

HYMS Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Students

1. Preamble

- 1.1 Postgraduate students, whether full-time or part-time, are expected both to acquire the skills of research and to make their own contribution to the advancement of knowledge. The successful outcome of the period of research for the student will be the completion and submission of the thesis and the award of the higher degree. HYMS will endeavour to give the student every assistance to achieve this goal. However, a successful outcome also demands from the student both commitment and a willingness to be imaginative yet self-critical. There should be intellectual excitement and personal satisfaction with the discovery of new knowledge or the establishment of new ideas. This Code of Practice should be read with this general framework in mind.
- 1.2 A principal supervisor and, where appropriate another (second) supervisor shall be appointed for each student. Supervisory arrangements vary from a supervisory panel to one supervisor, with appropriate additional pastoral and other support. References to supervisor(s) in the text below, therefore, refer to appropriate supervisory arrangements. Supervisors should be appointed with due regard for issues of conflict of interest. Each student will have a Thesis Advisory Panel to review the student's research programme, to supplement the supervisor's advice and guidance and to recommend whether a transfer to PhD registration is appropriate (see 6 below)
- 1.3 Postgraduate research students are expected to undertake a compulsory period of research training in accordance with the Universities' Postgraduate Training Schemes. The modules to be taken will be specified at the commencement of the course. Numbers of credits are specified at 8.5 and 8.7.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Code of Practice is for use by postgraduate research students and their supervisors. It is based on a Code of Practice prepared by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and circulated to all universities and also takes account of the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice, Section 1, Postgraduate research programmes (September 2004). Its aim is to set out the procedures and practices which have been adopted on matters relating to postgraduate research degrees; and these must be followed closely to avoid problems during the course of a student's registration.
- 2.2 Candidature for a degree is governed by the appropriate Regulations. Those for research degrees are available on the HYMS website. Students should ensure that they are familiar with the requirements of the Regulations for the degree for which they are registered.

3. Responsibilities at School level

3.1 HYMS, through the Postgraduate Programmes Board, is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies are developed for the admission, supervision and examination of research degree students, and for ensuring that these policies (including this Code of Practice) are implemented. More specifically the HYMS Board of Studies (BoS) is responsible for:

- a) defining HYMS policy on admission of candidates for research degrees and ensuring that these policies are followed by Units.
- b) ensuring, through the appropriate Handbooks, that research students are made aware of the facilities available to them at the universities, the regulations pertaining to their degree, the role of their research degree supervisors and HYMS' expectations of them as research students.
- c) ensuring that students have access to appropriate information technology and library facilities, careers advice, and welfare guidance.
- d) providing advice to Units on the production of departmental research student handbooks, monitoring of research students and the role of research supervisors.
- e) ensuring that training and staff development are provided for research supervisors.
- f) ensuring that students are given the opportunity to make their views known on their experiences as research students, (including commenting on the quality of research supervision received), through the consideration at Board of Studies level of annual reports from individual students and from departmental staff-student liaison committees for postgraduate students; problematic issues raised in such reports which cannot be resolved directly by the Board of Studies will be passed to the Joint Learning and Teaching Committee.
- g) ensuring that Units have established appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring of research student progress.
- h) ensuring that the HYMS' standards and procedures for research degrees are adhered to through:
 - i) the publication of clear definitions of HYMS expectations for research degrees, guidance concerning the length and presentation of research theses, approval of examiners (following nomination by units) and the provision of appropriate guidance to examiners on their role and the application of the HYMS research degree regulations.
 - ii) the establishment of administrative procedures which encourage students to complete their research successfully within an appropriate timescale.
 - iii) the operation and review of the HYMS procedures for student appeals against the decisions of research degree examiners.
- i) ensuring that the Board of Studies is aware of cases where particular consideration may need to be given to the protection of intellectual property developed within a project (the BoS is responsible for ensuring that students retain appropriate rights over the results of their research and that undue restrictions are not placed on access to a student's thesis by a research sponsor).

