

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
to be held on 14 May 2019 at 2.00pm
in the Raeburn Room, Old College
Convener: Professor Stephen Bowd**

A G E N D A

- 1 Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2019** Enclosed
- 2 Matters Arising**
 - 2.1 Old Kirk Project
 - 2.2 Scholarships
 - 2.3 Electronic business: Public Defence of Theses
- 3 Conveners' Communications**
 - 3.1 Senate Committees Review
 - 3.2 PhD Graduate School

For Discussion
- 4 Update: Research Staff Scoping Project** REC 18/19 5A
- 5 Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development:
Report on Current Status of Workstreams** REC 18/19 5B
- 6 Service Excellence Programme update**
- 7 Senate Themes for 2019/20 Meetings** REC 18/19 5C
- 8 Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students:
Review 2019** REC 18/19 5D
- 9 Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees:
Updates 2019** REC 18/19 5E
- 10 Communications**
 - 10.1 Tutors and demonstrators
 - 10.2 Postgraduate research student reps

For information and formal business
- 11 External Engagement:**
 - 11.1 League of European Research Universities (LERU)
 - 11.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)
 - 11.3 Coimbra
 - 11.4 Network of Universities from European Capitals (UNICA)
 - 11.5 Universitas 21
- 12. Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee: 22 March
2019 meeting** REC 18/19 5F
- 13 Research Policy Group report**
- 14 Any other business**
 - 14.1 Postgraduate Research Degree Examiners

REC: 14.05.19

H/02/26/02

REC 18/19 5A

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Update: Research Staff Scoping Project

Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings of an interview-based project designed to identify if research staff are engaging in, and benefiting from, University support and systems.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The institution needs to meet increasing requirements from the Concordat Review, funders and research staff to demonstrate commitment and support for broader career development of research staff. It directly relates to the committee priority for 2018/19 to:

- Enhance support for Early Career Researchers (make more visible, enhance and structure provision, strengthen partnerships)

Action requested

REC to support the following recommendations:

- REC to recommend IAD liaise with CAM about dedicated webpages for research staff
- REC to support the IAD and Careers Service in developing a case for University support for a specialist careers adviser for research staff

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

IAD will report on the new Concordat and progress against it at REC in late 2019/early 2020.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

- 1. Resource implications (including staffing)**
None, but report includes request to develop a case for a dedicated post between Careers and IAD
- 2. Risk assessment**
None
- 3. Equality and Diversity**
Improved career development opportunities for postdoctoral research staff will contribute to a more inclusive research environment through clearer signposting to support, line manager responsibilities and career trajectories.
- 4. Freedom of information**
The paper can be included in open business.

Key words **Research Staff, Postdoc, IAD, Career Development, Researcher Development, Concordat**

Originator of the paper

Nicola Cuthbert, Institute for Academic Development, April 2019.

Overview

The University employs around 2000 research staff¹, often referred to as postdocs in CSE and CMVM and early career researchers in CAHSS. Collectively, this group of staff contribute to the University's research outputs and have a large pool of knowledge, skills and experience.

This interview study builds on an initial review carried out in May 2018, which looked at the structures and support available for postdocs at University of Edinburgh and recommended ways to increase the postdoc profile and make the support available to this audience more visible².

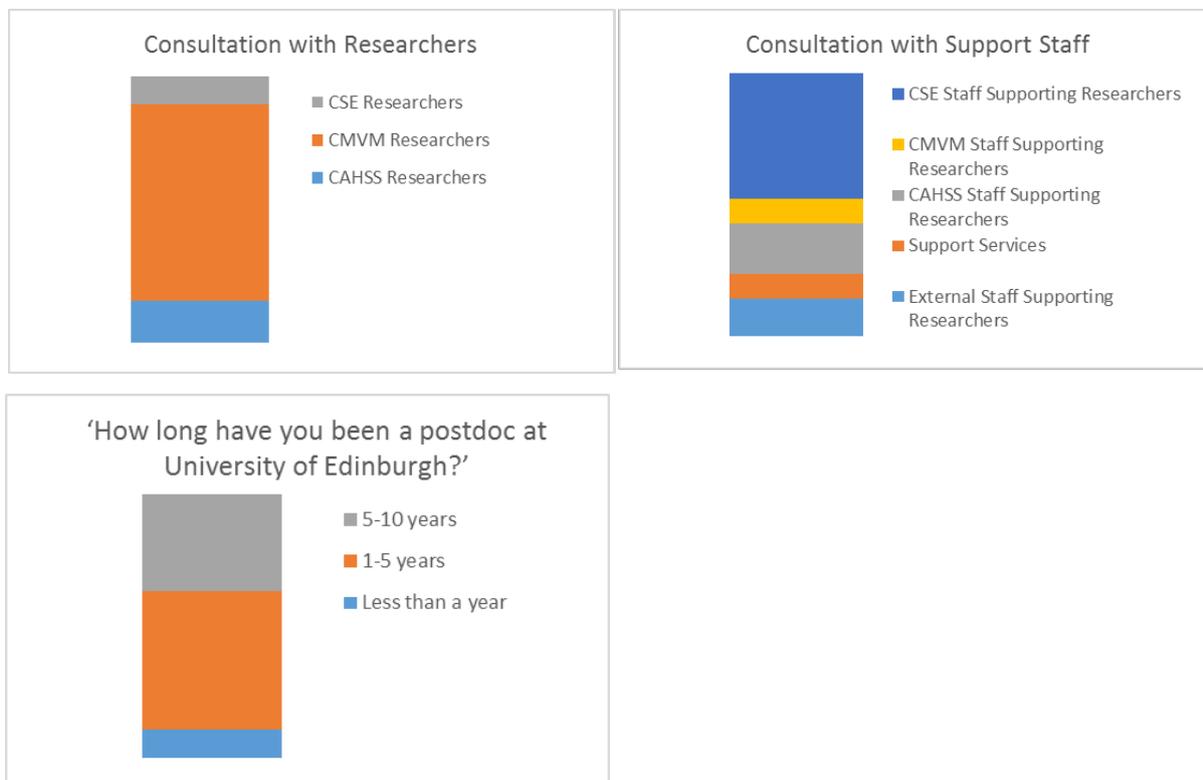
This larger scale review adds depth through consultation with relevant stakeholders including UoE postdocs and support staff, and support staff at external Universities. This process has identified the types of challenges and issues research staff face and gathered their views on the support available from the University. This report summarises our recommendations to develop support for and visibility of postdocs at the University.

¹ We use the terms postdoc and research staff throughout this report to refer to the same group of staff.

² <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20180627agendapapers.pdf>

Survey Dimensions

- 40 people interviewed between August and November 2018 through face-to-face meetings, a research staff society online survey (IGMM PODS) and questions via email
- Researchers, postdoc champions and support staff surveyed with tailored questions
- School and College coverage achieved and postdoc length of service at Edinburgh identified (refer to charts):



A named contact within Schools and an active postdoc society greatly facilitated access to information and interviewees.

Communication and Systems

Headlines

- Website is perceived as difficult to navigate and does not address needs of research staff
- Communication with and between research staff would be greatly facilitated with a dedicated page (see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/technicians>)
 - All relevant services and support to link from here to build “one stop shop”
- Profiles (at school level, linked from central page) would raise visibility of individual research staff and the quality of their contributions
- Research staff not aware of relevance or value of PURE and Research Explorer

Proposed next steps

- REC to recommend IAD liaise with CAM about dedicated webpages for research staff
- IAD to continue to discuss PURE/Research Explorer with Library Research Support team
- IAD to meet individual schools/named contacts to explore researcher visibility

Training/Development

Headlines

- Consensus about support being available and positive feedback about IAD provision
- Poor awareness of support leading to patchy engagement
- Career development focussed training and support was a recurring theme

Proposed Next Steps

- IAD to meet individual schools/named contacts to raise awareness of available training
- REC to support the IAD and Careers Service in developing a case for University support for a specialist careers adviser for research staff

Inductions/P&DRs

Headlines

- Inconsistent responses from interviewees about induction support and information received
- Year round start dates for staff make it difficult to deliver university wide induction events
- Consistent theme of needing career support early and flagged up from outset
- Research staff with more years of experience have different needs
- Awareness of the “20%” development time proposal in Concordat Review
- Support for PIs to broaden discussions during P&DR meetings beyond academic opportunities

Proposed Next Steps

- IAD to meet individual schools/named contacts to explore induction approaches and share good practice, and explore strategies for embedding positive messages about non-academic career paths
- IAD to develop online guides to support career conversations between researchers and PIs
- IAD to share report findings with central HR and explore access to data about length of service

Recognition & Representation

Headlines

- Consensus across all groups interviewed that current systems and structures don't recognise the contributions of research staff (i.e. supervision of students and visibility)
- Positive feedback on role of research staff societies
- Lack of long-term sustainability of research staff networks due to lack of underpinning support
- Difficulty finding research staff representation for key committees
- Impact of inconsistent language and terminology describing research staff and job titles

Proposed Next Steps

- Suggested 'Research Staff' webpage to be a platform for communicating the importance and contributions of research staff
- Explore models to resource a University level Research Staff Society
- Explore strategies to embed benefits of research staff cohorts (Chancellor's Fellows and Train@Ed fellows) to wider research staff community

Support Infrastructure**Headlines**

- Respondents were very positive about the research community at the University and the opportunities available
- The scarcity of permanent academic contracts and competition to secure these highlights a need for dedicated and tailored careers advice and support
- There is little information about our research staff population making it difficult to target them with tailored support and information, for example when they start at the University
- Researchers and the staff who support them found it difficult to understand which university policies and procedures related to them
- The devolved nature of the institution means there isn't a consistent approach to supporting researchers (one example being the presence of Postdoc Champions in CSE but not the other Colleges)
- Respondents were keen to see research staff communities developed but not universally interested in dedicated research staff spaces as long as opportunities to meet and mix were available

Proposed Next Steps

- Awareness building of relevant policies and procedures, making the current documentation around the Code of Practice more visible to research staff and their managers
- All new research staff to receive a welcome letter highlighting key information, support and opportunities to network with colleagues
- Information from HR centrally and in Schools and Colleges to clarify what data we hold about research staff, who owns this and what restrictions affect it
- Discuss with HR, potential value of a named ECR contact based within this service
- IAD to liaise with key services to establish how data might enable the provision of better services
- Support for a research staff careers service to ensure better awareness of career paths and support to pursue these
- A dedicated careers service for research staff could also gather exit information to enrich our understanding of career paths and identify issues commonly faced at the end of contracts so better support can be developed and better advice given to research staff
- As with previous recommendations, a centralised hub for information targeted at research staff would help awareness of opportunities reach relevant staff
- Building a network of those who support research staff so good practice can be shared and collaboration facilitated

PI Support

Headlines

- There should be a university wide message to PIs that training/events and initiatives are important for research staff. This is likely to be addressed through the 2019 Concordat, which will include specific responsibilities for PIs.
- There needs to be recognition of the work PIs do to champion research staff and they need to be supported to do this effectively.
- Although most of those interviewed spoke positively about PI/researcher relationships there were concerns about the risk to researchers if things go badly, including the potential for negative outcomes if research staff complain about poor management.

Proposed Next Steps

- IAD to work with Careers and other services to develop online resources to support PIs in managing research staff in P&DRs and beyond.
- Clear university wide encouragement of the value of mentoring and improved support for research staff to engage with mentoring opportunities.
- Providing research staff with a mechanism to flag up problems in relationships with their PIs without exposing them to negative outcomes.

