

# Code of Practice for research students starting their course in 2023-24

## Introduction

This Code of Practice is for students studying for a research degree<sup>1</sup>. This includes students in the probationary year of a PhD or taking the Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS). It applies equally to full-time and part-time students unless explicitly stated.

The Code has been issued by the University's main academic authority, the General Board, to make clear what you should expect during your study in terms of supervision, support, and assessment. Of equal importance, it also sets out what the University and those responsible for your study expect of you. These mutual responsibilities and expectations are intended to provide a framework within which you can flourish on your course.

This Code is issued for new students starting their course in 2023-24 and applies for the duration of their course. It is issued each year, and all those with responsibility for research students are made aware of changes between issues.

The Code supplements the University's formal requirements as set out in its Statutes and Ordinances<sup>2</sup>.

If you have any questions about this Code please do raise them with your Supervisor or the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution).

A summary of key points is included at the start of this Code. This is intended as a quick guide and must be read in conjunction with the detailed information provided in the Code itself.

A glossary of terms is included as an appendix.

Students, Supervisors and Academic Advisers will be asked to sign a copy of this Code to confirm that they have read it and discussed its content.

Professor Bhaskar Vira  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education  
August 2023

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, BusD, EdD, EngD, MD, VetMD, MLitt, MSc, or MPhil by Thesis.

<sup>2</sup> [Statutes and Ordinances: University of Cambridge](#)

## Summary of key points

- a. You will be a member of a Department, Faculty or University Partner Institution (para 7) and a member of a College (para 2).
- b. When recommending your admission, the Head of your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) will have confirmed that the facilities needed for your proposed course of research will be available (para 8).
- c. Your Degree Committee oversees your research course (para 9) and is responsible for appointment of your supervisory team (para 10) and for exercising academic oversight of you and your Supervisor, including resolution of academic problems if these cannot be resolved at a local level (para 11).
- d. Your Degree Committee is responsible for monitoring your progress. For doctoral students, it is the formal body which will need to recommend whether you are registered after your probationary period (para 12).
- e. The Degree Committee will make a decision as to the outcome of your final examination (para 14 and 97).
- f. Research degree provision in your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) is overseen by a Director of Postgraduate Education (para 16). They have specific responsibilities in relation to oversight of your study, provision of information, and setting out expectations for the frequency of supervision (para 17-22). In some departments there may also be a Director of the PhD Programme or similar.
- g. You will have a supervisory team consisting of a minimum of a Principal Research Supervisor (normally referred to as your Supervisor) and an Academic Adviser. Some students may also have a Secondary Supervisor (para 45-49). Your Supervisor is the main person appointed to oversee and help you with your study (para 27-44). Your Academic Adviser acts as a further point of contact for you for academic advice (para 50-53).
- h. You are expected to take full advantage of the facilities, training, teaching and supervision offered to you and to be proactive and self-directed in your study, and to make independent use of the facilities available (para 57).
- i. You should receive regular feedback and formal reports on your progress from your Supervisor (para 37). You should have the opportunity to respond to the feedback and complete a self-evaluation to reflect on your progress (para 36 and 61).
- j. You are responsible for your research and for the quality of all your academic work (para 62) and are expected to follow the academic conventions and comply with the requirements that pertain in your subject (para 65).
- k. For all students other than those taking the MPhil by Thesis, toward the end of your first year (or during the second year for part-time students) a formal

examination will be made to determine whether or not you should be permitted to continue with your course (para 70). This decision rests with your Degree Committee (para 74).

- l. You are expected to submit your thesis for examination within the maximum period specified for your degree (para 63).
- m. If you are experiencing difficulties with your study, you are expected to discuss these with your Supervisor without delay and take appropriate action so that any difficulties can be resolved as soon as possible (para 61). You can also raise matters directly with your Academic Adviser or College Tutor. Difficulties with your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed) which cannot be resolved directly with them should be raised with the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) (para 22).  
If you feel unable to raise your concerns within your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) you could seek support and advice from your College Tutor or the Cambridge SU Student Advice Service<sup>3</sup>.
- n. If at any point your Supervisor is concerned about your progress, they are required to notify you in writing and agree a timescale for further review. If your Supervisor's concerns remain, they are required to submit a report raising their concerns, and alert the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) (para 76).
- o. The University's Postgraduate Committee, acting on behalf of the General Board, may permanently withdraw you from your studies in certain circumstances (para 80).
- p. Your Degree Committee will appoint your Examiners, at least one of whom will be external to the University. Your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed) will not be one of your Examiners (para 15, 43, 49 and 84).
- q. In certain circumstances your Degree Committee will appoint an Independent Chair to oversee your examination (para 93).
- r. In certain circumstances, you may make a complaint about the conduct or result of your examination under the Examination Review Procedure (para 100).
- s. For more general complaints, the University Student Complaint Procedure is available (para 101-103).

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<sup>3</sup> [Student Advice Service \(cambridgesu.co.uk\)](http://cambridgesu.co.uk)

## Declaration

We confirm that we have read and discussed the contents of this Code of Practice.

Name	Signature	Date
<i>Student:</i>		
<i>Supervisor:</i>		
<i>Academic Adviser:</i>		

## A Responsibilities and expectations of those involved in your study

1. This section describes the roles of the various individuals and entities who share responsibility for your course of study. It also describes the roles of the various formal committees that oversee your progress and the award of your degree. Section B later in the document describes your responsibilities as a research student.

