



A Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

September 2007

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Status of this document

The regulations governing registration as a candidate for a research degree are specified in the University's *Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study* and the *Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations*.

This Code of Practice sets down guidelines on good practice in supervision for both supervisors and research students. It does not in itself constitute or in any way supersede the University's rules and regulations set out in the relevant documents. Having the status of guidance, this *Code* describes the University's recommended practice but does not preclude its recommendations being waived in certain circumstances if good reason for any such departure can be shown.

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Preliminary note

It is very important that all students and their supervisors should have read this *Code of Practice*, the *Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study* and the *Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations* setting out the University regulations concerning the individual student's candidature. **In the case of any appeal, a student will be deemed to have read these publications, which are made available to all research students on acceptance or registration.**

The *principal supervisor* (or the co-supervisor) is the person primarily responsible for giving the research student help and advice to obtain good training in research, choosing a topic of appropriate scope and significance, organising the research, composing a thesis that meets the University's specifications, and submitting it in due time. It is the student who has direct responsibility for the production of a thesis and its final quality.

The *research student* must take full advantage of the facilities and supervision offered and has a responsibility to actively seek advice and help from the sources identified in this Code if problems arise.

Each School has a *Postgraduate Director* (sometimes called a *Head of Graduate School*) who is responsible for making sure that all research students within the School are progressing satisfactorily and receiving the help and advice they require. The Postgraduate Director or Head of Graduate School should always act in concert with the student's supervisors. In larger Schools there may also be *Postgraduate Advisers* who are primarily responsible for designated subject areas within the School and who support the Postgraduate Director.

The *College Postgraduate Studies Committee* is responsible for overseeing post-graduate studies within the College and for ensuring that academic standards are maintained. It deals with matters concerning individual postgraduate students, including admission, extensions or interruptions of study, and the appointment of examiners. The Committee is consulted by and offers advice to the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee on a variety of matters.

The *Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee* includes the Conveners of the three College Postgraduate Studies Committees and a professional officer of the Edinburgh University Students' Association. It oversees postgraduate studies in the University, formulates and amends the postgraduate regulations, advises Senate on postgraduate policy and issues notes of guidance to ensure consistency of practice throughout the University. The Committee also considers exceptional concessions, and appeals from individual students.

This Code of Practice is also available in electronic form at:

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Index.htm>

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POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS AND THEIR SUPERVISION

A CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS

1. *Introduction*

The intention of this Code is to provide guidance and practical advice for both supervisors and research students. Suggestions for improvements are most welcome; these should be sent to the Secretary to the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee.

The supervision of postgraduate students is clearly personal in character, and influenced by many factors including the personalities involved and the environment in which student and supervisors work. There are also bound to be considerable variations in supervisory practice between disciplines. For these reasons the Code does not attempt to describe in exact detail the academic role of the supervisor. Rather it aims to identify those aspects of good supervisory practice which are common to all disciplines and to define the mutual responsibilities of supervisors and students. The Code deals with supervision of postgraduate research students, that is, candidates registered for the degrees of PhD, MPhil, MLitt, and, where applicable, taught professional doctorates. This Code also deals with those Masters by Research degrees which are assessed solely or primarily on the basis of a single project or dissertation. For other Masters by Research degrees (ie those which include a significant taught element and which have their own Board of Examiners) please refer to the Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes. (Note: Specific Masters by Research degrees within the University of Edinburgh include the MMedSci by Research, the MSc by Research, the MTh by Research and the MVetSci by Research)

The Code sets out University policy on good supervisory practice; it should be read in conjunction with the postgraduate regulations set out in the *University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study* and the *Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations*.

2. *The start of the relationship*

A student's initial application will be considered within the School and a decision should be made at this stage concerning the general area of study and potential supervisors. Possible areas of mutual interest and potential supervisor(s) can be specified at this stage. In the case of externally funded research projects with which the student hopes to be associated, the project leader holding the funding is likely to have specific requirements about the research topics available; whenever possible, and particularly for part-time study, the student should be interviewed. It is beneficial if a subsequent meeting(s) can be held prior to initial matriculation to identify more precisely the field of study and the supervisor(s) who will be involved. When initial interviews are impossible these stages of topic definition and identification of supervisor(s) should be undertaken as soon after the student's arrival as possible. Postgraduate research students must not remain unsupervised once they have joined the School even if they are to be involved in taught course studies prior to embarking on a research project.

Research students are enrolled for the degree of their choice, although their first year is regarded as *probationary*. This initial period provides the opportunity to assess the research potential of the candidate before confirmation of the candidate's degree registration is approved (see Section 5.4

below). It also provides an opportunity for the candidate to assess his or her aptitude for research and to develop and refine the research topic.

Supervisors are formally appointed by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee, normally at the time it accepts an applicant for admission to postgraduate study, on the recommendation of the School concerned.

The University has in place an agreed system for the training and support of supervisors, which involves attendance, every five years, on a College Supervisor Briefing session.

Members of staff who have no previous experience of supervising research postgraduate students are normally required to act as assistant supervisors, for a specified period, before they can be designated as a principal supervisor.

Two supervisors should normally be appointed from the outset. One supervisor will normally be designated as principal supervisor with the primary responsibility for supervision (see Section 3.2) and the other(s) will be assistant supervisor(s). The role of the assistant supervisor is intended to be considerably more limited than that of the principal supervisor, in terms of the responsibility held, but in some cases the assistant supervisor may have day to day involvement in the student's supervision. An assistant supervisor may be appointed at a later stage than the principal supervisor, especially when matters of complementary expertise are relevant, but should normally be appointed no later than the end of a candidate's first semester.

In many research programmes other staff members will be involved in an informal advisory capacity, especially if specialised equipment is to be used. It is the duty of the principal supervisor to ensure that these informal advisers are prepared both to undertake this work and to take responsibility for matters of instruction and safety.

2.1 International Students

Students whose first language is not English may be required to sit a diagnostic English test in Edinburgh prior to matriculation. Students who are required to take this test will be notified by their College on admission. The requirements for exemption from this test vary from time to time and between Colleges, and supervisors or other staff should contact their College Office for details. Following the Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM Test), the student may be *required* or *recommended* to undertake remedial English language tuition. It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to advise the student of the importance of this remedial English language training and to seek to ensure that the student attends. It is in the student's interest that the language test be strict, in order to ensure that any remedial action specified is appropriate, and to avoid serious problems at the stage of writing up the thesis. Even in areas such as musical composition, where written English may be less important, candidates must be able to communicate fluently with their supervisor. Candidates should remember, too, that part of their final examination will be an oral examination.

Students from abroad, even when English is their first language, often have problems adjusting to life away from home, especially when separated from their families. Advice and help is available from the International Office, the Student Counselling Service and The Advice Place. Students should not hesitate to contact these bodies; they should also seek help from their supervisors, and from the warden of their Hall of Residence, if applicable.

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3. *The early stages*

Once a student has matriculated, the School, the supervisors and the student all have a role to play in ensuring that progress is satisfactorily achieved.

3.1 *The School*

The School has a responsibility to do all it reasonably can to provide students with space where they can work. It must provide whatever equipment or facilities it has been agreed are required for the proposed project. In many cases library, computer or other facilities which are outwith the School's direct control need to be made available. Schools should not promise students facilities they cannot provide or can only provide at a much later date.

The facilities that should be provided in a School for each research student, depending on the nature of the discipline concerned, should normally include: bench-space, dedicated study-space, a desk, adequate lighting and heating, shelving for books or space in a bookcase, filing space, lockable storage, access to the computer network (if not provided centrally), an electronic mail address, a pigeonhole or collection-point for paper mail, and adequate provision of research premises, equipment and consumables.

The general School facilities that should be provided for research students include a noticeboard, or a designated part of one (devoted to postgraduate information such as seminar and lecture notices, conference notices, examination results, job vacancies and general School and University information), and limited access to a photocopier, a fax machine and a telephone.

The School should organise, often through the principal supervisor, a guided tour of the facilities and an introduction to staff as early as possible. Schools should ensure that students are made familiar with the structure of the University Library system and access arrangements, preferably through the induction process organised at the beginning of each academic session. School responsibilities relating to health and safety are covered in Appendix I.

It is in the interests of students, supervisors and the School to have an individual or group in the School or Graduate School to oversee postgraduate supervision and to be available to offer impartial advice to research students and supervisors. With such an arrangement difficulties can often be identified and resolved at an early stage. Possible arrangements which might be considered are as follows. In any case the School or Graduate School arrangements must complement and support the efforts of the supervisor(s).

- a. A Postgraduate Director or Head of Graduate School – a senior member of staff with responsibility for all postgraduate activity within the School. In larger Schools there may also be *Postgraduate Advisers* who support the Postgraduate Director.

and

- b. A School Postgraduate Group - In some cases it may be desirable for the Group to include members with special expertise from outside the School or indeed from outside the University.

