

REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC: RESEARCH DEGREES HANDBOOK 2022-2023
(Version 1 September 2022)

Please note that items in blue print are copied from the Manchester Metropolitan University Regulations. Items in black print are RNCM-specific variants negotiated with Manchester Metropolitan University.

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This document should be read in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University's [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees – Doctor of Philosophy](#).

Key contacts

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General information about RNCM's postgraduate research degrees

RNCM does not yet have research degree awarding powers. Manchester Metropolitan University validates the RNCM's research degrees programme. RNCM is therefore a Collaborative Partner of MMU **so far as the RNCM research degrees programme is concerned**. Manchester Met's [Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees Doctor of Philosophy \(PhD\)](#) therefore apply to the RNCM's research degrees programme. This Handbook provides clarifications of the Regulations, where necessary, for students at RNCM and their supervisory teams.

The RNCM's postgraduate research degrees occupy the final step in a progressive series of programmes that together make up the RNCM Graduate School. They offer an opportunity to conduct high-level research within the dynamic, creative, and supportive environment of an internationally recognised conservatoire. Excellence in the fields of performance and composition continues to be underpinned and enhanced by research of the highest quality in music education, music psychology and musicology as well as performance and composition, which, in recent years, has resulted in academic monographs, international critical editions, edited volumes, peer-reviewed journal articles, CDs, and a variety of Practice-as-Research (<http://www.rncm.ac.uk/research/>).

Introduction

These regulations outline the rules governing the formal stages of postgraduate research at the University: registration, progression and assessment.

These regulations are supported by a suite of policy and guidance documents that provide additional details for staff and students to support the practical implementation of the regulations.

Where the regulations state that approval must be sought by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), this approval may be delegated to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (Faculty RDC), Head of Faculty RDC or Graduate School, as outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

All of the other key documents are available on the Graduate School website at <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research-study/phd/research-regulations-and-guidance>.

General principles

1.1 The rules and procedures relating to postgraduate research degrees, including written and oral examinations, are set out in this document. These regulations provide mechanisms to ensure that students are assessed fairly and objectively, while maintaining the University's high academic standards. Ignorance of these rules and assessment requirements will not constitute a defence in any disciplinary procedures. Queries about the regulations should be directed to the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Team in the first instance.

1.2 Assessment at Manchester Metropolitan University is an integral part of the research degree. It is the principal instrument with which we recognise and reward student achievement and maintain academic standards.

1.3 The University regulations on assessment support this principle and they aim to make the processes inclusive, fair, consistent and clear to both staff and students. The regulations also reflect the expectation and relevant indicators of the [Quality Code for Higher Education](#).

1.4 These regulations and their underlying principles apply to postgraduate research degrees provision approved by the University and delivered by the University or by its collaborative partners leading to awards or academic credit of the University. They apply to all work that formally contributes to the award of the University, at whatever point in a programme the work is undertaken.

1.5 Any exemption or variation from these regulations shall be exceptional and must be approved in advance by the RDC as set out in the Terms of Reference.

1.6 These regulations shall be applied consistently to ensure equity of treatment of students regardless of their discipline or their mode of study.

1.7 The latest version of the regulations is applied to all current students for any given academic year, irrespective of their year of enrolment.

1.8 These regulations have undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), in accordance with our public sector equality duties.

Admission

Admission to the Degree

2.1 Candidates apply to study at the University via the online university admission system.

2.2 Applicants must meet the entry requirements set by the University, which are available on the [Applying for Postgraduate Research Courses](#) webpages. An offer will only be made upon confirmation from the admitting Faculty that there is appropriate supervision and resources available to support the proposed research.

Prospective PhD students (PGRs) currently apply to study at RNCM by submitting an application form to pgr@rncm.ac.uk.

Applicants must meet the minimum [entry requirements](#), available on the [Research Degrees Programmes](#) pages of the RNCM website.

Applicants are normally required to hold master's qualifications in relevant subjects, having undertaken research training and produced a dissertation and/or portfolio of compositions or performances. They will also be considered for a place on the RNCM-Man Met research degree programme if they expect their master's qualification to be awarded within the first three months after they have enrolled. All enrolments are expected to take place in September.

Eligible applicants may wish to apply for funding from the AHRC via the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDDTP). More information as to the application process and deadlines can be found at <https://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/>.

Applicants must have sufficient command of the English language to complete their study and to prepare and defend a thesis in English.

The minimum requirement for applicants to the **music education, music psychology and musicology** pathways is an **average IELTS score of 7.0 including a minimum of 7.0 for writing and no less than 6.0 in any of the other three components** (listening, writing and speaking), or equivalent scores on a test approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) taken no more than 12 months before the application was made.

