

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

Notes for use when completing the applications to register for any of the University's Research Degrees programmes using the appropriate RDC-R form

Introduction

- 1.1 The registration process is intended to allow the University's Research Degrees Committee's subject Sub-Committees to ensure that:
- the candidate is suitably qualified;
 - the candidate is embarking on a viable research programme;
 - the supervision is adequate and likely to be sustained; and
 - the University is able to provide appropriate facilities for the conduct of the research programme.

These notes are designed to help research students and supervisors complete the application for registration in order to facilitate the above process.

- 1.2 The application to register for a research degree should be completed by the candidate, with the assistance of the supervisors, normally within six months of initial enrolment for full-time candidates and within nine months for part-time candidates. MA, MSc, LLM by Research should normally register within three months of initial enrolment for full-time candidates and within four months for part-time candidates. Professional Doctorate candidates should register within 4 months of beginning the research element of the programme. The Director of Studies should provide guidance on how the form should be completed, however the Second Supervisor or Faculty Postgraduate Research Tutor may also advise if necessary. Candidates should not be left to complete the form on their own; neither should the application read as though it has been written entirely by the supervisor.
- 1.3 The Sub-Committee encourages candidates to make applications for registration as clear and concise as possible. Information should be included in the space provided on the application form. Examples of previously completed forms are generally available from Faculty Postgraduate Research Tutors.
- 1.4 The application for registration must come forward to the Sub-Committee with the approval of the Faculty Research Committee Chair or Postgraduate Research Tutor. The Faculty will ascertain that the form has been fully and correctly completed. In addition, it will examine the application from the point of view of clarity and appropriateness of content.
- 1.5 To assist the Sub-Committees in their deliberations should the Postgraduate Research Tutor be unable to attend the meeting or where the proposed Director of Studies will be invited to attend the meeting for the discussion of the application for registration.

Completing the form

- 2 Students must ensure that they have selected the correct RDC-R form for the programme of study they are registering, e.g. MPhil/PhD, MA, MSc, LLM by Research, Professional Doctorate etc. At the top of the application form the candidate must indicate which degree

the application for registration is for (MPhil only; MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD; or PhD direct, MA, MSc, LL.M by Research, Professional Doctorate) and delete the degrees which do not apply. For further details of these different pathways and their requirements see section 2 of the University Research Policies and Procedures Handbook. Please note that applications to register for PhD direct will only normally be considered when the work clearly follows on from a prior Masters degree undertaken by the candidate in the same subject area.

Section 1: The applicant

- 3.1 The candidate's surname and **all** forenames should be given on the application form as the name will be entered on the University's records and will eventually appear on the degree certificate. The candidate's preferred title should also be given (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms).
- 3.2 The candidate's present place of work and student status should be provided.
- 3.3 Details of any scholarship/studentship or other award held in connection with the proposed research programme should be provided, including the length of the award.
- 3.4 Please ensure that all the necessary details are entered in the qualifications section: the courses completed, main subjects, classification of the awards, names of the awarding bodies **and dates of the awards**.
- 3.5 Details should be provided indicating the nature of funding for the payment of fees and whether the funding will be available for the duration of the programme.
- 3.6 If applicable the English language qualifications section (1.1) should be completed. If this is not applicable please tick that box.
- 3.7 Complete section 1.2 confirming whether ethical approval has been obtained at the appropriate stage required.
- 3.8 Intellectual Property Rights:

Students who enrolled on or after September 2005 have agreed to assign their Intellectual Property Rights to the University when signing the acceptance of a place on the programme and agreeing to accept the University's Terms and Conditions, therefore please complete (a).

If Intellectual Property Rights have been assigned by way of a formal agreement before enrolment, or if for some other reason you are unable to assign the IP, please complete (b) and attach a letter explaining the reasons as to why the Intellectual Property cannot be assigned.
- 3.9 In the previous training and experience section (1.4), only include information which is relevant to the application. This section is particularly important for candidates with non-standard entry qualifications and for those returning to study after a break in their academic career. It may be useful for such candidates to attach a brief CV, which illustrates the candidate's relevant research or professional experience. If candidates are registering for the degree of PhD direct, this section should be used to provide further details of the relevant Masters degree (title of dissertation, details of research methodology courses, etc).
- 3.10 Students applying for the research element of a Professional Doctorate should list all the

required taught modules that have been successfully completed.

