

Research Degrees Student Recruitment Guidelines (Distance Learning)

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Appendix A: List of countries which cannot be supported by the programme

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What this document is for?

To provide guidance to faculties in the recruitment and selection of research students for the distance learning programme, and to aid the completion of the relevant [Applicant Recommendation Form](#) (ARF). The information in each section should be used as a reference when completing the ARF, or at other stages in the recruitment process as appropriate. The section numbers correspond with the sections of the ARF.

These guidelines have been compiled with reference to the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#):

This document provides advice and guidance for staff to ensure that the processes for attracting, recruiting and enrolling research students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied, in line with the expectations of the QAA, the OfS and UKRI. Once the student is registered, the [Research Degrees Regulations](#) and [Research Degrees Handbooks](#) are the main points of reference for students and staff.

All Research Degrees documents referred to in this guidance can be downloaded from the Forms and Guidance section of the Graduate School Network (GSN) at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance>

Who should use this guide?

All staff involved in the recruitment and selection of research students for the distance learning programme.

Requirements for a student to be registered for a Distance Learning PhD

- Students must be able to access the research infrastructure that they need to support their degree programme. Requirements are listed in the roles and responsibilities section below.
- Students must be able to access training courses as required. The university cannot guarantee that it can provide live training sessions to students across all time zones and prospective students must be made aware that this is not possible.
- There must be appropriate liability insurance policies in place for any work environment to which the student has access e.g. laboratories or archives.
- In-person registration and induction are mandatory for students domiciled in the UK. This represents an opportunity to foster initial engagement with the university and to enable students to meet their supervisory team and Faculty/School colleagues, and peers, in person. Exceptions may be requested on the grounds of disability or caring responsibilities. For students who are domiciled overseas registration and induction in person are recommended but are not mandatory.

Information for Faculties considering offering Distance Learning PhD positions

- Students may be based in the UK or overseas. However, there are some countries from where it will not be possible for students to access the OU's distance learning PhD programme. These are listed in Appendix A, based on the availability of OU taught courses. Other countries may need to be added to the list following consultation with Information Security regarding risks of issuing students with staff OUCUs, or where due to international sanctions, the university would be unable to accept fee payments from students. Please contact the Graduate School for information as this is subject to change and consideration may be needed mid-study if international political situations change.
- Students funded through UKRI DTP funding, and those studying in the UK on a Student Route visa, are not eligible for a distance learning programme.
- Faculties may decide whether university funding can be used to support students on a distance learning programme. For home students they can provide funding for fees, stipends and research training grants. Please note that the university is unable to pay stipends overseas to students who are not domiciled in the UK, therefore, stipends and research training grants cannot be offered to students based overseas.
- Students must be fully made aware of the fact that there are some countries where a distance learning doctorate may not be recognised. It is the responsibility of the student to check this for themselves if this is relevant to them.

Roles and responsibilities

Faculties are responsible for managing the recruitment and fair selection of research students in accordance with the [QAA Quality Code](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#). The guidance covers:

- Advertising specific studentships.
- Giving candidates access to academic staff to discuss research proposals and ideas prior to application and providing information that will help candidates make an informed decision about applying for a research degree at The Open University.
- Ensuring that staff are trained in fair selection procedures, understand their obligations in relation to [Equality and Diversity](#) and are supported in upholding Equality and Diversity principles in their ongoing relationships with students.
- Logging applications and recording whether the applicant was offered an interview and/or registration with The Open University. When appropriate, the data should be anonymized in compliance with the General Data Protection

Regulations (GDPR).