In summary, our research into the research staff community has confirmed and developed our plans to support and encourage research staff to be more proactive in their careers and roles, accessing relevant information and getting involved in committees. It has also informed our approach to developing PIs and staff who support researchers, highlighting the importance of having named staff in all services and academic units.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions to Researchers and Staff Supporting Researchers

Researcher	Staff Supporting Researchers
How long have you been a Postdoc at UoE?	What support is available in your School/Institute to support postdocs / Do you have any examples of good practice – anything that works well in your School?
What support / systems / structures are you looking for at Edinburgh?	What are the gaps / issues currently, in effectively supporting Postdocs?
Do you feel you have support and recognition in the university under the current systems and structures?	Do you feel postdocs get recognition at the University?
What challenges do you face?	Are there any challenges you face supporting postdocs – e.g. communication, locality, information available on webpages What challenges do you think they face?
What are the best things about being a Postdoc at Edinburgh?	What changes would you like to see made?
Have you been a Postdoc at any other Universities that you feel supported their Postdocs particularly well, or had systems that were effective?	Are you aware of any other Universities that have structures/systems in place that effectively support postdocs?
What would your idea of being supported at the University look like? E.g. clearer web information, a postdoc centre where all support is in one place	What would your idea of being able to effectively support postdocs at the University look like? E.g. clearer web information, a postdoc centre where all support is in one place
Do you use the University website to find information out, to update (PURE/Research Explorer); do you find what you are looking for, do you find it helpful?	Do you use the University website to find out information?
Is the lack of a consistent term for research staff contributing to ambiguity and poor signposting?	
Do postdocs and our positive research culture need higher status on the University research page?	

REC: 14.05.19

H/02/26/02

REC 18/19 5B

The University of Edinburgh

Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme: Report on Current Status of Workstreams

Executive Summary

This paper gives a short update on the current status of work stream 1 (supervisor training and support), work stream 2 (mentoring) and work stream 3 (personal and professional development record) of the Excellence programme. These include progress to date and proposed next steps. The committee is requested to discuss progress and approve proposed next steps where appropriate. Further information on the Programme is available here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education>

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University Strategic Goal of Excellence in Research and Strategic Theme of Outstanding Student Experience, and the committee priority to improve the Postgraduate Research Student experience.

Action requested

REC is asked to discuss and approve proposed next steps for the projects.

Given the review of the senate committees, REC is asked to discuss and make recommendations on ownership of the projects in this programme going forward.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

IAD will be responsible for communicating updates on supervisor training, and with Students' Association will communicate outcomes of peer mentoring project. This will be through established mechanisms such as School e-mails and PhD student newsletters.

REC Convenors will take responsibility for communicating any recommended changes in committees responsible for oversight of ongoing projects.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Some of the work to take forward actions can be supported by existing staffing resource in the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), Students' Association and Service Excellence Programme.

Development of online training for PhD supervisors will have additional resource implications so discussions will be undertaken with relevant units to identify resource.

Outcome of the peer mentoring project may recommend additional staff resource to sustain projects, either within the Students' Association or the University, so a case will be made as appropriate.

2. Risk assessment

Risk that resource is not identified to develop online supervisor training so halting this work.

Risk that Service Excellence Programme business case for PGR lifecycle project will not be approved, or will not include work on the personal and professional development record for PGRs.

No other risks identified.

3. Equality and Diversity

Outcome of project on peer support for postgraduate researchers should lead to introduction of new programmes and improve equality of access to this support across the University.

Development of online training for PhD supervisors will help equality of access to training for internal and external supervisors, and as a result may improve the PGR student experience.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is open.

Key words

PhD supervisor, mentoring, professional development

Originator of the paper

Sharon Maguire, Head of Doctoral Education (maternity cover), Institute for Academic Development, 1 May 2019

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme Report on Current Status of Workstreams

Introduction

The [Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme](#) was launched in January 2017 and is governed by the Senate Researcher Experience Committee. The programme focuses on three specific and interrelated areas of the Postgraduate Research experience; (1) supervisor support and training, (2) mentorship and wellbeing, and (3) personal and professional development record. Workstreams for each area were established with specific work groups set up for streams one and three, and an intern recruited to carry out a project around peer support for postgraduate researchers for work stream two. The work groups have since concluded and reported their findings to REC. This paper outlines continuing work in these areas and asks REC to consider how these areas of work can be supported in the future.

Updates on Workstreams

Workstream One: Supervisor Support and Training

The final report of the Task group on a CPD Framework for PhD Supervisors was presented at REC in March 2019. As a result of recommendations from REC, a group has been set up with a remit to initially oversee the development of online training for supervisors, and to review the effectiveness of supervisor training on an ongoing basis in line with ELIR recommendations. The group is convened by the Head of Doctoral Education, IAD and consists of membership from Academic Services, Student Association, Institute for Academic Development, College Postgraduate Office as well as the Postgraduate Research Student Deans from each College.

The first meeting of the group was in April 2019 and initial discussions were around key content for an online course, and the target audience (e.g. new and experienced supervisors, Edinburgh and external). Once content has been agreed, the group will have to identify resource to support development of the course.

Recommendation: It is recommended that IAD take ownership for this group and the development of supervisors training in the short term. Oversight of the group may move to a more suitable structure in the future in line with any developments in governance of PGR matters.

Workstream Two: Mentorship and Wellbeing

Following on from the initial work carried out by a PhD intern on peer mentoring for postgraduate researchers and reported on previously, we have now recruited another PhD Intern to continue to research and develop peer support for PGRs. The intern is working on a part time basis (up to 9 hours per week) for one year from April 2019, based in the

Students' Association with joint supervision from the Institute for Academic Development. Initial work has involved looking at some current undergraduate peer support schemes that may be suitable for rolling out to the PGR community, connecting with the 2 existing Students' Association supported PG peer mentoring schemes (Performance Psychology Alumni Mentoring and SSPS PG Peer mentoring – both of which are for PGT students), and identifying other forms of student-led PGR support structures across the University. The focus of semester one will be on piloting some new peer mentoring projects, based on the research into what PGR students want from peer mentoring, and in semester two on evaluating these pilots and recommendations for sustainability of successful activities.

Recommendation: It is recommended that IAD and Students' Association jointly keep oversight of this project and report as appropriate to relevant committees.

Workstream Three: Personal and Professional Development Record

As previously reported to REC, the workgroup looking at a personal and professional development record for PGRs finalised their report and handed action on this over to Service Excellence Programme. There is no further information on how a personal and professional development record will be implemented in this work, although developing a system that will allow the production of a PGR HEAR has been part of the discussions during SEP workshops. The business case for the PGR Lifecycle project of SEP was submitted to their board in April and if approved the detail of work to be undertaken will be determined.

For discussion: It will be important that progress on this is monitored so the work done by the REC group in developing guidelines for this record is not lost and that the recommendations are implemented as appropriate. Discussion and suggestions on how this can be achieved are welcome.

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Senate Themes for 2019/20 Meetings

Executive Summary

The Presentation and Discussion section of the Senate meetings is open to all members of staff and poses an opportunity to consider and take part in discussion on a key strategic theme.

In each session, presentations are made on a high level academic matter, intended to generate discussion. The session takes place at the beginning of Senate meetings and runs for 90 minutes.

The following themes have been covered in Presentation and Discussion sections in the past two years:

2018/19

- **Teaching and Academic Careers**
Professor Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal
- **The Research Excellence Framework**
Professor Jonathan Seckl, Vice-Principal Planning, Resources and Research Policy
- **Widening Participation**
Professor Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal

2017/18

- **The Future of Distance Learning**
Melissa Highton, Assistant Principal Online Learning and Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services
- **Edinburgh in the City: Partnering to Support Inclusion**
Professor Lesley McAra, Assistant Principal, Community Relations
- **Student Employability**
Shelagh Green, Director of Careers and Employability

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
Leadership in Learning and Research

Action requested

The Committee is invited to make suggestions for themes for the Presentation and Discussion sections for Senate in 2019/20.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Suggested themes will be passed to the Principal, who will decide the presentation and discussion themes in 2019/20.

Resource/Risk/Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

None

2. Risk assessment

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake a risk analysis

3. Equality and Diversity

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake an equality and diversity assessment

4. Freedom of information

Open

Originator of the paper

Theresa Sheppard, Academic Services.
2 May 2019

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students: Review 2019

Executive Summary

Updates for 2019

During 2017/18, Academic Services carried out a major review of the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students, and published the revised Code of Practice at the start of 2018/19. Academic Services proposes to carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of the content and communication of the revised Code of Practice in Semester 1 of 2019/20. Therefore, for this year Academic Services has reviewed the Code to update any broken links, correct typographical errors and ensure consistency with revised regulations and policy.

Appendix 1 provides a revised draft with amendments highlighted. As last year, Academic Services will also publish a print-friendly version of the Code of Practice on the website.

Evaluation proposal

Academic Services will evaluate the Code of Practice through consultation with the Students Association, College Postgraduate Offices and the Postgraduate Research Supervisor Network. Evaluation will focus on content, particularly how colleagues are handling the relationship expectations, and communication of the Code (how and if users find out about it). The Task Group on Supervisor Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has already carried out some evaluation of the Code of Practice as part of its CPD survey and Academic Services will incorporate that with other information to prepare an evaluation report for a future Committee meeting.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Plan objectives of leadership in learning and research.

Action requested

The Committee to approve the attached amendments for publication and the plans for evaluating the Code of Practice.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Academic Services communicates updates to the Code of Practice in the annual update on regulations and policies.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

There are no resources associated with updating and evaluating the Code of Practice as this is part of Academic Services core business.

2. Risk assessment

Updating broken links mitigates the risks of directing readers to missing or out of date information. As no material changes are proposed, no other risks are associated with the amendments to the Code of Practice.

3. Equality and Diversity

Academic Services does not anticipate any equality and diversity implications from the amendments to the Code of Practice.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**

Key words

Postgraduate research supervision

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

24 April 2019



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students





Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

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Introduction

The University aims to give research students an exceptional and distinctive experience that prepares them to make significant contributions to knowledge during and beyond their period of study.

This Code provides guidance and practical advice for research students to assist them in maximising their potential. It also provides guidance and practical advice to support supervisors in undertaking their crucial roles.

Since the University has a diverse research community with a variety of practices, this Code highlights common features and should be read along with School and programme-specific information.

Most aspects of the Code are relevant to distance programmes, however where different arrangements apply these will be highlighted in the relevant programme handbooks. The Code focuses primarily on students and supervisors of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programmes and many aspects are also relevant to MSc by Research programmes. However some MSc by Research programmes may have different arrangements for supervision and assessment and these will be highlighted in the relevant programme handbook. Where students are studying on jointly delivered research degree programmes (for example

through Doctoral Training Centres), some of the arrangements for supervision, assessment and support may differ from those described in the Code.

The Code is not part of the University's formal regulatory framework. It should be read in conjunction with the formal requirements set out in the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, and other relevant University policies and regulations, many of which are referenced in the Code.



1. Roles and responsibilities

At the University of Edinburgh, each student is supervised by a team of at least two supervisors; a Principal (or “Lead”) Supervisor, and either a Co-Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor, who are appointed by the College.

The nature of the research project and the best interests of the student will determine the makeup of the supervisory team and the key responsibilities of each member of the supervision team must be agreed by the team at the beginning of the student’s programme.

However the responsibilities are distributed, all supervisors are expected to take an active role in supervision and all have a responsibility towards the student.

1.1 Students’ responsibilities

All students are expected to comply with the University’s policies, regulations and procedures which along with their programme handbook, other programme information and the terms and conditions of admission, form the contract between the student and University during their studies.

