

# Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors 2025/26

*The Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors* (henceforth 'this Code' or 'the Code') is reviewed and republished on an annual basis by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO).

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## 1. Introduction

- (1) This Code reflects the advice and guidance in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](#) published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
- (2) Research degree students<sup>1</sup> (henceforth student or students) pursue independent research as part of a research degree within one of the University's academic schools. Successful progress depends primarily on their own efforts, supported by those of their supervisors, but also on the research environment in the school and on the quality of their research training. The purpose of this Code is to specify the practices and procedures that underpin these efforts. It should be read in conjunction with the University's [Research Degree Regulations](#), the [University's Student Registration and Enrolment](#), and [Student Engagement Policy](#). Where any discrepancy exists, the *Research Degree Regulations* and the *Student Engagement Policy* will always take precedence.
- (3) Disciplines differ markedly in the day-to-day conduct of a research degree. While some students will spend long periods in the field or in distant libraries and archives, others will be in daily contact with their research groups in laboratories. Consequently, the appropriate procedures for guiding their research will vary. Students should not be surprised by these variations and should not be disconcerted if their school or individual department requires, for example, more frequent reviews or more extensive written reports than are specified in the *Research Degree Regulations*, which set out minimum requirements based on sector-wide good practice.
- (4) A research degree requires a considerable commitment of time from all students, however, the challenges to part-time students are often different from those encountered by full-time students as in many cases part-time students will be in full-time employment and/or have other responsibilities.
- (5) Responsibility for implementing this Code is shared between the student, the supervisory team, the School Director of PGR Education, the Executive Dean and Head of Department. This Code sets out the specific responsibilities of each of these individuals and the relationships between them.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

- (6) The University expects students to demonstrate an appropriate level of engagement with their studies. Full-time students are expected to engage with their research for at least 21 hours per week, or part-time equivalent, pro rata. These hours may vary depending on students' individual circumstance.
- (7) Students should advise on, and agree, a schedule of meetings based on a minimum (for full-time students) of one meeting per month in the first year and, on average, one meeting every six weeks throughout subsequent years (and pro-rata equivalent for part-time students).

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'research degree student' refers to students on any research-based programme within the University, including Master of Arts/ Science by Research, Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy). The Doctor of Philosophy by Prior Publication (PhD) is a research degree award of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. Where references to an individual programme are made, the paragraph is relevant solely to that award.

- (8) Students who fail to attend two consecutive supervisory meetings without a valid reason may be issued with an engagement reminder from the Doctoral School and given 10 working days, from the date of the reminder, to re-engage with their research. Individual circumstances or personal situations might have adversely affected students' engagement and where this is considered to be the case will be dealt with sympathetically. Further support may be provided, where appropriate.
- (9) If the lack of engagement should continue after the engagement reminder, the formal warning process will commence, in accordance with Section 11 of the Research Degree Regulations. If a lack of engagement should then continue, and where students have not fully re-engaged with their research, the University reserves the right to pursue a request to discontinue the student's registration.
- (10) Students may appeal the decision to terminate their registration in writing, within 15 days of the notification, in line with the formal appeals process (see Section 26 of the Research Degree Regulations).

### **Responsibilities of the Student**

- (11) Students must acquaint themselves with this Code and other relevant University documentation<sup>2</sup> at the earliest opportunity in their research degree, including the [Research Degree Regulations](#), the [Student Engagement Policy](#), [Remote Studies Guidance](#) and research degree student handbook provided by the Doctoral School.
- (12) Students' responsibilities will include, but are not limited to:
  - (a) attending a schedule of agreed supervisory meetings, keeping a record of the meetings and any agreed actions points, and providing their supervisor(s) with an agreed version of the notes of each meeting;
  - (b) with the supervisor(s), agreeing in writing, before the end of the first term, a broad timetable of work and the objectives that should be met in the first year;
  - (c) Supervisory meetings should wherever possible be held in person. For students who are sponsored by Royal Holloway for the Student Visa it should be established at each meeting that the student is engaging with their studies in the UK.
  - (d) discussing with the supervisor(s) the type of guidance and form of comment found most helpful;
  - (e) undertaking research methods and Research Skills Training<sup>3</sup> provided by the University, the school, department and/or the supervisor;
  - (f) maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the agreed objectives, including the submission of written work as required in sufficient time to allow for comment and discussion;

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<sup>2</sup> The Doctoral School website provides information on relevant policies and documentation:

<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/home.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Further information on Research Skills Training can be found here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/researcher-development/home.aspx>

- (g) taking responsibility for the completion of any documentation required as part of the annual review or MPhil to PhD upgrade process<sup>4</sup>;
- (h) attending additional progress reviews when required and writing formal reports for these as necessary;
- (i) taking the initiative in raising at the earliest opportunity any personal difficulties which are interfering with their work or any disabilities or special educational needs for which they may require support; students should feel able to confide in their supervisor, but may prefer to speak with their second supervisor and/or advisor, the School Director of PGR Education, the Head of Department or Executive Dean, the Associate Pro Vice-Principal (Postgraduate Research), the Doctoral School, Student Life<sup>5</sup> or the Students' Union;
- (j) where supervisory problems or difficulties in the supervisory relationship arise, discussing these concerns informally with the supervisor(s) or advisor in the first instance. The University would expect students to take reasonable steps to resolve such problems or difficulties with their supervisor(s) and/or department before referring the matter on.
  - i) where it is not possible or practicable to discuss the matter with the supervisor/advisor or to resolve the difficulties through such a discussion, the matter may then be referred on to the School Director of PGR Education;
  - ii) where the School Director of PGR Education is also the supervisor/advisor, the matter may be referred on to the Executive Dean/Head of Department;
  - iii) in the event that the supervisory problems or difficulties are of such a nature that they could not reasonably be resolved through discussion with the supervisor(s), School Director of PGR Education and/or Executive Dean or Head of department, the matter may be referred to the Associate Pro Vice-Principal (Postgraduate Research);
- (k) reporting unforeseen or unavoidable periods of absence (e.g., through illness or personal issues) to the supervisor(s) and school as soon as possible. Students should interrupt their studies if the circumstances leading to the absence are likely to delay the research for a period longer than one month.
- (l) deciding when to submit the thesis, taking due account of the supervisor(s) opinions (which are advisory only), within the timescale prescribed by the *Research Degree Regulations* and those of UKRI where appropriate (where discrepancies between the deadlines occur, those of the UKRI take precedence);
- (m) taking full responsibility for checking the accuracy of grammar, spelling, and referencing in drafts submitted to supervisors as well as in the thesis before final submission;

