



Academic Regulations
for Research Degree Programmes
2022/23

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1. Introduction and Scope of the Regulations

- 1.1 These postgraduate research degree regulations apply to all postgraduate research programmes offered by SOAS University of London (“the School”). Where a student is enrolled with both SOAS and a partner institution, it will be agreed whether the SOAS or the partner regulations will apply.
- 1.2 The School’s [Taught Degree Regulations](#) do not apply to postgraduate research degree students except where individual taught modules are being taken as part of their programme.
- 1.3 These regulations should be read together with the following regulations, policies and documents:
 - General and Admissions Regulations
 - Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees
 - Code of Practice for Distance and Blended Learning Research Degrees
 - Student Engagement Policy – Postgraduate Research Students
 - Mitigating Circumstances Policy for Research Students
 - MPhil/PhD Examinations Handbook

2. Enrolment and Fees

- 2.1 Students who are admitted to the School should complete enrolment before the start date specified in their offer letter. Students are not entitled to supervision or access to School facilities until enrolment has been completed, including arrangements for the payment of tuition fees. In all cases, students must have completed enrolment no later than two weeks after the specified start date.
- 2.2 Students must enrol at the start of each subsequent year of their programme, unless an interruption of studies has been approved in advance. In order to be eligible to enrol in subsequent years, students must have complied with the progression requirements of their programme
- 2.3 A student who fails to enrol by the published deadline will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies, and their record will be closed.
- 2.4 The School reserves the right to decline or withdraw the enrolment of students who do not hold the appropriate immigration status, or who fail to comply with the conditions of their visa.
- 2.5 Students will pay the relevant tuition fee for the expected period of study appropriate to their mode of attendance and target exit award (e.g. 3 years fees for a full-time PhD). Should studies continue beyond this period, a continuation fee will be charged.
- 2.6 Where a student submits a thesis before the end of the expected period of study, they must make arrangements to pay any balance of fees owing for the expected period of study before the thesis may be examined. For example, a PhD student will be due to pay 3 years full-time tuition fee or part-time equivalent.

3. Research Degree Programmes

- 3.1 The research degrees of the School are Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil).
- 3.2 The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is awarded to students who have registered for the SOAS PhD or MPhil/PhD programme, completed relevant research training, devised and implemented a research project within the degree requirements, and demonstrated that the work examined forms a significant, distinct and original contribution to the knowledge of the subject.
- 3.3 The degree of Master of Philosophy is awarded to students who have registered for a SOAS MPhil or MPhil/PhD programme, completed relevant research training, devised and implemented a research project within the degree requirements, and demonstrated that the work examined demonstrates a thorough understanding and critical assessment of knowledge within the subject.
- 3.4 The minimum, expected, and maximum period of study, from first enrolment to submission of thesis, for each programme is set out below:

Award	Minimum	Expected	Maximum
PhD full-time	2	3	4
PhD part-time	4	6	7
PhD +4 programme full-time	2	4	5
PhD +4 programme part-time	4	8	9
MPhil full-time	2	2	3
MPhil part-time	4	4	5

- 3.5 A student may be permitted to transfer from a research degree programme at another recognised higher education institution in order to enter the MPhil/PhD programme. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis, and where advance standing is granted, will reduce the minimum, expected and maximum dates for an individual student.
- 3.6 In exceptional circumstances, a student may apply to transfer from full-time to part-time, or vice-versa, by applying to the Doctoral School. Approval to change will depend on the appropriateness of the proposed mode of study for the student's research project and visa status. Where approval to change mode of attendance is granted, a new expected and maximum date for submission of the student's thesis will be calculated, with each completed month of full-time study equivalent to two months of part-time study.
- 3.7 Postgraduate research degree programmes must be pursued continuously except where an interruption of studies has been approved by the School. Students may apply to the Doctoral School for a period of interruption, and any interruption granted does not count towards the student's period of study. Normally no more than one year will be granted in total during the student's research programme. When a period of interruption is granted, a return to study date

will be agreed. The student must register and resume their studies on that date; otherwise they will be withdrawn from study.