- j) defining policy in relation to research degree students who engage in teaching and ensuring that appropriate training is available to students who teach.
- k) ensuring that all research students follow a research training programme and have suitable opportunities for assembling a Progress File and participating in Personal Development Planning.
- l) ensuring that a student's supervisor may, at the request of the candidate, subject to the agreement of the examiners, be present as an observer at the oral examination.
- m) ensuring that examiners for a thesis (including, if required an Independent Chair) are appointed at the same time as a student gives notice of intention to submit the thesis.
- n) ensuring that examiners for a thesis complete the examination normally within three months of their appointment, including the viva voce examination.

4. Responsibilities at Unit level

4.1 Units are responsible for:

- a) nominating a member of staff to act as Unit head with responsibility, in collaboration with other members of the Unit as appropriate, for oversight of the selection of research students, the allocation of supervisors, and the monitoring of student progress and reporting to the Postgraduate Programmes Board.
- b) ensuring that accurate information and advice is available to prospective students concerning the research interests of members of staff and opportunities for undertaking research degrees.
- c) ensuring that candidates are appropriately qualified in their discipline and as far as possible have the necessary motivation and aptitude for research.
- d) ensuring that the appointed supervisors have sufficient expertise and interest in the field of the research project to provide adequate guidance to the student; ensuring that additional supervisory advice is available, should a project develop in a direction significantly divergent from the expertise of the original supervisors (from which it follows that ideally one other member of staff in the Unit should also have the expertise to supervise the project in case unforeseen difficulties arise with the original supervisory arrangements, although this may not always be possible).
- e) ensuring that inexperienced supervisors and supervisors new to HYMS attend staff development activities in research supervision and, where appropriate, are supported through joint supervision arrangements with more experienced staff.
- f) ensuring that students are provided with information through a handbook and induction meetings about the facilities and training available to them in the Unit, School and both Universities, especially on computer and statistical techniques, and including English Language tuition for overseas students, the Unit's expectations and arrangements for the Thesis Advisory Panel, monitoring progress and upgrading to full PhD registration, procedures for making formal complaints concerning supervision, changing supervisors, the operation of the HYMS postgraduate staff-student liaison committee and any other relevant procedures.

- g) ensuring through the provision of an induction and research training programme that training is provided in research methodology, use of equipment and computer software, health and safety, ethical issues and intellectual property rights etc appropriate to the discipline.
- h) organising research seminars or similar programmes for research students and staff according to practice in the discipline, including opportunities for students to present their work to other members of the School.
- i) ensuring, within the resources available, that students have access to adequate study space, equipment, library and computing facilities to pursue their research successfully and that any serious deficiencies are brought to the notice of the HYMS Board of Studies.
- j) establishing and operating clearly documented monitoring procedures for research-student progress which are consistent with the Universities' and external funding body policy and which are well understood by both staff and students.
- k) establishing procedures to allow for a change of supervisor should a student or supervisor or Thesis Advisory Panel member feel this to be necessary.
- l) ensuring that supervisors provide adequate guidance and support to research students in line with HYMS Codes of Practice, that monitoring procedures are adhered to and that students are given every encouragement to complete their research to the required standard within their period of full registration.
- m) ensuring that the other duties of supervisors within their departments leave them sufficient time to supervise their research students to an appropriate standard by developing explicit mechanisms for determining staff workloads in respect of teaching, research student supervision, personal research and administrative commitments.
- n) ensuring that supervisors are aware of school procedures for dealing with cases in which a student appears not to be making sufficient progress or when a breakdown has occurred in the relationship between student and supervisor(s) (see the Code of Practice on Termination of Programmes for details of warnings leading to the termination of research students' programmes of study on the grounds of lack of progress).
- o) ensuring that supervisors make adequate arrangements for the supervision of their research students during periods of absence from HYMS of more than one month, such as during summer vacations or study leave, and in periods when the student is undertaking research away from HYMS for a similar period.
- p) ensuring that alternative arrangements are made for students whose supervisor(s) suffer a prolonged period of illness.
- q) ensuring that there is a clear procedure for succession should a principal supervisor need to be replaced and that it is the explicit responsibility of the appropriate units in consultation with the Thesis Advisory Panel to oversee this process and ensure that an appropriate replacement is found, or alternative arrangements made. This could include a transfer to another institution.

