

# **Postgraduate Research Student Handbook and Guidance**

**AECC University College**

**Postgraduate research degrees validated and  
awarded by Solent University**

September 2022

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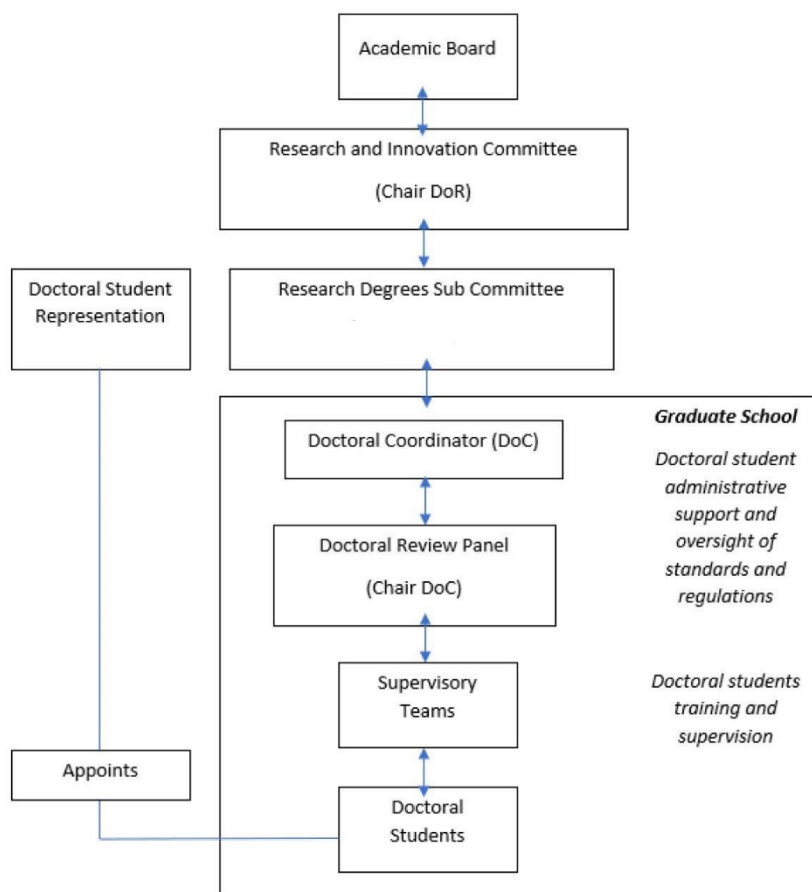
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# 1. Institutional arrangements and key principles

- 1.1. AECC University College has entered into an approved educational partnership with Solent University under which Solent University validates research degrees delivered through the University College. Solent University will award the degrees of MPhil and PhD to students who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research in accordance with the approved Regulations.
- 1.2. The Educational partnership between Solent University and AECC University College is governed by a contract signed by both institutions that sets out the requirements, roles and responsibilities on both sides. This is accompanied by a Partnership handbook approved annually by the Chair / Deputy Chair of the Solent Research Degrees Committee (RDC).
- 1.3. Research degrees are governed by the approved Regulations and Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students – AECC University College. The regulations for the current Academic year can be found at Appendix 1 All students should ensure that they are familiar with the information provided in this document.
- 1.4. Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study, subject to the requirement that the proposal is capable of leading to scholarly research, the University College has the expertise and resources to adequately supervise the research, and appropriate examiners are able to assess it. The submission may be in the form of a final thesis or by previously published work that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context. All proposed research programmes will be considered for research degree registration on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
- 1.5. All students wishing to gain a PhD qualification will register for the MPhil/PhD, where their initial registration will be for the MPhil award. At the appropriate point in their programme of study they will formally transfer from the MPhil award registration to the PhD award registration. The exception is the PhD by prior publication route, which is available to employees of Solent University and AECC University College, where registration will be for the award of PhD from commencement.
- 1.6. AECC University College and Solent University cannot guarantee students will be able to work with any particular supervisor, or that they will have the same supervisor throughout their period of study
- 1.7. AECC University College Research Degree Sub Committee has oversight of the research degree regulations and associated policies and guidance, the promotion and enhancement of the quality of the doctoral student experience, and arrangements for the effective delivery of supervision and supervisor training. This subcommittee reports to the University College Research and Innovation Committee which is a committee of Academic Board.



## 2. Roles and Responsibilities and coordinating the supervisory relationship

### Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The quality of the University College's research degree provision rests on the core relationships and activities which form the postgraduate research student experience. The respective responsibilities of the key relationships in the research degree process are set out in this Handbook.

- Doctoral Coordinator
- Supervisory Team
- Director of Studies
- Postgraduate research Student
- AECC University College Registry
- Doctoral Review Panel

### The Doctoral Coordinator

2.2. The Doctoral Coordinator supports the following processes:

- a. Admissions:
  - Undertakes initial review of applications and project proposals, arranges applicant interviews with academic staff, reviews preliminary supervisory arrangements and, when successful, authorises the offers to applicants, following Solent University approval.
- b. Supervisory arrangements:
  - Coordinates supervision team composition (including any external supervision arrangements, or proposed amendments to supervision teams) to meet the regulatory requirements of the University College and Solent University.

- Ensures that supervisors have training and support required to undertake effective supervision.
  - Seeks out suitable solutions and / or replacements when a member of a supervisory team leaves or where a supervisory relationship has irretrievably broken down
- c. Monitoring and progression
- Coordinates the Transfer milestone
  - Chairs the Annual Monitoring review and reports to RDSC and to Solent University as required.
- 2.3. The Doctoral Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the key milestones for postgraduate research students within their area:
- a. **Annual monitoring:** chairs the Doctoral Review Panel meeting, facilitating and providing oversight of the Annual Monitoring process. They record agreed outcomes of the Annual Monitoring Doctoral Review Panels, initiate appropriate action to resolve issues arising from the reviews, and report on these to AECC University College Registry and through RDSC to Solent University as required.
  - b. **Transfer and final examination:** offers support and guidance as required.
- 2.4. The Doctoral Coordinator is expected to contribute to sustaining the research environment and culture at the University College. They will:
- a. Contribute to research supervisor training and leadership events,
  - b. Ensure awareness across the University College of postgraduate research student training and events, external speakers and research seminars
  - c. Support and enhance the research environment for postgraduate research students
  - d. Ensure that communication and interaction with students is conducted in a professional manner and in the spirit of mutual respect.
- 2.5. The Doctoral Coordinator acts as Chair of the Doctoral Review Panel, coordinates the activities of the panel and reports on the findings of the panel to the University College RDSC, and to Solent University as required. This includes feedback from the student body, analysis of progression and attainment rates and analysis of external examiner reports.

### The Supervisory Team

- 2.6. The regulations governing the constitution and approval of supervisory teams are laid out in the Approved Regulations (appendix 1)
- 2.7. The supervisory team is composed of one primary supervisor (the Director of Studies (DoS)), and one or two co-supervisors. One or more advisors may be appointed to support the student on aspects of their work during their registration. Advisors have no formal supervisory role. All supervisors should be familiar with the approved regulations for research degrees (appendix 1).
- 2.8. Supervisors will:
- a. Provide regular constructive guidance and criticism to the student on their research, methodology and written work both in meetings and through written feedback. At minimum, full-time postgraduate research students should meet with a member of their supervisory team at least every 6 weeks (9 meetings per year) and part-time postgraduate research students at least every 8 weeks (7 meetings per year).
  - b. Provide guidance on relevant literature and exemplars of good research practice in the relevant field.
  - c. Advise the postgraduate research student on health and safety, risk assessment, and research integrity including consideration of ethical aspects of the research and the University College's research ethics policy and processes.
  - d. Encourage the postgraduate research student to engage with current developments and debates within their own and wider disciplinary contexts through publication,

- external and internal events such as discipline specific conferences, symposia, seminars and workshops, and participate fully in the research culture and postgraduate research student community of AECC University College.
- e. Contribute to postgraduate research students' record of all formal supervisory meetings: the actions arising from each meeting must be agreed by the supervisor and student following each meeting.
  - f. Ensure that communication and interaction with their students are conducted in a professional manner and in the spirit of mutual respect.
  - g. Undertake to attend the mandatory biennial Supervisor Training Sessions and regularly engage with further Supervisor Training delivered by Solent University or the University College and to update themselves annually of any amendments to the regulatory framework published at the start of each academic year either via the relevant supervisor training session or by accessing the latest iteration of the regulatory statements.
  - h. Support the postgraduate research student to prepare for key monitoring milestones and the final viva including reading and commenting on completed drafts prior to their submission, provided that they are made available by the student in reasonable time for feedback

## **The Director of Studies**

- 2.9. In addition to the expectations placed on supervisors listed above, the Director of Studies (DoS) is also responsible for:
- a. Ensuring the postgraduate research student is aware of the facilities and resources available to them across the University College and, where applicable within Solent University.
  - b. Engaging with the PG Certificate in Research Methods, which will entail:
    - i. Providing their postgraduate research student with support and guidance around the completion of the core assessment tasks embedded within the 2 modules
    - ii. Attendance at collaborative workshops where their postgraduate research student is required to give a presentation on their work (1 per module)
    - iii. Marking and provision of constructive feedback of their student's core assessment tasks embedded within the 2 modules (1 x presentation and 1 x written piece of work per module)
  - c. Ensuring the postgraduate research student is familiar with the relevant policies and procedures and relevant legislation including, but not limited to, health and safety, research integrity and ethics, data protection, student academic integrity and academic misconduct, research misconduct and intellectual property rights.
  - d. Tracking the institutional deadlines applicable to each of their postgraduate research students and ensuring they are prepared to meet the requirements of each deadline and monitoring point, including Annual Monitoring, Transfer and Viva. (See sections 7, 8, 10).
  - e. Ensuring the postgraduate research student submits drafts through Turnitin and reviewing the similarity reports prior to Transfer and Viva.
  - f. Ensuring the postgraduate research student undertakes a training and skills assessment on commencing their studies and that the student engages with internal and external training where appropriate to their programme of work.
  - g. Ensuring postgraduate research students are aware of their responsibility to maintain records of the frequency and content of supervisory meetings and that the maintenance of the supervisory meeting record is current.
  - h. Discussing with the postgraduate research student on a timely basis any issues of inadequate progress, barriers to accessing resources or to progressing with their research, or failure to engage with the Supervisory Team or AECC University College Registry.
  - i. Prior to the completion of the thesis, discussing with the postgraduate research student and supervisory team options for internal and external examiners, and forwarding the nominations to the Doctoral Coordinator no less than six months

- prior to submission of the completed thesis.
- j. Ensuring the postgraduate research student is familiar with the conduct, regulations and expectations of the final viva examination.
- k. Supporting dissemination of information about training and development opportunities and offering professional development and career planning advice to postgraduate research students.

## The Postgraduate Research Student

- 2.10. As with the supervisory team and DoS, the postgraduate research student is subject to obligations and responsibilities in their relationship with Solent University, AECC University College and their supervisory team.
- 2.11. All new students who register for a research degree are required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods during their first year of registration, unless an approved exemption is granted, as set out in the approved Regulations. This runs concurrently with their first year of their postgraduate research degree programme and is complementary to it. Continuation on the research degree programme will be subject to successful completion of the PG. Cert. in Research Methods.
- 2.12. In addition to completing the PG Cert in Research Methods the postgraduate research student will:
- a. Attend induction, which is mandatory for all new postgraduate research students. Students who elect to register late must attend the next scheduled induction event. Students who elect to register after the intake date for their entry point should be aware that their maximum registration period will be calculated from Solent University's intake date and not from their personal start date.
    - Once registered, students will have an AECC University College and a Solent University e-mail address. **All formal communication about the programme of study) will be via these email accounts.**

All day-to-day communications about the research degree programme of study, including arrangements for supervisory meetings, the annual monitoring, transfer and examination processes will be via the AECC University College e-mail address.

