CODE OF PRACTICE FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES IN 2022/23

This Code of Practice relates to all students taking supervised research degree programmes at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), specifically those on MPhil, PhD and DProf programmes and the MRes. It should be read in conjunction with the College's General Regulations, the Research Degree Examination Regulations and the University of London Regulation 1 which can be found on the RVC intranet and the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. Together these documents set out the regulations and procedures for research degree students. Further information and forms referred to in the Code of Practice can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. Where appropriate, cross-reference is made to documents available elsewhere.

The Code of Practice is updated annually and a copy sent to all research students and their supervisors at the beginning of the academic year. The current version is also available on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. Students and staff should use the most recent version *only* as a reference source.

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1 Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 The University of London and the RVC

The University and the RVC set the federal and institutional frameworks for the management of research degree programmes, designed to comply with the QAA Code of Practice part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B11: Research degrees, HEFCE good practice guidance and the requirements of good research governance. These cover:

- The roles and responsibilities of the key parties (the University, the RVC, Academic Departments, research students, supervisors);
- The facilities, resources, support and training which should be available to research students;
- The processes and procedures for managing and monitoring student admission and progress;
- Examination and appeal processes and procedures;
- Quality assurance processes and procedures;
- Mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students and for students to make appeals and complaints.

1.2 The RVC Graduate School

The Graduate School is the primary administrative structure, which supports postgraduate research students and programmes of study. It is also the principal central source of information about matters relating to postgraduate research degrees, ensuring that information for all parties is accessible, clear, accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date. The role of the Graduate School is to oversee and promote development of postgraduate research degree programmes leading to the MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf and of the postgraduate Clinical

Training programmes leading to PGDipVCP (Internships) and MVetMed (Residencies) degrees.

The processes and procedures regulating research students within the RVC are approved by the Research Degrees Committee and then Academic Board.

In relation to research degree students, the Graduate School has responsibility for the following:

- Together with the Academic Departments and the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, identifying an appropriate supervisor and co-supervisor and ensuring that there are appropriate and sufficient resources for the specific project;
- Together with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, allocating any bursaries or other forms of student support available to the College;
- Monitoring and reviewing the progress and training of each student periodically, and specifically confirming progression in accordance with established criteria and procedures at different stages of their programme, and alerting the Head of Department to any concerns about student progress;
  Approving administrative matters such as extensions to study, changes of registration status or supervisor or interruption of study in consultation with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation and/or the Student Performance and Development (SPD) system, as appropriate;
- After approval of examiners by the Research Degrees Committee, managing entry to, and progress of, the examination;
- Maintaining accurate records relating to student progress, including their academic progression and the skills training completed.

1.3 The Research Degrees Committee

Purpose:

- To assure the quality and standards of the College's research degrees and to make recommendations on their award.

Terms of reference:

- To recommend the College's strategy for the MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf for approval by the Academic Board, and to promote and monitor its implementation;
- To develop, implement and monitor policies, procedures and regulations in respect of the MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf and for the assurance of the academic standards of awards made by the College;
- To develop and monitor the implementation of procedures for the registration, progress, training, supervision and examination of candidates for the degrees of MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf;
- To approve any proposed changes to the programme specification for a particular programme of study (e.g. introduction or adoption of new taught modules);
- To approve any proposed changes to the form of examination for the MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf degrees;
- To recommend to the Academic Board the appointment of Examiners for the awards of MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf (level 8 components), to consider their reports and to ensure that the College responds appropriately*;
- To make recommendations to the Academic Board for the award of MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf degrees;
- To monitor the quality of provision for the MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf degrees with specific reference to the QAA Code of Practice and to monitor students'

experience of their course and to take action as necessary to improve it;

- To ensure that the College's practices are consistent with guidelines and codes of practice issued by the BBSRC and similar bodies;
- To have oversight of, and to approve, the College's annual report that informs the University Quality Enhancement Review (see UoL Regulation 1 paragraph 67.5);
- To ensure the proper discharge of the College's responsibilities in respect of these programmes by:
    - Approving and implementing for staff inclusion on the list of suitably trained supervisors;
    - Recognising institutions for inclusion in the Partner Research Institute (PRI) scheme;
    - Recognising partnerships with new organisations for DProf candidates;
- To encourage the strategic development of level 8 research components of all postgraduate courses;
- To liaise closely with the Research Strategy Committee, especially in matters such as approval of supervisory teams, research environment and research groups to host MRes, MPhil, PhD or DProf degree students.

*****Academic Board approval of the appointment of examiners for MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf candidates will normally be provided via Chair's action, with report to the subsequent meeting of Academic Board, to ensure that there is no delay in the ratification process.

Membership:

Chair:	A member of the Academic Board appointed by the Board.
Members:	Vice-Principal for Research & Innovation

Head of the Graduate School
One experienced research degree supervisor, plus one named deputy, from each academic department
SU Postgraduate Representative
Three postgraduate research student representatives whom together reflect the different modes and locations of study
Course Director for the Professional Doctorate (DProf) programme
Course Director for the Masters of Research (MRes) programme
Three External members[#]

Invited to Attend: Principal (Ex-Officio Member)
Head of Postgraduate Administration
Secretary

[#]*Should the College exercise its Degree Awarding Powers, the number of External Members will be increased to four.*

1.4 Departments

1.4.1 Departments should establish the environment and framework within which all their students will carry out their research degree programmes. This includes the facilities, the resources and all aspects of health and safety and training, and implementation of the Code of Practice.

Responsibilities of the Head of Department include:

- Ensuring that each student has adequate workspace, including a desk, telephone, and access to a photocopier and networked computer;
- Ensuring that students are provided with necessary safety information and instruction before and during their studies;
- Ensuring that students are familiar with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, where appropriate, and that all work on animals which they are involved with complies with this legislation;
- Ensuring that members of staff in their department are not acting as primary supervisor for more than 6 PhD students at any one time;
- Informing the Graduate School if alternative supervisory arrangements are needed when a student's supervisor is unable to continue their supervisory role temporarily or permanently.

1.5 Workplace/employer/Partner Research Institute (PRI) responsibilities

1.5.1 The employer/PRI will provide appropriate facilities including, where applicable, access to learning resources and support services to research students based in the workplace/at a PRI during their studentship;

1.5.2 Responsibility for the health and safety of research students will reside with both the RVC and the employer/PRI where the student is studying. In the event of an accident, local health and safety procedures will be followed.

1.5.3 The RVC and the employer/PRI must ensure that research students are informed of all local health and safety policies and procedures that are applicable to them whilst carrying out their studies.

1.5.4 The employer/PRI must ensure that accidents involving research students are recorded according to local procedures and regulations and, if expected to impact on the student's academic progress, formally reported to the RVC as soon as possible.

1.5.5 In the event that one or more representatives from one Party are visiting the premises of the other Party during the studentship, the visitor(s) will follow the local health and safety policies of the hosting Party. The hosting Party reserve the right to refuse entry to the representative(s) of the other Party if the visitor(s) refuse(s) to comply with the local health and safety policies.

1.6 Research students

1.6.1 The research and the thesis are the work of the student, and the student is expected to take responsibility for the progress of their work. During the progress of a research degree, students are expected to increasingly become independent thinkers and researchers. The general responsibilities of all students at the RVC are outlined in the RVC Charter.

1.6.2 Students should ensure from the outset that they conduct their research and present the findings in their theses in accordance with the College's procedures for Good Research Practice.

1.6.3 Students should consult the RVC's guidance on avoidance of plagiarism and academic misconduct and are required to sign a document indicating that they understand what plagiarism is and will not plagiarise. Students should also familiarise themselves with the procedure used when academic misconduct is suspected.

1.6.4 **Students are expected to have regular contact with supervisors throughout their research degree (irrespective of their geographical location)**, in order to discuss a programme of practical and written work and training, and keep to an agreed schedule.

1.6.5 Students should consider seriously any guidance provided by their supervisors, and should address any concerns expressed about their academic progress. Work should be of an appropriate standard for the degree. Any problems should be raised with the primary supervisor (or another member of the supervisory team) in the first instance. If the problem relates to supervision, students should contact the Head of the

Graduate School or Head of Postgraduate Administration or a Postgraduate Advisor.

1.6.6 Students registered for an MPhil or PhD will normally be expected to spend a minimum of two thirds of their studentship based at the College unless they are registered part-time, are based at a PRI or are working on a jointly-held studentship with another institution.

1.6.7 Some projects carried out by full-time RVC MPhil or PhD students may be suitable for externally-based students. A sub-group comprising the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, the Head of the Graduate School plus one member of Research Degrees Committee or Research Strategy Committee will consider (a) the research environment and programme of study for these students on an individual basis and (b) exceptional circumstances in which full-time students registered at RVC may spend less than the minimum proportion of their studentship at the College.

1.6.8 Students who wish to teach for 6 hours or more must undertake the mandatory Training Course "Teaching & Learning in Higher Education" (TLiHE). Teaching includes project supervision. TLiHE is free to RVC registered research students and consists of a half-day face-to-face induction followed by a 6-week online course and assessment. The TLiHE course will enable students to become involved in facilitating teaching, such as directed learning, contributing to project supervision and small group facilitation. PhD students should not deliver lectures except in specific and exceptional circumstances and never for core and mainstream topics.

1.6.9 Engagement with PgR Manager (the online tool for tracking research students' progress) is an essential component of the PhD programme and PgR Manager should be used to keep a record of supervisory meetings documenting

the project planning process. In addition, students should complete an annual Training Needs Analysis in PgR Manager and use the system to book onto relevant training courses offered by the Graduate School. This will feed into the appraisal process to certify regular supervisory meetings have taken place and that the student has met the College's professional skills training requirements of 20 points each year (pro-rata for part-time students). The appraisal process itself is also managed through PgR Manager.

Students are responsible for logging their skills development in PgR Manager, which will also capture dates of key meetings and changes of circumstances to inform the Graduate School.

1.6.10 PhD students may contribute to supervision of undergraduate and Masters students who are undertaking project work in their research group. Where an academic member of staff has asked a PhD student to help them with supervising an undergraduate or Masters student, the academic must be *actively* involved in overseeing the undergraduate/Masters project. A PhD student should not normally help supervise more than **one** undergraduate/Masters student at any given time, and a maximum of **two** per academic year. PhD students who help supervise undergraduate/Masters students for 6 hours or more must attend the training in teaching provided for them by the College, ideally before starting to supervise any project students or, if this is not possible, at the next available opportunity. More information on student supervision by PhD students can be found in Appendix B.