- 3.8 Interruption of study is intended to support students who require a block of time away from their studies, for example due to illness or maternity/paternity. For shorter, more routine breaks, each student has an annual leave allowance as set out in the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

4. Supervision and Engagement

- 4.1 All postgraduate research degree students are appointed a two-person supervisory committee to support them in their research project. There may be some circumstances where it is considered appropriate for a third member of the supervisory committee to be appointed to provide support for particular aspects of the research. The Principal Supervisor has overall responsibility for ensuring the student receives support and is progressing, but other members of the supervisory team should be regularly involved in meetings. The supervisory team may not be changed without the approval of the College Director of Doctoral Studies or Head of College.
- 4.2 Postgraduate research degree students are required to take responsibility for their own learning and research by meeting regularly with their supervisors, undertaking the annual training needs analysis and engaging with their agreed training plan.
- 4.3 Postgraduate research degree students are considered to be studying in attendance unless registered on a designated distance or blended programme. Doctoral students, whether full-time or part-time, are required to undertake research for their degree based at SOAS in London unless registered on a programme delivered in partnership with another institution, in which case attendance or residence requirements will be specified in the programme specification. Doctoral students should ensure that they attend SOAS in person regularly to pursue their research and for training and meetings in accordance with the [SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) and the Student Engagement Policy. As a minimum, all students must meet with their supervisors monthly.
- 4.4 Postgraduate research degree students studying on a programme specifically designated as being a distance or blended programme are required to attend at SOAS on such occasions as outlined in their programme specification and the *Code of Practice for Distance and Blended Research Degrees*. Students are expected to maintain regular contact with their supervisor and engage with research training and other required activities.
- 4.5 Following completion of the consideration for upgrade to PhD (see section 5), postgraduate research degree students may be granted permission for fieldwork away from SOAS subject to relevant provisions of the [SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) and applicable departmental requirements.

5. Progression

- 5.1 Postgraduate research degree students whose aim is to complete a PhD are initially registered as MPhil/PhD students and considered for upgrade to PhD enrolment during the first year of full-time, or second year of part-time, study. For doctoral students on the +4 pathway consideration for upgrade to PhD enrolment will take place during the second year of study.

- 5.2 Students must complete the Research Integrity Programme and submit an application for ethical approval of the proposed research project within 6 months of first enrolment. Failure to do so will delay the upgrade process and could have a negative impact on the student's ability to progress.
- 5.3 Where a student seeks to undertake a PhD by a combination of thesis and portfolio of original creative work, approval must be obtained prior to upgrade. The student, having consulted appropriately with the SOAS Library and Research Office, should prepare a proposal for the portfolio content making clear what work will be created, how the work relates to their research, the medium to be used and how it is to be recorded and presented for examination and preservation thereafter. If the creative work has written or spoken elements this should normally be in English, however a request can be made to permit another language to be used. Proposals that are supported by the candidate's supervisory committee should be forwarded to the Director of Doctoral Studies for approval.
- 5.4 The progress of research students will be evaluated by an annual progression review. This review will consider the student's progress towards agreed milestones in their research, as well as their engagement with training opportunities and development of research competencies.
- 5.5 A formal progression review will be held for each student after 9 months' study. The review panel may recommend any of the following to the Doctoral School:
- (a) To note satisfactory progress towards the student's intended qualification aim;
 - (b) At the year 1 review for a full-time student, or the year 2 review for a part-time or +4 student, to confirm progression as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
 - (c) Where sufficient progress has not been made, to transfer enrolment to Master of Philosophy;
 - (d) Where progress is unsatisfactory, to require the student to withdraw from the research degree programme;
 - (e) In exceptional circumstances, to defer a decision, once only, for not more than 3 months, with a follow-up review to be held. In such cases, the reviewing panel may set conditions that the student is required to meet before the follow-up review. Failure to meet such conditions could result in transfer of enrolment or withdrawal.

In the case of recommendations under (c) and (d) above, the Doctoral School will convene a meeting of the Research Degrees Panel to consider the recommendation.

- 5.6 Where a student has not met the requirements to upgrade to PhD at the first year review (which may include a single deferral as outlined in (e) above) they will no longer be eligible for progression to PhD.
- 5.7 Where the student's enrolment is transferred, the maximum permitted period of enrolment for the new qualification aim will apply, and the period of study prior to transfer will count towards that maximum period.

- 5.8 In cases where the student is unable to complete within the maximum permitted period for the new target award, a Suspension of Regulations may be sought, on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Panel, and if approved, a final completion date agreed.
- 5.9 Progression is overseen by the Research Degrees Panel, and a student has a right of appeal against a progression decision taken by the Panel, under the Academic Appeals Procedure.

