

Section M

Research Degrees

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1. Abbreviations in this section

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AQSH	Academic Quality and Standards Handbook
ARRD	Annual Report on Research Degrees
EC	Education Committee
EPSRC	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
FRDC	Faculty Research Degree Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IRPGR	Internal Review of Postgraduate Research
KU	Kingston University
OfS	Office for Students
PRES	Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
PGR	Postgraduate Research
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAE	Quality Assurance and Enhancement
RFC	Regulatory Framework Committee
URDC	University Research Degree Committee
VCO	Vice-Chancellor's Office

Definitions

Essential roles and Committee responsibilities

First Supervisor

2. The First Supervisor is the primary or principal supervisor and the main academic contact for the student. They work with the student to prepare the application for (provisional) registration and, subsequently, should monitor the student's progress both formally (as a key contributor to the annual monitoring process) and informally during the year. The First Supervisor should normally be a permanent member of staff.

Supervisory team

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

Faculty Research Degree Committee (FRDC)

4. The FRDC is a faculty level forum for discussion on matters relating to research degrees. It has specific responsibility for: monitoring students and their progression onto the following year; QA monitoring of faculty research provision; consideration of upgrade from MPhil to PhD and reporting to URDC for ratification.

University Research Degree Committee (URDC)

5. The URDC has two distinct functions. Firstly, it considers policy, regulations and external requirements and guidelines with regard to research degrees, mirroring the functions of the Education Committee and Regulatory Framework Committee (RFC), for taught provision. Secondly it has responsibilities similar to an Assessment Board for students following research degrees, ratifying all assessment of research degree theses and viva voce and annual progression of students. It oversees the work of FRDCs, and receives exceptional cases and issues concerned with registration, monitoring, and assessment and any other issues referred by FRDC.
6. The URDC relates to the Education Committee on matters of pedagogy and the student learning experience of research degree provision. URDC determines the cycle of Internal Review of Post Graduate Research Student Experience, and approves the faculty action plans, which are also reported to

the Education Committee to note. The Education Committee receive faculty monitoring reports, which should report on research-informed teaching. URDC receives faculty research reports and refers matters to the Education Committee where appropriate. The Academic Registrar (or their nominee) is an ex officio member of both committees.

Purpose

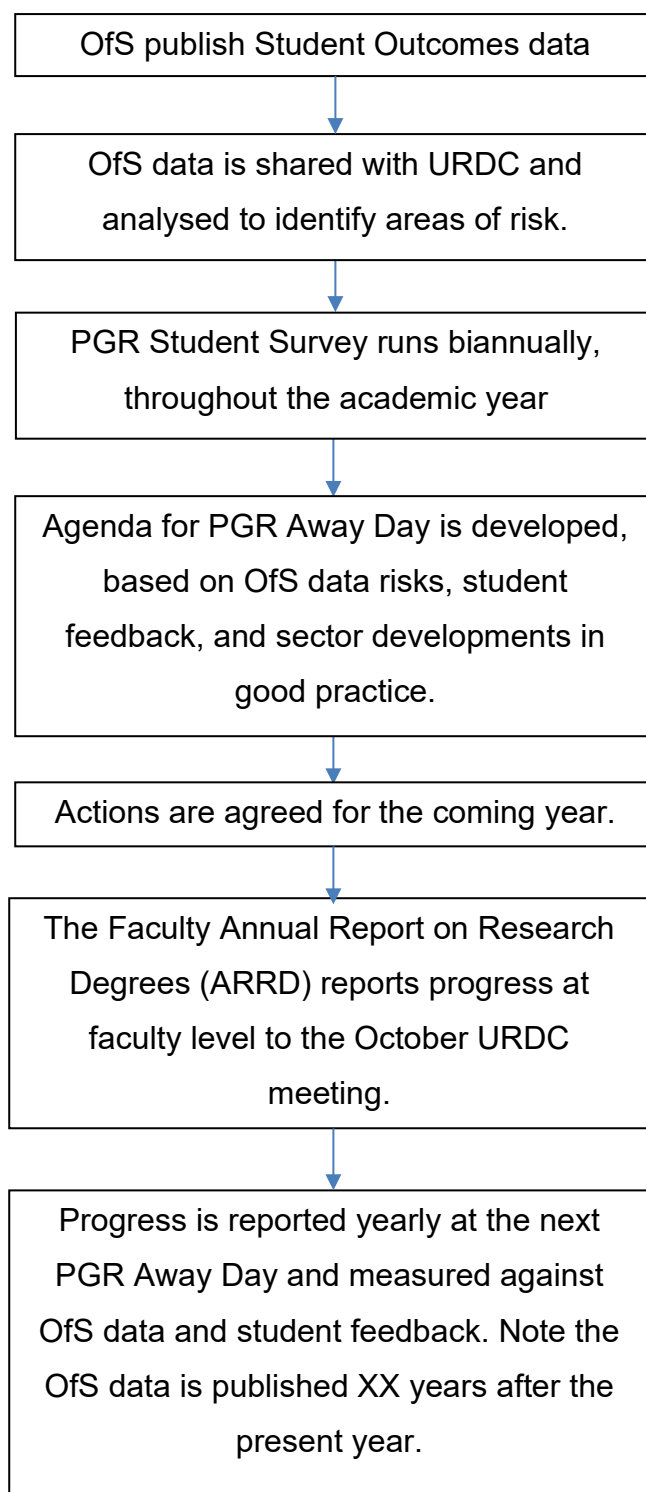
7. The aim of the section is to outline quality assurance related to the delivery of research degrees at Kingston University. Processes are fully articulated in the following documents:
 - postgraduate researcher handbook;
 - supervision handbook for staff;
 - regulations for research degree qualifications.

