

UCL Academic Manual 2024-25

Chapter 5: Research Degrees Framework

Part A: Research Degree Regulations

Covering MPhil/ PhD, EngD, MD(Res) and MRes programmes

EngD students should also refer to:

Chapter 5, Part C: Doctor in Engineering Additional Regulations

DPA students should also refer to:

Part D: Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) Regulations

MRes students should also refer to:

Chapter 5, Part H: MRes Additional Regulations

Chapter 3: Registration Framework for Taught Programmes

Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

1 Admissions

1.1 Standard Qualifications for Admission: MPhil/PhD Programmes

1. The normal minimum entrance qualification for registration for the MPhil degree or the PhD degree is:
 - i) An upper second class honours degree of a UK university or an overseas qualification of an equivalent standard obtained after a programme of study extending over not less than three years in a university (or educational institution of university rank), in a subject appropriate to that of the programme to be followed; or
 - ii) A registrable qualification appropriate to the programme to be followed awarded by a UK university in Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Studies; or a qualification of an equivalent standard appropriate to the programme to be followed awarded by a university (or

4. MRes students who fail the dissertation should not register on the EngD or MPhil/PhD programme in the following academic year but remain on the MRes and resubmit the dissertation by 31 January of the following academic year. The Board would then consider the award for these students in January, when they would be allowed to register on the EngD or MPhil/PhD if they passed. If, as a result, they missed taught components which formed part of the EngD or MPhil/PhD registration, these should be followed at the point when they are next available.
5. MRes students who are not awarded the degree after the first attempt and the resit attempt should not progress to the associated EngD or MPhil/PhD programme and would be required to leave UCL.

Further guidance

1. These regulations only apply to students on MRes programmes which form an integral part of an associated doctoral programme.
2. Applicants and students should also consult the relevant departmental/divisional admission and MRes progression requirements.
3. MRes programmes are subject to the regulations for Taught Postgraduate Programmes and to the additional regulations for Masters By Research Programmes in [Chapter 5, Part H](#).

1.4 Standard Qualifications for Admission: MD (Res) Programmes

1. To be eligible for registration for the MD(Res) degree, a candidate must have obtained the MBBS degree or some other registrable primary qualification in Medicine, and be eligible for full registration or hold limited registration with the General Medical Council (GMC), or have obtained the BDS degree or hold an equivalent dental qualification.

1.5 English Language Requirements

1. Applicants are required to meet [English Language Proficiency Requirements for Postgraduate Degrees](#).

1.6 Alternative Qualifications for Admission

1. Applicants possessing alternative qualifications may also be considered by UCL for registration.
 - i) An applicant who possesses a degree or overseas qualification of equivalent standard obtained after a programme of study extending over three years or more in a university (or educational institution of university rank) in an appropriate subject and who, although they do not meet the normal entry standard defined in [Sections 1.1-1.4](#)

2 Registration

2.1 Dual Registration

1. A student is not permitted to be formally registered for one programme of study at UCL at the same time as being formally registered (or re-sitting examinations) for another programme of study at UCL or any other Higher Education Institution.

Further guidance

1. Students can accept an offer of a place from UCL when they are still formally registered with another Higher Education Institution, or if they are re-sitting examinations. However, they may not formally register with UCL until they have completed their registration with another institution.

2.2 Application and Initial Registration

2.2.1 MPhil/ PhD Initial Registration

1. An applicant for a PhD degree will be registered initially for the MPhil degree.

Further guidance

1. All successful applicants, with the exception of the EngD and other specialist doctorate programmes, are initially registered for an MPhil degree, except where the applicant is exceptionally well qualified and UCL has given special permission for initial registration for the PhD degree.
2. Every student must complete enrolment as instructed within two weeks of the start of their research programme and must undertake to comply with the conditions of enrolment.
3. An applicant for registration is required to produce for inspection by UCL the original documentary evidence of their qualifications either before or at registration — i.e. the original diploma or certificate of the awarding body. An applicant for the MD (Res) degree will be registered at UCL in the names under which he/she has been registered with the GMC.

2.2.2 Proof of Identity

1. All students are required to present an accepted form of identification for verification before they can be enrolled. In the absence of this verification, enrolment cannot occur.

2.2.3 UK/EU/EEA-Based Students

1. UK/EU/EEA Based Students are required to present an accepted form of identification for verification before they can be enrolled. In the absence of this verification, enrolment will not be confirmed.