1.6.11 The detailed responsibilities of the student include:

Registration and progression

- Ensuring they register/enrol with the Graduate School at commencement of their studentship, annually thereafter and on return from interruption. Enrolment must be completed within 4 weeks of the due date. Failure to re-enrol will lead to withdrawal from the course.
- Ensuring their current contact information, including mobile telephone number, personal email address, contact address, as well as the details of their emergency contact person is up to date on RoVer;
- Reading the research integrity guidelines and undertaking the mandatory on-line research integrity training within 3 months of registration. DProf students should complete this training within 3 months of having completed the module Methods of Enquiry 1;
- Undertaking all other mandatory professional skills training requirements;
- Making initial contact with their assigned postgraduate advisor. It is compulsory that this is done within 3 months of registration;
- Maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the schedule agreed with the supervisor, as far as possible;
- Agreeing a schedule of meetings with the supervisor, setting aside sufficient time for them and attending them promptly;
- Attending research training courses, research seminars, conferences, Postgraduate Research Day etc. as agreed with the supervisor, and normally submitting a brief report to the supervisor on any external event attended;
- Maintaining records of supervisory meetings and skills development in PgR Manager;

- Presenting at the postgraduate seminar series (MPhil,PhD students, normally in Year 1 and Year 2 for full time students).
- Presenting a graphical abstract in Year 1 (full time PhD, MPhil and MRes students)
- Presenting a poster (normally in Year 2 for full-time MPhil and PhD and part-time MRes students and in Year 1 for full-time MRes students) at the Postgraduate Research Day;
- Giving a talk at the Postgraduate Research Day in the final year of study (PhD students);
- Attending and passing the statistics exam[1] (MRes, MPhil and PhD students);
- Attending at least 50% of the postgraduate seminars, a minimum of 6 of the College's research seminars and 6 other talks on topics relating to their field of study. Where students are not based primarily at RVC, providing evidence at appraisal of seminar attendance elsewhere (MRes, MPhil and PhD students);
- Taking the initiative in drawing the supervisor's attention to any problems with regard to their research project;
- Submitting written material as required by the supervisor, in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion;
- Submitting written progress reports in accordance with the College's procedures for monitoring research student progress;
- Completing a risk assessment and overseas travel training module prior to any overseas travel on College/Research business. More information on this process can be foundon the Intran. **This process must be followed for all travel overseas**;

[1] Students who do not pass will be required to re-take the exam

- Completing the work and submitting the thesis on time;
- Agreeing with the supervisor the proposed date of submission of the thesis;
- Preparing for the viva, normally by taking part in one or more mock orals conducted by their supervisor(s);
- Carrying out any required changes to the thesis in a timely manner and in consultation with their supervisor(s).

Good Research Practice and compliance

- Familiarising themselves with, and abiding by, health and safety regulations, the College's Good Research Practice, the Code of Practice for Research Students, the College's annual progress monitoring procedures, and other relevant rules and regulations including, where appropriate, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986;
- Communicating to the research community, both orally and in writing, their findings;
- Consulting their supervisor(s) before submitting any work for publication or presentation at a conference;
- Acknowledging the contribution of the supervisor(s) in any publication or presentation;
- Securing their supervisor's permission before accepting any offer of paid work at, for, or on behalf of the RVC during the period of research (MRes, MPhil and PhD students) and ensuring any paid work is processed through payroll, is subject to employment law and follows HR requirements, policies and guidelines;
- Agreeing with the supervisor the dates of holidays which will be taken, in accordance with the College's guidelines (see 3.1.15) or, where appropriate, those of the Funding body's or employer;

- Notifying the Graduate School of any changes of circumstance agreed using the change of registration form.

1.7 Supervisory teams

1.7.1 All research students shall have one primary supervisor ("the supervisor") and at least one other member of a supervisory team or, for DProf students, a professional adviser from the place of employment. The supervisor shall have the primary accountability for the student but it is understood that they and the co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser are equally important to student supervision and support. The supervisory team shall include individuals who provide specific identified expertise or support for the student to draw on. The supervisor and co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser are expected to work as a team and jointly meet with the student whenever possible. Minimally, this should be on the occasions outlined as compulsory supervisory meetings logged in PgR Manager. Milestones that are agreed should be signed off in PgR Manager by the supervisor and the student.

1.7.2 Both the supervisor and a co-supervisor should normally be RVC staff. Where there is collaboration with another organisation (a university, company or other employer) there may be additional members of the supervisory team from that organisation.

1.7.3 Where a proposed co-supervisor has not been approved as part of the internal review of grants/studentship applications prior to submission, approval will need to be sought from the Head of the Graduate School;

1.7.4 The supervisor should be selected primarily on the basis of appropriate subject expertise, and will normally have the

necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct research students' work. They will normally:

- be members of academic staff;
- hold a PhD, DVetMed or DProf;
- have a respectable personal research record demonstrated through publications and funding;
- have a good record of supervising students to completion;
- act as primary supervisor for no more than 6 PhD students at any one time.

1.7.5 Where the most appropriate supervisor lacks supervisory experience, the Head of Department will arrange for the supervisor to be allocated a mentor to provide support and guidance. All first time supervisors must attend supervisor training before taking on the role of primary supervisor. The mentor will normally act as co-supervisor.

1.7.6 Experienced supervisors are required to refresh their skills every 3 years by attending supervisor training.

1.7.7 The co-supervisor does not need to have core subject expertise, but may bring other qualities to the supervisory team (e.g. experience, complementary expertise, methodological advice, etc.).

The function of the co-supervisor is to act as an alternative complementary source of advice for the student. By the means outlined above the co-supervisor will be sufficiently well-informed to ensure that a second person is aware of the student's progress and any issues arising, and to provide for continuity if the supervisor leaves for any reason. It may be positively beneficial if the co-supervisor is not in the precise subject area of the research project.

1.7.8 The workplace-based professional adviser for a DProf student should be qualified to provide impartial and relevant advice on the field of work. Advisers may need to undertake training in their role and responsibilities at the RVC. A joint supervisory agreement will be signed by the College and the organisation at which the DProf student and their adviser are based. The role of the professional adviser is to:

- advise on the planning, feasibility and support available to carry out the proposed research within a workplace context;
- advise on sources of data and information;
- advise on current practice;
- provide guidance on the research component of the professional doctorate (both Organisation-Focused Study and Research Thesis);
- advise on the relevance of the research/practice being planned and undertaken;
- provide encouragement and support;
- arrange appropriate training and monitor its effectiveness;
- assist the DProf student in assessing their development needs, encourage them to develop transferable skills such as IT, decision-making, communication, time management and teamwork and provide opportunities for them to attend relevant courses;
- monitor the progress of the DProf student against objectives/milestones agreed with the RVC supervisor, counsel them on the adequacy of their progress and standard of work and arrange supportive action where appropriate, together with the RVC supervisor;
- monitor the general welfare of the DProf student and inform them of sources of specialist assistance as required;

- advise the DProf student about the readiness of their research for submission in consultation with the RVC supervisor;
- work together with the RVC supervisor to identify suitable examiners;
- where appropriate, advise the DProf student on future career development;
- notify the DProf Course Director and Graduate School of any changes to the circumstances of the DProf student, professional adviser or their workplace;
- ensure that adequate alternative advisory arrangements are made during periods of absence.

1.7.9 DProf students, in addition to their project supervisor, also have the support of the programme's Course Director together with administrative support from the Graduate School and relevant Masters course support. Students will be supported through the taught modules in accessing and navigating the RVC's Virtual Learning Environment (Learn) and utilising the services available at the RVC (IT/Library helpdesk, e-Library facilities, Advice Centre etc.).

The Course Director will co-ordinate activities across the DProf programmes and will have an oversight of all DProf students' progress within the programme. They will be responsible for approving the nomination of the workplace-based professional adviser together with the Head of Graduate School and Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation who will form part of the selection panel for DProf applicants

1.7.10 MRes students, in addition to their supervisory team, also have the support of the programme's Course Director and Deputy Course Director together with administrative support from the Graduate School.

1.7.11 Where a change of supervisor is unavoidable (such as when a student's supervisor leaves the College) the Head of the Graduate School will discuss the matter with the student and the Head of Department to identify a suitable individual to take over the supervision. Where there are unresolved problems with student supervision the Head of the Graduate School and the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will seek to resolve the matter with the student and the supervisors. Where either the Head of the Graduate School or the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation is a supervisor of the student, they will be replaced by another member of the Research Strategy Committee who is independent of the student's supervision. The consultation process may or may not lead to the appointment of another supervisor or supervisors. The Graduate School will notify the student of the decision and the reasons for the decision in writing.

1.7.12 The criteria used in deciding whether a change of supervisor will be allowed or not are as follows:

- Objective evidence (e.g. from an appraisal, a Student Performance and Development meeting or PgR Manager records) that (i) the supervisor is not adhering to the Code of Practice or the obligations regarding supervisory meetings, or (ii) the relationship between the supervisor and the student has irretrievably broken down;
- Availability of appropriately skilled alternative supervisors for the project;
- The source of funding for the project (including feasibility of change when an external grant named supervisor supports the student);
- Objective evidence (e.g. from a Student Performance and Development meeting, PgR Manager records, their research notebook or similar) that the student is

performing sufficiently well to continue with their studies.

1.7.13 Supervisors on sabbatical leave, or temporarily absent for other reasons should, where possible, maintain continuity of supervision. If this is not possible, clear arrangements should be made by the supervisor for the period of absence and notified to the Graduate School and the student. In such cases, it would be expected that the co-supervisor would normally take on the responsibilities of the primary supervisor.

1.7.14 Where at all possible, continuity of supervision should be maintained.

1.7.15 Supervisors are accountable to the College, Graduate School and any external sponsor for providing such reports as are required on the work, training and academic progress of their research students.

1.7.16 Independent research fellows can act as a primary or secondary supervisor for PhD students. Other post-doctoral scientists (and graduate research assistants) are expected to contribute to the supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students who are undertaking project work within their research group. However, it is recognised that a post-doctoral scientist may contribute intellectually to a grant for, or which includes funding for, a PhD studentship. More information can be found in Appendix B.

1.7.17 Detailed responsibilities of supervisors include:

Registration and progression

- Ensuring that the student is aware of the requirement to register annually through the Graduate School;
- Being accountable to the Research Degrees Committee through the Graduate School for the satisfactory progress of the student;
- Engaging fully with PgR Manager and advising their students to do the same.

Guidance

- Providing the student with support and encouragement;
- Advising the student about all relevant aspects of postgraduate research, including:

    - the nature of research;
    - research techniques;
    - the standard of work required;
    - the planning of the research programme;
    - facilities available to support the research;
    - attendance at training courses, conferences, seminars etc.;
    - publication;
    - plagiarism;
    - intellectual property rights;
    - Health and Safety regulations;
    - the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, if appropriate;

- Informing students about the postgraduate student Induction and ensuring attendance;
- Giving detailed advice on the scheduling of work, including the current and likely future working requirements of the project, so that the thesis may be submitted within the normal period of registration;
- Arranging appropriate training and monitoring its effectiveness;

- Assisting the student in assessing their development needs and encouraging them to develop transferable skills such as project management, decision-making, time management and teamwork and providing opportunities for the student to attend courses;
- Ensuring that the student has opportunities to develop communication skills through, for example, presenting their work at RVC research seminars and at external meetings;
- Attending RVC seminars and encouraging their research students to attend;
- Introducing the student to other workers in the field and to appropriate academic bodies;
- Monitoring the student's general welfare and informing them of sources of specialist assistance such as the Advice Centre or Graduate School staff where necessary;
- Advising on future career development;
- Ensuring that adequate alternative supervisory arrangements are made during periods of absence;
- Advising MPhil and PhD students that if they wish to be involved in supervising an undergraduate or Masters student research project, an academic supervisor must be actively involved in overseeing the project.
- Discussing and agreeing with the student appropriate working arrangements and work patterns, including flexibility and working from home

Meetings

- Meeting the student frequently, both informally and formally; the minimal schedule for formal meetings is outlined in PgR Manager; allowing adequate time for formal meetings
- Where there is joint supervision, agreeing with the student and the co-supervisor(s)/professional adviser the division of responsibility.

