Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees

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Version:	2.1
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Date approved by Learning and Teaching Committee:	V 1.0 approved 30.7.15 V 2.1 approved 14.11.22
Originator:	Academic Registrar
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Target Audience	
People who need a detailed knowledge of the Code of Practice	Dean of Education; Academic Registrar; Director of Postgraduate Research; PGR Administrators; Student Experience Officer
People who need a broad understanding of the Code of Practice	Learning and Teaching Committee; Research Students
People who need to know that the Code of Practice exists	All Academic Staff

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1 Introduction and Context

1.1 This Code of Practice provides an authoritative institutional framework for the delivery by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) of postgraduate research degree programmes. It is designed to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11 (Research Degrees, June 2012) and the RCUK Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training (January 2015).

1.2 In order to ensure that the LSTM research environment and awards are consistent with those within the higher education section nationally and internationally, this Code of Practice uses as a reference point the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), Level 8.

1.3 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:

- Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes
- Code of Practice on Admissions
- Code of Practice on Student Support and Welfare
- Code of Practice on Payment and Refund of Tuition Fees
- Procedure for the Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students
- Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students
- Procedure for Remote Oral Examination of a Research Degree
- Procedure on Academic Integrity for Postgraduate Research Programmes
- Procedure for Submission and Examination of a Research Degree Thesis
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Academic Appeals Procedure (Research Programmes)

2 Scope

2.1 This Code of Practice applies to all current postgraduate research students registered with LSTM, whether based on-site or off-site. Prospective students are covered by the *Code of Practice on Admissions*.

2.2 The Code is underpinned by the regulatory framework detailed in the *Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes* and applies to the following research degrees offered by LSTM:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)

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3   Definitions

3.1   LSTM subscribes to the two recognised definitions of research that are referenced in the UK Quality Code:

    3.1.1   The definition of research set out in the Frascati Manual[1] as "*creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society and the use of this stock of new knowledge to devise new applications*".

    3.1.2   The definition of research for the Research Excellence Framework (www.ref.ac.uk) as "*a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared*".

4   Roles and Responsibilities

4.1   The Research Committee will determine strategy and objectives for the recruitment of PGR students in line with the LSTM Research Strategy

4.2   The Director of Postgraduate Research will:

    4.2.1   Review applications against published entry criteria and make final decisions on offers to be made.

    4.2.2   Approve the appointment of supervisors and examiners, including ensuring that supervisors are qualified to supervise and have undertaken mandatory training.

    4.2.3   Review progress reports, follow up omissions, and approve students' progression to the next year of study

4.3   The Research Degrees Administrator will:

    4.3.1   Provide pre-entry advice and guidance to applicants and prospective applicants and process applications.

    4.3.2   Inform UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when there has been a delay to a student's arrival.

    4.3.3   Arrange registration and induction of new students, monitor submission of progress reports and arrange examination of the thesis.

    4.3.4   Monitor student compliance with compulsory training requirements

4.4   The Postgraduate Research Board of Studies will:

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[1] Frascati Manual 2002 (Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys on Research and Experimental Development)

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4.4.1   Approve the entry criteria for research degrees, including the required level of English language competence, bearing in mind comparable academic standards and UKVI requirements.

4.4.2   Monitor the reports of external examiners and be responsible for implementing changes in procedure as appropriate

4.4.3   Receive feedback from postgraduate research (PGR) students and respond appropriately to issues raised.

4.4.4   Review annually the progression requirements of PGR students and monitor outcomes.

4.4.5   Review annually the training requirements of PGR students and monitor the effectiveness of that training.

4.5   Supervisors will:

4.5.1   Make decisions on whether or not to accept prospective PGR students in a timely manner and convey their decision to the Research Degrees Administrator

4.5.2   Engage with PGR students, provide guidance and hold regular supervisory meetings throughout the programme (Section 8).

4.6   PGR students are expected to engage with the programme in line with the relevant academic regulations and in accordance with agreements made with their supervisors (Section 9).

