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1.0 The Doctoral College and Our Research Student Community

Every research student's experience is unique, but you are likely to find that undertaking a research degree is quite different from your previous experience of higher education – particularly if you are unfamiliar with the UK higher education system.

The Doctoral College acts as an umbrella for the University's academic and supporting services for research students and works to make sure that your time here is enjoyable and productive.

1.1 Welcome to the University of Leicester

You are joining one of the UK's largest and most vibrant postgraduate communities and, along with over 1,900 other research students, you will benefit from being a member of a University that combines a strong and proven track record of successful postgraduate support, together with an internationally regarded research reputation.

The Doctoral College is at the heart of our postgraduate research community and provides support to research students across the University's three academic Colleges. This handbook will help you to make the most of your time here and we hope that it will be of value to you now as you start your research degree, through to your final year as you look towards submitting your thesis and sitting your viva voce examination. The Handbook describes the academic and other support services available to you, as well as containing important administrative advice. There is also an introduction to the Doctoral College's skills and career development programmes through which you will develop the skills you need to become an effective researcher and successfully complete your degree together, as well as develop the professional skills that will be of use to you during your time at the University and in your career going forward, whether in academia or beyond.

The Handbook is designed primarily for research students on PhD, MD, PsyD, and MPhil programmes – but those on other research degree programmes will also find useful general advice.

Other useful information linked to this handbook can be found on Research Essentials Online:

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

You can also keep up with the latest news and find helpful advice on completing your degree by liking the Doctoral College on Facebook:

► **www.facebook.com/UniversityOfLeicesterDoctoralCollege**

We want your experience at the University of Leicester to be productive, successful, and enjoyable, and we hope that this handbook will be of help you, as you explore the range of opportunities available to our research students – but if you have any questions about the information here, or have a suggestion for something we should include in future editions, please do get in touch.

1.2 About the Doctoral College

The Doctoral College replaced the Graduate School in September 2017. The Doctoral College provides an umbrella under which the postgraduate research activity of the University is organised. The Doctoral College ensures that researchers across different stages of the research career are at the heart of the University's intellectual endeavour. In partnership with academics and professional services, the Doctoral College creates a research environment that delivers a rewarding experience for all researchers, particularly postgraduate researchers.

The Doctoral College has 4 key components associated with Postgraduate Research Degrees:

- The Dean of the Doctoral College
- College Directors of Postgraduate Research
- Doctoral College Team
- Doctoral College Office

The Dean of the Doctoral College

The Doctoral College is headed by the Dean of the Doctoral College Professor Dave Lambert. The Dean is a senior academic who is the voice for postgraduate research students and early career researchers on all major University committees. The Dean works with partners across the University to promote and deliver academic and support services for postgraduate research students. The Dean is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of academic standards and integrity for all research degrees at the University.

College Directors of Postgraduate Research

Each of the University's Colleges has a Director of Postgraduate Research who plays an important role in assisting the Dean of the Doctoral College and the Heads of each College in formulating and implementing policies and procedures relating to research students. These Directors play an important role in ensuring University policy is implemented at College level and that there is effective communication between the Doctoral College and each of the academic Colleges:

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities	Professor Neil Christie njc10@le.ac.uk
College of Medicine, Biological Sciences, and Psychology	Professor Don Jones djlj1@le.ac.uk
College of Science and Engineering	Professor Mark Williams mri@le.ac.uk

Doctoral College Team

The core of the Doctoral College Team is comprised of researcher development staff, who provide personal and professional development opportunities to enhance your research and your employability, in academia or beyond; as well as policy and partnership staff who support postgraduate research activity more broadly within the institution.

The Doctoral College Office

The Doctoral College Office deals with all administrative matters relating to registered research students. If you need to speak to the Doctoral College Office, you can reach them by email at pgresearch@le.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can get help by enquiring at the student service desk on the ground floor of the Charles Wilson Building which is open to visitors Mondays to Fridays from 09:00 to 17:00 – so you can call in if you require advice or information during the course of your degree.

1.3 Postgraduate Research Community

Research students are an important part of the University of Leicester research culture. As a postgraduate research student, you should make the most of the research events and activities in your department and across the University. Most departments have research seminars and dedicated postgraduate seminars where you will have a chance to discuss your research with fellow students. Café Research is also a great place for you to discuss your research with a broad audience of your peers across multiple disciplines. You are encouraged to be involved in the wider research community as much as possible throughout your research degree.

The University has around 1,900 research students. Our research student community is particularly distinctive and very diverse. We have:

- research students working in a wide range of disciplines across three Colleges
- research students registered on eight different research degree programmes
- a mix of British, European, and international research students
- a mix of younger and mature research students
- a mix of full-time and part-time research students
- a mix of campus-based and distance learning research students

This diversity adds to the vibrancy of the University's postgraduate experience and helps to create a stimulating environment for postgraduate research. Despite its size, our research student community is characterised by its friendliness and inclusiveness. Our research students are encouraged to be a part of our research community, to make new networks with other research students, and to raise their individual profile as researchers.

1.4 Understanding Research Degrees

Research degrees are quite different from undergraduate or master's degree programmes. Many new research students, particularly those who are less familiar with the UK higher education system, find it difficult at first to understand what is required to be successful at this level.

A good starting point is to be clear on the characteristics and requirements of a research degree programme and the attributes you will need to demonstrate as a research student.

Research Degree Characteristics

The main characteristics of a research degree such as a PhD or MPhil are:

- the completion by the research student of an independent research project – i.e., a project planned and managed by the research student
- the development and demonstration by the research student of the skills, attributes, and knowledge of a professional and effective researcher
- the writing-up of the research project in the form of a thesis which
 - describes their research question(s)
 - frames their research question(s) in the context of existing knowledge within their discipline
 - describes the methodology used to investigate the research question(s) and the results/findings obtained
 - describes the implications of their results/findings and discusses future research which might arise from their work
- the verbal defence of the thesis to a panel of examiners

The characteristics of a professional doctorate such as the Doctorate in Education (EdD) or Doctor of Social Science (DSocSci) are the same but, in addition, research students on these programmes complete a number of assessed components in the initial stages of the degree through which they frame and develop their research question(s) and advance their skills as a researcher.

A research degree is therefore quite different from a taught programme such as a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree where you follow a set syllabus.

Research Degree Requirements

While the characteristics of all research degrees are – broadly speaking – very similar, there is a difference in the requirements that must be satisfied to be awarded a doctoral qualification and those that must be satisfied for a master's level research degree such as the MPhil.

To be awarded a doctoral qualification, research students must – through their thesis and their defence of this in the viva voce examination – demonstrate that they have:

- a broad knowledge and understanding of their discipline and associated research techniques – i.e. show that they understand the broader research context within which their work sits and can frame their work and their research question(s) with reference to that research context
- applied in their work their knowledge of their discipline and associated research techniques – i.e., that they have chosen a research methodology that is sound, and which is relevant for their research question(s), applied this correctly, and analysed their results/findings appropriately and accurately
- made a distinct and original contribution to knowledge – this does not mean something that completely changes their field; it is likely to be something relatively minor, so long as it adds to knowledge in their field it should meet the requirement for originality
- produced work which is considered to be worthy of publication – i.e., work which satisfies the scholarly and professional requirements associated with publication in a peer-reviewed academic format such as a journal

For research students on a Master of Philosophy programme, the requirements are different and you are not required to make an original contribution to knowledge or to produce work that is considered to be worthy of publication.

Research Student Attributes

Research degrees are demanding and intensive programmes. To succeed at this level, applicants must be highly motivated, be able to work independently and as part of a team, be able to plan and manage their own work, and have an appropriate familiarity with the discipline and its associated research techniques.

1.5 Managing your Research Degree through MyPGR

In August 2019 the University introduced a web application called MyPGR which allows you to record formal supervisory meetings, check information regarding your research degree registration, complete a Training Needs Analysis, maintain a Training plan, and book training. Planned upgrades to the system will automate more functions related to research degree, so it is important to check your MyPGR record frequently and complete any outstanding tasks that are flagged within the system as soon as possible.

MyPGR can be accessed here:

► mypgr.le.ac.uk

1.6 Understanding Research Student Responsibilities

Research students have a number of specific responsibilities and it is important that you make yourself familiar with these right at the start of your research degree programme.

Personal Approach

Before looking at the specific responsibilities of research students, it is worth remembering that all research students are expected to adopt a professional approach to the research degree programme. All research students are expected to:

- show good timekeeping
- observe deadlines
- read and respond to communications from the supervisory team and other members of the University
- take responsibility for their own skills and career development

Specific Responsibilities

Your specific responsibilities as a research student include:

- completing initial registration and any subsequent re-registration as required and, in the case of international research students, complying with all relevant immigration requirements
- making yourself familiar with relevant policies and procedures – in particular, with the Senate Regulations and the Code of Conduct for Research
- developing an appropriate research plan that will enable submission of the thesis for examination within the relevant maximum registration period

- managing and sustaining progress in accordance with the agreed research plan, including the submission to the supervisory team of interim work as required
- recognising when you need help and taking the initiative in raising any concerns and problems as early as possible with your supervisory team or Postgraduate Tutor
- complying with all relevant requirements with respect to intellectual property
- making time at the start of the research degree programme to discuss with your supervisory team the nature of research, the standard of work expected of research students, and the respective roles and responsibilities you and your supervisory team have
- confirming with the supervisory team how supervision will work in practice and clarifying your own preferences with respect to the type of supervisory guidance needed and the ways in which this might be provided
- maintaining regular contact with the supervisory team and taking the initiative in agreeing with the supervisory team a mutually acceptable schedule for formal supervisory meetings
- attending formal supervisory meetings as scheduled and making appropriate arrangements if you are not able to attend a scheduled supervisory meeting
- reflecting on and responding to feedback and guidance provided by the supervisory team at formal supervisory meetings
- preparing and keeping an agreed written record of each formal supervisory meeting
- complying with the University's requirements for formal progress reviews
- undertaking appropriate skills and career development training
- maintaining a record of completed skills and career development activities and reviewing and revising their training plan as appropriate
- providing the supervisory team with a complete final draft of the thesis by a mutually acceptable date in sufficient time before the required submission date for the supervisors to read and comment on
- reflecting on and responding to feedback and guidance provided by the supervisory team with regards to the final draft of the thesis
- ensuring that the thesis complies with all relevant regulations, including those on word length, format, and binding
- making appropriate preparations for the viva voce examination and attending the examination as required by the examining team
- complying with all thesis final submission requirements – submission of one hard bound copy of the thesis to the University Library and one electronic copy of the thesis to the Leicester Research Archive

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The University's primary functions of teaching and research involve a search for knowledge and the truthful recording of the findings of that search. Any action that is knowingly taken by a research student which involves misrepresentation of the truth shall be considered as academic dishonesty and as such is an offence which the University believes should merit the application of very severe penalties. Offences in this category include, but are not confined to:

- cheating in examinations
- copying work from or using work written by another student
- copying from published authorities, including online sources, without acknowledgement
- making work available to another person for copying
- soliciting or commissioning work

- pretending ownership of another's ideas
- falsifying results
- undertaking research without appropriate ethical approval

Plagiarism is used as a general term to describe the action or practice of taking someone else's work or idea, and passing it off as one's own. Plagiarism can occur not only in the thesis and other assessed work (including the probation review report), but also in scientific experimentation, diagrams, maps, fieldwork, computer programmes, and all other forms of academic work where research students are expected to work independently and produce original material.

At a research degree level there are no excuses for plagiarism – research students are expected to know what plagiarism is and be able to manage their academic work so as to avoid intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Failure to do so can result in severe penalties including termination of registration. All new research students should, at the start of their degree, make time to consult the University's Avoiding Plagiarism Study Guide and complete the "Don't Cheat Yourself" online tutorial for their discipline:

There is mandatory Research Integrity training that all research students must complete prior to their Probation Review. This is available through Research Essentials Online on Blackboard. You will see the training is classified by broad discipline areas – choose the one most appropriate for you. If in doubt, consult your supervisor on which discipline area you need to choose. **There is a quiz at the end of the training, on satisfactory completion of which you will be issued an online certificate, which you will need to submit as part of your Probation Review.**

- ▶ Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Integrity Training

1.7 Essential Reading for Research Students

Research students are required to make themselves familiar with relevant policies and procedures – in particular, with the Senate Regulations and the Code of Conduct for Research.

Regulations Governing Research Degree Programmes

The Senate Regulations are approved by the Senate of the University and contain rules and important information about being a student at the University.

For research students, the most important regulations are contained in Senate Regulation Nine – Regulations Governing Research Degree Programmes. The Regulations are referred to a number of times throughout this Handbook. You are strongly encouraged to read these carefully at the start of your research degree programme and to speak with your supervisory team if you have any questions regarding these:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/sr9-postgraduate-research

Code of Conduct for Research

The University has adopted a Code of Conduct for Research and this provides guidelines for responsible practice in research as well as procedures for dealing with instances in which misconduct in research may have occurred.

The Code applies to all members of the University's research community, including research students. You should ensure that you read the Code of Conduct for Research and speak with your supervisory team if you have any questions regarding this:

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/researchsupport/integrity/code-of-conduct

Other University Policies

There are a number of other policies relating to your registration at the University that you should also familiarise yourself with:

- Student Code of Social Responsibility
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Policy Relating to Proof Reading Services

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations

Doctoral College Resources for New Research Students

The Doctoral College has a number of online resources to help you get your research degree off to the best possible start:

- Starting Your PhD/MPhil – Get Set for Success
- You and Your Supervisors – Making Supervision Work for You
- Welcome to Leicester – Advice for New International Research Students

► Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Starting

1.8 Six Top Tips for New Research Students

To close this opening section of the Handbook, here are some tips to help you adapt to life as a research student.