Feedback and progress

- Requesting written work as appropriate and returning such work to the student as promptly as possible, with constructive feedback;
- Monitoring the student's progress and advising them on the adequacy of progress and the standard of work, arranging supportive action where appropriate;
- **Arranging annual progress monitoring meetings** before each anniversary of registration in accordance with College procedures and encouraging the student to submit annual progress reports promptly. **Students should not be asked to identify or contact possible assessors; this is the supervisors' responsibility. For this process to work most effectively it is essential that the meeting is before the anniversary of admission, regardless of the status of results.**

Examination

- Nominating examiners and informing the student of their names. **Under no circumstances should a student be expected to identify or contact prospective examiners;**
- Assisting the student in planning for the oral examination;
- Advising the student of the readiness of the thesis for submission;
- Informing the Graduate School of likely changes to the submission date occurring after the nomination of examiners;
- **Arranging the date of the viva voce examination and informing the Graduate School of when and where this will take place;**
- Preparing the student for their viva, normally by conducting one or more mock orals;

- Being available on the day of the viva to meet the examiners and to support the student before and after the examination;
- Advising students on thesis amendments and emphasising the need for these to be completed in a timely manner and to meet agreed deadlines.

Change of student circumstances

- Notifying the Graduate School of any changes which influence the registration status of the student;
- In circumstances where the student wishes to interrupt study, informing the Graduate School. All periods of interruption must be agreed via SPD and will not normally be agreed for more than one year per programme. If SPD are requested to exceptionally agree an additional interruption, it will also be necessary for the Supervisors/Course Director to assess that overall programme learning outcomes can still be met within the registration limits of the programme at the intended return date. This assessment must be completed prior to approval of the additional interruption

- Information regarding SPD can be found on Learn

Supervisors who are responsible for DProf students, in addition to the responsibilities outlined above, should also:

- offer guidance, support and feedback, particularly on the quality and academic level of the work being carried out;
- offer guidance on the selection, coherence and quality of work in the research thesis;
- monitor progress of the DProf student through the taught components of the degree programme.

2 Resources and Support

2.1 Academic facilities and resources

2.1.1 As a minimum, Departments shall provide appropriate and necessary facilities and resources to research students, the level of access depending on their registration status (full-time, part-time, writing-up, or interrupted). Departments may enhance these levels as appropriate and as resources allow. These facilities relate to the status of being a research student and not to the requirements for carrying out any particular project. Project resources and facilities need to be separately identified, and availability and access agreed with students.

2.1.2 RVC academic resources are available to research students primarily through the IT and Library Services, and relate to computing and library facilities, including direct and remote access.

2.2 Research training

2.2.1 The RVC provides a Skills Training Programme through the Graduate School which covers the domains of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and helps students to gain the skills they need to design and complete their programmes effectively, and prepare themselves for their subsequent career.

2.2.2 All research students are normally required to participate in, and successfully complete, relevant parts of the Skills Training Programme. Exceptions or exemptions are made for students who have already successfully completed (parts of) an equivalent programme and for full or part-time students who are unable to access the Skills Training Programme. In the latter case, supervisors must discuss with

their students their principal training needs and make arrangements for such training to be made available to the student.

2.2.3 There will be no minimum period of attendance each year for externally based MPhil and PhD students but they *must* attend an induction, visit the College to meet face-to-face with their supervisor(s) at least once in each year of the studentship and undertake the following mandatory skills training:

- *Year 1 (pro-rata for part-time students):* Complete following the mandatory courses on:
    - working with your supervisor – on-line,
    - selecting a conference – on-line
    - presenting and networking- on-line‘
    - getting published in the sciences – on-line ‘
    - project management in the research context’ and – on-line
    - research integrity’ training - online
    - Health and Safety Induction – on-line
    - Good Research Practice training - online
    - complete the PG statistics course and pass the exam;

  attend and present a graphical abstract at Postgraduate Research Day (and submit a research impact statement);
- *Year 2 (pro-rata for part-time students):* Present a poster at Postgraduate Research Day (and submit the associated poster abstract)
- *Year 3/4 (pro-rata for part-time students):* Attend and give a talk at Postgraduate Research Day.

2.2.4 The Skills Training Programme consists of sessions given as workshops, lectures, online or distance learning modules. A statistics exam based on the taught course is mandatory for all MRes, MPhil and PhD students.

2.2.5 Students are expected to book a place on any training session at least 10 working days in advance of the session.

2.2.6 A £25 cancellation fee (payable by student or supervisor) will be charged for last minute cancellations (less than 3 working days' notice) or failure to attend without good reason.

2.2.7 If a student is unwell on the day of the training session, or unable to attend for a reason that was unforeseeable and out of their control, they should e-mail rdofficer@rvc.ac.uk

2.2.8 All students should use the Training Needs Analysis section of PgR Manager to reflect upon their training needs and to record the training sessions attended, presentations given, seminars attended and their evaluation of these.

2.3 Student support services

2.3.1 The RVC provides a range of student support services, all of which are available for research students who wish to make use of them. Services include learning support, disability, careers, financial advice and counselling. Full information can be accessed on the student support, careers and learning development pages on RVC Learn.

2.3.2 The College's Graduate School is a source of information, advice and guidance on all matters to do with postgraduate research students and programmes, and will help direct students to other appropriate sources of support.

2.3.3 There are a number of postgraduate student advisors[2] whom students may approach with matters of either academic or personal concern.

2.3.4 All new students will be assigned a Postgraduate Student Advisor on commencement of their studies. It will be the advisor's responsibility to make initial contact with their assigned student and this should be done within 3 months of registration. It is up to the student to ensure that they respond to this initial contact request. Advisors and their students are encouraged to meet annually at the very least, especially around the time leading to the student's annual appraisal and/or submission of their final thesis. Although each student will have an assigned Advisor, they are welcome to contact any on the list[2].

2.3.5 The Heads of the Graduate School and Postgraduate Administration are also accessible to all research students seeking support and guidance, regardless of the academic department in which they are carrying out their research.

2.3.6 The Student Union Postgraduate Officer/s is/are responsible for promotion of the general interests of postgraduate students and, together with their nominees, provide(s) a recognised channel of communication between postgraduate students and the RVC.

2.3.7 The RVC Students' Union is responsible for promoting the interests of all students and has specific Postgraduate Officer/s and also provides a recognised channel of communication between students and the RVC.

2.3.8 All research students are responsible for ensuring that any copy editing and/or proof reading of their thesis which

[2] See Appendix D for details

they have not personally undertaken does not alter the intellectual content and/or substance of their thesis. Any deficiencies in the work identified as being introduced by changes made by third parties undertaking either of these two processes will not be accepted as mitigating circumstances in the examination of the thesis for the award of a research degree.

2.3.9 A separate written statement acknowledging the use of professional third parties to copyedit or proof read the thesis must accompany the submission of the thesis and be made available to the examiners.

2.4 Studentships

2.4.1 The RVC normally has a number of studentships available for research degree study. They may be funded from the RVC's own resources, or funded by an external sponsor following competition, negotiation or an allocation process.

2.4.2 Available studentship opportunities are advertised on the RVC's website and appropriate external websites. Eligibility and selection criteria will be clear in all further particulars of awards and the application processes and closing dates will be clearly identified. The processes used for selection will be in accordance with the College's Equality and diversity policy.

3 Managing and Monitoring Student Admission and Progression

3.1 Registration and arrival

3.1.1 The minimum requirement for admission to a research degree is normally an upper second class honours degree from a UK university or an overseas qualification of an equivalent standard on a subject appropriate for the study topic to be followed, a registered qualification appropriate to the course of study (usually veterinary medicine) or a Masters degree in a subject appropriate to the course of study. Where the applicant's first language is not English, they will be required to demonstrate proficiency in English language to a level specified by the College. The RVC may have additional criteria which will apply in selecting candidates for particular research degrees.

3.1.2 No applicant will be accepted unless the RVC is confident that they have the capacity to complete a research degree successfully and that the RVC has the expertise and facilities to support the applicant's research.

3.1.3 No project will be offered unless it is appropriate for the degree concerned and can reasonably be undertaken within the required timescale with the resources available.

3.1.4 The details of all suitable applicants are passed to the relevant academic(s) for consideration. Selection will be made on the basis of all information available, including the application form, proposed area of research and the support available to undertake the project, qualifications, references and (where used) interview. Feedback is available to applicants on request.

3.1.5 Applicants are interviewed by at least two members of academic staff.

3.1.6 The offer of a place is made by the Head of Admission and is dependent on the applicant providing:

- evidence of suitable academic qualifications. Degree/Diploma certificates in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation attested by an official translator;
- evidence of a suitable level of English where English is not the applicant's first language. The applicant will be required to achieve an overall score of 7.0 in IELTS (academic module) with a minimum of 6.5 in each sub-test;
- firm evidence of funding to cover the fees and research expenses for the period of the degree;
- suitable references from two academic referees, neither of whom will be supervising the project(s) that the applicant has applied for;
- a project summary or a copy of the awarded grant which has been approved by the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation and the Head of the Graduate School;
- details of the proposed supervisory arrangements.

3.1.7 Equal opportunities information will be collected from all applicants. This information will not be used in the selection process, except in so far as the RVC will wish to ascertain that it has the appropriate facilities to support applicants with disabilities.

3.1.8 All offers of a place will be made by the Head of Admissions specifying the name of the supervisor and co-supervisor/professional adviser, the title of the project, the department in which the student will be based, the award for

which they will be registered, the registration status (full-time or part-time), normal length of study, the stipend in year 1 (if the student is in receipt of a stipend), any terms and conditions of the scholarship and relevant fees for year one. A copy of the current Code of Practice will also be included, with which the student must agree to comply (and any annual changes made to it subsequently).

3.1.9 All PhD students are initially registered for the MPhil degree, with upgrade to PhD occurring at the recommendation of the student's assessors, normally at the end of the first year of study (or equivalent in part-time study). The circumstances of transfer from MPhil to PhD are given in section 3.4.3.

3.1.10 For as long as students are pursuing their programmes of study (including during writing up period), they must remain formally registered/enrolled with the RVC and pay the appropriate level of fees.

3.1.11 Possible registration status options are full-time, part-time, writing-up and interrupted. Part-time status options are either 0.5FTE or 0.8FTE. Any change of status must be supported by the supervisor and approved by the Graduate School who may refer the request to SPD for approval. Transfer of status from full-time to part-time will not normally be permitted within 3 months prior to the end date of the studentship or during writing-up status. Such requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and the Graduate School may refer the request to SPD.

3.1.12 Interruption of study for reasons of longer-term ill health (exceeding 4 weeks) in line with sickness policy, maternity/paternity leave or personal problems is possible – this must be agreed via SPD and will not normally be for more than one year per programme During periods of approved

interruption, students will not be required to maintain active study on their research programmes. Any access to facilities needs to be approved by the Head of Department. Students in this situation will normally have access to College resources and facilities, but will not be required to pay any fees. Student stipends may not be paid for all of the period of interruption depending on the organisation funding the study and the circumstances. The sickness and maternity/paternity/adoption policies for postgraduate research students can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. All requests to interrupt must be submitted to the Graduate School and may need to be considered SPD for a final decision.

3.1.13 Fees for research degree study are set annually for a 12-month period from 1st August. Research students are required to pay the level of fee according to the year in which they register and subsequent years of re-registration. Students who have not submitted their thesis within 4 years (or within 3 years and 6 months for a 3-year studentship) will be liable to pay an annual fee (students should consult the Graduate School site on RVC Learn for further details).

3.1.14 At least once a year there will be an RVC induction programme to introduce new research students to the RVC and key staff, to postgraduate research study, and to one another.

