Royal Veterinary College
University of London

Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Code of Practice

This document applies to all RVC Postgraduate Research Students.

2024/25

Version	Update and Reason	Author and Title	Date of Academic Board Approval	Effective Date	Review date
June 24	Revision of Code of Practice for PGR Students	Lisa Matamala-Shaw and Carole Tilsley – Joint Heads of PG Administration			
Nov 24	Inclusion of 'active study' meaning, updated Contents page, updated contact email to PGAdmin@rvc.ac.uk	Lisa Harber, PG Programme Manager			

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the policy and procedural framework relating to postgraduate research (PGR) degrees at the Royal Veterinary College (MRes, MPhil, PhD, and ProfD).

The Code of Practice is updated annually and a copy sent to all PGR students and their supervisors at the beginning of each academic year. The current version is also available on the RVC Website and Graduate School pages on RVC Learn. Students and staff should use the most recent version as a reference source.

1.2 Governance/Regulatory Framework

The RVC is registered with the Office for Students and must meet its ongoing conditions of registration.

The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the RVC's General Regulations for Study and Award, the Research Degree Examination Regulations and the University of London Regulation 1. Together these documents set out the regulations and procedures for PGR degree students.

1.3 Research Degrees Committee (RDC)

The purpose of the RDC is to assure the quality and standards of the RVC's research degrees and to make recommendations on their award. Current Terms of Reference and Committee Membership can be found on the RVC Website.

1.4 Quality/Annual Review

PGR degree programmes will be reviewed annually by the RDC through:

- A report on all programmes in the autumn term;
- A report from the external MRes examiner;
- Consideration of Award and assessment regulations and programme specifications for the MRes and ProfD.

In addition, the MRes and ProfD courses are subject to periodic reviews (every 5 years) with recommendations submitted to the Teaching Quality Committee and subsequently Academic Board and changes monitored by the RDC.

These reports will be used to identify any changes that might be required to the portfolio of PGR degree provision.

2. Responsibilities of the Graduate School

The Graduate School is the primary administrative structure, which supports postgraduate research (PGR) students and programmes of study. It is also the principal central source of information about matters relating to PGR degrees, ensuring that information for all parties is accessible, clear, accurate, comprehensive and up to date.

The role of the Graduate School is to oversee and promote development of PGR degree programmes leading to the MRes, MPhil, PhD and ProfD and of the postgraduate Clinical Training programmes leading to PGDip VCP (Internships) and MVetMed (Residencies) degrees.

The processes and procedures regulating PGR students within the RVC are approved by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and then Academic Board.

2.1 PGR Students

In relation to PGR degree students, the Graduate School has responsibility for the following:

- The Head of the Graduate School together with the Heads of the Academic Departments identifying appropriate supervisor and co-supervisors and ensuring that there are appropriate and sufficient resources for the specific project;

- Assigning Mentors to PhD students and Postgraduate Advisors to MRes and PhD students and confirming their identities and the support that they provide to new and ongoing PGR students.

- Annually updating all PGR student handbooks;

- Monitoring and reviewing the progress and training of each PGR student periodically, and specifically confirming progression in accordance with established criteria and procedures at different stages of their programme, and alerting the relevant Head of Department to any concerns about student progress;

- Approving administrative matters such as:
  - Extensions to study;
  - Changes of registration status;
  - Interruption of study - referring to the Student Performance and Development (SPD) system, as appropriate;
  - Changes to supervisory teams.

- Where the Head of Graduate School has approved an interruption, SPD will organise a return to study meeting prior to the student's return;

- Where a student fails to re-enrol after a period of interruption, the Graduate School will email or phone the student and ask for a response. If they do not receive a response, the matter will be escalated to the Advice Centre. Further information can be found in the Missing Students Policy;

- Meeting with the PG Officers termly and on an ad hoc basis as appropriate to discuss any student matters or issues ahead of each RDC meeting;

- After the approval of examiners by the RDC, managing the examination process;

- Maintaining accurate records relating to student progress, including academic progression and the skills training completed;

- Efficient operation of the new Student Attendance Policy

- Where a supervisor contacts the Graduate School due to a student not engaging in studies or email communication, the Graduate School will email or phone the student and ask for a response. If they do not receive a response, the matter will be escalated to the Advice Centre. Further information can be found in the Missing Students Policy.

- Some RVC staff may be employed under a specific contract relating to their research studentship. The contract will clearly set out the terms of the employment and will be agreed between HR and the staff member. The Graduate School will be responsible for all matters relating to the research degree studentship and the human resources (HR) team will be responsible for matters relating to the employment contract.

2.2 Student Support

Along with the Graduate School, the RVC provides a variety of support services for students through the Learning and Wellbeing teams. Students can access this information at Student Support Services. Services include:

- Wellbeing Support
- Student Money Advisor
- The Disability Adviser
- International Student Adviser
- Housing
- Study skills
- Careers
- Library/IT
- Digital Support Service

3. Responsibilities of Heads of Department and MRes & ProfD Course Directors

3.1 Heads of Department

Departments should establish the environment and framework within which all their students will carry out their postgraduate research (PGR) degree programmes. This includes the facilities, the resources, all aspects of health and safety and training, and implementation of the Code of Practice.

Responsibilities of the Head of Department include ensuring that:

- their department provides a supportive infrastructure for PGR students whilst they are carrying out their studies;
- each PGR student has adequate workspace, including use of a desk, photocopier and networked computer;
- PGR students are provided with necessary safety information, induction and instruction before and during their studies;
- PGR students are familiar with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, where appropriate, and that all work on animals which they are involved with complies with this legislation;
- that members of staff in their department are not acting as primary supervisor for more than 6 PGR students at any one time;
- the Graduate School are informed if alternative supervisory arrangements are needed when a student's supervisor is unable to continue their supervisory role temporarily or permanently.

3.2 ProfD Course Director

Responsibilities of the course director include:

- Ensuring that appropriate supervision of the research topic can be provided;
- Approving the nomination of the workplace-based professional adviser together with the Head of Graduate School, who will form part of the selection panel for ProfD applicants;
- Ensuring that that the programme specification is reviewed and updated, if required, annually and approved by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC);
- That the award and assessment regulations are reviewed and updated, if required, annually and approved by the RDC;
- Co-ordinating activities across the ProfD programme and overseeing all ProfD students' progress within the programme.

3.3 MRes Course Directors

Responsibilities of the course director and deputy course director include ensuring:

- Programme development;
- Promotion of the course to prospective students and funders;
- Consideration of applications in collaboration with supervisory teams and the Head of Graduate School;
- Evaluation of project proposals in liaison with the Head of Graduate School
- Appropriate supervision of the proposed research topic;
- The programme specification is updated, if required, annually and approved by the RDC;
- The award and assessment regulations are reviewed and updated, if required, annually and approved by the RDC;
- Appropriate in course assessments are organised and assessment criteria are communicated to students at the beginning of the course;
- Constructive feedback, normally within 15 days unless otherwise agreed, and in an appropriate format;
- Oral Examinations are overseen by acting as an Independent Chair;
- the provision of mandatory training and induction to the course by liaising with the Graduate School;
- Students are informed of the identities and the support available from Postgraduate Advisors;
- That students are provided with a copy of the course handbook;
- Regular meetings with student representatives;
- Co-ordinate the production of an annual quality improvement report on the programme for the RDC and respond promptly to feedback on the programme;
- The preparation of the self- evaluation document for the periodic review of the course;
- The external examiner is kept updated on the MRes and has timely access to documents required for their annual report.