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<sup>4</sup> Further information and relevant documentation on the Upgrade process can be found here

<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorsal-school/pgr-student-lifecycle/annual-review-and-upgrade/home.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Information on Student Life can be found here <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/student-life/support-and-welfare/>

- (n) being aware of, and adhering to, ethical<sup>6</sup>, legal and professional requirements for the conduct and presentation of research, including rules relating to plagiarism;
- (o) adhering to the University's *Research Degree Regulations*;
- (p) ensuring that the academic School and the Doctoral School are provided with current postal and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers and for updating relevant student records to incorporate any change of these contact details.
- (q) For students holding a Student visa, to seek permission and await approval if the location of research is changing, as this may require additional approval and reporting by Student Administration.
- (r) For students requiring immigration permission to study in the UK, to ensure this is maintained throughout the duration of their studies and where applicable maintain Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certification if any of the below changes occur:
  - i) principal supervisor
  - ii) content of research
  - iii) financial sponsor or conditions for financial sponsorship

The student should inform the Doctoral School if they apply for a new ATAS certificate.

### **The Supervisory Team**

- (13) Each student is allocated a supervisory team, which will include as a minimum two members: a principal (first) supervisor and either a second supervisor or an advisor.
  - (a) The principal supervisor will normally be a non-probationary, doctorate-holding and research-active member of the academic staff of the University, while the second supervisor or advisor will normally be an established or probationary, doctorate-holding, research active member of staff, an Honorary Research Fellow, Emerita/Emeritus or Visiting Professor or may be external to the University. Members of academic staff on a temporary contract may be appointed as principal supervisor for a research student as long as their tenure lasts for the duration of the student's studies.
  - (b) For specialist doctorate research degrees, the first or second supervisors may include doctorate-holding practitioner colleagues who are research active with sufficient expertise in the specialist area. If this is the case a nominated advisor must be a doctorate-holding and research-active member of the academic staff of the University.
- (14) There may be cases where, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the research and/or the subject-specific expertise required (or exceptionally for pastoral reasons), there is a need to appoint an advisor as a third or fourth member of the supervisory team. This

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<sup>6</sup> Guidance on research ethics is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/research/research-and-enterprise/research-enterprise/ethics/home.aspx>.

will be a third supervisor if the individual is involved with the research and an advisor if they have a pastoral role.

- (15) Both principal and second supervisors/advisors, regardless of tenure, should normally be employed by the University. In cases of scarce expertise, where an external funding body requires it or where a student's research is considered to be at a stage where a change of supervisor may compromise their progress, the second supervisor may be external to the University. Cases of scarce expertise within University may include circumstances where there is a lack of technical and academic expertise in a particular research area or a lack of expertise in a particular methodology or theoretical perspective. Normally, supervision exclusively by persons from outside the University will not be permitted.
- (16) All supervisors and advisors should ensure that they behave politely and considerately towards students at all times. In particular supervisors and advisors should avoid the following types of behaviours: abuse of power or authority; verbal, written and/or physical intimidation such as threats or derisory remarks; persistent unjustified criticism; public humiliation; the setting of impossible deadlines or intolerable workload burdens; isolation and exclusions from team meetings and work and social events; deliberately withholding information or other resources an individual needs to do their job; removing, unnecessarily, areas of work from a person so reducing their job to tasks well below their skill and capabilities; refusal to allow taking of reasonable holiday entitlement notified in advance. In circumstances where the supervisory relationship has broken down and the School is unable to allocate a suitable replacement principal supervisor from within the University, a replacement principal supervisor who is external to the University may be appointed. In such circumstances, the second supervisor/advisor should normally be a member of University staff from outside the student's home department.
- (17) Requests for the appointment of an external person to act as a principal supervisor, second supervisor or advisor must normally be made to the Executive Dean, who will be responsible for the approval of any such requests. Any dispute in respect of an external appointment must be dealt with by the Doctoral School.
- (18) Staff with no prior experience of supervising a research degree student to completion may act as principal supervisor or second supervisor but in each such case they will have an experienced senior colleague as the second member of the supervisory team.
- (19) The supervisory team must clarify for the student at the start of the programme if there are any changes to the allocation of responsibilities of members of the supervisory team. In such cases where an advisor is required, the supervisory team will clarify for the student at the start the programme what the responsibilities of the advisor will be in relation to other members of the supervisory team, in particular the principal supervisor.
- (20) No member of the supervisory team – principal supervisor, second supervisor and/or advisor – may undertake the role of independent examiner at upgrade. This role should be undertaken by a staff member – normally the School Director of PGR Education, Deputy, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Head of Department or Executive Dean or member of professorial staff – who has not played a substantive role in the student's academic progress to this point.