[University Student Contract](#)

Research students have particular responsibilities for:

The research project

- Fulfilling the requirements of their degree programme (PhD, MPhil, MSc by Research or taught professional doctorate) including any requirements for annual progression review.
- Taking advantage of the facilities and supervision offered by the University.
- Working as a professional, independent researcher accountable for the development of their own research.
- Maintaining ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of research.
- Working diligently and effectively throughout their studies.
- Following the rules of any other university, Associated Institution (see 1.2.4), company or other organisation that they are studying with as part of their programme.

The thesis

The thesis may take various different formats, such as a portfolio (see 4.1). Throughout this document, the term “thesis” is used to represent the assessment submission.

- Submitting a thesis, or portfolio representing the student’s research and findings. The programme handbook will give details on what is expected to be submitted for assessment.
- Producing, on time, a thesis that meets the criteria set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.
- Taking full responsibility for the quality of the thesis submitted for assessment (while the supervisor may advise on whether they think work is ready for submission, their opinion carries no guarantee of success in the assessment).

Supervision

- Making themselves available at times agreed and maintaining regular contact with their supervisors.
- Producing a record of each key supervision meeting and forwarding it to their supervisor for agreement.
- Discussing any proposed employment with their supervisor to ensure it does not impede the successful completion of the students’ programme of study.

Training and development

- Taking advantage of available research skills training.
- Reflecting on their broader transferable skills and professional development, and engaging with appropriate training opportunities.
- Participating in any training that is a required part of the programme.

Resolving problems

- Actively seeking advice and help from the sources identified in this Code if problems arise.
- Notifying their Principal Supervisor, or other relevant staff, of any special circumstances affecting their studies or assessment (see 5.4).

1.2 Supervisors’ responsibilities

1.2.1 Principal/Lead Supervisor

Role

The Principal Supervisor, sometimes referred to as Lead Supervisor in a Co-Supervisory team (see 1.2.2 below), has the main responsibility for supervision arrangements and guidance for the student throughout their programme of study.

This includes taking overall responsibility for:

- The administrative aspects of supervision, for example submitting requests for leave of absence or interruption of studies and ensuring minimum contact requirements are met.
- Ensuring appropriate approval for any co-supervision arrangements is obtained from College.

- Ensuring the student's progress is reviewed for each year of study.
- Providing advice on pastoral support as well as academic matters.
- Ensuring the student's intellectual property is respected.
- Leading on initial and ongoing discussions with the supervisory team to negotiate and agree on roles and responsibilities for each team member.
- Ensuring the student is aware of the responsibilities of individual supervisory team members.
- Communication within the supervisory team.

1.2.2 Co-Supervisor

Role

A co-supervision model may be chosen when it is clear that the student's work involves interdisciplinary research. When this model is chosen, the Co-Supervisor will play a major role in supervising the research project. The division of responsibilities between the Principal or Lead Supervisor and the Co-Supervisor must be agreed upon at the outset of the co-supervisory arrangement.

1.2.3 Assistant Supervisor

Role

The Assistant Supervisor's role involves fewer responsibilities than the Principal Supervisor, but in some cases may include closer day-to-day involvement in the student's research. Assistant Supervisors may also provide complementary expertise, such as specialised knowledge of a particular technique, or depending on the work context, day-to-day supervision in some cases.

1.2.4 Supervisors in Associated Institutions

The University recognises as "Associated Institutions" a range of non-commercial and non-degree-awarding organisations with which it collaborates on teaching, research and services to the community. Staff working in Associated Institutions acting as supervisors for the University's students have the same responsibilities as University of Edinburgh supervisors, and the same requirement to attend the University's supervisor briefing sessions.

If the Principal Supervisor is from an Associated Institution, then the University Supervisor and School Postgraduate Director are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Associated Institution Principal Supervisor has read the University's regulations and policies.
- Ensuring student progress is monitored in line with the University's regulations and policies.

1.2.5 Responsibilities of the supervisory team

The supervisory team should meet as soon as possible once supervisory arrangements are confirmed. At the first meeting, the team should discuss the following responsibilities and decide how to ensure that all of them are covered.

- Introducing the student to the subject area, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff in the School. For distance PhD students these introductions may be virtual.
- Advising the student on the key milestones of the degree, drawing up a research plan and timetable for producing the thesis.

- Advising the student on research ethics and integrity, including obtaining ethical approval.
- Advising the student on facilities required for the research and supporting the student in accessing these.
- Advising the student on how to prepare for annual progression review and the viva voce examination.
- Agreeing the frequency of supervision meetings and the means of recording meetings (see 2.1).
- Organising regular meetings to discuss all matters relating to the student's research, including feedback on written work.
- Advising on the student's professional development needs at the start of the programme and reviewing these throughout the student's studies.
- Encouraging students to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses where possible.
- Advising the student on where to find appropriate sources of additional support and signposting University student support services details included in section 6.3.
- Ensuring the student is aware of relevant health and safety policies and procedures.
- Encouraging the student to become an active member of the research community, for example by advising on attendance at relevant conferences and supporting the student in seeking funding for such events.



The supervisors should revisit the distribution of supervisory responsibilities again at the student's annual progression review and at other times as necessary.

1.3 The College Committee

Each College has a specific committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters. The committee's name may vary by College, but it will have overall responsibility for postgraduate research supervision, annual progression review decisions (based on recommendations from Schools) and authorising periods of leave or changes to study periods. In practice, Colleges may delegate some of these decision-making responsibilities to Schools (for example the Postgraduate Director). The College Committee also acts as the Board of Examiners for postgraduate research degree awards. Throughout this document the term "College Committee" is used to refer to all these roles.

2. Student-Supervisor relationship

The student-supervisor relationship is vital to all research degrees. Therefore close contact between supervisors and students is essential.

Respect, trust, confidence and fairness are essential elements of the student-supervisor relationship. Most interpersonal problems between students and supervisors can be avoided if students and supervisors contribute responsibly and professionally to their working relationship by being respectful, courteous, punctual and conscientious.

The University's Dignity and Respect policy promotes a positive working and studying culture which every student and member of staff contributes to and within which they can fulfil their potential.

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

2.1 Contact and supervisory meetings

Students rely on contact with their supervisors for guidance and intellectual input to their research. Supervision meetings provide time for discussing all matters relating to the student's research and development, including feedback on written work. Meetings and regular contact may take place face-to-face or online.

If the Principal Supervisor is absent for more than six consecutive weeks, the College will ensure alternative supervision arrangements are in place.

Agreeing the purpose and frequency of supervisory meetings

Students must maintain contact with their supervisor as required and at least twice in every three month period. It is important that both student and supervisory team agree, at the start of the programme, how often meetings will be held and the purpose of meetings. It is important that students can easily contact their supervisors for advice, so supervisors may also be available for additional non-scheduled meetings. Students can initiate meetings but supervisors need to ensure that the minimum contact requirements are met.

The amount of contact between student and supervisors will vary depending on the length of the programme, how the research is being done and how much support the student needs. For example, there may be more meetings in the first few months when the research project is being defined.

Sometimes supervision will be at distance, for example if the student is working away from Edinburgh or is on a recognised distance learning programme. The supervisory team and the student will need to make sure arrangements are in place to support distance supervision, for example internet access and consider any time differences at the student's location.

Keeping records of supervisory meetings

Recording supervisory meetings helps the student and supervisory team keep track of actions and decisions. Therefore, students should provide their Principal Supervisor with a written note including:

- The date and purpose of the meeting.
- Any problems identified.
- Action points.



2.2 What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down

If the supervisory relationship seems to have broken down, students or supervisors can contact their Postgraduate Adviser or School Postgraduate Director. If they cannot resolve the problem then the School Postgraduate Director or the student can contact the Secretary or Chair of the College Committee. If there are problems with the supervisory relationship then University staff will respect confidentiality and limit disclosures to as few colleagues as necessary to resolve the problem.

If there appears to be a breakdown in the student-supervisor relationship and problems are not able to be resolved locally, both the supervisor and the student should consider mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process, however the University will always try to resolve conflict in a positive way. That means that the parties who are in conflict should give informed consideration to mediation as a way of resolving the conflict. Schools can request mediation from the College which can contact the University's accredited mediator in Human Resources for advice.

Support for students experiencing problems with the supervisory relationship is available from the [Students' Association's Advice Place](#).

3. Annual progression review

Keeping on track with research can be challenging for students. Annual progression review meetings provide an opportunity to monitor and support students in maximising their chance of successfully completing on time.

For students to benefit fully from annual progression reviews it is important that supervisors provide constructive criticism about the student's work.

Annual progression reviews provide a formal record of how the research project and thesis are going and recognition of student achievements. They also offer a structured opportunity to discuss students' professional development and career aims, and identify any training needs.



3.1 Annual progression review process

Timescale

The first review takes place within nine to 12 months of matriculation. By then students will have independently produced an identifiable body of work that can be assessed.

Progress is then assessed annually until thesis submission (or more frequently if recommended by the Postgraduate Director for an individual student - see below). The timescales are the same for full and part-time students.

Process

- The annual review process is supported by an online system which students can access via the MyEd portal and staff via the EUCLID system.
- The process begins when the student is notified by a system-generated email that their annual review form report is ready to complete. Once the student has completed their part, the supervisors complete their sections.

- The student prepares a presentation or report, including a forward plan of their work, before the meeting, with help from the supervisor(s) if needed.
- The review will be conducted by a panel which includes all the supervisory team and may include one or more people appointed by the School.
- The student attends a review meeting where they may need to give an oral presentation and the panel will review the student's presentation or report. (Students studying at distance may choose to attend annual progression review meetings in person. If this is not possible meetings may take place online.)
- The panel will decide whether they think the student can progress to their next year, and will provide the student with feedback.
- The supervisors will advise the School Postgraduate Director (or Head of the Graduate School) regarding the formal progression recommendation for submission to the College Committee for its approval. The student, supervisors, reviewer and School Postgraduate Director, or Head of Graduate School, then sign-off the online report before the supervisors' and Directors' progression recommendation is submitted to the College Committee for its approval (students cannot participate in the progression decision-making process).
- If the panel identifies concerns about a student's progress following any review, then it can recommend several different ways forward (see 3.2).

What is reviewed

Programme handbooks will give information on annual progression review arrangements but in addition to discussing progress on the student's thesis, some of the things that reviews may include are:

- A timetable for progress agreed by the student and supervisory team.
- A record of whether deadlines have been met.
- The results of any taught elements of the programme.
- The student's report on any programme of skills training they have undertaken to support their research and any transferable skills development they have undertaken.

Reviewing supervision arrangements

Sometimes a student's research changes direction and may move away from the supervisors' expertise. The annual progression review lets supervisors consider their own competence to deal with any new research area. It also provides an opportunity for the supervisory team to revisit the distribution of supervisory responsibility. If different expertise is needed to support the student, the School can recommend a change in supervisors to the College Committee.

Guidance and regulations

Guidance for students on completing their online annual progression review is available on Student Systems' website.

[Guidance on postgraduate research annual progression review form](#)

Guidance for supervisors on the annual progression review system and their role is available on Student Systems' website.

[Principal and lead supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

[Additional supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

The regulations on annual progression review, including the recommendations that can be made following a review, are in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

3.2 Problems with progress

Postgraduate research study is challenging and sometimes students may experience problems making progress. To help support students, it is important for supervisors to be open about any difficulties they foresee with successful completion. There are various options available to support students experiencing problems with progress and University student support services may be able to help with non-academic problems.