1. Set goals and make them happen

If there is one message that you should be clear on right from the start of your research degree, it is this – it is down to you! The research degree is your project and as a research student you will be responsible for:

- planning and managing your active research – your experimental/ laboratory/ archival/ field work and data collection
- recording and analysing your results/findings
- developing your research and other skills
- presenting your work and conclusions in a written thesis of an appropriate standard and submitted by the required deadline
- defending your thesis in a viva voce examination and making any changes as required by the examiners

You need to make sure that you have clear objectives for each part of the research work you will undertake as well as the written work you must complete to produce your thesis. You should also set objectives for the skills and career development activities you will need to complete to make sure you have the skills expected

of an effective and professional researcher. Together these objectives should form a clear plan for completing your research degree.

2. Manage your time and keep to deadlines

As a new research student, the time until your thesis is due for submission can seem a long way off – and it is easy to think that there will be plenty of time to get your research finished and your thesis written. But for many research students it can still be a close-run thing. To be successful in your research degree – and in your career beyond – you need to give your work the time it needs. Moreover, you will need to manage that time carefully so that you use it as productively as possible and so you can keep a healthy balance between your research degree and your personal and other commitments. As a general rule, full-time PhD/MPhil students should approach their degree as a full-time job.

3. Work with your supervisors and make use of their guidance

Your supervisors have several overlapping roles. Over the course of your research degree they will act as your mentor, trainer, supporter, critic, and fellow researcher. It is important that you understand the responsibilities your supervisors have so that you have clear expectations as to the role of your supervisory team. Start as you mean to go on. Remember that like any relationship, impressions will be formed early on and a professional and positive approach from you is more likely to bring out a similar response from your supervisor. If there are any problems, it is important that you tell your supervisory team as early as possible to minimise any disruption to your progress.

4. Ask for help when you need it

Many research students experience some sort of difficulties over the course of their research degree programme. Sometimes it is something directly connected with their research or thesis; other times it is more personal.

Whatever the circumstances, it is important to manage any problems. If there are any circumstances which are affecting your progress or your work, it is important that you seek help immediately. This is the best way to ensure that any problems do not stand in the way of you successfully completing your research degree.

5. Have a positive approach and use the opportunities available

Intelligence and subject knowledge are not enough on their own to successfully complete a research degree. It also takes determination, motivation, and a positive approach. A positive approach is one characterised by the following types of behaviours:

- building and maintaining effective working relationships with your supervisors, fellow researchers, and others
- an openness to constructive feedback from your supervisors and progress review panels
- a pro-active approach to getting on with your work, expanding your subject knowledge, and developing your skills and employability
- regularly reflecting on your progress and looking to improve your performance

Every research student experiences times during their degree when things do not go to plan, and it is important to approach problems positively:

- acknowledge the problem and its real significance

- identify what you need to do to overcome the problem
- report the problem and your proposed solution to your supervisor and be open to any feedback they may have on this
- put into action the solution agreed with your supervisor, try to catch up on any time lost, and learn from the experience so that you can avoid similar problems in future

6. Manage your professional development throughout your degree

Most research students will enter a career after completing their degree and it is important to start strategically thinking of the next step and develop a portfolio of necessary skills in the course of your research degree. There are several career and professional development training opportunities and events at the University of Leicester run within your department and by the Doctoral College to help you plan for the next stage in your life. The skills you develop during your research degree can be translated into a wide range of contexts – in academia, industry, the media, or much further afield. These include:

- attending careers events and workshops
- taking an active role, organising a panel at a conference, presenting a paper or poster, acting as a discussant, or presenting your complex research ideas to a lay audience
- identifying how to present the skills you learn through your research degree and presenting these to potential employers. These might include:
 - Managing your research project
 - Communicating effectively to diverse audiences
 - Developing contacts and managing a network
- writing a CV and keeping it up to date
- identifying your personal work style and building awareness of how you operate in research and other work contexts
- thinking more broadly about potential career paths

1.9 Your Feedback

Your feedback on your research degree experience is important to us. It helps the Doctoral College identify areas for improvement. The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is the only national survey of research students. PRES is run annually and all research students who have completed at least three months of registration are invited to participate in the survey. A link to complete the online survey will be advertised to you when it is open between February and April each year. Your honesty is welcome and student feedback in the past has helped to shape many recent changes to postgraduate research at the University.

Departments and colleges have a dedicated research student representative who sits on departmental and college research degree committees. If you have any concerns about the research environment or resources available to you, contacting your research student representative may be a good first step.

2.0 You, Your Supervisors, and Making the Most of Supervision

At first many new research students are unsure exactly what to expect from their supervisory team and the supervisory relationship. Both you and your supervisory team have specific responsibilities, and it is important that you understand what these are if your working relationship is to be an effective one.

2.1 Your Supervisory Team

All research students have a supervisory team, normally comprising two members. These will be members of the University's academic staff, normally but not always, from the same School/Department as you.

Your first supervisor will have primary responsibility for your supervision. He or she is the member of the supervisory team with whom you will have most contact, in particular it is likely to be your first supervisor who:

- agrees with you objectives for your research and written work and your skills and career development
- provides advice and guidance on your plans and progress
- provides feedback on your research findings/results and draft written work
- reads and comments on both your probation review report and thesis before these are formally submitted

The role of the other member(s) of the supervisory team will vary according to the circumstances. In some cases, they will act as joint supervisor(s) – taking a role broadly equivalent to that of your first supervisor and sharing in the first supervisor's responsibilities. This type of arrangement is most common in humanities and social science disciplines. Otherwise, they will act as second supervisor(s) – taking on a role subsidiary to that of the first supervisor and taking an active involvement in your supervision only in specific circumstances or for periods when your first supervisor is away. This type of arrangement is most common in science and engineering disciplines.

It is unusual for a supervisory team to have more than two members. Supervisory teams of three or more members are sometimes found where the research project is interdisciplinary in nature or involves an external partner.

You should make time at the very start of your research degree to ensure you know who your supervisors are and their individual roles in relation to your supervision.

2.2 Your Supervisors' Role

Both you and your supervisory team have specific responsibilities, and it is important that you understand what these are if your working relationship is to be effective.

Responsibilities of Your Supervisors

As indicated above, your supervisors have several overlapping roles. Understanding their roles will provide you with a foundation for building an effective working relationship with your supervisors.

It is important to recognise that your supervisors are not there to tell you what to do every step of the way. A research degree is an independent research project and, as a research student, you are responsible for your own success. You will be expected to show that you can plan and manage your work, develop and communicate your ideas, and deliver on time a thesis of an appropriate standard. Your research degree is very much down to you. That is not to say though that your supervisors are not there to help, but the help that they provide will be quite specific. Your supervisors are there to provide advice on the ideas that you develop, to give you feedback on your progress, and to help you develop your competencies as a researcher.

Providing Advice and Guidance

Your supervisors will provide advice and guidance to help you keep your research on track, but the responsibility for developing your work rests with you. Your supervisors will expect you to have your own ideas and your own solutions to problems, and your supervisors will provide advice on these.

In particular, your supervisors will provide advice and guidance to help you:

- formulate a plan for developing your research skills
- develop appropriate research practice and refine your plans and ideas
- find and use relevant literature
- understand relevant rules and regulations

The responsibility is on you to follow that advice. Make time to reflect on the advice that your supervisors provide and take seriously any suggestions that they make.

Providing Feedback on Your Work and Progress

In addition to providing advice and guidance on your plans and ideas, your supervisors will provide feedback on your completed work and progress. Your supervisors will provide feedback through:

- formal supervisory meetings
- comments on draft written work and provisional findings/results
- reviewing your thesis before submission for examination

It is important that you keep an accurate record of the feedback that your supervisors provide and this will be invaluable as you come to prepare the final draft of your thesis for submission. However, you also need to be considerate when seeking feedback. If you are submitting draft written work or provisional findings/results for comment, make sure that this is well organised and presented – draft written work should be thoroughly proof read and spelling and other errors should be removed before it is submitted while provisional findings/results should be accurate and clearly labelled or described as appropriate. You also need to make sure that you allow your supervisors sufficient time to provide you with feedback – allow plenty of time for your supervisors to read and comment on your work.

Enabling Your Skills and Career Development

Developing yourself and your skills is a big part of a research degree programme. Consider the range of skills you will need to develop over the course of your research degree. You will need to complete a training needs analysis via MyPGR.

Your supervisors will help you:

- develop an appropriate training plan based on your training needs
- provide coaching or training in research skills relevant to your work
- help you understand the importance of a broad-based training programme including transferable skills that enhance your employability

Your supervisors will have a particular interest in making sure that you develop the skills you will need to complete your research degree, but it is important that you also look to develop your employability skills such as communication skills, personal leadership, and team working. You will also need to make sure that your time spent on training activities is balanced against your primary need to complete your research degree on time.

2.3 Making the Most of Supervisory Meetings

Formal supervisory meetings are an opportunity for you to discuss your progress, describe your findings, and alert your supervisors to any problems. These meetings are an important part of your working relationship with your supervisory team and will play a big role in shaping the effectiveness of your supervisor-supervisee role. Therefore, it is important that you spend some time thinking about what you can do to make supervisory meetings as constructive as possible.

Formal Supervisory Meeting Frequency and Format

At the start of your research degree you and your supervisory team should discuss how often you will have formal supervisory meetings and whose responsibility it will be to schedule these. Having regular formal supervisory meetings is usually beneficial to both sides. It is a University regulation that these meetings are held at least every month (full-time) or every two months (part-time). Following successful completion of the probation period, formal supervisory meetings must continue to be held every month (full-time) or every two months (part-time). All research students registered for the degree of PhD, MD, PsyD, or MPhil must ensure no more than 60 calendar days elapse between supervisory meetings (full-time) or 90 calendar days elapse between supervisory meetings (part-time).

We would suggest that formal supervisory meetings for research students registered on other doctoral degree programmes are held at least monthly (full-time programmes) or every two months (part-time programmes). However, formal supervisory meetings on these programmes may not commence until the research student has completed all taught components of the programme.

Formal supervisory meetings for campus-based research students will normally be conducted in person. Formal supervisory meetings for distance-learning research students may be conducted by any appropriate means of communication, but meetings in person should be used where possible. Students conducting fieldwork should maintain communication by appropriate means with their supervisor and should have at least monthly recorded formal contact.

Your Role in Supervisory Meetings

To make the most of your meetings with your supervisor and to ensure that these are as constructive as possible, it may be worth thinking about your role in more detail. There are a number of things that you will need to think about before, during, and after each meeting.

Before the Meeting

You are responsible for taking the initiative in planning and organising meetings with your supervisor. It is important that you should not go into these meetings empty handed – you should have a clear idea of what it is you want to discuss with your supervisor and usually some work that shows your progress since your last meeting and which you can submit to your supervisor for comment. To that end, there are three things that you will need to do:

- take the initiative in agreeing a mutually convenient schedule of meetings with your supervisor
- prepare a short agenda of issues that you would like to discuss and forward a copy of the agenda to your supervisor a few days in advance of the meeting
- prepare some work for you to discuss at each meeting – as with the agenda, your supervisor may find it helpful to receive before the meeting a copy of the work you intend to discuss

During the Meeting

While preparing for the meeting is important, you also need to take action during the meeting to ensure it is a productive experience. In particular, you need to:

- arrive promptly and make sure you have everything you might need with you – a copy of the agenda, work to discuss, etc.
- provide direction to the discussion and make sure that it follows the agenda – do not expect your supervisor to do all the talking, they will want to hear from you
- ask questions – formal supervisory meetings are the best place for more detailed questions as they provide a private and quiet space in which you and your supervisor can think about the question and come up with a possible answer or solution

After the Meeting

With the meeting over there are some final tasks you need to complete to maximise the effectiveness of your supervisory meetings:

- complete a record of your supervisory meeting via MyPGR and note what was discussed and actions that were agreed either you or your supervisor should undertake
- make time after each meeting to reflect on the feedback your supervisor has provided and its implications for what you need to do next
- if your supervisor offers criticisms remember that this is done with the aim of being constructive – be open to criticism and be willing to learn from your supervisor's experience

It is these final steps that research students often overlook. Keeping a written record of your formal supervisory meetings is very important – if you are registered on a PhD, MD, PsyD, or MPhil programme your supervisory record will be reviewed at your probation review meeting. Beyond the probation review, the supervisory meeting record will provide an invaluable source of information that you can draw on as you

prepare your thesis for submission and can be used to check that you have addressed all the suggestions made by your supervisors.

2.4 Maintaining an Effective Supervisory Relationship

To maintain an effective working relationship with your supervisors there are a number of things that you will need to do. Like any working relationship, the relationship that you have with your supervisors will take time to develop and require effort on both sides to maintain. However, it is important that you work at this and doing so will improve your chances of completing your research degree successfully.

Understand Your Mutual Responsibilities and Expectations

As a research student you have specified responsibilities and how your supervisors have specified responsibilities towards you. At the start of your research degree, perhaps in your first meeting with your supervisors, you should discuss these responsibilities and the expectations you will each have of one another. In particular, you should confirm your mutual expectations around:

- responsibilities for setting, agreeing, and reviewing your objectives
- frequency and format of your formal supervisory meetings
- the nature of the advice and feedback that your supervisors will provide
- the submission of draft written and other work and the time needed to allow sufficient time for your supervisors to read and comment on the submitted work

Do take the opportunity to ask questions if there are any points on which you are unclear.