4.7   The Student Experience Officer will liaise with applicants with specific learning support needs to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place.

5 Admission and Induction of Research Students

5.1   Guidance on research degree opportunities available at LSTM will be provided on the LSTM website, including the length of time required and commitment involved in completing a research degree.

5.2   PGR students will be admitted to research degree programmes in line with the *Code of Practice on Admissions.*

5.3   Applicants admitted for PhD or MPhil research will normally have obtained, or expect to obtain, either a First Class or Upper Second Class Honours degree, a Master's degree or an international equivalent. Candidates for the MD must be medically qualified graduates with license to practice in the UK.

5.4   The decision on whether or not to admit an applicant will normally be made by one member of the proposed supervisory team and the Director of Postgraduate Research. If the Director of Postgraduate Research is a proposed supervisor, the application will

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be reviewed by the Director of LSTM. The selection process will normally involve an interview with the applicant (which may be conducted remotely) unless the applicant is known to the proposed supervisor(s).

5.5   PGR students designated as 'off-site' are registered with LSTM but spend the duration of the period of study at an alternative location. Students applying to be registered 'off-site' must be based at an institution with a suitable research active environment and provide details of a proposed local supervisor at that institution. Successful applicants will also be assigned a Liverpool-based supervisor. Arrangements must be made for off-site students to fulfil the requirements of the Researcher Development Programme and Annual Progress Review. Under exceptional circumstances, the Director of Postgraduate Research will consider requests for alternative arrangements to be made for the final examination in line with the *Procedure for remote oral examination of a research degree.*

5.6   PGR students may start on the 1st day of any month throughout the year. An induction day will be held annually for new students but the Research Degrees Administrator will make individual induction arrangements for each student on arrival. This will include registration on the student information system, information about training requirements, introduction to supervisors, a tour of facilities, health and safety information and allocation of office space.

6   Periods of Registration

6.1   The minimum and maximum periods of registration for research degrees are as follows:

   • MPhil full-time: minimum of one year and maximum of three years from the date of first registration

   • MPhil part-time: minimum of two years and maximum of six years from the date of first registration

   • MD (part-time only): minimum of two years and maximum of six years from the date of first registration

   • PhD full-time: minimum of two years and maximum of four years from the date of first registration

   • PhD part-time: minimum of four years and maximum of six years from the date of first registration

6.2   Extensions to the maximum registration period will be considered only if there are serious extenuating circumstances supported by appropriate evidence. PGR students who require an extension should complete an extension request form for consideration by the Director of Postgraduate Research.

6.3   PGR students who are experiencing difficulties such as ill-health or changes in their personal circumstances may apply to suspend studies. This may be done after consultation with the primary supervisor. International students who are considering a

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suspension should consult the Registry Manager for advice as a suspension may affect their immigration status.

6.4   A PGR student who has been registered for the minimum period and has finished data collection may change registration status to 'submission pending' whilst writing the thesis. The primary supervisor should notify the Research Degrees Administrator as soon as the student has completed their research so that the change in registration status may be implemented.

7   Payment of Fees

7.1   Fees will be set annually and published on the LSTM website.

7.2   PGR students or their sponsors are expected to pay tuition fees in line with the *Code of Practice on Payment and Refund of Tuition Fees.* Tuition fees are set annually in November and are published on the LSTM website. Published information includes fee reductions to be applied in the case of part-time students; full-time students registered as off-site; and students who have changed their registration status to 'submission pending'.

8   Appointment and Responsibilities of Supervisors

8.1   The *Procedure for the Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students* provides detailed information about the appointment, roles and responsibilities of supervisors.

8.2   For each PGR student, the Director of Postgraduate Research will appoint a primary supervisor as the main point of contact, together with one or more second supervisors. All supervisors should aim to establish a professional and supportive relationship with the student in order to facilitate the student's development as a researcher. Supervisors should provide opportunities to access the wider research community by encouraging attendance at conferences and workshops; make students aware of current developments in relevant areas of research; and encourage students to question critically the existing literature around the specific subject area and their own findings.