A supervisor who thinks that progress has been consistently unsatisfactory should discuss the problem with the student and follow this up with a written record of the discussion for the student. Unsatisfactory progress will also be noted in annual reports, and flagged for remedial action.

If a student is having difficulties make progress with their programme of study, this should be identified during the annual progression review. If the annual progression review panel identifies that a student is not making satisfactory progress, then the Postgraduate Director or Head of Graduate School, in consultation with the supervisors may recommend one of the following:

- Deferment of a decision (part-time students' first year review only).
- That a further (repeat) review takes place within three months.
- Registration for a different postgraduate research or taught degree.
- Exclusion from study (this option is rarely used).

Supervisors will provide students with a written explanation of their assessment in these cases.

The annual progression review may occasionally record serious problems, or recommend exclusion from study. If the supervisors and Director are recommending exclusion, the College will consider the recommendations in line with the University's Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study (see Section 5.6).

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

[University Procedure for withdrawal and exclusion from study](#)

4. Thesis preparation and assessment

Writing up and submitting the thesis in line with the timescales set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations or programme handbook should be the priority in a student's final year.

4.1 The thesis

Students must submit a thesis representing their research and findings. Some submissions will be in alternative formats to the traditional thesis. The Postgraduate Degree Regulations and programme handbook specify any further requirements for designs, composition, artworks or performances and their display, presentation and documentation.

Additional guidance on some specific aspects of the thesis format and presentation, such as the requirement for a lay summary, completing the signed declaration, including publications in the thesis and thesis binding requirements and electronic formats is available on the University website.

[Academic policies and regulations for research students](#)

More information on typical milestones and support in preparing the thesis is available on the Institute for Academic Development website.

[Writing up your PhD](#)

4.2 Thesis preparation

In preparation for thesis submission, student and supervisor should agree a timetable for completing the thesis.

The maximum thesis length is set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. While the University's regulations do not stipulate a minimum length, Schools or Colleges may have additional guidance on expectations which supervisors will be able to advise on.

Thesis regulations including notice of intention to submit, format, previously published material and the signed declaration are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

Thesis requirements

The criteria for the award of research degrees as set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations or otherwise agreed by the Senate Researcher Experience Committee are that the thesis must:

- Be the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised clearly on the declarations page of the thesis, and must not have been presented for any other degree except as specified on the declarations page.
- Present a coherent body of work.
- Make an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of study.
- Relate particular research projects to the general body of knowledge in the field and show adequate knowledge of relevant literature.
- Demonstrate critical judgement of the ~~candidate's~~ own work and that of other scholars in the field.
- Present the results of the research in a critical and scholarly way.
- ~~Make clear the intentions of the work, its background, methods and conclusions.~~
- Contain material worthy of publication.
- Demonstrate that any publications included in the thesis are the students own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised clearly on the declarations page.

~~The thesis should be written to:~~

- ~~Be satisfactory in its literary presentation.~~
- ~~Provide a coherent structure with full and adequate references.~~

- ~~Be understandable to a scholar in the same field.~~
- Be presented in a clear, consistent and accessible format.



Additional information

More information on thesis submission, including thesis submission forms, is available on the University website.

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

The University's [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#) 

4.3 Thesis submission

Students should complete a Notice of Intention to Submit form, along with a thesis abstract and Access to Thesis and Publication of Abstract form at least two months prior to submission. Pre-submission forms are submitted to the College Office. Once the thesis is ready for submission, the student presents it to the College Office including the abstract and lay summary. Supervisors and Graduate Schools will be able to advise students where to submit their thesis. Thesis submission forms are also available online.

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

4.4 Thesis assessment

Assessment regulations, including examiner roles and responsibilities, conduct of assessment, thesis regulations and assessment decisions are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

The University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

All research degrees (apart from MSc by Research) are assessed in two stages; the initial report by the examiners followed by an oral exam or viva voca, often referred to as the “viva”.

Each thesis is assessed by at least one External and one Internal Examiner, who are appointed by the College. Internal Examiners are members of University staff. External Examiners are from outside the University and have specialist knowledge relevant to the thesis.

Examiners' initial report

Before the viva, the examiners are asked to assess the thesis on the grounds set out in the regulations and as part of their report to consider:

- Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study?
- Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?
- Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?
- Does the thesis show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field?
- Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

The viva

The viva, is normally held within three months of thesis submission, however the exact date will depend on:

- When the Notice of Intention to Submit form is submitted by the student.
- When the thesis is submitted by the student.
- How long it takes to select and appoint examiners.
- How long the examiners require to examine the thesis.
- When everyone involved is available to meet for the oral examination, including any visa restrictions on the student's availability.

The examiners and the student attend the viva. The Internal Examiner is responsible for ensuring the arrangements for the exam are made and for chairing the exam. Sometimes a non-examining chair will be appointed and the ~~student will be notified by the Internal Examiner~~ if this is the case. The role of the non-examining chair is included in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. The examiners may use the viva to establish a student's knowledge of ~~the field of their~~ research, to establish the extent of any collaboration and to confirm that the work is the student's own.

The viva is usually held in Edinburgh, but where necessary the College Committee may approve a remote viva by video link.

University guidance on [PhD by Research oral examinations by video link](#)

Examiner recommendations

At the end of the viva, the examiners may, if they have agreed a recommendation, indicate their recommendation to the student. It is important to note that this recommendation is not final and is subject to approval by the College Committee, and examiners will make this clear to the student. Possible examiner recommendations after the viva:

- a) Award PhD/Doctorate
- b) Minor corrections needed (see 4.5)
- c) Additional oral examination needed – no further work on the thesis required, or stated minor corrections (see 4.5)
- d) Additional work on the thesis – no oral re-examination needed (see 4.5)
- e) Substantial Work on Thesis and Oral Re-Examination Needed – Resubmission for PhD/Doctorate (see 4.6)
- f) Award MPhil
- g) Award MPhil following Minor Corrections (see 4.6)
- h) Substantial Work on Thesis Needed before Resubmission and oral examination for MPhil (see 4.6)
- i) Award MSc by Research
- j) Fail

4.5 Thesis corrections

The Internal Examiner will certify corrections and the External Examiner may also ask to see corrections before the degree is awarded.

Minor corrections

After the viva, the examiners may ask students to make minor corrections to the thesis. These may be editorial corrections or to address minor weaknesses before the award is confirmed. Corrections will need to be submitted within three months (or four if a further oral exam is recommended).

Additional work

After the viva, the examiners may ask students to carry out additional work on the thesis, which may require further supervision. ~~These corrections will be more than required for minor corrections and will be stipulated by the examiners.~~ The examiners will set the period within which this work must be submitted, but submission will normally be within six months.

4.6 Thesis resubmission

Following the viva, the examiners may ask students to carry out further work on the thesis and to resubmit it for the same or a different degree. If resubmission for a different degree is recommended, the examiners may require minor corrections (see 4.5) or more substantial work on the thesis. Where more substantial work is required the examiners will stipulate what is needed and set a period for resubmission. Supervisors will guide students through the necessary steps to meet the examiners' requirements and continue to provide supervision as needed.

Students will get a clear written statement from the examiners, approved by the College Committee, of what revisions are required.

The examiners will assess the resubmitted thesis against the written statement on re-examination, and will not introduce any new criticisms of previously examined material.

The College Office will be able to advise on the resubmission process.

4.7 Final thesis submission

After students have successfully completed their thesis assessment, they must submit a final copy of their thesis to the College Office. An electronic copy must also be deposited with the Library. More information on final thesis submission is available from the College Office. Information on electronic submission is available from the Library.

[University Library's theses website](#)



5. Absences and concessions

Sometimes students may need to have time away from the University or from their studies.

This section gives advice on ways the University can support students through a variety of situations that may impact on their study.

5.1 Leave of absence

Students studying on campus in Edinburgh sometimes need to conduct part of their research away from Edinburgh. This is referred to as a leave of absence. Students who want a leave of absence of 30 calendar days or more should talk to their Principal Supervisor, who will be able to advise on obtaining permission.

A leave of absence should:

- Benefit the research programme.
- Not be detrimental to the research and the student's development and participation in the University's academic community.
- Not conflict with any other requirement of the student's programme of study.
- Not conflict with any obligations for the student to be available for on-campus activity.
- Have a working timetable agreed by supervisors and student.

- Be accompanied by an agreed method for submitting written work and receiving feedback, and for supervisory meetings, established by the supervisors and student.
- Be consistent with any funder requirements.

Further information on how leave of absence is approved, and student support arrangements during leave, is available from the College Office. Leave of absence does not apply to students on recognised distance learning programmes.

Leave of absence for international students

Tier 4 students are normally expected to carry out all of their study on campus in Edinburgh. However, in some cases they may need to study at another location; for compulsory and optional activities related to their programme. In these cases, students should apply for a leave of absence. The University will continue to sponsor student visas during the leave of absence, providing it can maintain Tier 4 sponsor duties, and student Tier 4 visas will remain valid. Advice is available from visahelp@ed.ac.uk.

5.2 Interruptions of study

Authorised interruption of study, usually referred to as “interruption”, is available for students who are unable to study for a while. This may be because of health or family problems for example, and students should notify their supervisor as soon as the need for an interruption arises. Following discussion with their supervisor, students are responsible for completing and submitting a form to request the interruption. Interruptions will be authorised when there is good reason and examples of what is considered good reason are given in the University policy on authorised interruptions of study.

Information on how to request an interruption, important considerations and where to find further advice are available in the Authorised Interruption of Study Policy.

[University policy on Authorised Interruption of Study](#)



5.3 Extensions of study

The University expects that the thesis will be submitted for assessment within the period stated in the programme handbook. Extensions to this period are available in exceptional circumstances and must be agreed by the Postgraduate Director and approved by the College Committee. For example, an extension may be available if unforeseen difficulties have held up the research or completion of the thesis. A strong case is required and must be supported by the Principal Supervisor.

To request an extension:

- The Principal Supervisor submits the request.
- The academic reasons for the extension, are stated in the request.
- A plan of work towards submitting the thesis, with milestones and specific dates agreed with the Principal Supervisor is included in the request.

Important things to consider when requesting an extension:

- It must be made before the end of the student’s maximum submission date (for example, within four years for a full-time PhD).
- It may have an impact on a student’s Tier 4 visa.
- It may have an impact on student funding.
- It may have an impact on council tax (for example discounts and exemptions).
- There are restrictions to the amount of time that can be requested for extension – these are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
- Additional fees will be incurred if an extension of study request is approved – see the University’s [tuition fees policy](#).

For further information and advice:

For Tier 4 students – [Edinburgh Global](#)

[The Advice Place](#) – free, impartial advice for students

University [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)



5.4 Special circumstances affecting studies and assessment

Special circumstances are exceptional circumstances beyond a student's control that significantly impact on their research performance, attendance or assessment submissions.

Students should discuss any circumstances affecting their ability to engage with their studies with their Principal Supervisor first.

Support for students with special circumstances that are disrupting their studies can be offered through authorised interruption or extension of study (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). However, there may be times when personal circumstances affect a student's ability to participate in an assessment, for example annual progression review or viva. If these are affected, it may be possible to reschedule or change the format of the meeting or exam.

The College Committee may also take into account any special circumstances when considering recommendations from an annual progression review or oral exam. Therefore, it is important that students notify their Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Director or Postgraduate Adviser in writing of any special circumstance before the relevant assessment (for example annual progression review or viva) or the College Committee meeting.

