating circumstances which have a bearing on the student's case. Following a *viva voce* examination (if conducted, see '*Viva Voce* Examinations'), the student should be given immediate informal feedback on the outcome of the examination and should be advised that more formal details will be transmitted later in writing. The Internal Examiner should also write to the student formally conveying the joint views of the Examiners on the submission, describing in detail the academic and presentational reasons for their recommendation, and (if appropriate) providing clear advice about what matters should be addressed in any resubmission.

If corrections have been recommended, s/he will be responsible for checking these and confirming with the Student Services that these have been completed. S/he will be responsible for confirming that the final electronically submitted version of the work is that which has been approved by the examiners if no corrections were needed after examination

7.0 Criteria for Appointing Internal Examiner

The Head of Department should ensure that the person nominated to act as Internal Examiner is a research-active member of the academic staff of the University who has the appropriate expertise in the student's research area. If Faculties wish to recommend nominees who do not satisfy this criterion, this should be highlighted in the nomination form and a case provided for consideration by QSC.

Post-doctoral Staff, Research Fellows below Level 5, holders of honourary appointments who do not receive remuneration, Emeritus Professors, staff who do not hold a doctorate themselves and retired academic staff should not be permitted to act as Internal Examiners.

8.0 Academic Staff in Their First Appointment

An academic member of staff in his/her first appointment at the NOUN should not normally be permitted to act as sole Internal Examiner on his/her first examination occasion. It is recommended that such members of staff should act jointly with a more senior member of staff on the first occasion that they act as Internal Examiner and the Dean of Faculty should monitor their performance.

However, Heads of Departments may apply to QSC for permission to allow such a member of academic staff to act as the sole Internal Examiner, if a good case can be made that the member of staff's educational and professional background makes it appropriate for him/her to act in this capacity.

9.0 Role of the External Examiner

The External Examiner must read the student's thesis and should lead the *viva voce* examination. The External Examiner must in particular come to a view as to whether the student's research work and knowledge are of a standard which are comparable to those of students being examined at other institutions for the same degree.

10.0 Appointment of External Examiners

Members of staff from outside institutions whom Faculties wish to nominate to act as External Examiners for NOUN research degrees should be research-active Professors, Readers, Lecturers or other teachers of their institution (or of equivalent status).

However, it will be appropriate in some cases for faculties to nominate individuals from other suitable environments provided that those individuals are experts in the field of the student's topic of research and hold a professional status which is equivalent to a University Professor, Reader, Lecturer or teacher.

In order to assess the eligibility of any individual to act as External Examiner who has not previously acted in this capacity for NOUN, the Dean of Faculty should obtain brief Curriculum Vitae which should be forwarded to Student Services with the nomination on the standard form. Student Services will retain the Curriculum Vitae for future reference.

Nominations for Examiners will be approved by the University and Student Services will write to the External Examiners informing them of the terms and conditions of their appointment and their role as Examiners. The letter will include a request that the Examiner consider whether a potential conflict(s) of interest is likely to occur as a result of examining a candidate's thesis and if so disclose it to the University.

11.0   Intelligible Categories for External Examiner

A member of staff of another institution should not be invited to act as an External Examiner if s/he is a NOUN graduate who graduated within the last three years. Also, ex-members of staff of NOUN who left the University less than three years previously and holders of honourary appointments for which remuneration is given at the NOUN should not be permitted to act as External Examiners.

Emeritus Professors and academic staff who have been retired for more than three years should not be permitted to act as External Examiners unless it can be demonstrated that they continue to be research active.

12.0   Disengagement between Examiners

In the event of a disagreement on the appropriate outcome of a research degree examination between the Internal and External Examiner, the matter should be resolved by the Examiners on the basis of detailed argument about the specific academic points arising from the examination, and a joint decision should be reached.

In this circumstance particular weight should be given to the views of the External Examiner. Where there are two External Examiners particular weight should be given to the chair.

13.0   Role of the Supervisor

The Supervisor may not act as an Examiner for the student's submission. The Supervisor may not normally attend the *viva voce* examination except with the agreement of the External Examiner, in which case s/he may attend as an observer only or where required under the terms of an approved collaborative doctorate programme, in which case s/he may contribute questions but may not participate in making the examiners' recommendation.

However, it is recommended that the Supervisor should be available in the Department at the time of the *viva voce* examination in case the Examiners feel that his/her presence at the *viva voce* is required (for example, to give support to the student).

14.0   Role of the Head of Department

The Head of Department must approve the appointment of the examiners.