- r) ensuring that the arrangements made for the continued supervision of a student are appropriate, and made with the student's full agreement.
- s) nominating suitable examiners for research degrees (including an Independent Chair) to the Postgraduate Programme Board/HYMS Board of Studies at the same time as the student gives notice of an intention to submit.
- t) ensuring that students whose theses are referred for resubmission are provided with appropriate advice by the internal examiner.
- u) ensuring, when a student who is registered for a Masters degree is being considered for transfer to PhD, that the transfer assessment follows the code of practice for the transfer and that the report(s) from the Thesis Advisory Panel recommending the outcome of the process to Postgraduate Programmes Board is/are submitted to the HYMS Board of Studies. (See the Code of Practice on the assessment procedure for transfer from MPhil to PhD).
- v) ensuring that no supervisor undertakes the supervision of more than a limited number of students (this limit will vary from one subject to another and according to such factors as a supervisor's experience and other duties. This should be covered by school workload models). The expectation is that, in general, no supervisor should have more than six supervisees as principal supervisor.

5. Responsibilities of supervisors

- 5.1 Before agreeing to supervise a research proposal, members of academic staff should satisfy themselves that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise to supervise the project, that the project is appropriate for the degree concerned, and that it can reasonably be undertaken with the resources available and in the required timescale, and that they are confident, as far as this is possible to determine, that the student has the capacity to undertake the project successfully.
- 5.2 Particular care needs to be taken with overseas students who may, in the early stages, need very frequent meetings of a seemingly elementary kind. (The assistance needed may include help with language problems and advice about language training, including the possibility of making such training compulsory where necessary). The minimum level of competence is an IELTS score of 7.
- 5.3 Supervisors are expected:
 - a) to give guidance about the nature of research and the standards expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources, attendance at taught courses or specialist training, and the use of requisite techniques (including instruction where necessary) and to encourage students to keep aware of all relevant developments within the subject.
 - b) to ensure that students are aware of all relevant regulations, standards and criteria for their degree and monitoring arrangements as well as the regulations and conditions attached to any scholarship or studentship held by the student.

- c) to give detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work, agreeing objectives for each stage so that the thesis may be submitted within the scheduled time.
- d) to provide advice on writing up the work, requesting written work as appropriate and returning such work with constructive criticism and within reasonable time.
- e) to read through the final draft of the thesis and provide detailed comments.
- f) to meet (face to face or by email/written contact) students on a regular and frequent basis to discuss problems and progress: in the first year of study, for full-time students, these meetings should normally be at least once a fortnight, but in subsequent years may be less frequent, depending on the stage the research has reached (meetings/supervisory discussions between supervisor and student should never be less than nine times a session unless special circumstances prevail, eg overseas fieldwork; and meetings will be considerably more frequent than this minimum in laboratory-based studies) The content and outcomes from meetings should be recorded by the supervisor, in consultation with the student, and be made available for departmental files and the student's Progress File.

NB: regulations require that part-time research students shall visit their supervisor as and when stipulated, which shall normally be at least six times per session. Before beginning a course of study, part-time students must satisfy the HYMS that they are able to do this and have adequate facilities to pursue their research.

- g) To attend meetings of the thesis advisory panel at least twice a year for full-time students and once for part-time students (see 6 below).
- h) to be accessible to students at other times, should advice on academic or personal problems be required.
- i) to inform students should they plan to be away from HYMS for more than a few days to allow students to plan accordingly.
- j) to make appropriate contact arrangements/alternative supervision arrangements should either the supervisor or student be away from the HYMS for more than a month (for example during study visits/leave, industrial placements or vacations).
- k) to fulfil the responsibilities of supervisors with regard to the Postgraduate Training Scheme (PGTS) as detailed in the manual and assist the student in development of personal transferable skills, Personal Development Planning (PDP) and the maintenance of a Progress File as appropriate to the student's aspirations and requirements of the research area, through, for example:
 - i) arranging for students to discuss their work at staff or graduate seminars.
 - ii) encouraging and assisting students to publish the results of their research and to present it at scholarly conferences.
- l) to recommend specific PGTS modules or other development opportunities.
- m) to ensure that students are made aware if either their progress or the standard of their work is unsatisfactory, and arrange a plan of supportive action.