Examples of circumstances that might have a significant impact include:

- Significant short-term physical illness or injury.
- Significant short-term mental ill-health.
- A long-term or chronic physical health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently.
- A long-term or chronic mental health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently.
- Bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship.
- A long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage.
- Exceptional (non-routine) caring responsibilities.
- Experience of sexual harassment or assault.
- Experience of other types of harassment.
- Victim of a crime which is likely to have significant emotional impact.
- Military conflict, natural disaster, or extreme weather conditions.

Examples of circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted include:

- A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently, or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment.
- A minor short-term illness or injury (for example, a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on assessment.
- Occasional low mood, stress or anxiety.
- Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable.
- Holidays.
- Financial issues.
- Pressure of academic work (unless this contributes to ill-health).
- Poor time-management.
- Lack of awareness of dates or times of assessment submission or examination.
- Failure, loss or theft of data, a computer or other equipment.
- Commitments to paid or voluntary employment.
- Death of a pet.

For taught courses taken by postgraduate research students, the University's Special Circumstances Policy applies.

[University's Special Circumstances Policy](#)

5.5 Withdrawal from studies

Withdrawal from studies is a voluntary decision by the student. Any student may withdraw permanently from the University at any point in the year. However, before applying to withdraw, students are strongly advised to consult their Principal Supervisor and to consider the implications of withdrawal. More information is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

5.6 Exclusion from studies

While it is very rare for students to be excluded from study, there are some circumstances in which the University will consider this option. These include:

- Where a student has not demonstrated satisfactory academic progress at an annual progression review.
- Where a student has not submitted a thesis by the end of their maximum period of study.
- Where a student has not met any engagement requirements as set out in their programme handbook.

More information about all the potential grounds for exclusion is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

5.7 Vacation leave

Students can take up to six weeks' vacation time in a year, with agreement from their supervisor. There is no need to apply for an interruption of study when taking vacation leave.



5.8 Student maternity and parental leave

Students who are pregnant, about to become a parent or guardian, or adopt a child during their study should let their supervisor know so they can provide academic advice. Flexible arrangements, such as time off, modifications to attendance or interruption of study, can be put in place to support students who are to become parents and more information is available in the University student maternity policy.

[The University's Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy](#)

6. Other support and information

The University offers a wide range of support services, resources and information, including academic support, wellbeing resources and skills training.

6.1 Resolving problems

Supervisors are the first point of contact for students if any problems arise and will either be able to offer advice themselves or direct the student to other sources of advice.

There may be times when students feel unable to confide in their supervisors. If so, they can get in touch with the Postgraduate Adviser if their subject area has one, or the School's Postgraduate Director. Contact details of key School staff are available in the programme handbook. If the problem cannot be resolved by them, the student may then consult with the Secretary or Chair of the College Committee.

Supervisors can also seek help in resolving problems by the same routes.

6.2 Programme handbooks

The School Office will provide students with their programme handbook. Programme handbooks are an important source of information for students. They are part of the University's academic governance framework and include programme-specific information on:

- Supervision arrangements.
- Thesis requirements.
- Research skills training.
- Professional development.
- Teaching opportunities.
- Research culture.

Handbooks also include information on programme organisation, assessment and feedback, key contacts and locations, student support services, opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experiences, attendance requirements, student representation structure, data protection and health and safety information.

6.3 Student support services

The University, Colleges, Schools and Students' Association provide a comprehensive range of support services to enable students to make the most of their time as part of the University community. Many student support units offer online as well as face to face services, although the range accessible to distance students may differ from those for on-campus students.

6.3.1 Students' Association

Research students are automatically members of Edinburgh University Students' Association. The Students' Association provides a range of services, including advice and representation, peer learning and support, events and entertainment. Over 300 student-run societies are supported by the Students' Association. For more details, see the association's website: eusa.ed.ac.uk/postgrad or visit one of the Students' Association buildings at Teviot Row House, Potterrow, Pleasance, or King's Buildings House.

The Advice Place

The Advice Place is home to the Students' Association's professional advice team. They offer free, impartial and confidential information for students on everything and anything including funding, accommodation, student welfare, and academic matters. For full details on the range of advice on offer, visit:

[The Advice Place](#)

Student representation

At the beginning of each academic year, Schools elect Postgraduate Student Representatives ('Reps') who are trained and supported by the Students' Association and work closely with their Postgraduate Director. Postgraduate research students also elect a University-wide Postgraduate Research Rep. Research students are encouraged to engage with student representation processes and elections so that Postgraduate Research Reps can work with them to improve their University experience and the Students' Association can adequately represent postgraduate research students.

6.3.2 Career development

Research graduates enter many different careers both within and out of higher education. To ensure students make satisfying, well-informed career decisions the University encourages research students to explore their career options, and to consider their career priorities throughout their study.

Considering career development from the start of the programme will ensure students both develop as researchers and prepare for professional success, whatever employment sector they enter. Throughout their studies, students should take advantage of the many opportunities they will have to gain experience, develop skills, access relevant training, engage with employers, and build professional networks to prepare for their future career. Students are encouraged to reflect on and record their experiences so they can consider areas of strength and interest, which will help them to identify suitable professional development opportunities and to make a successful career transition.

Research students can get support from the Careers Service to explore career options, consider what is important to them in a career, and to implement career decisions through job search and application support. The Careers Service runs career management workshops for research students, organises employer networking events and careers fairs, and offers individual career development consultations. The service also has online career management resources for research students.

[Careers Services: Information for postgraduate students](#)

6.3.3 English language tuition

English Language Education (ELE) provides classes, workshops, and materials for international students who would benefit from English language support whilst studying for their degree. Supervisors can refer a student who needs help with English to ELE directly, even if the student has not taken the Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM). The student will then be offered English language tuition, or independent study materials and advice.

[English Language Education](#)

6.3.4 Library collections and services

A wide range of library services, collections and study spaces are provided to support both taught and research elements of students' work. Collections include print and digital books and journals, rare books and special collections, artworks, images, museum items and archives. Digital and print library resources are available for students based in Edinburgh. In addition

to electronic resources, printed library materials are digitised where possible for students undertaking online or distance learning.

[Library services](#)

[Library resources for online distance learning students](#)

Academic Support Librarians

There is an Academic Support Librarian allocated to each School. Their role is to:

- Provide advice and assistance on using library services and collections.
- Demonstrate the use of information resources by arranging subject-specific information skills sessions.
- Help students' with research by arranging one-to-one advice sessions.
- Advise on research data management.

[Academic Support Librarians](#)

Centre for Research Collections

The Centre for Research Collections (CRC) is the only place in the UK where researchers can access material from across collection types; from medieval manuscripts to contemporary art.

6.3.5 Computing resources

Information Services (IS) provides a wide range of advice on all aspects of computing and IT.

[IS information for students](#)

[IS information for researchers and teaching staff](#)

Email

All students are provided with a University email account and this is used as the official means of communication.

[University policy on the use of email for contacting students](#)

Computing facilities

Schools will ensure that students have access to specialised computing facilities where required, and receive appropriate training. Training will cover how to access and use computing facilities relevant to particular degree programmes and research projects.

The Research Data Service offers tools, support and training to students working with research data. Solutions for research data management and all of their data-related requirements.

[Research Data Service](#)

Research Support in the Information Services Group (ISG) offers everything students need to know about managing and publishing their research.

[Research support](#)

6.3.6 Student Disability Service

The Student Disability Service provides information and advice to disabled students and staff. The Service:

- Provides a range of student support assistants who can proofread texts, assist in the library and act as notetakers.
- Supports students to apply for statutory or University funding, if they are entitled to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or equivalent funding for international and EU students.
- Determines a range of reasonable adjustments based on assessment of student needs.
- Advises supervisors and professional services staff on supporting disabled students and specific support adjustments to study, examination and assessment procedures.

Students with impairments (including dyslexia, long term mental health problems, students on the autistic spectrum, as well as physical and sensory impairments) that will impact on study should contact the Student Disability Service as soon as possible.

[Student Disability Service](#)

Regulations on “Reasonable Adjustments” to assessments for disabled students are included in the University’s assessment regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

6.4 Wellbeing support services

Postgraduate research study can be stressful at times. To support students to manage their wellbeing, the University provides a variety of services.

6.4.1 Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling Service offers one-to-one counselling, workshops and consultation, and training for staff. The service aims to help students work through their difficulty, understand themselves better and find ways of managing their situation.

[Student Counselling Service](#)

6.4.2 Health and wellbeing

Details of a range of services provided for students by the University and throughout Edinburgh for physical and mental wellbeing are available on the University's Student website.

[Health and wellbeing](#)

6.5 Research and skills training and support for students

The University provides information, support and training for research, digital and transferable skills. These skills are vital for development as an independent researcher and important for life and career after the degree.

Research, digital and transferable skills are often developed as an integral part of supervision and engagement with the research community. Some students may also be able to access credit-bearing research methods courses and in some cases these are a required part of a student's programme of study.

Digital, transferable and professional skills development training is provided by Colleges, Schools, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), the Careers Service, the Students' Association and Information Services Group. Students whose programmes of studies are delivered in partnership with other universities (for example via Doctoral Training Centres) may also have access to training opportunities delivered through those partnerships. Students also have access to online and University Library skills development resources, and digital skills development resources through Lynda.com, an online skills development service.

[University Lynda.com information pages](#)

Students are encouraged to take the initiative in their own development and record their portfolio of skills, including:

- Attendance on regular training and development opportunities in accordance with their personal development needs and the demands of their research.
- Use of online training to develop research, digital and transferable skills.
- Use of the library and online resources.
- Engagement with the research community including presenting at seminars, tutoring and demonstrating, producing publications and attending conferences.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) website also provides some useful information on doctoral skills development, including a training needs assessment.

[IAD Doctoral researchers website](#)

Annual progression reviews take account of what training and development opportunities students have undertaken and offer an opportunity to discuss future needs.

6.6 Training and support for supervisors

The University provides training and events to support supervisors in maintaining expertise needed to perform their supervisory role. Supervisors are required to attend a College or School supervisor briefing every five years.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) runs regular Postgraduate Research Supervisor Network events which focus on specific elements of supervision. The IAD also hosts informal, drop-in supervisor coffee discussion sessions to which all supervisors are welcome. Network events and informal discussions are advertised in the supervisor newsletter and on the IAD website.

Contact the Institute for Academic Development for more information on briefings, events and supervisor support. Email: iad.phdsupervisors@ed.ac.uk

[IAD postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

6.7 Students working during study

Work benefits both student and employer, but good self-management is needed to make sure students meet their research commitments. It is also important for students to maintain a good work-life balance.

The University will employ full-time postgraduate research students for no more than an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year (this is University policy), and recommends that students also apply this limit to work with other employers. Students should discuss any proposed employment with their Principal Supervisor.

If students get funding for their research, they must also check whether there are any restrictions or conditions on the amount of work they are allowed to

do. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

For students on Tier 4 visas, there are additional limits on employment set by the UK Home Office. More information on visa implications for students is available on the University website:

[Part-time work during studies](#) 

More information on combining part-time work with study is available on the Careers Service website:

[Part-time and vacation work](#)

The University's Policy for tutors and demonstrators is also available online:

[Tutors and demonstrators](#)

6.8 Fees and funding

6.8.1 Paying fees and fee status

Student fees and tuition costs are paid to the University Finance Department and more information on paying fees is available on their website. Tuition fee status and discount information is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website.

[Student Academic Fees – Finance Department](#)

[Tuition fees – Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

6.8.2 Scholarships and funding

Information about scholarships and financial support for research students is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website.

[Funding for UK/EU students](#)

[Funding for international students](#)

[Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

UK Research and Innovation is the organisation which brings together the seven UK Research Councils (UKRC). Their website includes links to UKRC research funding information.