- c. In all Schools, students with problems relating to supervision that cannot be resolved with their supervisor, Group or Postgraduate Adviser should consult the Postgraduate Director. Further grievance and complaints procedures are described in Section 6.1.

Each Postgraduate Director or School Postgraduate Group should be involved up to the time of submission in a regular formal review of the progress of each student at least once annually. One advantage of such an arrangement is that the student is automatically brought into contact with other members of the academic community so that the possibility of intellectual isolation, which many students experience, can be greatly reduced.

In addition, mechanisms for the representation of the interests and concerns of students should exist at both School and College level. Postgraduate research students should either be formally represented on committees or meetings held at School or College level, or they should be clearly advised how they can best make representations to the relevant committees at these levels.

3.2 *The supervisors*

The supervisors are critical to the success of a student's endeavours.

There are two types of supervisory arrangement: *principal plus assistant supervisor* and *principal plus co-supervisor*.

Principal plus assistant supervisor

It is the principal supervisor's role to assist the student in defining the topic of research either before arrival at the University, in the early weeks of study or as soon thereafter as possible. Although there is some evidence that students are better motivated when they choose their own research topic, local circumstances may mean that a free choice is impossible. It is important that student and supervisor(s) agree on the choice of research topic as early as possible and together identify the sequence of events which will culminate in a finished thesis. Between them they must ensure, with the Postgraduate Director, that:

- a. the project is one which is within the supervisors' field of expertise;
- b. the project can be achieved with resources that are available;
- c. the project is suitable for the degree which the student aims to undertake and should be capable of completion within the appropriate prescribed period of study (normally 12 months full-time for a Masters by Research, 24 months full-time for MPhil, 36 months full-time for PhD). Experience suggests that in some fields, perhaps especially in the humanities, students need to be saved from over-ambition - the attempt at a definitive study of too large a subject (see Section 3.3);
- d. the principal supervisor is likely to be available throughout the prescribed period of study, and in particular at the beginning of the period (see also Section 5.7 below);
- e. if particular conditions relating to study or examination have been specified in the letter of admission, for example the acquisition of computing skills or knowledge of a foreign language, then ways of implementing them should be agreed.

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It cannot be stressed too strongly that the success of a student in his or her research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance that the supervisors offer, especially in the early stages of the work, and close personal contact at this time is essential if later difficulties are to be avoided. Meetings between student and supervisors will need to be frequent throughout the first year. Weekly meetings during the first semester and towards the end of the first year would not seem unreasonable, although their frequency will vary from discipline to discipline.

Part-time students will have particular problems in the early stages: it may be difficult to arrange meetings with the supervisors; the part-time student may find it difficult to set priorities and provide enough free time for research. The supervisors should be aware of these problems and attempt to deal with them sympathetically, while still ensuring that the student is launched on the project without undue delay.

Although the work reported in the thesis is the work of the student it is the supervisors' role to provide guidance on the structure and content of the thesis. The *principal supervisor* is responsible to the Postgraduate Director for the following duties:

1. agreeing with the student a suitable field of study which will stimulate research interest and can be completed within an acceptable/reasonable period of time. At this stage, any specific further training needed by the student should be identified, and arrangements made for this to be followed;
2. consulting with the Postgraduate Director to ensure that School facilities are available and, as far as possible, that the student and supervisor can readily develop a working relationship;
3. encouraging and supporting students to take up opportunities to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses;
4. where necessary, arranging liaison with informal supervisors;
5. arranging regular meetings with the student at which all matters relating to the student's work can be discussed with the supervisor(s);
6. making adequate alternative supervisory arrangements if the principal supervisor is to be absent from the University for a consecutive period exceeding six weeks;
7. discussing with the Postgraduate Director, and the School Postgraduate Group, before the end of the probationary first year, arrangements for a review of the student's progress and suitability for further study;
8. completing and submitting on time to the Postgraduate Director annual reports for onward transmission to the College Office; completing all relevant reports required by Research Councils and other funding bodies, and ensuring their onward transmission;
9. combining a pastoral role with his or her academic role so that problems can be identified early and appropriate steps taken to obtain concessions such as *interruptions of study* or *extensions* for the student as rapidly as possible should they be necessary. It is essential that applications for *interruptions of study* or extensions be made at the earliest reasonable time, to protect the interests of the student. The pastoral responsibility of the principal

supervisor includes the need to be watchful for the emergence of social, psychological or medical problems that might affect the ability of the student to work effectively. The supervisor therefore also needs to know the facilities that the University offers for the support of students suffering such problems, such as the University Health Service, the Disability Office, the Student Counselling Service and the Advice Place. It is important for both supervisors and students to note that, by law, the provision of immigration advice is regulated and in the University this can only be provided by specific named people who meet the required competencies and work in accordance with the Code of Standards as defined by the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner. Students should go to either the International Office or The Advice Place for immigration advice. In addition, both supervisors and students should note that there are implications for immigration if there is a change of status to part time and there are serious implications if students fail to renew visas before they expire. The length of time this takes is quite long and students should be advised to seek help well in advance of the visa expiry date;

10. drawing up, with the student, a thesis structure and a timetable for completion of the work. This programme should include specific goals for the research, their timing and sequence, together with an identification of any time-dependencies between the goals (ie effectively a flowchart). The supervisor should include a written version of this programme of work in the student's file, and monitor his or her progress against it. Progress and revisions of the work programme should also be recorded;
11. where appropriate, encouraging other forms of output from the student's research, particularly publication in journals and conference proceedings (see also Section 3.3 below).

In order to accomplish these tasks effectively the principal supervisor must maintain regular contact with the student.

In certain circumstances when the student is working full-time in an Associated Institution the principal supervisor may, if the relevant College Postgraduate Studies Committee approves, be a full-time employee of the Associated Institution. In such a case the assistant supervisor(s) must be a University employee. A principal supervisor who is a member of an Associated Institution has exactly the same responsibilities as one working within the University, but it is helpful if the University supervisor and the Postgraduate Director ensure that the principal supervisor is fully conversant with the University's rules and procedures. Students should feel able to approach all three members of staff in case of problems. The University supervisor, Postgraduate Director and College Postgraduate Studies Committee should pay particular attention to ensuring that, through the system of annual reports, satisfactory progress is being maintained.

Candidates working in an Associated Institution have the same rights and responsibilities as those working in a University School, but may additionally be subject to the rules of that Associated Institution.

The role of the *assistant supervisor* may only be that of a back-up to the principal supervisor, in terms of availability for the student when the principal supervisor is absent, and (where relevant) of supplying complementary expertise, such as in specialised knowledge of a particular technique or sub-area of study. It is not normally the function of the assistant supervisor to offer an alternative approach to the main thesis topic addressed by the student.

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The *assistant supervisor* should meet with the student shortly after his/her arrival (possibly at a joint meeting with the principal supervisor). He or she should be kept informed of the student's progress and should be fully involved in the annual reviews of the student's progress and should comment on and sign the student's annual report form.

In some cases although the principal supervisor is the responsible person, the student's day to day supervision may be a duty of the assistant supervisor. In this case it is essential that the position of the supervisors is regularised, agreed and understood by all parties: the student, the two supervisors and the Postgraduate Director or Head of Graduate School.

Principal plus co-supervisor

This supervisory arrangement is normally chosen at the time of admission when it is clear that the student's proposal involves interdisciplinary research. It can also be arranged at a later date if the student's research takes an interdisciplinary direction. The principal supervisor and co-supervisor have equal roles and responsibilities towards the student with respect to supervision of the student's work, although it is normally the principal supervisor's task to deal with the administrative aspects of supervision, such as applications for concessions and ensuring that monitoring forms are completed.

If the student's research topic is interdisciplinary from the outset, the *principal and co-supervisor* should assist the student in identifying and defining the topic of research either before arrival at the University or shortly thereafter. Where the research topic develops into an interdisciplinary one, the principal supervisor, in consultation with the student, should identify an appropriate co-supervisor and arrange the terms of the relationship. Where the principal and co-supervisor are from different Schools, it is the principal supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the co-supervisory relationship has the agreement of both Postgraduate Directors.

The principal and co-supervisor are jointly responsible to the Postgraduate Director in the School in which the student is registered for the duties set out in (1) to (11) above and both should meet regularly with the student, either separately or together.

3.3 *The student*

All students are expected to work diligently and effectively throughout the period of their candidature, and to produce a thesis which makes a significant contribution to knowledge. It is also expected that the student will submit the completed thesis on time. The scope of a thesis topic, chosen with the help and advice of the supervisor, should, therefore, always take into account what may be reasonably expected of a capable and diligent student after three or at most four years of full-time study. Government agencies funding postgraduate studentships, such as the Research Councils are paying increasing attention to reasonable thesis completion rates. If the University and its future students are not to be penalised by the effect of poor performance in this area, the co-operation of students and supervisors is essential.