### Your College

2. All research students are formally members of a **College**<sup>4</sup>.
3. Your College will assign you a **College Postgraduate Tutor**, usually called your 'College Tutor' or 'Tutor'. Your College Tutor will offer or signpost you to support for pastoral matters such as illness or difficult personal circumstances. They are also a source of general advice on financial and academic matters. Your College Tutor is not expected to provide subject-specific academic advice.
4. Your College Tutor will monitor your progress and may consult with you, your Supervisor, or your Department if difficulties arise.
5. If you need to apply for a change in your student status, such as to intermit<sup>5</sup> or to work away<sup>6</sup> from Cambridge, your College Tutor will provide a commentary on your application as part of the application review process.
6. Your College is responsible for administering formal processes for matriculation and graduation.

### Your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution<sup>7</sup>)

7. All research students are formally members of a Department, a Faculty or a University Partner Institution (UPI). Departments are usually part of a larger Faculty, and University Partner Institutions are aligned to one or more Departments or Faculties. This is referred to as your **Faculty/Department (or UPI)** in this Code of Practice.
8. The **Head of your Faculty/Department (or UPI)** is responsible for personnel matters within your Faculty, Department or UPI. They may reasonably expect to be involved in resolution of any difficulties between staff and students that fall into this category. When recommending your admission, the Head of your Faculty/Department or UPI will have confirmed that the facilities needed for your proposed course of research will be available. Should your research involve a

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<sup>4</sup> [Cambridge Colleges – A Guide for Postgraduate Students](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Medical intermission](#) and [Non-Medical intermission](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Work away](#)

<sup>7</sup> The University Partner Institutions are: BBSRC Babraham Institute, British Antarctic Survey, Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, European Bioinformatics Institute, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Wellcome Sanger Institute.

period of working away<sup>8</sup> from Cambridge, the Head of your Department will be responsible for assessing any risk involved in this activity.

## Your Degree Committee

9. The **Degree Committee** for your Faculty (or the Faculty with which your UPI is associated) oversees the conduct of research courses covered by this Code. Your offer of admission and CamSIS self-service account will indicate your Degree Committee.
10. Your Degree Committee is responsible for appointing your supervisory team, and will not appoint someone if it is of the view that there is likely to be a conflict of interest. Your Degree Committee determines and monitors the maximum number of students its supervisors may have and will require a formal case to be made to exceed the limit it has set. In appointing your Supervisor, your Degree Committee will also give due regard to the overall workload they are already carrying.
11. Your Degree Committee is responsible for exercising academic oversight of you and your Supervisor, including resolution of academic problems if these cannot be resolved at a local level. The Degree Committee is responsible for offering your Supervisor, Secondary Supervisor (if appointed), and Academic Adviser appropriate induction and training. In practice, these responsibilities may be exercised by the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) on behalf of the Degree Committee.
12. Your Degree Committee is responsible for monitoring your progress. It is responsible for following up with your Supervisor if they have not submitted progress reports when they are due, and will review these reports and take appropriate action. If you are initially registered on a probationary basis, the Degree Committee will form an opinion as to whether you can proceed and be formally registered for a given qualification.
13. If you need to apply for a change in your student status, such as to intermit<sup>9</sup> or to work away<sup>10</sup> from Cambridge, the Degree Committee will provide a commentary on your application as part of the application review process.
14. The Degree Committee will decide whether to award you the degree (on the recommendation of your Examiners) or will recommend to the Postgraduate Committee that you not be awarded the degree (doctoral, MSc, and MLitt students only).
15. Your Degree Committee will appoint your Examiners and provide them with advice and documentation.

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<sup>8</sup> [Work away](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Medical Intermission](#) and [Non-medical Intermission](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Work away](#)

## Your Faculty/Department (or UPI)'s Director of Postgraduate Education

16. Research degree provision in each Faculty/Department (or UPI) is overseen by a **Director of Postgraduate Education**<sup>11</sup>. They will usually be supported by a Faculty/Department committee with responsibility for postgraduate education (e.g. a Learning and Teaching Committee). You will be told the name of the person who carries the responsibilities of the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) Course Handbook or online resource, and introduced to them as part of your induction.
17. The role of the Director of Postgraduate Education, and the roles performed by other individuals and committees responsible for postgraduate students, should be made clear to you through both induction and course literature.
18. The Director of Postgraduate Education is responsible for nominating members of your supervisory team for approval by your Degree Committee, and for making sure that necessary arrangements for academic and administrative support are available to you. They will monitor your progress and, in consultation with the Degree Committee, ensure that back-up arrangements are made if your Supervisor is absent.
19. Your Director of Postgraduate Education will ensure that you are provided with necessary information, at each stage of your study, about your course through the Course Handbook and your Faculty/Department (or UPI)'s website. This will include information about Health and Safety.
20. In consultation with your Department's Postgraduate Education Committee<sup>12</sup>, your Director of Postgraduate Education will set out general expectations for the frequency of your supervision. This will include expectations for formal opportunities for you to seek, and your Supervisor to give you, feedback on your work and progress. The frequency of supervision may vary according to the research project and the stage of study. The Director of Postgraduate Education will also monitor the performance of your Supervisor and advise your Supervisor on appropriate skills training for you.
21. The Director of Postgraduate Education will ensure that all research students in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) have the opportunity to provide feedback on the content, delivery and administration of their programme or course, and will ensure that this input is taken into account. They will oversee and coordinate periodic strategic reviews of the course.
22. Your Director of Postgraduate Education is a source of advice if you experience difficulties that cannot be resolved directly, and may act as an intermediary between you and your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed) if difficulties arise. If you experience difficulties with your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed) you are expected to raise these with the Director of

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<sup>11</sup> Titles may vary and in some Faculties this role may be undertaken by the Secretary of the Degree Committee or Director of PhD Programmes.

<sup>12</sup> Titles of department committees responsible for postgraduate education may vary.

Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) without delay. You may wish to seek advice and support from your College Tutor in doing this.

## Your Supervisory Team

23. Your **Supervisory Team** is expected to help you with your research. All research students are required to have a supervisory team consisting of a minimum of the Principal Research Supervisor (normally referred to as your Supervisor) and the Academic Adviser. Some students (e.g. UKRI Research Council sponsored students or where research is interdisciplinary) may also have one or more Secondary Supervisors appointed from within or external to the University.
24. Your Supervisor is appointed by the Degree Committee for your Faculty. The Degree Committee may appoint one or more Secondary Supervisors where necessary, for example if your project is interdisciplinary, but your Supervisor is primarily responsible for directing and assisting you in your study or research, and it is with them that the Degree Committee will normally correspond.
25. If your Supervisor is employed by a UPI, your UPI will nominate an appropriate Internal Secondary Supervisor employed by the University for you for appointment by your Degree Committee. Whilst the level of input from your Internal Secondary Supervisor will be subject to agreement with the UPI or other organisation, they are expected to retain overall oversight of your study, to have an active role in your supervision, and to ensure that you are being supervised in line with this Code and the University's regulations. In practice they may also be involved as a genuine research collaborator and play a Secondary Supervisor role. It is expected that the Internal Secondary Supervisor will also meet with you on a regular basis, and at least once per term, either through attending supervisory team meetings or by such other meetings as may be arranged.
26. Your Supervisory Team is supported by the Director of Postgraduate Education for your Faculty/Department (or UPI) and its Postgraduate Education Committee and/or Degree Committee, which may appoint additional people to the team as required.

## Your (Principal Research) Supervisor

27. Your **Principal Research Supervisor**, usually referred to simply as your 'Supervisor', is the main person appointed by the Degree Committee to oversee and help you with your study.
28. In agreeing to take on the role, your Supervisor will have established the suitability of your research topic in the light of resource availability; the University's timescale for submission of your thesis; the period of your funding; and your background and aptitude. If you are a part-time student, your Supervisor will establish at interview your pattern of attendance, including arrangements for supervision and training.



29. Your Supervisor will ensure you are introduced to the department, its facilities and other relevant colleagues, and that you receive a full induction.
30. Your Supervisor will ensure that you are told about the conventions and requirements that pertain to your subject with respect, for example, to scholarly writing; use of archives and collections; integrity in collecting and analysing data; and open access. They will advise you on relevant literature and methodology in your field, including how to present your research and how to acknowledge the work of others to avoid plagiarism<sup>13</sup>. These requirements will also be set out in the Course Handbook or online resource and explained to you during your induction. Your Supervisor will also ensure that you are aware of the University's expectations in respect of research integrity and good practice<sup>14</sup>.
31. Your Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that you are aware of relevant health and safety practices, the University policy on research ethics<sup>15</sup> and ethical matters specific to your research area and, where relevant, University policies on working with children or adults at risk<sup>16</sup> and animal welfare<sup>17</sup>. They will provide you with advice on applications seeking ethical review. Your Supervisor may require you to attend appropriate Health and Safety training.
32. If you are being sponsored with funds administered through the collegiate University, your Supervisor will ensure that the terms of the sponsorship agreement and any implications regarding the ownership of intellectual property rights and access to your completed thesis are made clear to you at the outset and are honoured during the course and in the examination of your thesis. Details of UKRI terms and conditions can be found on their website<sup>18</sup>.
33. Your Supervisor is expected to be familiar with this Code, as well as course literature and advice provided by your Faculty/Department (or UPI)'s Postgraduate Education Committee, Degree Committee, and the central University authorities. They are expected to attend training and events for supervisors as prescribed by your Faculty/Department (or UPI) and Degree Committee. New supervisors are required to attend introductory training. All Faculties/Departments (or UPIs) are expected to specify their general expectations for the frequency and form of supervisions in their Course Handbook or online resource, and your Supervisor should be aware of what is expected. Your Supervisor will establish an effective means of communication with you, including agreeing with you the frequency and timings of meetings, what will be required at the meetings, and who is expected to initiate a meeting.
34. The regularity with which postgraduate students meet with their Supervisor varies according to subject. In the arts, humanities and social sciences, students may work alone for sustained periods and may meet their Supervisor only at formal supervisions. However, in the sciences and technology, Supervisors, students,

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<sup>13</sup> [Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Research Integrity](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Ethical Review | Research Integrity](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Children and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Animal welfare and ethics](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Meeting terms and conditions for funding – UKRI](#)

and postdoctoral researchers may work alongside each other in a group setting on a regular or daily basis. The frequency of meetings will also change over time: these are likely to be more frequent to start with, during the planning stages, and towards the end, during the writing-up phase. Students and Supervisors should agree frequency of contact at the outset and review it regularly.