Section 2: Academic referees

- 4.1 This section should only be completed by those applicants who hold non-standard entry qualifications, i.e. candidates who do not hold at least an upper second-class honours degree or equivalent (section 2 of the Research Degree Policies and Procedures Handbook refers). Such candidates are required to provide the names of two independent academic referees. It is helpful if the supervisors can obtain the references and attach them to the application when it is submitted to the Sub-Committee. If references are not available, the Sub-Committee may defer a decision on the application until satisfactory references are received.

Section 3: Name of collaborating establishment(s) and the nature of the association:

- 5.1 If any collaborating establishments have been agreed, a letter from a senior member of the collaborating department or organisation must be attached to the application for registration. The letter must state that the facilities to be provided will be available for the duration of the programme (for example, access to specialist equipment, specific population of subjects or records, etc) and confirm that the institution will act as a collaborating establishment - if this is the case, the nature of the collaboration should be specified here.

Section 4.1: Title of the research programme

- 6.1 The title of the proposed programme of research is not expected to be the final title of the thesis. It should, however, be as concise and informative as possible. It is not necessary to begin the title with words such as 'An investigation of...'

Section 4.2: Aims and objectives of the investigation

- 7.1 The aims of the investigation should be listed in a systematic and logical way. Care should be taken to make the aims as clear as possible - a series of bullet points listing the aims may be used. It is often helpful if the aims can be linked to the MPhil and PhD components of the proposed plan of work, where appropriate.
- 7.2 Four or five objectives should be listed as bullet points detailing the main objectives for the project – care should be taken not to prejudge the outcomes. Explain how each objective will be met when describing the proposed research in the MPhil and PhD stages of the plan of work.

Section 4.3: Proposed plan of work

- 8.1 The purpose of this section is to indicate to the Sub-Committee that a viable programme of research has been formulated, which has been set within the appropriate context and is likely to be achievable within the time available. In order to ensure that the candidate has ownership of the project, **the Sub-Committee requires that the plan of work is written by the candidate, with the advice and assistance of the supervisors.**

- 8.2 The plan of work should be **no longer** than the space provided on the application form i.e. two sides of A4 paper - **only use the space provided below and the plan of work must not, under any circumstances be longer than 1,000 words**. Candidates should make the proposal as succinct as possible - carefully edited and economic versions of the proposed plan of work are more helpful for the purposes of the Sub-Committee than long-winded, sprawling statements. The plan of work should be written in such a way that it will be understandable by a non-specialist audience and the use of excessive jargon or specialist terms, which are not defined, should be avoided. It is the Sub-Committee's experience that candidates do find the focusing of their research proposal a useful exercise.
- 8.3 The plan of work should start with a paragraph which presents the background to the project and sets the research in its academic context. The project should be related to other work that has been undertaken in the field (or related areas) and key references should be cited within the text (usually about ten references will suffice). An extensive bibliography is **not** required. The Sub-Committee prefers candidates to number the references in the text and then list them in full in the recognised format for the appropriate subject area at the end of the plan of work (or on an attached sheet).
- 8.4 The plan of work should then describe the proposed research that is to be undertaken. The plan should be divided into stages rather than chapters of the thesis or time periods. Although the exact development of the research project may be uncertain at this stage, the Sub-Committee will want to see a structured statement of how the candidate, at the time of registration, expects to carry out the research.
- 8.5 Although the plan of work requires a description of the development of the project, care should be taken not to prejudge the results of the research and to introduce conclusions about the research into the plan of work.
- 8.6 It is not necessary to 'sell' the research project and to include claims of its importance or timeliness in the plan of work.
- 8.7 If the application is to register for the degree of MPhil/PhD, the plan of work must identify what aspects of the research are to be undertaken at the MPhil stage and what aspects will form the PhD stage. The division of the research into these two stages should illustrate the qualitative difference between the two levels. The Sub-Committee recognises that it is not always possible to identify at the start of the project the way in which the research is going to develop in the later stages, but an indication of what the PhD element might comprise should be provided. For example, a statement such as 'Possibilities for further development include ...' may be used. It does not matter if the research develops differently from the direction outlined at the registration stage: the application for transfer provides an opportunity to describe the proposed PhD stage of the project in greater depth. The description of the PhD stage in the plan of work should also include an indication of how the original contribution to knowledge is to be made.
- 8.8 If the application is to register for the degree of PhD direct and the candidate has already undertaken a Masters degree in the same subject area, care must be taken in writing the plan of work not to include information that has already been analysed as part of the Masters degree. The Masters dissertation may be cited as a source, but the PhD project must stand entirely separate from the Masters work. **The plan of work should illustrate how the PhD project has developed from the Masters work.**
- 8.9 If a candidate's research project forms part of a larger group project, the research that the candidate is going to undertake must be distinguishable from the larger project. The plan of