All communication regarding the PGCert Research Methods will be via the Solent University e-mail address
    - **Students must ensure they monitor both e-mail addresses regularly or set up a reliable forwarding system. (Setting up a forwarding system is a student's responsibility).**
    - When corresponding electronically about the programme students should do so using the AECC University College e-mail.
    - Students will need their Solent University e-mail to access electronic resources for the PGCert in Research Methods.
  - b. Be responsible for re-registering at the start of each academic year and for paying their fees on time. Failure to register or to pay fees may result in removal of access to facilities and resources including the library and student email accounts. Students who have not completed registration cannot be examined or progress their studies.
  - c. Become familiar with all applicable regulations, policies and processes and working with their supervisory team to ensure they comply with the University College's and Solent University's regulatory requirements, ethical and health and safety considerations, progression timeframes and monitoring milestones.



- d. Establish, in discussion with their supervisory team, a regular schedule of meetings whether in person or virtual, and advise their DoS in good time of any planned absences which will take them away from the University College or out of contact for an extended period of time. When a student is ill and unable to study they must inform their supervisory team as soon as is practicable.
- e. Ensure that they are meeting their registration mode obligations for average weekly engagement with their doctoral studies:
  - Full-time 35 hours \*
  - Part-time 17.5 hours ‡

\* A full-time student may undertake a small amount of paid work compatible with their full-time studies, with the expectation that the total demand on their time for duties within the University College is no more than 6 hours per week.

‡ Students registered as part-time are responsible for managing the demands of research degree study alongside any employment or other commitment, such that they are able to devote an average of 17.5 hours per week to their studies. Members of University College staff who wish to register for a research degree in the part-time mode must discuss how they will devote an average of 17.5 hours per week to the research with their line manager and Head of School.
- f. Maintain with their supervisory team a complete record of all supervisory meetings, including dates, times, agenda/points of discussion and agreed actions, which must be submitted annually to the Annual Monitoring Review by the student.
  - Note: Students are to record Supervisory meeting minutes and forward them to the supervisor/s present at the meeting for amendment as necessary and sign off.
  - Once signed students should submit the minutes to and send by e-mail to [Registr@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:Registr@aecc.ac.uk). Students should retain a copy and attach these to the Annual Monitoring Report for review by the Doctoral Panel.
- g. Regularly review their development needs with their DoS, respond to supervisory guidance and advice and pro-actively seek supervisory comment to support their development towards independence in the research process.
- h. Frequently submit their work for supervisory review and, especially at key monitoring stages ensure, on the advice of their supervisory team, that work is submitted in reasonable time for supervisory feedback to be received and acted upon. Also that they prepare in good time to meet all the reporting requirements of each monitoring milestone.
  - Annual monitoring progress report (see section 7)
  - Transfer (to PhD) (see section 8)
  - Viva (see section 10)
- i. Recognise the supervisor's role is to offer constructive advice on academic content and general presentation of work. It is the student's responsibility to proof-read their own work, the supervisors are not expected to provide detailed correction of written English.
- j. Actively engage, guided by their supervisory team, with current developments and debates within their own and wider disciplinary contexts through publication, external and internal events such as discipline specific conferences, symposia, seminars and workshops, and participate fully in the research culture and research student community of the University College.
- k. Respect the contribution and intellectual property rights of their supervisors and other collaborative relationships in external outputs.
- l. Ensure that communication and interaction with their supervisory team is conducted in a professional manner and in the spirit of mutual respect.
- m. Pro-actively address issues or problems that arise which may affect the progress of

their research with their DoS in the first instance, and make formal application for approval of periods of suspension or extension as appropriate. Postgraduate research students who do not wish to share sensitive information with their DoS can also seek confidential support from the University College's Student Services. Postgraduate research students may also raise general issues relating to resources or facilities affecting their progress to the Doctoral Coordinator, or through their postgraduate research student representative, for consideration by the AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee.

- n. Decide when to submit their thesis for examination, taking into account the opinion of their supervisory team. The opinion of the supervisors at this stage is advisory and postgraduate research students should note that their agreement to submission cannot be taken as a guarantee of success.
- o. Submit their thesis for examination within the expected period of registration (3 years for full-time, 6 years for part-time), and meet all submission requirements laid out in the regulations and this Handbook.
- p. Inform their supervisors or other individuals with whom their work is being discussed of any conflict of interest, for example in relation to joint publications, so this may be taken into account when examiners are recommended for appointment.

## **AECC University College Registry**

2.13. AECC University College Registry will :

- a. Provide advice on the regulations for postgraduate research students
- b. Process postgraduate student applications, facilitate admissions and registration in liaison with the DC and Solent University.
- c. Process relevant forms relating to admission and offer, supervisory team approval, Change of registration mode, and change or registration to writing up status; Change of supervisory teams, suspension, exceptional extension or withdrawal from registration
- d. Process the forms and procedural elements of the postgraduate research student milestones
- e. Maintain up-to-date student records and produce statistical and monitoring data to inform Doctoral Review Panels and the AECC University College RDSC in liaison with the DC.
- f. Support the DC to make arrangements for Annual Monitoring reviews, Transfer and Viva information.
- g. Coordinate the Doctoral Student induction events.
- h. Ensure that communication and interaction with students, supervisory teams and the DC is conducted in a professional manner and in the spirit of mutual respect.
- i. Ensure relevant documentation is shared with Solent University for formal approval or for note, as set out in the Regulations and Partnership Handbook.

## **Doctoral Review Panel**

- 2.14. The Doctoral Review Panel is comprised of subject experts and senior academics with supervisory experience. The Doctoral Review panel is chaired by the DoS. Formal panel meetings are held in June.
- 2.15. Further meetings of the Panel, either in full or in sub-groups, either in person or virtually, will be arranged to consider student applications and outcomes of monitoring exercises. Members may be asked to contribute, where appropriate to panels for Transfer or Viva examinations in the role of internal examiner or independent chair where they have relevant experience and have undertaken the appropriate training. The DC may elect to co-opt other academics with relevant experience to contribute to the panel and student reviews as appropriate.

- 2.16. The Doctoral Review Panel will meet, either in person or virtually, in good time prior to the AECC University College RDSC to consider, at appropriate points in the annual cycle, student data, student feedback, analysis of progression and attainment rates and external examiner reports to identify issues relating to postgraduate research student provision and experience for reporting within the University College and Solent University Research Degrees Committee.

### **Establishing the Supervisory Relationship**

- 2.17. It is recommended that postgraduate research students meet with their supervisory team as early as possible after induction to establish a mutual set of expectations. Discussion of roles and responsibilities should be recorded in an agreed set of expectations in the postgraduate research student meeting record that can be referred to and reviewed over the period of registration. (A template 'Postgraduate Research Student Supervision Record' can be accessed [on the VLE]). This may involve completion of a needs analysis.

Items to consider may include:

- a. **Definition of roles within the team:** Who is responsible for what and when?
- b. **Student meeting record:** Establish that the student will maintain and update the student meeting record, obtain sign off by all those party to the meeting, and circulate to the whole team.
- c. **Principles for supervisory meetings should include:**
  - **Frequency of meetings:** Has a meeting schedule been agreed that is achievable by both student and supervisors, and does it meet the minimum frequency requirements set in the approved regulations.
  - **Time of meetings:** the research programme is an independent programme of study and it is expected that a student will proactively request supervisory meetings and engage with their supervisory team's requests for meetings. Arrange meetings at mutually convenient times and with consideration for sufficient time for the provision of supervisory feedback on students' previously submitted work
- d. **Setting the tone:** Has a mutual expectation been established for supervisory meetings to be conducted in a spirit of supportive and constructive criticism by supervisors and measured and reflective response by students.
- e. **Remaining in contact:** How will you stay in touch between meetings?
- f. **Losing contact:** It is the responsibility of a student to ensure that they make every and ongoing efforts to maintain contact with their supervisors. Students who remain out of contact with the University College for more than 60 days may be subject to withdrawal of their registration under the regulations for postgraduate students.

## **3. Good Research Practice**

### **Introduction**

- 3.1. This section is closely based on the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) Code of Practice for Researchers.
- 3.2. The University College promotes and encourages the highest standards in research, including research data management, research ethics and academic good conduct.
- 3.3. Researchers at the University College, including postgraduate research students and supervisory teams, are responsible for observing the following principles:
  - a. **Quality:** striving for quality both in their conduct of research and in the publications they produce

- b. Honesty: in relation to their own research and that of others.
- c. Ensuring accuracy of data and results, acknowledging the contribution of the work of others, and neither engaging in nor concealing academic misconduct
- d. Integrity: complying with all legal and ethical requirements of the field of study and declaring any potential or actual conflicts of interest, including where necessary how these are to be addressed
- e. Openness: engaging in the open exchange of ideas, research methods, data and results, including discussion, scrutiny and debate, subject to considerations of confidentiality as appropriate
- f. Accountability: recognising researchers' ultimate accountability to the general public and engaging in research which meets all requirements of applicable agreements, legislation, terms and conditions and professional bodies. Including responsibility to maintain high standards of explicitness and transparency in the design and conduct of their research
- g. Safety and risk: only initiating research where the anticipated benefits justify any risks involved. Bearing in mind the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all involved in the research, including the researchers themselves. Avoiding unreasonable risk to research participants, patients, colleagues, researchers and others, reporting any concerns or breaches.
- h. Training and development: ensuring the researcher has the necessary skills, training and resources to safely conduct their research, either through their own professional training and development or through agreed collaboration with specialists in relevant fields.

### **Good practice in research**

- 3.4. Postgraduate research students will recognise their responsibility to conduct research of the highest ethical standards and to inform themselves of the University College's policies and procedures relating to good research practice available on the University College VLE}.
- 3.5. Supervisors should be aware of their responsibilities and ensure they have the necessary training, time and resources to carry out their role and undertake to request support if required.
- 3.6. Postgraduate research students should ensure their training and skills meet the requirements of their research and keep their skills up-to-date as required.
- 3.7. Postgraduate research students and supervisory teams should be aware of any contractual or other collaborative agreements relating to the research and undertake to seek guidance or assistance in maintaining the standards and procedures required of collaborative research, including reporting where necessary any concerns or irregularities they become aware of to the appropriate person(s).
- 3.8. Postgraduate research students should work with their supervisory teams to anticipate any issues that might arise from working collaboratively and agree in advance between all parties how these will be addressed, including questions of authorship, responsible roles and intellectual property, and undertake to review the agreement should individual's contributions alter within the duration of the research.
- 3.9. Postgraduate research students and supervisory teams must recognise and declare conflicts of interest and make all reasonable efforts to mitigate or address these when they arise. Measures may include making themselves conversant with the University College's policies and procedures, putting in place safeguards or declarations when appropriate, or halting the research pending approval to continue, in order to avoid poor practice or potential misconduct.
- 3.10. Postgraduate research students should be prepared to co-operate with the monitoring and audit of their research projects by applicable bodies. They should co-operate with any outcomes of monitoring or audit and if they become aware of a need for monitoring and audit where it is not already scheduled, they should report this to the appropriate person(s).

It is good practice to build consideration of data management and storage into the project design at an early stage to ensure any monitoring or audit required can be carried out effectively and efficiently.

### **Good practice in research design**

- 3.11. The postgraduate research student and their supervisors should be satisfied that:
- a. The proposed research addresses a pertinent research question and is designed either to add to existing knowledge or develop new methods of research into it
  - b. The design of the study is appropriate to the question and adequate resources and facilities are in place to ensure timely delivery of the project within the standard thesis submission deadline
  - c. A research data management plan is in place addressing how data will be gathered, analysed, stored and managed including;
    - secure storage of sensitive data
    - confidentiality and anonymization of personal data meeting GDPR requirements
    - planned management of expectations for open research data (see the Concordat on Open Research Data Management)
    - planned retention and deletion in accordance with relevant policies and funder agreements
  - d. Where the design of the project has received ethical, regulatory or other approval, postgraduate research students should ensure that any subsequent alterations to the design are presented for appropriate review, to determine they will not compromise the integrity of the research or any consents previously given.