35. At the beginning of your project, your Supervisor should agree with you an initial timetable for your project. You may wish to use the Research and Resources Overview form to assist your planning<sup>19</sup>. Your Supervisor will monitor your progress against the agreed timetable and plan, and regularly review the plan with you. Your Supervisor will take appropriate action as laid down in this Code, or your Course Handbook or online resource, if you do not keep in contact or your progress is poor.
36. All students should have the opportunity to seek formal feedback from their Supervisor, and Supervisors should have the opportunity to give such feedback.
37. Your Supervisor is required to monitor your progress and submit regular formal reports in which they should give an honest but constructive appraisal of your progress. Reports are available to you and your Faculty/Department (or UPI), Degree Committee and College, who all take an interest in your progress. Reports are also available to Student Registry who may review them on behalf of the Postgraduate Committee. You and your College Tutor can submit a response to your Supervisor's report. During each Michaelmas Term you will be asked to complete a self-evaluation of your progress. This will be available to your Supervisor, Department, Degree Committee and College, all of which can respond to your report. Supervision and self-evaluation reports are also available to Student Registry who may review them on behalf of the Postgraduate Committee.
38. Your Supervisor is required to report to those listed above in para 37 if you appear, in their opinion, not to be progressing satisfactorily and may be in danger of failing an examination, or are unlikely to make the standard for progression to the next stage of your course. These reports will be considered by the Degree Committee and may be used in cases of dispute or in support of a recommendation to the Postgraduate Committee that you be withdrawn from study due to poor progress. Please note that any absence of a report highlighting concerns about your progress during your course does not mean that you will certainly be awarded a degree.
39. Your Supervisor is also expected to advise you on planning your personal and skills development, and will encourage you to attend training related to your research project and future employability. Your supervisor will encourage you to interact with others working in cognate fields of research, for example by attending relevant conferences, and support you in seeking funding to attend such events.

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<sup>19</sup> [https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/resources\\_and\\_research\\_overview\\_form.pdf](https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/resources_and_research_overview_form.pdf)

40. Your Supervisor will be expected to provide an academic commentary on any applications you make to change your student status, for example to work away from Cambridge or intermit, or on certain funding applications. If you are funded by UKRI or another major sponsor, your Supervisor is expected to make sure that they are informed promptly if your work is delayed or seriously affected by illness or other grave cause.
41. Your Supervisor will advise you on publication of your research and offer advice on further study or careers in your specific research area or direct you to appropriate sources of information to support your career development. They will respond promptly to reasonable requests for references for you.
42. Your Supervisor will read and comment on draft chapters, so that you have the opportunity to incorporate any feedback into subsequent writing. Your Supervisor is not expected to proofread your thesis. Your Supervisor should respond promptly – given adequate notice – to requests from you to meet or to comment on your work, and you should agree with your Supervisor arrangements, including a plan for your work and a timetable for production of draft chapters. If your Supervisor is to be away from Cambridge for an extended period, they should ensure that you and the Director of Postgraduate Education are aware of this and should inform you of back-up supervisory arrangements.
43. Your Supervisor must not participate in the decision on examination of the work submitted by you as part of any registration exercise for the degree, and cannot participate in your formal examination for the degree.
44. If the outcome of your examination for the degree is approval subject to corrections or re-submission and re-examination for the degree, your Supervisor should agree a limited pattern of supervision with you.

#### **Your (Internal or External) Secondary Supervisor/s (if appointed)**

45. Secondary Supervisors who are either internal to the University or from an external organisation may be appointed to join a supervisory team. Your Supervisor retains responsibility for overseeing your study and monitoring your progress but may delegate some elements of supervision to your Secondary Supervisor/s. Your Supervisor is responsible for ensuring the roles and responsibilities of each member of the supervisory team are agreed, and communicated to you, and that the functioning of the team is regularly reviewed.
46. Secondary Supervisors are additional sources of advice and guidance on your research project. They may be invited to attend supervisory team meetings to discuss your research project and your progress.
47. Internal Secondary Supervisors may provide all or some of the following to support the responsibilities of the Supervisor: day-to-day supervision; technical or detailed subject expertise; feedback on your work and thesis drafts; advice on your researcher development needs, personal and skills development, and

training; advice on research publication; provide references; support interaction with others working in cognate fields of research.

48. External Secondary Supervisors may advise on the non-academic (e.g. industrial) application of the research. If you are conducting research at the organisation where your Secondary Supervisor is employed, the Secondary Supervisor should ensure you receive appropriate induction and training and complete any necessary risk assessment, are made aware of the company's expectations around conduct, and provided day-to-day support during your time at the organisation.
49. Your Secondary Supervisor/s must not participate in the decision on examination of the work submitted by you as part of any registration exercise for the degree and cannot participate in your formal examination for the degree.

### **Your Academic Adviser**

50. Your Faculty/Department (or UPI) will appoint an **Academic Adviser** for you. Your Academic Adviser might not be in the same research area as you and your Supervisor, nor necessarily in the same Faculty/Department (or UPI), but will be able to bring sufficient expertise to your supervisory team to act as a further point of contact for general academic advice.
51. Your Academic Adviser is available if you wish to informally discuss research progress, your personal and research development needs, your research environment or for general advice on research publication.
52. Depending on the level of their involvement in your project, your department may nominate your Academic Adviser to participate in the formal examination of your progress and registration exercises. Your Course Handbook should make you aware if this is common practice in your department. Your Academic Adviser should not be appointed as your Internal Examiner for the degree unless they have had little or no involvement with your research, and your Degree Committee is satisfied that there is no potential for a conflict of interest.
53. Your Academic Adviser is not required to provide regular, formal supervision; write supervision reports; provide pastoral support for you or your Supervisor; or mediate between for you and your Supervisor, although they may offer advice to either party if asked and willing to do so.

### **B Your responsibilities as a research student**

54. You are expected to keep the University informed of changes in your contact details, and to follow University processes to apply for any necessary change in your student status, including withdrawal from your course. You are also expected to pay fees in a timely manner.

