

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

Index

	<i>Paragraph numbers</i>
Definitions	1
• Director of Studies	1
• Supervisory team	2
• Faculty Research Degree Committee (FRDC)	3
• University Research Degree Committee (URDC)	4
Purpose	6
Criteria	7
Flowchart	11
• Internal Review of Postgraduate Research (IRPGR) Process	11
Process	
• Admissions	12
• Admissions and supervisors of students studying primarily overseas	13-15
• Advance Standing	16-18
• Supervision	19-22
• Collaborations	23-25
• Category A	26-31
• Category B	32-36
• Monitoring	37-41
• Internal Review of Postgraduate Research Student Experience (IRPGR)	42-43
o The Cycle	44
o Process	45-47
o Procedure	48
o Purpose of the IRPGR planning meeting	49
o Documents for the IRPGR planning meeting	50
o Constitution of the IRPGR planning meeting	51
o Report of the planning meeting	52
o Themes of the audit	53
o Documentation	54-60
o Meetings	61-62

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- Other documentation for consideration by the panel 63
- Reporting 64-66

Guidance Notes

MG(i) Notes for Internal Review of Postgraduate Research Student Experience (IRPGR) team members

Abbreviations

AB	Academic Board
ADC	Academic Development Centre
AQS	Academic Quality and Standards
AQSH	Academic Standards and Quality Handbook
AQSRG	Academic Quality and Standards Review Group
FDL	Flexible and Distributed Learning
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IQA	Internal Quality Audit
IRPGR	Internal Review of Postgraduate Research
ISR	Internal Subject Review
JACS	Joint Academic Coding System
LTA	Learning Teaching and Assessment
MRDP	Module Review and Development Plan
PSB	Professional/Statutory Body.
PCF	Postgraduate Credit Framework
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
SSCC	Staff-Student Consultative Committee
UMS	Undergraduate Modular Scheme

Definitions

Essential roles and Committee responsibilities

Director of studies

1. S/he is the primary or principal supervisor, the main academic contact for the student. S/he works with the student to prepare the application for (provisional) registration and, subsequently, should monitor the student's progress both formally (as a key contributor to the annual monitoring process) and informally during the year. The Director of Studies should normally be a permanent member of staff.

Supervisory team

2. All students are provided with second supervisors and occasionally third supervisors depending on the nature of their research project. Additional supervisors are not expected to meet with the student as frequently as the Director of Studies, but should maintain an effective working relationship with both the student and Director of Studies. When a director of study stands down, usual practice is for the second supervisor to take on the role. The University encourages formal and informal collaboration with other academic and non-academic institutions in the conduct of research. Thus it may be appropriate to nominate an additional supervisor based at another institution. At least one member of the supervisory team (not necessarily the Director of Studies) must have supervised at least one student to successful completion of a research degree.

Faculty Research Degree Committee (FRDC)

3. The FRDC has responsibilities similar to Boards of Studies for students following research degrees. It is a faculty level forum for discussion on matters relating to research degrees. It has specific responsibility for: monitoring students and their

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

progression onto the following year; QA monitoring of faculty research provision; and consideration of initial monitoring and reporting to URDC for ratification.

University Research Degree Committee (URDC)

4. The URDC has two distinct functions. Firstly it considers policy, regulations and external requirements and guidelines with regard to research degrees, mirroring the functions of Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) and Academic Regulations Committee (ARC) for the taught provision. Secondly it has responsibilities similar to an Examination Board for students following research degrees, ratifying all assessment of research degree theses and viva voce and annual progression of students. It oversees the work of FRDCs, and receives exceptional cases and issues concerned with registration, monitoring, and assessment and any other issues referred by FRDC.
5. The URDC relates to QEC on matters of quality assurance of research degree provision. URDC determines the cycle of the Internal Review of Post Graduate Research Student Experience, and approves the faculty action plans, which are also reported to QEC to note. QEC receive faculty monitoring reports, which should also report on research informed teaching. URDC receives faculty research reports and reports to QEC on these where appropriate. The Academic Registrar is an ex officio member of both committees.