4. Appointment and Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research (PGR) Supervisors

4.1 Appointment of Primary PGR Supervisors

All PGR students shall have one primary supervisor (“the supervisor”) and at least one other member of a supervisory team (“the co-supervisor") or, for ProfD students, a professional adviser from the place of employment. The supervisor shall have the primary accountability for the student but it is understood that they and the co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser are equally important to student supervision and support. The supervisory team shall include individuals who provide specific identified expertise or support for the student to draw on.

Both the supervisor and a co-supervisor should normally be RVC staff. Where there is collaboration with another organisation (a university, company or other employer) there may be additional members of the supervisory team from that organisation.

The supervisors should be selected primarily on the basis of appropriate subject expertise and will normally have the necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct research students’ work. They will normally:

- be members of academic staff;
- hold a PhD, DVetMed or ProfD;
- have a respectable personal research record demonstrated through publications and funding;
- have a good record of supervising students to completion;
- act as primary supervisor for no more than 6 PhD students at any one time.

Where the primary supervisor lacks supervisory experience, the Head of Department will arrange for the supervisor to be allocated a mentor to provide support and guidance. The mentor will normally act as co-supervisor.

Independent research fellows can act as a primary or co-supervisor for PhD students. Other post-doctoral scientists (and graduate research assistants) are expected to contribute to the supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students who are undertaking project work within their research group. It is also recognised that a post-doctoral scientist may contribute intellectually to a grant for, or which includes funding for, a PhD studentship. More information can be found in the policy on Supervision of PhD students by postdoctoral scientists.

4.2 Co-supervisors

The co-supervisor/s do not need to have core subject expertise but may bring other qualities to the supervisory team (e.g. experience, complementary expertise, methodological advice, etc.).

The function of the co-supervisor is to act as an alternative and complementary source

of advice for the student. The co-supervisor will be sufficiently well-informed to ensure that they are aware of the student's progress and any issues arising, and to provide for continuity if the primary supervisor leaves for any reason. It may be beneficial if the co-supervisor is not in the precise subject area of the research project.

The workplace-based professional adviser for a ProfD student should be qualified to provide impartial and relevant advice on the field of work. Advisers may need to undertake training in their role and responsibilities at the RVC. A joint supervisory agreement will be signed by the RVC and the organisation at which the ProfD student and their adviser are based. Please refer to the Role of the Professional Adviser Guidelines for detailed information.

ProfD students, in addition to their project supervisor, also have the support of the programme's Course Director together with administrative support from the Graduate School and relevant Masters and CPD course support. Students will be supported through the taught modules in accessing and navigating RVC Learn) and utilising the services available at the RVC (IT/Library helpdesk, e-Library facilities, Advice Centre etc.).

MRes students, in addition to their supervisory team, also have the support of the programme's Course Director and Deputy Course Director together with administrative support from the Graduate School.

4.3 Changes to Supervision

Where a proposed co-supervisor has not been approved as part of the internal review of grants/studentship applications prior to submission, approval will need to be sought from the Head of the Graduate School;

Where a change of supervisor is unavoidable (such as when a student's supervisor leaves the RVC) the Head of the Graduate School will discuss the matter with the student and the Head of Department, and where appropriate any external partners, to identify a suitable individual to take over the supervision. Where there are unresolved problems with student supervision the Head of the Graduate School will seek to resolve the matter with the student and the supervisors, taking advice from the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation if needed. Where either the Head of the Graduate School or the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation is a supervisor of the student, they will be replaced by another member of the Research and Innovation Committee who is independent of the student's supervision. The consultation process may or may not lead to the appointment of another supervisor or supervisors. The Graduate School will notify the student of the decision and the reasons for the decision in writing.

The criteria used in deciding whether a change of supervisor will be allowed or not are as follows:

- Objective evidence (e.g. from an appraisal, a Student Performance and Development (SPD) meeting or PgR Manager records) that (i) the supervisor is not adhering to the Code of Practice or the obligations regarding supervisory meetings, or (ii) the relationship between the supervisor and the student has irretrievably broken down;

- Availability of appropriately skilled alternative supervisors for the project;
- The source of funding for the project (including feasibility of change when an external grant named supervisor supports the student);
- Objective evidence (e.g. from a SPD meeting, PgR Manager records, their research notebook or similar) that the student is performing sufficiently well to continue with their studies.

Supervisors on sabbatical leave, or those temporarily absent for other reasons should, where possible, maintain continuity of supervision. If this is not possible, clear arrangements should be made by the supervisor for the period of absence and notified to the Graduate School and the student. In such cases, it would be expected that the co-supervisor would normally take on the responsibilities of the primary supervisor.

Where at all possible, continuity of supervision should be maintained.

4.4 Training

All first-time supervisors must attend new supervisor training before supervising PGR students.

All supervisors are required to refresh their skills every 3 years by attending experienced supervisor training.

4.5 Responsibilities

The supervisor and co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser are expected to work as a team and jointly meet with the student whenever possible. Minimally, this should be on the occasions outlined as compulsory supervisory meetings logged in PgR Manager. Milestones that are agreed should be signed off in PgR Manager by the supervisor and the student.

Supervisors are accountable to the RVC, Graduate School and any external sponsor for providing such reports as are required on the work, training and academic progress of their research students.

Detailed responsibilities of supervisors include:

4.5.1 Registration and progression

- Ensuring that the student is aware of the requirement to register annually through the Graduate School;
- Being accountable to the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) through the Graduate School for the satisfactory progress of the student;
- Engaging fully with PgR Manager and advising their students to do the same.

4.5.2 Guidance

- Providing the student with support and encouragement;
- Advising the student about all relevant aspects of postgraduate research, including:
  - the nature of research;
  - research techniques;
  - the standard of work required;
  - the planning of the research programme;
  - facilities available to support the research;
  - attendance at training courses, conferences, seminars etc.;
  - publication;
  - plagiarism;
  - intellectual property rights;
  - Health and Safety regulations;
  - the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, if appropriate;
- Informing students about the postgraduate student Induction and ensuring attendance;
- Giving detailed advice on the scheduling of work, including the current and likely future working requirements of the project, so that the thesis may be submitted within the normal period of registration;
- **Public Research Institution (PRI) / Joint Studentships** - Being aware of the contents of the agreement and/or contract of students on these programmes of study;
- Ensuring that RVC staff registered for PGR Study at the RVC, will follow both the code of practice for the PGR study and HR guidelines for their employment;
- Arranging appropriate training and monitoring its effectiveness;
- Assisting the student in assessing their development needs and encouraging them to develop transferable skills such as project management, decision-making, time management and teamwork and providing opportunities for the student to attend courses;
- Ensuring that the student has opportunities to develop communication skills through, for example, presenting their work at RVC research seminars and at external meetings;
- Attending RVC seminars and encouraging their research students to attend;
- Introducing the student to other workers in the field and to appropriate academic bodies;
- Monitoring the student's general welfare and informing them of sources of specialist assistance such as the Advice Centre or Graduate School staff where necessary;
- Advising on future career development;
- Ensuring that adequate alternative supervisory arrangements are made during periods of absence;
- Advising MPhil and PhD students that if they wish to be involved in supervising an undergraduate or Masters student research project, an academic supervisor must be actively involved in overseeing the project;

- Discussing and agreeing with the student appropriate working arrangements and work patterns, including flexibility and working from home.