- n) to contribute to the Thesis Advisory Panel reports to students and to the Postgraduate Programme Board on students' progress on their research programme and the PGTS and, if the student requests or the supervisor feels it advisable, to adopt a system of monthly/bi-monthly reports to monitor the student's progress, the frequency of supervision, the objectives of the next period, and to record agreed deadlines.
- o) to prepare MPhil/PhD students for the transfer assessment process to full PhD status.
- p) to take an active role in introducing the student to other workers in the field and appropriate academic bodies and societies, and encourage the student to engage in other activities such as attendance at relevant conferences and research workshops and fieldwork or work in archives, libraries or specialised laboratories away from HYMS.
- q) to advise students on matters of confidentiality or ethical considerations relating to particular techniques, sources or results.
- r) to ensure that the correct safety procedures are followed when using equipment or laboratory materials (full details on safety procedures are available from Safety Officers and from the Universities' Safety Officers).
- s) to ensure that, should a major change in research direction occur, with the help of the Thesis Advisory Panel, appropriate adjustments are made to the supervisory arrangements and, if necessary, to advise the Postgraduate Programme Board should the student's research lead in a direction which the supervisor is not equipped to supervise
- t) in respect of joint supervision, to agree with the other supervisor(s), members of the Thesis Advisory Panel and with the student, the respective responsibilities and roles of the different supervisors and to maintain good communication with the other supervisor(s) concerning the student's progress throughout the period of study.
- u) after discussion with the student and the Thesis Advisory Panel, to recommend examiners for the student's thesis to the HYMS Board of Studies to ensure that the proposed examiners are appropriate but have not had prior, significant input into the project.
- v) if the candidate wishes, in cases where a thesis is referred for resubmission to advise on the necessary revisions in consultation with the internal examiner.
- w) to give advice on the choice of appropriate research training modules.
- x) in the case of a student who has not submitted the thesis at the end of the prescribed period of study but indicates an intention to do so by paying until final submission or a decision not to submit, normally to keep in close contact with the student until final submission or a decision not to submit (payment of the submission/continuation fee does not entitle a student to supervision or to laboratory access, but it does entitle him or her to limited library facilities and access to the school facilities: students requiring full supervision or laboratory access should seek permission from the Board of Studies to register for a further year, but such cases should be rare).
- y) To attend the Training Programme for Research Supervisors within two years, if new to supervision or otherwise requiring training, and regularly update supervisory skills by attending Continuing Professional Development sessions.

6. Thesis advisory panels

- 6.1 Each postgraduate research student will have a thesis advisory panel. The principal purposes of the panel are:
- a) to review the progress of the student's research programme and Graduate Professional Development.
 - b) to supplement where appropriate the advice and guidance given to the student by the supervisor, and
 - c) to recommend to the Postgraduate Programme Board or the Board of Studies whether or not the student should transfer to PhD registration.
- 6.2 The thesis advisory panel consists of the supervisor(s) and at least one other member of either University's academic or related staff. If the supervisor is relatively inexperienced, the panel should include experienced members of staff. The panel will be appointed within the first three months of the student's registration period, and the student will be informed of its membership. A member of the thesis advisory panel other than the main supervisor should be clearly identified as a point of contact for the student should the main supervisor be temporarily unavailable.
- 6.3 For full-time students, the thesis advisory panel will meet with the student at least twice a year. For part-time students, the thesis advisory panel will meet with the student at least once a year. Any member of the panel, or the student, may request a panel meeting at other times. Meetings of the thesis advisory panel will be additional to formal supervisory meetings. The thesis advisory panel is expected to meet only during the student's normal registration period. The purpose and target dates of the thesis advisory panel meetings to be held during the research degree programme should be made clear to the student by the supervisor at the outset of the programme.
- 6.4 In preparation for thesis advisory panel meetings, students will be asked to complete a pro forma summarising progress on their work during the review period and outlining their future objectives. The pro forma will also allow the supervisor to comment on the student's progress.
- 6.5 Students will be given an opportunity to comment confidentially on the quality of their supervision, either in writing in advance of the meeting or orally at the meeting in the absence of the supervisor.
- 6.6 Following each thesis advisory panel meeting a brief report on progress and future action, agreed by all the panel members, will be produced, possibly on the pro forma referred to above. Copies of the reports of panel meetings will be submitted to the chair of the Postgraduate Programme Board, and placed on the student's departmental file.
- 6.7 If the thesis advisory panel structure is not operating properly, students should contact the Chair of the Postgraduate Programme Board or Board of Studies.