### **Research integrity**

#### ***Research involving human participants***

- 3.12. Any research involving human participants, human material or personal data must comply with all legal and ethical requirements any other applicable guidelines, such as those issued by a professional or regulatory body. Students must also submit their research project for approval by the relevant AECC University College ethics panel and abide by the conditions of the approval they receive. Postgraduate research students should also be conversant with any external ethical approval processes with which they should also comply (see also 15 below).
- a. Research with vulnerable participants, such as the very old, children or those with mental illness or other relevant categories (see the University's ethics policy and procedure) must be subject to an AECC University College ethics panel review.
  - b. Postgraduate research students whose projects involve participation by staff or patients of the NHS, or human material accessed through the NHS, must additionally apply for approval of their research by the Health Research Authority (HRA). All such applications must be approved by the University College's HRA Sponsor (the Director of Research).
  - c. The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants must be paramount in the design and rationale for the research.
  - d. Research conducted with participants from other countries must be subject to ethical review under the legal and ethical requirements of the UK and in the countries where the research is being conducted. Similarly researchers based overseas who are undertaking a research programme at the University College should comply with the legal and ethical requirements of the UK as well as those of their own country. Where overseas fieldwork is envisaged, a risk assessment must be drawn up by the student and DoS, and submitted to the DC for review prior to commencing the fieldwork.

- e. Postgraduate research students must ensure all projects including human subjects verify and retain evidence that participants receive adequate information about the project such that they can provide informed consent. Clarity on the aims of the project, the purpose of the participation in meeting those aims, any specific activity the participant is being asked to undertake, the use to which their data will be put, including any planned publication or dissemination activity and their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, and to withdraw their data from the research at any stage prior to the anonymization and publication of results.
- f. It is the student's responsibility throughout their registration to ensure that no research or fieldwork is undertaken for which ethical approval has not been obtained. Students who breach this principle will be subject to the University College's Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy, available on the University College VLE.

### **Academic writing**

- 3.13. The University College has a reasonable expectation that applicants for a research degree are fully conversant with acceptable standards of referencing the work of others within their writing. Failure to observe referencing conventions is considered a very serious breach of academic integrity at this level of study, and this is reflected in the investigation of any reported case of academic misconduct by a postgraduate research student.
- 3.14. Students should give reference to any work quoted, mentioned, or otherwise referred to, in their writing using the APA7 referencing system. Information and guidance on using referencing systems can be obtained from AECC University College Library and Learning Services.
- 3.15. Doctoral students submitting written work for supervisory review or for formal programme milestones (Annual Monitoring, Transfer, Thesis submission) should meet the expected standard of referencing, and should be aware that discrepancies may be investigated under AECC University College Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy (available on the VLE) .

### **Health and safety**

- 3.16. Consideration of health and safety should adhere to all requirements of legislation and good practice, including, but not limited to, use of hazardous materials, off site safety, research conducted in zones of conflict or other environmental risk.
- 3.17. Postgraduate research students should consider health and safety to include risks to the physical or mental health and well-being of themselves, participants, other researchers and any others affected by the conduct of the research. Where such risks are identified, students must carry out a health and safety risk assessment with the University College's health and safety officer
- 3.18. Postgraduate research students should demonstrate that they have submitted to all appropriate reviews of the health and safety for the project and have introduced all mitigation of risk as indicated by any health and safety assessment in consultation with the University College's health and safety officer.

## **4. Admissions**

- 4.1. Decisions to admit a doctoral student to study for a research degree (MPhil or PhD) are taken in accordance with the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students (appendix 1).
- 4.2. Entry criteria are set out in the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students (appendix 1).
- 4.3. Information about the selection and admissions process is set out in the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students (appendix 1).

- 4.4. The regulations governing the constitution and approval of supervisory teams are laid out in the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students (appendix 1).

## 5. Registration and changes to circumstances

### Enrolment, registration and induction

#### *Enrolment and Registration*

- 5.1. Postgraduate research students must register at the start of each annual academic session, and/or following any agreed period of suspension where applicable, within their prescribed registration period until submission of the thesis. Students' registration in each academic session can only be completed when they have paid the appropriate fee.
- 5.2. Students who do not complete their registration at the commencement of the annual academic session, or following return from any authorised period of suspension, will be withdrawn as a student. They will not be eligible for supervision and may not use the University College's resources or facilities or the resources or facilities of Solent University.

### Registration periods and outcomes

- 5.3. The registration periods during which a postgraduate research student will normally submit their thesis for final examination are as follows:

<b>MPhil</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Full-time	18	24 months	36 months
Part-time	36	48 months	72 months
<b>MPhil/PhD</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Full-time	24	36 months	48 months
Part-time	48	72 months	96 months
<b>PhD by prior publication (University College staff only)</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Part-time	6 months	12 months	18 months

- 5.4. A student's registration is deemed to run from the formal enrolment and induction date of their intake. Students who elect to enrol after the formal enrolment date do so at their own risk and will not have this time added to their maximum registration period.
- 5.5. The maximum registration period for an MPhil award is 36 months (full-time), 72 months (part-time). The maximum registration period for a PhD award is 48 months (full-time), 96 months (part-time). The maximum registration period for a PhD by prior publication award is 18 months (part-time).
- 5.6. All students are expected to complete their programme of study, including any 'writing-up' within the 'standard' registration period. Exceptionally students who have made unusually rapid progress may apply to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee for permission to submit a thesis in advance of the minimum period. Such decisions will require confirmation by the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC. Applications for MPhil 'writing-up' status before 12 months (24 months part-time) or for PhD before 24 months (48 months part-time) will not be approved (see also 'Writing up fees' below).
- 5.7. Students registered for the MPhil or MPhil/PhD, with the exception of those registered for PhD by Prior Publication, may submit an application to transfer their registration to PhD. Students should apply to transfer their registration to PhD between 12-18 months (full-time) or 24-36 months (part-time) from initial enrolment. Students whose application to transfer does not meet approval may be granted a probationary period to resubmit their transfer

application (see Section 8: Transfer). Students registered for the MPhil/PhD may elect to re-register for the MPhil or may be required to do so as an outcome of the Transfer application.

- 5.8. Where a student wishes to amend their registration from MPhil/PhD to MPhil prior to Transfer they must address the request by e-mail to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee.
- 5.9. Where a student has requested an amendment of registration from MPhil/PhD to MPhil, or they have received a Transfer viva outcome of 'write-up for MPhil' this will result in reduction of the registration period remaining to them.
- 5.10. Very exceptionally a student who has successfully transferred from MPhil to PhD registration may request to change their registration to MPhil. Requests should be addressed to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee and are considered on a case by case basis in respect of any adjustment to the remaining registration period.

### **Registration modes (full-time, part-time) and changing registration mode**

- 5.11. Postgraduate research students may be registered for full-time or part-time study modes.
- 5.12. A postgraduate research student may change mode at any point during their studies by completing parts A and B of the Change of Registration Mode form and forwarding it to AECC University College Registry for processing. If approved, a new set of deadlines relating to remaining milestones, the expected thesis submission date and the maximum registration period will be advised to the student and their supervisory team.
- 5.13. Where a student transfers from full-time to part-time registration, their remaining maximum registration will be recalculated to twice that of the registration period remaining to the student at the date of the transfer of mode being granted. Where a student transfers from part-time to full-time registration, their remaining maximum registration will be recalculated to half that of the registration period remaining to the student at the date of the transfer of mode being granted.  
e.g. FT 4 months remaining to end of maximum registration = PT 8 months  
PT 8 months remaining to end of maximum registration = FT 4 months

### **Induction**

- 5.14. All new postgraduate research students are required to attend a mandatory induction session that introduces them to the resources and services available to them
- 5.15. Induction also provides postgraduate research students with an opportunity to meet new and existing members of the University College research community.

### **Suspension, extension and withdrawal**

#### ***Suspension of studies***

- 5.16. Postgraduate research students are normally expected to pursue their research on a continuous basis for the duration of their programme of study. Where the student is prevented by ill-health or other compelling cause from making progress they may apply to suspend their studies for a period of not less than 1 month and normally not more than 6 months, and exceptionally to a maximum of 12 months.
- 5.17. The maximum registration period provides scope for unanticipated delays due to periods of ill-health, restricted access to planned resources or data or other circumstances. Periods of suspension will not result in additional time being added to the end of the student's maximum registration period. (For extensions beyond the maximum registration period see Extension of studies below)
- 5.18. Postgraduate research students may wish to discuss any reasons for interruption to their



studies through suspension with their DoS and/or co-supervisor(s) in the first instance, and may also wish to meet the DC.

- 5.19. Students wishing to suspend their studies must ensure parts A and B of the Application for Suspension form are completed and forwarded to AECC University College Registry for processing and submission to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC for approval. Decisions will be reported to the Chair of Solent University RDC. Students will receive notification of the outcome of their application from Registry. Applicants should note that approval is not guaranteed and all applications will be assessed individually on the basis of the grounds and evidence provided.
- 5.20. Appropriate medical evidence may be submitted to support requests for suspension on the grounds of ill-health.
- 5.21. Where a student is ill and unable to study, they must inform their DoS or a member of the supervisory team as soon as practicable, and also inform AECC University College Registry. Where a student is absent due to ill health for a period of 6 weeks or more, the supervisory team is required to inform Registry in order that the University College can suspend their studies and where relevant inform UKVI. AECC University College will report such suspensions to the Chair of Solent University RDC.
- 5.22. Applications to suspend studies on the following grounds are ineligible for consideration:
  - a. Pressure of work (unless the work and study are inextricably linked.)
  - b. Students in fee arrears (students wishing to apply for suspension on financial grounds should ensure they do so in good time before their next fee payment is due)
  - c. Retrospective applications will not normally be granted
- 5.23. Doctoral students with outstanding fees who wish to suspend should contact [studentfinance@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:studentfinance@aecc.ac.uk) for guidance.
- 5.24. Students who are sponsored by AECC University College under the student visa route and who are considering suspending their studies must seek guidance from the AECC University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Officer about the potential impact on their visa. The University College will inform the UKVI of all suspended international students sponsored on the student route.

### ***Extension of studies***

- 5.25. Postgraduate research students should review their programme of work in relation to their remaining permitted registration period regularly with their supervisory team. They should take advantage of Annual Monitoring and the Transfer milestone to assess the ongoing viability of their programme of work and make appropriate adjustments to ensure the project is deliverable within the normal timeframes. The research project up to submission of the thesis for examination should always be planned to be achievable within the standard registration period (see table in paragraph 5.3 above), while the maximum registration period provides scope for unanticipated delays due to periods of ill-health, restricted access to planned resources or data or other circumstances. An application for extension beyond this period will therefore be considered only on an exceptional basis and it is advisable for students to discuss any issues that may require an application for extension with the supervisory team and/or the DC.
- 5.26. Where exceptionally, due to circumstances beyond their control, a postgraduate research student wishes to make an application to extend their maximum period of registration, they should do so as soon as the risk of exceeding their maximum registration period becomes apparent and normally at least 6 months before the end of this period.
- 5.27. An application may be submitted for an extension period of normally not more than 6 months, and exceptionally to a maximum of 12 months. Postgraduate research students should ensure parts A, B, C and D of the Application to Extend Research Degree Registration form are completed before forwarding to AECC University College Registry for

processing and submission for approval. Applicants should note that approval is not guaranteed and all applications will be assessed individually on the basis of the strength of the grounds and evidence provided.

- 5.28. Applications for extension to the maximum registration period on basis of pressure of work are ineligible for consideration (unless the work and study are inextricably linked); e.g. students who have taken up a full-time job before they have submitted their thesis, however demanding the job.
- 5.29. Students reaching the end of their maximum registration who have not submitted their thesis will not be permitted to submit for examination without an approved extension to their period of registration in place.
- 5.30. Students whose extension has been approved will be required to pay an appropriate fee, which may be calculated pro-rata for the period of the extension.
- 5.31. It is recommended that students who are considering applying to extend their studies and are sponsored by AECC University College under the student visa route seek guidance from the AECC University College Admissions and immigration Compliance Manager about the potential impact on their visa.