8.3   The specific responsibilities of the primary supervisor include:

   8.3.1   Providing clear guidance on the planning of the research project, setting appropriate objectives, targets and deadlines and monitoring the student's progress against this plan.

   8.3.2   Meeting with the student regularly in line with the expectations of the *Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students*.

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8.3.3   Helping the student to identify their needs with respect to research skills training and agreeing an appropriate training strategy.

8.3.4   Ensuring that the student is prepared and supported to meet annual progression requirements and to undertake the final examination within the required timescales.

9   Responsibilities of the Student

9.1   PGR students are expected to work independently on their research and writing their thesis, taking ownership and responsibility for meeting agreed objectives and for submitting their thesis for examination. Students should be aware that their supervisors play no part in the examination process.

9.2   PGR students should arrange to meet regularly with their supervisors, prepare appropriately for those meetings and maintain a record of agreed outcomes in accordance with the *Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students.*

9.3   A PGR student who has concerns about their supervision should discuss these concerns wherever possible with the supervisor(s) in the first instance. If they are unable or unwilling to do this, they should raise concerns during their Annual Progress Review or with the Director of Postgraduate Research. The Director of Postgraduate Research will aim to address any concerns as quickly as possible, referring matters to other members of staff as appropriate. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the student should refer to the *Student Complaints Procedure* for guidance on how to submit a formal complaint.

9.4   PGR students should undertake research skills training as agreed with their supervisor and in line with LSTM requirements.

9.5   PGR students will be encouraged to take the opportunity for providing feedback on their experience through the channels provided by LSTM and to participate in the Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

10 Monitoring Academic Progress

10.1   The *Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students* details the framework within which PGR students are expected to engage with their supervisors and by which their progress will be monitored, including students based off-site. It also provides procedures for dealing with circumstances where students are not demonstrating satisfactory progress or engagement with the programme.

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10.2 Progression requirements will be reviewed annually and published to students at the beginning of each academic year. Students will be required to:

10.2.1 Undergo an Annual Progress Review including a formal independent assessment of their progress. If the student is based off-site, arrangements can be made for this assessment to take place by remote means. Students may use the Review as an opportunity to highlight any personal issues that they believe may have hindered their progress.

10.2.2 Complete mandatory elements of the Researcher Development Programme (Section 11). The requirements vary according to the year of study and may be adapted for off-site students in order to facilitate their participation.

11 Researcher Development Programme

11.1 The Researcher Development Programme provides PGR students with a broad portfolio of generic and subject-specific research skills required not only for the successful completion of their studies but also to equip them to fulfil their potential as the next generation of researchers. Completion of some elements of the Programme are mandatory for progression unless the student can give evidence for exemption via previous study or experience. Students can select optional elements according to their individual training needs.

11.2 The requirements of the Researcher Development Programme will be reviewed annually and published to students at the beginning of each academic year together with a schedule of training opportunities.

12 Thesis Submission and Examination

12.1 The *Procedure for Submission and Examination of a Research Degree Thesis* details the responsibilities of the student regarding submission of the thesis, including the timelines to be followed, and the procedures for appointing examiners. It also explains the process by which the thesis will be examined, the possible outcomes of the examination and the procedures to be followed subsequently.

13 Breaches of Academic Integrity

13.1 Cases of suspected breaches of academic integrity, such as plagiarism, collusion and fabrication of data, will be dealt with under the *Procedure on Academic Integrity for Postgraduate Research Programmes*.

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Annex of Modifications		
Version	**Date of issue**	**Details of modification from previous version**
1.0	29.7.15	
2.0		Amendment to wording of section 7.2 to reflect change in CoP on Payment of Fees and Refunds.
2.0		Code of Practice on Supporting Students with Disabilities has been superseded by Code of Practice on Student Support and Welfare
2.0		References to Mitigating Circumstances changed to Extenuating Circumstances.
2.1	14.11.22	Minor edits to reflect changes to Target Audience. Updated reapproval date.

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