4.5.3 Engagement and Meetings

- Meeting the student frequently, both informally and formally; the minimal schedule for formal meetings is outlined in PgR Manager; allowing adequate time for formal meetings.
- Meetings can be face to face or on-line, the format should be agreed between the student and supervisor. Meetings for UKVI monitoring purposes must take place face to face.
- Where there is joint supervision, agreeing with the student and the co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser the division of responsibility.
- Supervisors are responsible for informing the Graduate School if a PGR student is not engaging in the programme or keeping in touch or responding to communication.

4.5.4 Feedback and progress

- Requesting written work as appropriate and returning such work to the student normally within 15 days unless otherwise agreed., with constructive feedback;
- Monitoring the student's progress and advising them on the adequacy of progress and the standard of work, arranging supportive action where appropriate;
- **Arranging annual progress monitoring meetings (appraisals)** before each anniversary of registration in accordance with RVC procedures and encouraging the student to submit annual progress reports promptly. **Students should not be asked to identify or contact possible assessors; this is the supervisors' responsibility**. For this process to work most effectively it is essential that the meeting is before the anniversary of admission, regardless of the status of results.

4.5.5 Examination

- Nominating examiners and informing the student of their details. **Under no circumstances should a student be expected to identify or contact prospective examiners;**
- Assisting the student in planning for the oral examination (viva voce);
- Advising the student of the readiness of the thesis for submission;
- Arranging the date of the viva voce examination and informing the Graduate School of when and where this will take place;
- Preparing the student for their viva, normally by conducting one or more mock orals;
- Being available on the day of the viva to meet the examiners and to support the student before and after the examination;
- Advising students on thesis amendments and emphasising the need for these to be completed in a timely manner and to meet agreed deadlines.

4.5.6 Change of student circumstances

- Notifying the Graduate School of any changes which influence the registration status of the student;
- In circumstances where the student wishes to interrupt study, inform the Graduate School. Periods of interruption may be referred to SPD and will not normally be agreed for more than one year per programme. If SPD are requested to exceptionally agree an additional interruption, it will also be necessary for the Supervisors/Course Director to assess that overall programme learning outcomes can still be met within the registration limits of the programme at the intended return date. This assessment must be completed prior to approval of the additional interruption.
- Information regarding SPD can be found on Learn

4.5.7 ProfD Supervisors

Supervisors who are responsible for ProfD students, in addition to the responsibilities outlined above, should also:

- offer guidance, support and feedback, particularly on the quality and academic level of the work being carried out;
- offer guidance on the selection, coherence and quality of work in the research thesis;
- monitor progress of the ProfD student through the taught components of the degree programme.

4.6 Support for Supervisors

4.6.1 The Graduate School

The Graduate School is the primary administrative structure, which supports PGR students, programmes of study and PGR Supervisors. It is also the principal central source of information about matters relating to PGR degrees, ensuring that information for all parties is accessible, clear, accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date. The role of the Graduate School is to oversee and promote development of PGR degree programmes leading to the MRes, MPhil, PhD and ProfD. Supervisors would be urged to contact any member of the Graduate School team if they seek advice or information.

4.6.2 The Advice Centre

The Advice Centre provide a variety of support for students and their services can be accessed via email, phone, or face to face. This includes assistance with finance, specific learning differences and disability, mental health and wellbeing, counselling, housing and much more. If you have any concerns regarding your PGR student, you should signpost them to the Advice Centre or contact them on the student's behalf. They are contactable on 020 8051 3500 or at advice@rvc.ac.uk.

4.6.3 Wellbeing at Work

The RVC values all members of staff and seeks to provide a positive and satisfying working environment in which each member of staff is treated with respect and regard for their health and well-being.

The wellbeing of staff is central to the maintenance of a vibrant learning culture and there are of course many factors that affect the wellbeing of staff.

More information about Relationships at work and mental wellbeing can be found here:

Wellbeing at Work (rvc.ac.uk)

Related and Useful links for PGR Supervisors:

- UKCGE | Supporting research supervision
- Togetherall
- Free tools for PhD supervisors (ithinkwell.com.au)
- The Supervision Whisperers – Just like the Thesis Whisperer, but with more paperwork (wordpress.com)

4.6.4 HR Courses at the RVC

HR offer a range of All Staff Courses (rvc.ac.uk) Some that might be of interest to supervisors are as follows:

- dealing-with-difficult-conversations situations.pdf (rvc.ac.uk)
- Developing the confidence to Lead Flyer Cohort_INTRANET.pdf (rvc.ac.uk)
- EmotionalIntelligence.pdf (rvc.ac.uk)
- Managing Pressure-Bite Size.pdf (rvc.ac.uk)
- Supervisory skills.pdf (rvc.ac.uk)

5. Responsibilities of PGR Students

5.1 General responsibilities of the student include:

The research and the dissertation/thesis are the work of the student, and the student is expected to take responsibility for the progress of their work. During the progress of a research degree, students are expected to increasingly become independent thinkers and researchers. The general responsibilities of all students at the RVC are outlined in the RVC Charter.

Students should ensure from the outset that they conduct their research and present the findings in their dissertations or theses in accordance with the RVC's procedures for Good Research Practice.

Students should consult the RVC's guidance on avoidance of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Students are expected to have regular contact with supervisors throughout their research degree (irrespective of their geographical location), in order to discuss a programme of practical and written work, training and keep to an agreed schedule.

Students should consider seriously any guidance provided by their supervisors and should address any concerns expressed about their academic progress. Work should be of an appropriate standard for the degree. Any problems should be raised with a member of the supervisory team in the first instance. If the problem relates to supervision, students should contact the Head of the Graduate School, Head/s of Postgraduate Student Administration or a PG Advisor.

Students registered for an MPhil or PhD will normally be expected to spend a minimum of two thirds of their studentship based at the RVC unless they are registered part-time, are based at a PRI or are working on a jointly-held studentship with another institution.

Students who wish to teach for 6 hours or more must undertake the mandatory Training Course "Teaching & Learning in Higher Education" (TLiHE). Students must complete TLiHE before commencing any teaching activity, including supervision of research projects. TLiHE is free to RVC registered research students. It is an on-line course that takes around 2-3 months delivered via LEARN. The TLiHE course will enable students to become involved in facilitating teaching, such as directed learning, contributing to project supervision and small group facilitation. PhD students should not deliver lectures except in specific and exceptional circumstances and never for core and mainstream topics.

PhD students may contribute to supervision of undergraduate and Masters students who are undertaking project work in their research group. Where an academic member of staff has asked a PhD student to help them with supervising an undergraduate or Masters student, the academic must be *actively* involved in overseeing the undergraduate/Masters project. A PhD student should not normally help supervise more than **one** undergraduate/Masters student at any given time, and a maximum of **two** per academic year. PhD students who help supervise undergraduate/Masters students for 6 hours or more must complete the TLiHE course before starting to supervise any project students. More information on student supervision by PhD students can be found in the

Supervision Policy for Postdocs and PhD Students.

RVC staff that are registered for PGR study at the RVC will abide by this Code of Practice for their studies. For the portion of their time as a RVC employee the student will abide by their contract with RVC and HR policies.

PGR students will be expected to adhere to the new Student Attendance Policy.

5.2 PgR Manager (the online tool for tracking PGR students' progress):

- Engagement with PgR Manager is an essential component of the PGR programme and PgR Manager should be used to keep a record of supervisory meetings documenting the project planning process. In addition, students should complete an annual Training Needs Analysis in PgR Manager and use the system to book onto relevant training courses offered by the Graduate School.
- PGR Students are responsible for logging their skills development in PgR Manager, which will also capture dates of key meetings to inform the Graduate School.
- For PhD students this will feed into the appraisal process to certify regular supervisory meetings have taken place and that the student has met the RVC's professional skills training requirements of 20 points each year (pro-rata for part-time students). The appraisal process itself is also managed through PgR Manager.