### ***Withdrawal of registration***

- 5.32. A postgraduate research student's registration may be withdrawn at any of the review points where progress is deemed to have fallen below required standards and a period of probation is not warranted or, if following a period of probation, the standard of work remains unsatisfactory, or as an outcome of an investigation under the University College's Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy.
- 5.33. A student may also be withdrawn from registration where they have:
  - a. Failed to engage with their supervisory team and not responded to formal correspondence from the University College for a period of 60 days; or
  - b. Failed to complete the registration or re-registration process at the start of each academic session until submission of the thesis has taken place; or
  - c. Failed to pay such fees as published by the University College and failed subsequently to clear any debts following being informed by AECC University College of the intention to impose sanctions (see the University College Tuition Fees Policy)
- 5.34. A student may elect to withdraw their registration at any time.
- 5.35. To complete a withdrawal from registration, the Application to Withdraw from Research Degree form must be completed and returned to AECC University College Registry following consultation with the student's supervisory team, DC and / or other relevant professional services where they are in receipt of the student's notification of intent to withdraw. If the student has disengaged as per paragraph 33 the form will be completed by AECC University College Registry.
- 5.36. The University College will inform the UKVI of all withdrawn international students sponsored by AECC University College under the student visa route. For further information contact the AECC University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Officer.

### **Appeals**

- 5.37. A postgraduate research student may make a formal appeal to request reconsideration of decisions related to their progress, that is:
  - a. A decision to withdraw a student through lack of academic progress and/or failure to engage;
  - b. A decision to suspend a student due to ill-health; or
  - c. The outcome of a review or examination (including Transfer)

- 5.38. Appeals can only be lodged by the student (with limited exceptions for third parties) and can only be made using the process and on eligible grounds as outlined in the AECC University College Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure (postgraduate research students).
- 5.39. If a student is dissatisfied about any other aspect of their experience, including withdrawal on the basis of non-payment of fees, they should refer to the AECC University College Student Complaints Policy (on the VLE).

## **6. Tuition fees, student funding and training and development support**

### **Tuition fees**

#### **Payment of tuition fees**

- 6.1. New students must pay such fees as determined by the University before they can enrol, and subsequently all students must pay the annual fee before they attempt to re-register at the start of each year of study. Students wishing to pay their fee on a payment plan must contact [studentfinance@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:studentfinance@aecc.ac.uk) to discuss how they might pay for fees by instalment well in advance of their registration due date.
- 6.2. Students' annual registration takes place each year at the anniversary of their original entry point.
- 6.3. Non-payment or incomplete payment of the fee may result in a student being withdrawn. Students who have been withdrawn through non-payment of fees should refer to the University College's Student Complaints Policy.
- 6.4. Students should be aware that the fees, once published, will be set for that year of entry, but are subject to increase year on year. Any change will be applied to both new and continuing students. The fees for the current academic period can be found on the University College website. Please also refer to the AECC University College tuition Fees Policy. (see also the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students, Appendix 1).
- 6.5. Students who have submitted their thesis for final examination remain registered at the University College. If students submit before the end of their registration year they may be eligible for a pro-rata refund, and will remain registered on a 'no fee' basis pending their viva. Students who submit their thesis for final examination at the end of their registration year will register for the following year on a 'no fee' basis pending their viva.
- 6.6. Following the viva, if a student receives an outcome of 'major amendment' or 'revision for MPhil' (PhD students only are eligible for the latter outcome) they will be subject to an amendment fee (see below) for the period of amendment specified in their viva outcome.

#### **Writing-up fees**

- 6.7. Full-time postgraduate research students who are 'writing-up' their research, prior to submission of their thesis for examination, may apply to pay a reduced 'writing-up' annual fee for a maximum of one registration year. Part-time postgraduate research students may pay a 'writing-up' fee for a maximum of two registration years. Both full-time and part-time postgraduate research students will be eligible for a pro-rata refund if they submit before the end of the academic year in which they are 'writing-up'. The 'writing-up' period is part of the registration period of the student and cannot exceed the maximum registration period of the degree for which they are registered.
- 6.8. Full-time students will not be eligible to apply for the 'writing-up' fee until they have completed a minimum of 12 months of registration and must have successfully completed their Transfer (see Section 8: Transfer). Part-time students will not be eligible to apply for the 'writing-up' fee until they have completed a minimum of 36 months of registration and

must have successfully completed their Transfer. Applicants who have not successfully completed their Transfer will not be approved.

- 6.9. Applications for MPhil 'writing up' status before 12 months (24 months part-time) will not be approved.
- 6.10. If a postgraduate research student subsequently fails to submit by the end of their 'writing-up' period and is eligible to continue their registration within the maximum registration period, they will again become liable for the full annual tuition fee appropriate to their mode of study. If they then submit before the end of the academic year they will be eligible to receive a pro-rata refund as above.
- 6.11. Students can elect to apply for the 'writing up' fee before the start of any academic session after completing the minimum eligibility criteria (outlined in paragraph 6.8). Before they do so they must consult their supervision team for approval.
- 6.12. Other opportunities to review progress towards this status may occur at the Annual Monitoring point or Transfer panels (see Section 7: Annual Monitoring, Section 8: Transfer). A panel may recommend that the 'writing-up fee' should be applied for before the start of the student's next academic session, or give consideration to at which future academic session it might be appropriate for the student to make an application.
- 6.13. Applications to transfer registration to 'writing-up fee' status can be made by completing parts A, B and C on the Application for Writing-Up Status form and forwarding it to AECC University College Registry.
- 6.14. Postgraduate research students should ensure forms to apply for writing-up fee status are submitted to AECC University College Registry at least two months prior to the annual re-registration point. Students will be advised once their application has been processed.

### ***Major amendment fees***

- 6.15. Following the viva examination, students who receive an outcome of major amendments (6 months), re-examination subject to major amendments (12 months) or revision for the award of MPhil (PhD students only, 6 months), will continue receive full access to supervisory support and University College resources and facilities. This period is subject to a reduced annual fee applied as appropriate to their examination outcome (see also the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students (Appendix 1) and the University College Tuition Fees Policy).

## **7. Annual monitoring**

### **Introduction**

- 7.1. In addition to the research degree milestones of transfer and viva, the experience and academic progress of research students is formally monitored once a year in May/June. This is referred to as Annual Monitoring and involves a Progress Review and optional Independent Review to be held at the student's request.
- 7.2. The Progress Review entails students and DoSs submitting an academic progress report and an optional Independent Review, which is held at the student's request and comprises the student attending a meeting with an academic independent of their programme of study who will also submit a report. Both reports will be considered by the Doctoral Review Panel.
- 7.3. Students and DoSs must complete the monitoring progress report documentation. Failing to do so may jeopardise the student's continued registration.

### **General principles of Annual Monitoring**

- 7.4. Monitoring in these two ways ensures that all students are receiving timely and constructive feedback about their academic progress and that they are able to access all appropriate

support available to them. Through this monitoring the whole student experience is reviewed at regular intervals without placing an undue burden upon students.

- 7.5. The Progress Review is mandatory (with the exception of withdrawn or suspended students, or students post-submission of their final thesis). A student not completing their review, or failing to meet the annual deadline as advised, will not be eligible to continue their studies and their registration as a student can be withdrawn.
- 7.6. Other than as detailed in point 5 above, there are no exceptions to the requirement for sections A, B and provision of the required number of supervisory records to be completed by the student, and completion of Section C by the DoS.

### ***The annual monitoring process***

- 7.7. The submission of Annual Monitoring progress reviews involves:
  - a. This progress review covers the previous 12 month period.
  - b. The postgraduate research student is required to complete the annual monitoring form Parts A and B.
  - c. The postgraduate research student is additionally provided with the option of engaging in an Independent Review. This will be coordinated by the DCr, and subsequent documentation provided to the Doctoral Panel for review.
  - d. Once the postgraduate research student has completed their sections (A and B) of the report, it is forwarded to the DoS to complete section C.
  - e. Upon completion of all sections of the report by both the postgraduate research student and DoS, the report must be submitted to AECC University College Registry.
  - f. Annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the Doctoral Panel. Outcomes of this review and all agreed actions are then communicated to the postgraduate research student and DoS by AECC University College Registry.

### ***Progress review***

- 7.8. The Progress Review is a formal review of students' academic progress for the annual cycle (a reflection on progress for the previous 12 months, or since first registration for first year students). The aim of the review is to confirm whether the student is actively engaging with their programme of study, training and supervisory provision.
- 7.9. The Progress Review form is in 3 sections and is available from the the VLE or AECC University College Registry Notification to complete this documentation will be sent by University College Registry in February/March each year.
- 7.10. Sections A and B must be completed by the student and forwarded in good time to their DoS who is then responsible for completing Section C and submitting this to AECC University College Registry by the published deadline in May
  - a) Section A is a record of the student's details.
  - b) Section B consists of 4 parts:
    - i. Questions relating to research good practice, training and development over the previous 12 months (or since first registration for new students).
    - ii. Activity Summary, which is designed to assist in determining how much the student has achieved to date and ascertain whether the work remaining on the project is in line with the proposed timelines
    - iii. Questions relating to experience of supervisory support
    - iv. Questions relating to overall experience
    - v. Student signoff
- 7.11. In addition to the above report, students are required to keep records of meetings with their supervisory team. Meeting records need to be approved and signed off by member/s of the supervisory team present at the meetings. The meeting record include:
  - a) dates
  - b) supervisors present at each meeting

- c) points of discussion
- d) actions agreed as outcomes of each meeting

- 7.12. Section C addresses supervisory input, feedback about the student completed sections (A and B) and review of the student's engagement, specifically:
- a) Agreement/disagreement with what has been reported within Sections A and B (student content)
  - b) DoS's overall feedback about the student's progress
  - c) Good research practice (i.e. research ethics and health & safety considerations). Each year a student should work with their supervision team to consider the ongoing health and safety and research ethics implications of their project and if appropriate have made the relevant submissions for approval. This must be kept under review and if significant changes are made to their research project, such that amendments to research ethics approval or risk assessment have been made within the past 12 months, this section must be updated with the relevant information. If no changes have been made, students can simply answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the questions as appropriate.
  - d) Researcher development activities within the wider research community, such as attendance or contribution to events relevant to their development (conferences, symposia), publishing/exhibiting, peer review or other relevant activities.
- 7.13. Section C must be completed by a member of the supervisory team (normally the DoS) and returned by the supervisor with Sections A and B to [Registry@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:Registry@aecc.ac.uk). Section C addresses the student's overall academic quality and performance, review of any actions or changes to the health and safety arrangements with the student, and any changes or issues in respect of the ethical aspects of the project, and makes a recommendation to the Doctoral Review Panel assessors regarding the academic progress of the student.
- 7.14. Sections A, B and C must be submitted by the deadline given on the form. Failure to meet the deadline will mean the student will be automatically placed on probation as the Doctoral Review Panel will be unable to consider that any progress has been made at the scheduled panel meeting in June. Subsequent failure to meet probationary deadlines may jeopardise the student's registration and ability to continue their studies.
- 7.15. The Doctoral Review Panel will indicate a formal decision regarding the student's continued registration on the award. The panel may decide any of the following:
- a) The student has demonstrated satisfactory engagement and academic progress
  - b) Technical probation pending submission of missing or incomplete Annual Monitoring documentation (within 3 months)
  - c) Academic probation pending submission of work meeting an agreed plan set out by the Doctoral Review Panel (within 3 months)
  - d) Where evidence is such that the Doctoral Review Panel are not satisfied that a probationary period is warranted they can recommend withdrawal of registration (or where appropriate require the student to re-register for MPhil write-up).
- 7.16. The Doctoral Review Panel may elect to select both b and c as outcomes from the review. In this case the 3 month probation periods will run concurrently.