- Arranging interviews, informal visits and meetings with appropriately trained staff in accordance with the institutional framework determined by QAA Quality Code, the PGRS Strategy, and the fair selection process in place in the faculty.
- Agreeing which faculty will lead in the management of a student, where the research topic spans two or more faculties.
- Assessing candidates' eligibility to study against the standard regulatory requirements and/or those specific to the research discipline or studentship, fairly and consistently and against other candidates wherever possible.
- Checking evidence of qualifications, residency and visa status.
- Obtaining academic references.
- Ensuring that students are made aware of University policy relating to ethics review and intellectual property and capturing any potential issues relating to ethics and/or Intellectual Property Rights on the ARF.
- Ensuring that due consideration has been given to export controls, information sharing and safety. Any questions should be directed to RES-Research-Enterprise RES-Research-Enterprise@open.ac.uk in the first instance.
- Ensuring that the research environment, appropriate to the discipline, is in place to support student progression. This will include ensuring that the research infrastructure is in place to support the student, including supervision, research facilities and any contract arrangements.
- Ensuring that infrastructure and funding is considered and in place to support the student, including support for fieldwork
- Ensuring the processes are in place to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of the student, including risk assessments as required are considered prior to any offer and kept under review to ensure that students are safe to undertake their research including data collection, field work and travel.
- Ensure that students are insured to undertake their research in their country of residence or fieldwork and that all local legislative requirements are adhered to.
- Ensuring that students are aware of the costs involved in undertaking a research degree. For home students this may include explaining the rules relating to the Doctoral Loans.
- Ensuring that students consider whether the research degree they are applying for will be recognized within the country in which they later

intend to work.

- Checking any contracts relating to a studentship and ensuring that the relevant information is relayed with the ARF.
- Checking that proposed supervisors have the right to work in the UK and are adequately experienced and meet the academic standard detailed in this guide.
- Completing and submitting the ARF at the end of the selection process, if a candidate is successful, or advising the Research Degrees Team (RDT) in the Graduate School if a candidate is unsuccessful.
- Sending rejection letters to unsuccessful applicants.
- Ensuring that the correct [HECoS](#) codes are assigned to the research.
- Arranging supervisor payments where such payments lie outside of the norm.
- Updating the faculty content on the online prospectus.

In this process, the **RDT** is responsible for:

- Handling general enquiries from applicants.
- Supporting and advising faculty staff in handling applications.
- Supporting and advising faculty staff in making adjustments for meeting the needs of students with disabilities/additional needs.
- Conducting ENIC (The UK national agency for international qualifications and skills) checks.
- Verifying SELTS (Secure English Language Test) and IELTS (International English Language Test) scores provided by applicants.
- Ensuring that all ARFs are completed prior to consideration by Progress Board.
- Sending offer letters to successful applicants.
- Ensuring that the appointment of supervisors is approved by Progress Board.
- Ensuring that any contractual information relating to a studentship is relayed to the student in the offer letter.
- Keeping the central student record up to date from the point that the ARF is submitted.
- Keeping the research degrees website and non-faculty specific pages of the online prospectus up to date, to ensure that candidates and staff access current and relevant documentation ([QAA Quality Code and CMA Guidance](#)).
- Providing general advice and guidance to faculties on Student Route visas for applicants.



Advertising Studentships

The Research, Enterprise & Scholarship Unit funds general advertisements for student recruitment to raise awareness of the Open University's research degree provision.

Faculties advertise specific studentships from their own budgets via People Services. Studentships will be advertised on the [OU jobs pages](#) and can also be placed in journals, the national press, and on websites such as jobs.ac.uk and findaphd.com – as external advertising can be expensive, the faculty budget holder will make the decision on advertising activity. Advertisements should be checked for any unintentional discrimination implications for the nine protected characteristics (gender, race, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation). Contact details should be given for requesting documentation in alternative formats, such as audio or large print.

Please notify the RDT when you are placing an advert, so that administrators can respond appropriately to any enquiries arising. If you are giving the RDT contact details in an advertisement, please quote the mailbox address (research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk) and the main office number (01908 653806) rather than giving the contact details for a specific administrator. This will ensure any enquiries coming into the RDT can be dealt with efficiently.