3.1.15 PhD and MRes students can take up to 8 weeks' (40 days) annual leave per annum commencing from the date of registration (including all public holidays and College closures). Annual leave must be booked in consultation with, and with the approval of, the supervisor. Remaining annual leave days cannot be carried forward to the next year, and no more than one month of annual leave may be taken at the end of study (unless the funding body supporting the studentship states otherwise, in which case the latter takes precedence).

Where applicable, research students must abide by an employer's terms and conditions relating to annual leave.

3.2 Period of registration until submission

3.2.1 The MRes degree requires 12 months of full-time study or up to 24 months of part-time study; the maximum period of registration is 36 months. The DProf programmes of study should take a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 calendar years part-time. Depending on the terms of the studentship, the expectation is that the MPhil degree should take 24-36 months full-time or up to 6 years part-time and the PhD degree should take 36-48 months full-time or up to 6 years part-time. The minimum period of registration for the MPhil and PhD degrees is two years or the equivalent in part-time study. The maximum period of registration until submission is 48 months for an MPhil and 60 months for a PhD (pro-rata for part-time students), excluding approved periods of interruption. Full- or part-time fees will apply throughout these periods of registration.

3.2.2 It is the College's expectation that students complete their work and submit their thesis within the period specified in their offer of study.

3.2.3 Any request for an extension beyond the period specified in the offer of study up to a maximum of four years (pro-rata for part-time study) should normally come from the supervisor and be endorsed by the grant holder (where applicable). Extension requests must be submitted in a timely manner and requests submitted within one month of the end of the studentship will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The case needs to be made on the basis of the whole period of study since initial registration, explaining why the student has not been able to submit within the originally allotted time, estimating the time which the student will need

to complete (including a timeline) and advising on an appropriate period of extension. Extensions must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School and the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation and can be refused. Normally only one extension will be permitted. Students who do not submit within the period of extension will be asked to attend a meeting with a SPD panel which will advise on continuation or discontinuation of study.

3.2.4 Requests for an extension to the 4 year submission deadline will NOT normally be considered and College guidelines regarding allowable reasons for an extension should be followed.

3.3 Requirement to remain in good academic standing

3.3.1 In order to remain in good academic standing, all students are required to maintain active study and a satisfactory standard of work. Failure to do so may result in a requirement to withdraw from the RVC.

3.3.2 In order to demonstrate that students are actively studying they will be expected to keep in regular contact with their supervisors, irrespective of geographical location, and submit work regularly in accordance with a schedule agreed with supervisors. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that supervisors are kept informed about any barriers to their satisfactory progress. Failure to maintain contact may lead to an SPD referral.

3.3.3 Students will be informed of any concerns about the standard of their work, either by their supervisor (during normal supervision sessions or in written comments on work submitted) or as a result of formal appraisal. Students should take any such concerns expressed seriously and ensure that they take steps to improve the standard of their work.

3.3.4 A notice of unsatisfactory progress at appraisal may give rise to a recommendation that the student be re-appraised in less than one year's time and/or referral to SPD.

3.3.5 At any time (before or between appraisals) where a supervisory team is dissatisfied with the amount or quality of work submitted or undertaken by a student they may be referred to SPD and required to attend a meeting, following which recommendations will be made to the student. A second meeting with a SPD panel may be necessary as a follow-up or as a result of failure to respond to the recommendations made. Failure to respond may result in discontinuation of registration. ***The student has the right of appeal against the decision through the College's appeals procedure***.

3.3.6 Students who reach the end of 4 years of study and have not submitted their thesis will be deemed not to be in good academic standing. They will be required to meet with a SPD panel where their reasons for not submitting within 4 years will be assessed and a date for submission set. Failure to meet that deadline will lead to a second meeting with the SPD panel where discontinuation of registration may be recommended or a second and final submission deadline set. If the student does not comply with the decision made at the second SPD meeting, their registration will be discontinued. ***The student has the right of appeal against the decision through the College's appeals procedure***.

3.4 Regular progress monitoring

3.4.1 All parties associated with a student and the student themselves must recognise their responsibility for ensuring progress is monitored (see Section 1). Progress monitoring takes the form of regular supervisory meetings, with evidence

of key formal meetings documented in PgR Manager, and in the annual appraisal.

3.4.2 PgR Manager provides a framework for recording details relating to the student's programme of study, scheduled supervisory meetings and activities concerning the development of academic and key skills. It is used to chart the evidence of the development of these skills through a process of self-audit and discussion with the supervisor. It must be presented Assessors should consult the records at appraisal to provide assurance that regular supervisory meetings have taken place and that the student has met the College's generic training requirements.

3.4.3 Annual Appraisal

The appraisal procedures are intended to provide a framework for evaluating the progress of candidates in a regular, fair and constructive manner and to provide constructive feedback to the student on their progress.

The RVC is committed to a system of annual appraisal of all students registered for higher degrees, including MPhil, PhD and DProf. This applies to full- and part-time research students, to members of staff, including research assistants, who are registered for higher degrees on a part-time basis and to students registered under the PRI scheme. Appraisals are carried out by means of written reports or, where appropriate, presentations and short summary reports provided by the student, and formal meetings between the student, supervisor and two other members of academic staff. The discussions will include an opportunity for students to express their perceptions of their own progress and any aspects of their programme which are causing them concern. The adequacy of the supervision they are receiving and future

training needs will also be discussed. (See Appendix A for Good Practice Guidelines).

3.4.3.1 Procedures

- It is usual for the appraisal towards the end of the first year for full-time students (pro-rata for part-time students, see Appendix A) to consider candidates for upgrading from MPhil to PhD registration, if this is appropriate;
- Later appraisals monitor progress towards thesis preparation and examination;
- Part-time students at the end of years 1, 3, 5 and 7 (if applicable) will have a light touch appraisal, details of which are shown in Appendix A.
- Students on the DProf programme will have a light touch appraisal one calendar year from the date on which they complete parts 1-3 of the programme, and can begin their research. They will have their first full appraisal one calendar year after the first light touch appraisal. Subsequent appraisals will alternate between light touch and full appraisal as outlined in Appendix A. All students registered for a higher degree must comply with the procedures described;
- The appraisal dates must be at no more than 12-month intervals from the initial start date;
- It is the responsibility of both supervisor and student to ensure that this system is followed;
- Students on 4-year LIDo studentships who are registered with the College since the start of their studies will have a light-touch appraisal at the end of year 1 and their first full (upgrade) appraisal at the end of year 2.

3.4.3.2 Student's Appraisal Report

At the end of year 1 for full-time students (pro-rata for part-time students, see Appendix A), a report should be presented of completed and projected work to a panel of assessors. The report should not exceed 5,000 words excluding references and appendices with any additional information included in an appendix. Areas that should be covered are:

Context: background and rationale for project; a full literature review is not needed; students may additionally submit a review they have prepared at the beginning of their studies (see Appendix A Good Practice Guidelines).
Methods used (or to be used)
Outcomes: experimental and/or other data generated/collated/analysed
Conclusions drawn from the data, including development of research question(s) where appropriate, and how the findings relate to existing literature
Research plans, which may require explanation of how work carried out in year 1 affects the next year of study

There should also be a summary and a list of references.

*iCase students are required to submit a placement plan and objectives (normally) at the year 1 appraisal. A reflective practice document will be considered at the appraisal following completion of the placement.

PgR Manager should be used to evidence that they have undertaken skills training, attended seminars and met formally with their supervisors. PgR Manager will also produce for the assessors lists of the following:

- Conferences attended;
- Seminars attended;
- Seminars given (internal and external);

- Courses attended (including the mandatory College statistics course and any additional training in or out of College);
- Titles of papers presented at conferences; and
- Titles of journal papers accepted or submitted.

It is imperative therefore that the above are accurately captured and recorded in PgR Manager by the student throughout their programme of study.

Provided the student performs well during their upgrade appraisal, the next appraisal will consist of submitting a short progress report, giving an oral presentation and meeting with the assessors. See Appendix A for further details.

3.4.3.3 Assessors

These should normally include one assessor from the same department (primary assessor) and a second assessor, who can be either from the same or a different department. If no suitable person can be identified, then an external assessor can be used instead. If a student is jointly supervised by a member of staff at another institution, an external assessor from that other institution can also be used. The two assessors should be prepared to act as an additional source of guidance to the student if required. They should therefore be identified early in the research programme by the supervisors. Students should not be asked to identify or contact possible assessors; this is the supervisors' responsibility. The Graduate School must approve the proposed assessors on PgR Manager before they can be assigned to a student.

3.4.3.4 Appraisal Meeting and Assessment Forms

The primary supervisor is responsible for arranging the appraisal meeting and the student should ensure that copies

of the student report (including a presentation where appropriate) and the relevant papers are uploaded in PgR Manager at least 10 working days in advance of the meeting. For the benefit of the student it is expected that at least one supervisor, normally the primary supervisor, attends the appraisal, unless the student specifically does not want them to attend.

The appraisal takes the form of a mini-viva undertaken by the assessors. Supervisor(s) are present to support the student and should not actively participate in the discussion (unless invited to do so by the assessors). At the meeting the student will be given an opportunity to comment on their progress and any issues encountered in the absence of the supervisor(s). Any comments which the student relays in confidence which suggest action is needed beyond the scope of the meeting should be relayed separately to the Head of the Graduate School who will advise the student and/or the supervisor on the appropriate mechanisms or advice to achieve the action. If the student is supervised by the Head of Graduate School, the appraisers should relay their concerns to the Head of Postgraduate Administration.

The assessment forms are to be completed on PgR Manager and consist of the following

- supervisors' assessment;
- student's comments (see 3.4.3 & 3.4.3.2);
- assessments by assessors;
- final recommendations;

The supervisors' assessment, student's comments and first parts of the assessments by the assessors evaluating the written report) should be completed by the relevant persons **in advance on PgR Manager** and be available at the appraisal meeting.

3.4.3.5 Outcomes

At the end of the meeting it is the responsibility of one of the assessors to ensure that the forms are completed and submitted in PgR Manager. Following review by the Graduate School, a confirmation will be sent to the student, the supervisors, the assessors and the Head of Department. The recommendations for MPhil and PhD students are that, either:

- The registration should be changed from MPhil to PhD
- The registration for a PhD or DProf should be continued.
- The appraisal was not satisfactory and a re-appraisal is required - resubmission of the written report or other documentation. Where applicable, no change to the initial MPhil registration will be made until the student has satisfied the assessors at re-appraisal.
- The appraisal was not satisfactory and a re-appraisal is required - resubmission of the written report or other documentation and another oral. Where applicable, no change to the initial MPhil registration will be made until the student has satisfied the assessors at re-appraisal.
- The student should be asked to submit an MPhil rather than a PhD
- 4. Progress is not satisfactory; the registration for a Higher Degree should be terminated
- 5.

Assessors will report on the format of the following year's appraisal. (For more information on the format please see Appendix A)

Appropriate changes to the registration will be made on the basis of this report; where appropriate, upgrading from MPhil to PhD will be achieved.

Any student who receives an unsatisfactory progress report is failing to meet the requirements for maintaining good academic standing and may be recommended to attend a SPD meeting (see section 3.3).

3.4.3.6 Appeal

The student will have the right of appeal against the decision through the College's appeals procedure. The Appeals procedure can be found under 'Further Student Policies and Procedures'.

3.5 Progression to writing-up status

3.5.1 In order to transfer registration to writing-up status students must have completed the minimum period of registration.