The minimum requirement for applicants to the **composition and performance** pathways is an **average IELTS score of 7.0 with no less than 6.0 in any of the four components**, or equivalent scores on a test approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) taken no more than 12 months before the application was made.

For further information please see

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt> (updated 3 September 2021). If offers to applicants are made conditional on the results of language tests, these *must be passed prior to enrolment*.

The RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) checks scans of qualifications and certificates before applicants pay their fees and enrol at RNCM. The current fees are published on the RNCM website.

RNCM is committed to offering the highest quality supervision and expects its PGRs' research to be congruent with established or developing research within the College. To this end, prospective applicants are advised to identify a prospective primary supervisor (PPS; the research interests of staff are published on the RNCM website and in the [Guidelines for Applicants](#)) and work with them on the research proposal that will accompany their

formal application. Performers and composers should approach the appropriate Head of School for advice. The Programme Leader for Research Degrees, Professor Jane Ginsborg (pgr@rncm.ac.uk), can provide further guidance if necessary.

Applicants are required to nominate their chosen pathway (Composition, Music Education, Music Psychology, Performance, or Musicology) and submit an appropriate research proposal of 1500 words including tables, figure and table captions, and bibliography or references. This is congruent with the current word limits for AHRC funding proposals through the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (www.nwcdtp.ac.uk). The content and structure of research proposals for each pathway are specified in the [Guidelines for Applicants](#). Applicants for PhD in composition must also submit scores of three examples of their recent compositions, with high-quality audio-recordings where available, and applicants for PhD in performance must submit high-quality audio-visual recordings of their performances. In both cases links to online recordings are acceptable.

Applicants must nominate two referees. One can be the prospective primary supervisor (PPS) or secondary supervisor but at least one must be independent of the application.

Applications, including proposals (and portfolios, for Composition and Performance), are approved for review by the appropriate pathway leader or their nominee. Applications are reviewed by at least two suitably qualified members of staff including the PPS and a reviewer independent of the application. Reviews include one of three recommendations: i) call for interview, ii) ask for application to be revised (on one occasion only) and iii) do not call for interview.

Applicants are called to interview on the basis of the reviews; feedback and further advice on revised and unsuccessful applications are provided by the pathway leader. Only one revised application will be considered.

Interviews (and auditions, for Performance), normally lasting about 45 minutes, are conducted by a panel comprising at least two suitably qualified members of staff, ideally including those who reviewed the application, and not excluding the potential primary supervisor. The Head of School of Composition or his nominee will interview all applicants for PhD in composition. Without exception, the offer of a place on the programme will be made only after the applicant has been interviewed.

The offer of a place on the programme will be made only after the applicant has been interviewed. All offers are subject to the availability of a Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

3 Transferring PhD between institutions

Transferring into Manchester Metropolitan University from another institution

3.1 Applicants may transfer into Manchester Metropolitan University from another institution to complete their studies.

3.2 Each case will be considered on its merits and a maximum reduction of 12 months of study will be available for full-time students (24 months for part-time students).

3.3 In order for a student to be eligible for an award of the Manchester Metropolitan University, they must complete a minimum of 50% of their registration period at Manchester Met.

3.4 Applicants will be required to provide documentary evidence from their previous institution of agreement to the transfer, in line with the regulations for the previous institution (if available). This documentation should take the form of a report from the original institution to confirm the dates of registration, confirm support for the transfer, academic progress and assessment information, supervisory team comments on the work completed, and a statement from the student to confirm the reasons for moving institution.

Transferring from Manchester Metropolitan University to another institution

3.5 Applicants may transfer from Manchester Metropolitan University to another institution to complete their studies.

3.6 Where this applies, the University will provide documentation to confirm the dates of the student's registration, academic progress and assessment information and comments on the work completed to the new institution.

3.7 In all cases, the transfers are subject to the required documentations being provided, agreement of the student, supervisory team and the two institutions involved, and the approval of RDC.

4 Enrolment

4.1 Students must enrol with the University prior to starting their research degree. If a student does not enrol within four weeks of the start date in their offer letter, they will be required to withdraw from the University or defer their enrolment to the next enrolment intake.

Successful applicants must enrol at RNCM prior to starting their research degree. When they have done so, the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) arranges for them to be enrolled at Man Met.

4.2 Students are required to renew their enrolment annually. If a student does not re-enrol, their registration shall lapse, they shall no longer be insured at the University, and they will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies. A student whose registration has lapsed may be considered for re-admission to the same programme provided that the lapse in registration was not a consequence of academic failure and is within one calendar month from the re-enrolment start date.