Other Means of Recruitment

Suitable candidates may also be identified via direct contact with other universities, both in the early stages of the recruitment campaign and after final degree results have been announced. Personal and professional networks and/or websites also provide effective recruitment mechanisms.

Fair Selection

To ensure that the Open University continues to meet its priorities for delivering world-leading research, it needs to be able to recruit the best quality research students from the wide range of applications it receives each year.

To achieve this there must be fair, robust and efficient recruitment and selection processes, which comply with the QAA Quality Code (<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance>), and best practice principles. In accordance with the University's equality and diversity policies ([Equality Scheme & Objectives | The Open University Equality and Diversity](#), [Open University Anti-Discrimination Statement | About The Open University](#), [Open University Anti-Racism Statement | About The Open University](#)), applicants for research degrees will be treated solely on the basis of their merits, regardless of age,

disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, socio-economic background or other irrelevant distinction.

The recruitment of research students is managed by faculties with support from the RDT, and processes may vary according to faculty. Decisions on selection are made at faculty level. A selection panel Chair is responsible for ensuring the procedural integrity of the whole recruitment and selection process. The baseline criteria for all applications are:

- Quality of the proposal
- Alignment with OU and faculty research priorities
- Availability of supervisors with the appropriate levels of experience and expertise

It is recognised that selection activities will differ between faculties, and that often, recruitment will be a 'matching exercise' to find the best fit between a candidate's proposed project, the research priorities of the faculty and the availability of supervisors with the necessary expertise and experience. In all cases, a clear audit trail is required, to demonstrate that fair selection has taken place.

Interviews

A panel chair will sit on all interview panels, as far as is possible, to provide consistency across the panels. Candidates must be interviewed by a panel comprising experienced staff and not exclusively the prospective supervisors. Candidates should be given an overview of the work of the academic unit, which may take the form of an information pack, tour or talk, or units may put on an open day for enquirers prior to selection for interview. Where practicable, it is good practice to give applicants the opportunity to meet a range of academic staff and research students for informal discussion as well as the formal interview.

When interviewing students, the arrangements for access to suitable research facilities and expectations around academic engagement must be discussed and agreed. Any contractual agreements related to access to research facilities must be in place prior to student registration.

It is useful to identify any skills gaps or training needs at interview, to support the applicant in preparing for study in good time.

Faculties are expected to meet any claims for interview expenses from their own budgets. Generally, expenses are only paid for travel within the UK, and interviews with students who are resident overseas can be conducted by videoconference or Skype.

Applicants who are disabled will not be treated less favourably than non-disabled applicants because of their disability or a reason related to their disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, the University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process to enable a disabled applicant to compete fairly with other applicants. Applicants should be asked in the invitation to interview whether they require any adjustments to be made to enable them to participate fully in the interview.

Once an offer of registration is made, further assessment of the applicant's study needs, and possible adjustments will be required. There is no specific guidance on what constitutes a 'reasonable' adjustment – needs will vary according to individual students, their mode of study and type of research.

Guidance to aid supervisors, research degrees advisers and faculty staff with the referral of queries to specialist staff for advice and support is available on the GSN at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance>

Please contact the RDT for further advice and support.

Applications for study in the Welsh Language may be made and a thesis may be submitted in the Welsh Language with agreement at the application stage and this will be reflected in the offer letter sent to successful applicants.

Good Practice Model

Faculties are responsible for ensuring that all staff responsible for handling applications are trained in fair selection. Suggestions for good practice might include, but are not limited to:

- Screening advertisements for any unintentional bias towards or against certain groups of people.
- Asking interview candidates to indicate any reasonable adjustment required for interview in respect of any disability.
- Including senior staff (Director of Postgraduate Students, Associate Dean Research) where practical and appropriate, and at least one academic or research fellow on the interview panel. Some faculties include at least one of the proposed supervisors on the panel. Ideally, the Chair should be the same person across all interviews for a recruitment round , and it is good practice to use the same panel members in a recruitment round, although in some faculties, different specialist expertise will be required according to the proposed research project. All members of the interview panel should have undertaken the University's fair selection and unconscious bias training.
- Asking similar generic questions of all candidates, focused on, for example, the

academic suitability of the candidate for the research, the likelihood of timely completion and the design and process of the writing task. A scoring system may be helpful, such as that described in the Effective Recruitment and Selection produced by People Services. It is recognised that different projects will require different lines of questioning, but evidence of fair selection will still be required.