6. Writing Up and Examination

- 6.1 Doctoral students on a full-time enrolment for the three-year programme are expected to undertake writing up of the thesis during the third year of study following completion of fieldwork and/or data collection in year two. This timetable is adjusted accordingly for part-time enrolment. Doctoral students enrolled on the +4 pathway will undertake writing up during the fourth year of full-time enrolment.
- 6.2 Doctoral students are permitted a maximum of one additional year at the conclusion of their normal period of full-time or part-time study for completion of the writing-up of their thesis on Extension of Writing-up status. The thesis must be submitted for examination by the end of this additional year of study; otherwise the student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the School, and their record will be closed.
- 6.3 A successful thesis for the award of Doctor of Philosophy must meet the following requirements:
- (a) not exceed 100,000 words, excluding bibliography and appendices. Appendices must only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis but to which they may refer if they wish
 - (b) be written in English;
 - (c) consist of the student's own account of their investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of enrolment at the School;
 - (d) form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;
 - (e) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
 - (f) demonstrate research skills relevant to the thesis being presented;
 - (g) satisfy the examiners with regard to literary presentation;
 - (h) merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form.
- 6.4 A successful submission for the PhD by thesis and portfolio must meet the following requirements:
- (a) The thesis must be a minimum of 25,000 words and not exceed 75,000 words, excluding bibliography and appendices. Appendices must only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis but to which they may refer if they wish;

- (b) The portfolio should include the original creative work of the student, recorded/printed in the format agreed at the point of upgrade;
- (c) The thesis must be written in English. The portfolio work, if it contains verbal or written elements, should normally be in English, but with approval, may be in another language with an English translation provided;
- (d) Consist of the student's own account of their investigation and their own creative work, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of enrolment at the School;
- (e) Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical and creative power;
- (f) Be an integrated whole and together the thesis and portfolio should present a coherent argument;
- (g) Demonstrate research and creative skills relevant to the thesis being presented;
- (h) Satisfy the examiners with regards to literary and creative presentation;
- (i) Merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form.

6.5 A successful thesis for MPhil award must meet the following requirements:

- (a) not exceed 60,000 words excluding bibliography and appendices. Appendices must only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis but to which they may refer if they wish;
- (b) be written in English;
- (c) consist of the student's own account of their investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of enrolment at the School;
- (d) be a record either of original work or of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and shall provide evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly;
- (e) give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings and include a discussion on those findings;
- (f) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
- (g) satisfy the examiners with regard to literary presentation.

6.6 In order to move into the examination phase of study, the doctoral student must complete an Entry to Examination request no later than two months before submission of the thesis for examination via PhD Manager. Failure to do so will delay the *viva voce* examination.

6.7 The School will appoint an Examining Panel following a student's entry to examination request which will be comprised of the following:

- a) At least two suitably qualified and experienced examiners, at least one of whom shall be external to SOAS;

- b) One member of SOAS academic staff to act as independent internal chair.

In exceptional circumstances, the Head of the Doctoral School and Academic Registrar may jointly agree to waive the requirement for an independent internal chair.

- 6.8 Submission forms and an electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Doctoral School via PhD Manager as set out in the [Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research](#) or *Code of Practice for Distance and Blended Research Degrees* by the student's deadline for submission. Failure to submit a thesis for examination by the end of the maximum period of study will lead to the student being withdrawn and their record closed.
- 6.9 A non-electronic version of the thesis may be requested by either examiner, in which case the student is required to provide up to two hard copies to the Doctoral School.
- 6.10 Following submission, a date will be arranged for the student to undertake a viva voce examination as part of the examination and confirmed to the student, supervisor and examiners.
- 6.11 At the end of the *viva voce* examination, the examiners will confer and reach a unanimous decision on the outcome. While they may give an informal decision to the student, they must be clear that they are making a recommendation, and that the final decision rests with the School. The examiners will provide a joint written report that specifies the outcome of the examination, and append to the report a list of any corrections to the thesis that are required.
- 6.12 At the first examination for PhD, the following outcomes are possible:
 - (a) Pass;
 - (b) Pass, provided minor corrections are made within 3 months of the release of the result;
 - (c) Not pass, but resubmission with major corrections permitted within 12 months of the release of the result. In such cases a second viva may be held;
 - (d) Not pass, but with recommendation of award of MPhil;
 - (e) Not pass, with a recommendation of MPhil to be awarded upon satisfactory completion of minor corrections within 3 months of the release of the result;
 - (f) Not pass, with a recommendation of MPhil to be awarded upon satisfactory completion of major corrections within 12 months of the release of the result. In such cases a second viva may be held;
 - (g) Fail, with no opportunity for re-examination.
- 6.13 At the first examination for MPhil, the following outcomes are possible:
 - (a) Pass;
 - (b) Pass with minor corrections to be made within 3 months of the release of the result;
 - (c) Not pass, but resubmission with major corrections permitted within 12 months of the release of the result. In such cases a second viva may be held;
 - (d) Fail, with no opportunity for re-examination.