Purpose

6. The aim of the section is to indicate quality assurance criteria and process related to admissions, supervision, collaboration, monitoring and review, and to enhance existing documentation related to the delivery of research degrees at Kingston University. Sections enhance or emphasise processes fully articulated elsewhere, which are located in:
 - research students' handbook
 - supervision handbook for students
 - supervision handbook for staff
 - regulations for research degree qualifications

Criteria

7. Appropriate checks are in place at admissions to ensure that research projects are realistic and achievable and the student is well placed to succeed
8. The student has the optimum level of support through supervision to meet the requirements of the award, and that any forced changes to supervisory teams are managed

Section M

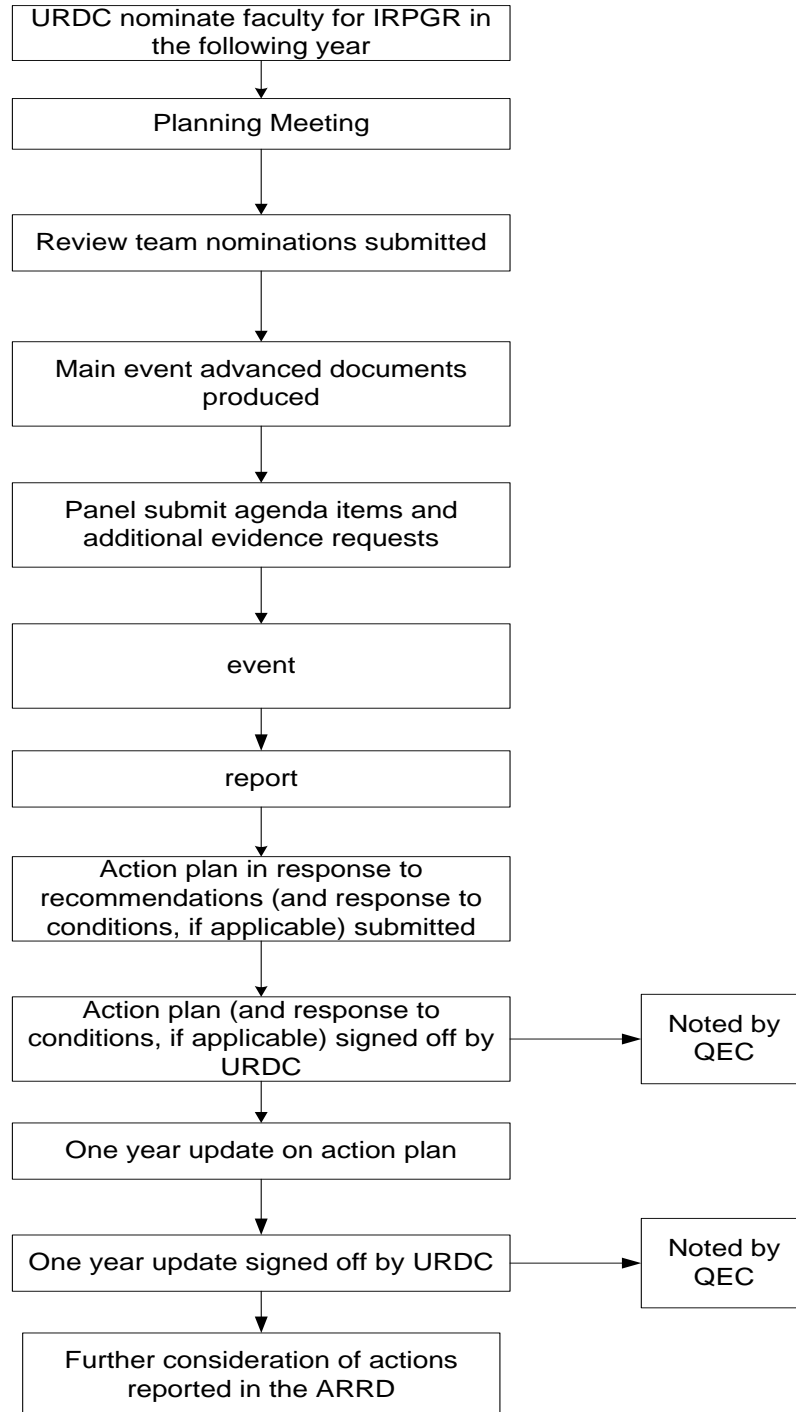
Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

9. Monitoring is undertaken annually to reassure the faculty and the university that research degrees are being supported and success rates fall within normal expectations against national benchmarks. Reviews are undertaken cyclically and confirm that the student support is robust and meets requirements and expectations of the University and the QAA code of practice
10. Collaborations undergo sufficient testing to ensure that student interests are protected and University criteria for research can be continually met.