Students should acquaint themselves with the standards expected of the relevant degree in their subject (PhD, MPhil, Masters by Research or taught professional doctorate), partly by discussion with their supervisor, and partly by consulting previous theses and dissertations lodged in the University Library or School Library.

It must be emphasised that the responsibility for the academic quality of a thesis or dissertation is the student's alone. The principal supervisor is seldom a member of the Board of Examiners, and is never in a position to make a valid pre-judgement about whether the particular thesis or dissertation will definitely be deemed worthy of passing by the Board of Examiners. Correspondingly, supervisors are encouraged not to volunteer a categorical judgement on whether the thesis will pass. This sensitive area of the relationship between supervisors and students is discussed further in Section 5.10.

The student and the supervisor may collaborate in the general advancement and dissemination of research knowledge. Such activity may lead to joint contributions to seminars and symposia, and possibly to joint publications in academic journals. In such circumstances, it may be advisable to consult the University of Edinburgh *Code of Research Practice* which is available from Edinburgh Research and Innovation (ERI). The following extracts cover the issues of most relevance for research students.

“Delicate issues associated with co-authorship may arise when staff and students collaborate in research, especially when the member of staff is the supervisor of the student. The delicacy springs from the unavoidable fact that the latter is to a tangible extent within the power of the former. In such a situation, it is part of the academic integrity expected of the University’s staff that they will wish to give carefully judged recognition to the contributions to collaborative work made by research students under their supervision.”

“Early discussion of, and adherence to, the conventions of co-authorship described [in the Code] will be particularly helpful in protecting the interests of all concerned in the collaboration. In preparing collaborative publications, both the member of staff and the student should take care to protect the identifiability of the student’s original contribution to the work, for degree purposes.”

The University attaches particular importance to the academic duty to acknowledge the work of other scholars and researchers, and to avoid plagiarism (see Section 8).

The attention of students and supervisors is drawn to Edinburgh University Library Guide 42 by Terence M Russell *'Essays, reports and dissertations: guidance notes on the preparation and presentation of written work'* Edinburgh University Library, second edition (1993). Other useful references are listed at the end of the Code. Attention is also drawn to Section 3 on Publication in the University’s *Code of Research Practice*.

The intellectual property (IP) represented by the dissertation or thesis remains the property of the student, as does the copyright of that material, except as affected by any prior agreements (for example, as part of the conditions of employment as a Research Assistant or Research Associate on an externally-funded project, or in other sponsored research). Edinburgh Research and Innovation, which is the University’s wholly owned company established for the commercial exploitation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is available to advise students. Issues relating to ownership of IP must be discussed with the student and ERI as soon as any potential issues become apparent, and before any conflict situation arises. See Section 3 of the University’s *Code of Research Practice*.

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3.4 Students with disabilities

The Disability Office can provide information and advice to supervisors and other staff as well as to disabled students themselves. The staff team includes a disability adviser and a dyslexia study adviser, who can advise on access to the curriculum, examination and assessment procedures and appropriate support. Copies of relevant policies and other written information, including the University's *Disability Policy* and *Disability Statement*, can be obtained from the Disability Office or its web site at <http://www.disability-office.ed.ac.uk/>

3.5 The University and the student

As full members of the University community, students have the right and obligation to share in the strategic objectives of the University as an institution, and the University has corresponding rights and obligations to the student.

The reasonable expectations on the part of students of the institution are that it should provide: a nurturing and stimulating intellectual and social environment; the opportunity to develop critical analytic and synthetic skills; training in research methods and relevant technical skills; adequate facilities for research; a professional level of supervision; personal, professional and career development opportunities; efficient administration; fair treatment; understandable regulations; good, regularly up-dated documentation; timely information; understandable and effective grievance, complaints and appeal procedures; common institution-wide standards; and a nationally and internationally accepted qualification.

In addition to those expectations listed in other sections of this document, the reasonable expectations on the part of the institution of students are that they should make a contribution to the life of the University; and that during their candidature and through their later careers they should seek to maintain and enhance the reputation of the University through their alumni status.

The reasonable joint expectations which spring from these two sets of rights and obligations are that the student and the University should enjoy a long-standing alumnus relationship and mutual respect for an enjoyable and profitable experience on both parts; and above all that the research recorded in the student's thesis or dissertation should constitute a significant advance in the collective knowledge and understanding of the subject concerned.

4. Support services available and how to use them

A comprehensive range of support services exist at University, College and School levels. Their purpose is to enable students to make the most of their programme and to avoid or overcome difficulties.

4.1 English language tuition

Students whose first language is not English will, unless exempted, be required to sit an English test in Edinburgh prior to matriculation. The Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM test) is used for diagnostic purposes. It is in the student's interest that the language test is strict, in order to ensure that appropriate remedial action is specified, and to avoid problems in assessments. If the student has not achieved a satisfactory standard in the TEAM test, he or she may be *required* or *recommended* to undertake remedial English language tuition at the Institute for Applied Language Studies (IALS). It is the responsibility of the supervisors to advise the student of the

importance of this remedial English language training and to seek to ensure that the student attends. It is the responsibility of the student to attend these classes as required or recommended by IALS.

Students taking courses and candidates for examination must be able to communicate fluently in English.

4.2 Study skills

Postgraduate students are expected to be proactive and self-directed in all aspects of study; to make independent and adventurous use of library and all other available resources; to embrace e-learning opportunities; to make full use of laboratory facilities; and to take the initiative in their use of information sources.

Schools provide additional information, support and training in academic skills to help students to complete their degrees. Much of this training takes place informally, as an integral part of coursework or tutorial support and supervision.

Books on study skills are available in University libraries. Information on the full range of resources can be found on the Library's On-line Catalogue at www.lib.ed.ac.uk. A list of recommended study skills books and advice handouts is provided by the TLA Centre at www.tla.ed.ac.uk (under 'for students'). The study skills workshops provided by the TLA Centre are aimed at undergraduate students but postgraduates are permitted to attend most of the sessions (see www.tla.ed.ac.uk for details).

4.3 Library resources

Students should receive direction from both library staff and staff in their school in the use of library facilities to support their work.

4.4 Computing resources

Schools must ensure that adequate computing facilities are available, and that students receive appropriate training. This training should cover the means of access to these facilities and essential components of their usage; as relevant to particular degree programmes. Students should be fully competent in computer word processing, data analysis, use of the web and communication by e-mail. All students are registered for e-mail usage.

4.5 Transferable skills development

The University places importance on the acquisition and development of transferable skills, such as communication by writing and orally, presentation of work, and the writing of reports.

Some of these may be built up informally through research work and supervisor support. Opportunities to benefit from more formal training in these areas are also available at University, College and School level, through the Transferable Skills Unit, the Careers Service, the Students' Association and other support groups.

The role of the supervisor in encouraging and supporting students to take up opportunities to develop these skills and to attend appropriate courses is an essential one.

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For information on the range of training opportunities available to postgraduate research students visit:-

<http://www.postgrad.ed.ac.uk/pgskills/default.htm>

4.6 Provision for part-time students

The University requires Schools to ensure provision of support services to part-time students. It is essential, therefore, that in the design and scheduling of courses, care is taken to ensure an adequate delivery of these support services at appropriate times.

4.7 Provision for disabled students

The Disability Office can provide information and advice to staff and students. There are two Dyslexia advisers and two Disability Officers who can advise on helping students to access a range of support provisions including study skills support, specific examination/assessment arrangements and support for non-medical personal assistants such as proof readers, library help etc. If students have a specific disability which might need to be taken into account during their studies they are urged to contact the Disability Office as soon as possible following their arrival at the University.

5. Formal aspects of the progress of the research student

5.1 Contact

Postgraduate research students rely on contact with their supervisors for general guidance and intellectual stimulation. Supervisors must maintain regular contact with their students who, in turn, have a responsibility to make themselves available at times agreed with their supervisors. Supervisors should be approachable and available for consultation at reasonable times. The initial probationary period is particularly crucial and, in addition to regular meetings, students should feel free to consult their supervisors as the need arises. As time passes, the initiative for establishing contact may gradually pass to the student but the supervisor continues to have a responsibility for ensuring that at least the minimum contact with the student required by the regulations is maintained. It is sometimes helpful to the student if guidance from the supervisor(s) is given in writing, especially where procedures or aims require to be unambiguously understood, and agreed, by both sides. When the research is carried out away from the School, the supervisor(s) have a particularly crucial role in ensuring that the student is clear about the work to be undertaken.