55. When you matriculated as a student at the University, you promised to abide by the University's regulations, Statutes and Ordinances, including those relating to Postgraduate Students<sup>20</sup> and those concerning discipline<sup>21</sup> and avoidance of plagiarism<sup>22</sup>.
56. If you are a full-time student you are required to reside<sup>23</sup> in Cambridge for the duration of your studies) and to be approved to work away<sup>24</sup> from Cambridge before undertaking research outside Cambridge (University precincts or UPI). This includes fieldwork and internships integral to your course. Formal permission to work away is not required for conferences and short research visits. Before submitting an application to work away from Cambridge, you must have in place an approved risk assessment<sup>25</sup> (unless you are applying to work away at home to either write up your thesis or complete corrections post-examination), and before and during your time away from Cambridge you must adhere to any conditions attached to this assessment.
- If you are a part-time student you are expected to attend the University on a regular basis, totalling approximately 45 days per year, and to be approved to work away before undertaking research/fieldwork away from your normal place of residence. Formal permission to work away is not required for conferences and short research visits. Before submitting an application to work away from Cambridge you must have in place an approved work assessment.
57. You are expected to take full advantage of the facilities, training, teaching and supervision offered to you by your Faculty/Department (or UPI) or by the University<sup>26</sup>, and to keep your Supervisor informed of any circumstances affecting your academic performance or participation in any part of the course. You are expected to be proactive and self-directed in all aspects of your study, and to make independent use of library and other available resources, including laboratory facilities where appropriate.
58. If you are a full-time student, you are expected to devote around 40 hours per week to your studies for the full duration of the course. You may undertake paid or unpaid work alongside your study within specified limits<sup>27</sup>, but your academic study must take priority.
- If you are a part-time student, you will be expected to devote pro-rata hours to your study each week for the full duration of the course. Hours of paid or unpaid work are not restricted for part-time students.
59. Full-time students are entitled to take up to 8 weeks holiday per year of study (1 October to 30 September). It is recommended that you take a minimum of 4 weeks of holiday per year. The 8-week entitlement includes Public Holidays and

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<sup>20</sup> [Statutes and Ordinances: University of Cambridge](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Student discipline | Student Complaints](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Terms of study](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Work away](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Safeguarding Work Away](#)

<sup>26</sup> [CamRDF | Postgraduate Researcher Development](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Working while you study](#)

periods when the University is closed (such as the Christmas period). Periods of holiday should be agreed with your Supervisor and are expected to be arranged at a time that allows the residence requirement to be kept, but it is not expected that you can only take leave when your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed) are away from Cambridge or otherwise unavailable. You should not use periods of holiday for absences which should be covered by the procedures for intermission<sup>28</sup> or working away<sup>29</sup> from Cambridge.

Part-time students receive a pro-rata holiday entitlement.

You are not expected to be working on your research during periods of holiday.

60. You should meet regularly with your Supervisor, and keep them informed of your progress. If you are experiencing problems with your work, you are expected to discuss these with your Supervisor without delay. You should submit work as agreed with your Supervisor, and should produce progress reports and a training log if and when required by your Faculty/Department (or UPI). If you experience difficulties in meeting with your Supervisor, you should contact the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) without delay.
61. You are expected to access and comment on your supervision reports, and to discuss them with your Supervisor. You are expected to complete a self-evaluation report in each Michaelmas Term. This gives you an opportunity to reflect on your progress and to highlight any support or advice you feel you may need. You can use the self-evaluation report to raise any issues you are experiencing, but if you are worried about your studies or need other support<sup>30</sup> you are encouraged to speak to your Supervisor, Director of Postgraduate Education or your College Tutor at the earliest opportunity. Your report will be available to your Supervisor, Department, Degree Committee and College, all of which can submit a response or comment.

### ***Your Thesis and other written work submitted for examination***

62. You are expected to take responsibility for the quality of all your academic work, including the final version of your thesis submitted for examination, and any subsequent revisions or corrections which may be required by your Examiners. Your Supervisor's advice, approval or encouragement will have no bearing on the Examiners' decision, and these do not constitute grounds for complaint should you fail the examination. Likewise, the absence of a progress report from your Supervisor highlighting concerns about your academic progress is not sufficient grounds for complaint in the case of failure.
63. All research degrees require completion of a certain number of terms of research<sup>31</sup> before the thesis can be submitted for examination and will have an expected final submission date. You will be withdrawn from study<sup>32</sup> if you do not submit on time and have not been granted an extension to your submission

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<sup>28</sup> [Medical intermission](#) and [Non-Medical intermission](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Work away](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Student Support](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Terms of study](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Withdrawing from the University](#) and [Reinstatement](#)

deadline or have an application under consideration. Your Supervisor will advise you on an appropriate timetable to meet this deadline.

If you are a full-time PhD student, you are expected to complete your research for the degree and submit your thesis for examination within four years. If you are a part-time PhD student, you are expected to submit your thesis for examination within seven years (Route A) or within five years and one term (Route B). If you are an MPhil by Thesis student your submission deadline will be set by your Degree Committee.

It is your responsibility to know the timetable set by your Department for progress reports and the final date for your thesis submission.

64. There are specific circumstances in which your final submission deadline can be extended. If you are unable to work on your studies for a period of time - owing to ill health<sup>33</sup>, maternity/paternity/parental leave<sup>34</sup>, bereavement, undertaking an internship that is not integral to your research but would be beneficial for your career, or for another valid reason<sup>35</sup> - you are expected to apply to intermit. If you are unable to meet your final submission deadline for another valid reason, you can apply for an extension<sup>36</sup>. Such applications will only be approved in certain circumstances.
65. You are expected to follow the conventions and comply with the requirements in your subject with respect, for example, to scholarly writing; use of archives and collections; and integrity in collecting and analysing data<sup>37</sup>. You should ensure that you comply with the requirement for honesty in presenting your research, and the conventions for acknowledging the work of others in your subject, and ensure that you understand what plagiarism<sup>38</sup> is and how to avoid it.
66. You are expected to comply with the requirements for the format and submission of your thesis for examination. The University reserves the right to require the submission of your work in both electronic and paper format, and to submit your work for screening with text-matching software. You should also consider and discuss with your Supervisor the appropriate level of external access<sup>39</sup> to your completed thesis with consideration to any sponsor access requirements.
67. You should discuss drafts of your thesis with your Supervisor and confer on its state of readiness for submission. If, for good reason, your Supervisor is unable to comment on drafts of your work in reasonable time, you should contact the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) for advice.
68. Where it is not possible for you to come to a mutual decision with your Supervisor about the readiness of your work for examination, you have the right to decide to