5.3 The detailed responsibilities of the student to themselves include:

- For those with a student visa – adhering to UKVI monitoring requirements;
- Reading the research integrity guidelines and undertaking the mandatory on-line research integrity training within 4 months of registration. ProfD students should complete this training within 4 months of having completed the module Methods of Enquiry 1;
- Undertaking all other mandatory professional skills training requirements;
- Responding to initial contact with their assigned postgraduate advisor. It is compulsory that this is done within 3 months of registration;
- If the postgraduate advisor has not contacted the PGR student within 3 months the student should initiate contact with the advisor and advise the Graduate School;
- Attending research training courses, research seminars, conferences, Postgraduate Research Day etc. as agreed with the supervisor, and normally submitting a brief report to the supervisor on any external event attended;
- PhD Students - accruing 20 training points per academic year (pro-rated for part-time students);
- MRes Students – attending all mandatory training as detailed in the Award and Assessment Regulations;
- Maintaining records of supervisory meetings and skills development in PgR Manager;
- Presenting at the postgraduate seminar series (MPhil and PhD students, normally in Year 1 and Year 2 for full time students).
- PG Research Day:
  - Presenting a graphical abstract and impact statement in Year 1 (full time PhD, MPhil and MRes students);

    - Presenting a poster (normally in Year 2 for full-time MPhil and PhD and part-time MRes students and in Year 1 for full-time MRes students);
    - Giving a seminar in the final year of study (PhD students);

- Attending and passing the statistics exam (MRes, MPhil and PhD students) in Year 1. Students who do not pass will be required to re-take the exam;
- Attending at least 50% of the postgraduate seminars, a minimum of 6 of the RVC's research seminars and 6 other talks on topics relating to their field of study. Where students are not based primarily at RVC, providing evidence at appraisal of seminar attendance elsewhere (MRes, MPhil and PhD students);
- Taking the initiative in drawing the supervisor's attention to any problems with regard to their research project;
- Alerting the Graduate School if supervisors are not responding to the student or providing feedback within agreed timeframes;
- Submitting written progress reports in accordance with the RVC's procedures for monitoring research student progress and appraisal guidelines;
- Completion of a Overseas Travel Training Module prior to any overseas travel on RVC/Research business. There is a requirement for all students to complete an overseas travel training module. The travel risk training is available through Learn and should be completed by all students who are travelling outside the Common Travel Area unless it is your country of residence. A certificate should be downloaded following successful completion as you will need to provide proof of completed training when arranging your flights. The completion certificate should be forwarded to Sharan Kane, CSS Departmental Operations Manager if you are in CSS, Berit Zimmermann, PSS Departmental Operations Manager, if you are in PPS, or Karen Creeke CBS Departmental Operations Manager, if you are in CBS.
- If students are travelling abroad, they are required to complete the SDO530a Overseas Risk Assessment Form A. This form is available in the Travel Section of the Health & Safety Pages on the Intranet. This will provide a base level of insurance protection as well as ensuring your whereabouts are known by staff in the event of an emergency. Permission to travel must always be obtained before undertaking any overseas trip.SD0530b Risk Assessment Form B must also be completed if hazardous activity is planned or there are risks stated within the country following assessment of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO).
- When booking travel and accommodation, please refer to the RVC's Official Business Air and Hotel Travel Policy, found on the intranet. Overseas flights must be booked through RVC's official travel provider: Selective Travel to ensure our insurance covers you. If you do not follow this procedure and purchase your own flights to claim back on expenses, they will not be reimbursed and you will not be covered by RVC insurance. When ready to book flights/accommodation, please email Selective Travel via rvc@selective-travel.co.uk copying in Sharan Kane, CSS Departmental Operations Manager if you are in CSS, Berit Zimmermann, PSS Departmental Operations Manager, if you are in PPS, or Karen Creeke CBS Departmental Operations Manager, if you are in CBS. Please indicate your travel destination and dates (and how flexible you are with dates) to ask for a quote. Once you have decided on dates and times, please confirm with Selective Travel and Sharan Kane, Berit Zimmermann or Karen Creeke, depending on your department. Sharan/Berit/Karen will then raise a purchase

order to pay for the flights directly from the correct budget. Ensure you get confirmation from your supervisor of the Agresso project code the purchase order is to raised from.
- Completing the work and submitting the dissertation or thesis on time;
- Preparing for the viva, normally by taking part in one or more mock orals conducted by their supervisor(s);
- Carrying out any required changes to the MPhil, PhD or ProfD thesis in a timely manner and in consultation with their supervisor(s).

5.4 The detailed responsibilities of the student to their supervisors include:

- Maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the schedule agreed with the supervisor, as far as possible;
- Agreeing a schedule of meetings with the supervisor, setting aside sufficient time for them and attending them promptly;
- Submitting written material as required by the supervisor, in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion;
- Agreeing with the supervisor the proposed date of submission of the thesis;
- Consulting their supervisor(s) before submitting any work for publication or presentation at a conference;
- Acknowledging the contribution of the supervisor(s) in any publication or presentation;
- Securing their supervisor's permission before accepting any offer of paid work at, for, or on behalf of the RVC during the period of research (MRes, MPhil and PhD students) and ensuring any paid work is processed through payroll, is subject to employment law and follows HR requirements, policies and guidelines;
- Agreeing with the supervisor the dates of holidays which will be taken, in accordance with the RVC's guidelines or, where appropriate, those of the Funding body or employer;

5.5 The detailed responsibilities of the student to other/s include:

- Being aware of the contents of any appropriate agreement where applicable;
- Familiarising themselves with, and abiding by, health and safety regulations, the RVC's Good Research Practice, the Code of Practice for Research Students, the RVC's annual progress monitoring procedures, and other relevant rules and regulations including, where appropriate, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986;
- Communicating to the research community, both orally and in writing, their findings;

5.6 The detailed responsibilities of the student with regards to registration/enrolment and the Graduate School include:

- Ensuring they register/enrol with the Graduate School at commencement of their studentship, annually thereafter and on return from interruption. Enrolment must be completed within 4 weeks of the due date. Failure to re-enrol could lead to withdrawal from the course.
- Ensuring their current contact information, including mobile telephone number, personal email address, contact address, as well as the details of their emergency contact person is up to date on RoVer;

- Notifying pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk of any changes of circumstance agreed using the change of registration form.

6. Admissions, Enrolment and Induction

6.1 Admissions

The selection and admission of postgraduate research (PGR) students to PGR programmes will be undertaken in accordance with the RVC Admissions Policy

Prior to advertising PGR studentships, project proposal forms must be completed by supervisors and approved by the MRes course director, for MRes projects, and by the Head of the Graduate School, for PhD projects. Approval will be contingent on confirmation of the project plan, facilities, supervision and funding.

The minimum requirement for admission to a research degree is normally either an upper second-class honours degree from a UK university; an overseas qualification of an equivalent standard in a subject appropriate for the study topic to be followed; a registered qualification appropriate to the course of study; or a Master's degree in a subject appropriate to the course of study. Where the applicant's first language is not English, they will be required to demonstrate proficiency in English language to a level specified by the RVC.

As a part of the initial selection process, all applicants will be assessed to determine their fee status, based on the information provided on their application as set out in with the RVCs Admissions Policy Fees for research degree study are set annually for a 12-month period from 1st August. PGR students are required to pay the level of fee according to the year in which they register, and subsequent years of re-registration.