Maintain Regular Contact with Your Supervisors

Throughout your research degree you should take the initiative in maintaining regular contact with your supervisors. Partly this is to ensure that your supervisors are kept informed of your progress and partly it will allow them opportunities to provide you with appropriate advice and feedback. More broadly, it will provide you with a structure that will help you to stay on track with your research degree.

Research students who maintain regular contact with their supervisors are more likely to regularly reflect on and review their progress against their agreed plans and objectives and to take action if they have fallen behind or are in danger of not submitting their thesis on time. They are also more likely to find it easier to maintain their motivation over the duration of their research degree – so as a research student, maintaining regular contact with your supervisors offers a number of real benefits.

Finally, maintaining regular contact with your supervisors is particularly important for full-time research students holding a Tier 4 (Student) visa. Failure to maintain regular contact with your supervisors could result in your visa being revoked and you being required to return to your home country.

Meet Agreed Deadlines

Early in your research degree you should have agreed with your supervisors a detailed work plan for your probation period with perhaps an outlined plan for the remainder of your degree. It is important that you keep to the deadlines you have agreed with your supervisors whether these are deadlines for completing your

active research, writing your thesis, undertaking skills and career development activities, or other tasks such as preparing a conference presentation or contributing work to a written report/article.

You should also be conscious of deadlines for submitting draft written or other work to your supervisors for comment. Your supervisors are busy people – they have their own teaching, research, and administrative duties and may well be involved in the supervision of other research students, not to mention other activities associated with their work. If you regularly miss deadlines for submitting draft work to them, it could give the impression that you are not serious about completing your degree. It will inevitably limit the time your supervisor has to give you feedback on your work. Receiving and making use of feedback on your draft written work is vital if your thesis is to be completed on time and be of an appropriate standard. You should therefore make every effort to meet deadlines agreed with your supervisor for submitting draft work for feedback and make sure to allow sufficient time for them to read and comment on this.

Use Your Supervisors' Advice and Feedback

Among the responsibilities that your supervisors have towards you, one of the most important is to provide you with advice and feedback. In particular, they will provide advice on the direction and management of your research, feedback on your results/findings, and analysis and on your draft written work such as draft chapters of your thesis.

It is crucial to your success that you make use of your supervisors' advice and feedback. It can be easy to hear the positive comments that your supervisors make and then to find excuses to disregard any negative comments. This is very dangerous and is something all research students should guard against.

It is important to remember that:

- your supervisors' comments are based on experience – their experience as a supervisor of other research students and their experience as a researcher in their own right; you should be keen to apply that experience to your own work and benefit from it – if you are unsure why your supervisor is making a particular suggestion, feel free to ask them about this making sure though not to do this in a way that might seem challenging or defensive
- your supervisors' comments are intended to be constructive – to provide you with guidance to help you improve your work and finish your research degree successfully; comments highlighting a problem or oversight are not intended as and should never be interpreted as a personal criticism
- if there are any aspects of your supervisors' advice and feedback which are unclear you should ask for clarification as early as possible; it can also be helpful to keep a written record – almost like a diary – of the feedback provided by your supervisors so that you can refer to this later
- you should always look to follow whatever advice and feedback is provided by your supervisors; if you have any questions or uncertainties about this, discuss them with your supervisors – do not just disregard comments you do not fully understand or with which you disagree

Be Open About Any Problems

Many research students experience some sort of difficulties over the course of their research degree programme. Sometimes it is something directly connected with their research or thesis – such as technical

problems or difficulties accessing an archive or other resource. Other times it is more personal such as illness, lack of motivation, or something connected to their family.

Whatever the circumstances, it is important to manage any problems so that they do not come to disrupt your progress with your degree, but you are not expected to manage problems alone. If there are any circumstances that are affecting your progress or your work, it is important that you seek help early on. Seeking help early on is the best way to ensure that any problems do not stand in the way of you successfully completing your research degree.

It is recognised that research students may be hesitant to approach their supervisors with a problem or to discuss with them something that is causing difficulties. However, it is vital that they are kept informed and, in the long run, they are the ones who can do the most to help you avoid a situation which jeopardises your ability to successfully complete your research degree.

2.5 Other Important Contacts

Although your supervisors should be your first point of contact should any issues or concerns arise over the course of your degree, there may be times when you want to speak with someone who is not one of your supervisors. If you do want to speak to someone outside of your supervisory team, there are a number of other contacts you can approach.

Your Postgraduate Research Tutor

Your departmental Postgraduate Research Tutor is available to provide support, advice, and guidance on matters relating to your academic progress or any personal circumstances that may be affecting your progress. Common subjects of discussion include options available when medical or personal circumstances are affecting your work, maintaining a good working relationship with your supervisor, and balancing a research degree with other commitments.

Research students are encouraged to take the initiative in contacting or making an appointment with their Postgraduate Tutor. Your Postgraduate Tutor will normally be introduced at the start of your research degree; if you are unsure who your Postgraduate Tutor is, please ask your departmental administrator.

College Directors of Postgraduate Research and the Dean of the Doctoral College

If you are experiencing severe problems or there are good reasons why you might want to discuss your situation with someone outside of your department, you are welcome to arrange an appointment to speak with your College Director of Postgraduate Research or the Dean of the Doctoral College. Contact details of the College Directors of Postgraduate Research can be found at the beginning of this handbook.

To contact the Dean of the Doctoral College, please email [**doctoralcollege@le.ac.uk**](mailto:doctoralcollege@le.ac.uk).

When arranging to speak with the College Director of Postgraduate Research or the Dean of the Doctoral College, it is helpful if you can provide some indication as to what you would like to discuss. Discussions with the College Director of Postgraduate Research or the Dean of the Doctoral College will be handled sensitively. However, in order to resolve issues it is normally necessary to involve others at some point.

Advice Service

There may be occasions when you want to speak with someone outside of the University – for example, if you should wish to make a complaint or to appeal against an academic decision. In such cases, research students are invited to contact Advice Service.

The Advice Service is part of the Students' Union – its staff are employees of the Students' Union, not the University. They provide a friendly, confidential service and can offer expert advice on matters relating to your academic progress and student status. They can provide advice if you are unhappy with any aspect of the academic support that you are receiving.

To arrange an appointment, email advice@le.ac.uk. For more information about the Advice Service, visit: <https://www.leicesterunion.com/advice>.

2.6 Complaints and Appeals

The University has robust systems in place governing the quality and standards of its research degree programmes and your experience as a research student here. We are confident that, like the vast majority of research students here, you will enjoy and be satisfied with your programme. In most instances your supervisory team and/or Department will be able to resolve any issues that do occur – but we recognise that this will not always be possible. For this reason, the University has official procedures that allow eligible cases to be formally reviewed.

Research students are expected to take the initiative in raising any difficulties they encounter. If you are having difficulties it is important that you act quickly and discuss the matter with your supervisory team as it is usually possible to put matters right without you losing valuable research time.

Academic Appeals

You may appeal against an academic decision concerning progress, the award of a degree lower than that for which you were registered, or the termination of your registration. Research students who wish to appeal against an academic decision of these types must submit a formal academic appeal as specified in Senate Regulation Ten:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/senatereg10-appeals.pdf

Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with any element of your research degree programme or supervision, you must discuss any concerns at the time they occur and prior to submission of your thesis for examination. You must discuss any such concerns with your supervisory team in the first instance. Research students who are dissatisfied with the response of their supervisory team should take their concerns to the Postgraduate Tutor or the Head of Department. If you are unable to resolve difficulties through these routes you may submit a formal complaint as specified in Senate Regulation Twelve:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/senatereg12-complaints.pdf

3.0 Skills and Career Development

Undertaking a research degree is clearly about producing an excellent piece of research – but it is also about acquiring new skills. The University's skills and career development programmes and resources for research students will give you the skills you need to become an effective researcher and complete your degree together with transferable skills that will be of use both during your time here and in your career beyond.

The Doctoral College's structured 'needs-based' approach to skills and career development will help you make the most of the opportunities available.

3.1 Using the Researcher Development Framework

Personal development planning starts with questions – questions about where you are now and where you want to be in the future. The exact questions are down to you, but we would suggest something like the following:

- What do I want to achieve this year? Over my research degree? With my life?
- What would characterise the type of person that I want to be? What sort of career? What sort of personal life? What sort of intellectual abilities or interests?
- Am I in a position to make those things happen? Am I giving sufficient focus and time to making those things happen? Do I need to learn anything or develop new skills to make those things happen?
- Am I actively taking steps towards my goals? Am I making use of the support available to help me achieve my goals?

Personal development planning involves taking the answers to questions like these and using the answers to decide where you want to go and how you will get there. That journey is one on which you will reflect at specific points to make sure that you are going in the right direction and to decide whether you need to make any changes in what you are doing or how you are doing it.

Research students are encouraged to use the Leicester Researcher Development Framework to support their personal development planning. The Researcher Development Framework sets out the knowledge, behaviours, and attributes that you are expected to demonstrate as a researcher.

You can download the complete Researcher Development Framework:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

The Researcher Development Framework is designed for researchers at all levels and you may find not all parts of it are relevant to you – but it will help you think about the full range of skills you will need to succeed in your research degree and achieve your longer-term personal and professional goals. As a research student, you will use the Researcher Development Framework to support your personal development planning as you develop a training plan that meets your individual needs and keep a training record so you can monitor your progress.

3.2 Training Plans for Research Students

Your training plan is something you will need to discuss and agree with your supervisory team – they will want to ensure that your training plan fits with your overall work plan and that any immediate training needs are addressed as soon as possible. We would suggest that your initial training plan covers the period up to your probation review. Following the probation review, you can prepare and agree an updated plan to cover the remaining period of the research degree programme.

Your training plan will reflect your specific needs – no two research students have the same training plan. Your plan should reflect your skills needs over your research degree as well as your longer-term personal and professional development goals.

A training plan is your road map to becoming an effective researcher – it tells you where you are going and how you will get there. The first step in developing a training plan is to audit your existing skills - a training needs analysis.

Training Needs Analysis

A training needs analysis is a self-assessment of your current skills levels and knowledge. It can also be used to start thinking about your skills development needs and how these might be prioritised. Research students are encouraged to complete a training needs analysis before going on to develop a full training plan.

For each descriptor, indicate your current skill level and then think what priority your development of that skill might have. It is important that you are realistic as you do this. If you are unsure how to prioritise your skills needs, discuss this with your supervisory team. If you find it difficult to assess your current skill level, try to think about a situation where you have used that skill and how well you were able to do so.

Skills and Career Development Objectives

You can next use the information obtained from the training needs analysis to formulate some basic objectives for your skills and career development. To be effective, your objectives should follow the SMART model - that is, they should be:

- **Specific** – Exactly what is it you want to achieve?
- **Measurable** – How will you know you have achieved it?
- **Agreed** – Does your supervisory team agree with your objectives?
- **Realistic** – Can your objectives be achieved given the time and resource available to you?
- **Timed** – When do you expect to have met each objective?

We would suggest that you try to formulate three or four objectives that are focussed on the initial stages of your research degree – developing or refining your research question(s), undertaking a literature review, preparing for the probation review, etc. But you should not forget your longer term personal and professional goals and your objectives may reflect these to some degree.

Training Plan

Once you have identified your training needs you can start thinking about the development opportunities that are available and begin matching the two up in a training plan. In your training plan you will need to set out

what training you will need to undertake to fill the skills gaps identified in your training needs analysis and when you plan to undertake this training.

As you complete your plan, you should make full use of the training programmes and resources available across the University.

3.3 Skills and Career Development Training Programmes

Much of the subject-specific research skills training that you will need to complete your research work and analyse your results/findings will be undertaken within your Department or as an integral part of your research degree – a form of training as you work. In some cases this may involve completion of Master’s degree modules in planning and managing a research project or relevant research techniques.

Research students undertaking teaching/demonstrating duties alongside their degree will be required to also complete specific training events before commencing employment. All students starting research degrees after 1 September 2018 must also complete research integrity training.

However, alongside all this you will need to remain mindful of your broader skills development and, in particular, how you will develop:

- more general research competencies – in areas such as research conduct, commercialisation of research, communicating research, etc.
- transferable skills that enhance your employability and support your career plans – such as personal leadership, team working, project management, etc.
- skills needed to complete your research degree – such as preparation for the probation review, managing the writing and submission of your thesis, and preparation for the viva voce examination

Our cohort training programmes will be at the heart of the skills development activities that you will complete in these areas, but you will also be able to make use of opportunities provided across the Doctoral College.

Cohort Skills and Career Development Programmes

Our cohort training programmes are designed to support your development as an effective and professional researcher – giving you the skills you need to be successful in your degree and help you achieve your longer-term career goals.

There are three types of cohort programme:

- Research Council Doctoral Training Partnerships/Centre for Doctoral Training Programmes
- College Research Student Development Programmes
- Professional Doctorate Training Programmes

The training requirements on these programmes are highly structured, particularly for new research students, and may include compulsory components. It is therefore important that early on in your research degree you discuss with your supervisors what components you are required to fulfil and how these relate to overall training plan.

Doctoral Training Partnership/Centre for Doctoral Training Programmes

Research Council sponsored research students based in the Doctoral Training Partnerships/ Centres for Doctoral Training in which the University is a partner will undertake a structured inter-disciplinary training programme designed to support their effectiveness as a researcher. Usually these programmes will involve opportunities to make use of training events delivered by other partner institutions in the region and to develop practical experience through training or placements at external partners.