4.3 Enrolment on time is the expected standard. If exceptional circumstances prevent timely enrolment or re-enrolment, backdating of that enrolment may be possible at the discretion of the RDC.

PGRs must re-enrol at RNCM each August, or by mid-January for those who enrolled – exceptionally – for the first time in January,¹ until the degree has been conferred.

5 Award and Registration Information

Criteria for Awarding research degrees

5.1 Manchester Metropolitan University assures its academic standards for research degrees through engagement with external reference points established by the [Quality Assurance Agency Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#) and through the [Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which clearly outlines what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of them.

5.2 The standards of the University's awards are regulated through the [Regulations for the Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) and the [Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees Doctor of Philosophy](#).

Awards of the University

5.3 The awards that the University offers for postgraduate research study are detailed in the [Regulations for the Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#).

5.4 Information relating to aegrotat and posthumous awards are outlined in the document.

The following programmes are offered at RNCM in i) composition, ii) music psychology, iii) music education, iv) musicology, and v) performance:

- PhD
- PhD by published work.

6 PhD Period of Student Registration

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Minimum period of registration | Standard period of registration | Maximum period of registration |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

¹ Induction and enrolment normally take place mid-September.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 24 months (full-time) 48 months (part-time) | 36 months (full-time) 72 months (part-time) | 48 months (full-time) 84 months (part-time) |
|--|--|--|

- 6.1 The standard length of supervised study for a PhD is 36 months (full-time) / 72 months (part-time).
- 6.2 Students can apply to the RDC for permission to submit before this in line with the minimum period of registration.
- 6.3 Students will be eligible to enter a writing up period immediately after the end of the standard registration period, for a maximum of 12 months. The 12-month period is applicable to both full-time and part-time students. See Section “Supervision, Review and Progression/Writing up” for full details.
- 6.4 For all research degrees, the registration period commences on the date indicated in the student’s offer letter. The registration period continues until the degree is awarded, the student reaches their maximum registration period (unless an extension is granted), or the student withdraws from the programme. See also the requirement for students to re-enrol on an annual basis to maintain their registration.
- 6.5 Appropriate fees are payable annually for the duration of the degree and for any resubmission period (if applicable).

7 Supervision, Review and Progression/Writing-Up

Supervision

- 7.1 All research degree students shall be supervised by a supervisory team including a Principal Supervisor, supervisors and, where appropriate, specialist advisor(s).
- 7.2 The aim of supervision at Manchester Met is to:
- Support and develop the student to enable them to complete their studies within the agreed timeframe.
 - Enable the student to develop and effectively provide and receive a critical overview of their work.
 - Provide effective support and prepare the student for their oral examination.
 - Provide a framework in which new supervisors can gain experience alongside those with more experience.
- 7.3 Supervision team criteria, roles and responsibilities of the supervisory team and student, schedule of agreed contact, and the process that a student needs to follow if they are not satisfied with their supervision arrangements, are all detailed in the [Guidance on Postgraduate Research Supervision](#).
- 7.4 Supervisory teams are subject to approval by the RDC.

At Manchester Metropolitan University the Principal Supervisor is normally the student’s primary supervisor. At RNCM, students’ supervisory teams include primary and secondary supervisors who are typically full- and/or part-time members of staff at RNCM, and the Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University who can both liaise with the Faculty Research Degrees Team there and take an active part in supervision. For the purposes of [SkillsForge](#), the portal through which research degrees are managed at Man Met, primary supervisors at RNCM are nominated joint principal supervisors so that they can make applications for changes to supervisory arrangements, for example, and nominate examiners.

Team composition and appointment criteria

All PGRs (other than those registered for [PhD by Published Works](#), who have an Internal Advisor) should be supervised by a supervisory team including a primary supervisor, secondary supervisor and, where appropriate, one or more specialist advisors. The team should not include anyone who has a close personal relationship with the student.

At least one member of the supervisory team should be experienced in and actively engaged in research, with a PhD. At least one member of the team should have supervised one or more PhDs to completion, although if this is not

possible a member of staff at RNCM who has supervised to completion can be appointed as a mentor to the team. Members of the team who do not hold a PhD should have appropriate equivalent experience or professional qualifications or status.

In addition, the approval of the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee should be sought for proposed supervisors to supervise to a higher level than their own qualifications. Supervisors without completions (i.e. conferral of the award of PhD to a PhD student they have supervised), or new to the College, are strongly recommended to follow the [UKGCE Research Supervision Recognition Programme](#) (the cost to be borne by RNCM) and become UKGCE Recognised Research Supervisors; they should also receive mentoring from a more experienced member of the supervisory team. Supervisors and advisors may be external to the College. All new supervisors must attend the researcher supervisors' workshops held annually at RNCM and all more experienced supervisors must attend at least once every three years. All new supervisors must attend the Manchester Metropolitan University Graduate School's development workshop in their first year, and thereafter every three years. Induction sessions for new supervisors are provided by the Programme Leader for Research Degrees on a small-group or one-to-one basis and an induction booklet for new supervisors, including the chairs and members of PGR review panels (see **Formal Progression Milestones**, below), is circulated at the beginning of each academic year.