3.5.2 In order for a student to be allowed to transfer to writing-up status, the Head of Department must be satisfied that the work still required to be completed up to submission of the thesis is such that it can be satisfactorily completed using minimal supervision, primarily related to reading and commenting on draft thesis chapters, access to the library and other facilities and use of personal office space and computing facilities in the Department. If additional resources are required, particularly project-related resources or a higher level of supervision, students cannot be transferred to writing-up status.

3.6 Withdrawal from research degree study

3.6.1 Students may be required to, or may wish to, withdraw from their studies at any stage during their research degree. It is recognised that such a decision may be traumatic for a student, particularly if it is at a late stage.

3.6.2 The period of notice should be agreed between the supervisor and the student and should not normally exceed one month.

3.6.3 All students, whether they withdraw voluntarily or are required to withdraw from their programme of study, will be offered a package of support from the Advice Centre, and on written request will be provided with documentation setting out their attendance and achievements on the research training programme.

4 Examination

4.1 Appointment of examiners and submission

4.1.1 For all students registered at the RVC, examiners for MRes, MPhil, PhD and DProf examinations are initially approved by the Research Degrees Committee and ratified by Academic Board. The Research Degrees Committee meets three times a year prior to Academic Board and additionally in July. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that examiners are approved. It is strongly recommended that nominations are submitted to the meeting occurring no later than four months before submission of the thesis.

4.1.2 **Supervisors must complete a standard form nominating examiners**. Students should not be asked to identify or contact prospective examiners. The nomination form must be submitted to the secretary of the Research Degrees Committee *no later than eight working days* before the Committee meets. A draft abstract of the thesis must be attached to the form (this is solely for assessing the suitability of the examiners and need not be the final document). Short (2-page) CVs should also be submitted to the Committee for each proposed examiner.

For information regarding nominating examiners please see the Guidelines for Nomination of Research Degree Examiners on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn.

4.1.3 It is the student's responsibility to decide when to submit the thesis in conjunction with their supervisor. When submitting a thesis for examination, the student will be required to sign the Consent to Publish and Declaration of Words forms.

When preparing a thesis for submission, students should follow the submission process guidance on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn or ask for guidance from the Graduate School.

On submitting the thesis, a student will be required to insert the following signed Declaration into their bound thesis:

I certify that:

1. The thesis being submitted for examination is my own account of my own research;
2. My research has been conducted ethically;
3. The data and results presented are the genuine data and results actually obtained by me during the conduct of the research;
4. Where I have drawn on the work, ideas and results of others this has been appropriately acknowledged in the thesis;
5. Where any collaboration has taken place with other researchers, I have clearly stated in the thesis my own personal share in the investigation;
6. The greater portion of the work described in the thesis has been undertaken subsequent to my registration for the higher degree for which I am submitting for examination;
7. The thesis submitted is within the required word limit as specified by the RVC; the total number of words is given below.

The length of an RVC PhD thesis should be no more than **100,000** words **including** figure legends and footnotes but **excluding** bibliography and appendices.

The length of an RVC MPhil thesis should be no more than **60,000** words **including** figure legends and footnotes but **excluding** bibliography and appendices.

The length of an RVC DProf thesis should be no more than 30,000 words (excluding title, figures, tables, appendices and references). Theses which are largely social science based may, with prior agreement, be no more than 45,000 words.

The length of an RVC MRes research project dissertation should be between 10,000 and 15,000 words.

Appendices should only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis (but to which they may refer if they wish).

These limits are upper limits and not targets. Students should consult with their supervisor(s) about the length of thesis that is appropriate for each particular research topic and be mindful that brevity without sacrifice of clarity will be appreciated by examiners.

Extensions to the word limit will not be permitted.

4.1.5 Students should submit their thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School and the submission date will be recorded.

4.2 The examination and examiners' reports

4.2.1 The examination of the thesis or Masters dissertation will be conducted in accordance with RVC regulations.

4.2.2 The supervisor is responsible for arranging the date, time and venue for the viva examination to suit all parties and inform the Graduate School accordingly.

4.2.3 For MPhil, PhD and DProf examinations, each of the examiners will prepare an independent report prior to the viva, followed by the viva (at which the supervisor may be

present if all parties wish it). On conclusion of the viva, the examiners will agree a recommendation and write a joint report (which will include details of any required revisions to the thesis). The outcome of the viva will normally be communicated to the student by the examiners and the report sent to the Graduate School, who will formally inform the student and supervisor of the outcome.

4.2.4 MPhil, PhD and DProf students may be asked to make minor amendments to their thesis within 3 months of their viva, major corrections within 6 months or undertake major revisions within 18 months. In each case the revised thesis must be sent via the Research Degrees Officer to the examiners[3] for approval. Any student requiring major revisions within 18 months should meet with the Head of Graduate School and their supervisors in order to discuss the resubmission timetable.

In the event that a student thinks it unlikely they will meet the 3, 6 or 18 month deadline, they should contact the Graduate School (where possible at least 2 weeks beforehand) to explain the extenuating circumstances. With the agreement of the examiners, the Research Degrees Officer will then set a new deadline for submission of the corrections which will take account of the nature of the extenuating circumstances. If the Research Degrees Officer is only made aware of the failure to meet the 3, 6 or 18 month deadline by the examiners, they will request an explanation from the student. If there are extenuating circumstances, a new deadline for submission of the corrections will be set with the agreement of the examiners. If there are no extenuating circumstances, a new submission deadline will be set and the student may be subject to attending another viva. In the event that a student fails to meet the new submission deadline and has no

extenuating circumstances, the student will fail the examination.

In the event that a student does not send their revised thesis to the examiner(s) or their nominee by the deadline set, and has not been in touch with the supervisory team/Graduate School in the interim, every endeavour will be made to contact the student (including sending a letter by recorded delivery to the student's last known address) up to one month after the submission deadline with the following request/information:

1) That they attend a SPD meeting on a set date to explain any extenuating circumstances;
2) That non-attendance at the SPD meeting without a satisfactory explanation will automatically result in withdrawal of registration;
3) That the candidate will have the right of appeal following normal College procedures.

This procedure will also apply if a student has not submitted their thesis within 4 years (pro-rata for part-time candidates) from the date of registration (excluding any approved interruptions) and does not reply to any communication from their supervisors, the Graduate School or Advice Centre staff.

For more information about the examination process, please see the Research Degree Examination Regulations (which can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn).

4.3 Appeals

The student will have the right of appeal against the decision through the College's appeals procedure. The Appeals procedure can be found here.

5 Quality Assurance

5.1 Criteria for awards

Standards of awards are assured in part by having clearly articulated criteria which conform to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications on Postgraduate Research Degrees. A single set of recommendations by examiners with clear guidance about circumstances in which they should be used and the criteria for awards are set out in the Research Degree Examination Regulations which can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn.

5.2 Departments

Departments have the primary responsibility for the delivery of research degree programmes.

5.3 The Graduate School

The Graduate School has a role in ensuring the quality and consistency of research degree programmes in accordance with the QAA Code of Practice part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B11: Research degrees and bringing to the attention of the Research Degrees Committee, the Teaching Quality Committee and Academic Board any matter of concern requiring action.

6 Student Liaison, Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

6.1 Student liaison and representation

6.1.1 Students with concerns about resources should in the first instance raise their concerns with their supervisor and their Head of Department.

6.1.2 The Research Degrees Committee, which meets four times during the academic year, has postgraduate student representatives as committee members.

6.1.3 The Students' Union Postgraduate Officer/s offers support and representation for postgraduate students. Officers sit on major RVC committees.

6.2 Feedback and evaluation

The College takes part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), which is designed and run by the Higher Education Academy for postgraduate research students, with reference to their experience of supervision, the research environment and their development as a researcher. The PRES will normally run annually and the findings are reported to the Research Degrees Committee and the Student Survey Results Working Group (a sub-group of the Teaching Quality Committee). The RVC also takes part in the Student Barometer Survey, run by I-graduate.

6.3 Complaints and Appeals

Both the Complaints and Appeals procedures can be found under 'Further Student Policies and Procedures'.

Approved by Academic Board September 2020.

Modifications approved by Academic Board May 2006, May 2008, May 2009, May 2010, May 2011,May 2012, May 2013, May 2014, June 2015, June 2016, July 2017, July 2018, July 2019, July 2020, July 2021 & July 2022.

7 Dual/Joint PhD programmes

7.1 When strategically justified, the College may collaborate with other universities to offer dual and joint PhD programmes. Research Strategy Committee/RDC approval must be sought for any dual or joint PhD programme.

7.2 The rules that govern a dual or joint PhD programme (e.g. in terms of selection, admission, induction, supervision, progress and review arrangements, training, and assessment) will normally be negotiated between the institutions, so that the minimum requirements of both can be met. When approving a dual or joint PhD programme, RDC will need to give approval to any exceptions to the College's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees and will only do this where there is good reason and when the Committee can be assured that the standard of the PhD and the quality of the student experience will not be compromised.

7.3 A memorandum of agreement or equivalent must be drawn up for each partnership outlining the agreed fees, pattern of study and duration, the training programme, monitoring and management of the student(s), examination arrangements, learning resources and student support, the students' rights and responsibilities and intellectual property.

8 Appendix A

Postgraduate Research Student Appraisal Good Practice Guidelines

The College is committed to a system of annual appraisal of all students registered for higher degrees (MPhil, PhD and DProf). This applies to all full-time and part-time research students. This good practice document should be read in conjunction with the RVC's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

The objectives of appraisal are:

- To evaluate student progress so that the College can be assured of the quality of research degree programmes and can identify any weaknesses in a timely fashion;
- To provide objective feedback to students and their supervisors on progress;
- To give the student experience of the processes by which research degrees are evaluated (writing a report and an oral defence of the work).

PhD students who are registered 80% part-time should follow the same system of appraisal as full-time students except that the full appraisal should take place 14-15 months after the start date of the studentship and at 14-15 month intervals thereafter.

DProf students will be appraised annually in the same way as other part-time students. The first appraisal should take place one calendar year from the date on which they complete Methods of Enquiry 1 and can begin their research.

	Full-Time Students		Part-Time Students	
Year 1*	**Full Appraisal** Appraisal will consist of a 5,000 word report and an oral with 2 assessors to discuss the project[+] **Good or Excellent**	**[#]Weak or very poor**	**Light touch Appraisal** Appraisal will consist of a two page progress report to be reviewed by 2 assessors	
Year 2*	Appraisal will consist of a two page progress report, a 20-30min presentation and associated oral with 2 assessors to discuss the project **Good or Excellent**	Appraisal as above **[#]Weak or very poor**	Appraisal will consist of a 5,000 word report and an oral with 2 assessors to discuss the project *Performance at this appraisal will determine the format of the appraisal at year 4* *DProf students would typically have completed 120 credit taught modules*	
Year 3* (4y F/T students only)	Appraisal as Above	Appraisal as above	Light touch Appraisal	
Year 4*	Submission		**Performance at excellent / good** Appraisal	**year 2 appraisal: [#]weak / v poor**

		will consist of a 2 page progress report, a 20-30min presentation and associated oral with 2 assessors to discuss the project	Appraisal as in year 2 *Performance at this appraisal will determine the format of the appraisal at year 6*
Year 5*		Light touch Appraisal	
Year 6*		**Performance at excellent / good** Appraisal as in year 4	**year 4 appraisal: #weak / v poor** Appraisal as in year 2
Year 7*		Light touch Appraisal	
Year 8*		Submission	

NOTE:
All appraisal documentation is completed in PgR Manager. Guidance on using the online system for appraisals is on Learn.