Further guidance

1. UCL's preferred form of identification is a valid passport. However, in the absence of a valid passport, the following will be accepted forms of identification for students who do not require a visa to study in the UK:
 - a) A UK photo driving licence, a European National Identity Card or Armed Forces Identity Card; or
 - b) An original birth certificate, adoption certificate or certificate of naturalisation.
2. No other forms of identification are acceptable.
3. If the family name or other personal details are different from those of the student's previous institution, the student must provide evidence of the change.

2.2.4 Students Who Require a Visa to Study in the UK

1. Under UK immigration requirements, presentation of a valid passport is a mandatory requirement for students who require a visa to study in the UK, and no other forms of identification will suffice. Enrolment will not take place without presentation of a valid passport and visa.
2. For further details on UK immigration requirements see the UCL [Immigration and Visa Information](#) webpages.

2.3 Exemption from Part of a Programme of Study

1. UCL may exempt from part of the programme of study of the MPhil/PhD degree, research degree students who have commenced a programme of study for the MPhil or PhD degree (or equivalent degree) of another university in the United Kingdom, provided that the programme of study followed at UCL is not less than one calendar year, or its equivalent in part-time study.

Further guidance

1. Applications for exemption should be made at the point of admission and are considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. The regulations and criteria for the Recognition of Prior Learning, including the types of prior learning that might be considered by UCL, are defined in the UCL Academic Manual, Chapter 1: Student Recruitment and Admissions.
3. Back-dated registration is not usually permitted by UCL. In exceptional circumstances however, requests for back-dating registration may be considered by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee via researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk subject to the following conditions:
 - i) The statement from the supervisor and/or the Head of Department gives strong academic reasons for the request and confirms in writing that the student has been undertaking relevant research since this date.
 - ii) There is evidence that the student has been fully supervised.
 - iii) There is a good reason provided explaining why the student was not formally registered from the requested start date.
4. If the back-dating is granted, regardless of the time period requested, the student should be aware that he or she is liable for tuition fees from the date of retrospective registration and that the date for submission of the thesis will be calculated from this date.

2.4 Course of Study: General

1. All research degree students are required to pursue a course of study prescribed by UCL.
2. A programme of study for the degree of MPhil, PhD or MD(Res) may requi

2.6 Annual Leave

1. Annual Leave entitlement for doctoral students should be in-line with staff entitlements. For a full-time student this equates to 41 days over the year including 27 days of Annual Leave, 8 Public and Statutory Holidays, and 6 Closure Days. For part-time students these entitlements should be pro-rata.
2. Students and supervisors should agree a way to record and monitor Annual Leave in-line with Departmental practises where appropriate.
3. Students should ensure their supervisors are aware of any Annual Leave planned in advance and ensure any required cover is put in place.
4. Where the programme includes any Taught or time-sensitive elements this should be taken into consideration when planning Annual Leave.
5. Funded Students must ensure they continue to meet their funder Terms & Conditions.
6. Students on a Student Visa must ensure they continue to meet their Visa requirements.

2.7 Length of Programme

1. The lengths of UCL research degree programmes are as follows:
 - i) The length of an MPhil/PhD programme is normally three years' full time and five years' part time.
 - ii) The length of the MD(Res) is normally two calendar years of full-time or part-time study.
2. Students may not interrupt their period of registration without prior permission from UCL.
3. Unless prior exemption from a part of the programme has been agreed, a student must be registered for at least two calendar years full time, or three calendar years part time, before he/she will be allowed to submit her/his thesis for examination for the PhD or the MPhil degree.
4. A student must be registered for at least two calendar years before he/she will be allowed to submit her/his thesis for examination for the MD(Res) degree.
5. In the case of registration for the PhD and the MPhil degree, unless prior exemption from a part of the programme has been agreed, students must be registered for at least three calendar years full time, or five calendar years part time, before they will be eligible to adopt Completing Research Status (see [Section 4](#)).
6. In the case of registration for the MD(Res) degree, students must be registered for at least two calendar years before they will be eligible to adopt Completing Research Status (see [Section 4](#)).

Further guidance

1. Requests to submit a thesis earlier than the minimum periods of registration specified in the regulation above may be considered by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. Requests should be made in writing via researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk and should include a statement of support from the supervisor and/or Head of Department. The Research Degrees Committee will monitor the outcome of such requests by scrutiny of examiners' reports on the candidates' theses. Students and staff should note that early submission of a thesis will not be considered as an extenuating circumstance when deciding the outcome of the examination of a thesis.
2. Students who submit early would be liable for tuition fees up to the date of the submission of the thesis but would not be liable for tuition fees thereafter.