- Keeping notes in case of further enquiry by the applicant.

Training sessions on recruitment and selection, including online modules, are advertised on [Learning Management System](#) in the Staff area on the OU intranet, and will be helpful for staff involved in recruiting students.

Fees & Funding Models

Fees for Home students are determined by the University and are normally in line with UKRI. Research students based outside the UK, or those who do not meet the criteria to be classified as a 'Home' student may be required to pay enhanced fee levels. Precise criteria are used to define a 'Home' or 'International' student and there are implications of classifying a student on fees and funding levels. If an applicant is not sure which fee rate they would be subject to, please ask them to contact the RDT for advice.

The different funding models available for funded distance learning research degrees.

- Fees and stipend (*UK domiciled students*)
- Fees only (*International domiciled students*)

Please note that:

- Stipends cannot be paid to students who are domiciled overseas.
- UKRI funding cannot be used to support distance learning research degrees

A studentship can be funded by more than one funding source. The RDT can provide further advice and guidance. An entry on the Award Management System (AMS) will need to be completed where external funding is being arranged; please flag any studentships to the RDT as early in the process as it is feasible.

Funding Arrangements

Studentships can be:

- Funded by an Open University faculty. Practice in most academic units is to decide the award on the basis of nominated candidates, availability of supervisors with the relevant expertise, and research priorities.

- Part-funded, using internal funding to match external funding. The aim of this scheme is to increase the level of external studentship funding by encouraging organisations which could not afford the full cost of a studentship, or for whom the fact that the University is committing its own resources is a deciding factor in whether they can release funding. The internal funds required will vary according to the nature of the project and the external organisation. This scheme should be used to attract increased external sponsorship and should not be used where the external organisation could be persuaded to provide funds for a full studentship.
- The external body will normally be expected to contribute towards university fees. The balance of funding from the external organisation and the OU should be negotiated by Faculties, but it is likely to be one of the following combinations:
 - Fees and stipend (*UK domiciled students*)
 - Fees only (*International domiciled students*)

The Graduate School can provide guidance on negotiating collaborative arrangements.

Additional Costs/Funding

Each studentship should have any additional costs/funding clearly articulated at the outset, e.g. to cover travel, accessing archives, lab costs and fieldwork, for example.

Contracts

If a studentship is subject to a particular contract, the RDT will need to produce a specific offer letter to the applicant which describes any variance from the standard terms and conditions of registration. In assessing an ARF where a contract is involved, the RDT will be particularly looking for issues which would impact on the student's ability to study and progress which differs from the norm, for example:

- Terms and conditions laid down by the funder in relation to study breaks, sickness, maternity, etc.
- Supervision arrangements throughout the student's registration
- Stipend payments (for UK domiciled students), grants, travel expenses, etc.

A studentship contract template is available from Legal Services; the Graduate School can advise on matters relating to the terms and conditions of registration.

As a consequence of complex funding, contractual and immigration arrangements, offers can take some time to confirm. Due diligence of potential partner institutions is an essential part of the process along with the academic arrangements. Please refer to and use the [Research Degree Student Partnership Framework](#)

Application Form

The RDT is responsible for publishing and updating the [Application Form](#) on the GSN and on the University intranet. Applicants download a form from the website and should send it to the appropriate faculty together with the required documentation.