### **Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor**

- (21) The principal supervisor bears the major responsibility for providing advice and support to the student on the conduct of their work, however, the independent research will normally be carried out by the student alone. The supervisor is an important resource and is there to offer guidance, ask relevant questions and suggest lines of enquiry but not to provide answers to major research questions.
- (22) The principal supervisor should be approachable and available for consultation at reasonable times. The success of a student's research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance provided by the supervisor. The University encourages students and supervisors to maintain close contact, particularly in the early stages of the work, in order to avoid difficulties.
- (23) In line with paragraph 13 (a) and (b), a schedule of supervisory meetings and work should be agreed with the principal supervisor and, where necessary, other members of the supervisory team in advance (e.g. at the start of the academic year). The timings and required reporting, including upgrades, referred to in this document do not relate to specialist doctorates who will set out their own deadlines and progress monitoring procedures and share these with the student as set in the [Specialist Doctorate Regulations](#).
- (24) The principal supervisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
- (a) agreeing with the student a suitable research topic that can be completed within time and at an appropriate level, and checking that appropriate resources are available;
  - (b) advising on techniques, literature and methods, and encouraging familiarity with developments in the subject;
  - (c) ensuring that any necessary internal administrative and other procedures are adhered to (e.g. annual reviews);
  - (d) with the student, advising on and agreeing a schedule of meetings, based on a minimum (for full-time students) of one meeting per month in the first year and, on average, one meeting every six weeks throughout subsequent years (and a pro-rata equivalent for part-time students); for laboratory-based projects, students can expect more regular contact, with substantive discussion meetings often on a weekly basis for full-time students (or fortnightly for part-time students); only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. fieldwork or the student working abroad) will communication by e-mail or telephone be an acceptable substitute for face-to-face meetings;
  - (e) lodging notes and dates of each substantive supervisory meeting (as agreed with the student) centrally in their school (this would normally be with the annual review notes);
  - (f) by the end of the first term, agreeing with the student a broad timetable of work and objectives to be met in the first year; these must be written down and sent to the School Director of PGR Education for approval and filing;
  - (g) agreeing with the student a written statement of research and skills development needs at the start of the programme (by completing a Training

Needs Analysis Tool<sup>7</sup>) and monitoring and updating the fulfilment of these needs through supervisions, annual reviews and at the upgrade meeting;

- (h) arranging appropriate introductions to the school and where appropriate the departmental and/ or school research environment;
- (i) promoting awareness of ethical, legal and professional issues relevant to the conduct and presentation of research, including plagiarism;
- (j) requesting written work according to an agreed schedule and returning such work with constructive feedback within a reasonable time;
- (k) making students aware of the procedures for annual review and upgrade from MPhil to PhD and arranging reviews of student progress; ensuring that the student is fully aware of the progress of the work in relation to the expected standard and the agreed programme; writing to students to make them aware if progress is inadequate, offering support and advising them how to rectify the situation; making an annual written report to the School Director of PGR Education;
- (l) offering support to students with their personal development planning by encouraging them to attend research skills training courses and conferences and, where appropriate, facilitating the presentation of papers; providing opportunities for the student to present work to appropriate seminars; advising on making grant and job applications; giving guidance on identifying learning, achievement and employment goals;
- (m) completing documentation for UKRI and other funding bodies, where required;
- (n) ensuring that adequate supervision is maintained where they may no longer be able to fulfil the responsibilities of the role (e.g. where the supervisor is leaving the employment of the University or undertaking a period of sabbatical) and consulting the School Director of PGR Education and/or Executive Dean as necessary;
- (o) submitting reports on student progress to the School Director of PGR Education, jointly agreed and signed by the second supervisor. Exceptionally, the principal and the second supervisors may decide to submit separate reports;
- (p) co-ordinating and advising on the submission of examination entry forms, the nomination of examiners, and arrangements for the *viva voce* examination; one member of the supervisory team may attend the *viva voce* examinations of their students, provided the student has no objections to this;
- (q) offering to meet with students after the release of the final examination report to provide advice and guidance on the examiners' requirements and how these could be addressed. Where minor amendments or re-presentation of the thesis in a revised form are required, supervisors should make themselves available for further support and consultation at times to be agreed between student and supervisor, at a minimum frequency of one meeting every two months;

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<sup>7</sup>The Training Needs Analysis Tool can be accessed here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorsal-school/assets/docs/pdf/new-training-needs-analysis-tool.pdf>

- (r) making students aware of the services offered by Student Life and the Students' Union for students with personal difficulties;
- (s) exercising their duty of care towards students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties in line with advice from the Disability and Neurodiversity Services (D&N))<sup>8</sup>;
- (t) alerting students to the various courses and types of support offered by the University as part of the research skills training programme;
- (u) to engage with the University's engagement monitoring systems and processes, keeping appropriate records of student interactions and reporting to the University any students who hold a Student visa and who have failed to meet the attendance and/or engagement requirements. This also includes informing of any proposed changes to location of research for Student visa holders which may need secondary approval by Student Administration. This is in line with the University's obligations to UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI).
- (v) if the student holds any form of immigration permission, inform the Doctoral School at the earliest opportunity of any planned changes to:
  - i) principal supervisor
  - ii) content of research
  - iii) financial sponsor or conditions for financial sponsorship

This is to verify if any further action may be required to obtain a new certificate for Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS).

- (w) ensuring the student is engaging with their studies in the UK unless they are going abroad on fieldwork or other academically approved research trips or taking a period of leave.
- (25) Members of University staff assigned as principal or second supervisors will have continuing responsibility for supervision throughout any period of sabbatical. Where they may be unable to continue to act as principal or second supervisor (e.g. for reasons of overseas research fieldwork), they will be responsible for working with the School Director of PGR Education to make alternative arrangements as necessary.
- (26) Where the principal supervisor is due to leave the University or will be unable to supervise the student for a protracted period (e.g. period of maternity leave), a meeting will be held beforehand to agree future supervision arrangements. The meeting will be arranged by the principal supervisor, or the School Director of PGR Education, and will include the student, the principal supervisor, the second supervisor/advisor, the School Director of PGR Education and any staff who it is proposed will be involved in the future supervision arrangements.
- (27) In line with paragraph 16, a principal supervisor who leaves the employment of the University may continue to be involved as the student's second supervisor, provided the School appoints, at the earliest opportunity, an appropriately qualified replacement principal supervisor who is a member of the University's academic staff

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<sup>8</sup> Further information on the support available from Disability and can be found here <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/welfare/disabledstudents/home.aspx>.

and will take responsibility for ensuring that the student is supervised and supported in line with the requirements of the University's *Research Degree Regulations* and this Code. In such cases, the student will also still have an additional supervisor and / or advisor. Should both the principal and second supervisor leave the University's employment within a short period of each other, and alternative supervision arrangements cannot be made from within University, then the Executive Dean may agree to an external appointment.