2.8 Interruption of Study

1. Interruption of study may be granted on the authorisation of the Director of Student Operations on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee, provided that a statement of support from the Principal Supervisor and Departmental Graduate Tutor is received. If approved, the period of interruption of study granted will be initially not more than one calendar year and any further period of interruption of study will be considered one year at a time. UCL may, at its discretion, grant an interruption of study to a student on grounds of illness or other adequate reasons. The need to take up or pursue employment during the programme will not normally be considered grounds for interruption of studies.

2.9 Upgrade from MPhil to PhD

1. Upgrade from MPhil to PhD registration may be made not less than nine months after initial registration for the MPhil degree for full-time students, and not less than fifteen months after initial registration for the MPhil degree for part-time students. In the case of a student who has been granted an exemption of part of the programme of study, upgrade from MPhil degree to PhD registration may be made not less than eight months, or its part-time equivalent, after initial registration for the MPhil degree.
2. A student who fails to achieve upgrade to PhD status may, if all other conditions are met, enter for the MPhil examination.
3. Detailed information on the upgrade process can be found in the Upgrade Guidelines.

2.10 Transfer from PhD to MPhil

1. A student who has been upgraded from MPhil to PhD status may, with the permission of UCL, transfer back to MPhil status and enter for the MPhil examination provided he or she has not entered for the examination of a PhD.
2. The transferred registration may be dated from the date of original registration for the MPhil/PhD degree.

2.11 Transfer Between MPhil/PhD and MD(Res)

1. A student may, with the permission of UCL, transfer from the MD(Res) degree to the MPhil/PhD degree, provided they have not entered for the examination of an MD(Res) degree; or from the MPhil/PhD degree to the MD(Res) degree provided they have not entered for the examination of an MPhil or PhD degree.
2. Students wishing to transfer from an MPhil/PhD to an MD(Res) degree, or vice versa, should contact researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk.

2.12 Non-Resident PhD: Registration and Attendance

1. Students registered on a non-resident MPhil/PhD programme shall attend UCL on at least one occasion. This must be the meeting at which their upgrade to PhD is decided.
2. In addition a student registered on a non-resident MPhil/PhD programme shall meet his or her supervisor(s) in person on at least two other occasions, one at the beginning and one at the end of -1.4(w(e)6.6(en)1.6(t)-f9)1.5(11.9(t)-5 E`

requirements. Such statements should be submitted in writing to the Chair of RDC via [Admissions in Student & Registry Services](#).

3. In cases where an approved research programme has been set up with a specific institution or institutions which have formal collaborative agreements with UCL, approval of individual applications, as described above, will not need to be submitted for approval by the Chair of the RDC.
4. Students on a non-resident MPhil/PhD programme will be registered as full-time students by UCL if they are carrying out their research on a full-time basis in their countries of residence. Otherwise, they will be registered as part-time students by UCL. A special fee rate applies to the non-resident MPhil/PhD programme.

3.4 Number of Students per Supervisor

1. The maximum number of MPhil/PhD students [head count], whether full- or part-time, that may be supervised by a full-time member of staff as either Principal or Subsidiary Supervisor will be ten. Exceptions are allowed where programme directors are named as a supervisor; however, it is expected that the substantive supervisory team will be in place for upgrade and final examination and that the normal rule would then apply.
2. Supervisors must ensure they are able to dedicate enough time to meet with the students on a regular basis to ensure successful completion (see Graduate Research Degrees Code of



1. A student must submit a thesis for examination before the end of his or her CRS period. A

5 Final Examination

5.1 Requirements of a Thesis

5.1.1 Theses: General

1. The greater proportion of the work submitted in a thesis must have been undertaken after the registration of the student for the MPhil/PhD/EngD or MD(Res) degree.
2. The work in the thesis submitted by a student must be their own work and the submission of a thesis for examination will be regarded as a declaration of that fact.
3. A student will not be permitted to submit a thesis that has been submitted for examination for a degree, or comparable award, of this or any other university or institution. However,

they appear to the student to advance the study of the subject; and, in so doing, demonstrates a deep and synoptic understanding of the field of study, (a student being able to place the thesis in a wider context), objectivity and the capacity for judgement in complex situations and autonomous work in that field.

- c) form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;
- d) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
- e) give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings, include discussion on those findings and indicate in what respects they

Further guidance

Examiner Nomination Forms, to assist in the appointment of suitable examiners (see [Research Degree Examination Entry webpages](#) for more details).

