

# Research Degrees Student Recruitment Guidelines (Directly Supported)

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## What this document is for?

To provide guidance to faculties in the recruitment and selection of research students, 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: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

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 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.

## 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 the infrastructure is in place to support the student, including

supervision, facilities, and any contract /funding arrangements.

- Ensuring that infrastructure and funding support is in place to support the student, including support for fieldwork
- Ensuring that students are aware of the costs involved in undertaking a research degree. For overseas students this will include visa costs and the Immigration Health Surcharge and UK living costs. 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 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.
- Confirming whether or not ATAS is required for overseas students.
- 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.
- Providing general advice and guidance to faculties on Student Route visas for applicants.

## **Recruitment**

### **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](mailto: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.

### **Transfers into The Open University**

Transfers of registration from another university or institution to The Open University is only permitted where a student has previously been supervised by someone who has become a member of The Open University academic staff. Any student applying to transfer in from another institution needs to be identified at an early stage to the RDT, particularly where there are specific funding or contract arrangements in place, or where the student has a Student Route visa. Faculties will need to include details of the student, their contract, funding and visa arrangements, and a copy of the release correspondence from the original institution, with the [Applicant recommendation - Transfer form](#). The transfer of registration will normally be at the equivalent stage in the research degree programme, as closely as equivalence can be determined. This will also apply for the duration of registration.

Further guidance is available separately under 'Transfer of Registration' in the [Research Degree Regulations](#)

### **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.

Professional Doctorate (PD) students are recruited via The OU website and referring to the Research Degrees prospectus: <http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/degrees-we-offer/professional-doctorates>

### **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 an advertised studentship
- 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.

Applicants being interviewed for funded studentships should be made aware of any funder-specific Terms and Conditions relating to the studentship which would override the standard OU Terms and Conditions. This might include, for example, time off, payment arrangements, maternity / sickness policy, length of registration etc. Please contact the RDT if you need advice on how specific terms and conditions might impact on the offer made to the successful candidate.

When interviewing students the arrangements for access to suitable research facilities must be agreed. All applicants must be made aware of the expectations within the Academic Engagement and Attendance policy.

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.

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

## **Disabled Applicants**

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.

### **Overseas applicants**

For specific advice on immigration matters, please refer to the applicant to the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>).

**Applications for study may be made in the Welsh Language 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 competency-based 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 a set writing task. A scoring system may be helpful, such as that described in the Effective Recruitment and Selection Guidance 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.

### **Funding Models**

This section provides an overview of the different funding models available for funded research degrees. It is not exhaustive, and some flexibility is possible depending on the funding source. A studentship can/may 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**

Funding can come from a Research Council, company, government organisation, project, grant, doctoral loan or charity. Refer to the Research Council website for specific details of funded studentships being offered. Candidates who meet the criteria for external funding should be nominated for those awards first so that any available internal funding can be offered to another candidate.

In addition, studentships may 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 some of 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
  - Fees *or* stipend
  - Percentage of each

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:

- Arrangements for assessing upgrade and progress reporting, where a DTP might have different requirements of their students.
- Terms and conditions laid down by the funder in relation to study breaks, sickness, maternity, etc.
- Minimum and maximum permitted registration periods, where a DTP might have different requirements of their students.

- Supervision arrangements throughout the student's registration
- Stipend payments, 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 contact the Graduate School as early as possible to discuss your requirements.

## **Enquiry Handling**

### **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, 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 (e.g., the Home or International version). 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 deadlines for receiving completed forms and all associated documents from faculties 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 <sup>st</sup> October	30 <sup>th</sup> May	31 <sup>st</sup> April
1 <sup>st</sup> February	30 <sup>th</sup> November	30 <sup>th</sup> 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.

## **International applicants**

### Biometric Number

All international (anyone other than UK or Irish nationals) students are required to have a Biometric Residence Permit. Where the student is already resident in the UK, they may already have a biometric number related to their visa.

### Length of time spent studying in the UK.

This information is required to ensure that there is no breach of Immigration Law. International students are only permitted to remain in the UK for limited time periods. The total time allowed depends on the degree course.

### Dependents

International students intending to bring dependents into the country must be able to demonstrate that they have the funds available to support them. If they have a grant this may be used as contributory evidence but may not be sufficient.

## **Programme details.**

### Proposed start date

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

Agreement for a student to register at other times of year will only be approved in exceptional circumstances and a case must be made to Progress Board. Careful consideration should be given to the student's ability to attend induction and other university training events if they are to start at other times of the year. Provision must be made to ensure that students who do not start in February or October are not unduly disadvantaged.