College Research Student Development Programmes

College programmes are similar to Doctoral Training Partnership/Centre for Doctoral Training programmes in that they focus on inter-disciplinary training relevant to your development as a researcher. However, they usually also include more opportunities to develop the understanding and skills you will need to complete your research degree – skills such as finding and using academic literature, presenting research to different audiences, and planning for your career beyond your degree. These programmes are open to all PhD/MPhil students within the College, including those who are Research Council sponsored.

Professional Doctorate Training Programmes

On professional doctorate programmes such as the EdD and the DSocSci the focus is more likely to be on completion of assessed components or professional practice requirements. The assessed components excluding the thesis are designed to provide research students on these programmes with the same sort of research skills training that PhD/MPhil students receive, but in within a framework more suitable for those based away from Leicester or who are working within a professional setting.

Doctoral College Skills and Career Development Programmes

The cohort training programmes will cover the essentials skills that you will need over your research degree. However, to ensure your training plan supports your ongoing personal and professional development, you should also make use of other training opportunities provided for the Doctoral College as a whole:

<i>for help with ...</i> transferable skills, career development planning, academic writing support, thesis submission and examination	<i>... speak to</i> Researcher Development www2.le.ac.uk/offices/red/rd
finding and using academic literature, literature reviews, bibliographic software, managing references	Library Research Services www2.le.ac.uk/library/for/researchers
using MS Office and other software, research computing services, managing files and folders	IT Services Training www2.le.ac.uk/offices/staff-development/courses/it
improving your spoken and written English language skills (if English is not your first language)	English Language Teaching Unit www2.le.ac.uk/offices/eltu
learning another modern language	Languages@Leicester www2.le.ac.uk/departments/modern-languages/lal

To help put your skills into practice and provide opportunities to meet with other research students, there are a number of Doctoral College events that take place throughout the year in which all research students are

encouraged to get involved. The emphasis is on providing a supportive environment in which research students can gain confidence presenting and discussing their research, but also these events are places to share experiences and make new friends:

-
- Cafe Research
- Lunchtime Lectures
- Research Bytes
- Images of Research

To find out more about up-coming events and workshops lookout for regular updates from the Doctoral College.

3.4 Skills and Career Development Training e-Resources

In addition to the University's training programmes and events, research students can support their skills and career development by using the various e-resources that are available.

Doctoral College Study Guides

The Doctoral College has a number of online resources to help you over the course of your research degree:

- Starting Your PhD/MPhil – Get Set for Success
- You and Your Supervisors – Making Supervision Work for You
- Avoiding Plagiarism in Your Research Degree
- Your Thesis – Planning and Managing Your Writing
- The Viva Exam – What to Expect and How to Prepare

► **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Research and Academic Skills Study Guides

The University Library and the Leicester Learning Institute have a number of online study guides to help you conduct and present your research and improve your academic writing. Guides that will be of particular value to research students include:

- Critical Reading
- Critical Writing
- Writing a Literature Review
- Managing Your References
- Keeping Up to Date
- Bibliographic Software
- The Art of Editing
- Presenting Numerical Data

The complete list of study guides is available from the Doctoral College Website:

► **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

IT Skills Study Guides and Videos

These videos and accompanying study guides have been developed by IT Services to provide practical support in two of the most commonly used MS Office programs – MS Word and MS PowerPoint:

- Using MS Word for Long Documents – Video
 - Using MS Word for Long Documents – Study Guide
 - Using MS PowerPoint for Posters – Videos
 - Using MS PowerPoint for Posters – Study Guide
- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Research Essentials Online

Research Essentials Online is a collection of research student resources from around the web as well as materials from the University's research student training programmes. There is an emphasis on practical advice that research students can use to develop their broader research capabilities:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

3.5 Career Development and Employability

Whether you are just starting your research degree or are coming towards the submission of your thesis, it pays to plan ahead for your career beyond.

Career Planning

Whatever your career aims and regardless of your current career status, there are resources that you can use to improve your career planning.

For advice on career development events, resources, and one-to-one consultations to discuss your employability please visit:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Job Applications and CVs for Research Degree Graduates

Preparing a Curriculum Vitae can be daunting – particularly for research students. But there are techniques you can use and Vitae have a number of resources to help you plan, draft, and refine your CV and prepare for job applications and interviews:

- Creating Effective CVs as a Researcher
 - Researcher CV Examples
 - Effective Cover Letters
 - Finding Academic Jobs
 - Applying for Academic Jobs
 - Academic Job Interviews
- ▶ **www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers**

Work Experience - Internships and Placements

We offer a number of internal and external internships and placements exclusively for research students to help you gain work experience and develop your professional networks. Internships and placements can be undertaken at any stage of the research degree programme, though it is suggested that research students avoid the first and final year of the programme. Research students require the approval of their supervisory team to undertake an internship or placement.

For details of current work experience opportunities, visit the Skills and Career Development Website:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Career Development Events

In addition to training workshops and e-resources designed to help you broaden your skills and enhance your employability, the University regularly hosts career events specifically for research students. These are often tailored to specific departments or colleges.

For details of up-coming events, check the Professional Employability Development page:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – MOPED**

3.6 Training Records for Research Students

It is important that you keep a running record of all the skills and development activities that you complete over your research degree. Your training record in MyPGR will be updated automatically when you attend training events booked through the same system, but you should also update your record with activities performed outside of workshops and University events. These may include:

- skills you have demonstrated/developed through your research project
- use of online resources
- attendance at conferences, seminars, etc.
- self-directed learning

You will need to present a full training record in order to complete your probation review – but even beyond that, you should continue to keep your record up to date as this information will be invaluable when you come to apply for jobs, research funding, etc.

Reviewing Your Training Record

As you progress with your research degree your skills and career development needs may change, so it is important that you review your training plan and your training record from time to time. In particular, as you move towards the completion of the active research part of your degree you may find your focus shifting more towards your career beyond your research degree. We therefore suggest that you review your training plan every year or at least at key points in your research degree programme – for example, on completion of your probation review and as you enter the final year of your degree.

4.0 Probation and Progress Monitoring

This section of the Handbook applies to research students on PhD, MD, PsyD, or MPhil programmes. The progress of research students on other doctoral programmes will be reviewed through the taught components of these programmes and you should consult the programme handbook/materials for advice on this.

Please note that the regulations relating to progress monitoring changed substantially for 2013-14; research students who commenced their research degree before October 2013 should seek advice from their Department on applicable regulations. **All research students starting after 1 August 2018 must complete the Research Integrity Training module.** The module can be found here:

- ▶ [Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources

4.1 Progress Review Framework

Your supervisory team has an important role in monitoring your progress, checking that you are on course to complete your degree, and providing feedback through formal supervisory meetings and comments on your draft written and other work.

Normally any concerns your supervisory team might have will be relatively minor and can be addressed quite easily. However, there may be occasions where a supervisory team has more serious doubts about a research student's progress or ability to complete their research degree programme. Where that is the case, the supervisory team may choose to initiate proceedings under the University's regulations on neglect of academic obligations.

Where such proceedings are initiated, the research student will be notified as to reasons why their progress is considered to be unsatisfactory. That process will normally involve the Postgraduate Tutor and often the Head of Department. Should the research student's progress then continue to be unsatisfactory or they are unable to demonstrate the ability to perform at the required level, the Head of Department will either issue a formal warning or recommend that the student's registration should be terminated.

This monitoring of your progress by your supervisory team is just one part of a broader progress review framework. For research students on PhD, MD, PsyD, or MPhil programmes this framework comprises an initial probation review followed by regular formal annual progress reviews.

4.2 Probation Period and Review

Research students on PhD, MD, PsyD, or MPhil programmes must complete an initial probation period at the start of their research degree. The probation period duration is either:

- one year (MD, PsyD, and full-time PhD and MPhil programmes)
or
- two years (part-time PhD and MPhil programmes)

Before the end of your probation period you will be required to complete a probation review. This will be used to determine whether you have made satisfactory progress to date with your research degree. The probation review comprises two parts:

- a written report from both you and your supervisory team
- a presentation and defence of your work to a probation review panel

You will be deemed to have successfully completed probation if it is the academic judgement of the probation review panel that:

- your overall performance demonstrates appropriate progress to date
and
- there are no serious doubts about your ability to achieve the degree for which you are registered

Probation Reports

Your Department will tell you when you are required to complete the written report for your probation review. Normally this will be around ten months (MD, PsyD, and full-time PhD and MPhil) or twenty months (part-time PhD and MPhil) after your initial registration.

Your written report will comprise two parts:

- a substantive piece of writing (5,000 to 10,000 words) describing your work to date – the format that this will take will depend on your discipline; it may take the form of a thesis chapter or be more of a technical report, but your Department will tell you what is required
- supporting documents, including:
 - a work plan for completing your thesis over the remaining period of your degree
 - a record of the skills and career development training that you have completed to date
 - records of all the formal supervisory meetings that have been held to date

If you have any questions about the requirements for your probation report, you should discuss these with your supervisory team as early as possible. Your supervisory team will prepare their own written report for your probation review and this will include a discussion of your progress to date and the feasibility of your work plan.

Submitting your Probation Report through Turnitin

All research students starting after 1 August 2018 must submit their probation report and any accompanying substantive work through TurnitinUK for a plagiarism check. Your supervisors, PGR Tutor or PGR administrator will be able to advise on the process for this.

Presentation and Defence

The written reports by you and your supervisory team will both be considered by your probation review panel. Your probation review panel will normally comprise two members of the University's academic staff. Members of your supervisory team are not allowed to be members of your probation review panel.

Your probation review panel will invite you to a probation review meeting. Normally this will take place eleven months (MD, PsyD, and full-time PhD and MPhil) or twenty-two months (part-time PhD and MPhil) after your

initial registration. The format of the probation review meeting will depend on your discipline. In some cases it will be a closed meeting between you and your probation review panel – something like a viva voce examination. In other cases, it may involve you giving a presentation to a wider audience followed by an opportunity for the probation review panel to ask you questions.

Your Department will tell you what type of format is used in your discipline, but regardless of the type of format used, you will be expected to discuss your research, your findings so far and your plans for completing your thesis. The probation review panel will ask you questions in order to decide whether your progress to date has been satisfactory and whether you are likely to be able to complete your degree in the time allowed.

Preparing for the Probation Review

The most important part of your preparations is to know what is supposed to happen and when – speak with your supervisors early on about the requirements for the probation review and make sure you understand what format your probation review report should take, when the report must be submitted, and how you will present your work to the probation review panel.

To help you write your probation review report, you may wish to use the following online resources:

- Critical Reading
- Critical Writing
- Writing a Literature Review
- Managing Your References
- Bibliographic Software
- Using MS Word for Long Documents

► **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

To help you prepare for your probation review meeting/presentation, you may wish to use the following online resources:

- Presenting Your Research
- Presenting Numerical Data

► **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

On the basis of the written reports and your performance in the probation review meeting (including any separate presentation session), the probation review panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- that you should be allowed to continue with your research degree programme
- that you should remain on probation for a period of no more than six months and complete a further and final probation review before the end of that period
- that you should be transferred to a lower research degree programme
- that your registration should be terminated

At the end of the probation review, both you and your supervisory team will receive a copy of the probation review panel's report. You should discuss this report with your supervisory team as soon as possible and consider whether it identifies any concerns that you need to address.

4.3 Progress Reviews after Probation

Following completion of the probation review, research students on PhD, MD, PsyD, and MPhil programmes will be monitored by a progress review panel.

Like the probation review panel, the progress review panel will comprise at least two people. In some cases these will be the same people who made up your probation review panel. In other cases, your progress review panel will comprise one or more members of your supervisory team together with someone from outside your supervisory team – usually someone who was on your probation review panel.

Before the end of each year of registration – excluding your final year of registration – you will be required to submit to your progress review panel a written report on your progress. This will be of around 2,000 words. As with the written submission for your probation review, the format of the progress review report will vary according to your discipline and your Department will tell you what format this should take.

For these progress reviews there is not the same requirement to present and defend your work as there is with the probation review. However, your progress review panel will meet with you to discuss your progress. These meetings will normally take place annually, but they may take place every second year on part-time PhD or MPhil programmes.

If the progress review panel does not think your progress is satisfactory it may recommend that you be registered for a different degree or that your registration should be terminated.

5.0 Academic and Personal Support

One of the Doctoral College's main roles is to coordinate the various support services for research students provided right across the University. This section of the Handbook will give you an idea of the range of support available to you together with useful links and contact information.