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

Flowchart

11. The flowchart below, illustrates in diagrammatic form the IRPGR process.



Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

Processes

Admissions

12. The admission process for research degree applicants has a number of discrete stages and is fully detailed in the Research Degrees: Staff Handbook (pages 5 to 9) <http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C14/Research%20Students/default.aspx>

Admissions and supervising of students studying primarily overseas

13. The Faculty Research Degrees Committee will consider applications from prospective research students who are to be based primarily overseas. Close consideration will be given to the frequency and nature of contact between the supervisors (especially the Director of Studies) and the student, the local availability of library and other appropriate resources. Applicants should nominate an appropriately qualified local supervisor. The arrangements will be subject to ratification by the University Research Degrees Committee.
14. The Director of Studies is always based at KU. These arrangements might also include cohorts from a particular institution with which the University might want to agree some generic aspects and some individual arrangements. These would be agreed on a case by case basis by URDC
15. Requirements in relation to students based overseas include.
 - A supplement is required to the RD3b form regarding supervisory arrangements. A letter must be attached from the overseas institution where the student will be based as a supplement to the RD3b form confirming that the resources outlined in this letter will be made available to the student.
 - Partner supervisors must be provided with a pack to include Graduate Research School (GRS), general and University level information and Academic Development Centre (ADC) training pack (supervisor training). ADC pack is available on staff space at (<http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C14/Research%20Students/default.aspx>)
 - Attendance is required at induction and generic skills training unless exemption granted by FRDC. This includes mandatory and optional elements.

Advance Standing

16. The MPhil and MSc is the equivalent of 180 credits and the PhD is the equivalent of 360 credits. However, the credit is not defined except at qualification level. Therefore, it is not possible to accredit prior learning.
17. However, a student can enter the research project with advanced standing. Where a faculty is satisfied that work presented prior to entry constitutes

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

significant progress towards completion of a research project, and which has not been recognised for prior award, the student's application can be considered under the process of initial monitoring, and if successful the research project commences post initial monitoring. This decision must be ratified by the URDC. The student must register for at least 24 months, before being eligible for an award, or for writing up status. In these instances, the student will be registered directly onto the PhD.

18. No advanced standing is considered for MPhil or MSc by Research registration.

Supervision

19. All research students will have a Director of Study as a first line supervisor and at least one additional supervisor. Changes to the supervisory team must be communicated formally and immediately to the student. When a Director of Study is no longer able to supervise a project, the normal practice is to move the secondary supervisor into the director of study role.
20. The contact time expected between students and their supervisory team is set at a minimum of one meeting a month, on average, for full time students, and pro-rata for part-time students. The University provides guidance on the rights and responsibilities of both students and supervisors regarding the supervisory process and an agreement on the exact level of interaction is expected to be reached by mutual agreement between both parties at the time of registration.
21. A record of supervisory meetings is maintained by the student and signed off by both the student and any supervisors present.
22. In order to ensure that no supervisor becomes overloaded, experienced staff are normally expected to have no more than 6 supervisions, that can be allocated across a maximum of 10 individual students, including some registered on a part-time basis. Less experienced staff members are normally expected to have not more than 4, across a maximum of 5 individual students. Numbers are monitored through the FRDCs and the URDC when an application for registration is received.

Collaborations

23. The university considers two categories of collaboration:
 - a. individual or cohort research students who undertake their academic research within a wider cultural or commercial context that requires the close collaboration of the university with another organisation. Such cross sector projects are actively encouraged by the Research Councils and attract funding accordingly.

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- b. in cases where Kingston University requires additional physical or staffing resources to support a programme of research, most likely to support an overseas student or cohort, or when the University share academic processes with another institution suitable collaborative arrangements may be proposed.
24. Within this section of the handbook the term cohort refers to a number of students (more than one) embarking on a research degree at the same time, connected by an association to an approved partner institution or a specific research fund. There is no substantive difference of experience between such students and individual research students.
25. Exceptionally, the University will enter a joint degree arrangement (see section B), where academic process and decision are shared. In these cases, the institutions will need to consider the regulations of the award and may need to develop bespoke regulations that meet the requirements of each institution. In these instances an institutional agreement is required.