No postgraduate research student will be accepted unless their application and interview indicate that they have the capacity to complete a research degree successfully, and that the RVC has the expertise and facilities to support the applicant's research.

No research project will be offered for a research studentship unless it is appropriate for the degree concerned and can reasonably be undertaken within the required timescale with the resources available.

The details of all applicants who meet the published criteria are passed to the relevant academic(s) for consideration. Selection will be made on the basis of all information available, including the application form, proposed area of research and the support available to undertake the project, qualifications, references and performance at interview. Feedback is available to applicants on request.

Applicants are interviewed by at least two members of academic staff using a standardised interview template.

The offer of a place is made by the Head of Admissions and is dependent on the Admissions team receiving:

- evidence of suitable academic qualifications. Degree/Diploma certificates in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation attested by an official translator;
- evidence of a suitable level of English where English is not the applicant's first language.
- evidence of funding to cover the fees and research expenses for the period of the degree;
- suitable references from two academic referees, neither of whom will be supervising the project(s) that the applicant has applied for;
- The project proposal form and a copy of the awarded grant (if applicable) which has been approved by the Head of the Graduate School or MRes Course Director;
- details of the proposed supervisory arrangements.
- Confirmation that any required contracts with third parties are in place

Equal opportunities information will be collected from all applicants. This information will not be used in the selection process, except in so far as the RVC will wish to ascertain that it has the appropriate facilities to support applicants with disabilities.

All offers of a place will specify the name of the supervisor and co-supervisor(s) / professional adviser, the title of the project, the department in which the student will be based, the award for which they will be registered, the registration status (full-time or part-time), normal length of study, the stipend in year 1 (if the student is in receipt of a stipend), any terms and conditions of the scholarship, relevant fees for year one and any conditions which the applicant needs to fulfil. A copy of both the current Code of Practice and RVC Student Intellectual Property and Confidentiality Agreement will also be included, which the student must agree to comply with (and any annual changes made to it subsequently).

All PhD students are initially registered for the MPhil degree, with upgrade to PhD occurring at the recommendation of the student's assessors, normally at the end of the first year of study (or equivalent in part-time study).

6.2 Enrolment

Once any terms and conditions of an offer have been made PGR students will be asked to complete pre-enrolment.

At the commencement of their studies, students should ensure that they enrol with the Graduate School and that they confirm their enrolment annually thereafter (including during the writing period) and on return from any interruption. Enrolment must be completed within 4 weeks of the due date. Failure to re-enrol may lead to withdrawal from the course.

Fees for research degrees, tuition fees are set annually for a 12-month period from 1st August. PGR students are required to pay the level of fee according to the year in which they register and subsequent years of re-registration.

6.3 Induction

At least once a year there will be an RVC induction programme to introduce new research students to the RVC, key staff, PGR study, and to one another.

Attendance at induction is compulsory for all PGR students.

For those enrolling at the start of the academic year, this is normally a 2-day programme on (or the first working day after) 1st and 2nd October. Day 1 at the Camden Campus and Day 2 at the Hawkshead Campus.

Details of the induction programme can be found in the PhD, MRes handbooks.

PhD students starting at a different time of year, and part-time MRes students starting in April, will attend an induction on or close to their start date.

7. Periods of Registration and Modes of Study

7.1 Minimum and Maximum periods of registration

For PGR degree programmes (MRes, MPhil, PhD, ProfD) the period of registration is considered to be the time until submission of the thesis and excludes periods of interrupted study.

Depending on the terms of the studentship, the expectation is that the minimum and maximum registration periods of study for research degrees is as follows:

Minimum and Maximum registration periods:				
	Full Time (FT) Programmes		**Part Time (PT) Programmes**	
Award	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
MRes	12 months	24 months	24 months	36 months
MPhil	24 months	48 months	24 months	36 months
PhD	24 months	60 months	48 months	96 months
ProfD	Not available	Not available	48 months	96 months

FT or PT fees will apply throughout these periods of registration.

7.2 Full Time (FT) and Part Time (PT)

Possible registration status options are FT, PT, writing-up (PhD and MPhil only) and interrupted.

PT status options are either 0.5FTE (PhD/MPhil, ProfD or MRes) or 0.8FTE (PhD/MPhil only).

Any change of status must be supported by the supervisor and approved by the Graduate School who may refer the request to SPD for approval.

Transfer of status from FT to PT will not normally be permitted within 3 months prior to the end date of the studentship or during writing-up status for PhD students. Such requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and the Graduate School may refer the request to SPD.

7.3 Absences

7.3.1 Annual Leave

PhD, MPhil and MRes students can take up to 8 weeks' (40 days) annual leave per annum commencing from the date of registration (including all public holidays and RVC closure days). This should be prorated for part time students. Annual leave must be booked in consultation with, and with the approval of, the supervisory team. Remaining annual leave days cannot be carried forward to the next year, and no more than one month of annual leave may be taken at the end of study (unless the funding body supporting the studentship states otherwise, in which case the latter takes precedence).

Where applicable, research students must abide by an employer's terms and conditions relating to annual leave**.**

7.3.2 Interruptions

Requests for Interruption of study for periods exceeding 4 weeks must be submitted to the Graduate School and may be referred to SPD.

Periods of less than 4 weeks may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The maximum period of interruption will not normally be for more than one year per programme.

If SPD are requested to exceptionally agree an additional interruption, it will also be necessary for the Supervisors/Course Director to assess that overall programme learning outcomes can still be met within the registration limits of the programme at the intended return date. This assessment must be completed prior to approval of the additional interruption.

During periods of approved interruption, students will not be required to maintain active study on their research programmes. Any access to facilities needs to be approved by the Head of Department. If approved, students in this situation will normally have access to RVC resources and facilities but will not be required to pay any fees.

Student stipends may not be paid for all of the period of interruption depending on the organisation funding the study and the circumstances. This is set out in the Sickness absence policy for PgR students. Periods of interruption recommended by SPD, SPD will arrange a return to study meeting prior to the student's return. Where an interruption has been agreed by the Graduate School, the Graduate School will arrange a return to study meeting prior to the students' return. Students must re-enrol on return from interruption.

7.4 Extensions

It is the RVC's expectation that students complete their work and submit their thesis within the period specified in their offer of study.

For PhD/MPhil students, a request for an extension beyond the period specified in the offer of study, up to a maximum of four years (pro-rata for part-time study) should normally come from the supervisor and be endorsed by the grant holder (where applicable).

Extension requests can be submitted by completing the Change of Registration form and submitting the form to pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk in a timely manner. Requests submitted within one month of the end of the studentship will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The case needs to be made on the basis of the whole period of study since initial registration, explaining why the student has not been able to submit within the originally

allotted time, estimating the time which the student will need to complete (including a timeline) and advising on an appropriate period of extension.

Extensions must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School, where necessary in consultation with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation and can be refused.

Normally only one extension will be permitted.

Students who do not submit within the period of extension will be asked to attend a meeting with an SPD panel which will advise on continuation or withdrawal of study.

Requests for an extension to the 4-year submission deadline will NOT normally be considered.

8. Partnerships with Public Research Institutions (PRIs), Joint programmes and RVC Staff Registered for PGR study

An appropriate agreement(s) should be in place through the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) where a studentship:

- Is fully or jointly supported by an external body;
- includes an external supervisor;
- Involves data or materials that will be transferred between parties.