- (28) If, for any reason, the student or the principal supervisor believes that a change of supervisor is necessary, this must be agreed by all parties and the School Director of PGR Education. A written record of the agreed arrangements, with the student's signature of consent, must be circulated to all those involved and placed on file in the school and in the Doctoral School.

### **Responsibilities of the Second Supervisor/Advisor**

- (29) Each student will be allocated, as a minimum, either a second supervisor (as an additional source of academic support) and/or advisor (for pastoral support). The following section outlines the responsibilities of the second supervisor and advisor.
- (30) Where the student's principal supervisor is of the opposite gender and the student has expressed a wish to have a member of their supervisory team of the same gender, this should be accommodated in appointing the second supervisor/advisor.
- (31) Where departmental staff expertise and availability allow, a second supervisor will be appointed (in line with funding body and/or UKRI policy) whose responsibilities are normally to:
- (a) have reasonable familiarity with some aspect of the work and progress of the student so that they are able to advise and support the student as appropriate, both academically and pastorally;
  - (b) read the student's work and provide informed (but not necessarily detailed) feedback;
  - (c) maintain contact with the student throughout the period of their studies by meeting with them at a minimum frequency of three times each academic year;
  - (d) participate in annual reviews and any other periodic reviews of the student's progress and in the upgrade from MPhil to PhD as required;
  - (e) provide additional pastoral support and advice to the student as necessary;
  - (f) where appropriate and agreed, contribute to the discussion of the planning of research and any associated training, timetable and objectives in consultation with the principal supervisor.
- (32) The advisor is not expected to have expertise in the student's research area or to offer guidance on academic work and has an essentially pastoral role. The advisor's responsibilities are normally to:
- (a) maintain contact with the student throughout the period of their studies by meeting with them at a minimum frequency of three times each academic year to monitor progress and offer pastoral support as necessary;

- (b) participate in annual reviews and any other periodic reviews of the student's progress and in the upgrade from MPhil to PhD as required.

### **Responsibilities of Directors of PGR Education**

(33) Each School has a Director of PGR Education, whose responsibilities include:

- (a) making suitable alternative arrangements where a supervisor leaves the University's employment, to ensure that the student continues to receive appropriate support and supervision;
- (b) Representing the School as a member of the Doctoral School Committee, and plays a key role in shaping the academic mission and development of the Doctoral School;
- (c) Promoting and supporting postgraduate research in the School through the integration of students in the research culture of the School supporting the development of in the School through co-ordinating the updating the School's postgraduate prospectus, website and dealing with other recruitment matters e.g. advertising and Open Days in consultation with MarComms;
- (d) Acting as the primary point of contact between staff, the Doctoral School and other relevant sections of the University such as Student Life;
- (e) Ensuring that application and admissions processes for such students are applied fairly and consistently across the School in line with University guidelines and providing advice on UKRI Council and other studentship applications and coordinates applications for these;
- (f) Seeking special permission from the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PGR) before an offer is made, if it is necessary to charge an overseas or privately funded applicant a supplementary fee;
- (g) Coordinating, with the Doctoral School, a School induction and provision of relevant information for all students, which might involve discipline-specific inductions as appropriate;
- (h) Working with School colleagues to ensure a joined up approach to training provision in the School to complement that delivered by the Doctoral School's Researcher Development Programme and to identify any gaps in such provision;
- (i) Monitoring the participation of students in relevant skills training activities to meet University, DTC and/ or DTP training requirements;
- (j) Exercising overall responsibility for the academic progress of the students in the School with respect to annual reviews, upgrades, submissions and completions, including the submission of required paperwork, as required by the Doctoral School;
- (k) With the principal supervisor, ensuring adequate supervision is maintained in the event of the appointed supervisor being unavailable, and notifying the Doctoral School of any change;

- (l) making suitable alternative arrangements where a supervisor leaves the University's employment, to ensure that the student continues to receive appropriate support and supervision;
  - (m) Overseeing compliance with UKVI reporting of PGR students in the School;
  - (n) Approving the appointment of PGR examiners for individual candidates;
  - (o) Holding a pre submission interview with students 6 months prior to the date for submission of their doctoral thesis. In the case of the Director of PGR Education's own doctoral students, arrangements should be made to for this responsibility to be delegated to another academic within the School;
  - (p) Organising and attending Staff-Student Action meeting for PGR students in the School;
  - (q) Encouraging students to complete relevant external surveys such as PRES and any relevant internal surveys, reviewing these results in relevant School committees and ensuring that outcomes and proposed actions are shared with students;
  - (r) Monitoring the School policy on resources and facilities (desks, rooms, photocopying and printing arrangements, etc.);
- (34) Where departments have a hundred or more doctoral students, they may wish to appoint departmental 'Post-Graduate leads'. These may be allocated responsibilities such as the following for students in departments within the School or any other of the responsibilities listed above. The School must ensure that it makes clear for students who in the School will be responsible for particular areas of work. Where there are not such PGR leads, the responsibilities below will fall to the School Director of PGR Education.
- (a) appointing second supervisors/advisors and notifying the Doctoral School of the names and roles of all members of the supervisory team for each student. This should normally be within four weeks of the student's date of registration;
  - (b) ensuring the Doctoral School is aware of any supervisors/advisors leaving employment and communicating the relevant supervisor/advisor replacements;
  - (c) taking appropriate action where students' annual review of upgrade fails to take place or if the outcomes are unsatisfactory;
  - (d) ensuring that reports of students' upgrades are submitted to the Doctoral School as soon as possible after the upgrade has taken place;
  - (e) giving advice and guidance, in strict confidence, to assist in resolving any difficulties where a breakdown of relations between a supervisor and the student has occurred and, in other circumstances, where a change of supervisor is desirable, and, where necessary, to arrange the appointment of a replacement supervisor.