Category A

26. These types of arrangements include those covered by AHRC and EPSRC.
27. The faculty identifies and bids for the funds to support a research project with another organisation.
28. An agreement is drawn up with the partner to outline the responsibilities of each with regards to support for the student(s), the role of the supervisors, monitoring and review, management of the agreement, and financial considerations.
29. In these collaborations, the partner is required to provide a second supervisor.
30. The partner supervisor is invited to attend supervisor training and is provided with the research students' handbook, Information for staff, the ADC supervisor training pack and faculty information.
31. The student is subject to the standard admissions process. Where a research student is working in a collaborative arrangement, evidence must be appended to the application for provisional registration giving details of the nature of the arrangement.

Category B

32. A class B joint collaborative programme is likely to have some or all of the following characteristics:
- The partner is responsible for the induction of students;
 - Research and related skills training is provided by Partner;
 - Application jointly considered;

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- The Director of Studies is based at the partner;
 - The partner is responsible for the training of the research supervisor;
 - Initial Monitoring and Confirmation of Registration shared or done by the partner;
 - Annual Monitoring shared or done by the partner;
 - The primary research environment for the students is based at the partner.
33. The following requirements will not be devolved to partners:
- Recommendations for conferment of award;
 - Appointment of external examiners;
 - KU Academic Regulations and Appeals requirements always apply (in the exceptional cases of Joint Awards the Institutions may develop bespoke regulations subject to approval by the appropriate committees, being for KU URDC and ARC).
34. If any of the above apply to a proposal then the faculty must seek partner approval from Academic Directorate, following the process described in Section B. As research degrees are not validated, but approved at URDC, Academic Directorate will normally recommend an approval visit as part of the partner approval process. A place cannot be offered until a signed Institutional Agreement has been received and logged in AQS and an approval report has been confirmed subsequent to the visit. Given the costs associated, Academic Directorate will consider only those proposals where the partner institution is supporting a cohort or significant throughput of research students.
35. The following table outlines the QA requirements related to the criteria for a collaborative agreement.

Characteristic	Evidence for approval visit	Ongoing monitoring and other requirements
The partner is responsible for the induction of students.	Programme, student information and handbook,	As part of the faculty report to URDC
Research and related skills training is provided by Partner	Nature of the training, programme of training, staff CVs	Require report on attendance.
Application jointly considered	Description of a joint process or confirmation that KU process is used	Considered as part of annual report Process, if not KU, must be noted as a schedule to the IA

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

The Director of Studies is based at the partner	Staff CV	Secondary supervisors must be KU
The partner is responsible for the training of the research supervisor.	Nature of training, timing of training, evaluation and QA processes	Training must be completed prior to supervisory role being undertaken and confirmed to KU Any such training must meet minimum requirements
Initial Monitoring and Confirmation of Registration shared or done by the partner	Process of communication, line of responsibilities, identification of independent person	report required to URDC. Process, if not KU, must be noted as a schedule to the IA
Annual Monitoring shared or done by the partner	Process of communication, line of responsibilities,	Reports into KU committee structure Process, if not KU, must be noted as a schedule to the IA
The primary research environment for the students is based at the partner	Determined during the visit Tour of resources Meeting the staff etc.	KU staff to visit 2 times a year All changes to registration to be agreed by KU Chair of viva panel to be KU

36. The External Examiner will be appointed by KU and reports will be considered according to standard procedures by URDC.

Monitoring

37. Monitoring in research has two functions: it monitors student progress and as such acts in a similar fashion to a programme assessment board; it collates student and supervisory team views on the faculty management of research, as such acting more as a student survey, and Module Review and Development Plan. Whilst these two functions in practice are indivisible, this section considers only those aspects related to the latter aspects of quality assurance monitoring.
38. Based on the information gathered in the individual monitoring forms and faculty wide progression and award data, faculties produce an Annual Report on Research Degrees (ARRD) to monitor the progress of research programmes. Included with the reports are data on student numbers, including completions and withdrawals and demonstration of how research is informing taught provision

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

within the faculty. The final report is considered by the FRDC and submitted to the URDC. (LINK Annual report template)

39. The URDC considers all reports alongside summaries of feedback from external examiners, complaints and appeals and Careers Service activities and ensures that University policies are being applied consistently across all areas and there is quality of provision in each faculty.
40. The outcomes of URDC discussions relating to these information sources are used to inform developments in institutional policy regarding research students, and to identify good practice for implementation across the University.
41. The faculty annual research reports are noted at the following QEC.