work contained in the application for registration should describe clearly the candidate's own contribution to the project and the relationship between the candidate's work and the larger project.

- 8.10 If a candidate is undertaking a significant amount of the research project in another country, it is useful if a timetable indicating the time periods to be spent in the UK and abroad can be included in the plan of work.
- 8.11 In addition to describing the research the candidate is going to do, the plan of work must also describe how the candidate is going to undertake the research. It is very important, therefore, to indicate an understanding of appropriate methodologies and/or techniques to be used.

Section 4.4: Details of any specialist facilities available for the investigation

- 9.1 This section should provide details and location of any specialist facilities available at the University, collaborating establishment(s) and other institutions. Facilities that obviously will be available, such as the University's library and computing facilities, should not be listed. If appropriate, a copy of a letter guaranteeing access to facilities for the duration of the programme should be attached.

Section 4.5:

- 9.2 If appropriate, provide a list of the glossary of terms used in the plan of work in section 4.3 and attach it to the form.

Section 5: Programme of related activities

- 10.1 Candidates should note that attendance at both Faculty and University training programmes is expected and a list of these should be provided.

The programme of related activities is intended to:

- a) provide the candidate with the skills and knowledge necessary for the pursuit of the proposed research;
- b) provide breadth of knowledge in related subjects; and
- c) place the candidate in contact with the research community.

- 10.2 **All candidates must complete section 5.1.** Specific examples of the seminars, conferences, courses etc, to be attended should be given. It is not sufficient to type 'Attendance at relevant seminars and conferences' under this section.
- 10.3 Section 5.2 should only be completed if a candidate is going to undertake a programme of studies which will be formally assessed as part of the research degree (if it is felt that the candidate should take, and pass, specific modules or courses in order to plug any academic gaps in the candidate's background).

Section 6: Supervision of programme of work

- 11.1 The requirements regarding the supervision team are laid out in section 9 of the Research Degree Policies and Procedures Handbook.
- 11.2 Please ensure that all the required details are given for all the proposed supervisors listed in sections 6.1 and 6.2: name, qualifications, post held and place of work, current and previous supervision figures; and that form RDC-CV is attached if the supervisor has not previously supervised any Oxford Brookes University research degree candidates.
- 11.3 If the supervisors and the candidate are not located in the same place, a statement of the frequency of contact (for example, the number of meetings planned per term) should be provided on a separate sheet.
- 11.4 Please ensure that all the required details are given for all the advisors listed in section 6.3: name, qualifications, post held and place of work. Form RDC-CV is not required for an advisor.