Selection Outcomes

If there is any doubt about an applicant's suitability for postgraduate research study, whether on academic or administrative grounds, faculties should contact the RDT early on in the process, and before submitting an ARF. Any applicant that does not meet all the entrance requirements, as set out in the Research Degrees regulations should be discussed with RDT who will pass on the relevant information for consideration by Progress Board. This must be prior to any applicant being informed that the faculty will be making a recommendation to the University to offer a place.

If an applicant is successful in the selection process, faculties must complete and submit an ARF to the RDT.

Please note that faculties cannot make offers of admission to students. The following text should be used where an applicant is successful at interview and the faculty wants to inform them of the outcome.

Dear X,

Following successful interview, we are writing to let you know that we will be making a recommendation to the University Progress Board for your admission on to the Research Degree Programme in {Faculty}. Your admission will be dependent on the decision of the Progress Board, who may provide you with an offer, a conditional offer or may in exceptional cases where admission would breach internal or external regulatory requirements, may be unable to provide you with an offer.

If an applicant is unsuccessful, either before or after interview the faculty should contact the applicant in writing as soon as possible to advise the outcome, providing as much detail as possible regarding the reasons for rejection.

Candidates who have been unsuccessful may wish to ask for more information about why they were not offered a place, so it is helpful to keep a detailed record. A record of unsuccessful applications will need to be kept for a period of two years following the date of rejection. Following the two-year period, the data should be minimised, anonymised and kept for reporting purposes.

Completing the Applicant recommendation form

Please ensure that the correct ARF is completed. Please complete the details in full. Most of the form is self-explanatory. Clarification as to what is needed elsewhere is given below. If you have any questions, please contact the RDT.

In order for RDT to have adequate time to process ARFs and complete associated activities, the following deadlines for receiving completed forms and all associated documents are as follows (noting that these deadlines are not flexible and no ARFs will be accepted after midnight on these dates):

Registration Start Date	Home ARF to reach RDT fully completed no later than :	International ARF to reach RDT fully completed no later than :
1 st October	30 th May	31 st April
1 st February	30 th November	30 th October

Applicant details

Name of Applicant

Please complete the full name of the applicant as provided in their identification document. Where a student has changed their name such that it is different from the name on the qualifications, official documents supporting the change of name (e.g. a marriage certificate) should be provided.

Personal Identifier

The RDT will create a PI for each applicant if they do not already have one.

Programme details.

Proposed start date

The main application period is November to March. MPhil/PhD students should normally start on 1st February or 1st October.

Proposed registration period

This relates to the registration period, not the funded period. The standard registration period for a full-time student is 4 years, and 8 years for part-time. It is recommended that research degrees be structured with the expectation of completion in the stated study period below:

	Minimum	Maximum
MPhil		
Full-time	15 months	48 months
Part-time	30 months	72 months
PhD		

Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months

There are no exemptions from the minimum periods of study, and registration cannot be backdated to take account of any research applicants may have already done.

The registration 'clock' does not stop unless a student has taken a study break from their registration.

Where a student changes their mode of study, the time already spent studying will be taken into account when determining the new maximum registration date.

REF Unit of Assessment (UoA)

The UoA codes can be found in Appendix B.

HECoS codes

This information categorises the applicant in line with the University's statutory reporting requirements and enables us to gain an accurate profile of our student body, benchmarked against other universities.

It is important to use the most accurate code available that reflects the research topic.

HECoS codes are available from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>

You can select up to three HECoS codes to accurately reflect the research topic. Where more than one HECoS code is selected then it is important to indicate the percentage of time allocated to each subject represented by each code e.g. 50%

If you can't find the appropriate code for the research topic, please contact your ADR (or delegate) for advice.

Non-book thesis components

Some subjects may carry the opportunity for students to submit non-book components, and applicants may wish to discuss the regulations at interview. Where there is a possibility that a student will want to submit non-book components, it is vital that this is captured early, so that the student can be advised appropriately throughout their studies.

The University's research degree regulations provide information for the submission of theses containing 'non-book' components in conjunction with the written ('book') part of a thesis.