Supervisors should encourage students to play a full part in the intellectual life of the School, the University and the wider community. Many students are slow to recognise the opportunities that postgraduate research presents for their own intellectual broadening and the supervisor has a key role in helping them to develop their talents widely and to the full. Membership of EUSA is automatic. Many University societies exist and can be helpful in encouraging involvement in the University community. EUSA provides a Postgraduate Handbook and a Members' Services Guide which is available through The Advice Place or the Students' Association offices.

5.2 *Ethical considerations*

Both students and supervisors concerned with research carry responsibilities for maintaining due ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of the research. In particular, ethical considerations may need to be addressed in experiments involving either human subjects or animals, and any necessary approval sought. The Secretary of the Medical Ethics Committee of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine can be approached for initial advice about appropriate procedures for securing the approval of this Committee where this may be relevant. Attention is also drawn to the University's *Code of Research Practice*.

5.3 *Monitoring progress*

Supervisors can use a variety of methods to monitor the progress of students in the first year of study and students should be made aware of the procedures involved. As noted earlier, the principal supervisor (or co-supervisors) and student should regularly agree, and commit to paper, timetables for progress. The principal supervisor should monitor whether deadlines have been met, and keep file copies of the timetables. There may be formal coursework examined by written tests or continuous assessment; or the student may have to undertake directed reading with progress assessed by presentation of a report or by interview; or the student may be required to present an outline of his or her research proposals or findings to the supervisors or to a seminar attended by other staff or students. By the end of the first year the student should have produced some identifiable piece of work which has been written up independently and which can be assessed in some form. This will normally form the basis of confirmation of degree registration.

5.4 *First year report and confirmation of degree registration*

The University has adopted the following University-wide criteria for first year and subsequent annual reviews. In addition, some Colleges and Schools have developed more specific criteria. These are made available to all new research students on admission.

- Reviews should normally take place for all full-time students within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment.
- The student should make at least a written presentation or report and may also be required to make an oral presentation.
- The student's submission should include a forward plan of his/her work.
- A written report should be submitted and signed by all supervisors.
- The student's presentation together with the supervisors' report should be considered by an assessment panel of 3 to 5 members (which must include both of the supervisors and at least one independent person (ie who has not been involved to any significant extent, either academically or administratively, with the student involved)). Where a serious problem has been identified or discontinuation is being considered, then an interview with the student must be held before discontinuation can be recommended and formal discontinuation procedures invoked. The student must be given an opportunity to respond to the decision.
- After each review, written feedback will be provided by the assessment panel to the student and should be acknowledged by the student.

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- Should the first annual review indicate some concerns about the student's progress, then a further review should be undertaken 3 to 6 months after the first review.
- Similar procedures should be put in place for part-time and 'home and away' students. 'Home and away' students should normally be reviewed within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment, like other full-time students. Further reviews should be arranged to coincide with the required visit by the Edinburgh supervisor.
- Reviews of part-time students should normally also take place within 9 to 12 months of their enrolment. They will not be expected to have made as much progress as full-time students within this time. Should a further review be necessary, this should take place 18 to 24 months from enrolment.
- Criteria for the subsequent review of part-time students should be decided by the School or Graduate School, and approved by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee.

The first year report is normally the first formal report by the supervisor on the student's progress. This report is particularly important since it forms the basis for the decision on confirmation of degree registration. The first year report is a record of achievements to date but also provides the opportunity to confirm that the original conditions of registration have been met. The precise area of study should normally be defined by this stage. Supervisors must, in consultation with their Postgraduate Director, make a recommendation to the relevant College Postgraduate Studies Committee on the course which registration should take, in the light of the student's abilities and aspirations. The student has no right to be involved in this decision, although the supervisors should provide written feedback. A variety of recommendations are open to the supervisors and Postgraduate Director:

- a. confirmation of registration for PhD, MPhil, etc;
- b. registration for a lower degree such as MPhil or Masters by Research;
- c. extension of the probationary period. (Save for part-time students, extension of this period would be exceptional and in no circumstances should the probationary period last for more than 18 months from date of first registration);
- d. registration for a postgraduate taught degree (MSc, etc.) or diploma can be contemplated if the student has been undertaking the coursework for that qualification in his or her first year of study;
- e. discontinuation of registration at the end of the first year (see Section 6.4 below).

Assuming that progress is satisfactory, the student's degree registration will be confirmed. If there are doubts about a candidate's ability to complete a PhD successfully then the supervisor is duty bound to consider options (b) or (c). If there are serious doubts as to the candidate's research capability, then the supervisor should consider options (d) or (e). Although these may be painful decisions to take, *it is not in anyone's interest to allow a student to continue on a course of study which he or she is incapable of bringing to a successful conclusion*. It is particularly important in these cases that the student is given, in writing, an explanation of the reasons for the recommendation being made. If conscientious supervision has been given, then the

recommendation should not be a complete shock since the supervisors will already have given a series of warnings that progress has been inadequate. The Postgraduate Director, Postgraduate Adviser or School Postgraduate Group (see Section 3.1) can often play a helpful and important role in this crucial period.

5.5 *Annual reports*

Progress in the second and subsequent years is formally assessed in much the same way until the thesis is submitted, with annual report forms being completed by the supervisors and Postgraduate Director and approved by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. Reports should show, *inter alia*, what has been achieved since the last review and how the advice from that review has been acted upon. These reports provide an opportunity to review the appropriateness of the student's registration category and to recommend re-registration if necessary. In particular, students registered for MPhil can be recommended for re-registration for PhD if their performance merits that. *Annual reports are not to be regarded as routine*. Supervisors must be as frank as possible about any difficulties which have arisen and should give their views on the candidate's prospects. It is important that, if difficulties are apparent, the student should be given a written report itemising the problems. This will help to avoid later disputes over who said what.

Practice will vary according to the discipline concerned, but as a broad generalisation there would be cause for concern if by the end of the second year a student in the humanities had failed to produce a substantial piece of writing beyond that submitted in the first year, and in the science-based subjects the end of the experimentation period were not in sight.

If serious problems arise or if requests for extension to the period of study are made, the College Postgraduate Studies Committee will look to the record of annual reports as an indication of how the difficulties arose and what steps were taken by supervisor and student to deal with them at an early stage.

If there are changes in the nature of the student's research, the supervisor should review his or her own competence to deal with the new research area. The possibility of changing one of the supervisors should always be open to consideration, not only when there are difficulties in the student-supervisor relationship (see Section 6.1) but also when the student's research interests begin to diverge from those of the supervisor even though good relationships may continue. The student should be consulted about any change and any change recommended by the School has to be approved by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee.

The University has a structured questionnaire to be completed annually by students on their experience of the supervisory relationship. This form is in use for all students in each of the three colleges, and its purpose is to encourage good practice, and to maximise the effectiveness of the supervisory relationship.

5.6 *Leave of absence for the student*

Students will normally carry out their research in or near the University. At times, however, it may be desirable or necessary for students to conduct some of their research elsewhere. If the student is to be working away from the University for more than 15 months, then the principal supervisor must apply for permission from the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. If the period of leave is for less than 15 months, *written* approval must be sought from the candidate's

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Postgraduate Director, who is responsible for submitting annually to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee details of all periods of leave approved in his/her School.

In certain circumstances 'home and away' arrangements may be agreed by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee for overseas research students who need to spend a substantial period of time in their own country, in order to gather research data on a locally-relevant topic. This agreement must have been secured *before* admission. Under this scheme, a local supervisor must be appointed for day-to-day supervision, and the candidate's Edinburgh supervisor must visit the student in the field at least once every 12 months.

Explicit supervisory arrangements are particularly important for all students who are undertaking fieldwork or necessary academic research away from Edinburgh. Supervisors and students should agree a working timetable and agree the nature and frequency of submitting written work and receiving comments.

5.7 Absence of the Principal Supervisor

Special arrangements must be made for maintaining the supervision of research postgraduate students whenever the principal supervisor is absent, and *an alternative supervisor must be found if the absence is for more than six consecutive weeks*. Supervisors are not expected to be present throughout the summer vacation but even then the student should at least be informed when the supervisors will be available and special arrangements may need to be considered if the student is at a particularly crucial phase in his or her work. If the principal supervisor is repeatedly absent for short periods of a week or two, he or she should make every effort to contact the student while in Edinburgh. Continuity of supervision can be maintained much more easily if the normal practice of having an assistant supervisor has been followed (See Sections 2 and 3.2 above).

5.8 Authorised interruption of study

(Note: Authorised interruption of study was previously referred to and known as suspension of study.)

Apart from for Masters by Research degrees, the Postgraduate Regulations allow *interruption of study* for periods up to a total of five years. *Interruption of study* may be granted for good cause. For a student to obtain an *interruption of study* he or she must be *unable* to work on the thesis for a significant period of time. Applications for an *interruption of study*, which should be made to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee, must be supported in writing by both the supervisor and the Postgraduate Director. If there are medical problems, medical certificates will be required. In all cases an application for *interruption of study* should be made as quickly as is practicable. Periods of *interruption of study* do not count towards the student's total permitted period of study.