1.0   PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSMENT
2.0   Policy Framework

Research students and academic staff eligible to act as Internal or External Examiners shall be given orientation on the procedures for assessing research degree submissions

A student wishing to submit a thesis for examination must give formal notice to Student Services, (General Administration Office at the NOUN) of the intention to submit (see below for form and Submission Pack). The form can also be submitted to the candidate's School for onward transmission to Student Services. Student Services, NOUN Administration Office or the SPGS will make arrangements for the nomination and appointment of Examiners (see below for form) and, provided that the thesis has been submitted, will forward the thesis to the Examiners within one week of receiving the Examiners' written agreement to act. See below for **guidance** notes on presentation of the thesis.

3.0 Criteria for Award of Qualification

Research degrees will be awarded at Master's or Doctoral level to students who have demonstrated that they satisfy the relevant qualification descriptors contained in the NOUN Qualifications Framework. The thesis should be presented in a satisfactory manner. The subject matter must be clearly and precisely expressed, its arguments logical and intelligible, and its language appropriate. It must show that the student not only has ideas, but also has the ability of putting them into suitable words.

The thesis must be written by the student and be the result of the student's own work. The requirement does not preclude a student obtaining limited assistance with the routine collection and/or processing of data under guidelines and instructions clearly devised by the student. When such help is obtained it should be with the prior approval of the supervisor who must be satisfied that the spirit of the 'own work' requirement is not breached. Students are encouraged to publish papers in advance of submission of their thesis and prior publication of papers arising from the research being undertaken should not prejudice the assessment of this thesis.

4.0 Examiners' Reports

The Examiners should submit independent reports to Student Services, (SPGS General Administration Office at NOUN) or Head of Department on the submission before the *viva voce* examination takes place (*see below*). The reports need not be provided in a standard format but must be written in English and word-processed or typed and must include the name and School of the student, the degree sought, the signature, name (printed), position of the Examiner (i.e. Internal or External) and the date. They should contain a full and frank assessment of the merits and weaknesses of the thesis in the light of the criteria described above. It is suggested that a favourable report should normally fill at least one side of A4 paper. It is particularly important that the merits and shortcomings of a submission are provided in full and in detail if the report is unfavourable and, therefore, a lengthier report might be expected. It should be noted that Examiners' Independent and Joint reports will be given to the candidate when the examination outcome is notified and circulated to staff and students as part of the University's Appeals procedures if relevant.

5.0 Feedback to Candidate and Examiners' Report

Following a *viva voce* examination (if conducted, see '*Viva Voce* Examinations'), the student should be given immediate informal feedback on the outcome of the examination and should be advised that more formal details will be transmitted later in writing. The Internal Examiner should also write to the student formally conveying the joint views of the Examiners on the submission, describing in detail the academic and presentational reasons for their recommendation, and (if appropriate) providing clear advice about what matters should be addressed in any resubmission.

6.0 Approval of Examiners' Report

The Joint Report Form shall be forwarded by the examiners to the Dean of Faculty for approval and signature and s/he shall forward the independent and Joint Report Form to Student Services for approval by the University.

*NB the same procedure shall be followed with respect to students who submit their theses for examination at NOUN. The SPGS should also receive copies of the examiners' reports (including Dean of Faculty's signature) for information only. Staff in Student Services shall be responsible for ensuring that staff at the SPGS are kept informed of the University's decision concerning such submissions.

Student Services will write to the student within one week of the University's decision being made, informing him/her of the recommendation that the degree be awarded (or not) and advising him/her of the procedures for graduating, or for lodging an appeal, as appropriate.

VIVA VOCE EXAMINATIONS

1.0   Timing of *Viva Voce* Examination

The Head of Department has overall responsibility for ensuring that *viva voce* examinations normally take place within **3 months** of the submission of the thesis to Student Services SPGS, and that the appropriate Office is informed of the dates of *viva voce* examinations.

2.0   Location for *Viva Voce* Examination

The *viva voce* examination (if required, as will be the case for doctoral degrees) will **normally** take place at the University. However, the Head of Department may give permission in **exceptional circumstances** for the *viva voce* examination to be held in **another location**, provided that the **agreement** of the Examiners and the student is obtained and the proposed location is one that is deemed by them all to be suitable for the purpose. Student Services shall be informed when these decisions are made.

3.0   Format

If circumstances demand it, a *viva voce* examination may be organised in **another form** (e.g. by a video conference). Before agreeing to such an arrangement, the Department must check that appropriate facilities are available to all participants, and shall ensure they have written confirmation that the student and the Examiners have **agreed** to the proposal.