The term 'non-book' refers to material of a non-printed text form, with the exception of a Creative Writing piece. This can include, but is not limited to, digital media, film, audio

files, drawings, maps and software. Where possible, digital non-book components should comply with existing standards appropriate for the type of media (e.g. 3D, hypertext, image audio).

Ethics review

At interview stage, applicants may not be aware of the significance and importance of ethical review, or if their research is likely to require it. However, it is good practice to make them aware of The Open University approach to ethics review and refer them to the guidance at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>

Students and supervisors must ensure compliance with any local ethical requirements.

The level of detail will be at the discretion of the interview panel and potential supervisors.

Similarly, candidates may find the University policy on intellectual property (IP) useful, especially if they are being funded by a commercial organisation with a vested interest in the research outputs. Having these conversations at interview stage may help identify any ethical, contractual, or IPR issues which would need to be articulated in the offer letter to the student.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

New students are required to assign their IPR to the Open University unless they are bound by an IP agreement with a third party, such as a sponsor. This policy gives students the same rights as staff to a share of any money made from the commercialisation of their research results. Research students hold the copyright to the text of their thesis. This should be articulated to the applicant at interview and will be confirmed in their offer letter. The Conditions of Registration for PGR students outline the IPR policy for applicants and registered students, and they are asked to read this before accepting an offer of registration.

Record of Selection Process

This section is to confirm that the recruitment guidelines have been followed in the selection of the student.

Academic entrance requirements

The normal minimum entrance requirement is an upper second-class honours degree or Master's degree, relevant to the proposed area of study, from a recognised higher education institution in the UK (or equivalent).

Applicants should also have experience of academic research, normally in the form of either a Master's degree in research methods, an undergraduate degree with a research element in the final year, or work-related experience with evidence through research

reports.

Recommendations for all applicants, and especially those who are not UK graduates or who hold other qualifications, must be supported by evidence (e.g. details of publications) and a detailed statement that the applicant has an adequate academic background, is capable of undertaking postgraduate level research, and has been assessed against clear criteria.

Applicants who hold no degree level qualifications will not be admitted to the PhD programme.

Please note that all applicants will be required to provide the original certificates of academic qualifications at registration. Where the qualification is from outside the UK, it is a requirement that the RDT undertakes a UK ENIC check. UK ENIC is the National Agency with designated responsibility in providing advisory services on comparing international qualifications. Any document that is not in English or Welsh must be accompanied by a certified translation. The translator's credentials should be given along with their official declaration that the translation is accurate.

English language requirements for academic assessment

Where English is not the applicant's first language, the applicant must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language to support successful study at research degree standard.

The UK government recognises certain countries as majority English speaking. If the applicant is a national of one of these countries or holds a degree from one of these countries, then they will not need to provide further proof of English language proficiency. For a full list of recognised majority English speaking countries, please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/knowledge-of-english> . Similarly, if they have already proven your English proficiency for a previous, successful UK student/skilled-worker visa application, they will not be asked to do so again.

Applicants who have been taught in English in a country that is not recognised as majority English-speaking can apply for an English Language Proficiency Statement (ELPS) through Ecctis Visas and Nationality Services www.ecctis.com.

All other applicants will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency through taking an IELTS test <https://ielts.org/>. Our minimum requirements are an average score of at least 6.5 and a score of at least 6.0 in each individual category. The certificate must be dated within two years of the course start date

Confirmation

The agreed signatory, e.g. the Associate Dean (Research) or delegate will be asked to confirm that fair selection has taken place, that adequate arrangements will be in place to support the student throughout their studies, and that the candidate is

Full-time student living arrangements

Please indicate the type of accommodation the applicant is intending to live in while studying – this information does not have to be finalised at this stage.