PGRs, other than those registered for [PhD by Published Works](#), may not act as primary supervisors for other PGRs, but may act as a secondary supervisor or advisor.

The RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee will determine the number of concurrent supervisions permitted for a member of staff acting as a primary or secondary supervisor, to a maximum of six full-time students for primary supervisors. The Committee should ensure that an individual member of staff is able to manage a particular workload and that this does not reach a level where it might disadvantage an individual PGR.

Appointment process

The supervisory team including the Principal Supervisor at Man Met is identified through the admissions process, must be approved by the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Committee at Manchester Metropolitan University and be in place by the time of the Initial Project Review.

Student and supervisor responsibilities

These are set out in the [Guidance on Postgraduate Research Supervision](#). In aiming to fulfil their roles, supervisory teams should be aware of the QAA [Advice on doctoral standards for research students and supervisors](#) (updated on 8 March 2021) and the National and Dublin descriptors set out as Appendix A to this handbook.

Note that Manchester Metropolitan University expects formal meetings to be held by the PGR and primary supervisor at least 10 times a year, regardless of whether the student is full- or part-time, and recorded on [SkillsForge](#). The precise number, length and format of contacts will vary since they depend on many factors, including the stage of the research, type of meeting and type of research project.

Expectations, feedback and academic progress

The whole supervisory team should meet as soon as possible after the PGR has enrolled to establish all parties' expectations, including when and how work will be received by the team for review, and when and how feedback will be given to the PhD student. If such feedback is given outside a formal meeting, it should be recorded on [SkillsForge](#) within the record of the following meeting.

If supervisors have concerns over the PGR's progress, they should consult and follow the [Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress](#).

In keeping with all Graduate School Programmes at RNCM, supervision for PhD students is normally delivered within the context of a 34-week academic year. That part of the year lying outside this 34-week period should be regarded primarily as devoted to private study and preparation for submission.

Formal Progression Milestones

7.5 Formal progression milestones require the student to submit a progress report and attend a review meeting, which consists of the student and a panel of reviewers who are independent of the supervisory team.

7.6 The role of the panel is to assess the progress of the student and produce and submit a written recommendation report to the RDC for review.

7.7 The following recommended outcomes are available to the panel, for subsequent approval by the RDC:

- **Continue.** The student has made sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#), and may continue with their studies.
- **Resubmit.** The student is not currently making sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) to continue with their studies. The student is required to make revisions and amendments to their work and resubmit them for further review. Upon resubmission the outcomes available to the student will be continue, transfer or withdraw.
- **Transfer.** The student has not made sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) and it is recommended that they transfer from the doctoral degree to a lower award.
- **Withdraw.** The student has not made sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) for PhD or a lower award, and it is recommended that the student is withdrawn from the University.

7.8 The format and timescales for the completion of formal milestones are detailed in the [Guidance on Milestones](#).

Please also see the [Milestones Supplementary Information](#).

Note that both full- and part-time PhD students submit their progress reports for the [Initial Project Review](#) three months after enrolment and attend a review meeting shortly thereafter. The submission should include an RNCM [Ethical Clearance](#) form, signed by the PhD student's primary supervisor and the Chair of the RNCM Research Ethics Committee. [Ethical approval](#) should be sought from the RNCM Research Ethics Committee, if appropriate, before the PhD student starts collecting data.

Turnitin is accessed via MyMMU. Navigate to the PGR Hub area of PGR Moodle and it will be found at the "Managing your research degree" tab.

Full-time PhD students undertake their First Formal Annual Progression Review 9-12 months after enrolment, the Second Formal Annual Progression Review 20-24 months after enrolment and their Final Formal Review 30-33 months after enrolment, in preparation for the submission of their thesis or portfolio and critical commentary for examination.

Part-time PhD students undertake Annual Check-ins 9-12 and 33-36 months after enrolment. Their First and Second Progression Reviews take place after 18-24 and 40-48 months, respectively, and their Final Formal Review 60-66 months after enrolment. (There is no Annual Check-in between the Second Progression Review and the Final Formal Review.)

Each student has a Review Panel comprising a Chair and two members of staff at RNCM who are independent of the PhD student's supervisory team. This panel should remain consistent, from the [Initial Project Review](#) to the Final Formal Review. One member of the supervisory team should attend each Review Panel Meeting.