Section 7: Period of time for completion of programme of work

- 12.1 Section 7.1: The expected starting date for registration purposes should be the date when the candidate started the research project, which will normally be the date when the candidate first enrolled as a research student at the University. The date of registration cannot be before the date of initial enrolment. The Sub-Committee views the preparation of the application for registration as being the start of the research project, so the application can be submitted up to six months after the effective date of registration given on the form. If the effective date of registration on the form is backdated by more than six months from the date of receipt of the application by the Sub-Committee, the reasons for this must be provided on a separate sheet. The Sub-Committee does recognise that applications from candidates in certain areas may be delayed if they have undertaken substantial research methodology courses in their first year.
- 12.2 Section 7.1: Whether the candidate registers on a full-time or a part-time basis will depend upon the number of hours the candidate is able to devote to the research project. Full-time candidates are normally expected to devote an average of at least 35 hours per week over a 44 week year to the research project, part-time candidates an average of at least 15 hours per week.
- 12.3 Section 7.1. The amount of time allowed for the programme is an indication of the average amount of time the candidate expects to be able to devote to the research on a weekly basis, it does not commit the candidate to undertaking a set number of hours per week on the project.
- 12.4 The expected duration of the programme is likewise only an indication of how long the candidate expects to spend on the research project and does not commit the candidate to spending exactly this amount of time on it. The following time periods are normally used:

The thesis must be submitted within the following minimum and maximum periods of registration:

	Minimum	Maximum
MPhil		
full-time	2 years	3 years
part-time	3 years	4 years
PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration and including that period of MPhil registration)		
full-time	3 years	5 years
part-time	4 years	6 years
PhD (direct)		
full-time	2 years	5 years
part-time	3 years	6 years
Research Component of the Professional Doctorate		
	3 years	4 years

Please ensure that the years given are within the minimum and maximum periods of registration, as given in the Research Degree Policies and Procedures Handbook refers (regulation 7.2.2 refers).

It should be noted that a timely submission and conferment of the following awards should take place within the timescale indicated below:

MPhil		
full-time	2 years	
part-time	3 years	
PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration and including that period of MPhil registration)		
full-time	3.5 years	
part-time	5 years	
PhD (direct)		
full-time	2 years	
part-time	3 years	
Research Component of the Professional Doctorate		
	3-4 years	

Research Students and Research Ethics Review

It is University policy that all research carried out by research students which involves human participants should be submitted for research ethics review. Research ethics review is carried out by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) or, for those conducting research on patients, carers or staff in the NHS, by an NHS Local Research Ethics Committee or NHS Multi-centre Research Ethics Committee.

Which projects need research ethics review?

All projects carried out by students registered for an MPhil, MPhil/PhD, PhD, MA, MSc, LLM by Research, Professional Doctorate, which involve people as *research participants* require research ethics review and approval. This includes projects where:

- Only a part of the research involves people as *participants*
- Contact with participants is through email or letter
- Participants are contacted outside the UK

At what stage is ethics review required?

Students must have full ethics approval before any attempt is made to recruit participants and collect data. Research ethics review can take up to six or eight weeks to complete and students should allow sufficient time for this in planning their work.

What is the process for research ethics review?

Students whose research involves patients, carers or staff in the NHS (i.e. students who plan to gain access to their research participants through the NHS) should apply to the appropriate NHS research ethics committee. See how to apply to the [research ethics committees in Oxford](#)

See guidance for students applying for [University Research Ethics](#)

Please note that:

- Applications must be signed by the research team and passed to the relevant Research Ethics Officer to be approved and signed off - three weeks before the meeting date. Once signed off at Faculty level, the hard copy should be given to the UREC administrator two weeks before the meeting date.
- Applications to UREC should first go through Faculty ethics review procedures and be signed off by the Faculty Research Ethics Officer.
- Committee meeting dates are available on the [ethics research web page](#).

What should be included in the application?

The application form asks for specific information in relation to the research and the way in which it will be conducted.

But please note:

- Where research involving human participants constitutes only one component of the study, it is important that this component be *set in the context of the wider study, including its aims and methods*. The contribution of this component to the broader aims of the study and the way in which the data will be used in progressing the study should be made clear.

Where can I get further information?

[Research Ethics website](#)

[Policies, procedures and codes of practice](#)