Internal Review of Post Graduate Research Student Experience (IRPGR)

42. Periodic review of the postgraduate research student experience enables the University to reassure itself that Faculties are discharging their responsibilities appropriately as set out in the Academic Regulations for Research Degrees (Masters by Research, MPhil, PhD) and the Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors. It is a means of confirming Faculty adherence to University policies and quality assurance procedures with regard to postgraduate research students and their alignment to the *QAA Code of Practice Section 1 – Postgraduate Research Programmes*, and of identifying good practice worthy of dissemination in the University.
43. The review covers activities in relation to recruitment, registration, training, supervision, support and examination of postgraduate research degree students in all Faculties and collaborative partners.

The cycle

44. The cycle of review is every six years. This is subject to a review of the process itself by URDC during the fifth year of the first cycle. URDC determines the schedule of review by faculty.

Process

45. The Graduate Research School and Academic Registry are responsible for co-ordinating the process through the Assistant Registrar. Chairs of FRDCs are responsible for co-ordinating the process for each Faculty ensuring timely provision of documentation and nomination of staff and students.
46. The review is undertaken by a panel composed as follows:
 - Chair of URDC (Chair)
 - One external assessor (nominated by the Faculty*)

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- Chair of FRDC from another Faculty
- Head of Graduate Research School
- Officer (Assistant Registrar (PGR))

47. *The external assessor should meet the following criteria:

- qualified to doctorate level
- subject expertise that falls within the cognate disciplines within the faculty
- significant supervisory experience
- has not been associated with the University for the previous five years in the role of External Examiner, employee or guest lecturer, and has not been involved in more than two previous quality assurance events within the last two years.

The faculty nominates the external review members and submits this to AQS on form C2. AQS nominates the FRDC chair from another faculty.

Procedure

48. A planning meeting is held to agree the particulars of the IRPGR. It is normally held during the preceding Academic Year to when the IRPGR is due to take place.

Purpose of the ISR planning meeting

49. The task of the planning meeting is to:

- identify individuals responsible for preparing for the IRPGR and the preparation of the contextual submission
- identify documentation required for the IRPGR, to be provided for the review team in advance
- identify dates for the review
- agree the nature of evidence to be provided at the time of the review
- identify individuals responsible for the local administration of the review
- identify review team members/categories of membership (final membership to be agreed by AQS)
- agree the range of students and graduates to meet the review team;
- agree the range of staff to meet the review team
- plan the timetable for the review event and any optional meetings to be included

Documents for the IRPGR Planning Meeting

50. AQS circulates a standard agenda for IRPGR planning meetings in advance.

Constitution of the IRPGR Planning Meeting

51. Planning meetings are normally constituted as:

- Chair of the forthcoming event (Chair)

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- Representative of AQS (clerk)
- Associate Dean for research
- Chair of Faculty Quality Assurance Committee(s)
- Head of Graduate School
- Research Administrator

Report of the Planning Meeting

52. The AQS representative produces brief notes of the outcomes of the meeting. The notes detail the dates for submission of documentation to AQS and the date for circulating the preliminary agenda and additional documentation requests to the subject providers. The notes also state any documentation identified at the planning meeting that should accompany the contextual document over and above the standard requirements. These notes are for internal use only.

Themes of the audit

53. The review focuses on evidence from the Faculty including supporting documentation and meetings with academic staff, support staff and students. Themes for the audit include:
- Efficiency and effectiveness of application procedures including accuracy of information; entry and selection procedures for UK and overseas students;
 - Training and personal and professional development of research degree students in line with RCUK, QAA and HEFCE guidance;
 - Training and development of staff to supervise research degree students;
 - Adherence to the regulatory framework for research degrees including the supervision of research degree students and research outcomes align with the D level descriptors;
 - Student support arrangements;
 - Student monitoring and progression arrangements including safeguarding against plagiarism;
 - Provision of support for research students who teach;
 - Final examination process;
 - Mechanisms for obtaining and responding to student feedback;
 - Complaints and appeals processes and procedures;
 - Completion rates and progress against University targets;
 - Career progress of students.