### ***Independent review***

- 7.17. The Independent Review, which is optional and held at the student's request, is an optional one-to-one meeting with an academic member of staff who is an experienced researcher and is independent of the student's supervisory team. This review focuses on the student's personal experience. It is an opportunity to discuss any barriers or challenges they feel are affecting them personally or in their research environment. The aim of the review is to ascertain if there are any issues affecting the student personally or academically which the University College can address through its various services. Issues arising from the independent reviews may be escalated to the DC.

- 7.18. The DC will arrange the one-to-one meetings when required. Normally the nominated independent reviewer will make the meeting arrangements.
- 7.19. The meeting will normally take place between March - May with sufficient advance notice to reserve this time within respective diaries.
- 7.20. At the meeting, the independent reviewer and student will jointly complete the Independent Review Questionnaire form. This should include any additional concerns highlighted and discussed in the meeting.
- 7.21. The form must be returned to AECC University College Registry before the May deadline and will be forwarded to the DC to follow up any individual actions.
- 7.22. Independent Review forms will also be reviewed by the Doctoral Review Panel who will consider these in the context of both the individual student's Annual Monitoring outcome, and overall to identify any common factors or improvements to practice that may be indicated, and where appropriate these will be escalated to the AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee, and to Solent University as required.

### **Confidentiality**

- 7.23. Students should indicate on the Independent Review form if they wish for part or the whole of their Independent Review responses to be kept confidential from the Doctoral Review Panel.
- 7.24. Normally the DC will review all Independent Review forms to address any individual actions. In cases where an action is warranted, but the student has requested confidentiality which includes the DC, the Independent Reviewer may elect for the action to be forwarded to a designated academic member of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee to mitigate the student's desire for confidentiality. This should be discussed between the student and independent reviewer and the student's preference clearly indicated.

### **The Doctoral Review Panel**

- 7.25. The DC will convene the Doctoral Review Panel, or sub-panels representative of the Doctoral Review Panel with relevant expertise, to consider the Independent Review and Progress Review forms in June each year.
- 7.26. Any documentation submitted after the May deadline will not be considered in June and will be subject to review when the DC is able to reconvene the Doctoral Review Panel, or a sub-panel, such that a review may take place.
- 7.27. Each student must satisfy the Doctoral Review Panel in the following:
  - Their Progress Review provides evidence of satisfactory progress during the preceding 12 months (or in the case of first year students, since their first registration) and that they have provided an appropriate plan for the forthcoming 12 months
- 7.28. Students who have been granted a probationary period will be notified in writing of an agreed programme of remedial work. They must submit their revisions or evidence of additional work (as stipulated in the agreed plan) within 3 months. The DC will arrange for these to be reviewed. The reviewers will consider whether the student has satisfied the criteria of the probation and may continue with their studies. Failure to submit required work can result in withdrawal of the student's registration.
- 7.29. At an appropriate phase of the programme of study, the panel may consider a student's progress is such that an application for 'writing-up' status at the next annual registration point for their award would be appropriate. This should be stated in the panel report (see Section 9 for details).
- 7.30. If there is no improvement in the student's performance after a period of probation and

serious concerns remain about their progress and/or there is a significant probability that the student will not be able to submit a thesis within the permitted registration period, a recommendation to withdraw the student's registration should be made to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee, for recommendation to Solent University. Where appropriate the student may be required to re-register for the MPhil award in lieu of withdrawal from their studies.

### ***Appealing an Annual Monitoring outcome***

- 7.31. A student who believes they have eligible grounds to appeal their Annual Monitoring outcome may make a formal appeal under the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (postgraduate research degree students) on the University College VLE.

## **8. Transfer**

### **Introduction**

#### ***Review timeframe***

- 8.1. Students registered for the MPhil/PhD route are expected to Transfer from MPhil registration to PhD, normally between 12-18 months for full-time study (24-36 months for part-time study).
- 8.2. Students who have registered for the PhD by Prior Publication route will not be required to Transfer. Students who have registered for an MPhil only can elect to apply to transfer to PhD in the same timeframe as those students registered on the MPhil/PhD.
- 8.3. In the event of an unsatisfactory Transfer submission, a full-time postgraduate research student may be offered a 3 month period (6 month part-time) in which to amend the report in the light of feedback from the Doctoral Transfer Panel. If the transfer document(s) remain unsatisfactory, the Doctoral Transfer Panel will either recommend the student remain registered for an MPhil (which may result in a reduction to their registration period (see Section 5 Registration and change of circumstances), or that the student be withdrawn from their studies.
- 8.4. Failure to submit an application within 18 months of the commencement of full-time study, or part-time equivalent (36 months), may result in a recommendation that the student remain registered for an MPhil or that the registration be withdrawn.

8.5.

<b>MPhil/PhD</b>	<b>Transfer window for registration for PhD</b>	<b>Probationary period</b>
Full-time	12-18 months	3 months
Part-time	24-36 months	6 months

- 8.6. A student who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply in writing to the Chair of the AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee for their registration to revert to MPhil (see Section 5).

### **Context of review**

- 8.7. The transfer process is a key milestone and an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and reflect on the remaining body of work that needs to be done before submitting a thesis. It is also one of the occasions when students get careful feedback from experienced academics who are not directly involved in their project. Experience shows that meticulous preparation for the transfer process can substantially increase the likelihood of timely and successful completion of a PhD thesis.



- 8.8. Students should seek supervisors' guidance and advice in a timely manner about appropriate timing and preparation for the transfer. Students should agree a schedule of meetings with their supervisory team to discuss transfer, and factor into their preparation
- sufficient time for their supervisory team to read and comment on the draft(s),
  - time to think about the supervisory team's comments and respond before the deadline for submission,
  - time to obtain the necessary signatures to support their application.

## **The transfer process**

### **Submitting the Transfer Form and Associated Documents**

- 8.9. In support of the transfer application, the student shall be required to submit evidence in the form of:
- a) a full transfer report, plus other material subject to the nature of their research,
  - b) a Turnitin similarity report and
  - c) the completed Transfer form
- 8.10. They will also be required to attend a viva examination at which they must successfully demonstrate the work has the potential to meet the learning outcomes for the doctoral award.
- 8.11. The student must submit their transfer report to Turnitin, complete the Transfer form, and then forward all the above documentation to their supervisory team for their DoS or co-supervisor to confirm that they have checked and are satisfied with the Turnitin report and to complete part D of the transfer form, The supervision team must identify and make the initial contact to confirm the assessors for the Transfer. Each assessor must be contacted independently to avoid conflicts of interest.
- 8.12. When all the above actions have been completed, all documentation .i.e. the full transfer report, the Turnitin similarity report and the Transfer form, should be forwarded by the DoS to AECC University College Registry. Registry will record the submission and forward it to the DC who will convene a Transfer Panel (see below)
- 8.13. If any part of the documentation is incomplete when it is submitted, AECC University College Registry will return it to the student for revision.

### **Submitting to Turnitin**

- 8.14. Student should allow up to 24 hours for the Turnitin similarity report to generate.
- 8.15. Students must download the similarity report and forward it to their DoS or co-supervisor for review.
- 8.16. Submission to Turnitin does NOT result in submission of the transfer report to Registry.

### **The Transfer form**

- 8.17. When completing the Transfer form, postgraduate research students are asked to take particular care not to alter the layout of the form or delete sections.
- 8.18. In any section of the form where there is no applicable information, students should indicate 'n/a' (e.g. if there are no collaborating establishments).
- 8.19. Students must complete sections A, B and C. The DoS (or a co-supervisor) must complete section D.

### **The transfer report**

- 8.20. A typical thesis based study should require a full transfer report of circa 10,000 – 20,000 words.

- 8.21. A full transfer report would normally take the form of a coherent document in the style of a thesis that includes the following chapters:
- An introduction that sets out the contextual rationale to the work, and an appropriate set of aims and objectives;
  - A critical literature review that provides a comprehensive contextualisation of the research and demonstrates that by satisfying the aims of the project, an appropriate original contribution to knowledge will be achieved;
  - A research methodology that demonstrates how the methods selected will achieve the desired aims and objectives and fully justifies the approach taken;
  - A presentation and consideration of any findings to date, demonstrating how the final results of the project will satisfy the requirements of the research in addressing the project's aims; the purpose of the chapter is not to attempt to answer the research question but to demonstrate that the research question can be answered;
  - An outline of the subsequent steps necessary to complete the research, including a timetable of completion of the thesis from the date of initial registration; and a chapter-by-chapter outline of the final thesis.
- 8.22. Students should give reference to any work mentioned, or referred to, in their proposed plan of work using the APA 7 system. For information please consult Library and Learning Services.
- 8.23. Failure to observe referencing conventions at this level of study is considered a very serious breach of academic and research integrity and this is reflected in the investigation of any reported case of academic misconduct by a postgraduate research student.

## **The transfer panel review**

### ***The panel meeting***

- 8.24. It is the DC's' responsibility to complete the following actions:
- Arrange a transfer viva examination, appointing an independent chair and contacting the two assessors provided by the supervisory team. The assessors will not be members of the student's supervisory team and will normally be internal to the University College. An external assessor may be appointed, if approved by the DC. .
  - Ensure the report by the Transfer Panel assessors (Part E of the Transfer form, is complete, has all relevant signatures.
  - When a final transfer outcome, including any amendments, have been reviewed and agreed by the panel, the completed Transfer form is submitted to AECC University College Registry, to be forwarded to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee for consideration and recommendation to Solent University for approval.
- 8.25. At the Transfer Panel the student will normally open with a short presentation, which will be followed by questions and answers, and informal discussion.
- 8.26. The student may request one of their supervisory team members to be present at the panel meeting as an observer, but the supervisor will not take part in the discussion. A student must confirm in writing to AECC University College Registry if they are requesting to have a supervisor present. Registry will advise the DC and issue the invitation to the named supervisor.
- 8.27. The Panel should give the student informal, verbal feedback at the end of the review meeting. Written notification of the outcome will be forwarded to the student following approval of the decision by Solent University.

### ***Transfer panel assessment criteria***

- 8.28. In reviewing the transfer documents and the student's viva voce performance, the Transfer

- Panel must be convinced of the following:
- a. That the Panel have received sufficiently detailed material to ascertain;
    - i. If progress to date has been satisfactory, and if there is a feasible and realistic plan of work to ensure that the project will be completed within the standard registration period (*3 years full-time, 6 years part-time*)?
    - ii. What methods have been used, how they have been deployed and the rationale for their use?
    - iii. What findings have emerged or are expected to emerge?
    - iv. That the project, as it has developed, is going to deliver an original contribution to knowledge (which is what distinguishes the PhD from an MPhil)?
  - b. That the style and presentation of the transfer report represents the qualities of PhD level work;
    - i. Can the postgraduate research student write clearly and in a manner appropriate for an advanced piece of academic writing?
    - ii. Are concepts, theories and relevant methodological issues confidently and accurately handled?
    - iii. Is data presented in ways that comply with academic conventions, and does the candidate understand how to interpret these data and know their limitations?
    - iv. Can the postgraduate research student distinguish clearly between explanations, interpretation and speculation in the discussion of findings and the inferences to be drawn from them?

### ***Transfer panel report***

- 8.29. The Transfer Panel will complete a report in section E of the Transfer form, which the independent chair will submit to the DC, copied to AECC University College Registry. The report will:
- a. assess the student's transfer outcome against the above criteria,
  - b. clearly acknowledge the strengths of the project, as well as identify any areas of weakness or limitation, and where possible provide constructive suggestions for addressing these,
  - c. provide an explicit recommendation for one of the four possible outcomes (listed in Transfer Panel outcomes below), and
  - d. in cases where the recommendation is for amendment and resubmission, state clearly what issues need to be addressed and how this will be achieved. The Transfer Panel should ensure that any recommendation for probation also nominates the Panel member(s) who will review the resubmitted documents, or state if the Transfer Panel should be reconvened on resubmission,
  - e. In cases where the recommendation is for approval, the Transfer Panel may give consideration to stating whether the student is likely to be in a position to make an application for 'writing-up' status at the next annual registration point for their award.