5.9 Extension of maximum period of study

Research students have a 'prescribed period of study' during which they pay tuition fees and are normally expected to remain in residence in Edinburgh. Beyond the prescribed period, there is a 'maximum period of study' sometimes referred to as the 'writing-up period'. In recent years, there have been some changes to the periods of study for research degrees, meaning that students starting on different dates will have different periods of 'prescribed' and 'maximum' study. Details are set out in Regulations . The table below sets out the position:

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Start date	Degree	part-time/ full-time	Prescribed Period	Maximum Period
From 1 Sept 94	PhD	full-time	36 months	48 months
Pre 1 Jan 97	PhD	part-time	48 months	60 months
From 1 Jan 97	PhD	part-time	48 - 72 months	72 months
From 1 Sept 04	PhD	part-time	72 months	84 months
From 1 Sep 94	MPhil	full-time	24 months	36 months
Pre 1 Jan 97	MPhil	part-time	36 months	48 months
From 1 Jan 97	MPhil	part-time	36-60 months	60 months
From 1 Sept 04	MPhil	part-time	48 months	60 months
From Sept 04	Masters by Research	full-time	12 months	12 months
From Sept 04	Masters by Research	part-time	36 months	36 months

Students who have completed their prescribed period of study but who have not yet submitted a thesis are termed 'continuing students'. Like all other students, continuing students are required to pay a matriculation fee each year. Such students effectively pre-empt either or both supervisory resource and facilities, so that the ability of a School to take on new applicants is thereby limited. Full-time students admitted from 1 September 1994 onwards, and part-time students admitted from 1 September 1997 onwards, also require to pay a continuation fee for any period beyond the maximum period of study. For students who are still within the prescribed period of study, the matriculation fee is included in the annual tuition fee.

A student's period of study may be extended for stated reasons which might include academic reasons such as unforeseen difficulties in obtaining or analysing data. Applications for extension, which should be made to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee, must be supported in writing by both the supervisor and the School Postgraduate Director. Periods of extension are exceptional and will always be subject to critical scrutiny before being approved.

It is important for candidates who have completed their maximum period of study to recognise the difference between *extension* and *interruption of study*. Students who are within their maximum period of study can obtain an *interruption of study* but extension would be inappropriate. An extension would be appropriate where progress has been hampered by unforeseen difficulties and hence completion of the thesis has been delayed.

In exceptional circumstances, College Postgraduate Studies Committees may extend a student's maximum period of registration by up to two years. Extensions beyond this time are not permitted.

The Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee places great emphasis on prompt completion of the thesis, believing that the periods allowed under the regulations are sufficient in most circumstances. A strong case is required before extension can be granted: if the need for an extension becomes apparent, the principal supervisor is expected to make the case for extension to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee before expiry of the normal maximum period of registration. When an extension is granted, a programme of work will be agreed between the student and his or her supervisors and progress regularly monitored.

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5.10 *Writing up and submission*

Satisfactory completion of the thesis is the goal of the research programme and the principal supervisor must make every effort to ensure that the student completes in timely fashion. The way in which the writing up of the thesis proceeds will differ between disciplines; in science subjects writing up is often concentrated towards the end of the prescribed period of study; in the humanities writing up may be a much more continuous process with chapters being written over an extended period throughout the research programme. In either case the principal supervisor should agree a schedule of completion dates with the candidate and try to ensure that the student keeps to deadlines. *For the full-time PhD the aim should normally be to complete within three, or at most four years from the date of initial registration. For the full-time MPhil the thesis should normally be completed within two or at most three years.*

Candidates may, with their supervisors' support, seek permission from the College Postgraduate Studies Committee to reduce their period of study and to submit their theses up to 12 months early.

Students should be aware that it may take some time for examiners to be appointed and for them to read and assess the thesis. The normal expectation is that examiners will read the thesis within three months; but candidates should allow for examiners' other commitments. If, because of visa restrictions, overseas candidates must return home promptly at the end of their period in Edinburgh, they and their supervisors must ensure that an allowance is made for this time when submitting the thesis.

Graduation ceremonies are held in July and December. In addition, candidates may be awarded their degrees *in absentia* in January/February, May and October.

Supervisors should draw the attention of students to the requirement to notify their intention to submit on the prescribed form and the standards for the format and binding of theses.

There are regulations governing the maximum length of a thesis. The maximum length relates to the length of the body of the thesis. This body includes the main text, prefatory material, footnotes and references, but does not include material in the appendices. Candidates should be aware, however, that the material in any appendices is nevertheless examinable at the discretion of the examiners. If a longer thesis is required for adequate treatment of the thesis topic, the principal supervisor must seek the approval of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee prior to submission.

A candidate may decide, or may be asked in certain circumstances by his/her supervisor or examiners, to provide data in electronic form that could not otherwise be easily included in the main text of the thesis. This electronic material may help the examiners to understand and assess a thesis more fully. This electronic material may be submitted in a pocket at the back of the thesis, but candidates should be aware that this material is supplementary to, and not an essential part of, the thesis.

The thesis must be the student's own work and he or she has the responsibility for its eventual success or failure. The supervisors' role is to guide, assess, criticise, suggest solutions, and give encouragement. The student may accept or reject the supervisors' opinions and must take ultimate responsibility for the content and presentation of the thesis. Where supervisors have severe doubts about the quality of the thesis, criticisms should be made to the student in writing. The way in

which advice is given on the writing of the thesis will vary from supervisor to supervisor and from discipline to discipline. All supervisors ought to see and comment on the first and subsequent drafts of a thesis, but they may see it in the form of a series of individual chapters rather than as a whole. The form and presentation of the final version must be the student's responsibility. In the exceptional case of a supervisor who is likely to be an internal examiner (see Section 5.11) he or she must be particularly careful not to become closely involved in commenting on later versions of the thesis. At the same time, he or she should ensure that reasonable advice is available to the student at this stage. Equally, students must be aware that criticism by a supervisor is not the same as the examination of the thesis by a Board of Examiners, and any approving comments by a supervisor on the quality of a thesis can carry no guarantee of the eventual success of the final version. The fact that a supervisor might have made such approving comments will not be taken to constitute legitimate grounds for any later appeal.

It may become apparent, when the supervisors see the initial stages of a PhD thesis, that it is not going to be good enough for that degree. In this situation the supervisors can advise the student to submit instead for MPhil, but the decision rests with the student. Conversely, it may become apparent that an MPhil thesis is of such quality that it might be considered for a PhD. Again a supervisor can advise the student to change registration category but it is for the student to decide whether to accept that advice. If a change of degree is envisaged the College Postgraduate Studies Committee will need to approve a change in registration category on the recommendation of the supervisors and the Postgraduate Director before the examination.

A *Student Checklist* for the examination of research degrees is made available to all candidates at the start of the final year of their prescribed period.

5.11 Examination

Guidelines for the Examination of Research Degrees are made available to all examiners when they are appointed. When a student gives notice of intention to submit the thesis, the College Postgraduate Studies Committee will request the nomination of examiners from the Head of School, or designated nominee. The Head of School, or their designated nominee, is also responsible for nominating a non-examining chair where this is appropriate. The appointment of a non-examining chair is compulsory if the internal examiner has no previous experience of PhD/MPhil examination but is generally recommended (but not required) for all other cases in order to ensure consistency between examiners and fairness to the views of both the examiners and the candidate. It is the responsibility of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee to consider the nominations and appoint the examiners and the non-examining chair.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. in the case of an interdisciplinary topic) a second external examiner may be appointed. Only in very exceptional circumstances should the Postgraduate Director nominate the assistant, or co-supervisor as an internal examiner. In preference, consideration should be given to appointing two external examiners and a generalist internal examiner. In either case, a written case should be made to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. Where a member of staff of the University is a candidate there must be two external and one internal examiners. Where a candidate has been a member of staff of the University at any point during their research degree study the College Postgraduate Studies Committee should consider appointing two external and one internal examiners. For candidates in either of the above categories neither the Head of School nor the Postgraduate Director shall be an examiner, except with the express permission of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. In the interests of the integrity of the examination procedures, Postgraduate Directors should be aware that all

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nominations of examiners should take into account the ability of the nominee to provide an impartial assessment of the submitted work.

The supervisors should be consulted about the choice of examiners. Although the principal supervisor may not act as an internal examiner, he or she or an assistant supervisor may, nevertheless, with the agreement of the candidate and of the examiners, attend the oral examination as an observer. On such occasions, the examiners may invite the supervisor to comment on specific matters. The supervisor leaves the examination room with the candidate and is not entitled to participate in any process of decision by the examiners. Students should be consulted by the Postgraduate Director to see if they have any objections to the supervisor being present at the oral examination. If they lodge an objection to a supervisor's presence then the supervisor should not attend.