Documentation

54. Seven copies of the documentation should be provided to AQS no later than three weeks prior to the event.
55. The key documentation is:
- Faculty Annual Report on Research Degrees (ARRD*);

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- Faculty response to the QAA Code of Practice mapping exercise.
56. Depending on the time in the cycle, the Faculty may wish to supplement these documents with additional or more recent contextual information.
57. Supporting documentation to be provided in advance:
- a list of all current research students and their supervisors;
 - sample applicant information including sample offer letter;
 - details of postgraduate research student induction arrangements at faculty level;
 - a copy of the Faculty postgraduate research student handbook (or equivalent);
 - any additional guidance notes for research students and copies of documents given to research students (e.g. Faculty policies);
 - faculty information or guidance notes for supervisors;
 - Agendas, Minutes and Papers of Faculty Research Degrees Committee meetings (last academic year);
 - career destination information for past students, if available.
- *Supplements to the ARRD if necessary:
- details of training provided to supervisors and attendance records (only if updates to the ARRD are necessary);
 - details of training provided to research students and attendance records (only if updates to the ARRD are necessary);
 - details of student numbers, withdrawal and completion rates (only if updates to the ARRD are necessary).
58. Specimen student files have to be provided from all research degree levels and should be representative. They will normally include:
- two files of successful PhD students
 - two files of successful Masters by Research students
 - two files of current PhD students
 - two files of current Masters by Research students
 - one file of PhD by publication (if applicable)
 - one file of Professional Doctorate (if applicable)
59. Specimen files should be fully documented from entry to completion. Files normally include the following:
- application form and outline of research proposal;
 - reference letters;
 - offer letter;
 - RD3b (Registration Details Form);
 - copy of minute of URDC approval if non-standard registration (overseas based/collaborative/practice based);

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- ethics approval (if applicable);
- Initial Monitoring and Annual Monitoring reports;
- records of students supervisory meetings;
- general correspondence with student, for example, on progression, suspension of study, change of mode etc.;
- records of approval of any changes to the research proposal (if applicable);
- RD9 examination arrangements approval form;
- internal and external examiner reports and recommendations.

60. Faculties are invited to include in the files instances where problems have arisen and how they have been dealt with. If this cannot be done prior to the meeting, they should be made available on the day in the panel meeting room at the start of the review so that Panel members can inspect them prior to the meetings with staff and students.

Meetings

61. Apart from considering the documentation submitted the Review Panel conducts meetings with a representative sample of:
- senior academic staff of the Faculty with responsibility for research and research students;
 - academic staff with current and/or recent responsibility for supervising postgraduate research students (to include both experienced and novice Directors of Study and supervisors) and administrative/support staff involved in the support of research students;
 - Current research students.
62. A typical agenda for IRPGR is:
- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 09.30 – 10.00 | Private review team meeting |
| 10.00 – 11.00 | Tour of resources |
| 11.00 – 13.00 | Analysis of evidence |
| 13.00 – 13.30 | Lunch break |
| 13.30 – 14.30 | Meeting with current postgraduate students |
| 14.30 – 15.00 | Private review team meeting |
| 15.00 – 16.30 | Meeting with the senior team and supervisors |
| 16.30 – 17.00 | Private review team meeting |
| 17.00 – 17.15 | Feedback |

Other documentation for consideration by the Panel

63. The panel considers the Faculty's submission in the context of internal and external documentation available and relevant to the audit process. These typically include:

Section M

Research Degrees (Covering Masters by Research, MPhil and PhD)

- University policies and procedures for postgraduate research provision, supervision and examination;
- general University information and guidance notes for postgraduate research students;
- University Regulations for postgraduate research study and examinations;
- recent URDC minutes relating to students from the Faculty to be audited;
- *QAA Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes*;
- national benchmark data on research student progression and completion rates;
- guidance notes for review teams (see guidance GM(i)).

Reporting

64. The Panel Officer drafts a report on behalf of the Review Panel. The unconfirmed report is sent to Panel members for comment and correction of errors and omissions. The final report is submitted to the next meeting of the University's URDC and QEC for consideration.
65. The report includes a judgement on the effectiveness with which Faculties have discharged their responsibilities. The report also highlights good practice and informs the University of any issues that need urgent attention as a result of the review either through matters for immediate action or recommendations.
66. An action plan in response to the report is produced by the Faculty and relevant departments and thereafter a 1 year follow up. The report and 1 year follow up is considered by URDC and reported to QEC. Faculties are asked to comment on actions taken in following years as part of the ARRD.