5.1 Library Services

The University Library is your gateway to high quality information relevant to your research. Using it effectively contributes directly to your success. The Library provides you with:

- access to a huge range of specialist information resources including a print collection of over one million items and a Digital Library of over 500,000 eBooks and 500,000 electronic journals which you can use from anywhere on the Web
- help in finding and using information – online, face-to-face, and by telephone
- individual and group work spaces – including the dedicated Doctoral College Reading Room
- PCs, netbooks, and wireless networking for your laptop
- services for distance learning research students

To learn more, visit the Library website:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/library

Library Services for Researchers

Specialist Library services and support for researchers include:

- document supply service
- citation management support
- bibliographic software support
- rare books and archives collections
- advice on copyright and research

Learn more about Library Services for Researchers:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/library/for/researchers

The Library is a shared resource for all members of the University. Please respect it and observe the Library Regulations:

- ▶ www.le.ac.uk/library/about

5.2 IT Services

Over the course of your research degree programme you will have a University IT account and email address. There are hundreds of University PCs available on campus with MS Office and many specialist programs to help you with your research:

- student email – access your email and calendar anywhere, including on your smartphone or other mobile device
- printing – print, copy, or scan on campus and pay by topping up your print and copy account
- wifi – free access to eduroam on campus, in halls, or at other UK universities
- PCs on campus - there are over 900 PCs available for student use
- files – personal ‘Z: drive’ to store your files, which is backed up and available anywhere
- Leicester Digital Library – access to journals, databases, and electronic books online
- mobile app – download the University mobile app

To learn more, visit the IT Services Website:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ithelp/it4/students

IT Services for Researchers

Specialist IT services and support for researchers include:

- research computing
- high performance computing
- secure file storage
- IT training sessions

Learn more about IT Services for Researchers:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/itservices/ithelp/it4/staff/research-computing

The University's IT provision is a shared resource for all members of the University. Please respect it and observe the IT Services Regulations:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/itservices/about/policies/regulations

5.3 English Language Support

The English Language Teaching Unit is British Council accredited and offers courses to help students and postgraduates to improve their academic English language skills. The English Language Teaching Unit offers a module specifically for new research students who are non-native speakers of English. The module comprises a two hour lesson each week for eight weeks and is designed to support new research students in:

- seminar skills for group discussions and presentations
- giving and justifying opinions
- expressing agreement and disagreement
- asking for and giving clarification
- written academic style
- planning, drafting, and editing written work
- organisation and paragraphing of written work
- referencing and bibliographies

The module is presented each term and is free to registered research students. All new campus-based international research students whose first language is not English and who have not previously studied in the

UK are strongly encouraged to enrol on this module in their first year and those who do greatly improve their chances of successfully completing their research degree. Even if your spoken/general English language skills are good, this module will provide you with the academic English language skills needed in the probation review, the writing of your thesis, and the viva voce examination.

To learn more, visit the English Language Teaching Unit Website:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/eltu

5.4 Student Welfare Services

The Student Welfare Service provides a fully integrated support service for students and postgraduates.

Student Welfare Centre

The Student Welfare Centre offers wide ranging practical support, advice, and information for students and postgraduates:

- financial advice
- immigration advice
- housing advice
- legal advice

To learn more, visit the Student Welfare Centre Website:

- ▶ www.le.ac.uk/welfare

Student Psychological and Healthy Living Service

The Student Psychological and Healthy Living Service offers a range of expertise and support for both the physical and psychological aspects of health and wellbeing in the context of your academic journey.

Student Counselling Support

Time-limited, free and confidential counselling on a one-to-one or group basis addressing both academic-related and personal issues:

- ▶ www.le.ac.uk/counselling

Student Mental Wellbeing Support

Practical and emotional one-to-one and group support for students and postgraduates managing mental health issues at the University:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/mental-wellbeing

There is also additional information on mental well-being for research students on the Doctoral College website:

- ▶ Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources

Student Healthy Living Service

The Student Healthy Living Service strives to help students and postgraduates improve their health and wellbeing. The Student Healthy Living Service also works closely with local NHS services and provides advice on access to health care facilities:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/healthy-living-for-students

AccessAbility Centre

The AccessAbility Centre offers a range of services to all students and postgraduates who have specific learning difficulties, disabilities, or long-term conditions. The AccessAbility Centre has some specialised equipment (CCTV, enlarged keyboard, and chairs) and some for loan (chairs, laptops, and digital recorders). Low-level photocopying and printing facilities are also available.

To learn more, visit the AccessAbility Centre Website:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/accessability

5.5 Health Care

The University's Healthy Living Service helps students and postgraduates to enjoy a healthy and balanced life. They also offer advice to new international research students on how to access public health care through the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

All new research students are strongly encouraged to consult the Healthy Living Service's leaflet *Your Health – How to Get Help and Advice*.

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/healthy-living-for-students/offices/ssds/healthy-living-for-students

Registering with a Doctor

All new research students are strongly encouraged to register with a local doctor – sometimes known as a "General Practitioner" or GP.

Research students living near to the University may wish to register with the Victoria Park Health Centre which is located adjacent to the main campus. However, you will only be able to do this once you have arrived in the UK and have an address in Leicester. The doctors, nurses, and administrative staff at the Victoria Park Health Centre have expertise in 'student health' and they work closely with the University to support students at times of ill health.

Information about other local health centres is available from the NHS website:

- ▶ www.nhs.uk/service-search

Health Care Costs

Nationals from other European Union countries are entitled to free necessary treatment from the NHS while in the UK. Nationals from countries outside the European Union are entitled to free necessary treatment from the NHS provided that they are:

- a registered full-time research student from any country on a course lasting more than six months

- the husband or wife of such a research student and living here while their wife or husband is a registered full-time research student
- a dependent of such a research student (a dependent is any child under 16 or under 19 if in full time education)

Even if you are entitled to free healthcare, charges are made for some services such as prescription medication, dental treatment, and eye tests. If you are a national of another European Union country you will require a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which must be obtained from your home country.

Seeking Advice for Minor Ailments

If you are unwell and need advice about minor ailments such as a cold, coughs, sore throats, etc. you can:

- use the NHS111 service – if you urgently need medical help or advice but it is not a life-threatening situation, call 111; the service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and calls are free from landlines and mobile phones
- use the NHS Choices online guides – search for your symptoms and find advice on treatments

► www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pages/hub.aspx

- ask your local pharmacist – pharmacists can often give you advice about how to deal with a range of minor illness without you having to first make an appointment

Seeking Advice from a Doctor

If you are unwell and need to see a doctor you will need to make an appointment with the health centre where you are registered. Appointments can usually be made in person, by phone, and often online via the health centre's own website.

When the health centre is closed you can see a GP at either of the following centres:

- Leicester Urgent Care Centre (next to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Leicester Royal Infirmary)
- Oadby and Wigston Walk-In Medical Centre

Research students living outside of Leicester should seek advice from their health centre on out-of-hours health care facilities.

Seeking Advice in an Emergency

In the event of an emergency such as:

- severe breathing difficulties
- unconsciousness
- severe blood loss
- suspected broken bones
- severe chest pain
- a serious accident

You should go to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Leicester Royal Infirmary or your local hospital. An ambulance should only be requested for cases which are life threatening – if an ambulance is required call 999.

5.6 Arts, Sports, and Leisure

The period of your research degree registration should not be all work, work, work – it is important to make time for other interests and to take breaks away from your research and thesis. Leicester offers lots of opportunities for your leisure time.

Arts and Culture

Leicester has undergone a cultural renaissance in the last ten years.

The opening of the state-of-the-art Curve Theatre has brought national theatre productions and other performances to the city as well as providing a new home for local and regional performance groups. Nearby Phoenix Square is a base for alternative arts including cinema and new media performances. Other local cultural landmarks are De Montfort Hall, the YMCA Theatre, and the Highcross Cinema.

Embrace Arts is the University's own multi-use inclusive arts centre and offers a year-round programme of music, dance, drama, and workshops.

Sports

The University has excellent sports and leisure facilities at the Danielle Brown Sports Centre and the Roger Bettles Sports Centre. These include swimming pools, gyms, saunas and steam rooms, tennis courts, badminton courts, squash courts, and outdoor pitches for football and rugby.

To learn more, visit the Sport and Recreation Website:

► www.le.ac.uk/sports

For those who prefer sport as a spectator, Leicester is home to the 2016 Premier League champions Leicester City Football Club – as well as one of the UK's top rugby union clubs – the Leicester Tigers and Leicestershire County Cricket Club.

Leisure and Places to See

If you are out-and-about in Leicester, places worth visiting include the Jewry Wall Museum, built around the remains of the Roman bath house, while nearby you will find Leicester Cathedral, the ornate Jain Temple, the Leicester Guildhall which dates from the 1300s, and the Richard III Visitors' Centre.

The New Walk Museum and Gallery is close to the University and its dinosaur collection is always popular with children. Leicester is also home to the UK's National Space Centre.

There are a huge number of parks and open spaces throughout the city and these are popular all year round with walkers, joggers, and families. The surrounding countryside is also within easy reach with local sights including Charnwood Forest, Bradgate Park, Foxton Locks, and Rutland Water. For those looking for some serenity, the University Botanic Gardens are a green oasis in Oadby in the suburbs of Leicester.

5.7 Students' Union

There is more to student life than studying. Working for your research degree is important, but your years at university are also about other life skills – making friends and making ends meet, exploring ideas, and discovering places.

The University of Leicester Students' Union supports more than 200 student societies. It works to campaign about issues that matter to you, to support your safety and welfare, and to help you boost your employability.

Based in the Percy Gee Building on the main campus, Students' Union services and facilities include:

- SULets – for students looking for rented accommodation in Leicester
- Education Unit – for free and impartial advice on academic matters and concerns
- Activities Resource Centre – a hub for student groups of all kinds
- Students' Union Shop, the 1923 Cafe and Restaurant, the Common Room bar, and branches of Ryman's office supplies, Santander bank, and Starbucks coffee shop

Research students are encouraged to become involved in the running of the Students' Union through the Union Parliament.

To learn more, visit the Students' Union Website:

- ▶ <http://leicesterunion.com>

5.8 University Chaplaincy

Leicester is a multi-faith, multi-cultural city and our policy within the University is to promote understanding, cooperation, and contact between faith groups. The Chaplaincy is located in The Gatehouse close to the main campus.

The University Chaplaincy primarily serves students of Christian denominations – but the Chaplaincy team welcome students and postgraduates of any faith or none. The Chaplaincy works with advisers for Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh students. Leicester is also home to communities of Jains and Bahá'ís.

To learn more, visit the Chaplaincy Website:

- ▶ www.le.ac.uk/chaplaincy

6.0 Registration and Administrative Support

This section of the Handbook contains important administrative advice regarding your registration and related matters. The University's rules on these are set out in full in the Regulations Governing Research Degree Programmes.

Further advice on research degree administrative processes and requirements is available from the Research Student Zone:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/departments/doctoralcollege/zone

Alternatively, please contact the Doctoral College Office. It is located on the ground floor of the Charles Wilson Building and is open to visitors Mondays to Fridays from 09:00 to 17:00. Or you can email pgresearch@le.ac.uk or call +44 (0)116 252 2448.

6.1 Initial Registration and Annual Re-Registration

Registration is an important process – you must be registered to have access to University services and facilities.

Initial Registration for New Research Students

As a new research student you need to register at the start of your degree to confirm your place on the programme. Registration is a quick and easy process – just follow the Registration Instructions for New Research Students:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/office/registration/new-registration

Once you have registered for your first year, you will receive:

Student Identification Card

Your student identification card lasts for the duration of your degree. You should keep your card safe – it gives you access to the University Library and you may need it to access university buildings or to prove your identity while on campus.

Your student card also shows your nine-digit student number. This is your unique personal identification number and must be quoted in all correspondence with the University.

Certificate of Registration

This is issued automatically at the start of your research degree and confirms your registration as a research student. This is an important document which you should keep safe.

University IT Account and University Email Account

When you have completed registration you will be asked to create a University IT account and email account. It is important that you do this – your University email address is our primary means of contacting you. Check

your University email account frequently to ensure that you do not miss any important communication from the University or your Department.

If you are having problems setting up or using your University IT account or if you lose your password, please contact IT Services.

Annual Re-Registration for Continuing Research Students

All research students are required to re-register each year on the anniversary of their initial registration. Instructions for doing this will be sent to your University email account.

Re-registration is a quick and easy process that can be completed from any computer connected to the internet, anywhere in the world – just follow the Registration Instructions for Continuing Research Students:

► **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Please note that you will not be able to re-register if you:

- have not made arrangements for the payment of the new academic year's tuition fees
or
- have any outstanding fees – so you must ensure that your tuition and other fees (accommodation charges, bench fees, etc.) have been paid by the deadlines given

6.2 Registration Periods

Each research degree programme has a specified minimum and maximum period of registration dependent on the research student's mode of study. The specified minimum and maximum periods are calculated by reference to your initial date of registration.

The registration periods for the degree of PhD, MD, or MPhil are:

		Minimum Period (Years)	Maximum Period (Years)
PhD	Full-Time	2.0	4.0
	Part-Time	4.0	7.0
MD	Full-Time	2.0	4.0
	Part-Time	2.0	5.0
MPhil	Full-Time	1.0	2.0
	Part-Time	2.0	4.0

The registration periods for the degree of PsyD, DClinPsy, DSocSci, EdD, EngD are:

		Minimum Period (Years)	Maximum Period (Years)
PsyD	Part-Time	2.0	5.0
DClinPsy	Full-Time	3.0	3.0

DSocSci	Part-Time	4.0	6.0
EdD	Part-Time	3.0	6.0
EngD	Full-Time	4.0	5.0

Research students are required to maintain registration for at least the specified minimum period and are not allowed to maintain registration beyond the specified maximum period. Research students who have experienced extenuating circumstances which are accepted by the University may be given an extension of registration beyond the specified maximum period.

6.3 Transfer to Writing-Up Status

Research students on PhD, MD, and MPhil programmes are expected by the start of the final year of the maximum registration period to have completed their research and be well advanced with the writing of their thesis. A writing-up period is designed to facilitate the completion of the thesis. As research students are no longer engaged in active research, a reduced fee is payable for the writing-up period.

If you are registered on a PhD, MD, or MPhil programme you can request to transfer to writing-up status if:

- you are or will be shortly entering your final year
- you have completed all active research – including all experimental work, laboratory work, field work, archival work, and data collection
- you have the approval of your supervisory team and Postgraduate Tutor

In exceptional cases, the Dean of the Doctoral College can approve a transfer to writing up before the final year.

The writing-up period counts towards the specified maximum registration period and the writing-up period cannot exceed twelve months. At the end of the writing-up period you will be required to submit your thesis for examination.

Over the writing-up period you will continue to be offered formal supervision and this will include your first supervisor reading and commenting on the final draft of your thesis – provided that they are given the draft thesis by a mutually acceptable date and in sufficient time before the required submission date.