Students may volunteer names of possible examiners, and should inform the principal supervisor if any special problems are likely to arise if particular examiners are appointed. Any comments the student may offer will be taken into account in choosing the examiners. However, students have no right to play any part in the eventual recommendation on the nomination of examiners, and therefore have no right to veto any particular appointment. Students should be advised of their examiners at the earliest opportunity. No external examiner may be appointed who has been a member of staff or a student of the University at any time during the previous three years.

The Postgraduate Director must either make all the necessary arrangements for the oral examination or must clearly delegate this responsibility to the internal examiner or the non-examining chair (where appointed), one of whom should chair the meeting of the examiners. These arrangements, including the date and place of the oral examination, the chairing of it, and the names of all those participating in it, must be provided, in advance and with due notice, to all those who are to be present at the oral examination (including all examiners, the student and any observer).

Postgraduate Directors must ensure that training is made available to inexperienced internal examiners and that the internal examiner is aware of his/her duties in the examination process and is fully conversant with the University's regulations and, in particular, with the range of recommendations available to the examiners after the oral examination.

The criteria for assessment of research theses, the procedure governing the examination and the recommendations open to examiners are described in the regulations and in the examiners' report forms. The examiners are asked specifically to assess the thesis in terms of the grounds for the award of degree set out in Regulations which students should consult for information. The purpose of the examination is to allow the examiners to establish that the thesis is satisfactory in the following regards:

it is an original work making a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study; it contains material worthy of publication; it shows adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature; it shows the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the candidate's work and that of other scholars in the same general field; it contains material which presents a unified body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of three years' postgraduate study and research; it is satisfactory in its literary presentation, gives full and adequate references; and it has a coherent structure understandable to a scholar in the same general field with regard to intentions, background, methods and conclusions.

Questions on any of the above aspects may be amongst those raised in the oral examination. The oral examination may be used to establish a candidate's general knowledge of the field of his or her research, to establish the extent of any collaboration to ascertain that the candidate can work independently and lead the work of others, and to confirm that the work is indeed the candidate's own. Candidates are encouraged to publish their work, and provision is made for articles and papers to be bound in the thesis. Whilst recognising teamwork and the substantial benefits of early publication it must always be possible to track the individual work of the candidate. Examiners must be able to evaluate the candidate's *role* in the work, the *process* of the experimentation and the resulting *understanding* of the science involved. The degree cannot be awarded for what is in essence a compendium of jointly authored articles with no indication of the candidate's original contribution.

The oral examination is an extremely important part of the assessment and must be held in all but the most exceptional circumstances; such a rare recommendation is subject to approval by the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee. The absence of the candidate from the UK is not an acceptable reason for waiving the oral examination; such students must therefore be prepared to return to the UK for the examination. However, the oral need not be held in the UK if this is convenient for all the examiners and the candidate and when appropriate arrangements can be made, e.g. when attending the same conference overseas. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to conduct the oral examination by video link. Separate guidelines are available from College Postgraduate Studies Committees.

The examiners may tell the candidate what their views are at the end of or after the oral but they must make clear that their view is a recommendation to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee and not a final decision. The Committee has the power to modify or, exceptionally, to overturn the examiners' recommendation.

The principal supervisor's role does not necessarily end after the examination. If there are minor revisions to be made to the thesis, these will be conveyed to the candidate and to the supervisor who should then confirm with the candidate the revisions to be made. The examiners' joint report will be made available to the candidate and his/her supervisor for further guidance on the general quality of the thesis and level of the candidate's knowledge.

The revised thesis is then examined by the internal examiner(s) and also by the external examiner if he or she so wishes.

Where the thesis is more seriously flawed, the examiners may recommend resubmission for the same degree after a further period of study under supervision. The thesis will normally be re-examined by the original examiners, and a second oral examination will normally be held. Alternatively, the examiners may recommend resubmission of a PhD thesis for MPhil, usually after further study, but occasionally without further study and with little or no modification being required.

A candidate is permitted one opportunity to resubmit the thesis. If resubmission is required, the candidate will be given a clear written statement prepared by the examiners of the aspects which require revision. The resubmitted thesis may be judged only against this written statement. No new criticisms of other material in, or aspects of, the thesis can be introduced at a later stage. The written statement of the aspects of the thesis which require revision must be approved by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee and cannot subsequently be altered without the agreement of that Committee. The supervisor should offer guidance to the candidate as to what

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steps may be taken to meet the concerns expressed by the examiners and should offer further supervision as appropriate.

When a thesis is rejected or a PhD thesis is referred for MPhil, the candidate will be given, on request, a statement of the reasons why the thesis has not been accepted.

5.12 Final Submission of Thesis

At the end of the examination process all successful PhD and MPhil candidates are required to submit the final version of their thesis to the University. Candidates who began study on or after 1st September 2005 are obliged to submit their final version in electronic form in addition to one hardbound copy.

Candidates should therefore hand in the following to their College Postgraduate Office:

1. one hardbound version of the thesis conforming to the Regulatory Standards for the Format and Binding of Theses and Portfolios of Musical Compositions (see section 3 of the Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations which are available at: <http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/exam.htm>)
2. one completed 'Access to Thesis' form¹
3. any supplementary data required for assessment. Datasets should be supported by good accompanying documentation which is appropriate to the subject discipline. Research councils often provide specialist advice and support in this area, for example the ESDS advice on documenting data².
4. an electronic version on CD, including:
 - a PDF version (for uploading to the Edinburgh Research Archive)
 - the original word processor files (where possible) for digital preservation purposes
 - a completed thesis CD cover sleeve¹ on which should be noted whether or not the candidate wishes to take up the option of restricting access to the electronic version of the thesis for a limited one year period.

Although PhD and MPhil candidates who began their studies before 1 September 2005 are not required to submit their thesis electronically they are free to choose this option and indeed, are encouraged to do so. If they choose not to submit a copy electronically, then two hard bound copies of the thesis must be submitted to the College Office. Again these hardbound versions of the thesis must conform to the Regulatory Standards for the Format and Binding of Theses and Portfolios of Musical Compositions (see section 3 of the Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations which are available at: <http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/exam.htm>).

It is highly recommended that candidates discuss with their primary supervisor the implications of publishing the thesis online in ERA. If the thesis contains confidential or sensitive data it may not be appropriate to make the full text freely available online. Similarly if there is the intention to publish the whole, or extracts from, the thesis you may want to restrict access to the electronic version.

Access to the electronic version of your thesis can be automatically restricted by ticking the box on the CD cover sleeve. However, should the candidate wish the electronic embargo to be longer

¹ The 'Access to Thesis' form and CD cover sleeve can be downloaded from <http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/AcAffairs/pginfo/pgresearch.htm>

² Documenting data for the Economic and Social Data Service <http://www.esds.ac.uk/aandp/create/research.asp>

than one year then this must be negotiated with the ERA administrators. For further details on the Edinburgh Research Archive (ERA) please see <http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/> or contact the administrators at era.admin@ed.ac.uk.

6. *Resolving problems*

6.1 *Difficulties in the supervisor/student relationship*

The relationship between student and supervisor is one of the most important relationships the student will experience. Both student and supervisor should contribute responsibly to this relationship by relying on common courtesy, punctuality, conscientious performance and mutual respect.

The student should feel free to bring any problems, including those of a social or medical nature, to the attention of the supervisor(s) especially if the problem is interfering with his or her work. If for any reason students feel unable to confide in their supervisors they should approach the Postgraduate Adviser in their subject area, the School's Postgraduate Director or, in extreme cases, the Secretary or Convener of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. All staff will treat such approaches with complete confidentiality. Students should not live with a problem and expect the supervisor(s) to notice when something is wrong.

If any difficulty has arisen over a decision of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee and the student continues to feel aggrieved after consulting the Convener or Secretary, there is the possibility of appeal to the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee. The Student Counselling Service or The Advice Place can also be approached at any stage to offer independent guidance and advice.

One of the most important functions of the supervisor is to provide constructive criticism. When a student is making inadequate progress an over-friendly and uncritical attitude may delay conflict but it will not ultimately prevent it. Open and frank discussion from the outset can reduce conflict or prevent it arising. Supervisors may also find it helpful to keep a log book of their discussions with all their research students. A supervisor who believes that progress has been consistently unsatisfactory should notify this view in writing to the student after discussing the problem with him or her. Unsatisfactory progress must also be reported in annual reports.

Occasionally the relationship between the student and supervisor(s) may break down. In these circumstances outside help may be needed to resolve the difficulties. The principal supervisor has the responsibility to attempt to resolve conflicts which may arise between the student and other supervisors. Supervisors should feel able initially to consult the Postgraduate Adviser in their subject area or the Postgraduate Director. In extreme cases, the Convener or Secretary of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee should be consulted.