5.2.2 Thesis Submission: MPhil/PhD/EngD/MD(Res)

1. Prior to examination, candidates are required to submit their e-thesis to UCL for dispatch to their examiners. Further information and guidance is available on the [Thesis Formatting webpages](#).
2. After the examination and before the award is made, candidates entering for a UCL award are required deposit one e-thesis in the UCL Institutional Repository.

Further guidance

1. A candidate for the EngD, PhD, MPhil or MD(Res) degree is required to bring to the oral examination a copy of his/her thesis which is identical to the copies submitted to researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk

1. The Supervisor(s) must nominate for appointment a team of at least two examiners for each candidate in accordance with the UCL Procedures for the Appointment of Examiners (see the [Chapter 5 webpage](#) for more details).
2. One of the examiners must be external to UCL; the other shall normally be a member of staff of UCL. Two external examiners may be appointed in lieu of an internal examiner if, on grounds of academic expertise or other reasons, a suitable individual within UCL cannot be nominated. The duly nominated examiners shall be appointed on behalf of the UCL Research

any restrictions on access to the thesis, which have been granted by UCL, have been removed.

9. The supervisor who attends the viva examination does not have the right to participate in the examination of the candidate but may contribute if invited to do so by the examiners.

Further guidance

5.5.2 Outcomes of the Oral Examination: MPhil Degree

1. Students for the MPhil degree must submit a thesis and be examined orally. There are five options open to examiners in determining the result of the examination as follows:
 - a) If the thesis fulfils the criteria (set out in

Further guidance

1. Staff and students should also refer to the [Code of Practice for Graduate Research Degrees](#) for further guidance on the examination of research degree students.

5.6 Research Misconduct

5.6.1 Research Misconduct: Initiation of Proceedings

1. Cases of suspected research misconduct, including plagiarism, shall be investigated in accordance with the [UCL Procedures for Investigating and Resolving Allegations of Misconduct in Academic Research](#). Exceptions to this requirement are set out below.

5.6.2 Extent of Misconduct: Action Open to a Department/Division

1. The following instances of research misconduct may be dealt with by the department/division concerned:
 - i) A first instance of plagiarism in the early stages of the programme of study.
 - ii) A first instance of misrepresentation of results in the early stages of the programme of study.

Further guidance

1. The following instances of research misconduct may be dealt with by the department/ division concerned:
 - a) A first instance of plagiarism in the early stages of the programme of study (i.e. prior to upgrading to MPhil/PhD on the PhD programme, or at the end of the first year of study on the MPhil programme), including suspected collusion but not including suspected use of a fellow student's or other person's work without that student's knowledge and consent.
 - b) A first instance of plagiarism (including suspected collusion but not including suspected use of a fellow student's or other person's work without that student's knowledge and consent) in the later stages of the programme of study (after upgrade to MPhil/PhD on the PhD programme) in which (a) no more than 30% of the work in question can be demonstrated to have been plagiarised, or (b) in the case of plagiarised data, statistics

- a) Any instance of plagiarism (including suspected collusion²) other than a first instance falling under [Section 5.6.2](#) above in which more than 30% of the work can be demonstrated to have been plagiarised or, in the case of plagiarised data, statistics etc. it can be demonstrated that they are the main findings or among the main findings on which the argument of the thesis rests.
- b) Any repeated instance of plagiarism after a warning has been given, whether or not it exceeds 30%, or involves data, statistics etc. which are not among the main findings on which the argument of the thesis rests.

Visiting Research Students

1. Visiting Research Students may register for between 3 and 12 months at UCL to undertake research which is complementary to the Doctoral/PhD project they are undertaking at the university in which they are enrolled. Applications for longer periods of registration can be considered, but require special permission from UCL before students start their registration. A department/division wishing to make an offer to an applicant for a period in excess of 12 months is required to submit a statement of the case for acceptance, via researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk, to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee [RDC].
2. Requests for extensions to the agreed registration period can be considered but require the support of both the UCL host department and the student's home institution. Departments seeking an extension to a student's Visiting Research Student status should contact researchdegrees@ucl.ac.uk confirming their support and including a statement of support from the home institution.

Arrangements for Supervision

1. Each Visiting Research Student will work under the guidance of a suitably qualified and approved UCL research supervisor during their time at UCL (see [Section 3](#) for Supervisor Eligibility Criteria) and the supervisor must be recorded against their Portico record in the