Over the writing-up period you will continue to have access to the University Library and your University IT account. You may continue to have access to appropriate departmental facilities subject to the approval of the Head of Department.

To request to transfer to writing-up status, please visit the Research Student Zone – Writing-Up:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

6.4 Extension of Registration

Research students are required to submit their thesis for examination on or before the date on which they complete the maximum registration period. An extension of registration may be given if the University accepts that there are extenuating circumstances for the thesis being late.

Extension request must not be made earlier than two months before the expiration of registration. If you believe you will need some additional time in which to complete your thesis you can request an extension of registration if:

- you can demonstrate reasonable progress to date and extenuating circumstances for the thesis being late
- you can demonstrate a viable plan for completing the thesis over the extension period
- you have the approval of your supervisory team and Postgraduate Tutor

Extensions are normally for periods of one to three months; longer extensions of up to six months (or for separate extensions that cumulatively total six months) may be requested where there have been exceptional circumstances for this and an acceptable explanation as to why you did not suspend your registration. Extensions of more than six months are not permitted.

Tuition fees are payable for all extension periods. Restrictions may apply if you are funded by one of the UK Research Councils.

To request an extension of registration, please visit the Research Student Zone – Extensions:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

6.5 Suspension of Programme and Withdrawals

Research students may request to temporarily halt their degree (suspension) or permanently end their registration (withdrawal).

Requests for Suspension of Programme

If there are specific reasons why you need to take a temporary break from your research degree, you can request a short suspension of your programme if:

- you are ill, need a period of maternity/paternity leave, or have some other serious personal or financial difficulties that are affecting your ability to study
- the suspension period shall normally be three months long – requests for suspensions of less than three months will only be considered under special circumstances
- the suspension period will be no longer than twelve months – requests for a suspension of more than twelve months (or for separate suspensions that would cumulatively total more than twelve months over the length of your degree) will be approved only in exceptional circumstances

A request to suspend your programme must be made at the time the suspension is needed, or in advance if at all possible – retrospective requests will not be considered under any circumstances. No tuition fees are payable for an agreed period of suspension; however, for the duration of the suspension research students are not entitled to any support from their supervisory team or Department.

To request a suspension of your programme, please visit the Research Student Zone – Suspensions:

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

If you have a Tier 4 student visa obtained using a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) statement, the University must notify the UK Border Agency if you suspend your programme. You may suspend up to 60 calendar days without the curtailment of your visa. If you must suspend for more than 60 calendar days, your leave to remain in the UK may be ended and you will need to return home until your suspension has ended. In such instances, you will need to apply for a new visa to re-join your degree after your suspension has ended – you will not be able to re-register with your existing visa. Students who hold a Tier 4 Visa and need to suspend their studies should contact the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team for advice on suspending their studies. You can email the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team at visas@le.ac.uk.

► **le.ac.uk/study/international-students/advice**

Withdrawing from Your Research Degree

If you are considering withdrawing from your degree – that is, permanently ending your registration – we would encourage you to first seek advice from your supervisory team. You may also want to speak with the Student Welfare Centre or the Advice Service.

If you decide that you do need to withdraw from your degree, you need to notify the Doctoral College Office in writing – failure to do so may mean that you continue to incur fees.

To withdraw from your research degree programme, please visit the Research Student Zone – Withdrawals:

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

6.6 Immigration and Visas

To comply with UK immigration law you will need to:

- hold a valid visa that entitles you to study at the University of Leicester
- provide us with a copy of your visa/biometrics card and passport – if these are renewed at any time you will need to bring your new documents to the Doctoral College Office
- provide us with your UK and home addresses and contact telephone numbers and notify the Doctoral College Office if these change
- pay your fees and register for your course on-time every year
- attend the University on a full-time basis and meet any specific attendance requirements that your Department asks of you
- agree any absences (i.e., holidays) with your Department and supervisory team before they occur
- seek permission in advance if you want to temporarily suspend your programme or withdraw from your degree

- tell us if you are employed by the University and if this contract ends/changes
- leave the UK if you defer, suspend, or withdraw from your degree, or if your place on your degree is ended, or if your circumstances change such that you are no longer studying full-time (including completing your degree early)

The University also has certain legal responsibilities for international full-time research students:

- to keep copies of all international research students' passport/visa/biometrics card/ATAS clearance (where appropriate)
- to inform UK Visas and Immigration where research students in the UK on a Tier 4 student visa obtained using a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS):
 - defer the start date of their degree after using their CAS
 - do not start their degree for any other reason after using their CAS
 - do not complete registration – both online and face-to-face registration
 - do not meet attendance and checkpoint requirements
 - suspend their programme
 - leave the University without completing their course – that is, withdraw permanently
 - change to a shorter degree or change to a degree that does not meet Tier 4 requirements (for example, a part-time degree)
 - have their registration terminated/ended
 - complete their degree early

Please note that UK Visas and Immigration can bring your immigration permission to an end early if it is notified of one of these matters. It is therefore very important to ensure that if any difficulties arise which will affect your ability to meet attendance requirements or continue with your degree that you keep your Department informed of your situation. You may also wish to take advice from the Student Welfare Centre about your immigration status.

Please note that the University can only sponsor research students who are registered on an eligible degree and you are required to be in attendance at the University to undertake full-time study.

Student Visa Renewals

If you need to apply for a visa renewal/extension because your current visa expires before you will submit your thesis, you must first request a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) statement from the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team by email at visas@le.ac.uk.

Please note that it can take up to two weeks to issue a CAS statement from the date your request is received. You are strongly advised to submit your CAS request in plenty of time before the expiry of your current visa. You are also asked to wait until you have received your CAS statement before making a visa renewal appointment.

Doctorate Visa Extension Scheme

If you are a full-time international research student studying towards a doctoral degree on a Tier 4 visa then you may be eligible to apply for the doctorate extension scheme. This scheme allows you to remain in the UK

for up to twelve months after your degree to find work with a Tier 2 employer, set up as an entrepreneur, or gain practical work experience in your field.

If you are interested in the Doctoral Extension Scheme (DES), please contact pgresearch@le.ac.uk.

6.7 Council Tax Adjustments and Exemptions

Research students resident in the UK may be entitled to an exemption from/adjustment to their council tax assessment if they are registered on a full-time research degree programme. However, the exact rules do vary between local authorities and you should contact your local authority directly for advice on their eligibility criteria.

Those registered as part-time or distance learning research students are not entitled to an exemption from/adjustment to their council tax assessment.

Local authorities will require proof that you are registered as a full-time research student before applying any exemption/adjustment. This will be provided automatically by the Doctoral College Office if you live in one of the following local authority areas:

- Blaby District Council
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
- Leicester City Council
- Lincoln Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Market Harborough District Council
- Melton Borough Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Nuneaton Borough Council
- Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Rutland County Council

If you live outside of these areas, you should use a copy of your Certificate of Registration as proof that you are registered as a full-time research student.

6.8 Holidays and Illnesses

Research students who need to take a short break from their research degree programme either for a holiday or ill health should notify their supervisory team.

Holidays

Each calendar year you may take periods of annual leave, normally up to a maximum of twenty-four (full-time) or twelve (part-time) leave days. Requests to take annual leave must be made through your supervisory team and recorded by your Department. Requests to take leave for a period of more than one month will not normally be approved.

In addition to this annual leave entitlement, there are a number of United Kingdom public holidays and a further number of days in each year which are allocated by the University as closure days around the Christmas and Easter periods.

Illnesses

If you suffer a minor illness for a period of less than seven days you must report it to your Department where this may have affected your progress with your research degree.

If you suffer an illness of more than seven days' duration or that is of a non-minor nature you must seek medical advice and obtain a medical certificate. You must then provide a copy of the medical certificate to your Department and to the Doctoral College Office.

6.9 Your Personal Details

The Doctoral College Office keeps a record of your contact details – i.e. your term-time and vacation postal address(es), telephone number, any alternative (personal) email address, and your emergency contact person. It is important that this record is kept up-to-date.

You can change your personal details by logging on to MyStudentRecord:

- ▶ srs.le.ac.uk/sipr/sits.urd/run/siw_lgn

You can notify the Doctoral College Office of a change in your personal details by email pgresearch@le.ac.uk making sure to include your nine-digit student number.

7.0 Thesis Submission and Examination

Your thesis is the culmination of your research degree. It is important that you make sure that you are fully prepared for the process of writing and submitting your thesis and that you are aware of all applicable University regulations. Here you can find advice and guidance to support you through the process of writing and submitting your thesis and sitting the viva voce examination.

7.1 Planning and Managing Your Thesis Submission

No one ever said writing a thesis was easy, but there are things that you can do to make the process less painful. In particular, having a clear plan that tells you what to do and when to do it will help you take control of your work instead of allowing it to control you.

Regularly reviewing your progress against your plan will allow you to see any problems before it becomes too late to do anything about them and will help you stay motivated as you see your thesis taking shape and can mark parts of your plan as completed.

Thesis Submission Date

Your plan must take account of your required thesis submission date.

Your thesis must be submitted for examination by the time you complete the maximum registration period for your research degree programme. In the case of a full-time PhD, the maximum registration period is four years from your initial date of registration. You can find the maximum registration period for other research degree programmes in the Regulations Governing Research Degree Programmes. Extensions beyond this date are approved only in specific circumstances and the maximum extension period is six months.

You must also allow sufficient time for your supervisors to read and comment on your thesis before it is submitted for examination and they may need up to three months for this.

Develop a Thesis Plan

If you do not have one already, a good place to start is by putting together a thesis plan - something that shows the individual sections/chapters that will make up your thesis and says a bit about what each one will contain. This does not have to be too detailed and probably one side of paper will be enough for this, but it should show:

- the order of the sections/chapters that will make up your thesis
- the title of each section/chapter
- a note of what each section/chapter will cover
- a tentative word count for each section/chapter (making sure that the total does not exceed the maximum word limit allowed)

As you develop your thesis plan, try to remember that the purpose of your thesis is to explain what original contribution to knowledge your research has made. Think about how your thesis will do this – Where will you

set out what your contribution to knowledge has been? How will each section/chapter develop expand and develop from this declaration? Will your structure help to present your research and contribution to knowledge in a logical and clear manner?

It is also a good idea to get some feedback on your thesis plan from your supervisory team to make sure that the structure of your thesis is consistent with normal practice for your discipline. You may find it useful to look at some recent theses in your Department to get a better feel for how a thesis should be structured and the sort of tone it should have.

Develop a Work Plan

The next step is to take your thesis plan and develop a work plan for completing each section/chapter.

Your tentative word count for each section will give you some idea as to which sections/chapters may take longer to write than others and there will be some sections (like your acknowledgements) which should not take very long to write. You should also take account of sections/chapters where you will be able to re-use something you have already written – like a conference paper or progress report.

The important thing in developing your work plan is to be realistic – clearly you cannot spend all day every day writing, but you should be writing regularly and giving sufficient time to your writing to allow you to submit your thesis before you complete your maximum period of registration.

Most research students find that in their final year they need to spend at least some time each day writing their thesis in order to complete it on time. Many find that keeping "office hours" for their thesis is a good way of making sure they focus on their writing – that is, having fixed hours each day that are set aside for writing their thesis.

We would suggest that in your work plan you need to allow sufficient time for a process similar to the one outlined below and have specific dates for the completion of each stage:

- drafting and re-drafting each draft section/chapter
- seeking comments from your supervisors on each draft section/chapter
- revising each draft section/chapter in light of your supervisors' comments
- preparing a complete final draft
- seeking comments from your supervisors on your complete final draft
- revising your complete final draft in light of your supervisors' comments

As with your thesis plan, we would suggest that you get some feedback from your supervisory team to make sure that your work plan is realistic and that they know when you expect to submit draft work to them for comment on.

Use Your Plans

Any plan is only as good as the use that is made of it. Once you have developed your thesis plan and your work plan and have agreed these with your supervisory team, it is important that you use them by regularly referring back to them and comparing your actual progress with where your plans say you should be. As you do this, ask yourself questions about whether what you are doing is consistent with your plans:

- am I giving as much time to my thesis as I had planned to do?
- am I on track to complete each section/chapter by the planned date?
- am I providing draft work to my supervisory team by the dates agreed?
- does each section/chapter include the information that it was supposed to?
- does each section/chapter help explain what my original contribution to knowledge is?

If you are finding that you are not keeping to your plans, then you may have to adjust your working practices. A common problem is to not give enough time to your thesis – regular writing is not only good for your progress, it will help you gain confidence, develop a more effective writing style, and make sitting down to work much less off-putting.

Use Feedback

Research students are encouraged to make seeking feedback from their supervisors a regular feature in their work plan. Seeking feedback from your supervisors will help you to manage your writing in two main ways – firstly, having agreed dates by which you must submit draft work to your supervisors will help you stay focussed and keep to your work plan; and secondly, your supervisors' comments will help you improve the quality of your writing.

The feedback that your supervisors provide is likely to address both positive and negative aspects of your work. Recognise the positive feedback and be pleased with it – but do not be tempted to ignore any negative feedback. It is provided with the aim of helping your work and you should follow your supervisors' advice.

Work Smart

When it comes to your final year, it pays to be a little boring – not in your writing, but in your working patterns. Routine and order are both important tools in helping you manage your time:

- keep fixed work hours each day
- have a tidy workspace
- use electronic files and folders and make sure you have a back-up copy of your work

If you are using MS Word, there are several features that you can use to make it easier to prepare and manage a long document like a thesis. For practical advice and tips visit:

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/lli/staff-development/events/courses/it/microsoftoffice

Avoid Perfectionism

Perfection is an unrealistic objective – a perception that anything less than perfection is unacceptable and that your own work falls far short of this is a common problem for research students when producing written work, especially the thesis.