The RNCM PGR conference takes place in May every year, and all PhD students are expected to present their work-in-progress to their peers and members of staff unless they have already submitted their thesis/portfolio.

Transfer of registration to a lower award

7.9 A registered student may request a transfer to a lower award at any time.

7.10 A Principal Supervisor may recommend that a student is transferred to a lower award at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, which will then be managed through the formal progression milestone process or through the [Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress](#) (if the formal progression milestone is not imminent).

7.11 All transfer requests are subject to approval by the RDC.

Supporting Student Progress

7.12 The [Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research](#) may be used to support a student's progress in the following scenarios:

- Where students are not making sufficient progress with their research, or they are failing to maintain contact with their supervisory team, the procedure can be instigated by supervisors at any point during the academic year.
- In the event that the formal progression milestone(s) outcomes deem that insufficient progress has been made to continue, the independent review panel, in consultation with the supervisory team, may recommend that the procedure be instigated.

7.13 The procedure aims to seek a resolution, agreeable to both parties, within an appropriate timescale. However, if insufficient progress continues, or engagement does not improve, it may lead to the withdrawal of the student's registration by the RDC. The student has a right of appeal regarding any progression recommendation via the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

Intention to submit

7.14 Students should register their intention to submit 3 months prior to their planned submission, using the relevant University form.

The RNCM Notice of Intention to Submit form can be found on RNCM Moodle, [here](#). The difference between it and the Manchester Metropolitan University form is that it must be signed by the Programme Leader. The correct form must be completed and submitted to pgr@rncm.ac.uk.

Writing-up Period

7.15 All students registered on a PhD degree are eligible to enter a writing-up period after the end of their period of supervised study, to allow additional time to prepare and write up their thesis in advance of submission.

7.16 A fee will be payable for any writing-up period that is approved by the University. Details of the writing-up fee and other University fees can be found in the Regulations for the Payment of University Fees and other related Financial Information for Postgraduate Research Students.

There is one flat-rate writing-up fee of £350, which applies to home and international students. If a PGR is granted an extension following the write-up period, the extension fee is £350 for up to 12 months. PGRs who receive a "revise and resubmit" outcome following their oral examination will be charged a flat-rate fee of £350 for up to 12 months. This applies to home and international students. The RNCM Application for a Writing-Up Period form can be found on RNCM Moodle, [here](#).

7.17 If students are funded, or hold a visa, they are advised to check if there are any restrictions in advance of applying.

8 Research ethics and academic misconduct

8.1 The University expects research students to maintain the highest level of professional integrity in research practice and publication. Students are accountable to their professional bodies, Manchester Metropolitan University and to the organisations that fund their research. The Manchester Metropolitan University Academic Ethical Framework provides further details.

8.2 Prior to the commencement of any research, students must gain [ethical approval](#) for that work.

PGRs at RNCM, whether their research is practice-based (i.e. in composition or performance) or non-practice-based (music education, music psychology, musicology) must apply for [ethical clearance](#), to be signed off by the PGR's primary supervisor, the Chair of the RNCM Research Ethics Committee, and the Programme Leader for Research Degrees before submitting their progress report to the [Initial Project Review](#).

Before any participants are recruited to studies involving human participation, [ethical approval](#) (not clearance) must be obtained from the RNCM Research Ethics Committee. The requirement to obtain ethical approval applies to

- all researchers who are members of staff, PGRs or students at RNCM
- all external researchers (i.e. independent researchers and those employed by other institutions) wishing to recruit staff, PGRs or students at RNCM as participants in their research, regardless of whether they have obtained ethical approval from another institution.

It is therefore vital that *all* PGRs and their supervisory teams are aware of and adhere to RNCM procedures for obtaining ethical clearance for research that does *not* involve the participation of other people (typically musicological and archival research), and ethical approval for empirical research that *does* involve other people as participants, including composition and performance.

8.3 The Manchester Metropolitan University website on Research Governance provides guidelines for good research practice and links to legal requirements and Manchester Metropolitan University policies and procedures. The [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#) and the [Procedure for Handling Academic Misconduct](#) provide guidance on appropriate behaviour and definitions of misconduct in research.

8.4 The University will implement the [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#) if an allegation of scientific or ethical misconduct is identified. Once this procedure is complete, any necessary recommendations and decisions on penalties will be made through an Assessment Disciplinary Committee as outlined in the [Procedure for Handling Academic Misconduct](#).

PhD students at RNCM should **in addition** be familiar with the [RNCM Good Research Conduct](#) policy, which sets out the RNCM Research Misconduct Procedure.