Each individual agreement will set out specifics for each studentship and supervisors are encouraged to contact a member of the contracts team who will work through the specifics of each agreement and reflect accordingly.

8.1 Dual and Joint PhD Programmes

The RVC may collaborate with other universities to offer dual, joint or cotutelle PhD programmes. A dual award results in award of a degree by each partner whereas joint or cotutelle awards result in one award in the name of both partners.

Graduate School approval must be sought for any dual, joint or cotutelle PhD programme, taking advice from the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation as appropriate.

The rules that govern a dual, joint or cotutelle PhD programme (e.g. in terms of selection, admission, induction, supervision, progress and review arrangements, training, and assessment) will normally be negotiated between the institutions, so that the minimum requirements of both can be met. An appropriate agreement will be drawn up for each dual, joint or cotutelle programme with RIO and will include any exceptions to this Code of Practice where appropriate.

8.2 ProfD Students

The workplace-based professional adviser for a ProfD student should be qualified to provide impartial and relevant advice on the field of work. Advisers may need to undertake training in their role and responsibilities at the RVC. A joint supervisory agreement will be signed by the College and the organisation at which the ProfD student and their adviser are based. The role of the professional adviser is set out in the professional adviser guidelines.

8.3 RVC Staff

RVC Staff may undertake research degrees, PhD or MRes, on a part-time basis, alongside their normal employment. This will be with the agreement of their line manager.

Admissions processes as set out in Section 6 will be followed and part-time status options are 0.5FTE or 0.8FTE and no tuition fees will be payable.

RVC staff will abide by this Code for their PhD or MRes. For the portion of their time as a RVC employee the student will abide by their contract with RVC and HR policies.

Some RVC staff may be employed under a specific contract relating to their research studentship. The contract will clearly set out the terms of the employment and will be agreed between HR and the staff member. The Graduate School will be responsible for all matters relating to the research degree studentship. HR will be responsible for matters relating to the employment contract.

9. Progression and Programme Requirements

9.1 Supervisory meeting/regular progress monitoring

This should be read in conjunction with the sections on Responsibilities of Students and Supervisors which can be found in section 4 and 5 of this document.

All parties associated with a student and the student themselves must recognise their responsibility for ensuring progress is monitored.

In order to demonstrate that students are actively studying they will be expected to keep in regular contact with their supervisors, irrespective of geographical location, and submit work regularly in accordance with a schedule agreed with supervisors. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that supervisors are kept informed about any barriers to their satisfactory progress. Failure to maintain regular and agreed contact may lead to an SPD referral and could initiate the withdrawal process.

Progress monitoring takes the form of regular supervisory meetings, with evidence of key formal meetings documented in PgR Manager. PgR Manager provides a framework for recording details relating to the student's programme of study, scheduled supervisory meetings and activities concerning the development of academic and key skills. It is used to chart the evidence of the development of these skills through a process of self-audit and discussion with the supervisor. Assessors should consult the records at appraisals for PhD and ProfD students to provide assurance that regular supervisory meetings have taken place and that the student has met the RVC's generic training requirements.

9.2 Development of research students

The RVC provides a Skills Training Programme through the Graduate School which covers the domains of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and helps students to gain the skills they need to design and complete their programmes effectively and prepare themselves for their subsequent career.

All research students are normally required to participate in, and successfully complete, relevant parts of the Skills Training Programme. Every PhD student is expected to take part in approximately 10 days of transferable (generic) skills training each year (pro-rated for part time students). MRes students must complete mandatory skills training set out in the award and assessment regulations.

Exceptions or exemptions are made for students who have already successfully completed (parts of) an equivalent programme and for full or part-time students who are unable to access the Skills Training Programme. In the latter case, supervisors must discuss with their students their principal training needs and make arrangements for such training to be made available to the student.

There will be no minimum period of attendance each year for externally based MPhil and PhD students but they must attend an induction, visit the RVC to meet face-to-face with their supervisor(s) at least once in each year of the studentship and undertake the mandatory skills training listed on RVC Learn.

The Skills Training Programme consists of sessions given as workshops, or lectures (face-to-face or on-line), and online or distance learning modules. A statistics exam based on the taught course is mandatory for all MRes, MPhil and PhD students.

A £25 cancellation fee (payable by student or supervisor) will be charged for last minute cancellations (less than 3 working days' notice) or failure to attend without good reason.
All students should use the Training Needs Analysis section of PgR Manager to reflect upon their training needs and to record the training sessions attended, presentations given, seminars attended and their evaluation of these.

9.3 Appraisal and Interim Progress reviews

The appraisal procedures are intended to provide a framework for evaluating the progress of PGR students in a regular, fair and constructive manner and to provide constructive feedback to the student on their progress.

The RVC is committed to a system of annual appraisal of all students registered for MPhil, PhD and ProfD. Appraisals are carried out by means of written reports or, where appropriate, presentations and short summary reports provided by the student, and formal meetings between the student, supervisor and two other members of academic staff. The discussions will include an opportunity for students to express their perceptions of their own progress and any aspects of their programme which are causing them concern. The adequacy of the supervision they are receiving and future training needs will also be discussed.

Details of the appraisal process can be found in the appraisal guidelines.

The outcomes of annual appraisal can be as follows:

- Upgrade to PhD
- PhD registration continued
- Change registration to MPhil
- Unsatisfactory progress - re-appraisal (report)
- Unsatisfactory progress - re-appraisal (report and meeting)
- Termination/Withdrawal

An appraisal outcome of change in registration to MPhil or unsatisfactory progress at appraisal may result in a recommendation that the student be re-appraised in less than one year's time and/or referral to SPD.

An appraisal or re-appraisal outcome of termination/withdrawal would result in a referral to SPD.

MRes students will have an interim progress review (comprising an abstract, presentation and discussion) with the Course Director after 3 months of commencing the course (pro-rata for part-time students). Students will also receive feedback on poster and graphical abstract presentations submitted for Postgraduate Research Day

and their statistics examination result.

9.4 Progress to writing up

In order for MPhil, PhD and ProfD students to transfer registration to writing-up status, students must have completed the minimum period of registration.

In order for a student to be allowed to transfer to writing-up status, the Head of Department must be satisfied that the work still required to be completed up to submission of the thesis is such that it can be satisfactorily completed using minimal supervision, primarily related to reading and commenting on draft thesis chapters, access to the library and other facilities and use of personal office space and computing facilities in the Department. If additional resources are required, particularly project-related resources or a higher level of supervision, students cannot be transferred to writing- up status and an extension to study could be considered.

MPhil and PhD students that do not submit their thesis within 3 years and 6 months (for a 3-year studentship) will be liable to pay a writing-up fee. MPhil and PhD students that do not submit their thesis on or before the 4-year deadline will be liable to pay a non-submission fee. Fee details can be found in the relevant course handbook.

9.5 Good academic standing

To remain in good academic standing, all students are required to maintain active study whilst on the PGR programme and a satisfactory standard of work. The definition of active study is to maintain the standard of work formally agreed by your supervisor(s) which aligns with the programme specification. Maintaining active study may also include students demonstrating their responsibility under Section 5.3. Failure to do so may result in a requirement to withdraw from the RVC.

Students who reach the end of 4 years of study and have not submitted their thesis can be deemed not to be in good academic standing. They will be required to meet with SPD where their reasons for not submitting within 4 years will be assessed, a date for submission set and the non-submission fee charged. Failure to meet that deadline will lead to a second meeting with SPD where a final submission deadline will be set. If the student does not comply with the final deadline, their registration will be withdrawn. The student has the right of appeal against the decision through the RVC's appeals procedure.