### 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
<b>MPhil</b>		
Full-time	15 months	48 months
Part-time	30 months	72 months
<b>PhD</b>		
Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months
<b>PD</b>		
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 REF UoA codes can be found in [Appendix A](#).

#### 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.

#### Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is a scheme of the British government for certifying international students for entry into the United Kingdom to study or conduct research in certain sensitive technology-related fields.

Students and researchers who are nationals of EU countries, the European Economic Area (EEA), Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland or the United States of America do not need an ATAS certificate. For any other international students, the need for an ATAS certificate will be assessed using the CAH3 code(s) derived from the HECoS codes on the ARF. More information is available via <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

The RDT is responsible for providing the electronic documentation students need in order to apply for ATAS clearance. If an ATAS certificate is required, please include a 2000 character summary of the project proposal and thesis title. Please note that when an applicant submits an ATAS request to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office it takes an average of 8 weeks for a decision to be made and so it is essential that ARFs are received in a timely fashion.

### 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, numerical datasets, 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). The library can give advice on media standards.

### Ethics review

At interview stage, applicants may not be aware of the significance and importance of ethical review, or whether 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/>

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 competency/aptitude 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](http://www.ecctis.com).

All other applicants will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency through taking an [IELTS test](https://ielts.org/) <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, or EdD/DHSC Programme Leader, 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 suitable for postgraduate research. The Associate Dean (Research) or Director of Postgraduate Studies is responsible for confirming whether or not ATAS is required.

### Residency requirements

There is a strong correlation between students' experience and their research environment and location. The Open University wishes to ensure that any research student living at a distance from the Milton Keynes campus can engage fully with the research environment and have the best possible chance of success

Applicants for full-time MPhil/PhD research study should live within easy commutable distance of the Milton Keynes campus, to ensure they can engage fully with their research and University life in general, that they have regular contact with their supervisor(s), academic staff and other students, and that they can participate in training activities.

Applicants for part-time research study must be resident in the UK for the duration of their studies. Exceptionally, this requirement may be waived for non-UK-based applicants, or for full-time or part-time UK-based students undertaking essential fieldwork overseas, where it can be demonstrated that adequate and regular arrangements for supervision can be made. Students will still be required to make regular visits to the UK at their own expense. Part-time Professional Doctorate students may reside anywhere in the world.

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 to offset the absence of HEFCE funding. 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.

### 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 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.

Thank you for your assistance in ensuring our continued compliance with this requirement.

### **Fees and Funding for MPhil/PhD Students**

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 to cover the forecasted costs of the research project for which the student is to be registered, including the training grant of £200 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.

#### Research Council awards.

If the applicant is being nominated for a Research Council award, please refer to the relevant Research Council handbook. All Research Council awards have citizenship and residence restrictions, and many require the applicant to be either a UK citizen, or to have lived in the UK for at least three years for non- study purposes. Please contact the RDT for advice if there is any doubt about an applicant's eligibility for an award. You should tell the applicant if there are particular Terms and Conditions which differ from the OU standard Conditions of Registration for PGR Students, for example relating to leave, payment dates, sickness and maternity.

#### Je-S records

Je-S is the Joint Electronic Submission service used to collect information about students and research grants and is used by Research Councils to provide their communities with electronic grant services. The Faculty and RDT work together to create a Je-S record for the applicant once they are approved for registration, using information provided on the ARF and from information held within the faculty.

### **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 what facilities the university will provide to support their research and what needs to be provided externally. This might sometimes include accessing OU facilities at Walton Hall, but where costs are involved, this should be budgeted for and agreed in advance with the student. Where an external partner is providing research facilities, the arrangement should be formalised with a contract according to the procedures outlined in the Research Degree Student Partnership Framework.

### 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 a contract for use of the facilities is in place with the external partner according to 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 and residency 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.
- HECoS and CAH3 codes have been considered and any requirements for ATAS have been confirmed.

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.

### Evidence for visa application

Please attach copies of all documents being used as evidence to support the visa application.

### **Resources**

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

The RDT can also advise on the recruitment of non-EEA applicants requiring a visa under Tier 4 immigration controls.

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>

Research Council handbooks:

- AHRC: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/>
- BBSRC: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/>
- EPSRC: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/>
- ESRC: <https://esrc.ukri.org/>
- NERC: <https://nerc.ukri.org/>
- STFC: <https://stfc.ukri.org/>

### **Studentship contract template**

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



## Appendix A: Unit of Assessment codes

<b>A</b>	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>B</b>	7	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
	8	Chemistry
	9	Physics
	10	Mathematical Sciences
	11	Computer Science and Informatics
	12	Engineering
<b>C</b>	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
<b>D</b>	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