9 Training and Development

9.1 A programme of skills training and development is a fundamental component of the research degree, as outlined in [The Quality Code, Advice and Guidance Theme: Research Degrees; Guiding principle 4](#), which states that 'Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development'.

9.2 All full-time and part-time research students must attend the appropriate Faculty induction programme and complete the online induction at the start of their registration period.

9.3 Research students are required to engage in training and development to support their development as researchers. Manchester Met is committed to principles contained within the [Concordat to support the career development of researchers](#), including the minimum requirements for professional development time.

9.4 Training and Development opportunities provide personal and professional skills and the skills necessary to attain competence in research methods, wider research integrity and knowledge related to the subject of the thesis.

9.5 Development opportunities and events are available on The Graduate School webpages. Detailed training and development information is provided to all students at induction events and throughout their studies.

Employment of Research Students

9.6 During the student's period of registration, there is a maximum number of hours per week that a full-time research student can be employed and be paid for. Details of the maximum number of hours per week are detailed in the Research Degrees Handbook.

9.7 Students who require a visa and/or students who are funded should also check their eligibility to work with the relevant authority.

Change in Circumstances

Request to Interrupt

10.1 Where a student is prevented from making progress with their research, they may apply, in accordance with the [Guidance on Concessions](#), to interrupt during their period of supervised study. Retrospective applications for interruption will not normally be considered.

10.2 An interruption of studies for a period of up to 6 months at any one time, and for a maximum of 12 months' continually, may be granted.

10.3 The total length of time taken as an interruption will not normally exceed 24 months over the duration of the student's registered period of study.

If, having read the [Guidance on Concessions](#), PGRs at RNCM wish to apply for an interruption, they must make their case, in writing, supported by documentary evidence, and submit it to the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (pgr@rncm.ac.uk). They should then request interviews, face-to-face or via a video conference, with each of the following members of staff in turn, so that the RNCM Interruption of Studies form can be completed:

- Programme Leader for Research Degrees [Course Leader],
- Head of Student Services.

When the [RNCM PhD Interruption of Study](#) form has been completed and signed by both members of staff it can be used as evidence to support an application for interruption of studies to Manchester Metropolitan University via [SkillsForge](#). The Programme Leader will report interruptions of study to the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee when they have been approved.

10.4 The student Pregnancy and Maternity Guidelines ([here](#)) outline the maternity procedures for all students where this applies to an interruption of study.

Where an RNCM PGR has a studentship and is either funded internally or by an external funding body or sponsor, the PGR student must first obtain approval from the funding body to interrupt their studies.

Request for an extension to a deadline or writing-up period

10.5 An application for an extension to the writing-up period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and should be submitted with satisfactory documentary evidence to support the request.

10.6 If the Faculty RDC considers that the extension request is valid, and the application is supported by satisfactory documentary evidence, the Committee may agree to an extension of the deadline date.

10.7 An application for an extension to a formal progression milestone, thesis revisions, or resubmission deadline should be submitted in accordance with the [Guidance on Concessions](#).

If, having read the [Guidance on Concessions](#), PGRs at RNCM wish to apply for an extension, they must make their case, in writing, supported by documentary evidence, and submit it to the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) (pgr@rncm.ac.uk). They should then request interviews, face-to-face or via video conference, with the Programme Leader for Research Degrees, so that the [RNCM PhD Extension of Study](#) form can be completed and used as evidence to support an application for extension of studies to Manchester Metropolitan University (see below). The Programme Leader will report extensions of study to the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee when they have been approved.

Applications for extensions to milestones are not made via SkillsForge but must be made to Manchester Metropolitan University directly using the [Man Met Research Degrees Exceptional Factors Form](#). Where an RNCM PhD student has a studentship and is either funded internally or by an external funding body or sponsor, the PhD

student must first obtain approval from the funding body to extend their studies. **Note that this process is scheduled to change during the academic year 2022-23 but at the time of writing no updated information is available on the Man Met Graduate School website.**

Change in Mode of studies

10.8 A student may apply to the Faculty RDC to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time, or part-time to full-time at any point. Details of the application process are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook ([here](#)).

PGRs at RNCM who wish to transfer from full-time to part-time or vice versa (at the end of the second or fourth part-time year) should do so using an **RNCM Request for Change in Mode of Study (PGR)** on [Moodle](#). Note that for visa reasons this option is not open to overseas PGRs. They must **also** apply to their Faculty at Man Met using the application process referred to in 10.8, above.

10.9 Students who require a visa and/or students who are funded should also check their eligibility to work with the relevant authority.

Change in Programme of studies

10.10 A student may apply to the Faculty RDC to change their approved programme of study if there has been a significant change in the direction of their research in advance of the approval of their second progression review milestone. Details of the application process are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook.