4.0   Appointment of Chair

If Departments wish to do so, an **independent, non-examining chair** may be appointed to preside over the *viva* proceedings in order to ensure consistency between different *vivas* and to provide an additional viewpoint if the conduct of the *viva* should become the subject of a student appeal. Where the appointment of an independent chair is not feasible, Faculties should find alternative ways of assuring fairness and consistency which are acceptable to the student.

5.0   Attendance at Proceedings

With the agreement of the External Examiner, the **Supervisor may be present** at the *viva voce* examination, though s/he will not participate in the proceedings. The Head of Department **has a right to attend** as an observer at the *viva voce* examination of any research student in his/her School, unless s/he is the student's Supervisor when a deputy should be appointed to attend in his/her place (see paragraph 13 of the Role and Appointment of Examiners for the right to attend as a supervisor). Before the *viva voce* examination takes place the Head of Department should first inform the Examiners, the student and the Supervisor that s/he intends to attend. The Examiners may request that the Head of School attend a *viva voce* examination.

6.0   Purpose of *Viva*

The *viva* will normally include **questions** designed to ascertain that the thesis embodies the candidate's own research. It will test the candidate's general comprehension of the field of study within which the subject of the thesis falls. It will test the candidate's acquaintance with the general literature of the subject, knowledge of the relation of the work to the wider field of which it is a part, and the respects in which the work advances, modifies, or otherwise affects this wider field of scholarship.

7.0 Completion of Joint Report Form

Following *the viva voce* examination, the Examiners will complete and sign the joint report form and shall come to agreement on the recommendation on the award (or not) of the degree. The option not to award any degree following the first examination is one which should only be chosen in extreme circumstances.

RESTRICTION ON A THESIS
1.0 Policy Framework

If a thesis includes work which is politically, commercially* or industrially sensitive, it is possible for a student to apply for access either to the printed copy held in the University, or to the electronic copy held in NOUN e-Theses, or both, to be restricted. In such a case an application for restriction should be included when the student submits their thesis.

Some research projects are funded, partly or wholly, by outside agencies and a restriction may be stipulated in the contract which is drawn up with the University. If no contract exists, it is the responsibility of the student to put together a structured case to support their application for a restriction.

The University's Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) can grant a restriction of access to a thesis for a period not exceeding 2 years in the first instance with the possibility of an extension of that period up to a maximum of 5 years.

A restriction to a thesis does not affect the award of the degree in any way.

An application form is available below.
As part of the application the student's supervisor is responsible for providing a statement regarding the research being undertaken, comments on the need for a restriction and the current research project number.

2.0 Procedure

The student concerned completes an 'Application for a Restriction to Be Placed on a Thesis' form *(see below)* ensuring all boxes have been completed. Although the student may not know the relevant research project number, it is important that the student's supervisor provides this piece of information.

The form is then submitted by the student, with their thesis, to Student Services for processing.

Once the QSC has made a decision about whether or not the restriction has been granted, the student will receive formal notification of the decision from Student Services. A copy of this notification is sent to Information Services, which will implement the restriction in the University Library, or NOUN e-Theses, or both, as required; and to the student's supervisor and Student Services.

A final decision on an application can be expected within approximately 6 weeks of receipt of the form by Student Services.
It is possible to apply for an extension to the period of restriction once the initial period has lapsed and this is done by completing another copy of the original form which is available from Student Services or *(see below)*.

In the case of a retrospective application, the printed copy or the electronic copy or both may already be accessible. In this case the form may be copied by the student or School to Information Services to request immediate restriction as a temporary measure until the Committee's final decision is notified.

* To include cases where a student wishes to publish their work in another format before it becomes more widely available via the British Library Catalogue.

MONITORING

1. On an annual basis, a Quantitative Data Set (QDS) will be provided to Schools in regard to their research degree programmes. The information will include:
- admissions data
- drop-out rates (terminations and withdrawals)
- submission rates
- successful completion rates.

2. For comparative purposes, Faculties will also be provided with aggregate data for their faculty and for the institution as a whole. The same data set will be available to Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) and QSC will approach any faculty where the data suggested difficulties might exist in order to discuss the remedial action to be taken. QSC will also consider the institutional totals with a view to identifying any need for changes to policy or procedures.

3. It will be left up to individual faculty to decide on a procedure for the monitoring of research degree programmes. Typically, a Faculty Postgraduate Students Committee or equivalent will consider the data in 1 above, along with any other relevant information (e.g. from a Learning Community Forum), and determine whether anything gives cause for concern. Where a problem is detected, this should then be brought to the attention of the Faculty management through the Faculty's communication and decision-making channels.

4. The Faculty Review process will be used to check that annual monitoring of research degree programmes is taking place in Departments and that effective use is being made of the results of the monitoring.

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