Criteria

8. OfS data are scrutinised, and areas of risk identified.
9. Student feedback is scrutinised, and areas of improvement identified.
10. Good practice from across the sector and at faculty level within Kingston University is identified and shared.

Flowchart

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



Process.

12. Annually, the URDC will review the updated OfS Student outcomes data relating to research degree students. This will be used to identify areas of risk and student groups who may need targeted support.
13. A PGR Student Survey will run biannually and for a full academic year instead of the university participating in the national PRES.
14. The agenda for the PGR Away Day will focus on any risks identified as part of the OfS data review. If none are identified, the agenda will focus on student feedback from the survey and sector developments in good practice.
15. The PGR Away Day will include a student panel and supervisors of all levels. External speakers will be invited where appropriate.
16. Actions will be agreed by those present at the PGR Away Day, led by members of the URDC.
17. Progress against the actions will be reported in the Faculty ARRDs and at the next year's PGR Away Day.

Risk based review of HESA data

18. Using the OfS data, provided by KU's planning team, the Graduate Research School and URDC will identify areas of potential risk. For example, in 2022/23 it was noted that part-time male students were nearing the level of concern for completion.

PGR Student Survey

19. The most recent participation in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) resulted in participation rates that were too low to be useful (less than 20%). As an alternative, it has been agreed that we will run our own, shorter, PGR Student Survey throughout the academic year. Students will be given the opportunity to complete it at each mandatory training session which will hopefully result in higher participation and more meaningful data.

Annual Report on Research Degrees (ARRD)

20. Each faculty completes this report, reflecting on the previous year's activity. Questions relating to the actions agreed at the PGR Away Day will be added to enable faculties to report on progress. A summary report is submitted to Education Committee.

PGR Away Day

21. An annual event to be held off campus, to allow the PGR team to agree actions to address any risks identified in the OfS data and the PGR Student

Survey, and to share best practice.

The following groups will be invited:

Chairs of FRDCs
PGR Coordinators
PGR Student Panel and PGR student reps
Research Degree Supervisors
Faculty Research Student Coordinators
Graduate Research School staff
External expertise, as required.

Planning Procedure

22. A planning meeting will be held to agree agenda of the PGR Away Day.

Documents for the Planning Meeting

23. OfS Student Outcomes data

24. PGR Student Survey outcomes

25. Faculty ARRDs for the previous year

26. Any sector-wide publications relating to good practice.

27. [OfS Quality and Standards Conditions](#)

Constitution of the PGR Away Day Planning Meeting

28. Planning meetings are normally constituted as follows:

- Chair of the forthcoming event (usually the Chair of URDC);
- Chairs of FRDCs;
- Graduate Research School Manager (clerk);

Reporting

29. The clerk drafts a report of the PGR Away Day on behalf of the team. The unconfirmed report is sent to review team members for comment and correction of errors and omissions. The final report is submitted to the next meeting of the University's URDC and the Education Committee for consideration.

30. The report highlights areas of risk and good practice and informs the University of any issues that need urgent attention as a result of the review, either through matters for immediate action or recommendations.

31. An action plan in response to the report is produced by the Graduate Research School and URDC and thereafter a one-year follow-up. The report and one year follow-up is considered by URDC and reported to the Education Committee. Faculties are asked to comment on actions taken in following years as part of the ARRD.