Adjustments for students

10.11 The needs of students with disabilities, including specific learning difficulties, are supported throughout the research degree in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. If a student requires any adjustment to be made this will be implemented with support from colleagues in the Disability Service. Details around student adjustments are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook.

PGRs at RNCM who identify a disability or other learning need that requires modifications to the approved programme will be referred to the RNCM's Learning Support Tutor and, if necessary, will be offered a Personal Learning Plan. The implications of such a plan will be discussed with the PGR and their supervisor(s). The relevant College guidelines may be found [here](#).

Compulsory Suspension

10.12 For reasons of academic or personal misconduct, the University may apply a suspension from attendance at the University for a specified period. A student's registration status throughout this period will be 'Suspended'. The procedure for this can be accessed from the [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#).

10.13 The Finance Service Centre under certain circumstances (e.g. non-payment of fees) can suspend a student's studies. This will occur where the University has had a number of failed attempts to contact the student to reach a resolution. It is the student's responsibility to contact the University to negotiate a payment arrangement.

10.14 Where the above applies, there will be implications to the student's funding provision, access to University facilities, and for international students, implications to their visa and immigration status. It is the student's responsibility to contact the University to confirm what these implications will be.

Withdrawal

10.15 A student may make a request to withdraw from their studies at any time.

10.16 Where the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee requires a registered student to be withdrawn from their studies, this will be managed, as outlined in the Postgraduate Student Withdrawal Policy ([here](#)).

PGRs wishing to withdraw from their programme of studies should apply first to RNCM using the RNCM Notice of Withdrawal form on [Moodle](#).

11 Preparation and Presentation of Thesis

Thesis word limit

11.1 The text of the thesis should not exceed the maximum word limit of 80,000 words (excluding ancillary data such as footnotes, bibliographies, diagrams and references).

11.2 It should be noted that the maximum limit is not intended to be interpreted as a requirement for the length of the thesis and that in certain disciplines the thesis may be shorter. A student can apply to submit a thesis that exceeds the maximum word limit and should seek further advice from their Principal Supervisor.

For RNCM PGRs, the maximum word limit for PhD is 80,000 words (excluding ancillary data). Students who wish to submit a thesis exceeding the maximum word limits should seek advice from their supervisory team at RNCM and their Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

11.3 Students registered to conduct research within a practice-based context may be permitted other variants of assessment methods. This would normally be based on a thesis with a lower word limit of up to 50,000 words, and a practice-based element (for example a live performance, exhibition or calculations and equations). Where this applies, and a student requires alternative examination arrangements, they must inform the Graduate School and Research Degrees Committee in advance of thesis submission.

At RNCM, PhD submissions in **composition** should consist of a substantial portfolio of compositions normally between 90 and 120 minutes in duration and a critical commentary. The portfolio of scores should normally be accompanied by recordings of each work. The critical commentary should normally be between 10,000 and 20,000 words, although this can be negotiated.

PhD students must make scores of all works performed available to both members of the examination panel, so should contact Library staff four weeks in advance of the examination for copies to be obtained and made available. The supervisory team will ensure that submissions in Performance involving live presentation, or that for other reasons require multiple assessment points, will be supported by the early appointment of an external examiner who will be invited to assess the PhD student's performances accordingly.

At RNCM, PhD submissions in **performance** should consist of a series of substantial performances of c.180 minutes total duration, which may be in the form of live presentations or studio recordings and a critical commentary. Live presentations must also be submitted as high-quality audio-visual recordings of their performances (links to online recordings are acceptable) recordings (live and / or studio). The critical commentary should normally be between 10,000 and 20,000 words, although this can be negotiated.

PhD students must make scores of all works performed available to both members of the examination panel, so should contact Library staff four weeks in advance of the examination for copies to be obtained and made available. The supervisory team will ensure that submissions in Performance involving live presentation, or that for other reasons require multiple assessment points, will be supported by the early appointment of an external examiner who will be invited to assess the student's performances accordingly.

Thesis Submission requirements

11.4 The thesis should be submitted in accordance with the [Guidance on Thesis Submission for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

11.5 To successfully submit a thesis, a student must ensure that they are currently enrolled as a student of the University, and that they have no outstanding fees.

11.6 If a thesis is not submitted before the end of the maximum period of registration, the student will be withdrawn from the University and deemed unable to submit, unless further approval is granted owing to reasons of exceptional circumstances.

Request for early submission

11.7 A student can submit a request for early submission to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. Specific guidance on the process is provided in the Submission Requirements guidance.

11.8 The minimum length of registration before a student can submit for a PhD is 24 months full-time (48 months part-time).