Research students must not let themselves fall into this way of thinking. Perfect is not achievable – professional is. Your supervisors and your examiners will not expect perfect work; they will expect professional work. Keep a sense of perspective and be realistic about what you can achieve. Your thesis should be clearly and accurately written; but as someone at the start of your research career, no one is expecting you to produce the standard of academic writing that only comes from years of work and practice.

If you do start having doubts about the quality of your work, the best thing to do is to ask your supervisors. It can also be helpful to seek feedback from fellow research students or to look at past theses submitted in your Department. This will help give you a sense of perspective as to what is expected from you and your work.

Take Care of Yourself

Completing a research degree is hugely demanding. It can take a toll on your physical and mental health and, unless you are careful, you can find yourself so busy that you forget basic rules for healthy living such as taking regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep. If you are finding it difficult to live healthily or are experiencing health problems, there is lots of advice available online from NHS Choices – including:

- Healthy Eating
- Sleep Problems
- Stress, Anxiety, Depression
- Tiredness and Fatigue

▶ www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx

Any health problems that are affecting your academic progress should be discussed with a medical professional. For more advice on accessing health care services, consult the University Healthy Living Service's leaflet Your Health – How to Get Help and Advice:

▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/healthy-living-for-students/offices/ssds/healthy-living-for-students

Stress and Depression

Everyone has times when they feel less motivated, but sometimes the issue may become more serious and lead to problems such as stress or depression. If you experience these problems, it is important not to ignore them. Speaking with your supervisors, your Postgraduate Tutor, your friends, or family can often help you to get things in perspective and identify ways to get back on track.

If you need more specialist advice or just want to talk with someone in confidence, the University offers free and confidential counselling provided by qualified professionals. For more advice, visit the Student Counselling Support Website:

▶ www.le.ac.uk/counselling

Get the Right Balance

To keep up with your work plan you will need to make sure that you are allowing sufficient time to work on your thesis each week. However, your research degree is not a 24/7 job and it is important to take regular breaks and to make time to get away from your thesis altogether. Regular short breaks during the day will help you stay focused and give you a chance to refresh yourself and stretch your legs – short breaks like this are particularly important if you are working at a computer as getting away from the screen will help avoid eye strain. You also need to make time for regular meal breaks to ensure that you are eating healthily.

7.2 Developing Your Writing Skills

As you get further along in your writing, you will start to think about its quality and whether there is anything you can do to improve this. No thesis is ever perfect, but there are things that you can do to develop your writing skills.

Think About Your Readers' Needs

Your aim should be to make your text as clear as possible – to present your ideas clearly and concisely and to avoid ambiguity or redundancy. If it is something you are still having problems with, try adopting these very basic rules as you write your thesis:

- avoid excessively long sentences
- do not use a difficult word where a simple one will do
- use punctuation correctly to aid the sense of your writing
- use paragraphs to break your text into logically self-contained units

To guide your readers through your thesis it should include a system of "signposts" – things that explicitly or implicitly tell the reader what to expect. Signposts that you can use in your thesis are:

- a detailed table of contents
- a well written abstract
- an introductory section/chapter for the thesis as a whole
- an introductory paragraph for each individual section/chapter
- a consistent system of headings and sub-headings

Remember that your thesis is telling a story – your original contribution to knowledge in your discipline. It should be clear from the very start what your original contribution to knowledge is and each section/chapter should then help to tell that story.

Write Critically

Your thesis must demonstrate your ability to write critically – that is, to write in a way that is characterised by:

- a clear and confident refusal to accept the conclusions of other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence that they provide
- a balanced presentation of reasons why the conclusions of other writers may be accepted or may need to be treated with caution
- a clear presentation of your own evidence and argument, leading to your conclusion
- a recognition of the limitations in your own evidence, argument, and conclusion

For more advice, read the University's Critical Writing Study Guide:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-writing

Remember as well that whatever discipline you belong to, there will be certain conventions of academic writing – for example, specific modes of phrasing, specific terminology, recognised acronyms/abbreviations, etc. It is important that you make yourself familiar with these and the best way to do this is through reading

theses, articles, and other texts. Ask your supervisors if you are unsure of the specific conventions for academic writing in your discipline.

Have a Structure for Drafting and Re-Drafting

To start with, your thesis will be very much a work in progress. It is important to remember in the early stages of your writing that you are working on a draft, not the finished thesis. Even if you know that you can do better, leave the improvements until you come to write the next draft. This will give you time to reflect and think more carefully about anything that you might need to change. Instead of re-drafting as you go, why not look to make drafting a process with formal stages and different questions to be addressed at each stage:

1st Re-Draft	Editing for Academic Rigour
2nd Re-Draft	Reducing Redundancy
3rd Re-Draft	Editing for Consistency
4th Re-Draft	Signposting and Linking
5th Re-Draft	Proof Reading

For more advice on the type of things you need to consider at each stage, read the University's Art of Editing Study Guide:

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/editing

We recommend that you apply this structure to each complete section/chapter of your thesis as well as your final complete version – so it is important that in your work plan you allow sufficient time for each re-drafting stage.

Remember Basic Rules for Good Written English

It is important that you pay attention to the basic rules for good written English – accurate spelling and correct use of grammar and punctuation.

Errors of spelling are best avoided by careful proof reading – and you should never rely simply on your word processor's spell check function. Proof reading is something you should allow time for as part of your structure for re-drafting your work – do not expect your supervisors to do your proof reading for you. Grammar and punctuation can be more difficult to get right, particularly if English is not your first language. For more advice, read the University's Grammar Study Guides:

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/grammar/grammar-guides

You may also want to consult the University's Inclusive Writing Study Guide:

► www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/inclusive

Get Feedback on Your Writing and Use It

Getting feedback from your supervisors as your writing progresses should already be a part of your work plan and your strategy for managing your writing. If you would find it helpful to also be given feedback on your writing style and what you could do to develop your writing, let your supervisors know that this is something you would appreciate their comments on.

Your supervisors' comments are intended to be constructive – to provide you with guidance to help you improve your work and finish your research degree successfully; comments highlighting a problem or oversight are not intended as, and should never be interpreted as, a personal criticism. They may structure their feedback in a way that brings out the positives before going on to talk about any weaknesses. You will need to take a balanced approach – be pleased with the positives, but take seriously any weaknesses and listen to and act on any comments your supervisors might have for addressing these. If there are any aspects of your supervisors' advice and feedback which are unclear you should ask for clarification as early as possible; it can also be helpful to keep a written record – almost like a diary – of the feedback provided by your supervisors so that you can refer to this later.

Be Realistic About What You Can Achieve

It is natural to be anxious about the quality of your work, but do not let this stop you writing or allow yourself to be caught in the trap of repeatedly revising the same section. Being realistic as to what to expect from your writing will avoid wasting time through worrying rather than getting on with your thesis.

Remember that:

- you are just starting out as an academic writer – you should not expect, nor will your examiners expect, to see in your thesis the writing style of an experienced academic writer
- you need to keep sight of what is important about your writing style – do not waste time agonising over phrasing or your choice of words, your writing is doing its job if it communicates clearly what you have to say
- you can use feedback from your supervisors and others to reassure yourself that what you are writing is of an appropriate standard

Further training and resources to help you with the writing process are provided by the Leicester Learning Institute:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

7.3 Formatting the Thesis and Thesis Word Limits

The University has rules for the presentation and binding of research degree theses and your thesis may not be examined if you fail to follow these. If you have any questions regarding these rules, you should seek advice from your supervisory team or the Doctoral College Office.

Formatting Requirements

The rules for formatting research degree theses are quite straightforward, but it is important that you get them right:

- with the exception of short quotations for which an English translation is provided, the thesis must be written in English, unless the Dean of the Doctoral College has given approval prior to submission for examination for all or part of the thesis to be in another language
- the thesis must be presented on good quality A4 paper
- the thesis pages must be printed on one side only
- the printed text must be of good quality with 1.5 line spacing and should normally be in 12 point type

- the thesis pages must have a margin of at least 3.5 centimetres on the left side of each page to allow for binding - all other margins must be of at least 2.5 centimetres

Thesis Title Page

The first page of the thesis must be a title page that includes the following information:

- the full title of the thesis
- your full name
- the name of your School/Department – such as School of or Department of
- the month and year in which the thesis was submitted for examination

You can download an illustration of what your thesis title page should look like:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Thesis Abstract and Order of Contents

The title page of the thesis must be followed by the thesis abstract. The abstract must not exceed 300 words and must include in the form of a heading the full title of the thesis and your full name.

Your abstract must make it clear what your original contribution to knowledge is.

The thesis abstract must be followed in this order by:

- acknowledgements page
- table of contents
- main body of the thesis
- appendices (if needed)

Footnotes and Bibliography

Explanatory notes must be numbered and presented as footnotes at the bottom of the relevant page.

The thesis appendices – or the main body of the thesis if there are no appendices – must be followed by a complete and accurate bibliography. All works referenced in the thesis must be included in the bibliography.

Thesis Word Limits

The University has a maximum word limit for research degree theses and you must ensure that your thesis does not exceed the relevant limit.

College of Social Science Arts, and Humanities

- PhD 80,000 words
- EdD 55,000 words
- DSocSci 50,000 words
- MPhil 50,000 words

including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices, the bibliography, and table(s) of cases/legislation/treaties cited.

College of Life Sciences

- PhD 50,000 words
- MD 30,000 words
- MPhil 30,000 words

including footnotes and any appendices, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, and the bibliography.

Except for:

1. research students registered for the degree of PhD, MD, or MPhil and whose thesis is based on qualitative or case study research, where the length of the thesis – including footnotes and any appendices, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, and the bibliography – must not exceed the following limits:
 - PhD 80,000 words
 - MD 50,000 words
 - MPhil 50,000 words
2. research students registered for the degree of PsyD or DClínPsy where the length of the thesis – including footnotes and any appendices (except mandatory appendices), but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, and the bibliography – must not exceed the following limits:
 - PsyD 30,000 words
 - DClínPsy 29,000 words

College of Science and Engineering

- PhD 50,000 words
- EngD 25,000 words
- MPhil 30,000 words

including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices, and the bibliography.

Except for research students in the Department of Geography registered for the degree of PhD or MPhil and whose thesis is based on social science research, where the length of the thesis must not exceed the limits specified for the College of Social Science.

Referencing and Citations

You will need to reference your thesis fully and accurately both to acknowledge your debts to others and to allow your readers to distinguish your ideas from those of others that you have drawn on. There are three key rules that you should follow:

- speak with your supervisors early on for advice on referencing conventions in your discipline – the two main ones are the Harvard (author/date) system and the Vancouver (numbered) system, but in the School of Law the Oxford Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities (OSCOLA) is used
- your references must be accurate – having inaccurate references is as bad as having no references at all and potentially could lead to you being accused of poor academic practice or plagiarism
- your referencing must be consistent – make sure that your formatting of references with respect to capitalisation and punctuation is consistent all the way through your thesis

If you need general advice on how to ensure your thesis is appropriately referenced, take a look at the Referencing and Bibliographies Study Guide:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/ref-bib

If you are in any doubt about your use of the work, ideas, or expressions of others check the Avoiding Plagiarism in Your Research Degree Study Guide and seek advice from your supervisors:

- ▶ **Blackboard.le.ac.uk – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

The University Library also offers detailed guides on using the Harvard Referencing and Vancouver Referencing systems:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/citing/harvard-author-date-system/harvard-author-date-system
- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/citing/vancouver-numbered-system/vancouver-numbered-system

Bibliographic software allows you to create databases of references which can then be stored, searched and used in conjunction with MS Word to input citations as you write your thesis. The two main types of bibliographic software are EndNote and RefWorks.

The University Library offer advice on accessing and using bibliographic software:

- ▶ www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/bibliographies/bibliographic-software

Use of Published Work Within Research Degree Theses

You may wish in your thesis to re-use work which you have authored and which has already been published elsewhere. Research degree theses may include:

- complete specimens of published work that you have authored and which are submitted in support of the thesis
and/or
- material from published work that you have authored and which has been re-worked and incorporated within the main body of the thesis

The inclusion within the thesis of work that has been accepted for publication must not be taken as a guarantee that the thesis will meet the requirements for the award of a research degree. The decision to award a degree rests with the examining team.

In all cases, published work may be used in these ways provided that:

- the published work was written during your period of registration at the University and represents work undertaken wholly or mainly by you
- where the published work represents a collaborative effort the thesis must include a statement as to the nature of your contribution as well as an acknowledgement of the contribution of others
- the thesis acknowledges where the published work has been submitted for examination at the University or elsewhere by a co-author
- standard rules regarding plagiarism and academic honesty are adhered to

It is your responsibility to ensure that the use of published work within the thesis complies with any applicable copyright restrictions.

If you intend to provide complete specimens of published work in support of the thesis, these must be presented as appendices to the main body of the thesis. Appendices will count toward the maximum word limit as specified above. Complete specimens of published work that are submitted in support of the thesis must:

- be relevant to the research question(s) addressed by the thesis
- have appeared in print or have been accepted for publication

7.4 Notice of Intention to Submit Thesis for Examination

At least three months before your expected thesis submission date, you must formally notify the Doctoral College Office of your intention to submit your thesis for examination. This is important as it is only on receipt of this notification that the process of appointing examiners will be started – failure to provide sufficient notice may mean that examiners have not been appointed by the date your thesis is submitted and could result in a delay in you sitting your viva examination.