### ***Transfer Panel outcomes***

- 8.30. The Transfer Panel can decide one of the following outcomes:
- a. Transfer to PhD is approved
  - b. The Transfer report is subject to amendment and resubmission within 3 months (full-time) or 6 months (part-time) to the satisfaction of the Transfer Panel
  - c. Registration to remain as MPhil (NB: this will result in an amended final submission deadline)
  - d. Registration withdrawn
- 8.31. Students will receive formal notification of the outcome in writing as soon as possible after the transfer after the above processes have been completed and formal approval is confirmed.
- 8.32. In the event that the student requires further guidance on the panel outcome, they should contact the DC in the first instance.

- 8.33. Students can also seek informal feedback from the DC and / or from the supervisor they invited to be present where appropriate.
- 8.34. If the student has submitted revisions for outcome b), and the panel reviewer(s) conclude that the transfer report remains unsatisfactory, they will normally recommend to the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee that the student's registration be retained at MPhil or, that the registration be withdrawn. If endorsed the recommendation will be submitted to Solent University for approval.
- 8.35. A student who believes they have eligible grounds to appeal their Transfer outcome may make a formal appeal under the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (postgraduate research degree students) available from the University College VLE.

## 9. Writing up

### Timing

#### *When is it time to start 'writing up'?*

- 9.1. 'Writing-up' normally follows the phase of research where the bulk of the data collection / experimental work and analysis has been undertaken. Substantial drafts of sections of the thesis will normally already be in place.
- 9.2. 'Writing-up' will be completed in one year or less by full-time students and in two years or less by part-time students.
- 9.3. Students should apply to transfer to a reduced 'writing-up fee' before the beginning of their final year (or final two years if a part-time student) of standard registration when they are, or expect shortly to be, in the position described at point 1 above.
- 9.4. As outlined in Sections 7 and 8, the Annual Monitoring or Transfer Panel may be appropriate points to consider when to transition to 'writing-up fee' status depending on the progress of the student to that point. A panel may make a recommendation that the student and supervisory team consider making the application at the next registration point, or offer a projection of at which future annual registration point an application may be appropriate.
- 9.5. The postgraduate research student and their supervisory team will discuss the decision, as supervisory approval of the application for 'writing up fee' status is required. The student's supervisory team must review the student's progress after Transfer is successfully completed prior to each annual re-registration point and when appropriate approve the student's application for 'writing-up fee' status.
- 9.6. Students wishing to make an application for 'writing-up fee' status should consult with their supervisory team well in advance of their next annual registration point in order that supervisory approval can be obtained in time to have the fee applied (see Section 6). An application for 'writing up fee' status should be submitted to AECC University College Registry at least 2 months before the annual registration date.
- 9.7. For further information on the duration and processes of applying for 'writing-up fee' status see Section 6.

#### **Eligibility for 'writing-up fees'**

- 9.8. Students must have completed Transfer before they are eligible to apply for 'writing-up' status. Full-time students who have successfully transferred may apply after a minimum of 12 months registration. Part-time students who have successfully transferred may apply after a minimum of 36 months registration (see also Section 6).

#### **What is 'Writing-up'?**

- 9.9. 'Writing-up' generally applies to the writing, refining and editing of final drafts preparatory to

submitting the completed thesis for assessment. Preparation for submitting the thesis is an important phase of the programme of study and there are a number of key steps to the preparation that should be factored in to a timetable for completion between the student and the supervisory team to ensure everything progresses smoothly at this stage.

- 9.10. In addition, sufficient time in advance of the submission of the final thesis should be allowed for the following:
- a. Nomination of examiners (see Section 10);
  - b. Comments and feedback from the supervision team on the whole draft thesis;
  - c. Proof-reading the final thesis for typographical, grammatical and formatting errors
  - d. Agreement on the final title of the thesis; and
  - e. If required arrange for copies of the thesis to be printed and set in temporary bindings for submission to AECC University College Registry. (see Section 10).

### **Thesis submission after the ‘writing up’ period has expired**

- 9.11. If a student has not submitted their thesis for final examination within the ‘writing-up fee’ period appropriate to their mode of study (full-time / part-time) they will no longer be eligible for a reduced fee. Subject to being eligible to continue their registration within the maximum registration period for their mode of study they must resume payment of the full annual fee at that point (see Section 6).
- 9.12. Students who are not ready to submit their thesis at the end of their ‘writing-up’ period may continue to register at the full annual fee until they have reached the end of their maximum registration period.

## **10. Thesis submission and examination (viva)**

### **General introduction**

- 10.13. The submission of a thesis for examination is at the sole discretion of the student, subject to satisfying the conditions of eligibility required by the regulations for postgraduate research students.
- 10.14. While a student would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of their supervisors, it is their right to do so. Equally, students should not assume that a supervisor’s agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.
- 10.15. A student must ensure that the thesis is submitted to AECC University College Registry before the expiry of their registration period. Students with exceptional circumstances must complete an application to extend this period prior to the expiry of their registration period (see Section 5).

### **Pre-Submission**

- 10.16. The writing, preparing and submitting of the thesis within the permitted registration period is the student’s responsibility.
- 10.17. The thesis must be the student’s own work and in their own words except for quotations from published and unpublished sources which must be clearly identified and acknowledged using the APA7 referencing system.
- 10.18. There are copies of successful theses available through Solent University. In preparation for the final version of the thesis, students might find it useful to look at other theses to guide them in achieving the required standard.
- 10.19. Exceptionally, a student who has completed the transfer stage and is registered for the PhD may request in writing, at the time of submitting their PhD thesis, that the thesis be considered for MPhil.

## **Research Degree Examination Arrangements**

- 10.20. The predicted date of submission must be stated on the Research Degree Examination Arrangements form (submitted six months in advance of thesis submission. This date cannot exceed the maximum registration period. Students should notify AECC University College Registry as soon as possible if their expected submission date will be subject to change.
- 10.21. At least six months before a student expects to have completed their thesis for submission for examination they should discuss with their supervisory team their predicted thesis submission date and who might be appropriate to invite to act as external examiner(s).
- 10.22. The supervisory team are responsible for completing the Research Degree Examination Arrangements form. This is the formal notification of the date on which the candidate intends to submit the thesis for examination and includes the nomination of examiners and the independent chair.

## **Nomination of examiners**

- 10.23. It is important to begin discussions of potential external examiners early, as confirmation of the examination panel takes some time and having the arrangements in place prior to submission of the thesis will ensure that a student's viva can take place within reasonable time of the thesis submission.
- 10.24. The DoS/supervisory team must complete the Research Degree Examination Arrangements form parts A, B and C and must include CVs of the proposed examiners including details of their PhD examination and supervision experience and recent relevant research and publications. The form must be sent to AECC University College Registry for onward transmission for consideration/approval.
- 10.25. Arrangements for the nomination and approval of internal and external examiners are set out in the Regulations (Appendix 1).

## **Submission of thesis**

- 10.26. Submission must include the following actions:
- a. The thesis must be submitted electronically to Turnitin and the Turnitin similarity report must be generated.
  - b. The full thesis, the Turnitin similarity report and the Thesis Submission – Candidate Declaration form must all be submitted by the student to AECC University College Registry
  - c. The thesis must be presented electronically. The student may also subsequently be required to provide two hard copies, with the format and temporary binding following the guidance below, to AECC University College Registry.
- 10.27. Enquiries about the format, binding or number of copies should be made to AECC University College Registry in good time.

## **Submitting to Turnitin**

- 10.28. Students should allow up to 24 hours for the Turnitin similarity report to generate.
- 10.29. Students must download the similarity report and include it with their submission to AECC University College Registry.
- 10.30. Submission to Turnitin does NOT result in submission of the transfer report to AECC University College Registry.

## **Thesis Submission –Declaration form**

- 10.31. Postgraduate research students must complete parts A to I of the Thesis Submission –

Declaration form. This includes;

- a. Identification of any aspects of the thesis which have previously been published, or
- b. Where published work has been jointly authored with others, which parts of the work(s) are the student's responsibility;
- c. Any aspects of the thesis which have already been submitted for a degree or comparable award; and
- d. A declaration of research integrity

### **Thesis format**

- 10.32. All the following requirements must be adhered to in the format of the thesis.
- 10.33. The thesis must be presented in English.
- 10.34. The thesis must be presented in a permanent and legible form in typescript. The size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall not be less than 2.0mm for capitals and 1.5mm for X-height (that is, the height of a lower-case x)
- 10.35. Where a hard copy is required the printed version must be single sided. The margin at the left-hand binding edge of the page must be no less than 40mm; other margins must not be less than 15mm.
- 10.36. Double or one-and-a-half spacing must be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes, where single spacing may be used.
- 10.37. Pages must be numbered consecutively through the main text, including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages.
- 10.38. The thesis must normally be in A4 format; permission may be granted for submission in another format where it is clear that the contents of the thesis may be better expressed in that format; a postgraduate research student using a format larger than A4 should note that the production of microfiche copies and full-size enlargement may not be feasible.
- 10.39. The title page must give the following information:
  - a) The full title of the thesis
  - b) The full name of the author
  - c) That the degree is awarded by Solent University
  - d) The award for which the thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Solent University
  - e) That the student was enrolled for study at AECC University College
  - f) The collaborating establishments (if any), and
  - g) The month and year of submission
- 10.40. A specimen title page is provided below:

The origins of the Farmers' Co-operative in Wessex

John Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

of Solent University for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

while enrolled under a validated partnership with AECC  
University College

*If appropriate:* This research programme was carried out in collaboration with the Borchester  
Farmer's Club

- 10.41. An abstract of approximately 300 words must be included in the thesis, and should provide a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated.
- 10.42. The abstract should also be copied electronically to AECC University College Registry when the electronic version of the thesis is submitted.
- 10.43. The thesis must include a copyright statement, immediately following the title page in the following form:
- a) 'This work is the intellectual property of [the author]. You may copy up to 5% of this work for private study, or personal, non- commercial research. Any re-use of the information contained within this document should be fully referenced, quoting the author, title, university degree level and pagination. Queries or requests for any other use, or if a more substantial copy is required, should be directed to the owner(s) of the Intellectual Property Rights'.
  - b) Note: If there are other owners of the IP they must also be named here.
- 10.44. The finished thesis must include a statement of the student's objectives and must acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and any assistance received.
- 10.45. When a student's research is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis must indicate clearly the postgraduate research student's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
- 10.46. The student is free to publish material in advance of the thesis, but reference must be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of the published material should be included with the thesis.
- 10.47. The length of the thesis should not normally exceed the following:
- |    |       |              |
|----|-------|--------------|
| a) | PhD   | 80,000 words |
| b) | MPhil | 40,000 words |
- 10.48. Where the submission includes material in other than textual form, the written thesis should normally be within the range:
- a. PhD 30,000 – 40,000 words
  - b. MPhil 15,000 – 20,000 words



- 10.49. Examiners will have regard to the candidate's fulfilment of Solent University's assessment criteria, where a thesis is submitted significantly under the maximums cited above.
- 10.50. For clarification the thesis word count includes:
- Quotations
  - Tables
  - Figures
  - Footnotes / endnotes

The thesis word count excludes:

- Appendices (if the content is appropriate to an appendix and not a continuation / extension to part or all of the thesis)
- Bibliography / reference list
- Abstract
- Acknowledgement / dedication
- The table of contents

### **Thesis binding**

- 10.51. If hard copies are required the thesis should be submitted in a temporary binding which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. A thesis submitted in a temporarily bound form should be in its final form in all respects save the binding.
- 10.52. Following successful examination the final thesis must be presented in a permanent electronic format before the degree may be awarded. In such cases, the student must confirm that the contents of the electronic thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except where amendments have been made to meet the requirements of the examiners.