## **Responsibilities of Academic Schools**

- (35) Academic Schools are responsible for ensuring that students are only admitted for a research degree where there are suitable arrangements for supervision and the necessary equipment and facilities are available.
- (36) Academic Schools are responsible for exercising collective oversight of research degrees. This is achieved by setting up a School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. Minutes must be kept and made available for scrutiny by the School Board and Executive if required. The business of these committees should be reported to the School Board and School Executive as required.
- (37) The responsibilities of the School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee are as follows:
- (a) Overall responsibility for promoting and supporting postgraduate research student provision in the School;
  - (b) Working with the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee encourages a supportive and nurturing research environment and the development of good practice in relation to research undertaken by students in the School;
  - (c) Oversees the School's research student recruitment and publicity activities and works with MarComms as appropriate;
  - (d) Oversees the application and admissions process for research students in the School ensuring that there is a consistent and fair approach;
  - (e) Encourages and advises on studentship bids to UKRI and other bodies, advises on the distribution of studentships where appropriate and monitors;
  - (f) Ensures that relevant procedures relating to doctoral training partnerships and centres (DTPs) in the School are followed;
  - (g) Monitors the performance of the School in attracting studentships and identifies new opportunities;
  - (h) Makes decisions and recommendations on how any School finance for students should be allocated as appropriate;
  - (i) Monitors the progress of all research degree students in particular annual reviews and upgrades and endorses outcomes of such panels,
  - (j) Monitors the submission and completion rates of research students in the School and agrees on any measures necessary;
  - (k) Ensures that all supervisors are supported and receive training as appropriate and makes recommendations in this regard to the Doctoral School Committee;
  - (l) Receives annual reports on the appointment of examiners for research students in the School;
  - (m) Monitors welfare issues of research students in the School;
  - (n) Receives reports from Staff-Student Committees in the School and takes action as appropriate.

### 3. Research Skills Training

- (38) The University provides skills training for students at department, School and institutional level through a combination of subject-specific research training, and researcher development (transferable skills) training. The training may be delivered by staff of the University or external facilitators/ organisations.
- (39) All students must engage in research skills training over the first three years of full-time study (pro-rata for part-time students), as identified and agreed with their supervisor.
- (40) All students are required to complete an average of a minimum of ten days of researcher development training per academic year over their first three years of full-time study (pro-rata for part-time students) with a total of thirty days across three years of study. Some Schools or departments may specify a higher number of days. Activities such as conference posters and papers may be counted towards this total at the discretion of departments.
- (41) Students are provided with a Training Needs Analysis Tool and a Research Training Log at the start of their first year, designed to help them assess and log their training needs and to monitor whether these needs have been met. The Training Needs Analysis Tool should be used as a starting point for a discussion on specific training requirements. Completion of the agreed skills and researcher development training is monitored by supervisors at annual review and during the upgrade. This provides the opportunity for students to discuss and agree any new training needs which they have identified during the course of the year. Satisfactory completion of any agreed research skills training objectives prior to the upgrade is one of the criteria for successful upgrade from MPhil to PhD.

### 4. Period of study

- (42) Postgraduate research students are expected to be in the UK for the duration of their studies unless they are going abroad on fieldwork or other academically approved research trips or taking a period of leave.
- (43) Students in receipt of funding from UKRI or other approved funding body are expected to observe any requirements and deadlines set by that body in addition to the requirements set out in the University's *Research Degree Regulations*.
- (44) Students who are on a Student visa must comply with the time limits set by UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI). The *Student Route Sponsorship and Confirmation of Acceptance of Study (CAS) Issuing Policy* sets out when extended visa sponsorship may be given, but there is no guarantee of this, and when visa sponsorship may be withdrawn, for example, upon early completion.
- (45) In order to complete the thesis within the prescribed time, it is essential that students agree a realistic timetable with their supervisor(s). This applies particularly to the completion of practical work and the writing-up of the thesis, a stage which very often takes far longer than is anticipated. Reasonable periods must also be allowed for supervisors to read and comment on drafts of various chapters of the thesis. Students are strongly advised to review the requirements of a thesis set out in the *Research Degree Regulations* prior to or at an early stage in their degree with the University.
- (46) MPhil or PhD students who submit their thesis during their writing-up year are eligible for a pro-rata refund of tuition fees according to the date of submission as set out in

the University's *Student Fee Regulations*<sup>9</sup>. Students who are in receipt of an award from University, UKRI, or any other external funding body, should check the implications of early submission for their funding.

(47) For those students holding awards from external funding bodies, the University will follow the guidelines of the funding body with regard to absences allowed for holidays, illness, interruptions and maternity/paternity/adoption leave, the last of which is dealt with in section 10 of this Code. Otherwise, the following guidelines apply. Full details on interruption of studies including the maximum period of interruption permitted are detailed in the *Research Degree Regulations*.

- (a) Holidays: students are entitled to up to eight weeks holiday (including public holidays and University closure days) in a 12 month period of registration. Students should notify their supervisor in writing (by e mail is acceptable) of any holidays taken. Written notification is not required for public holidays or University closure days. The holiday entitlement of students who are registered or funded for less than 12 months at a time is reduced on a pro rata basis.
- (b) Illness: If a student is absent through illness for a continuous period of more than two weeks, they must inform the supervisor immediately after this period has elapsed and submit a medical certificate. Students who are ill for a month or more should seek an interruption of studies. A student is also expected to inform the supervisor if they suffer frequent short absences for medical or other reasons that are likely to result in a considerable delay to the programme of research and training. Periods of leave notified in this way may be taken into account when calculating the thesis submission date if an interruption has been requested and approved.
- (c) Placements, internships and other engagement opportunities: the University may approve interruptions to the period of registration for the purposes of placements or internships. Students in receipt of funding should note that the University will only normally approve interruptions where these are stipulated requirements of the relevant award. Students in receipt of UKRI funding should also note that the deadline of the thesis may not always be extended where they interrupt for the purposes of a placement or internship and that it is their responsibility to consult the conditions of their grant or award.