*If in any year of appraisal a student does not satisfy their assessors, remedial action may be needed, the nature of which will depend on the individual circumstances.

[#]A "satisfactory" performance at appraisal could result in a requirement for *either* a 5,000-word report *or* a short report and presentation + oral at the next full appraisal.

[+]iCASE students are required to submit a placement plan and objectives (normally) at the year 1 appraisal. A reflective practice document written by the student will be considered at the appraisal following completion of the placement.

Note for LIDo students:
LIDo students who join the RVC in year 1 of the LIDo programme will have a light touch appraisal towards the end of year 1 and have their first full appraisal towards the end of year 2

Full Appraisal
The first full appraisal consists of evaluation of a 5,000-word report (excluding references and appendices but including figure legends and footnotes) and a meeting with the student. The content of the report and the students' progress with their research and skills development training will be discussed. Students also have the opportunity to raise any issues relating to their programme of study. The appraisal is conducted by two assessors, who are members of academic staff not directly involved in the project. The primary supervisor is expected to be present, but not to participate unless invited to do so. The assessors evaluate the student's report and performance in the meeting by completing the online appraisal documents. These a) provide feedback to the student and their supervisors on progress and any areas for attention and future development and b) record recommendations to the Graduate School based on student progress. The assessors will remain the same throughout the duration of studies. Supervisors also provide feedback on the student's development as a researcher. Upgrade to PhD registration will be considered for students at the year 1

appraisal (year 2 for part-time students and 14-15 months into the studentship for those registered 80% part-time) and a recommendation made about the format of the next year's appraisal.

LIDo students who join the RVC in year 1 of the LIDo programme will have a light touch appraisal towards the end of year 1 and have their first full appraisal towards the end of year 2

If a student performs well during their first full appraisal, the next full appraisal will normally consist of a short written summary of their progress over the past year to be submitted to their assessors in advance of the appraisal meeting, together with a PowerPoint presentation about their work which will be discussed with their assessors at the meeting. As in the first full appraisal, online appraisal forms will be completed by all the relevant parties. A recommendation about the format of a subsequent full appraisal (if required) will be made based on the student's performance at the second full appraisal.

Light Touch Appraisal

Part-time students will be appraised at the end of each year of study (for DProf students this will be one year after completion of parts 1-3 of the programme), but in years 1, 3, 5 and 7 (if relevant) the appraisal will consist of a short written progress report which should include research plans for the next year. This will be sent to the assessors for review via PgR manager, together with the supervisors' assessment and the students' comments. Assessors will be asked to recommend to the Graduate School whether the student should be allowed to continue with their studies and/or if any remedial action is required. . They are not expected to meet with the student but may ask to do so if they think it is

necessary. In years 2, 4 and 6 (if relevant), the appraisal process will be as described above for full-time students.

Practical Arrangements and Responsibilities

Supervisors

- Supervisors are responsible for identifying assessors.
- Supervisors are responsible for organising with the student and the assessors a suitable time, date and place for the appraisal to take place.
- Supervisors are responsible for clearly indicating to the student the scope and length of the appraisal report/presentation and the necessary preparation time. They should give appropriate guidance on format/style/content before and during preparation.
- Many supervisors find the writing of the student report is assisted by the student's familiarisation with the relevant background papers and asking students to write a literature review on which they receive feedback at the beginning of their studies.
- Supervisors should ensure that the assessors receive the student's report and the appraisal documents at least 10 days prior to the meeting via PgR Manager. *Note that for supervisors of iCASE award studentships the report should include the placement plan and objectives agreed with the student and the supervisor at the partner organisation to be considered (normally) at the year 1 appraisal*.
- Supervisors should attend the appraisal meeting although the interview is conducted by the assessors. Supervisors are present to support the student and are not expected to actively participate. It is valuable to see how their students perform in order to offer advice and it is also important that they inform the assessors of any special circumstances and that they see the assessment is fair.

- Supervisors should ensure that both they and the student have completed their reports in PgR Manager before the meeting. The reports will be available to the assessors in PgR Manager.

Students

- The student is responsible for producing their report/presentation in a timely fashion and ensuring there is sufficient time for supervisors to comment and for revisions to be made before the report is submitted in PgR Manager.
- The student is responsible for submitting their appraisal report, and student feedback form, in PgR Manager at least 10 days before the meeting.
- Students should come to the meeting prepared to discuss their work and its wider context. They should have access to their report and Student Log including the list of attendance at seminars and training in PgR Manager. *iCASE students should additionally be prepared to discuss their placement plan and objectives (normally at the year 1 appraisal).*

Assessors

- The assessors should be carefully chosen for their experience of examining or appraising postgraduate research students. It would be expected that both would have postgraduate research degrees. At least one of the assessors should have the detailed knowledge and/or skills to appraise the student on the topic of their project. It is important that at least one assessor is experienced in the RVC appraisal process. New academic staff should be encouraged to take part in appraisals alongside an experienced RVC individual. Where an assessor from outside the College is used they should be paired with an assessor from the RVC. The two assessors should be prepared to act as an additional source of guidance to the student if required. They should therefore be identified early in the research programme by the supervisors. Students should not be asked to identify or contact possible assessors; this is the supervisors' responsibility. The assessors should ideally remain the same throughout the student's PhD programme. As such, members of staff on fixed-term contracts that are due to end before the end of the PhD studentship will not normally be approved. If a change of assessor is unavoidable, a new assessor has to be nominated via PgR Manager.
- Assessors should complete the assessment of the written report in PgR Manager, and can do so before the meeting.
- The length of the appraisal should be sufficient for a thorough review but not so long that it becomes a marathon. No more than two hours would seem appropriate.
- At the appraisal meeting, the assessors must review the skills the student has, or needs to develop, to assist them in their progression and future plans, and must enquire about the broader learning issues such as

attendance at the College seminars, giving talks, attending and participating in meetings, research with integrity issues and skills development.

- At the appraisal the assessors must give adequate time (usually towards the end) for the student to talk freely about their supervision in the absence of the supervisor. It is normal to ask the supervisor to leave the room for the duration of this discussion and be invited to return when it is over. It is important that the student feels comfortable to do so. Assessors should also provide supervisors with an opportunity to discuss their student's progress without the student being present.
- The assessors should discuss their conclusions with the supervisor and with the student at the end of the meeting. Where they are proposing a further appraisal in less than a year, or where they have reservations about progress, they must explain their reasons and indicate clearly what their expectations are. A summary should submitted via PgR Manager as part of the appraisal documentation.
- Both assessors should complete and submit their forms in PgR Manager in a timely manner. These are then passed on to the Graduate School.

The Graduate School

- The Head of Postgraduate Administration and/or Head of the Graduate School will review the reports and the student will be notified of the outcome via PgR Manager.
- A record of the reports will be available in PgR Manager.

9 Appendix B

1. Policy on supervision of PhD students by post-doctoral scientists

The RVC Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees states that postgraduate research students must have one primary supervisor and at least one other member of a supervisory team, both of whom are normally members of academic staff at RVC[1].

Independent research fellows can act as a primary or co-supervisor for PhD students. Other post-doctoral scientists (and graduate research assistants) are expected to contribute to the supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students who are undertaking project work within their research group. However, it is recognised that a post-doctoral scientist may contribute intellectually to a grant for, or which includes funding for, a PhD studentship. In such instances, this contribution can be acknowledged by the post-doctoral scientist becoming a third supervisor (i.e. a second co-supervisor) for the PhD student. The PI/principal supervisor must complete a co-supervisor proposal form explaining the rationale for the post-doctoral scientist being a part of the supervisory team. It would normally be expected that the post-doctoral scientist would be at the RVC throughout the period of the PhD studentship. Post-doctoral scientists involved in supervising PhD students must attend the supervisory training provided by the College at the earliest opportunity, ideally prior to starting their supervisory role. Co-supervision will need to be approved by the Vice-Principal for Research & Innovation/Head of Graduate School on behalf of Research Strategy Committee/Research Degrees Committee.

[1]for DProf students the co-supervisor is a professional advisor from their place of employment

2a. Guidance for Principal Investigators/Line Managers regarding student research project supervision by post-doctoral scientists or graduate research assistants

Post-doctoral scientists (and graduate research assistants) contribute to supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students who are undertaking project work in their research group. Therefore, it is appropriate that they should be provided with some guidance on the nature and extent of their commitments.

The following guidelines apply:

Where an academic member of staff has asked a post-doctoral scientist (or graduate research assistant) to help them with supervising an undergraduate or postgraduate student research project, the academic must be *actively* involved in overseeing the project.

Normally a post-doctoral scientist (or graduate research assistant) should not be asked to help supervise more than **one** research project student at any given time with a maximum of **three** permitted during each academic year.

Post-doctoral scientists/graduate research assistants must attend the supervisory training provided by the College. Ideally they should do so before starting to supervise any project students but if this is not possible, it should be at the next available opportunity.

Additional points are:

- The academic is responsible for ensuring that there is a programme of work in place (which the project student might have developed/been involved in helping to develop);

- The academic is responsible for ensuring the student has the necessary resources to carry out the agreed programme of work;

- A post-doctoral scientist or graduate research assistant can contribute to supervision by showing a student how to carry out a particular technique(s), help them with troubleshooting problems as and when they arise and assist by collecting (and if appropriate) analysing samples/data for them, as long as it doesn't negatively impact on their own progress;

- A post-doctoral scientist or graduate research assistant can also provide a student with advice on how to structure their research project report or an oral presentation on their work and be able to advise them on the presentation and interpretation of their results, as well the conclusions that can be drawn from them. *However,* the academic is responsible for reading and commenting on one or more drafts[2] of the written project report or slides for an oral presentation on the project. Post-doctoral scientists (and graduate research assistants) should <u>not</u> *be solely responsible for commenting on/approving the final version of any written work or oral presentation that contributes to an undergraduate or postgraduate student's final marks in a unit of assessment.*

[2]*according to the course guidelines on the amount of input allowed*

2b. Guidance for PhD supervisors/Line Managers regarding student research project supervision by PhD students

PhD students contribute to supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students who are undertaking project work in their research group. Therefore, it is appropriate that they should be provided with some guidance on the nature and extent of their commitments.

The following guidelines apply:

Where an academic member of staff has asked a PhD student to help them with supervising an undergraduate or Masters' student research project, the academic must be *actively* involved in overseeing the project.

Normally a PhD student should not be asked to help supervise more than **one** research project student at any given time with a maximum of **two** per academic year permitted.

PhD students must attend the training in teaching provided for them by the College. Ideally they should do so before starting to supervise any project students but if this is not possible, it should be at the next available opportunity.

Additional points are:

- The academic is responsible for ensuring that there is a programme of work in place (which the project student might have developed/been involved in helping to develop);

- The academic is responsible for ensuring the student has the necessary resources to carry out the agreed programme of work;

- A PhD student can contribute to supervision by showing a student how to carry out a particular technique(s), help them with troubleshooting problems as and when they arise and assist by collecting (and if appropriate) analysing samples/data for them, as long as it doesn't interfere with their own work;

- A PhD student should be able to provide a student with advice on how to present (some or all of) the methods and results sections in their written report or oral presentation on their work. In addition, they may be able to help with them with interpreting results and to see what conclusions can be drawn from them. *However*, the academic is responsible for reading and commenting on one or more drafts[2] of the written project report or slides for an oral presentation on the project. PhD students should not *be solely responsible for commenting on/approving the final version of any written work or oral presentation that contributes to an undergraduate or postgraduate student's final marks in a unit of assessment*.