[UK Research and Innovation](#)

6.9 Degree and assessment regulations and other University policies

Postgraduate research degrees are governed by the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations. These regulations cover issues such as study and submission periods, leave of absence, interruptions, extensions and withdrawal from study. Supervision regulations and the grounds for award of doctoral degrees are also here, as well as additional programme specific regulations.

The Postgraduate Degree regulations  are in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) website.

[DRPS](#)

Research degrees are assessed under the University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. These regulations cover the conduct of assessment, including annual progression reviews, thesis assessment and viva, thesis regulations and assessment decisions.

Some research degrees may contain taught elements and these will be assessed under the University's Taught Assessment Regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

[Taught Assessment Regulations](#)

In addition to these regulations, students must follow all the other University regulations, policies and procedures. The University's student contract encompasses the policies and regulations that support the partnership between students and staff. Students should familiarise themselves with these documents, particularly those that are most likely to be relevant to postgraduate research study.

[The student contract](#)

6.10 Student appeals

The University has an appeals process to allow students to request a review of a decision in relation to progression, degree award, student conduct, fitness to practice or exclusion. Information on the Student Appeal Regulations, arrangements and timescales for submitting an appeal and where to get advice is available on the University website.

Supervisor role in appeals

A supervisor's pastoral role continues after an appeal is lodged, even though the appeal might question the quality of supervision. After taking appropriate advice, supervisors will decide whether to assist the student in making their appeal case.

[Appeals](#)

6.11 Complaints

Students are encouraged to resolve any problems locally as early as possible, however if this is not possible a formal procedure is also available. The University's complaints procedure is designed to ensure that complaints are properly investigated and given careful and fair consideration. More information is available on the University Student website.

[Complaints](#)

6.12 Student conduct

Advice on expected conduct is also available on the University Student website.

[Student conduct](#)

6.12.1 Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism and cheating, is covered by the Code of Student Conduct. More information is available on the University website.

[Academic misconduct](#)

6.13 Links to useful resources

Alphabetical list of links to University regulations, policies, guidance and other useful information.

[The Advice Place](#) – Edinburgh University Students' Association's professional advice service

[Assessment Regulations](#)

[Authorised Interruption of Study Policy](#)

[Careers Service](#) – information for PhD students

[Centre for Research Collections](#)

[Complaint Procedure](#)

[Computing Regulations](#)

[Conduct, Student Code](#)

[Contacting Students by Email Policy](#)

[Data Protection – University policy](#) – includes use of personal data by students

[Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study \(DRPS\)](#)

[Digital Skills Programme](#)

[Dignity & Respect Policy](#)

[Disclosure of Information about Students - Guidelines](#)

[Equality and Diversity](#)

[Edinburgh University Students' Association Postgraduate Activities](#)

[Glossary of Terms](#)  defines terms used in the Degree Regulations

[Graduations](#)

[Health and Safety – University policy and codes of practice](#)

[Health and wellbeing](#)

[Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses, Guidance](#)

[Lay summary guidance](#)

[Library Regulations](#)

[Library theses website](#)

[Mental Health, Student Strategy](#)

[New students' website](#)

[Peer proofreading – The Advice Place scheme](#) 

[Plagiarism guidelines](#)

[Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Annual Progression Review Form software help \(PGR Supervisors\)](#)

[Postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

[Research support](#)

[Research Data Service](#)

[Research ethics and integrity resources](#)

[Smoking - University Policy](#)

[Social Media, University Guidelines](#)

[Student website - University](#) (including Health and Wellbeing, Academic Life, Careers, Money and Fees information)

[Student Appeal Regulations](#)

[Student Information Pages](#) (Scholarships and Student Funding, Student Information Points, Timetabling)

[Video linked viva examinations, Guidance](#)

References

[The Quality Code, Chapter B11: Research Degrees, Quality Assurance Agency](#)

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Degree Regulations [2018/19](#)

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees [2018/19](#)



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The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees Updates 2019

Executive Summary

The Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees provides guidance and practical advice for both External Examiners and University staff. In consultation with Colleges, Academic Services has reviewed the Handbook for consistency with changes to University degree and assessment regulations, the revised UK Quality Code, UK employment, freedom of information and data protection law. The review has simplified the handbook to be more user-friendly and removed redundant or replicated content. The attached draft highlights the proposed changes.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Reviewing the handbook aligns with the University's Strategic Plan objective of leadership in learning and research.

Action requested

Consider the proposed amendments for approval.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Academic Services will communicate the handbook updates in the annual policies and regulations communication in June 2019.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

No resource implications are identified in relation to the proposed changes.

2. Risk assessment

Academic Services has not identified any risks in relation to the proposed changes. There is a minor risk of inconsistency with University regulations if the handbook is not updated to reflect changes in regulations.

3. Equality and Diversity

The changes do not propose any change to procedures. Academic Services does not anticipate any equality and diversity implications from the amendments to the handbook.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Key words

Postgraduate research External Examiners

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

24 April 2019

Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



Purpose of Guidance

The handbook provides guidance and practical advice on external examining of research degrees. It sets out the expected standards and best practice for both External Examiners and University staff, recognising the diversity of contexts and practices across the University.

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Scope: Guidance is not Mandatory

The handbook sets out the expected standards and best practice for both External Examiners and University academic and support staff. **It is primarily for the information of External Examiners, but is also relevant for staff involved in postgraduate research assessment and administration.**

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Contact Officer: Susan Hunter, Academic Policy Officer, Susan.Hunter5@ed.ac.uk

Document control

Approved: 03.03.15	Starts: 03.03.15	Equality impact assessment: N/A	Amendments: May 2019	Next Review: March 2017/2021/22
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Approving authority

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

Consultation undertaken

College Postgraduate Office staff, College postgraduate committees with responsibility for research degrees (including Graduate Schools), support services, External Examiner Project (taught), Researcher Experience Committee.

Section responsible for guidance maintenance & review

Academic Services

Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations

Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees
https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf
www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf
 Postgraduate DRPS
www.drps.ed.ac.uk/

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UK Quality Code

UK Quality Code: [External Expertise and Research Degrees Chapters B7 and B11](#)

Guidance superseded by this guidance

None – this is new guidance [Previous versions of this guidance](#)

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 [650-651-21384490](tel:65065121384490).

Keywords

External examiner, viva examiner, PhD examiner, MPhil examiner, PGR examiner, postgraduate research examiner, PhD examining, MPhil examining, PGR examining, postgraduate research examining, viva examining



Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees

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Introduction

This handbook provides guidance and practical advice on external examining of research degrees. It sets out the expected standards and best practice for both External Examiners and University staff, recognising the diversity of contexts and practices across the University. It is divided into two parts; the first part "The External Examiner" covers the responsibilities and expectations of this role, and the second part explains the External Examining Process.

The handbook does not supersede the University's regulations and should be read in conjunction with the postgraduate regulations set out in

- [The University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study \(DRPS\)](#)
- [The Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.](#)

The handbook is consistent with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11: Research Degrees](#)

1 Welcome Statement

1.1

Thank you for agreeing to act as an External Examiner at Edinburgh. The University fully appreciates the commitment that you have shown in agreeing to undertake this role.

Edinburgh strongly adheres to the precepts of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11: Research Degrees \(June 2012\)](#); The University recognises that External Examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards, and in ensuring rigorous and fair assessment processes.

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1.2

This handbook ~~sets out~~ aims to provide essential information to External Examiners to allow them to carry out their duties at Edinburgh. It ~~provides~~ includes information on ~~the External Examiners'~~ role and responsibilities ~~of External Examiners and as well as~~ guidance on administrative and business processes ~~regarding~~ arrangements for thesis assessment, submission of reports and payment of fees and expenses.

1.3

~~This handbook is intended primarily for the information of External Examiners, but is also relevant for staff involved in postgraduate research assessment and administration.~~

1.34

External Examiners ~~are appointed to~~ provide impartial and independent assessment and advice on postgraduate research degrees. External Examiners also provide invaluable independent feedback to the University on its postgraduate research assessment procedures.

1.45

~~Colleges are responsible for appointing~~ External Examiners for postgraduate research degrees ~~are appointed by the relevant College~~. The University's regulations set out the requirements for ~~the appointment of External Examiners for postgraduate research degrees, and this handbook gives a summary of~~ details of which have been summarised in this document.

The External Examiner

2 Role and Key Responsibilities

External Examiners are a fundamental part of the assessment process for postgraduate research degrees assessment process. They assess the written thesis against the criteria set by the University (see also section 9) and attend and participate in the oral examination (viva voce). Feedback to the College or School on the assessment process is also a key element of the External Examiner's role.

3 Summary of Key Responsibilities

- Assess the written thesis
- Attend the oral examination
- Complete and submit examiner report forms
- Provide an assessment of examination process
- Assess the resubmitted thesis, if required
- Attend the oral re-examination, if required
- Complete and submit re-examination report forms
- Provide an assessment of the re-examination process

4 Induction and Briefing

4.1

On approval, the External Examiner will receive a formal letter of appointment from the College or School, indicating the name of the candidate student to be assessed, School, degree, Internal Examiner(s) and Supervisor. A copy of the letter is sent copied as appropriate to the Internal Examiner and Supervisor for information.

4.2

The College will ensure that each Examiner is sent a copy of the thesis, together with information on how to access the appropriate regulations, guidance and report forms.

5 Terms of Appointment

The An External Examiner's is appointed appointment is for the period of assessment of the candidate's student's thesis. External Examiners are involved responsibilities begin once a student has submitted their thesis and continue until the the examiners make their final award recommendation is made to the College.

6 Summary of What the External Examiner can expect from the University

Responsibility for provision of the information is stated given in brackets after each category.

- Information and guidance on the University's assessment procedures and regulations (College Office, School Postgraduate Administrators)
- Key contact information (College Office)
- Information on the arrangements for the oral examination (Internal Examiner, College Office, School Postgraduate Administrators)

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- Information and guidance on the relevant forms for completion in relation to the assessment, examination and expenses (College Office)
- Prompt payment of fees and expenses, once the necessary, complete paperwork has been provided (College Office)

7 Qualifications and Expertise

7.1

~~It is the College Committee's responsibility to ensure that the External Examiner is competent to assess the degree.~~ External Examiners should normally be experienced members of the research/scholarly community. External Examiners must have the requisite experience to examine the degree programme at the level at which it is offered. ~~They need to meet the responsibilities set out by the College Postgraduate Committee and comply with quality and standards requirements. They need to meet the responsibilities set out by the relevant College Committee and comply with quality and standards requirements as set out in the University's degree regulations.~~

7.2

~~The relevant College Committee will specify responsibilities and requirements to Examiners.~~

7.23

~~It is the responsibility of the College Committee to ensure that the External Examiner is competent to assess the degree.~~ The External Examiner is appointed for ~~his or her~~their specialist knowledge, whereas the Internal Examiner may be a generalist or an expert in only part of the subject matter of the thesis.

7.3

~~Guidance Advice for inexperienced External Examiners on the University's regulations and processes for inexperienced External Examiners~~ is available from the Internal Examiner and/or Non-Examining Chair ~~(where appointed)~~ of the oral examination.

~~The University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees set out the required qualifications and expertise.~~

8 Conflicts of Interest

8.1

No External Examiner shall be involved in any assessment or examination in which they have any private, personal or commercial interest, for example a current or previous personal, family or legal relationship with a student being assessed.