9.6 Unsatisfactory Progress

Students will be informed of any concerns about the standard of their work, either by their supervisor (during normal supervision sessions or in written comments on work submitted) or as a result of formal appraisal. Students must take any such concerns expressed seriously and ensure that they take steps to improve the standard of their work.

A notice of unsatisfactory progress at an appraisal may give rise to a recommendation that the student be re- appraised in less than one year's time and/or referral to SPD.

At any time (before or between appraisals) where a supervisory team is dissatisfied with the amount or quality of work submitted or undertaken by a student the supervisors may refer the student to SPD which could lead to withdrawal. The student has the right of appeal against any decision through the RVC's appeals procedure.

9.7 Withdrawal

Notification of withdrawal of PGR students may be initiated by the research student, the supervisory team, the appraisal assessors or the Graduate School.

Upon return to study, after a period of interruption, reasonable adjustments can be put in place to support the PGR students return to study. If the student does not agree with or agree to accept the reasonable adjustments, withdrawal of study can be initiated.

At any stage in the process, the PGR student can seek advice from their supervisory team, the Graduate School, the Advice Centre or a PG advisor. The list of current PG advisors can be found here.

Students themselves may initiate their own withdrawal from the programme.

The supervisory team may initiate the withdrawal of a PGR student where there are serious concerns about the academic progress of the student and/or their compliance with degree regulations and procedures. Examples include but are not limited to continually failing to provide draft work to supervisors, repeatedly failing to act on advice and guidance and on-going failure to maintain regular contact with supervisors.

Appraisal assessors can initiate the withdrawal of the PGR student if the student is not performing at the required level for the course in which they are being appraised. If this should be the appraisal outcome, the student should immediately be referred to SPD for further discussion and support.

The Graduate School can initiate withdrawal of a student for failure to pay tuition fees or failure to meet enrolment requirements.

9.8 Academic Failure

It is possible for withdrawal of study to be an outcome of academic failure. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Unsatisfactory appraisal outcome;
- Non-submission of a dissertation or thesis;
- Outcome of the final viva voce examination;
- Non-submission of a revised thesis that has already been examined;
- Gross Misconduct.

Students who are withdrawn from their PGR programme will be notified of their right to appeal against the decision.

10. Ethics and Data Retention

In line with the UK Concordat to support research integrity, post graduate research students and their supervisors are expected to maintain the highest standards of research conduct and to familiarise themselves and act in accordance with:

Research Integrity for staff and students
Procedures for dealing with research misconduct
Policies and procedures on public interest disclosure
Research data Management

All publicly funded research councils now require the management of data generated by funded projects, to enable open availability to others and to maximise the potential for reuse.

10.1 Research Integrity

The RVC expects all staff and students undertaking research to undertake their work with rigour, integrity, and to the highest ethical standards. All post-graduate students should complete a Research Integrity Quiz and accompanying presentation within 4 months of having started and then every 4 years as a refresher.

10.2 Research data Management

To ensure compliance with Research Councils UK guidelines on the management of research data, the RVC must effectively support the management of data generated by research activities.

10.3 Student files

Student files will be held electronically and contain information on progress matters, finance and funding and any correspondence with the student. Files must be secure and should be available only to relevant staff in the Graduate School. Any data must conform to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations. Generally, student files will be kept no longer than 6 years after the student has completed their course.

10.4 Student Privacy Notice

The RVCs Student Privacy Notice is designed to provide further information about the different ways in which the RVC uses the personal while students are at the RVC.

11. Student Liaison and Feedback

11.1 Student liaison and representation

The Research Degrees Committee (RDC), meets once a term for open business and has PhD student representatives from both campuses alongside MRes student representatives and a representative of students based off-campus as committee members.

11.2 Students' Union

The Students' Union Postgraduate Officer/s offers support and representation for postgraduate students. Officers sit on major RVC committees.

The SU Postgraduate Officers provide a report to each open business session of the RDC where student issues can be identified and action plans put in place to improve student experience.

11.3 Student feedback – PRES

The RVC takes part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which is designed and run by Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) for PGR students, with reference to their experience of supervision, the research environment and their development as a researcher. The PRES will normally run annually and the findings are reported to the RDC and the External Student Survey Results working group'(a sub-group of the Teaching Quality Committee). The RVC also takes part in the Student Barometer Survey, run by I-graduate.

11.4 Student Feedback – Training

PGR students are invited to feedback on all training sessions organised by the Graduate School. Feedback is reported at each open business session of the RDC and action agreed as necessary.

11.5 Student Feedback – General

Student feedback on any matter is always welcome and should be sent in the first instance to pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk

12. Examination

For detailed information on the examination process for MPhil/PhD/ProfD please see the Research Degree Examination Regulations

For detailed information on the examination process for MRes students please see the Assessment and Awards Regulations

12.1 Appointment of examiners

For all PGR students registered at the RVC, examiners are initially approved during the reserved meetings of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which convene four times a year, and are then ratified by Academic Board. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that examiners are approved. It is strongly recommended that nominations are submitted to the meeting occurring no later than four months before submission of the dissertation or thesis.

Supervisors must complete a standard form for nominating examiners. Students should not be asked to identify or contact prospective examiners. The nomination form must be submitted to the secretary of the RDC *no later than eight working days* before the Committee meets. A draft abstract of the dissertation or thesis must be attached to the form (this is solely for assessing the suitability of the examiners and need not be the final document). Short (2-page) CVs should also be submitted to the Committee for each proposed examiner.

For more information regarding nominating examiners please see MRes guidelines or the MPhil/PhD/ProfD guidelines.

12.2 Submission

It is the student's responsibility to submit the dissertation or thesis in conjunction with their supervisor on or before the submission deadline.

When submitting a dissertation or thesis for examination, the student will be required to sign the Consent to Publish form, the Statement of Originality and Number of Words form and complete a Submission Receipt. These forms will be emailed to the PGR student in advance of the submission deadline and they can be found on RVC Learn.

Students are required to insert a declaration into their dissertation or thesis. The wording of this declaration and guidance for when preparing a dissertation or thesis for submission can be found in the Instructions on Submission Format guidelines.

The length of an RVC MRes research project dissertation should be between **10,000 and 15,000** words, **including** in-text citations and footnotes, but **excluding** abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, reference list, figure legends/captions and appendices.

The length of an RVC MPhil thesis should be no more than **60,000** words **including** figure legends and footnotes but **excluding** bibliography and appendices.

The length of an RVC PhD thesis should be no more than **100,000** words **including** figure legends and footnotes but **excluding** bibliography and appendices.

The length of an RVC ProfD thesis should be no more than **30,000** words (**excluding** title, figures, tables, appendices and references). Theses which are largely social science based may, with prior agreement, be no more than **45,000** words.

Appendices should only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis (but to which they may refer if they wish).

These limits are upper limits and not targets. Students should consult with their supervisor(s) about the length of thesis that is appropriate for each particular research topic and be mindful that brevity without sacrifice of clarity will be appreciated by examiners.

Extensions to the word limit will not be permitted.

Students should submit their dissertation or thesis electronically to pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk and the submission date will be recorded. If an examiner has requested a hard copy of the dissertation or thesis, the student will be asked to print the document and arrange delivery to the examiner/s.

MPhil and PhD Students who have not submitted their thesis within 4 years (or within 3 years and 6 months for a 3-year studentship) will be liable to pay an annual fee. More information can be found in the relevant course handbooks.

More information on submission can be found in the Instructions on Submission Format guidelines.