Research students are encouraged to inform their supervisors that they have given their notice of intention to submit. To give notice of your intention to submit your thesis for examination, please visit the Research Student Zone – Notice of Submission:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

7.5 First Submission of Your Thesis

It could be that at the start of your final year you found it hard to get going on your thesis. As your final year draws to a close, you may well face the opposite problem – bringing yourself to let it go.

Getting Finished - When Enough is Enough!

Ultimately, you are responsible for deciding whether your thesis is ready for submission. Remember that you must submit your thesis by the end of your final year. In your work plan you should have taken your expected submission date into account, allowing some weeks before this date to give your supervisory team a chance to read and comment on your complete final draft.

The first thing you need to do is go back to your thesis plan:

- have you covered everything you wanted to cover?
- does your thesis clearly set out what your original contribution to knowledge in your discipline is and what implications stem from that?
- have you followed the advice for developing your writing?
- have you completed a process of successive re-drafting?

If you can answer "yes" to all of these questions, then it is likely that the work you have done is sufficient for your first submission.

Supervisor Feedback

Even if you are not entirely happy with your thesis, your supervisory team is there to provide advice. Make sure your supervisors have several weeks in which to read and comment on your thesis before the final submission deadline.

Seeking feedback from your supervisory team is very important and it is strongly recommended that you do not submit your thesis without your supervisory team having first had a chance to comment on your final draft. Again, your supervisors may structure their feedback in a way that brings out the positives before going on to talk about any weaknesses. You will need to take a balanced approach – be pleased with the positives, but take seriously any weaknesses and listen to and act on any comments your supervisors might have for addressing these.

Binding and Submitting Your Thesis

For your first submission, you are required to submit two copies of your thesis to the Doctoral College Office:

- both copies must be perfect bound (i.e., soft bound) – also known as thermal or hot glue binding; comb or spiral binding is not acceptable, nor is insertion into a ring binder or slide binder
- theses which are incorrectly bound will be delayed while arrangements are made for them to be re-bound at your expense
- there is no regulation for the colour of the cover at this stage – though it is useful to re-print the title page on the cover
- the spine of the thesis can be left blank
- you must also submit to the Doctoral College Office a completed First Submission Form

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/printservices) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

The University's Print Services can print and bind your thesis – for more advice, please see the Print Services Website:

► **www2.le.ac.uk/offices/printservices**

Theses do not need to be submitted in person, but if you are sending yours by post you should consider using a secure means such as recorded delivery. If your thesis is printed and bound by Print Services, they can deliver the bound copies to the Doctoral College Office for you.

If you are not submitting your thesis in person, the first thesis submission form can be sent by email to pgresearch@le.ac.uk.

You must ensure that all fees due to the University (tuition fees, bench fees, accommodation fees, etc.) have been paid in full before you submit your thesis – it will not be sent for examination if you have any outstanding debts.

7.6 Preparing for Your Viva Voce Examination

To be awarded a research degree you must successfully complete a viva voce examination. The viva examination is where you will give a verbal defence of your thesis; its purpose is to:

- demonstrate that the thesis is your own work
- confirm that you understand what you have written and can defend it verbally
- investigate your awareness of where your original work sits in relation to the wider research field
- establish whether the thesis is of sufficiently high standard to merit the award of the degree for which it is submitted
- allow you to clarify and develop the written thesis in response to the examiners' questions

Your Examiners

You will normally have two examiners:

- an internal examiner who will be a member of academic staff of the University, usually from your School/Department but not one of your supervisors
- an external examiner who will normally be a member of academic staff of another institution or occasionally a professional in another field with expertise in your area of research

In some cases there may also be a Chair person for the examination.

If you returned your Notice of Intention to Submit Your Thesis form three months before your submission date, your viva exam should normally take place quite soon after submission. Almost all viva exams take place within three months of thesis submission and in many cases it is within one month.

Format of the Exam

All viva examinations are different, so it is not possible to describe exactly what will happen. In order to establish that your work is of a sufficiently high standard to merit the award of the degree for which it is submitted, the examiners may:

- ask you to justify your arguments
- ask you to justify not only things which you have included in your thesis but also things which you may have left out
- ask you questions about the wider research context in which the work has been undertaken
- argue certain points with you
- expect you to discuss any developments which may flow from your work in the future

Inevitably, your thesis will have strengths and weaknesses and the examiners will want to discuss these. It is considered a positive thing, indeed an essential thing, that you can discuss both the strengths and the weaknesses. You can think of the weaknesses as an opportunity to demonstrate your skill at critical appraisal.

Preparing for Your Viva Exam

Getting ready for your viva exam is not something you need to panic about. It is normal to be anxious, but you can prepare yourself for the big day in three easy steps:

1. get to re-know your thesis
2. practice your exam responses
3. think about your examiners

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Taking a structured approach to your exam preparations and making sure to follow each of these steps will help give you the confidence you need to effectively defend your thesis. Remember as well to try to think positively. Positive thinking will help you feel in control of the situation which will increase your confidence.

Try to be:

- anticipating a potentially interesting discussion
- ready to engage in debate
- confident in your preparation
- eager to get on with it and relieved at being there at last
- excited at the challenge ahead

Support for Your Viva Exam Preparations

Research students can access a range of University and other support to help them prepare for their viva exam:

Your Supervisors

Your supervisors can play a key role in developing a plan for your viva examination preparations. Your supervisors can offer guidance and reassurance as to what to expect and may also be able to help you with your preparations – for example, by going through a practice viva examination with you. Speak with your supervisors early on in your preparations to see how they can help.

Preparing for the Viva Examination - Workshop

The University runs a workshop for research students preparing for their viva examination. It is recommended that you should have already made your first thesis submission before attending the workshop or be planning to submit in the next six months. This workshop is presented regularly during term time – see the events diary:

► **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

External Resources

Vitae Viva Preparations Guidance and Checklist:

► **www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva**

7.7 Viva Voce Examination Outcomes

The University's Regulations Governing Research Degree Programmes set out what decisions your examiners may make following your viva examination.

At the end of your viva exam, your examiners will ask you to leave the room so that they can discuss what recommendation to make. Do not worry if it is some time before you are asked to come back in – your examiners will have a lot to discuss, so it is not a sign that you have done badly if this does take some time. Most research students who get to this stage are successful and are awarded their degree – try to relax and to stay positive while you wait.

Examiner Decisions

Depending on what type of degree you are registered for, your examiners will make one of the following decisions following your viva examination:

- to award the degree for which you were examined with distinction (research students examined for the degree of MD)
- to award the degree for which you were examined
- to award the degree for which you were examined subject to the satisfactory completion of minor amendments to the thesis
- to award the degree for which you were examined subject to the satisfactory completion of major amendments to the thesis
- to refer you for resubmission of the thesis for the same degree as which you were examined
- to award a degree lower than that for which you were examined (research students examined for the degree of PhD, DSocSci, or EdD)
- to award a degree lower than that for which you were examined subject to the satisfactory completion of minor amendments to the thesis (research students examined for the degree of PhD or EdD)
- to refer you for resubmission of the thesis for a degree lower than that for which you were examined (research students examined for the degree of PhD or EdD only)
- to fail the thesis with no right of resubmission

It is very rare that examiners decide to award a degree without requiring some amendments to the thesis – in the majority of cases, examiners will decide to award the degree subject to amendments or, in a smaller number of cases, will decide that the research student should be referred for resubmission of the thesis.

Minor Amendments

Being asked to complete minor amendments is the most common outcome of a viva examination. The amendments that you will need to complete will be largely typographical or grammatical and may include corrections to references and/or diagrams and the re-writing of small sections of text. If your examiners decide that minor amendments are needed, they will explain what these are at the end of the examination. Your examiners will then give you a period of between one to three months to complete the required amendments and submit these to your internal examiner.

Major Amendments

If you are asked to complete major amendments these will be more substantial – they will involve more than typographical and other minor corrections and may include substantial re-writing of parts of the thesis. If your

examiners decide that major amendments are needed, then following the examination they will provide you with a written report which indicates what these are. Your examiners will then give you a period of between three to six months to complete the required amendments and submit these to your internal examiner.

Referral for Resubmission

Referral for resubmission means that the examiners are agreed that you need to undertake further research or repeat completed research and/or re-write or restructure large parts of your thesis. While this outcome can be disappointing, it is important to remember that most referred research students do go on to successfully complete their thesis. Your examiners will give you a referral period of between six and twelve months from the date at which you are provided with the examining team's post-viva exam report including details as to the changes and corrections required. You must then submit two soft bound copies of your revised thesis to the Doctoral College Office.

If you are referred for resubmission of the thesis, the examining team will decide whether a further viva examination is needed. The decision whether to hold a further viva examination will be taken once the examiners have assessed your resubmitted thesis. On completion of the assessment of the resubmitted thesis, and a further viva examination if one is held, the examiners will jointly make one of the following decisions:

- to award the degree for which you were examined with distinction (research students examined for the degree of MD)
- to award the degree for which you were examined
- to award the degree for which you were examined subject to the satisfactory completion of minor amendments to the thesis
- to award a degree lower than that for which you were examined (research students examined for the degree of PhD, DSocSci, or EdD)
- to award a degree lower than that for which you were examined subject to the satisfactory completion of minor amendments to the thesis (research students examined for the degree of PhD or EdD)
- to fail the thesis with no right of resubmission

If you are referred for resubmission of the thesis, a resubmission fee is payable.

Award of a Lower Degree

A lower degree can be awarded if you have not met the requirements for the degree for which you have examined but have met the requirements for a lower degree. Lower degrees can be awarded only in the case of research students examined for the degree of PhD, DSocSci, or EdD. On these programmes the award of a lower degree is conditional on:

- the thesis meeting the requirements for the degree of MPhil (research students examined for the degree of PhD or EdD)
or
- the student having successfully completed the taught components and other programme requirements (research students examined for the degree of DSocSci or EdD)

Research students examined for the degree of DSocSci or EdD and who are awarded a lower degree on the basis of the successful completion of the taught components and other programme requirements, will receive the degree of Master of Social Science or Master's in Education Research Inquiry.

Clarification of Examiner Comments

If you are required to make minor or major amendments to the thesis or are referred for resubmission of the thesis, you must not contact members of the examining team regarding the changes or corrections required. Research students who need clarification on any points relating to the changes or corrections required must seek advice from their supervisory team.

7.8 Final Submission of Your Thesis

If you have been awarded your degree without amendments being needed, or you have made any amendments needed and your internal examiner has confirmed these have been completed satisfactorily, you need to prepare and submit the final version of your thesis. This should be done promptly – the award of your degree may be delayed until the final bound copy of your thesis has been received.

Binding and Submitting Your Thesis

For your final submission, you are required to submit one copy of the final version of your thesis to the University Library. This copy must be hard bound and the binding must be Standard Green – Arbelave Library Buckram No. 563. The front and back covers should be blank while the spine should have your name, thesis title (abbreviated to fit if necessary), degree, and year of first submission in gold lettering. You can download an illustration of what your thesis spine should look like:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Theses which are not bound correctly will be delayed while arrangements are made for them to be re-bound at your expense.

The University's Print Services can print and bind your thesis – for more advice, please visit the Print Services Website:

- ▶ **www2.le.ac.uk/offices/printservices**

Theses do not need to be submitted in person, but if you are sending yours by post you should consider using a secure means such as recorded delivery. If your thesis is printed and bound by Print Services, they can normally deliver the bound copies to the University Library for you. You must also submit to the University Library a completed Final Submission Form:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

The final submission form must include an original signature. If you are not submitting your thesis in person, the final submission form should be sent to the University Library by post – electronic or scanned signatures are not permitted.

Submitting Your eThesis

In addition to the hard bound copy of your thesis, you are required to submit to the University Library an electronic copy of the final version of your thesis. The electronic copy – also known as an eThesis – should be submitted as a single PDF at the same time as you submit your hard bound copy.

The thesis will be made available through the University's Leicester Research Archive and the UK's Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS). Etheses are much more accessible than printed theses. Adding your thesis to the Leicester Research Archive means that it will be accessible to the worldwide research community and significantly improves the chances that your work will be viewed, consulted, and cited – something that is particularly important as you look to take your first steps into your career beyond your degree.

You can learn more about the benefits of theses and how to create and submit your thesis in the Doctoral College's Submitting Your eThesis Study Guide:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

7.9 Thesis Embargos

If you believe that you will need to restrict access to your thesis by placing it under an embargo, you should discuss this with your supervisory team as early as possible. An embargo is normally needed only if:

- the thesis contains material that is of commercial value
- the thesis contains sensitive personal data
- you can demonstrate that without an embargo your ability to publish your thesis elsewhere would be harmed

If you have concerns about your ability to publish your thesis elsewhere, you should read the Doctoral College's Submitting Your eThesis Study Guide:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

Most publishers do not require an embargo and restricting access to your thesis can harm your chances of securing publication.

To request a thesis embargo, please visit the Research Student Zone – Thesis Embargos:

- ▶ **[Blackboard.le.ac.uk](https://blackboard.le.ac.uk) – Research Essentials Online – Research Student Handbook Resources**

7.10 Award and Graduation

Once the Doctoral College Office has received confirmation that you have met the requirements for a degree from your examiners and the Library has confirmed receipt of your thesis, you will receive a letter notifying you of your degree award.

In due course you will also be invited to attend a degree congregation to collect your degree certificate. Degree congregations are held in January and July each year and you will be invited to the next degree congregation following the confirmation of your award. If you are unable to attend, you can request to graduate in absentia – in which case your degree certificate will be posted to you, after the ceremony.

To learn more, visit the Graduation Advice Website:

- ▶ **www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/graduation**