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<sup>33</sup> [Medical Intermission](#)

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/maternity\\_paternity\\_policy.pdf](https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/maternity_paternity_policy.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> [Non-Medical intermission](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Extending your Submission Date](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Research Integrity](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Terminology for different access levels to theses | Open Research](#)

submit without your Supervisor's consent. In all cases, ultimate responsibility for the academic quality of the thesis and the timing of submission lies with you.

69. If, after your examination, you are required to make corrections to your thesis, you will be set a deadline by which to submit your corrected thesis. For doctoral students, there is a deadline of three months for minor corrections and six months for major corrections; for Master's students, there is a deadline of three weeks for minor corrections and six weeks for major corrections.

## **Your Progress**

### ***Registration for the PhD, BusD, EngD, EdD, MSc, and MLitt Degree***

70. The majority of candidates for a PhD, BusD, EngD, EdD, MSc or MLitt are admitted on a probationary basis. You may be registered in the first instance for a Certificate of Postgraduate Studies (CPGS), or a master's degree, or may not be registered for any qualification. Towards the end of your first year (or second year for a part-time student), a formal progress examination will take place to determine whether or not you should be registered as a candidate for the degree (i.e. permitted to continue). You will be informed through your Course Handbook or similar where a different timeframe for the progress examination has been agreed by the Postgraduate Committee; this may be the case for certain CDT/DTP courses, for example.
71. If you have been registered for a qualification in the first instance, your performance in the examination for this qualification may form part of the registration examination for the PhD, EngD, EdD, MSc, or MLitt, but a pass in the examination for the qualification concerned will not in itself be sufficient to guarantee registration for the higher degree.
72. If you have not been registered for any qualification in your first year, a formal registration examination (sometimes termed a first-year assessment or probationary review) will be carried out. This normally takes the form of an assessed piece of written work, which sets out work in progress and includes your proposal for further research. The assessment usually includes an oral examination (viva). Your Degree Committee may use a different form of examination, which will have been approved by the University's Postgraduate Committee. You will be informed of the details of the registration exercise at the start of your course. The registration examination will be carried out by at least two Assessors, neither of whom is your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed). Your Academic Adviser may be appointed as an Assessor provided that there is no potential for a conflict of interests.
73. Assessors will provide a report on the outcome of the progress examination which will include their recommendation on registration for the degree and any feedback they wish to provide for you and your Supervisor.
74. Your Supervisor will also report on your progress in the light of the Assessors' feedback and make a recommendation on the outcome. Your Supervisor may be asked to attend a viva, but must not be involved in making a decision on whether



or not to recommend to the Degree Committee that you continue. Your Degree Committee will consider your Assessors' reports together with your Supervisor's recommendation and, on the strength of these, recommend an outcome.

75. The Degree Committee may decide one of the following outcomes:
- a) registration for the degree sought;
  - b) to recommend registration for a lower degree with or without the option of a further assessment for the purposes of reviewing registration status. If offered, this assessment will be completed before the submission of your thesis for examination for the lower degree or certificate;
  - c) permission to revise and resubmit your registration report after a defined period (normally not more than one year) for a further progress examination;
  - or
  - d) to recommend permanent withdrawal from study.

Recommendations for b) and d) above will be subject to the approval of the Postgraduate Committee.

***If your progress is unsatisfactory***

76. If, at any point, your Supervisor is concerned about your progress, they are required to let you know in writing and to submit a report making this clear. Reports submitted through the online reporting system will be immediately available to you, your College, Department and Degree Committee and the Student Registry. You may be called to a meeting with the Director of Postgraduate Education, your Supervisor and other members of your supervisory team.
77. The concerns will be put to you at this meeting, and possible remedies explored. A written record of the meeting, including any agreed action, will be given to you. If deadlines have been set for work to be submitted, or patterns of required attendance set out, or any other requirements stated, these will be specified in writing. The consequences of non-compliance with these requirements will be made clear to you. These may range from a warning that you are in danger of non-completion through to a recommendation that you be withdrawn from study, depending on the severity of the problem.
78. If it is evident that you are suffering from ill health or other personal difficulty, you will be referred to your College Tutor for help. In some circumstances, you may be referred to the University's Occupational Health Service<sup>40</sup>, Counselling Service<sup>41</sup> or Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre<sup>42</sup>. You can also refer yourself to any of these services at any time during your studies. If there are serious concerns about your capability to study or your ability to undergo academic assessment (for example, because of your health or because your conduct or performance suggests underlying health issues), you may be referred

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<sup>40</sup> [Occupational Health and Safety Services](#)

<sup>41</sup> [University Counselling Service | Student Counselling](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre | ADRC](#)

for assessment through the University's Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study<sup>43</sup>.

79. You will be given a reasonable period of time to improve. However, should your progress continue to be unsatisfactory or should you persist in not complying with the requests of your supervisory team, the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) will refer the matter to the Degree Committee with a recommendation that you should be withdrawn from study. You will be invited to respond in writing to the case made by the Director of Postgraduate Education, and your response will be considered by the Degree Committee.