6.2 *Personal harassment*

The University has adopted a policy of providing equal opportunities for its students and staff. One aspect of this is the intention to prevent, as far as possible, the harassment of one person by another. To this end, the University has adopted a *Code of Practice on Personal Harassment*, which is widely available from academic and administrative offices and the Edinburgh University Students' Association. Given the necessarily close working relationship between a supervisor and a research student which, by its nature, normally extends over several years, both supervisor and

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student have a special responsibility to observe the obligations recommended by this Code. Trust, confidence and fairness are essential elements in this relationship.

The concept of personal harassment extends beyond matters of sexual harassment as such, to include any behaviour unwelcome by the recipient on grounds such as gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. Harassment can occur in either direction between staff and students, and in either direction between men and women. Harassment is particularly unacceptable where the harasser occupies a position of power or authority - e.g. in the role of supervisor, Postgraduate Director, teacher, examiner or administrator, and who is thus able to affect the mark, grade, qualification, employment or career of the person harassed. *The Code of Practice on Personal Harassment* contains advice both on seeking informal assistance in such cases, and on the procedures for making a formal complaint.

The codes of practice dealing with personal harassment are available at:

<http://www.humanresources.ed.ac.uk/equality/HARASS/STUD.HTM>

6.3 *Complaints*

The University has established codes of practice regarding complaints which a student might have about some aspect of his or her dealings with the University.

The procedures were drawn up with the aim, where possible, of resolving complaints informally between those individuals who are most concerned. If it is not possible to resolve the problem informally, then a student may invoke the formal complaints procedures.

Students wishing to make a complaint are encouraged to do so as soon as the problem arises.

General advice to a student who is considering making a complaint is available from the Edinburgh University Students' Association. Full details of both the informal and formal complaints procedures are available from:

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Complaints/index.htm>

6.4 *Discontinuation*

A special procedure applies when a candidate already registered for the PhD, MPhil, Masters by Research or a professional doctorate is to have his or her registration discontinued. A supervisor recommending discontinuation must place the facts before the Head of School, or their nominee (normally the Postgraduate Director), who is then responsible for notifying the student that discontinuation has been recommended. In the event that the Head of School (or his/her nominee) does not agree with the supervisor's recommendation for discontinuation they must ensure that an appropriate framework is in place to allow the candidate to continue with their studies, including the provision of any conditions or targets/deadlines which the candidate must fulfil.

The decision to discontinue is taken, after study of all the facts, by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee on the recommendation of the Head of School or his/her nominee. The student must have an opportunity to submit his or her views to the College Committee before the decision is taken. Any appeal against a decision by a College Committee to discontinue the registration of a student is heard by the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee.

7. *Appeals*

For research students (excluding those Masters by Research students whose programmes involve taught course study and which thus have their own Boards of Examiners) the Board of Examiners is the College Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Appeals against the decisions of a Board of Examiners will be dealt with through the formal University Postgraduate Appeals Procedure and its designated University Appeals Committee structure.

A candidate has the right to appeal against the results of an examination.

In making an appeal factors which may adversely affect a candidate's performance in an examination³, such as personal illness or the illness of a close relative or partner immediately before or during the examination, or in the case of postgraduate students their supervision, must be drawn to the attention of the examiners in writing by the student as soon as possible and, in any event, before the meeting of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee.

The formal grounds under which a postgraduate appeal may be considered are:

- a. Substantial information directly relevant to the quality of performance in the examination that for good reason was not available to the examiners when their decision was taken. Ignorance of the requirement to report timeously factors which may have adversely affected a candidate's performance, or failure to report such factors on the basis that the candidate did not anticipate an unsatisfactory result in the examination, can never by themselves constitute good reason; *or*
- b. Alleged irregular procedure or improper conduct of the examination. For this purpose "conduct of an examination" includes conduct of a meeting of the Board of Examiners; and/or
- c. Evidence of prejudice or lack of due diligence in the examination on the part of any examiners.

Under (a), it is emphasised that the information withheld from the Committee must be of a substantial nature and the reason for it being withheld must also be a good one. Any student who is aware of the existence of a substantial factor likely to have seriously affected his or her academic performance must communicate this information to the Secretary to the College Postgraduate Studies Committee before the meeting of the Committee, so that it can be taken into account by the members of the Committee as a potentially mitigating factor in reaching their decision. Under (b), the 'examination' is held to include all aspects of the examination process, including the process of examination, and the ratification by the College Postgraduate Studies Committee of the recommendation. It is not normally a function of the appeals process to reconsider the validity of a decision by the Committee on matters of academic quality as such.

³ 'Examination' is understood to include any written, practical or oral examination, continuously assessed coursework or dissertation which counts towards the final assessment.

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

In any appeal, a student will be deemed to have read every part of this *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students*, and the relevant sections of the Postgraduate Research degree Appeal Regulations.

Appellants must specify the grounds on which they believe their appeals should be considered. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Secretary to the University within six weeks of the results being made available to the candidate. Only in exceptional circumstances will an appeal be considered if submitted outwith this period.

An appeal may place the supervisor in a difficult or uncertain situation, especially if the appellant alleges inadequate supervision. Nevertheless the supervisor's pastoral role is not obviated by the lodging of an appeal. The supervisor must decide, after taking appropriate advice, whether to assist the student in formulating the case for appeal. If a full hearing of the appeal takes place, the principal supervisor's written comments will normally be requested in advance, and he or she will usually be asked to give evidence at the appeal hearing.

Further guidance on appeals procedures can be obtained from College Offices and from the Secretary to the Senatus Postgraduate Studies Committee. General advice to a student considering an appeal is available from the Edinburgh University Students' Association.

8. *Plagiarism and Cheating*

Plagiarism and cheating are offences against University discipline. The full text of the University's regulation on plagiarism and cheating can be found on the University's web site at: www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/exam.htm

Specific guidance on plagiarism for research students and supervisors may be found at the following:-

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Plagiarism/Intro.htm>

9. *Edinburgh University Students' Association*

Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) is the body which represents students at the University and which provides a number of valuable services and support mechanisms which are confidential and independent of the University.

If you have been experiencing specific difficulties during your studies and you are not sure how to address these issues, or you have not been able to resolve these issues to your satisfaction, you can contact the EUSA Advice Place where the experienced staff will be able to advise you on university procedures, practices and ways of resolving difficulties.

If you wish to raise specific policy or school issues you can do this via your school postgraduate representative. For details as to who your representative is please contact your School Postgraduate Director or EUSA via Marion Matheson, one of the permanent EUSA staff. EUSA sabbatical officers also represent students on many University committees.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work, etc Act places upon the University a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all employees and students whilst at work, and of all visitors to University premises. The University Health and Safety Policy contains the University Court's Health and Safety Policy statement and advice on general precautions as well as on precautions with particular hazards. The successful implementation of the University Policy requires the full support and active co-operation of all employees and students. The Policy also contains a summary of the scheme of enforcement of the Act, including the fact that the Health and Safety Executive can bring criminal proceedings against the University or any individual for a breach of any duty under the Act, or its attendant Regulations.

With regard to the safety of postgraduate students the Health and Safety Policy advises that academic staff who supervise experimental work carried out by postgraduate students are required to give careful attention to the health and safety of those under their supervision. This applies not only to work on University premises but also in supervised fieldwork and to University work carried out elsewhere either in the UK or abroad. To fulfil its function, the degree of supervision must have reasonable regard to the level of training and expertise of the staff or students being supervised.

During the absence of the principal supervisor, a named person should be available to ensure that established health and safety procedures are maintained.

The University has a duty to ensure that postgraduate students do not create unsafe conditions by unauthorised initiatives and that supervision must be adequate to meet this requirement. Accordingly, prior to the commencement of any hazardous work or activity, the supervisor should provide, obtain or agree to appropriate procedures which would obviate foreseeable dangers and thereafter should keep in regular touch with the student's work. This process of preparatory and ongoing risk assessment and avoidance is necessary for ensuring that any such research work can proceed safely and without risks to health, whatever type of hazard may be involved.

If the work activity in question involves the use of substances or biological agents hazardous to health or of hazardous equipment, an agreed formal written risk assessment must be in place, before the work can commence, in order to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations, respectively. Activities involving genetically modified organisms must comply specifically with the Genetically Modified Organisms Regulations. Supervisors must keep themselves informed of the University's health and safety requirements and School health and safety procedures, and of changes in these, and must ensure that the student does the same.

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

The University Health and Safety Policy is published in nine separate parts, each of which relates to specific aspects of University work. It is the duty of all employees and students to observe those parts of the Health and Safety Policy that are relevant to their own work, and to take account of other health and safety guidance material.