Proposed Supervisory Team

Heads of School are responsible for managing the workload of supervisors in their faculty and for ensuring that students will be properly supervised. Associate Deans (Research), or Programme Leaders, should satisfy themselves that adequate arrangements are in place to supervise the student, and that the proposed supervisors have the right to work in the UK. Supervisors who have breached UKVI reporting or failed to discharge their duties as a supervisor may not be able to supervise until they have undertaken the relevant training.

Applicant recommendation form.

Progress Board is responsible for approving and confirming supervisor appointments. Proposed supervision teams and individual supervisors should meet the regulatory requirements as outlined in the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

A Supervisor CV is required for all supervisors which outlines their supervisory experience to date. You should indicate the lead supervisor on the ARF – this is a requirement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

To facilitate professional development where a member of staff needs to gain experience of supervision, or if a student's project goes across several areas, a third internal supervisor can be named. An 'industrial supervisor', i.e. a supervisor from an industrial or commercial setting, rather than an academic one, can be appointed in addition to the core team, to provide specific expertise.

The agreed signatory who submits the completed ARF (usually the Associate Dean (Research) or delegate, or Programme Leader) is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate approval has been obtained for any proposed supervisor who is not based in their own academic unit. The agreed signatory should not put forward any external person who has not provided a photocopy or scanned copy of proof of their right to work in the UK.

Right to work in the UK

The Open University is required by law to ensure that anyone appointed to undertake

work on its behalf in the UK has the right to work in the UK. Right to work checks are carried out by People Services and can usually be facilitated online.

If a supervisor is going to be based outside the UK and Republic of Ireland, and won't be coming to the UK, they will need to be appointed and paid via their home institution where possible. If this is not possible, it may be possible to contract them via an external agency, but there are costs associated with this which must be met by the faculty. Please contact the RDT to discuss your requirements.

Fees and Funding

This section should be completed as fully as possible to avoid any delay processing the application.

Where a student is to be externally funded please refer to the Framework and Guidance on External Collaboration. Please note the importance of due diligence when working with a new funder/partner.

Students must receive the full grant and any allowance(s) to which they are entitled as outlined in their terms and conditions.

Fee liability

When an applicant accepts an offer of registration, their fee liability will be recorded in CIRCE, either for internal accounting, or for invoicing to the student.

Funds for research costs

Faculties should ensure sufficient funds are available for the research project for which the student is to be registered, including the training grant of £200 (please note that this will not be available to students based overseas) now incorporated into full-time and part-time student fees.

Account codes.

HG account codes should be in place for externally funded applicants before an offer of registration can be made, although it is recognised that in some cases, a contract may take time to arrange.

Faculties are asked to keep the RDT informed as early as possible where a contract is being arranged.

The RDT will need the AMS number, the contract number and the CLS number for all externally funded studentships.

Please note that it is University policy that no students can be registered until the associated contract has been agreed and signed by all parties.

Research student ID.

HESA assigns a Research student ID to every student in receipt of funding. This is sent to

faculties once funding is agreed. If you have the Research student ID for the applicant, please enter it on the form.

Supporting Statement

This section is for faculties to summarise the applicant's unique suitability for postgraduate research study, and to confirm that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support the student, in terms of supervision, funding, facilities, training and support, and fit with research strategy. Please provide a detailed statement that relates directly to the applicant rather than simple confirmation of the points listed. You are asked to confirm that the applicant meets the minimum level of English required for all postgraduate study as described above. It is critical that the statement is a narrative tailored to the individual student and is not a generic statement.

If selection has been conducted against a faculty-specific checklist or set of criteria, please give details and/or attach copies of any relevant documents that provide evidence of fair selection. It is good practice to use a checklist to verify that fair selection has taken place.

If one or more of the student's supervisors belong to another faculty, a short statement from that faculty about supervision arrangements should be included in this section.

Research facilities.

The University will agree in advance with prospective students which facilities the student will need to support their research. This might sometimes include accessing OU facilities at Walton Hall or those of an external partner. Due diligence must be undertaken to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and that all health & safety and risk assessments are in place. This will include insurance. Where an external partner is providing research facilities that the arrangement should be formalised with a contract according to the procedures outlined in the [Research Degree Student Partnership Framework](#).