Copyright guidance

11.9 Students must have a full understanding and awareness of copyright issues and when it is necessary to seek permission to use other people's work to avoid infringing copyright. Further specifics in relation to copyright guidance are provided in the Submission Requirements guidance.

12. Examination and Assessment

Examination arrangements

12.1 Standard attendance at the oral examination consists of the student, two examiners and an independent chair. Additional examiners may attend dependent on the individual assessment requirements for the degree being examined.

12.2 Members of University staff, and other postgraduate research students of the University, may attend the examination, if prior consent is provided by the student.

12.3 The oral examination will be conducted within the University, or via video conferencing if deemed appropriate (see the [Oral Examination by Video Conference Policy](#) for full details and eligibility. Alternative format of examination, such as public defence, may be permitted subject to formal agreement between collaborating institutions.

12.4 All students must defend their thesis in English.

12.5 Where a student requires alternative assessment arrangements the student must inform their Principal Supervisor and the Faculty Research Degrees Team in writing at the point of thesis submission at the latest. Examination Team

12.6 The appointment of examiners shall proceed in accordance with the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

12.7 The examination team will normally consist of two examiners; at least one shall be an external examiner. Exceptions to this, such as for members of staff at MMU, are outlined in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

12.8 Examination teams are approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

12.9 For all research degree students who are required to undertake an oral examination, an independent chair shall be appointed to promote consistency and fairness. The independent chair does not examine the student, and is solely responsible for chairing the examination and ensuring the associated administration of the oral examination is completed.

Examination outcomes

12.10 After examining the thesis presented by a candidate and considering the results of the oral examination, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations for subsequent approval by the Assessment Board.

i) The student **be awarded the degree** with no revisions to the thesis being required.

ii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) (i.e. the revisions should be capable of being completed by the student within **two months from receipt of the written outcome**)

iii) The student be awarded the degree subject to **major revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) (i.e. the revisions should be capable of being completed by the student within **six months from receipt of the written outcome**. The examination team will provide the detail of the required revisions at the end of the oral examination. Both examiners will check the amendments)

iv) The student **be invited to revise and re-submit the thesis** within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#). The student will be permitted to resubmit on only one occasion. The thesis will be re-examined, normally by the original examiners, and a further oral examination may be required.

v) The student **be awarded a lower qualification with or without corrections** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) (see [Regulations for Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) for appropriate awards/exit awards).

vi) **No award be made to the student** and no resubmission be permitted.

Submission of revisions (outcomes ii, iii & v)

12.11 If the student has submitted the corrected thesis within the deadline, but the examiners are not satisfied with the revisions, the examiners may agree to allow up to one additional month on one occasion for the student to make further, minor revisions.

Re-assessment and resubmission (outcome iv)

12.12 The student shall be required to re-submit for re-examination and approval within a period of time specified in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

12.13 The form of the re-examination shall be as specified in the initial examiner outcome report, and shall address those aspects of the first examination in which the student's performance was not satisfactory and may consider any new or amended material included in the thesis presented for re-examination.

12.14 Students who fail to resubmit their amendments by the date specified may be deemed to have failed their degree and may be withdrawn by the University.

12.15 Upon resubmission, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations for subsequent approval by the Assessment Board:

i) The student **be awarded the degree** with no corrections to the thesis being required.

ii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#). The revisions will be assessed as outlined in the "Submission of revisions" section above.

iii) The student **be awarded a lower qualification with or without corrections** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the [Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) (see [Regulations for Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) for appropriate awards/exit awards).

iv) **No award be made** to the student, and the student is withdrawn from the University.

12.16 The original examiners will normally undertake the re-examination, but in the event of non-availability, new examiners shall be appointed and approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

12.17 For the purpose of satisfying the provisions of these regulations, the Faculty RDC acts as the Assessment Board for all research degrees.

12.18 In all cases, having considered the recommendation, the RDC shall submit its final recommendations for an award to the Academic Board for University approval.

13 Complaints and appeals

13.1 The [Student Complaints Procedure](#) and the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#) apply to all postgraduate research students of the University.

PGRs at RNCM will be entitled to invoke the complaints and appeals procedures of either RNCM or Manchester Metropolitan University, but not both, according to the individual circumstances of the complaint. Complaints must be addressed to the institution responsible for the subject of the complaint or where it occurred. The RNCM's formal procedure for Student Complaints is published [here](#).

14 Further Information

Additional guidance and support

14.1 Information to support the regulations is available on the Graduate School Website at <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research-study/phd/research-regulations-and-guidance>.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS: doctoral degree

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments

Dublin descriptors

Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge-based society.