### **The Viva**

- 10.53. There are two stages to the examination of MPhil and PhD theses. Firstly a preliminary assessment of the thesis by the examiners. Secondly its defence in an oral examination (viva examination) before a panel of examiners following the formal submission of the thesis for examination.
- 10.54. Normally the viva will take place 2 or 3 months after the thesis is submitted, making allowance for the examiners to have sufficient time to read and carefully consider the merits of the research.
- 10.55. A student will normally be examined orally on their thesis and on the field of study in which their research lies.
- 10.56. The viva will normally be held in the UK. In special cases, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee may give approval for the examination to take place abroad or online.

### **Before the viva**

- 10.57. As soon as submission of the final thesis is completed, AECC University College Registry will make arrangements for the viva and establish the availability of the previously approved examiners and independent chair.
- 10.58. AECC University College Registry will notify the student, supervisory team, independent chair and examiners of the date and location of the viva.
- 10.59. AECC University College Registry will send a copy of the thesis and the relevant regulations to each examiner, together with the Preliminary Examiner Report on a Thesis form and any appropriate guidance.

- 10.60. Each examiner must read and examine the thesis and submit the Preliminary Examiner Report to AECC University College Registry at least five working days before the viva is held.
- 10.61. In completing the Preliminary Examiner Report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the viva.
- 10.62. The Preliminary Examiner Report forms are to be completed independently and without formal or informal consultation between examiners, whether external or internal. An examiner having received the thesis and wishing to contact another examiner, the student or any member of the supervisory team should do so only via AECC University College Registry.
- 10.63. Once all Preliminary Examiner Reports have been received by AECC University College Registry, they will be circulated to the other examiners before the viva takes place.
- 10.64. A viva may be postponed if all AECC University College Preliminary Examiner Reports have not been submitted to AECC University College Registry in good time before a viva is due to take place. In these circumstances a new date must be arranged as soon as possible.
- 10.65. If an examiner has to withdraw from a viva they should notify AECC University College Registry as soon as possible in order that nomination of a new examiner can take place. The postgraduate research student should be kept informed of any changes to examination panels or to the date of the viva.
- 10.66. A postgraduate research student can request that one member of the supervisory team be present at the viva as an observer, but they may not take part. The student must give written authorisation to AECC University College Registry before an invitation will be issued to the named supervisor. It is entirely the student's choice whether to invite a supervisor to be present.

### **Conduct of the viva**

- 10.67. Where a student is ill and cannot attend the viva, they must notify the University College, providing documentary evidence, and the University College will reschedule the examination.
- 10.68. Where for reasons of disability or comparable valid cause the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo a viva, an alternative form of examination may be recommended to Solent University for approval. Such approval must not be given because a student's knowledge of English is inadequate.
- 10.69. Where evidence of academic misconduct in the preparation of the thesis or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee will consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners and relevant colleagues at Solent University and take appropriate action.
- 10.70. The viva will be conducted by the examiners and will be chaired by an independent staff member of the University College or Solent University.
- 10.71. Recording of the viva will not normally be permitted.
- 10.72. Examiners may elect to indicate informally their decision on the result of the examination to the student, but they must make it clear that the formal notification of the outcome will be communicated by AECC University College Registry following processing of the relevant Examiner Decision form and approval by Solent University.

### **The independent chair**

- 10.73. The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the viva is conducted with due regard to fair play and in compliance with the regulations for postgraduate research students.

10.74. The role of the independent chair is set out in the Regulations (Appendix 1).

### **The Viva outcomes**

10.75. Outcomes from the viva examination are as set out in the Regulations (Appendix1).

### **Completion**

10.76. Completion is the term used to describe a successful thesis following submission, examination and any amendments which have been made to the satisfaction of the examiners, and following formal approval of the outcome by Solent University.

10.77. The degree is awarded by Solent University.

10.78. Conferment of the award is conditional on receipt by the Solent University Graduate School Officer of all of the following.

- a) A PDF version of the thesis for deposit in Solent University's and AECC University College's institutional repository.
- b) A completed and signed British Library registration form, permitting full participation in the UK thesis service; and
- c) A signed draft certificate, including the wording of the thesis title, agreed by the candidate and the Chair of the RDC

10.79. Following the award of the degree, the Solent University Library, on behalf of the Graduate School Officer will:

- a) Send a copy of the title page, abstract and a list of contents to the British Library in accordance with the arrangements for participation in the UK thesis service; and
- b) Upload the PDF version of the thesis to Pure, Solent University's repository. Library and Learning Services at AECC University College will arrange for a copy to be uploaded to the University College's repository

10.80. Where a postgraduate research student has previously had an application approved for the thesis to remain confidential for a period after completion of the work (see Section 4), the thesis will be embargoed on Pure and the University College's repository for the approved period, and will only be made available to those who were directly involved in the project.

## **11. Misconduct, appeals and complaints**

### **Academic and research misconduct**

11.1. AECC University College and Solent University are committed to helping and supporting students to understand the expectations associated with academic writing and provides advice, guidance and self-help material, so that students can fully understand what is considered unacceptable behaviour. Postgraduate research students are expected, with the support provided by the University College, to make themselves fully aware of what constitutes good academic conduct and consequently what academic misconduct entails.

11.2. In order to protect the standard and integrity of its awards, the University College will identify any incidence that meets the definition of academic misconduct and will bring this to the attention of the student. The University College would consider any incidence of academic misconduct at the level of a postgraduate research degree as very serious. Where proven, the University will impose an academic penalty under the University College's Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy and procedure available on the VLE.

11.3. As stated above, there is an expectation at this level of study that postgraduate research students should know what constitutes misconduct in research. Failure to observe referencing conventions and other aspects of good research practice is considered a very serious breach of research integrity at this level of study. This is reflected in the penalties applied by the University College to any case of academic misconduct by a postgraduate

research student which is upheld after investigation.

- 11.4. Students should refer to the University College Academic Integrity and Academic misconduct policy on the VLE, which includes a non-exhaustive list of behaviors or actions that may constitute academic misconduct activities (including misconduct in research).
- 11.5. Postgraduate research students who fail to obtain all relevant permissions to conduct their research will be considered in breach of the University College's ethical approval procedure.
- 11.6. Postgraduate research students who suspect misconduct should report it through [reporting@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:reporting@aecc.ac.uk).
- 11.7. Postgraduate research students should recognise that good practice in research/good academic practice includes reporting concerns about the conduct of research and should co-operate with any investigation of misconduct in research when requested.

### **Appeals procedure**

- 11.8. A postgraduate student may make a formal appeal to have the following academic decisions reconsidered under this policy:
  - a. A decision to withdraw a student through lack of academic progress and / or failure to engage,
  - b. A decision to suspend a student due to ill-health
  - c. The outcomes of an assessment, including viva examination, transfer panel and annual monitoring review
- 11.9. Postgraduate research students should refer to the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (postgraduate research degree students) available on the AECC University College VLE.
- 11.10. At the Review stage students may make an appeal to Solent University.

### **Complaints**

- 11.11. Where a student is dissatisfied with their learning experience or with the services provided by the University College they may follow the University College's Complaints Policy and Procedure available on the VLE

## **12. Students Sponsored by AECC University College under the Student visa Route**

### **Introduction**

- 12.1. All students seeking advice relating to visa and immigration should contact the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager.
- 12.2. Support from the University College for a visa application does not guarantee the approval of a visa application from the Home Office.
- 12.3. The University College, as a Sponsor of international students, has certain responsibilities and rules which it is required to follow by the Home Office.

### **Admission**

- 12.4. Upon acceptance of an offer to study, students requiring sponsorship form a visa to study in the UK are asked to pay a deposit of **£3,000** before the Admissions Team can raise a CAS number (Confirmation of Acceptance to Study). A CAS is confirmation the University College is supporting a student's visa application and a mandatory requirement for student visa applications.
- 12.5. Copies of all original documentation are required before raising a CAS; the original documents will need to be verified at registration. Once all documentation has been received

raising a CAS number can take up to three working days.

- 12.6. Students must meet with the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager at the start of their course to complete their registration. Failure to do so will result in sponsorship being withdrawn and the visa cancelled.
- 12.7. Students may register and commence their studies with the University College whilst their visa application is pending with the Home Office (if the visa application was made in the UK and prior to their previous visa expiring). However, they must show evidence that they have a current application with the Home Office and sign the 'Sponsored student visa disclaimer form' when they enrol.
- 12.8. If a student's visa application is later refused by the Home Office, their registration at the University is terminated immediately.

### **Changes to registration status**

- 12.9. The University College informs the Home Office of all Sponsored students who suspend their studies or who are withdrawn. . Students with an illness exceeding a consistent six week period would be required to suspend their registration.

### **Contact details**

- 12.10. The University College is required to hold up to date contact details for Sponsored students. If a student's contact details change (address, phone number, email), they must inform AECC University College Registry.

### **Attendance monitoring**

- 12.11. The University College is required to monitor the attendance of students it has sponsored under the student visa route, as set out in the University College's Sponsored Student Academic Engagement Monitoring Policy and Procedures, available on the VLE. This policy is in place to ensure that the University College is compliant with its duties as a Student sponsor, including providing accurate information to the Home Office.
- 12.12. In alignment with this requirement the following are defined as contact points
  - Enrolment for new students and annual registration
  - Completion of the PG Cert component of PhD
  - Supervisor meetings
  - Hand-in deadlines
  - Attendance at transfer viva
- 12.13. Students and supervisors are required to keep a written record of all their supervisory meetings and must be able to show such records to Registry on request and at each Annual Monitoring point.
- 12.14. Should a student fail to attend meetings with their supervisor or to engage with their studies, and fail to demonstrate a substantial and immediate increased level of engagement, measured through the above-mentioned contact points, Registry will notify the Home Office of this and sponsorship will be withdrawn through the SMS system.
- 12.15. Outside University closure periods, Postgraduate Research students should discuss any leave requirements with their supervisory team.

### **Visa extensions**

- 12.16. Students who need to apply to extend their student visa should seek advice from the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 12.17. A student may need to apply to extend their visa to complete their course, for example once the outcome of their viva examination is known. Please note, the University College is only able to

continue/extend Sponsorship if a student's continued participation is required on the course e.g., the student is required to maintain contact with their supervisor (as per Section 11).

- 12.18. The University College calculates end of registration dates on CAS applications by the thesis submission date plus three months to take into account time for the viva examination.
- 12.19. If student foresee a problem in submitting their thesis within the maximum registration period for their mode of study, in addition to seeking advice from their supervisory team, they should contact the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager, .to seek advice immediately with regards to the implications this will have on their visa.
  - a. Students awarded an MPhil are not permitted to extend their Student visa
  - b. Students failing without the right to resubmit are not permitted to extend their student visa

### **Working during studies**

- 12.20. Most Sponsored students have immigration permission which allows them to work during their studies. However, the hours and type of work can do are restricted, e.g., maximum 20 hours per week during term time, as specified on the BRP card. Please note, research students are only outside of term time when periods of leave, as per para 14 have been granted.
- 12.21. Sponsored students are not permitted to be self-employed or engaged in Business Activity, which includes, setting up a business, being employed for a company in which you hold shares of 10% or more or holding a statutory role, such as a director.

### **Doctorate extension scheme (des)**

- 12.22. The Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) is designed to allow students who have almost finished their PhD to apply for an additional 12 months of Student Visa permission, enabling them to look for employment, set up a business or start work in the UK.
- 12.23. Please note, students have a short window to apply for a DES visa and the timing of the application is important. Students who are interested in the scheme should contact the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager at least two-months prior to their viva examination to arrange a meeting to start preparing documents and discuss the timing of their visa application.
- 12.24. For more information and eligibility students should contact the University College Admissions and Immigration Compliance Manager.

## **13. PhD by prior publication**

### **Introduction**

- 13.1. This section provides potential applicants, students, and staff involved with the application and programme of study with details of the arrangements for the award of PhD by Prior Publication and should be read in conjunction with the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students.
- 13.2. The University does not award PhDs by Publication.
- 13.3. The PhD by Prior Publication allow people who have not followed the traditional academic route towards a PhD to obtain academic recognition for having undertaken and produced original research, and developed their research skills and subject knowledge to a doctoral level. This may include people entering higher education in mid-career, especially in practice-based disciplines.
- 13.4. The PhD by Prior Publication differs from the 'traditional' PhD in that it is based upon research already undertaken before registration for the degree that has led to a number of coherent publications or a body of publicly available non-textual/creative outputs.