~~The University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees set out requirements on avoiding potential conflicts of interest.~~

8.2

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-On nomination, the proposed External Examiner has the opportunity to declare any conflict of interests that would compromise their role as External Examiner. If ~~a change in an conflict of interest arises during an~~ External Examiner's ~~circumstances during~~ the term of appointment ~~gives rise to any conflicts of interest~~, the External Examiner may need to resign or the contract may need to be terminated unless the conflict of interest can be resolved. The External Examiner must keep the College informed of any changes in circumstances that may give rise to a conflict of interests ~~so that appropriate action can be taken~~.

8.32

~~If there is a potential conflict of interest the relevant~~The College Committee will ~~decide consider potential conflicts of interest and decide whether a conflict of interest exists and~~ what, if any, further action needs to be taken. ~~Relevant More~~ information ~~can be found in is available in~~ the University's policy on conflict of interest.

- [The University's Policy on Conflict of Interest](#)

8.3 Disclosure of intimate relationships

~~The University requires any member of staff, including External Examiners, to disclose an intimate relationship with any University of Edinburgh student (see Policy on Disclosure of Intimate Relationships).~~

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Field Code Changed

9 Expected Standards for Postgraduate Research programmes of study

The grounds for the award of Postgraduate Research degrees are set out in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Studies. Guidance is also available on the University's expectations when students choose to include published articles in a thesis.

- [DRPS](#)
- [Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses](#)

10 Participation in Assessment and Examination Procedures

10.1 Thesis assessment

The normal expectation is that Examiners will read the thesis and submit their pre-viva report within three months. External Examiners are required to submit their initial, independent pre-viva report (Part I) form to the College after assessing the written thesis and within the timescale indicated ~~(at least five working days before the viva)~~. (see also section 13)

10.2 Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

External Examiners have an examining role in the oral examination and are expected to attend (see also section 14).

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10.3 Re-Examination

When required, External Examiners also have a role in the re-examination process (see also section 16).



The Examining Process

12 Nomination and Appointment of Examiners

12.1

Each ~~candidate student~~ undertaking a research programme ~~must be examined~~ ~~is assessed~~ by at least ~~two Examiners~~, one ~~of whom must be an~~ External Examiner ~~and one Internal Examiner~~. ~~If a candidate is a member of staff of the University, then the College will appoint at least two External Examiners must be appointed. Colleges may also appoint A~~ second External Examiner ~~may also be appointed~~ in particular cases, for example if the thesis topic is interdisciplinary.

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12.2

The ~~Head of School in the organising School or Institute initiates the~~ recommendation for the appointment of External Examiner(s) ~~for the degree should be initiated by the Head of School in the organising School or Institute,~~ in consultation with the student's Supervisor(s). Schools should ~~use the appropriate form to~~ make nominations for ~~the Examiner appointments of Examiners using the appropriate form which is available online.~~

- [University Examiner forms](#)

12.3

Schools should submit nomination forms to the College at least four weeks prior to the date of submission, ~~to This~~ allows time for ~~the College Committee proposal to be approved~~ ~~by the relevant College Committee~~ and for ~~sending~~ the appropriate correspondence to ~~be sent to~~ the Examiners. The College or School office will confirm appointment to the Examiners.

12.4

External Examiners for research degrees are treated as self-employed and universities are not required to deduct tax or national insurance – provided that the whole of the work is performed under a contract for services (that is, the External Examiner is treated as self-employed) in less than twelve months.

12.5

Non-EU External Examiners will need to obtain a visa in order to visit the UK and the University will be able to advise on this. More information on the Permitted Paid Engagement route for visitor visas is available on the University website.

- [Visitors and Permitted Paid Engagement](#)

Field Code Changed

12.6 Notifying Candidates of their Examiners

Supervisors advise ~~candidates students~~ of the ~~proposed Examiners'~~ names ~~of proposed Examiners~~. ~~Candidates Students~~ can notify their Supervisor if any problems are likely to arise if particular Examiners are appointed. ~~The Head of School will take account of A~~ any comments ~~will be taken into account~~ but ~~candidates students~~ have no right to determine the ~~Head of School's~~ eventual recommendation, and therefore have no right to veto any particular appointment.

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12.7

The Examiners are asked specifically to assess the thesis in terms of the grounds for the award of degree set out in the Regulations. The purpose of the examination is to allow the Examiners to establish that the thesis is satisfactory in the following regards:

- it is an original work making a significant contribution to knowledge ~~in-or~~ understanding of the field of study ~~and containing material worthy of publication;~~
- it shows adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature;
- it shows the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the ~~candidate's~~ student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field;
- ~~it contains material which presents a unified body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of postgraduate study and research during the prescribed period of study;~~
- ~~it is satisfactory in its literary presentation~~ presents, gives full and adequate references the results of the research in a critical and scholarly way; and
- ~~it has a coherent structure understandable to a scholar in the same general field with regard to intentions, background, methods and conclusions~~ represents a coherent body of work containing material worthy of publication.

13 Examiner Reports

13.1

At the University of Edinburgh, doctoral and MPhil degrees are examined through a two-stage process: assessment of the thesis followed by an oral examination (the viva). Examiners submit pre-viva (Part I) and post-viva (Part II) reports. in which each Examiner, acting independently, submits an initial (Part I) report on the thesis before the oral examination is held. University template forms should be used to prepare examiner reports and reports should be submitted within the timescale indicated by the School or College. The report forms are available online.

- University Examiner report forms

Preparation of Examiners' Independent Reports in Advance of Oral Examination – Part I Form

13.24

The College or School Office will notify examiners of the date ~~on which of~~ the oral examination ~~will be held~~. Examiners ~~are expected to must~~ complete and return their Part I report, reports by the deadlines specified by the College or School Office and at least by five working days prior to the date of the oral examination.

13.2

~~At the University of Edinburgh, doctoral and MPhil degrees are examined through a two-stage process in which each Examiner, acting independently, submits an initial (Part I) report on the thesis before the oral examination is held. University template forms should~~

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Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



~~be used to prepare examiner reports and reports should be submitted within the timescale indicated by the School or College. The report forms are available online.~~

- ~~• [University Examiner report forms](#)~~

13.3

Each Examiner, having read the thesis, should prepare a preliminary, independent report in advance of the oral examination. Examiners should not consult on their pre-viva reports at this stage. The report should cover all relevant issues arising from the candidate's thesis that the Examiner wishes to highlight. The report should be prepared on the pre-viva (Part I) form provided. ~~The Examiners should discuss their independent reports before the start of the oral examination.~~

13.4

Exceptionally, if the Examiners do find it necessary to consult before writing their pre-viva reports, this ~~fact~~ and the reason(s) for ~~it~~ [consultation](#) must be noted in their reports.

13.5

~~The r~~Reports must be sufficiently detailed ~~to enable so that, after the oral examination,~~ members of the ~~relevant~~ College Committee ~~(after the oral examination) to assess can~~ [assess](#) the scope and significance of the thesis and ~~to appreciate its strengths and weaknesses. They must be expressed~~ [Examiners should write their reports](#) in terms that are intelligible to those who are not specialists in the particular field of the thesis.

13.6

The expectation is that Examiners will complete their preliminary reports (Part I) within three months of receipt of the thesis.

13.7

~~The pre-oral examination report should be completed and returned to the College by five working days prior to the date of the oral examination.~~

Submission of Examiners' Post-Oral Report Forms – Part II Forms

13.7

Following the oral, the Examiners submit a joint (Part II) report on the thesis. The Chair of the Oral Examination is responsible for sending the Part II report to the College Committee. The College will provide the External Examiner with the recommendations available to them before the oral exam. The Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees specify the examiner recommendations.

- [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

13.8

The completed Examiners' pre-oral examination (Part I) reports and Examiners' Recommendation (Part II) report form must together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the University to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.

13.9

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The post-oral examination (Part II) report includes a “Critique for the student”, which must be completed except where recommendation (a) – Award PhD/Doctorate (without corrections) – is made.

Commented [HS1]: CAHSS request that “except where recommendation (a)...” is removed. Their Exam Board prefer that a critique is provided for all students.

13.10

The post-oral report must be completed and returned to the College within two weeks of the oral examination.

13.11

The Chair of the oral examination should ensure that the post-oral examination report gives a full account of the Examiners' views. In the event of the Examiners failing to reach a consensus, the Examiners' post-oral report should state this along with an indication of the area of disagreement. In the unlikely event of Examiners failing to reach agreement, they may make separate recommendations, which will be subject to arbitration by the College Committee.

13.12 College Committee confirmation of decision

The College Committee will consider the reports and recommendations from the Examiners and, on the basis that the requisite criteria are satisfied, will recommend that the degree is awarded.

14 Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

14.1

An oral examination is required for all doctoral and MPhil candidates. The oral examination may be used to establish a student's knowledge of the field of their research, to establish the extent of any collaboration and to confirm that the work is the student's own. Through the oral examination, the Examiners are assessing jointly whether the thesis, and the student's defence of it, satisfy the requirements and regulations for the award of the degree. Further details on the operation and regulation of oral examinations are available in the [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

14.2

The Internal Examiner is responsible for making all necessary arrangements for the oral examination with support from the School. The Internal Examiner is also responsible for ensuring that the External Examiner is properly consulted on these arrangements.

14.3

~~Examiners are not expected to wear academic robes for oral examinations.~~

14.34

~~An oral examination is required for all doctoral and MPhil candidates.~~ The Internal Examiner is responsible for chairing the oral examination. Where the Internal Examiner is acting for the first time, or is a member of honorary staff, the College will appoint a Non-



Examining Chair to attend the oral examination and ensure that due process is carried out. The Examiners should discuss their independent (Part I) reports before the start of the oral examination.

14.45

Supervisors may attend the oral examination as observers with the consent of the ~~candidate student~~ and ~~e~~Examiners. If the Supervisor does attend, they may not comment and must leave the examination with the ~~candidate student~~. Supervisors do not participate in the discussion and decision of the examiners.

14.56

Although there is no formal limit, oral examinations normally last for around two to three hours and should be a positive experience for the ~~candidate student~~.

14.67

At the end of the oral examination, and if they have agreed a recommendation, the Examiners may tell the ~~candidate student~~ what their views are. However, they must stress that their view is a recommendation to the ~~relevant~~ College Committee and not a final decision. The College Committee acts as the Board of Examiners for postgraduate research degrees and has the power to modify or, exceptionally, to overturn the Examiners' recommendation.

14.8

The oral examination will be held in Edinburgh, and the Examiners, Non-Examining Chair (where appointed) and the ~~candidate student~~ are required to be physically present. However, under exceptional circumstances, the oral examination may be conducted ~~using technology such as video conferencing remotely, for example by video conferencing, enabling when~~ the student or an Examiner ~~to participate but is not unable to~~ be physically present at the University. Students must be accompanied by an Examiner or approved authority when the oral examination is conducted by video link. ~~Such r~~Remote assessment must have ~~the~~ written permission ~~of from~~ the ~~relevant~~ College Committee, the student, all Examiners and any Non-Examining Chair. The authority for any such decision lies with the College Committee. The University guidance on video linked oral examinations is available online.

- [University guidance: PhD by Research oral examinations by video link](#)

14.3

The University does not expect examiners to wear academic robes for oral examinations.

15 Submission of Examiners' Post-Oral Report Forms — Part II Forms

15.1

~~Following the oral, the Examiners are asked to submit a joint (Part II) report on the thesis. The Chair of the Oral Examination is responsible for sending the Part II report to the relevant College Committee. Examiners' recommendations are specified in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees supplied to the External Examiner by the College.~~

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- Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

15.2

The completed Examiners' pre-oral examination (Part I) reports and Examiners' Recommendation (Part II) report form must together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the University to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.