Where costs are involved, this should be budgeted for and agreed in advance with the student.

Research training.

Professional development is a vital part of a research degree, and it is important to think about development needs early on. Applicants should have a training needs analysis conducted to identify any significant gaps that need to be addressed, at the beginning of the student's registration. Training resources are made available to students on the GSN when they first register.

Submission and Approval

The ARF should be submitted to the RDT by the agreed signatory, usually the Associate

Dean (Research), or their delegate, or Programme Leader. By submitting this form, the signatory is confirming that:

- The Research student recruitment guidelines have been followed in recruitment of the student.
- The infrastructure, facilities and supervision to support the student are in place, if the student is to be based away from Walton Hall the faculties must assure themselves as to the suitability of the research facilities to be used by the student and that that a contract for use of the facilities is in place with the external partner according of the procedures outlined in the [Research Degree Student Partnership Framework](#).
- The proposed supervisors meet the requirements as outlined in the *Research Degrees Regulations*
- The applicant meets the academic requirements.
- Any contract and funding arrangements are in place.
- Any proposed external supervisors have provided copies of evidence of their right to work in the UK.
- Supervisors have undertaken training in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations.

The ARF is subject to the approval of Progress Board.

Attachments

A checklist is provided on the ARF.

Proposal

The requirements for any proposal to be submitted as part of the application process must be stated in the studentship advertisement and the faculty's entries in the research degrees prospectus. Where a research proposal is not required it is expected that the student will provide evidence, perhaps in a cover letter, as to why their application for an existing project should be considered.

References

Two independent academic referees' reports are required and may be requested before or after interviews.

References must be rated against clear criteria, including academic achievement, academic potential, originality, judgement, aptitude for postgraduate research and the referee's general recommendation. Personal references will not be accepted as proof of suitability for a research degree.

Resources

For advice and support before submitting a recommendation please contact the RDT on 01908 653806 or email research-degrees-applications@open.ac.uk



The Open
University

The Research Degrees prospectus and latest fees are at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees>

Application forms can be downloaded from the GSN at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/students/research/forms-and-guidance>

Studentship contract template

A contract template is available. Please contact the RDT to discuss your requirements.

Appendix A: List of countries which cannot be supported by the programme

Excluded Countries

North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Syria, Russia (including Crimea/Sevastopol region). May also impact nearby regions such as Pakistan or UAE. Although OU online materials may be accessible via VPN, use of VPN may put an individual at risk of local sanctions.

OU Agreed Study Areas –

Aland Islands, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Channel Islands, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic,

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Isle of Man, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom*, Vatican City State.

Protectorates of the above e.g. Madeira and Canary Islands

* Includes British Overseas Territories and students eligible to use a BFPO address

Countries not listed

Consideration needs to be given to whether:

- Third party materials have been cleared for worldwide rights
- There are any restrictions on the number of licences available for use outside the UK for required software

There may also be subject-specific criteria to consider. For example, Cisco is blocked in China.

Appendix B: Unit of Assessment codes

A	1	Clinical Medicine
	2	Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
	3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
	4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
	5	Biological Sciences
	6	Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences
B	7	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
	8	Chemistry
	9	Physics
	10	Mathematical Sciences
	11	Computer Science and Informatics
	12	Engineering
C	13	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
	14	Geography and Environmental Studies
	15	Archaeology
	16	Economics and Econometrics
	17	Business and Management Studies
	18	Law
	19	Politics and International Studies
	20	Social Work and Social Policy
	21	Sociology
	22	Anthropology and Development Studies
	23	Education
	24	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
D	25	Area Studies
	26	Modern Languages and Linguistics
	27	English Language and Literature
	28	History
	29	Classics
	30	Philosophy
	31	Theology and Religious Studies
	32	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
	33	Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
	34	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management