12.3 Viva

The examination of the dissertation or thesis will be conducted in accordance with RVC regulations.

The supervisor is responsible for arranging the date, time and venue for the viva examination to suit all parties and inform the Exams Office accordingly.

12.3.1 MPhil, PhD and ProfD Students

For MPhil, PhD and ProfD examinations, each of the examiners will prepare an independent preliminary report and this report will be submitted to the Graduate School at least a week before the viva is due to take place. Any cause for concern will be reported to the Head of the

Graduate School.

Supervisors may be present during the viva if all parties agree. An independent chair, that has experience of examining for the University of London, will attend a viva where both examiners are external to the University of London, where examiners lack experience of examining for the UoL and if the viva takes place online or in a Hybrid format in order to ensure that RVC process is followed.

On conclusion of the viva, the examiners will agree a recommendation and write a joint report (which will include details of any required revisions to the thesis). The outcome of the viva will normally be communicated to the student by the examiners and the report sent to the Exams Office, who will formally inform the student and supervisor of the outcome.

MPhil, PhD and ProfD students may be asked to make minor amendments to their thesis within 3 months of their viva, major corrections within 6 months or undertake major revisions within 18 months. In each case the revised thesis must be sent via the Research Degrees Officer to the examiners for approval. Any student requiring major revisions within 18 months should meet with the Head of Graduate School and their supervisors in order to discuss the resubmission timetable. It is the students responsibility to arrange this meeting.

In the event that a student thinks it unlikely they will meet the 3-, 6- or 18-month deadline, they should refer to the procedure detailed in the Research Degree Examination Regulations.

The procedure also applies to students that have not submitted their thesis within 4 years (pro-rata for part-time candidates) from the date of registration (excluding any approved interruptions) and does not reply to any communication from their supervisors, the Graduate School or Advice Centre staff.

12.3.2 MRes Students

For MRes examinations, each of the examiners will prepare an independent preliminary and this report will be submitted to the Exams Office at least a week before the viva is due to take place. Any cause for concern will be reported to the Head of the Graduate School.

Supervisors may be present during the viva if all parties agree to it. The course director or deputy course director will be present throughout the viva.

On conclusion of the viva, the examiners will agree a final mark and submit this with the final joint report form and oral exam mark sheet. The paperwork will be submitted to the Graduate School. Once all of the paperwork has been received, the coursework has been completed and

the exam spreadsheet has been approved by the course director the Research Degrees Officer will inform the student and supervisor of the outcome.

A student who fails overall at the first attempt will be given an opportunity to revise and resubmit the dissertation (normally a maximum of 3 months after the viva date) and will be required to re-sit the oral examination, if this mark was less than 5/10.

For more information and the consequences of failure in terms of in-course assessment, please see the assessment and awards regulations.

12.4 Appeals

Information can be found in Section 13 below and at Student Resolution and Compliance

12.5 Awards

Once all paperwork has been received and results confirmed, the Exams Office will process the award. MPhil, PhD and ProfD students will need to submit a final electronic copy of their thesis to pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk. Award dates for those students will be the last day of the month in which they submit the final copy of the thesis. Award dates for MRes students are the last day of the month in which they receive confirmation from the Exams Office that they have achieved a pass, merit or distinction for the MRes degree.

Pass lists are sent to the University of London who produce the final degree certificate.

13. Appeals, Complaints & Academic Misconduct

13.1 Student Resolution and Compliance (SRC) Team

The SRCTeam are responsible for managing appeals, complaints and conduct in line with the relevant procedure. Students can contact the SRC Team for support with procedural queries. Further information and contact details are outlined below.

The Advice Centre (advice@rvc.ac.uk) are available to provide independent welfare advice to students who are engaging with any SRC procedures.

13.2 Appeals

An appeal is a request for a review of a decision made an academic body that makes a decision on a student's progression, assessment or award.

Appeals are considered through the Student Appeals Procedure.

The procedure cannot be used to contest academic judgement.

In order to submit an appeal, students should provide a completed Student Appeal Request Form, alongside any supporting evidence, to the SRC Team via email to studentappeals@rvc.ac.uk.

13.3 Complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider.'

Complaints are considered through the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure. In order to submit a complaint, students should provide a completed Student Complaint Form, alongside any supporting evidence, to the SRC Team via email to studentcomplaints@rvc.ac.uk.

Upon review of a complaint submission, the SRC Team may identify that a complaint, or aspects of a complaint, relating to the behaviour of a staff member, should be dealt with by the Human Resources (HR) department. In this instance, the SRC Team will signpost the student accordingly.

13.4 Conduct

The RVC define misconduct as an action or omission that:

(i) Causes detriment or any serious physical or emotional harm to any student, member of staff or other visiting, working or studying at the RVC or involved in RVC activities;
obstructs, frustrates, or disrupts the functioning or activities of the RVC, or of those who work or study at the RVC;

(ii) otherwise damages the RVC or its reputation.

13.5 Conduct – Informal Resolution

Where possible, low-level concerns relating to a student's conduct should be addressed informally, directly with the area or person relevant to the matter.

PGR Students should raise their concerns in person or in writing via email or letter (not social media) directly with a member of the Graduate School.

The member of staff to whom the concern is raised should make and retain a brief record of the matter or concern. They should also outline the circumstances under which escalation will be required (e.g. a repeat of behaviours after the informal stage, failure to engage with the opportunity for informal resolution.)

Further information is set out in Section 14 of the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

13.6 Conduct – Formal Resolution

Where concerns relating to a student's conduct are more serious, and constitute a significant or repeated breach of the RVC Charter, the case will be formally managed by the SRC Team, in line with Student Misconduct Procedure.

Reports of potential misconduct can be made by Graduate School staff and/or a student concerned by the behaviours of another student. In order to make a report, a Student Misconduct Reporting Form should be completed and submitted to the SRC Team, alongside any supporting evidence, via email to studentconduct@rvc.ac.uk.

13.7 Academic Misconduct

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) defines academic misconduct as 'any action by a student which gives or has the potential to give an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research.

The Student Academic Misconduct Procedures provides further information on the various categories of academic misconduct.

For PGR degree programmes, concerns relating to Academic Misconduct are reportable to the Head of the Graduate School, who will determine whether there is a prima facie case for an investigation to be facilitated in line with the Policy and procedure for dealing with allegations of research misconduct.

13.8 Professional Requirements

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) confirm that 'fitness to practise is

the ability to meet professional standards; it is about character, professional competence and health.

Concerns relating to a student's fitness to practise are considered through the Professional Requirements Procedure. Where a student is a member of a registered profession (i.e. the RCVS) consultation with the relevant body will take place to determine whether the student should be treated under this procedure or referred to the procedures of that body.

In the first instance, concerns relating to a student's fitness to practise should be discussed with a senior tutor, who will determine whether it is necessary to refer the matter to the Professional Requirements Procedure.

The SRC Team are responsible for providing procedural and administrative support on cases that have been referred and can be contacted via email (professionalrequirements@rvc.ac.uk) to answer any procedural queries.

14. Graduate School Contacts

Head of Graduate School & Professor of Companion Animal Pathology

Professor Ken Smith

Email: ksmith@rvc.ac.uk

Programme Management Research Team

- Assistant Registrar for Programme Management

  Adam Hall

  Email: ahall@rvc.ac.uk

- Postgraduate Programme Manager

  Lisa Harber

  Email: lharber@rvc.ac.uk

- Programme Administrators – Research

  Rob Bacon & Rochelle Rozasty

  Email: pgadmin@rvc.ac.uk