[2]*according to the course guidelines on the amount of input allowed*

10 Appendix C

Guidelines on Personal Relationships at Work

This guide is intended to provide information to employees regarding personal relationships within the College, in order to avoid any perceived, actual or potential conflicts of interest or misuse of authority.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The College values and relies upon the professional integrity of its employees, particularly where an employee has supervisory responsibilities or a professional relationship with a student.

1.2 So that employees conduct themselves and are perceived to conduct themselves in a professional manner, it is necessary to recognise and take account of personal relationships which might affect working relationships.

1.3 The College is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination.

Accordingly, these guidelines will be applied fairly and consistently and with due regard to equality of treatment.

1.4 The guidelines do not form part of employees' contracts of employment. They will be kept under review and may be revised from time to time.

2 SCOPE AND PURPOSE

2.1 The guidelines apply to all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full time and part-time employees.

2.2 In the context of these guidelines:

(a) a 'personal relationship' is a personal relationship which is:
  (i) a family relationship;
  (ii) a business/commercial/financial relationship; or
  (iii) a sexual/romantic relationship; and

(b) a 'working relationship' is any situation in which individuals will interact in the course of their day-to-day work. This includes situations where one of the individuals in the personal relationship is not an employee of the College. For example, they might be an agency worker, or work for a contractor.

2.3 The guidelines apply to personal relationships between:

(a) employees of the College;
(b) an employee of the College and an agency worker, casual worker, consultant, contractor or supplier, and/or
(c) an employee of the College and a current student of the College,

2.4 Although most social and personal relationships need not present a difficulty, it is recognised that there will be certain circumstances where employees may need to avoid taking certain

decisions or undertaking certain roles in order to protect themselves and the College from any potential allegations of impropriety, unfair bias, abuse of power or conflict of interest.

2.5 These guidelines are therefore intended to:

(a) provide guidance in areas where a personal relationship overlaps with any working relationship and particularly where it might cause:

(i) a conflict of interest (for example where an employee's personal interests clash with their professional obligations);
(ii) breach of confidentiality;
(iii) unfair advantage; or
(iv) allegations of abuse of power;

(b) ensure that an employee in a personal relationship is not open to allegations that it has affected a working relationship; and

(c) enable the situation to be managed, if considered necessary, with a view to avoiding difficulties within any working relationship.

3 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND/OR AGENCY WORKERS, CASUAL WORKERS, CONSULTANTS, CONTRACTORS OR SUPPLIERS

3.1 To maintain professionalism and avoid embarrassment to others, an employee in a personal relationship should avoid public displays of affection in the workplace. This includes, for example, kissing, touching and holding hands.

3.2 Where an employee is in a line management or supervisory position, that employee must not be involved in any recruitment, appraisal, promotion, disciplinary or grievance process or in any other process involving the other. Where authorisation is required for any financial matters e.g. expenses claims/salary changes or allocation of external funding for an employee with whom a personal relationship has been declared, additional independent authorisation must be sought.

3.3 When an employee has been in a personal relationship, but it has come to an end, they must throughout remain professional and ensure that the ending of the relationship does not affect their work or their working relationships.

3.4 Employees should at all times conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their role and duties and the College's policies and procedures (including those relating to equality and diversity and dignity at work).

4. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND CURRENT STUDENTS

4.1 It is vital that trust and confidence exist between employees and students to ensure that students maximise their learning experience. The professional relationship between a student and an employee of the College is a central part of the student's educational development. A personal relationship could compromise this professional relationship and damage the teaching and learning environment for other students and employees.

4.2 Employees are strongly discouraged from entering into a personal relationship with a student they are responsible for teaching, tutoring, supervising or assessing. It would be considered unprofessional for an employee to seek actively to initiate a personal relationship without regard to the problems that may ensue.

4.3 If a consensual personal relationship does develop between an employee of the College and a student they are responsible for teaching, tutoring, supervising or assessing, the employee must declare the relationship to their line manager without delay. Any such disclosure will be treated sensitively.

4.4 The College reserves the right to discontinue the responsibility of the member of staff for teaching, tutoring or supervising a student with whom they have a personal relationship.

4.5 In no circumstances will an employee be permitted to take part in the assessment of a student with whom they have a personal relationship.

4.6 In the event that the supervision of a Post-Graduate student involves two employees who are in a personal relationship, a third supervisor should always be assigned.

5. CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION OF A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN A LINE MANAGEMENT OR SUPERVISORY WORKING RELATIONSHIP

5.1 Where a personal relationship exists or develops within a line management or supervisory working relationship, the line manager's manager must be informed. Upon receiving this information, the line manager should seek further guidance from Human Resources.

5.2 Employees may be reluctant to disclose their personal relationship, but it is important that the College is able to assess any risk of conflict of interest, unfair advantage or breach of confidentiality and discuss with employees concerned, ways in which such issues can be avoided.

5.3 Information relating to a disclosure of a relationship will be handled with confidence. Employees will be treated with sensitivity during this process.

5.4 Upon learning of the personal relationship, the College will consider what, if any, steps need to be taken. Due regard will be given to the potential effect of the relationship on others in the College, any potential negative effect on the workings of a department or team and the professional conduct of the College's business.

5.5 The employee concerned will be consulted with a view to reaching agreement regarding the appropriate action. No action will be taken without first discussing it fully with the employee concerned.

5.6 The College may, at its discretion, make alternative management arrangements. This may include transferring some of an employee's duties or transferring an employee to another department. Any actions to be taken will be confirmed in writing to any employee concerned.

5.7 In no circumstances will an employee be permitted to appraise another employee with whom they have a personal relationship, nor will they be permitted to sign off expenses or other administrative documentation.

5.8 If it is considered necessary to inform other employees about the personal relationship (for example, in order to explain a change in management arrangements) this will be discussed first with the employee concerned.

5.9 If the circumstances of the personal relationship change, the employee must also advise their line manager, who may seek advice from Human Resources. The previously agreed actions will be reviewed in consultation with the employee and any further appropriate action taken.

6 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS NOT IN A LINE MANAGEMENT OR SUPERVISORY WORKING RELATIONSHIP

6.1 Even where there is no managerial/supervisory relationship with an employee in a personal

relationship, there may still be a risk of a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage being perceived to be gained from the overlap of a personal and working relationship.

6.2 Where there is any possibility of conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage, the relationship should also be declared as above.

6.3 An employee should seek the guidance of Human Resources if in any doubt as to whether or not there is or might be a risk of a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage.

6.4 Upon learning of the personal relationship, the College will consider what, if any, steps need to be taken, as above.

6.5 The line manager/head of department, in consultation with HR, may consider transferring one party or both parties, making alternative line management or supervisory arrangements or implementing other appropriate arrangements to eliminate the conflict of interest, depending on the circumstances. In very rare circumstances, such alternative arrangements may not be feasible and the College may then have to consider dismissing one or both parties.

7. FAILURE TO DISCLOSE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE GUIDELINES

7.1 In the event that an employee fails to declare a personal relationship where required to do so in accordance with these guidelines, or where it would

have been prudent to do so, disciplinary action will be taken. Serious cases will be dealt with as gross misconduct.

8. HARASSMENT & BULLYING

8.1 Employees are reminded that unwanted attention given by either party, whether at work or outside work (for example, when a personal relationship has ended) could constitute bullying and/or harassment. In such cases disciplinary action may be taken. Serious cases will be dealt with as gross misconduct.

9 DATA PROTECTION

9.1 Any personal data provided to the College as a result of this policy will be treated in accordance with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998.

10. FURTHER GUIDANCE

10.1 Employees may seek further guidance, on a confidential basis, from the HR department.

Last Reviewed August 2016

11 Appendix D

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees sets out the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and their research students. The Code is updated annually and both supervisors and students will have been sent a copy of the most recent version at the beginning of the academic year.

Students

Who are the Postgraduate student advisors this year and how do I contact them?

Name **Email**

Dr Siobhan Abeyesinghe sabeyesinghe@rvc.ac.uk
Siobhan is part of the Livestock Production & Health research group at the RVC and is based in the Pathobiology and Population Sciences (PPS) department at the Hawkshead Campus.

Dr Dagmar Berner dberner@rvc.ac.uk
Dagmar is a lecturer in Equine Diagnostic Imaging and is based in the Clinical Science and Services (CSS) department at the Hawkshead Campus

Prof. Brian Catchpole bcatchpole@rvc.ac.uk
Brian is part of the Comparative Physiology & Medicine research group at the RVC and is based in the PPS department at the Hawkshead Campus.

Prof Virginia Luis Fuentes vluisfuentes@rvc.ac.uk

Virginia is Head of the Cardiology Service and is based in Hawkshead splitting time between clinics at the Queen Mother Hospital, teaching and research.

Dr Scott Roberts sjroberts@rvc.ac.uk
Scott is part of the Comparative Physiology & Medicine research group at the RVC and is based in the CBS department at the Camden Campus.

Dr Claire Russell crussell@rvc.ac.uk
Claire is part of the Comparative Physiology & Medicine research group at the RVC and is based in the CBS department at the Camden Campus.

Dr Helen Stolp hstolp@rvc.ac.uk
Claire is part of the Comparative Physiology & Medicine research group at the RVC and is based in the CBS department at the Camden Campus.

Dr Tim West twest@rvc.ac.uk
Tim is part of the Comparative Physiology & Medicine research group at the RVC and is based in the CBS department at the Hawkshead Campus.

PhD and MRes Supervisors

PhD students

When is induction for research students and what topics will be covered?

All those starting their studies for a MRes, MPhil or PhD degree are expected to attend an induction. For those enrolling at the start of the academic year, this is normally a 1.5 day programme on (or the first working day after) Oct 1st and Oct 2nd. Day 1 is held at Camden; students are enrolled and hear about studying for a research degree, the research environment, research ethics and intellectual property. They

are also shown how to use RVC facilities such as the Library and RVC Learn. Lunch is provided so that they have an opportunity to meet one another and a campus tour and social event is arranged by the Postgraduate Officer(s).

The second day at Hawkshead consists of talks by a panel of research degree students comprised of 4 current students from different years. Each gives a brief introduction to their background, research project and the challenges and rewards of the last 12 months. There are also talks about research skills training, Learning and Study Skills for research students and teaching others. The Postgraduate Officer(s) arrange a campus tour and a lunchtime social event.

PG research students who will be undertaking laboratory-based studies are also required to attend a (campus-specific) induction in health and safety and good research practice. A senior member of technical staff at Hawkshead or Camden will notify them of the time and date of the session to be held on the campus that is their primary base. They will also need to undertake area-specific induction(s) which are carried out by the responsible technician.

If your MPhil or PhD student starts at a different time of year, they will be expected to attend a brief induction with the Head of the Graduate School/Head of Postgraduate Administration. They will also receive an online introduction to Library, IT and E-Media. Supervisors should ensure that their students also get the appropriate health and safety/good research practice inductions.

My PhD student is in their first year and has said it would be helpful to have a mentor. Is there a mentoring system?
Year 1 students who are interested in having a mentor should contact the Graduate School. A mentor programme has been

set up with the help of PhD students in years 2-4 of full-time study and post-doctoral researchers.

What is the RDF and how can I help my student to identify their skills training needs?