## 5. UK Visa and Immigration Requirements

(48) The UKVI require all international students to have permission to study in the UK.<sup>10</sup>

(49) Although the majority of students will complete their thesis within the timescales, some students with more complex circumstances and unusual patterns of study may not do so. In these circumstances, it may not be possible to continue sponsorship if UKVI requirements cannot be met. The *Student Route Sponsorship and Confirmation of Acceptance of Study (CAS) Issuing Policy* sets out when further visa sponsorship may or may not be issued.

(50) Students in receipt of a Student visa are required to remain fully engaged with their programme of study at all times, meeting regularly with their supervisor and

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<sup>9</sup> Further information on fee payment and the University's *Student Fee Regulations* can be accessed here:

<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/money/fees/home.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Further information on student visas can be found here: <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/international-students/visas-and-immigration/before-you-arrive/student-visa/>

including during periods of post-viva thesis correction, amendment or resubmission. The Engagement Monitoring Policy sets out the requirements.

- (a) This should include a minimum of one face-to-face contact point per month between student and member of School staff, e.g. supervisor or Director of PGR Education.
  - (b) An online meeting may exceptionally be considered acceptable as a point of engagement, for example, in cases where a student is conducting approved fieldwork overseas, as long as a record is kept of the meeting (for example in the supervision log) and the record demonstrates that the student is engaging with their studies. Successive online meetings would not normally be considered acceptable. An exception to this may, however, be made in cases where a student is conducting fieldwork overseas.
- (51) Permission and approval must be sought to change research location, for example, if conducting fieldwork overseas to be approved by Student Administration and ensure UKVI requirements are met including any additional reporting to UKVI. It may not be possible to approve a request if it is not deemed to meet Student visa conditions and UKVI requirements.

## 6. Changes to Registration Status

### Interruption of study

- (52) Students seeking an interruption of studies should contact their supervisor(s) and/or Department PGR Lead to discuss in the first instance. The student should then submit an interruption to studies request form to the Doctoral School.<sup>11</sup>
- (53) An interruption of studies request will need the support of the supervisor(s) and the Doctoral School will contact them before the request can be considered by the Executive Director of Student Journey or nominee.
- (54) Students are strongly encouraged to discuss an interruption of studies with their supervisor(s) as soon as it becomes clear that circumstances may require them to interrupt their studies. It should be noted that a retrospective interruption will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.
- (55) A student will only be permitted an interruption of studies up to a maximum period of 24 months, whether consecutively or otherwise. Any period of interruption that takes the total period of leave to more than 24 months can only be approved in serious extenuating circumstances and as a Suspension of Regulations.
- (56) Students are required to provide adequate supporting evidence with the interruption request.<sup>12</sup> Students and supervisors should note that requests will only be approved if accompanied by adequate evidence.

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<sup>11</sup> Further details on the Interruption to studies process, including the online request form, can be found here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/pgr-student-lifecycle/changes-that-affect-your-registration-status/interruption-of-study.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> For further advice on supporting evidence please get in touch with the Doctoral School at [doctoralschool@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralschool@rhul.ac.uk).

- (57) Students in receipt of UKRI funding should check whether the conditions of the funding permit the interruption before requesting the University's approval.<sup>13</sup>
- (58) Students sponsored on a Student visa who interrupt their studies will need to re-apply for a CAS in all but the most exceptional circumstances. Normally the University will withdraw its sponsorship and students are required by the Home Office to leave the UK for the duration of the interruption.<sup>14</sup>
- (59) The University will not normally approve a period of interruption of studies during the writing up year. Interruptions at this stage will only normally be permitted for placements, maternity/paternity/adoption leave or for long-term and very serious extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from undertaking any research at all and will require a Suspension of Regulations.
- (60) When an interruption of studies request is approved, the student's outstanding upgrade and submission deadlines are adjusted accordingly (e.g. a student with a 23 September 2025 deadline who interrupts for six months would have a revised submission deadline of 23 March 2026).
- (61) Where a student on a University studentship interrupts due to ill health, they are permitted to apply for up to thirteen weeks of paid sick leave within a rolling 12-month period, supported by a medical certificate. During this period of sick leave, the stipend will continue to be paid and relevant deadlines will be extended accordingly.
- (62) Where a student on a UKRI studentship interrupts due to ill health, there may be additional funding in place to support the interruption during which time the stipend will continue to be paid. Please see <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorschool/scholarships-and-finance/terms-and-conditions-of-funding.aspx> for further details. All outstanding upgrade and submission deadlines will be extended accordingly, although any submission deadline extension will be dictated by UKRI terms and conditions.
- (63) Students granted interruptions of study are expected to take a complete break from their work for the duration of the interruption, and are not permitted to attend classes, receive supervision or access University facilities. Exceptions to this policy are made to support recovery in cases of mental health and wellbeing, to be approved on an individual basis, and all cases of maternity, paternity and adoption leave (see below).

### **Change to Mode of Study**

- (64) Students wishing to change from full-time to part-time or vice versa are required to submit the change of mode of attendance form to the Doctoral School.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Further information for UKRI funded students requesting an interruption of studies can be found here:

<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorschool/scholarships-and-finance/interruption-of-study-for-scholarship-recipients.aspx> For queries

about the general requirements of UKRI funding please see this page for relevant studentships Terms and Conditions: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorschool/scholarships-and-finance/terms-and-conditions-of-funding.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> In exceptional circumstances Student visa holders may be permitted to remain in the UK during the period of interruption, if the proposed period is less than sixty days. In such cases, students should contact International Advice ([internationaladvice@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:internationaladvice@rhul.ac.uk)) to discuss an 'authorised absence'.