The Keynote Guide:	Health and Safety Policy
Part one:	Framework
Part two:	General precautions
Part three:	Electrical equipment
Part four:	Mechanical equipment
Part five:	Chemical laboratories
Part six:	Biological laboratories
Part seven: one:	Radiation protection: Ionising radiations
Part seven: two:	Radiation protection: Non-ionising radiations
Part seven: three:	Radiation protection: Laser equipment
Part eight:	Fieldwork and outdoor activities

The complete University Health and Safety Policy is now only available in electronic form, at <http://www.safety.ed.ac.uk/>

Any questions or problems about matters of health and safety should be taken up with the School Safety Adviser. The Director of Health and Safety, the University Radiation Protection Adviser, and the Occupational Health Adviser are also available to help. They can advise on the standards prevailing in this and other universities and, when relevant, in other fields of employment. The standards of health and safety in the University's research laboratories should not be inferior to those in good commercial or other professional practice.

Data Protection Act

Background

The University must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Act concerns the 'processing' of personal data. Personal data is information which relates to identifiable living individuals which is either processed automatically (for example on a computer), or filed within a 'relevant filing system'. From 1 January 2005 the Act will cover *all* information about living individuals regardless of how it is stored. The definition of 'processing' is very wide. It includes collection, consultation, disclosure and deletion of information; indeed it is hard to think of an activity using information about living individuals which would not fall within the Act's definition of 'processing'.

When processing personal data the University must comply with eight principles set out in the Act, and it must notify the Information Commissioner of all the purposes for which it processes personal data. The notification covers all personal data processed for University purposes whether stored on University equipment or privately.

Responsibilities of staff

All staff are responsible, with the guidance of the University's Data Protection Officer, for fulfilling the University's obligations under the terms of the Act when using personal data for University purposes. Staff must ensure that the holding, use and disclosure of any personal data for which they are responsible is in accordance with the University's notification and that the requirements of the Act are observed. For further information please refer to the University's Data Protection Policy, which can be found at:

<http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/>

Students

Academic and academic-related staff are responsible for the conduct in these matters of the students whom they supervise. The University has adopted the following policy governing use of personal data by students:

- a. A student should only use personal data for a University-related purpose with the knowledge and express consent of the Programme Director or dissertation supervisor.
- b. The use of personal data by students for University purposes should be limited to the minimum consistent with the achievement of academic objectives. Wherever possible data should be de-personalised by removing not just names, but all information that would enable individuals to be identified.

Use of personal data by students is subject to the regulations set out below. The University's policy is based on the principle that students must only use personal data under the guidance of a member of staff. A breach of these regulations is an offence against University discipline.

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

1. Students must not construct or maintain files of personal data for use in connection with their academic studies/research without the express authority of the Programme Director or dissertation supervisor.
2. When giving such authority, the member of staff shall make the student aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act and of the appropriate level of security arrangements required for the particular set of personal data.
3. Students must abide by the data protection principles and follow the instructions of the University in relation to any uses of personal data for University purposes.

Specific data protection guidance for student research projects is available at: http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DP_Students/DPGuidanceForStudentResearchProjects.htm

Further information

Further advice is available from the University's Data Protection Officer, telephone 6514099 or email recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk.

Useful references

Brown, G. and Atkins, M. (1988). 'Effective Research and Project Supervision'. Chapter 6 in *Effective Teaching in Higher Education*, 115-49. London: Routledge.

Brown, G. (1993). 'Examining Theses and Dissertations'. Part 4 in Partington, Brown and Gordon, *Handbook for External Examiners in Higher Education*, 67-80. Sheffield: Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals.

Cryer, P. (1997). *Handling Common Dilemmas in Supervision*. Issues in Postgraduate Supervision, Teaching and Management Series, no. 2. London: Society for Research into Higher Education.

CVCP. (1992). *A Code of Practice for the Management of Higher Degrees Undertaken by Overseas Students*. London: Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Delamont, S., Atkinson, P. and Parry, O. (1997). *Supervising the PhD: A Guide to Success*. London: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

HEFCE, CVCP, SCOP. (1996). *Review of Postgraduate Education (The Harris Report). Volume 1, The Report; Volume 2, The Evidence*. Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Moses, I. (1985). *Supervising Postgraduates*. Herdsa Green Guide no. 7. Kensington, New South Wales: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

NPC. (1992). *Guidelines on Codes of Practice for Postgraduate Research*. National Postgraduate Committee (<http://www.npc.org.uk/>).

Okorocho, E. (1997). *Supervising International Research Students*. Issues in Postgraduate Supervision, Teaching and Management Series, no. 1. London: Society for Research into Higher Education.

QAA. (2004). *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Postgraduate Research Programmes*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

SERC. (1992). *Research Student and Supervisor: An Approach to Good Supervisory Practice*. Swindon: Science and Engineering Research Council.

UKCGE. (1996). *Quality and Standards of Postgraduate Research Degrees*. London: UK Council for Graduate Education.

Zuber-Skerritt, O. and Ryan, Y. eds. (1994). *Quality in Postgraduate Education*. London: Kogan Page.

University Codes of Practice and Regulations

Covering the use of Computing Facilities

<http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/EUCS/regs.html>

How to make a complaint

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Complaints/index.htm>

Code of Student Discipline

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/DIS.HTM>

Guidelines on Disclosure of Information about Students

<http://www.registry.ed.ac.uk/Registry/DisclosureGuidelines.htm>

Examination regulations

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/exam.htm>

Dealing with Personal Harassment

<http://www.humanresources.ed.ac.uk/equality/HARASS/STUD.HTM>

Guidelines for Colleges on the avoidance of plagiarism

Plagiarism guidelines

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Plagiarism/Intro.htm>

Library Regulations

<http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/libregs02.shtml>

Data Protection - Use of Personal Data by Students

http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/dp_student_statement.htm

University Policy on Smoking

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/smoking.htm>

Code of Practice on the Abuse of Alcohol by Students

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/alcohol.htm>

Code of Practice on the Abuse of Drugs by Students

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/drugs.htm>

Code of Practice on Student Mental Health

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/mhealth.htm>

University of Edinburgh publications:

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

<http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/>

The Postgraduate Research Degree Assessment Regulations

<http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/exam.htm>

The University of Edinburgh Code of Research Practice

<http://www.research-innovation.ed.ac.uk/information/goodresearchpractice.pdf>

The University of Edinburgh Disability Statement

<http://www.disability-office.ed.ac.uk/statement/>

The University of Edinburgh Student Information Pages

<http://www.registry.ed.ac.uk/Student/>

Edinburgh University Students' Association, Postgraduate Survival Guide

The University of Edinburgh International Office Pre-Arrival Guide

<http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/prearrival/index.html>

Edinburgh University Students' Association, International Student Post-Arrival Guide

Edinburgh University Students' Association, Guide to Members' Services

Edinburgh University Students' Association, Accommodation Guide

Welfare and other useful information is available from The Advice Place section of EUSA's web site: <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk>

The University of Edinburgh's web pages

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/>

Sources of additional advice and information:

The Advice Place:

Potterrow, Bristo Square	650 9225
King's Buildings House	650 5822
Paterson's Land, Holyrood Campus	651 6060
http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/	

College Offices:

College of Humanities & Social Science, David Hume Tower, George Square	650 4086
http://www.hss.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/index.htm	

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, the Chancellor's Building, 49 Little France Crescent	0131 242 6460
http://www.mvm.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/index.htm	

College of Science and Engineering, Weir Building, King's Buildings	650 5766
http://www.scieng.ed.ac.uk/Students/index.asp	

Academic Affairs, Policy and Planning, Old College, South Bridge	650 2158/60
http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/AcAffairs/index.htm	

Edinburgh University Students' Association, Bristo Square	650 2656
http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/	

Student Counselling Service:

31 Buccleuch Place	650 4170
Weir Building King's Buildings	650 5773
Paterson's Land, Moray House	551 6200
http://www.student-counselling.ed.ac.uk/	

Careers Service:

33 Buccleuch Place	650 4670
Weir Building, King's Buildings	650 5773
http://www.careers.ed.ac.uk/	

University Health Service, Richard Verney Building, 6 Bristo Square	650 2777
http://www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/	

Chaplaincy Centre, 1 Bristo Square	650 2595
http://www.chaplaincy.ed.ac.uk/	

International Office, 57 George Square	650 4296/7
http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/	

Student Accommodation Service, Pollock Halls of Residence	667 1971
http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/	

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

Disability Co-ordinator, 6-8 South College Street http://www.disability-office.ed.ac.uk/	650 6828 (voice) 650 9371 (text)
Health and Safety Department, 9-16 Chambers Street http://www.safety.ed.ac.uk/	651 4225
Data Protection Office http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/	651 4099
Institute for Applied Language Studies http://www.ials.ed.ac.uk/	650 6200