Many of you will know that the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) was launched in 2010. The RDF is *"a professional development framework for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education. It articulates the knowledge, skills behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to realise their potential."* The UK Research Councils and other funders expect HEIs to use the Researcher Development Statement (RDS) derived from the RDF to inform the development of all its researchers, from postgraduate research student to Professor.

In order to better understand their individual training needs, MPhil/PhD (and MRes) students are expected to undertake the self-reflective training needs analysis (TNA) set out in the training section of PgR Manager at the start of their programme of study and at the end of each year of study. As supervisors (and assessors) you are in a position to help your students identify their strengths and weaknesses and to encourage them to attend appropriate transferable skills training opportunities. Attendance at certain courses is compulsory.

Copies of the RDF and RDS can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn.

What training workshops does my PhD student <u>have</u> to attend?

Your student will be able to access the research training timetable on Learn following induction. This lists the courses run specifically for postgraduate research students but they

are also entitled to attend relevant RVC staff development workshops. Invitations to courses will be sent to students through PgR Manager. They may, of course, also take advantage of courses available outside the College such as those run by the Bloomsbury postgraduate student network or Vitae.

Induction, the statistics training course* and the online research skills training 'working with your supervisor', 'conferences, presenting and networking', 'getting published in the sciences', 'managing your research project' and 'research integrity' are compulsory. *Students may ask the Head of the Graduate School for an exemption from attending the statistics course, usually on the grounds of accredited prior learning (APL), but all students are required to take the statistics exam.* Note also that the campus-based health and safety induction and an introduction to good laboratory practice are compulsory for those undertaking lab-based projects. This is in addition to the talk on Health & Safety given at Induction by the College's Health & Safety Manager.

**If equivalent training is available, students based at another Institution may instead attend the course provided by that Institution. If that course is not examined, they will be expected to sit the RVC statistics examination.*

Does my PhD student have to present at the Postgraduate Research Day?

Yes, they have to present a graphical abstract in year 1 (unless there is a good reason why it is not possible for them to do so and approval has been given by the Head of the Graduate School). Note that in addition to the graphical abstract, they have to submit an impact statement (as part of the Impact Competition). In their second year they have to submit a poster and an abstract. In their final year of study they have to give a short talk summarising their project, its

findings and resulting impact/practical application(s), along with a presentation abstract.

What is the minimum attendance requirement at College seminars for my PhD student?
All postgraduate research students are expected to attend at least 50% of the postgraduate research seminars, a minimum of 6 of the College's research seminars and 6 other talks on topics relating to their field of study. *Note: Your student is expected to present twice (once if they are based at another institution) at the postgraduate research seminar series, the first talk normally being given in year 1. Students not based at RVC must provide evidence at annual appraisal of seminar attendance elsewhere. This may also be allowable for RVC based students undertaking social sciences or education research and should be discussed with the Head of the Graduate School. Recordings of the seminars are available on Learn.*

Should I be keeping a record of my meetings with my PhD student?
Yes. Formal, compulsory meetings will be documented in PgR Manager but you should keep a summary of what has been agreed at all your other meetings. *It is recommended that records of any supervisory meeting are also kept in PgR Manager.*

My full-time PhD students' assessors said they did very well at their first annual appraisal. Does my student have to write a 5K word report for the year 2 appraisal?
No, not normally. The student should write a short report and give a PowerPoint presentation which summarises what they have achieved since the last appraisal to their assessors. The presentation will be followed by a discussion about their work and future plans. Completion of all appraisal forms on PgR Manager remains a part of the appraisal process. The format

of the next year's appraisal will be noted by the assessors. *See Appendix A of the Code for further information.*

I thought my full time PhD student did very well in their first year but the assessors rated their report and performance in the oral as satisfactory (or weak) at the first annual appraisal. Will they have to write a 5K word report for the year 2 appraisal?
Yes. The format of the next year's appraisal will be noted by the assessors. *See Appendix A of the Code for further information.*

I have a part-time PhD student. Will they be considered for upgrading to PhD registration at their first appraisal?
It depends. At the time of their first appraisal, most part-time students will have been working on their research project for the equivalent of 6 months of full-time study. Therefore the appraisal at the end of year 1 will ensure they are progressing satisfactorily but the upgrade to PhD registration will be considered at the end of the second year of part-time study. For students registered as 80% part-time, the first appraisal should be held 14-15 months after registration and at 14-15 month intervals thereafter. The appraisal format is the same as for full-time students and upgrade to PhD registration is considered at the first appraisal. *See Appendix A of the Code*.

My PhD student has some personal or financial issues. Is there someone that they can talk to/go to for advice?
Yes. The Advice Centre at the RVC is there to offer advice, information and advocacy to all students. More information can be found in the PhD Student handbook or at http://www.rvc.ac.uk/study/support-for-students

My PhD student needs to take a significant (more than 4 weeks) amount of time out from their studies for health reasons or other extenuating circumstances. What do I do?
With your agreement, the student will need to request an interruption to study by completing a change of registration status form on PgR Manager; *you must approve the request on PgR Manager and this will then be sent to the Graduate School for consideration and actioning*. Depending on the situation, the request may need to be considered by representatives of SPD. Interruption to study can have financial implications. The sickness policy for postgraduate research students can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. If appropriate, you should also suggest to your student that they contact the Money and Welfare Adviser (moneymatters@rvc.ac.uk).

I would like to extend the period of funding for my PhD student by a few months and I have the funds to pay their stipend and fees. How do I go about it?
It depends. You should complete an extension request form and submit to the Graduate School The application will be considered by the Head of the Graduate School and the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation. Approval will depend upon the case that has been made for an extension being necessary and availability of funds. However, extensions are only applicable for 3-year funded studentships (pro-rated for part-time study). All PhD students are expected to submit their thesis within 4 years (pro-rated for part time study). If your student is in the final year of a 4 year funded studentship and you think there is any likelihood, however small, that they will not be ready to submit within 4 years, you must discuss this with the Head of the Graduate School/Head of Postgraduate Administration as early as possible.

I would like to extend the period of funding for my PhD student by a few months but I don't have the funds to pay their stipend and fees. What do I do?

See guidance above about requesting extensions. Speak to your Head of Department to explore potential opportunities for funding the extension, although bear in mind that these may not be available. Any requests for extension should be made through PgR Manager.

Note if a 3-year studentship is funded entirely by the College, you could also speak to the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation as some limited funds may be available to extend the studentship.

Covid-19 – My PhDs student's research has been impacted by Covid-19 and they may need to seek an extension. What should I do?

The student should discuss contingency plans with you to enable them to continue to work productively on their research project or thesis without having to consider the need for a potential interruption. This may include changing the phasing of work to bring forward some activities and to delay others. It may also be possible to revise objectives or add complementary ones that can be achieved whilst working remotely and will add value to the body of work to be included in the thesis. However, if, despite the student's best efforts, productivity is impeded it is imperative that any delays are well documented and the impact on progress clearly outlined. Consider whether switching to part-time study (0.5FTE or 0.8FTE) is a possibility, in particular where the student has additional responsibilities due to the current situation. If an interruption to the student's studies is still the preferred option, this should be discussed and agreed with the funding body, including whether they agree to a no-cost extension (any period of interruption will automatically result in a commensurate extension to the end of the studentship). Unfortunately the College is not currently in a position to fund students during a period of interruption and so stipend

payments will be halted when a student chooses to interrupt. Our normal policies on pay during interruptions for maternity or sickness leave will continue to apply. The normal processes in applying for extensions to College funded 3 year studentships also continue to apply.

The 3 years funding for my PhD student has come to an end but they haven't yet submitted their thesis. What happens?
Their registration will be transferred from full- or part-time to writing-up status and an annual fee of £640 will be charged. This is not collected until 6 months after the date on which the students' registration is transferred and will not be charged if they submit their thesis within this 6-month period, pro-rata for part-time students. Supervisors should remind their students that annual re-enrolment is required once their status changes to writing-up.

My student was funded on a 3-year studentship and hasn't submitted their PhD by the end of the writing up year/had a 4-year studentship and hasn't submitted their PhD by the end of the studentship. What happens?
You should notify the Graduate School who will arrange for your student to meet with a Student Performance and Development panel; you will normally be expected to attend. The reason(s) for the thesis not having been submitted will be discussed and a time for completion will be set. Note that the maximum period of registration for a PhD is 5 years (pro-rated for part-time students) and that the fee for a fifth year of study is £1,270 *Note that all PhD students are expected to submit their thesis within 4 years (pro-rated for part time study). If you think there is any likelihood, however small, that they will not be ready to submit within 4 years, you must discuss this with the Head of the Graduate School/Head of Postgraduate Administration as early as possible.*

My PhD student has told me that they are pregnant. What is the College's policy on maternity/paternity leave and associated pay?

The maternity/paternity and adoption leave policy can be found on Learn.

How should I help my PhD students to prepare for their viva?

It is recommended that you hold one or more practice vivas with your student. Once they have gained sufficient confidence, you may wish to consider inviting others from your group to a final practice viva and have them ask your student some questions. All students in their final year are expected to present a short summary of their thesis studies, highlighting the key findings and their impact at Postgraduate Research Day. Preparing such talks for presentation to a diverse audience and taking questions after the talk is excellent practice for the viva.

MRes Students

Where do I find a copy of the MRes Course requirements?
On the Intranet; look for the Assessment & Award regulations under the Students and Teaching drop-down menu.

Which training workshops does my MRes student have to attend?
Research student induction; Statistics course; Project management; Time management; Effective presentation skills; Writing workshop 1 and 2, Research with Impact and the online Research Integrity training. *Application of knowledge and skills gained through attending these workshops will be evaluated in the MRes oral examination.*

My MRes student has some personal or financial issues. Is there someone that they can talk to/go to for advice?
Yes. The Advice Centre at the RVC is there to offer advice, information and advocacy to all students. More information can be found in the MRes Student handbook or at http://www.rvc.ac.uk/study/support-for-students

My MRes student needs to take some time out from their studies for health reasons or other extenuating circumstances. What do I do?
With your agreement, the student will need to request an interruption to study by completing a change of registration status form, *which you must also sign to indicate your approval*. This should be sent to the Graduate School and may need to be considered by representatives of SPD. Interruption to study can have financial implications. The sickness pay policy for postgraduate research students can be found on the Graduate School site on RVC Learn. If appropriate, you should also suggest to your student that they contact the Money and Welfare Adviser (moneymatters@rvc.ac.uk).

When does my MRes student have to hand in their project?
At the end of the 11th month of study, which for full-time students will be 1st September of the academic year in which they were enrolled (or the first Monday after 1st September when this falls on a weekend). The oral exam should be held by the end of September. Dates will be adjusted appropriately for part-time students. *Note: Some MRes students will be hoping to start a PhD in October and a PhD studentship offer may be conditional upon the award of their MRes. Therefore, they will want to know their degree result by the end of September.*

Does my MRes student have to present at the Postgraduate Research Day?
Yes, they have to do a poster presentation. In addition to the poster presentation, they should also submit an abstract and an impact statement (as part of the Impact Competition).

What is the minimum attendance requirement at College seminars for my MRes student?
50% of the postgraduate research seminars, a minimum of 6 of the College's research seminars and 6 other talks on topics relating to their field of study. *Note: Your student has to give at least 2 oral research presentations during their years of study. This may be at group meetings, the postgraduate research seminar series (one talk) or external meetings. Recordings of the seminars are available on Learn.*