7. Corrections and Re-examination

- 7.1 A student who is required to submit minor corrections within 3 months of the release of the examination result will be given a deadline date for submission of a revised thesis with the required corrections. Failure to submit the corrections by the due date will lead to the student being withdrawn and no award will be made.
- 7.2 Minor corrections will be reviewed by the Chair, Internal Examiner and External Examiner, unless the External Examiner has explicitly agreed that they may be reviewed by the Internal Examiner and Chair only. If the corrections are satisfactory, the Internal Examiner will notify the Doctoral School and the student will be recommended for the award.
- 7.3 A student who is required to resubmit as a result of a decision at the first examination of 'Not pass, but with major corrections' is permitted one re-entry to examination on resubmission of the corrected work. They will be given a deadline date for submission of a revised thesis, and must submit a re-entry to examination form two months before resubmission. Failure to resubmit by the required date will lead to the student being withdrawn.
- 7.4 The resubmitted thesis will be reviewed by the full Examining Panel, and having reviewed the corrections, the Panel may require a second *viva voce* examination to be held. The following outcomes are possible for students re-entered for examination:
- (a) Pass;
 - (b) Pass with minor corrections to be made within 3 months of the release of the result;
 - (c) Award of MPhil;
 - (d) Award of MPhil with minor corrections to be made within 3 months of the release of the result;
 - (e) Fail, with no opportunity for re-examination.

8. Award of Degree

- 8.1 Students will be awarded the degree only when they have satisfied the examiners, and submitted to the Doctoral School one electronic copy of their final thesis and a completed E-thesis Access Agreement Form.

9. Appeals

- 9.1 Further information can be found in the [General and Admissions Regulations](#) and in the School's [Appeals Policy](#).

10. Change Log

Valid from	Author	Changes	Date
2016/17	Marcus Cerny, Doctoral School Manager		September 2016
2018/19	Rebecca Harrison, Academic Registrar	Terminology updates in line with restructuring. Addition of information regarding distance/blended research degrees (1.4; 4.4.2; 4.4.3; 6.2; 6.8; 6.10). Removal of doctoral candidate logbook requirement (3.5). Information on extended deadlines (3.7). Information relating to PhD by thesis and portfolio (3.7.1; 3.8; 6.2; 6.8). Supervisory committee reduced to two members (4.2). Clarification of submission requirements (6.6). Approved by Valerie Amos taking Chair's Action on behalf of Academic Board 26.07.2018.	August 2018
2019/20	Jenni Rhodes, Academic Registrar, in consultation with the Doctoral School Management Group chaired by Professor Alfredo Saad-Filho, Head of Doctoral School and Professor Richard Fardon, Interim Head of the Doctoral School	Terminology and job title updates in line with restructuring Additional outcome for PhD examination (6.9) Removal of examination fee for resubmission following corrections (6.14)	January 2020
2022/23	Susan Campbell, Philip Ramage, Academic Registrar in consultation with Professor Andrea Cornwall, Pro-Director for Research, Professor Lutz Marten, Head of the Doctoral School, Andres Chavez Ocana, Head of Student Strategic Initiatives. Drafts discussed by Regulations Committee, Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Committee, Executive Board, Academic Senate, and Academic Board.	Redefined scope of these regulations (1.1) Inclusion of all other relevant regulations, policies and documents (1.3) Clearly outlines the need for enrolment before relevant deadlines (2.1) Clearly defines the need for re-enrolment and requirements (2.2) Defines the consequences associated with non-enrolment (2.3) Enrolment requirements for Visa sponsored students (2.4) Student fee requirements in relation to mode of study (2.5) Fee requirements for students who submit before the expected period of study (2.6)	June 2022

		<p>Defines the research degrees available for award by the SOAS Doctoral School (3.1)</p> <p>Outlines the minimum and maximum periods of study for each programme (3.4)</p> <p>Ability for transfer from a other research degree programmes at other recognised institutions through consideration (3.5)</p> <p>Clarifies criteria for changes in mode of study (3.6)</p> <p>Defines the need for continuous study, the interruption of studies status and the need to resume studies upon its termination (3.7)</p> <p>Annual leave entitlement (3.8)</p> <p>Definement of supervisory committee structure and responsibilities (4.1)</p> <p>Changes to the minimum supervisory meeting attendance requirement (4.3)</p> <p>Addition to reference of conditions outlined in section 5 (4.5)</p> <p>Renaming of ethics training (5.2)</p> <p>Clarification of what is considered by the annual progression review (5.4)</p> <p>Recommendations available to the review panel following formal progression review (5.5)</p> <p>Maximum period to receive Upgrade confirmation (5.6)</p> <p>Maximum enrolment period following transfer to new qualification (5.7)</p> <p>Requirement for a Suspension of Regulation if target award cannot be met within prescribed timeframe (5.8)</p> <p>Highlights appeals procedure in relation to progression decision (5.9)</p> <p>Requirement for completion of Entry to Examination in a timely manner (6.6)</p> <p>Composition of Examination Panel (6.7)</p>	
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11. Document Control Information

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