15.3

The post-oral examination (Part II) report includes a "Critique for the student", which must be completed except where recommendation (a) – no corrections – is made.

15.4

The post-oral report must be completed and returned to the College within two weeks of the oral examination.

15.5

The Chair of the oral examination should ensure that the post-oral examination report gives a full account of the Examiners' views. In the event of the Examiners failing to reach a consensus, this should be stated on the Examiners' post-viva report along with an indication of the area of disagreement. In the unlikely event of Examiners failing to reach agreement, separate recommendations may be made and will be subject to arbitration by the relevant College Committee.

15.6 College Committee confirmation of decision

The relevant College Committee will consider the reports and recommendations from the Examiners and, on the basis that the requisite criteria are satisfied, will recommend that the degree is awarded.

156 Corrections and Re-Examination

15.1

Where the Examiners recommend minor corrections to the thesis or that an additional oral exam is needed, the Internal Examiner will approve any corrections. However, External Examiners may also request to have approval of corrections.

156.21

Where the Examiners recommend that resubmission of a thesis is required, they must write a detailed statement of the aspects which require revision. The resubmitted thesis is judged only against this written statement. A student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit ~~his or her~~their thesis.

156.32

When the College Committee confirms a resubmission recommendation ~~is confirmed by the relevant College Committee~~, the College Office must ensure that the student receives a written statement of any revisions to be made to the thesis and the timescale for completing the revisions as set by the Examiners. The Supervisor is responsible for confirming with the student ~~his or her~~their understanding of any required ~~revisions to be made~~.

15.4

The College Committee must approve the written statement and the aspects of the thesis which require revision. The approved statement and revisions cannot subsequently be altered without the College Committee's agreement.

156.35

The ~~candidate student~~ is responsible for presenting the resubmitted thesis to the School or College Office ~~for transmission to the Examiners. At the appropriate time, t~~The School or College Office will provide each Examiner with a copy of the revised thesis.

15.6

-Having read the thesis, the Examiners should prepare new independent reports on Examiner's Report Resubmission (Part I) form and complete further Examiners' Resubmission Recommendation (Part II) and Assessment of Examination Process Examiner's comments (Part III) form at the appropriate times.

165.47

~~Examiners cannot No make~~ further criticism of other material or aspects of the thesis passed as satisfactory at the first examination ~~can be introduced at a later stage. The written statement and the aspects of the thesis which require revision must be approved by the relevant College Committee and cannot subsequently be altered without the agreement of that Committee.~~

17 Return of Thesis

~~Following the completion of the examination and the submission of the part two reports, the Examiners should return their copies of the thesis to the College Office. Examiners should not retain electronic copies of the thesis.~~

178 External Examiner Comments Reports – Part III Forms

External Examiner comments are sought after the conclusion of the examination process via the Assessment of Examination Process (Part III) form. Comments are requested on the examination process generally and Examiners are also invited to comment on any other relevant aspects. Receipt of this form triggers the payment process for External Examiner fees and expenses. Any major themes or trends arising from Part III forms, and from schools' review of data on research student progression and completion, should be considered for inclusion in the school annual quality assurance report to Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

19 Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

19.1

~~The student holds copyright as author of all work submitted for examination. Each student must grant the University the right to publish the thesis, abstract or list of works, and/or to authorise its publication for any scholarly purpose with proper acknowledgement of authorship.~~

19.2

~~The University and the student reserve the copyright and all other intellectual property rights on both the thesis and the abstract. During the examination the Examiners must hold the thesis and the abstract in strict confidence.~~

1849.3 Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

18.1

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Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



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The student holds copyright as author of all work submitted for examination. Each student must grant the University the right to publish the thesis, abstract or list of works, and/or to authorise its publication for any scholarly purpose with proper acknowledgement of authorship.

18.2

During the assessment process, the Examiners must treat the thesis and abstract as confidential and ensure it is handled, transported, recorded and stored securely.

18.3

The Examiners' initial, independent (Part I) reports remain confidential to the College but can be requested under Freedom of Information (see also section 13). However, Examiners should note that students receive post-viva (Part II) reports after the meeting of the relevant College Committee.

18.519-4

External Examiner reports and any correspondence engaged in by the External Examiner in connection with their external examiner duties are disclosable in line with the University's freedom of information obligations.

Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



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19.518.6

Requests for the disclosure of any restricted reports made directly, and separately, to the Head of College or the Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance will be judged on a case-by-case basis in line with the University's freedom of information and data protection obligations.

- [Request handling procedures](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)

18.7 Use of data by External Examiners

External Examiners have access to confidential information and must ensure that personal data are always held securely and are not disclosed to any unauthorised third party either accidentally, negligently or intentionally.

18.8 Return of Thesis

Following completion of the examination and the submission of the part two reports, the Examiners should return their copies of the thesis to the College Office. Examiners must not retain electronic copies of the thesis.

20 Examiners Fees and Expenses

20.1

External Examiners of research degrees are responsible for any income tax due in respect of the fee through HMRC Self-Assessment. It is essential that, on appointment, all UK tax-paying Examiners provide their Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) which is issued by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) when registering for Self-Assessment.

20.2

Information concerning expenses for examining research theses is set out within the University's Guidelines for Reimbursement of Expenses. The College Office will be able to provide advice on fees and claiming expenses.

- [Guidelines for Reimbursement of Expenses](#)

20.3

The University pays fees in pounds sterling to the External Examiner's bank account within 30 days of receipt of the Assessment of Examination Process (Part III) forms, along with completed forms for the UTR (see also section 12.5) and bank account details. These forms are available from the College Office. The College is responsible for instructing Accounts Payable to arrange to pay the fees.

20.4

Reasonable expenses incurred in connection with an External Examiner's duties, including travel, accommodation and/or subsistence costs, should be itemised on an expense claim form. Expense claims will not normally be accepted in any other form and certainly not without all receipts attached. Bank account details are required in order to pay expenses. The Examiner expense claim form is available from the College Office.

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Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



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20.5

Expenses are processed by the College Office. They are normally processed immediately upon receipt of the Assessment of Examination Process (Part III) form, so long as the expense form is completed fully and correctly and the appropriate receipts are attached.

Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees



21 Notification of concerns

21.1

The External Examiner may raise concerns regarding the examination process with the Internal Examiner, the School or College Office. The Assessment of Examination Process (Part III) form also provides a mechanism for reporting on the examination process.

21.2

If concerns are unable to be resolved within the scope of the examination process for an individual thesis, the External Examiner may raise these with the relevant Head of College ~~or with the Convener of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee.~~

21.3

External Examiners have the right to raise any matter of serious concern with the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, who acts on behalf of the Principal, if necessary, by means of a separate confidential report. The Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance will respond in writing, outlining any actions to be taken as a result.

21.4

Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings in the academic standards of a programme or programmes, and has exhausted all procedures internal to the University, including the submission of a confidential report to the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance, they may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

22 College contact information

- College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
- College of Science and Engineering

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The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

14 May 2019

Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee

Executive Summary

To update Senate on certain matters considered by the Knowledge Strategy Committee at its meeting on 22 March 2019.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Not applicable.

Action requested

To note the report.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Not applicable.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

2. Risk assessment

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

3. Equality and Diversity

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

4. Freedom of information

This paper is open.

Key words

Knowledge Strategy Committee

Originator of the paper

Dr Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services, September 2018

REPORT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**22 March 2019****1 Artificial Intelligence & Data Ethics Advisory Board**

The Vice-Principal High Performance Computing provided an overview of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Data Ethics Advisory Board, intended to:

- establish an ethical framework, comprising clear guiding principles and robust processes for data governance and use;
- assist existing University ethics bodies to improve their competence in dealing with AI and data use issues;
- monitor compliance by the University and its partners with the ethical framework, and with any other relevant processes and regulations;
- encourage a culture that is aware of the ethical and societal implications, informs and contributes to public debate, and promotes responsible research and innovation; and,
- provide strategic advice on how the University can be a global leader in the ethical development and use of AI and data science.

The Committee raised the following points: how the Board would interact with School-level ethics committees, with the Board established to consider new ethical problems and not duplicate existing work; building a repository of answers to frequently asked questions from staff and students, noting that the Board is not resourced as yet; progress with the consultation on monitoring study space usage and that an arms-length body including external members may be useful for oversight of some aspects of University research in this area. A further update was requested in due course.

2 Core Systems Update

The Deputy Chief Information Officer presented an update on the Core Systems procurement programme to replace HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement systems. A winning bidder has been agreed within the planned timescale, with due diligence workshops with subject matter experts underway and a final contact award expected in April. Members asked if any lessons learned from the process to date have been identified, with the logistical challenge of organising 156 due diligence workshops over a 9 week period the key learning point. It was noted that the HR and Finance strands of the Service Excellence Programmes were established before the Core Systems procurement to aid the development of systems requirements.

3 Information Services Group Plan 2019-22

Key elements of the Information Services Group (ISG) Plan for 2019-22 were reviewed. The Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning provided context on the University's medium term planning, the uncertain external environment and the intention to increase contributions from across the University budget areas for reinvestment in key priorities. The Chief Information Officer noted pressures on the ISG budget from the increased contribution requested and increased costs of provision of many services, including software licensing increases, replacement of

an obsolescent programming language used in many University applications and higher employer USS pension contributions.

The Committee discussed:

- Ensuring that any changes in centrally-provided services do not lead to an increased proliferation of locally-provided services in mitigation, with an already highly-devolved level of Information Technology expenditure compared to peer institutions;
- The potential for consolidating IT expenditure centrally to generate cost savings;
- Generating cost savings while minimising any potential effect on the student experience;
- The implementation of a post approval process with Chief Information Officer sign-off for all ISG staff recruitment was welcomed; and,
- A glossary of acronyms would be helpful for committee members.

4 Information Security Update

A regular update on Information Security risk management activity was reviewed. The proposed purchase of password manager software to provide enhanced protection before an upgrade of the University's authentication service (EASE) was discussed – with queries on whether the company or the University would hold responsibility for assisting staff and students experiencing problems with the service, how the service would accommodate individuals with dual staff and student credentials and managing those moving between staff, student and alumni categories.

5 Plan S Update

An update on the initiative from predominantly European funding agencies to accelerate the transition to full and immediate open access to research publications was reviewed. It was noted that, while many universities have raised strong concerns on the implementation date of 1 January 2020 and consequent short time period to prepare, an early 2020 implementation date remains favoured by the coalition of funders. Universities are continuing to consult with the coalition of funders. The University of Edinburgh's consultation response was supportive in principle but with a number of specific changes requested. A further update was requested for the next meeting.

6 Academic Engagement with Collections

A report on the depth and breadth of academic engagement with the Centre for Research Collections was considered. Programmes to enhance student employability were welcomed, including student placements, with further work requested on encouraging student placements with University suppliers.

7 Projects and Ongoing Activities Update

The lecture recording update was discussed, with 85% of centrally allocated teaching rooms (over 300 in total) now enabled for lecture recording. It is proposed for the next phase will focus on equipping conference areas used for large public

lectures and similar events rather than the remaining small teaching rooms used for discussion-based seminars that are less suitable for recording. It was noted that students used to lecture recording in the early years of an undergraduate degree should be made aware that this may not continue in seminars at honours level. Masters level students on courses taught in smaller rooms may expect to have teaching in these rooms recorded and smaller rooms which have lecture recording equipment installed can be booked. The Committee welcomed the extent of lecture recording taking place, one of the highest in the Russell Group, with the figures to be kept under review and any examined in detail for any anomalies.