7. Responsibilities of research students

- 7.1 As candidates for research degrees, students are expected:

- a) to discuss with their supervisor(s) the type of guidance and comment they find most helpful, and to agree a schedule of meetings and other contact both during semester-time and vacations for the prescribed period of study.
- b) to seek advice from the supervisor in an active manner, recognising that it is the student's responsibility to have their own topics to raise with the supervisor.
- c) to maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor and the Thesis Advisory Panel and in accordance with departmental monitoring procedures (including, in particular, the provision of well-presented written work within the agreed timescales for comment and discussion before proceeding to the next stage).
- d) submitting reports of work undertaken as specified by the supervisor and HYMS.
- e) taking note of the guidance and feedback provided by the supervisor and Thesis Advisory Panel.
- f) to inform the supervisor of other individuals with whom the work has been or is being discussed, so that this may be taken into account when examiners are recommended.
- g) to be familiar with the regulations and guidelines relating to their degree and the monitoring of progress and with the regulations for any studentship or award they may hold.
- h) to contribute to the research environment of the school as appropriate by taking up opportunities to present work at seminars and by engaging in discussion with other researchers.
- i) to actively pursue research training and Personal Development through the PGTS and other opportunities.
- j) to conduct their work at all times in accordance with Universities' and departmental safety requirements, and to ensure that their work follows the proper procedures for ethical guidance.
- k) to inform their supervisor, in good time where possible, should they plan to be away from HYMS for more than five working days.
- l) to provide an annual report on their progress to the Postgraduate Programme Board via the designated procedure.
- m) to take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the supervisor in the first instance, however elementary these may seem, including any matters which may require a suspension of registration or cause a delay in the expected completion date of the work.
- n) to decide when to submit the thesis taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, (which is necessarily only advisory) and to provide the supervisor with a final draft of the thesis in reasonable time for comment and feedback prior to its examination.
- o) to discuss with the supervisor the appropriate choice of research training modules.

8. Postgraduate training

- 8.1 It is now widely recognised by employers, professional bodies and research funding agencies that specialist expertise alone is not sufficient preparation either for research or a subsequent career.
- 8.2 With this in mind, HYMS requires all its postgraduate research students to follow a research training programme relating both to their particular field of study and to generic/professional skills; for example, information technology and communication skills.
- 8.3 Personal student contact with the academic supervisor, from whom many of the specialist skills and appropriate research methodology will be learned is supported by training modules designed to help the student undertake research more effectively and complete successfully whether his or her future career lies in the research or another community.
- 8.4 Each research student and supervisor, in effect, put together an individually tailored programme of training from the PGTS manuals and other sources.
- 8.5 Within the programme, and unless granted exemptions, all research students (full-time and part-time) registered for a PhD are required to acquire during their period of study a minimum of 60 credits (without exemptions) which will qualify them for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Training.
- 8.6 Students should note that unless they have been granted exemptions, the submission of their thesis is not permitted until they have accumulated sufficient credits.
- 8.7 Students following one or two-year research degrees by full-time and part-time study are required to obtain 20 and 40 credits respectively (which may include appropriate exemption).
- 8.8 With the agreement of the supervisor, a research student may take a maximum of 120 credits and be awarded, if successful, (without exemptions) a Diploma in Research Training.
- 8.9 Further details of the training scheme are described in the Postgraduate Research Training Manual which is sent to research students prior to their arrival at HYMS.