<sup>15</sup> The change of mode of attendance form is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctorschool/pgs-student-lifecycle/changes-that-affect-your-registration-status/changes-of-mode-of-study.aspx>

- (65) Students are not permitted to change their mode of attendance to part time after the first two years of study (24 months FTE).
- (66) After 24 months FTE, a change to part time mode of studies will only be considered as a Suspension of Regulations if there are serious extenuating circumstances, and this will require the approval of the School Director of PGR Education or nominee on behalf of the Doctoral School Committee. Students should discuss this with their supervisor(s) in the first instance before seeking a Suspension of Regulations.
- (67) A student on a UKRI studentship should check the terms and conditions of their studentship before requesting a change to mode of study.<sup>16</sup>
- (68) The thesis submission deadline and any outstanding upgrade deadlines will be adjusted in line with the change to mode of study, with part-time attendance counted as 0.5 FTE.

### **Extension to Writing-Up Period**

- (69) Students should note that an extension to the writing-up period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, students should first consult their supervisor(s) and/or Department PGR Lead, as any request for an extension to the writing-up period will need to be approved as a Suspension of Regulations.
- (70) In cases where the supervisor(s) and/or Department PGR Lead agree/s to support an extension request the student will need to complete an extension request form and send this to their supervisor with supporting evidence.<sup>17</sup> The supervisor should then submit the request directly to the Doctoral School at least two months in advance of the current thesis submission deadline. The request must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence and a detailed work plan on the appropriate form.
- (71) Any requests for an extension to the writing-up period will be considered by the School Director of PGR Education or nominee on behalf of the Doctoral School Committee.
- (72) Students granted an extension to the writing-up period are liable for an extension fee.<sup>18</sup>
- (73) Students sponsored on a Student visa should contact the International Advice team<sup>19</sup> if they have any queries regarding how an extension to the writing-up period may impact their visa.
- (74) A student on a UKRI studentship should check the terms and conditions of their studentship before requesting an extension to the writing-up period.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> UKRI terms and conditions can be found here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/scholarships-and-finance/terms-and-conditions-of-funding.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> To request an extension form, please contact the Doctoral School at [doctoralschool@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralschool@rhul.ac.uk).

<sup>18</sup> Further guidance on extension fees can be found in the Tuition Fee operational guidelines located here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/study/our-college-regulations/your-responsibilities-as-a-student.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> Please contact International Advice at [internationaladvice@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:internationaladvice@rhul.ac.uk).

<sup>20</sup> UKRI Terms and Conditions can be found here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/scholarships-and-finance/terms-and-conditions-of-funding.aspx>

## Withdrawal

- (75) Students wishing to withdraw from their degree and discontinue their registration with the University should complete a withdrawal form and submit this to the Doctoral School.<sup>21</sup>
- (76) Students who wish to withdraw from their degree and are sponsored by the University on a Student visa should note that sponsorship will cease on the date of withdrawal. In such cases, students who withdraw from their degree will be obliged to leave the UK.

## 7. Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave

- (77) Where students interrupt their studies on the grounds of maternity, paternity or adoption leave<sup>22</sup>, their registration (including the thesis deadline) will be extended by this period. Students must follow the University's process for requesting an interruption, ensuring they include a copy of the MATB1 certificate for pregnancy or an alternative form of evidence from an adoption or other agency if adopting.
- (78) Where a student on a University or UKRI studentship<sup>22</sup> becomes pregnant with an expected date of childbirth that occurs during the period of their research degree, or adopts a child during that time, they are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity-equivalent leave if the expected week of childbirth will occur during the period of their award. The first 26 weeks should be paid at full stipend rate, pro-rated as necessary for part time students and the following 13 weeks should be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The studentship will be extended accordingly. Students may also request an interruption of the award for a further 13 weeks, during which no stipend or tuition fees are payable. The paid period of absence and the unpaid interruption should be taken consecutively. Students must follow the procedures for requesting an interruption, ensuring that they include a copy of the MATB1 certificate if they are pregnant or other relevant evidence from an adoption or other agency if they are adopting. There is no qualifying period for maternity, paternity or adoption leave. As such, students may take leave regardless of when they commenced their research degree provided they are still receiving a stipend.
- (79) Full-time and part-time research students who are new fathers have the right to apply for an interruption of studies for up to 13 weeks, within the first 12 months after the birth of the child. Where a student is on a University or UKRI studentship, they are entitled to up to two weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave on full stipend and their studentship will be extended accordingly.
- (80) Students who have interrupted their studies on the grounds of maternity, paternity or adoption leave continue to have the right to attend classes, use University facilities, and receive tuition or supervision by arrangement.

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<sup>21</sup> The withdrawal form is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/pgr-student-lifecycle/changes-that-affect-your-registration-status/withdrawal-from-study.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Further guidance on maternity, paternity and adoption leave can be found here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/doctoral-school/pgr-student-lifecycle/changes-that-affect-your-registration-status/maternity-paternity-or-adoption-leave.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> The University provides financial support for students in a variety of ways, including a funding package similar to those provided by external bodies such as UKRI. Many students are also either partially or wholly supported by University funds.

- (81) The University may also provide a reduced period of stipend funding for international students holding visas. This will, however, be governed in relation to the maximum number of days allowed for pregnant international students to remain in the UK whilst interrupting their studies. The University will support such students according to the time allowed under the terms of their visa away from working on the studentship in the UK and will not pay any additional stipend over and above that figure. For example, where sponsorship compliance obligations mean that a student may only take a maximum of sixty days off from a studentship in the UK during Maternity, then the University will not pay any additional stipend over and above the sixty days, even if the student leaves the country for a longer period.

## **8. The Viva Voce Examination**

- (82) The following items can be brought into the viva voce examination:

- (a) a copy of the thesis (either in hard or electronic form)
- (b) any supplementary materials that support the thesis
- (c) writing materials (either a notebook and pen or a laptop)
- (d) light snacks and drinks

- (83) Any other items need to be agreed with the Independent Chair in advance of the viva voce examination.