### ***Permanent withdrawal from study***

80. The University's Postgraduate Committee can decide to permanently withdraw you from study in a number of specific circumstances, including in respect of unsatisfactory progress where your Degree Committee has satisfied the Postgraduate Committee that:
- a) you have not been working to its satisfaction;
  - b) you have not complied with the conditions laid down in your case;
  - c) in its opinion, you are not likely to reach the standard of the MSc, MLitt, MPhil, or of any other qualification for which you might be registered as a candidate;
  - d) if, following your first-year registration, the Degree Committee are of the view that you are not qualified to continue with your course.

In view of the third of these provisions, Degree Committees must consider whether you might be re-registered for a lower qualification than the one currently sought.

81. The Postgraduate Committee can also withdraw you from study if you are no longer a member of a College, if you have not met your conditions of admission (including holding a valid visa), or if you have failed to pay your fees.
82. If you are withdrawn from study, you will lose your student status. Permanent withdrawal means that you are unable to apply to be re-instated. Only students who were withdrawn on non-academic grounds (non-payment fees, conditions of admission, college membership) may apply for reinstatement once the reason for the reinstatement had been rectified.
83. If you are dissatisfied with a decision to withdraw you from study, you can request a review under the University's Review procedures<sup>44</sup>.

## **Examination for the Degree**

### ***Appointment of your Examiners***

84. Your Degree Committee will appoint two examiners for your research degree. Except in the case of the CPGS, one of these must be an External Examiner.

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<sup>43</sup> [Supporting and assessing capability to Study | Student Complaints](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Reviews of Decisions of University bodies | Student Complaints](#)

The appointment of an internal person as the second examiner is highly desirable but not essential, and where no suitable Internal Examiner can be found, a second External Examiner will be appointed. If you are a member of staff of the University, both of your Examiners will normally be external to the University. Note that neither examiner will be your Supervisor or Secondary Supervisor (if appointed).

85. The Degree Committee will normally consult your Faculty/Department (or UPI) and Supervisor about the suitability and availability of examiners, and will take appropriate steps to ensure that there is no potential conflict of interest between either you or your Supervisor/s and either of your Examiners. You may not choose your Examiners, but the Degree Committee will inform you at the earliest opportunity who has been nominated. If you have good reason to object to any given individual as an Examiner, you should make this known and the Degree Committee will consider any such objection when making an appointment.
86. Your Examiners will normally be expert in one or more aspects of your thesis, and their expertise will normally be complementary. It is not expected that either Examiner will be expert in the whole field covered by your thesis.
87. Where there is an Examiner who has not examined for the University before, they will, wherever possible, be paired with an experienced Examiner. If both Examiners are inexperienced, then the Degree Committee will appoint an Independent Chair.
88. The Degree Committee will be the Examiners' main point of contact throughout the examination period.

### ***Your Internal Examiner***

89. In exceptional circumstances, your Academic Adviser, or an Assessor of an earlier progress report, may be appointed to examine your thesis providing the Degree Committee is satisfied that their involvement in the development of your thesis was not so great as to prejudice their role as Examiner.
90. Your Internal Examiner is expected to organise your oral examination (viva) by contacting both you and the External Examiner about your availability. The date for your oral should be fixed as soon as possible after submission and the examination held, if possible, within six to eight weeks. Your viva may take place in person or via video conference.
91. Your Internal Examiner is responsible for ensuring that your External Examiner is aware of the requirements for the examination and for ensuring that their reports are sent to the Degree Committee promptly after the oral. If two External Examiners are appointed, the Degree Committee Secretary will advise the Examiners of their duties and assist with arrangements for the oral examination.

### ***Your External Examiner***

92. Your External Examiner is expected to provide an external view of the merits of your thesis and its defence in your oral examination, and to set the thesis and its examination in the context of the standards for the degree in the UK.

### ***The Independent Chair***

93. The Degree Committee will appoint an Independent Chair to oversee your examination in the following circumstances:

- a) where two External Examiners have been appointed neither of whom, in the view of the Degree Committee, are experienced Cambridge Examiners;
- b) where, in the view of the Degree Committee, the Internal Examiner is inexperienced;
- c) in cases of re-examination where a second viva examination is required;
- d) for any candidate for whom the Degree Committee has identified concerns regarding the examination;
- e) if you, as the candidate, have satisfied the Degree Committee that an Independent Chair is required; or
- f) in any other circumstances where the Degree Committee has satisfied the Postgraduate Committee that the appointment is required.

94. The Independent Chair is expected to ensure that the examination process is fair and that you have the opportunity to defend your thesis and to respond to all questions posed by the Examiners. The Independent Chair will ensure that questioning by the Examiners is conducted fairly and professionally, and that they adhere to the University's regulations and procedures. If required, they will advise both you and your Examiners on the regulations. Before the oral examination, the Independent Chair will ensure that your Examiners have completed their preliminary independent reports, and that your Examiners' joint report is completed at the end of the examination, and all reports are submitted to the Degree Committee in a timely fashion.

95. The Chair is not expected to question you about your work, and is not expected to have received or read a copy of your thesis in preparation for the examination.

96. In the case of disagreement between your Examiners, the Chair's role will be confined to advising the Examiners on their options; the Chair does not have an additional casting vote but should use their best endeavours to help the Examiners to reach an agreed position.

### ***Examination outcomes***

97. There are a number of possible outcomes open to the Examiners of your thesis. Examiners are asked to make a joint recommendation of an outcome. The possible outcomes are:

1. Approve for the degree with no corrections;
2. Approve for the degree subject to the completion of minor or major corrections (in this case one or both of the Examiners will be asked to confirm that the corrections have been made to their satisfaction);
3. Allowed to revise and resubmit for the same degree;

4. Allowed to revise and resubmit for the same degree or accept a lower degree without further examination (which may be subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections). This option is only possible for students on doctoral degrees;
5. Not to be allowed to revise the thesis for the degree, but offered a lower degree without further examination (which may be subject to satisfactory completion of corrections). This option is only possible for students on doctoral degrees;
6. Not to be allowed to revise the thesis for the degree but to be allowed to revise the thesis for a lower degree. This option is only possible for students on doctoral degrees;
7. Not to be approved or allowed to revise the thesis for any degree, i.e. outright fail.