9. Summary of responsibilities

- 9.1 Responsibilities of research students:
 - a) to read the training Manual and plan your own training programme, taking modules early in your period of study where possible (front-weighting), but always pacing the training to match your research needs.
 - b) to discuss and agree your training programme and any claims for exemptions with your supervisor(s).
 - c) if necessary, with your supervisor consult the Postgraduate Academic Director.
 - d) liaise with the coordinator for each module as necessary, to confirm that you meet any pre-requisites, and that you know the time and place of training sessions.

- e) fill in your training programme form from the PGTS manual annually. Sign the form and obtain your supervisor's counter-signature. Return the form to the HYMS Postgraduate Office to record your choice of modules.
- f) inform the Postgraduate School Office of subsequent changes in your choice of modules.
- g) write your personal details on a Module Outcome form for each module you take, and give that form to the module coordinator.
- h) attend the training, and complete the assessment.
- i) keep a record of your own training and Personal Development Planning (PDP) (again a pro forma for this purpose can be found in the PGTS manual).
- j) keep your supervisor informed as to your progress and any difficulties regarding your training programme.

9.2 Responsibilities of supervisors:

- a) discuss their students' training needs and ensure that training is relevant and useful to each student's research and general development.
- b) help students with their Personal Development Planning (PDP).
- c) evaluate each student's claims for exemption in the context of the HYMS policy on accreditation of prior experience and learning and forward the evidence to the Postgraduate Academic Director.
- d) bring to each student's attention possibilities for training through conferences or courses elsewhere.
- e) monitor each student's progress and check that he or she has attended and benefited from training modules.
- f) warn the student, as part of the regular process of reports, if he or she seems not to be satisfying the training requirement.
- g) provide feedback on the quality and appropriateness of the PGTS to the Postgraduate Academic Director, who will in turn report to the Postgraduate Programmes Board.

9.3 Responsibilities of Postgraduate Academic Director

- a) request and collate module entries from HYMS for the training Manual.
- b) identify gaps in provision and negotiate with tutors to provide new modules.
- c) advise supervisors and, when necessary, discuss with new and continuing postgraduates their module choices.
- d) liaise with training officers in other departments and ensure that quality is maintained across HYMS.
- e) provide information to the Universities to promote the implementation and development of the PGTS.

- f) recommend actions on exemptions.

9.4 Responsibilities of module providers:

- a) provide details of the content and arrangements for their modules to the Postgraduate Academic Director and to the Universities.
- b) provide assessment that tests both the content of the training and also the student's ability to incorporate it into the research process and apply it to their own research.
- c) following assessment (including any inspection by the External Examiner for that module), follow a defined procedure to ensure the result is entered on the Academic Information System.
- d) return a copy of the assessed work with formative comments to the student.
- e) for University-level modules, forward the resultant copy of the student's assessed work to the HYMS Postgraduate Office, who will retain it until completion of external assessment of the PGTS of that student.
- f) forward to the Postgraduate Academic Director feedback from students on the appropriateness of the module, in content and level, for their research needs.

9.5 Responsibilities of the Postgraduate Office

- a) update the training manual annually, and publicise to students further training opportunities that become available during the year
- b) maintain a record of the training choices for each student.
- c) enter results for University level modules as received from the module providers.
- d) supply on request, in compliance with Data Protection legislation, a copy of a student's record.
- e) print and supply, on request in writing, a copy of students' records to their supervisor.
- f) annually inform students of their PGTS record in time for amendments to be made and approved by the Postgraduate Programme Board.
- g) when a student wishes to submit his/her thesis, or when a programme is terminated, indicate whether the student appears to conform to requirements for submission or for an award.
- h) arrange for the external assessment of the HYMS units in the Postgraduate Research Training Scheme.
- i) convene a Postgraduate Programme Board for the confirmation of results.
- j) when a student gives notice of submission of a thesis, determine whether the student appears to satisfy the requirements of the training scheme.
- k) when a student graduates or terminates, arrange the issue of a transcript of training and nominate the student for any award.