- (84) If the student is registered with the Disability and Neurodiversity Services, they can authorise other items that are necessary as part of their registered as part of their registered disability/condition as an access arrangement: these will be communicated to the Doctoral School in advance of the viva voce examination and the independent chair will be alerted as appropriate.

## **9. Teaching and Other Paid Work**

- (85) Full-time students may undertake paid work (please see paragraphs 71-75 in relation to teaching duties) in order to support themselves during their studies. In line with the Research Degree Regulations, paid work shall not exceed 20 hours per week. This limit does not apply once a full-time student has submitted their thesis. In the case of part-time students, no limit exists. Full-time students who are offered full time employment in their writing up year (but prior to submission of their thesis) may, in exceptional circumstances, request a change to their student status from full-time to part-time to enable them to take up the offer of employment.

### **Teaching**

- (86) Students may be offered teaching opportunities by their schools. This activity is beneficial in that it helps to equip students with transferable communication skills and to develop good practice in teaching that contributes to career development.
- (87) Teaching duties undertaken by full-time students should not normally exceed six hours per week in term time (i.e. 168 hours in the year), inclusive of time spent on marking. This does not include time spent in preparing for classes but does include inSTIL training. This limit is set so that students will be able to submit their theses

within the specified period; it is also congruent with the formal limits that apply to Departmental Assistantship award holders and UKRI award holders.

- (88) Teaching duties should not be assigned to students by schools where it may result in a delay in the completion of the thesis beyond the normal period. Heads of Department and/ or Schools are encouraged to timetable the work required of students in such a way that it minimises the disruption to their studies (e.g. by concentrating the teaching on one or two days in the week).
- (89) Students employed by the University in a lead teaching role (i.e. conducting teaching sessions entirely on their own) are required to complete the University's programme in Skills of Teaching to Inspire Learning (inSTIL). Upon successful completion, students will be awarded 15 M level credits and will automatically qualify for Associate Membership of the Higher Education Academy.
- (90) Students who are employed only to teach as part of a team (e.g. a demonstrator alongside an academic staff member), are required to complete a day of demonstrator training.

### **Departmental Assistantships and University Awards**

- (91) All formal offers of Departmental Assistantships must be made by Human Resources. Departments may, however, inform candidates that they have been recommended to the School for the award of a Departmental Assistantship.
- (92) The offer letter from Human Resources will clearly specify the period and value of the award, and the exact amount and type of work that will be expected from the student in return for the award. The department may not ask the student to carry out more teaching than is specified within this Code. A student engaged in non-teaching duties may only be required to work for an average of six hours a week over the academic year (i.e. for a maximum of 288 hours across 48 working weeks in the year).
- (93) Students who are employed by the University to teach are entitled to attend courses offered by the University's Organisation Development team.

## **10. Council Tax**

- (94) Research students who are in their writing-up year (and who were previously enrolled as full-time) can get a letter exempting them from Council Tax. This arrangement does not apply once the student has submitted their thesis and does not apply to students enrolled on a part-time basis prior to their writing-up year. Eligible students who live within the Borough of Runnymede are automatically exempt from Council Tax.
- (95) To qualify for an exemption from Council Tax during their writing-up year, students are expected to be undertaking an average of 21 hours of work each week on their thesis, for at least 24 weeks, from the start of their fourth year and they must not be in full-time employment in line with Section 7 of the University's *Research Degree Regulations*. To qualify students must previously have been studying on a full-time basis.

## 11. Jury Service

- (96) Eligible students may be approached by HRM Courts and Tribunal Service for jury service during their studies. The University suggests that students establish whether they can either accommodate the request for jury service or ask for a postponement. They may also request exemption from service if they have strong grounds, such as an upcoming fieldwork trip or viva.
- (97) If such a request is turned down, there is the right of appeal when appearing in court to serve on the jury as the presiding judge has the discretion to excuse jury members who they deem to have compelling reasons not to serve at that point.
- (98) Students whose initial request for exemption has been refused should discuss this with their principal supervisor who can provide a supporting statement outlining why the student should be exempted by the presiding judge (e.g. if the trial is likely to be longer than the statutory two weeks which would impact on current field or lab based research or that the service would conflict with a submission deadline or viva).

## 12. Feedback, Appeals and Complaints

- (99) Students who wish to appeal against the outcomes of formal reviews, other required assessments, and the final examination are referred to section 21 of the *Research Degree Regulations*.
- (100) Students who wish to appeal against the termination of their registration are referred to section 25 of the *Research Degree Regulations*.<sup>23</sup>
- (101) Students who wish to submit an appeal must do so no later than 15 working days after the date they were formally informed about the decision (e.g. from receipt of the unsuccessful MPhil to PhD letter or from receiving official confirmation of their viva voce examination outcome).
- (102) Students who are unhappy with any aspect of their degree (e.g. quality of supervision) should follow the *Student Complaints Procedure*.<sup>24</sup> However, if they have a concern about the behaviour of a member of staff or another student related to bullying or harassment, they should follow the advice [here](#).
- (103) Students who are uncertain of the process regarding a complaint or an appeal, or who require further information or assistance with these procedures, should contact the Students' Union, the Student Services Centre their Director of Postgraduate Research Education or the Doctoral School.
- (104) Students should note the University's policy for investigating and resolving allegations of research misconduct<sup>25</sup> and the University's *Intellectual Property Policy*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The student appeals process is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/study/academic-appeals/make-an-academic-appeal.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> The *Student Complaints Procedure* is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/study/complaints/complaints-process/the-complaints-process.aspx>

<sup>25</sup> The *Code of Practice for Inquiring into Allegations of Misconduct in relation to Academic, Research and Scientific Activities* is available here: <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/assets/docs/pdf/human-resources/researchmisconductpolicy.pdf>

- (105) Students may be asked to complete the University's internal online feedback questionnaire for research degrees and/ or the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which the University normally takes part in.