98. Your Degree Committee will consider the Examiners' reports and decide upon an outcome. In cases where the Degree Committee has decided upon outcomes 4-7 for doctoral students, a final decision will be made by the Postgraduate Committee.

***Requesting an Examination Allowance<sup>45</sup> (restricted to the CPGS only)***

99. If your preparation for the examination for the CPGS has been hindered due to extenuating circumstances beyond your control (e.g. ill health or bereavement), then you should seek advice from your College Tutor. You or your College Tutor may apply to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee for an examination allowance. A request for an examination allowance must be accompanied by evidence of the extenuating circumstances, and must be received by the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee within three months of the notification of the outcome of the examination.

***Requesting a Review of your Examination Results***

100. You may request a review of your examination results (including the result of any progression examinations) within the timeframe specified in the University's procedures. Further information is available within the Examination Review Procedure<sup>46</sup>.

**Problems and Complaints**

101. Most problems or complaints can be resolved quickly and efficiently with the support, involvement or intervention of University staff or, sometimes, your College Tutor. You may also seek independent advice from the Students' Union Advice Service<sup>47</sup>. You are expected to exhaust all avenues of local, early informal resolution before initiating any formal complaint, review or appeal processes. In the first instance, you should consult and seek the advice of the appropriate departmental member of staff. If you are unclear who this is, you should consult the Director of Postgraduate Education in your Faculty/Department (or UPI).

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<sup>45</sup> [EAMC Guidance notes and application forms](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Examination Review | Student Complaints](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Student Advice Service \(cambridgesu.co.uk\)](http://cambridgesu.co.uk)

Although your College Tutor might not be able to solve the problem directly, they might be able to intervene, or at least offer suitable advice about how to proceed or where to go for assistance or advice.

102. If, however, you have reason to think that a problem or issue has not been dealt with satisfactorily at the initial, local level – or if the problem is demonstrably of a more serious nature – then you should submit a formal complaint.

### ***Formal complaints procedures<sup>48</sup>***

103. The University requires students to raise complaints in a timely manner, within 28 days of the matter arising, so that any disadvantage can be limited and an effective remedy can be put in place. Your College will have its own complaint procedure, if your concern relates to College matters.

### ***The Office of the Independent Adjudicator***

104. A student who remains dissatisfied following the completion of the University's examination review, appeal or complaint procedures may be able to apply for a review of their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), providing that the complaint they take to the OIA is eligible under its rules. Further information about this process will be provided in the final decision letter issued to the student.

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<sup>48</sup> [Student Complaints | Student Complaints](#)

## Glossary

**Academic Adviser** – the person appointed by your Faculty/Department (or UPI) to help and support you and your Supervisor.

**Assessor** – someone appointed to examine the work you have submitted at the end of your first year and who will make a recommendation to the Degree Committee on whether you are allowed to continue with the course.

**College (Postgraduate) Tutor** – the person your College has appointed to provide general advice and guidance to you. This person may also be called the Tutor or College Tutor.

**Degree Committee** – the Committee in your Faculty which has responsibility for your course and examination and for the approval of your degree.

**Director of Postgraduate Education** – the person in your Faculty/Department (or UPI) who is responsible for oversight of its research students and courses.

**Examination Allowance** – if you do not perform well in an examination for the CPGS, and there are mitigating circumstances, you may be able to apply for an examination allowance. This may mean that you can continue with your study or be allowed to re-take part or all of the examination.

**Examiner** – someone appointed by the Degree Committee to examine your thesis and conduct an oral examination (or viva) and make a recommendation to the Degree Committee on whether you be awarded the degree.

**External Examiner** – an Examiner from outside of the University.

**Examination Review Procedure** – the procedure for requesting a review of the results of an examination.

**Faculty / Department (or University Partner Institution)** – the body responsible for organising teaching and research in individual subjects or groups of subjects.

**General Board** – the central body which advises the University on educational policy and resources. It is responsible for maintaining a high standard of teaching and research. The Postgraduate Committee acts on behalf of the General Board.

**Intermission** – temporary authorised absence from your course for ill health or other eligible reason.

**Internal Examiner** – an Examiner who is from within the University (see Examiner).

**OSCCA** – the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals

**PFRS - Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting System** for students and Supervisors to submit online progress reports. Submitted reports are immediately available to students, Supervisors, Colleges, Departments, Degree Committees and Student Registry.

**Principal Research Supervisor** – see Supervisor.

**Postgraduate Committee** – the formal body in the University which is responsible for research degrees covered by this Code.

**Secondary Supervisor** – you may be appointed a Secondary Supervisor by the Degree Committee, for example to ensure that the breadth of your research can be supervised if your research is interdisciplinary. UKRI Research Councils often require a student to have two Supervisors.

**Statutes and Ordinances** – the University's regulations.

**Student Complaint Procedure** – the procedure under which you can make a formal complaint.

**Supervisor** – your Principal Research Supervisor (normally referred to as 'Supervisor') is the person appointed by the Degree Committee to be responsible for your study. See also Secondary Supervisor.

**Supervisory Team** – your Supervisor and Academic Adviser. Your Supervisory Team may also include one or more Secondary Supervisors.

**Work away** – the approval you will need to seek if you want to study outside Cambridge during your course.