'Traditional' PhD students undertake training in research methodology and research practice as part of their programme of study, while the PhD by Prior Publication student will have undertaken this training and academic development prior to coming to the University College or have developed these skills alongside their professional role at the University College and have demonstrated these through their research publications/outputs. The research skills obtained are therefore recognised and evaluated in retrospect and would be expected to be at the level equivalent of a 'traditional' PhD route at the 'writing-up' stage at the point of admission to the PhD by Prior Publication.

### **General information**

- 13.5. Only applications which are complete by the published annual application deadline will be considered for registration at the next entry date. Annually there is one entry date in October. Applications which are incomplete at the application deadline may be considered for the next available entry point once they are completed.
- 13.6. Applicants may defer entry once accepted to the next entry point. Applicants may defer for up to 12 months, but must do this in the knowledge that the University College may not be in a position to offer a place to study at a later stage, or may amend the previously proposed supervision arrangements.
- 13.7. A key part of the application review process is to determine whether the University College is able to offer appropriate supervisory expertise. The non-availability of expert supervision is an acceptable reason for rejecting an application, however eligible the applicant is in other respects.
- 13.8. The University College does not accept applications that present any part of a thesis by Prior Publication in a language other than English

### **PhD by prior publication eligibility**

#### ***The application***

- 13.9. Applications are made using the same process as that for the 'traditional' PhD except as outlined below.
- 13.10. The applicant should, following their application, submit for consideration at the prima facie stage no less than four and no more than six substantial published works (published texts or outputs) published within the past five years, which taken together comprise in quantity and quality the greater part of the word length of a PhD as outlined in Section 10 and which must be in the public domain prior to registration on the award.
- 13.11. Examples of materials acceptable for publication submission include but are not limited to:
  - Refereed articles in journals
  - Monographs
  - Chapters in books
  - Chapters in conference proceedings with an ISSN
  - Books
- 13.12. The degree will be awarded on the basis of the materials and submitted publications as described below and defined and formally recognised by the appropriate subject and disciplinary area.

#### **Entry criteria: Prima facie stage**

- 13.13. The award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Prior Publication shall be open to applicants who are members of AECC University College staff who have completed their probationary period of employment and who can demonstrate a record of publication or other public outputs of research of appropriate quantity and quality and who do not already hold a doctoral degree in the same or cognate discipline or area of research.

- 13.14. The body of research outputs must:
- a. Demonstrate a quantity, quality and level of research equivalent to that of a 'traditional' PhD student who has reached the beginning of the 'writing-up' stage.
  - b. Be at least equal to the length of a standard PhD thesis (see Section 10).
  - c. Provide evidence of the acquisition and utilisation of research skills equivalent to those of a 'traditional' PhD student who has reached the beginning of the 'writing-up' stage.
- 13.15. Prior to registering for a PhD by Prior Publication, applicants will be required to undergo a preliminary evaluation. This initial prima facie stage accompanies the interview element of admission, with the objective of enabling the University College to make a preliminary judgement as to the quality and coherence of the publications that form the basis of the application, the likelihood of a submission which will meet the criteria for an award, and the ability of the relevant research area within the University College to provide appropriate supervision and resources.
- 13.16. The prima facie evaluation will be undertaken by the DC or a nominated representative and a senior academic from a field relevant to the proposal. The evaluation may result in one of the following recommendations:
- a. That there is a prima facie case for admission to the degree of PhD by Prior Publication
  - b. That there is no prima facie case for admission to the degree of PhD by Prior Publication at this stage, but the applicant should consider making a new application after further publication or revisions have been made
  - c. That there is no prima facie case for admission to the degree of PhD by Prior Publication
- 13.17. By recommending that there is a prima facie case for admission, the panel are confirming that there is evidence that the applicant:
- o Meets the entry criteria
  - o Has a substantial body of work and skills that can be considered to be the equivalent of a 'traditional' PhD at the beginning of the 'writing-up' stage
  - o Is likely to meet the required standard for a PhD
  - o Includes evidence of a unifying theme across the publications
  - o Includes evidence of originality
  - o Includes evidence of research skills equivalent to those expected of a 'traditional' PhD student in the relevant discipline
  - o Has proposed a suitable PhD title
  - o That there is a suitable supervisor available
- 13.18. In the event of any issues arising regarding the eligibility, the proposal should be referred initially to the Doctoral Review Panel.
- 13.19. Following the prima facie and interview element of the admission process the DC will make arrangements to confirm the supervisory provision.
- 13.20. Applications for registration for a PhD by Prior Publication must be approved by the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent RDC.

## **Registration**

- 13.21. Applicants accepting an offer to submit for a PhD by Prior Publication must follow the registration and induction process outlined in Section 4.
- 13.22. Students registered for the PhD by Prior Publication will not be required to undertake the Transfer milestone of the 'traditional' PhD, but will be expected to engage in the Annual Monitoring processes outlined in Section 8.
- 13.23. Registration for PhD by Prior Publication will be on a part-time basis only and will be subject to a minimum registration period of 6 months with an expected submission for examination



within 12 months of registration (see Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degree Students).

- 13.24. No less than two months' notice of intention to submit for examination should be given. The student and supervisor must agree an intended submission date and the supervisor should submit this information along with the nomination of examiners on the Research Degree Examination Arrangements form (see Section 10).

### **Tuition fees**

- 13.25. The PhD by Prior Publication shall be subject to the University College's reduced annual 'writing-up' fee. Staff seeking the fee from their School must obtain authorisation from the Head of School prior to registration.
- 13.26. Candidates for the PhD by Prior Publication who do not submit within the 12 months registration period will be liable for the full annual part-time fee during any period of approved extension.

### **The role of the supervisor**

#### ***Doctoral Review Panel***

- 13.27. The nominated DoS will act in a similar role to that of a supervisor of a 'traditional' PhD project, but with more emphasis on being a mentor to the student. There will normally be no co-supervisors. They will act as a source of support and guidance during the preparation of the research material for examination and for administration of the annual monitoring, examination and other internal processes.
- 13.28. The DoS will be a permanent member of staff with experience of supervising at least one doctoral student to successful completion, or part of a supervisory team that includes a member of a staff with a completion at doctoral level.
- 13.29. The DoS will:
- a) Guide the student in the final selection of publications for inclusion in the submission;
  - b) Support and advise on the development of the framing document/ introductory section;
  - c) Guide the student in relation to the coherence of the body of work to be submitted;
  - d) Advise the student in relation to any research training requirement,
  - e) Make arrangements for the examination, including nomination of examiners, in discussion with the student; and
  - f) Support the student through the examination process and any required amendments following examination

### **Requirements of the degree**

#### ***The form of the examination***

- 13.30. The submission consists of two parts
- a. A substantial body of published work (published texts or outputs)
    - i. The number of publications will depend on the disciplinary area and type of publication but will typically be no less than four and no more than six publications
    - ii. Such publications may include academic journal articles, chapters, monographs, scholarly editions of a text, published reports, creative works in relevant areas, or other artefacts
    - iii. Where the student is not the first author in co-authored publications and there is no published statement as to the contribution of each author, the extent of their contribution must be certified by the co-author(s)
    - iv. Publications included in the submission for the PhD by Prior Publication should not have been used in the submission for another degree
    - v. Publications should demonstrate that the quality, extent and level of research undertaken is at least equivalent to that expected of a 'traditional' PhD student

who has reached the end of the 'writing-up' stage

- b. A framing document / introductory section demonstrating that the published works contain unifying themes and comprise a coherent body of academic work that meets the requirements of the award of PhD. This component should:
  - i. Set the published works in the context of existing literature and evaluate the contribution that the research makes to the advancement of the chosen subject or professional area
  - ii. Stress the coherence of the publications, linking them to the methodology adopted
  - iii. Demonstrate the acquisition and utilisation of appropriate research skills equivalent to those of a 'traditional' PhD student who has reached the end of the 'writing-up' stage
  - iv. Include a section relating to the student's methodology. This is particularly relevant if detail regarding methodology is not included in the publications. The PhD is about rigour of research process as well as originality of the outcomes
  - v. In cases where the works are jointly authored by the student and other persons (see above), this section should also describe the roles played by these authors, and contain percentage estimates of the student's input into each jointly authored work
  - vi. Be approximately 10,000 words in length, exceptionally where the complexity or volume of work requires further analysis, a higher word count may be submitted up to a maximum of 20,000 words.

### **Examination procedures**

- 13.31. The regulations and procedures governing the examination of PhD theses also apply to the PhD by Prior Publication (see Section 10), except that the examiners' decisions are limited to the following:
- a. That the student be awarded the degree;
  - b. That the student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the framing document / introductory section within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
  - c. That the material submitted in the portfolio falls short of the requirements, and the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.

### **Guidance for examiners**

- 13.32. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students.
- 13.33. The examiners' main tasks may be interpreted as to:
- a) Evaluate the intellectual merit of the student's cited published works
  - b) Establish if a satisfactory case is made for coherence between publications
  - c) Assess the contribution to knowledge represented by the publications and made apparent in any critical appraisal in the framing document
  - d) Evaluate the rigour with which the student has contextualised and analysed their publications in any critical appraisal in the framing document
  - e) Evaluate the appropriateness of the methods employed in the research and the correctness of their application
  - f) Assess the student's contribution to the various phases of the research embodied in any multi-authored works
  - g) Establish the students 'ownership' of the published work and appreciation of the state of [historical and] current knowledge within the student's research area
  - h) Assess the student's research skills in terms of their potential as a continuing, independent researcher
- 13.34. The examiners should note that due to constraints imposed by publishers, published work may contain less detail than a 'traditional' thesis. There may be instances where the

evidence available to the examiner about the quality of the work and the raw data on which important conclusions are based is minimal or even absent. Whilst to some extent this should have been addressed in the framing document / introductory section, the oral examination should be used as an opportunity to question the student on how conclusions were reached.

### **Format of submission for examination**

13.35. The thesis should be presented for examination in the standard format outlined in Section 10.

### **Final submission: binding PhDs by Prior Publication**

13.36. The agreed final version of the research work should be presented according to the standard guidelines described in Section 10.

# **Regulations and Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students – AECC University College**

May 2022  
For September 2022

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1. These regulations are reviewed and updated each year and apply to each student in the current year of registration.
2. AECC University College has entered into an approved educational partnership with Solent University under which Solent University validates research degrees delivered through the University College. Solent University will award the degrees of MPhil and PhD to students who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research in accordance with these regulations.
3. Programmes of research at AECC University College may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirements that:-
  - a. The proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research.
  - b. The University College has the expertise and resources to adequately supervise the research; and
  - c. The completed submission is capable of being assessed by appropriate examiners.
4. The submission may be in the form of a final thesis or by published work, that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context.
5. All proposed research programmes will be considered for research degree registration on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
6. These regulations and individual programmes of research must take due regards of Solent University's and AECC University College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity scheme and policy.

## **2. GOVERNANCE**

7. The Educational partnership between Solent University and AECC University College is governed by a contract signed by both institutions that sets out the requirements, roles and responsibilities on both sides. This is accompanied by a Partnership handbook approved annually by the Chair / Deputy Chair of the Solent RDC.

## **3. QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS**

8. In alignment with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies students awarded a research degree should meet the level descriptors in full.
9. Students awarded a PhD will be able to demonstrate through a body of their work and viva (oral) examination:-
  - a. the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.
  - b. a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
  - c. the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
  - d. a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry in their discipline; and
  - e. informed judgement making on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and the ability to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

10. Students awarded an MPhil will be able to demonstrate through the a body of their work and viva (oral) examination:-
  - a. a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
  - b. a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
  - c. originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
  - d. conceptual understanding that enables the student:-
    - i. to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
    - ii. to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses; and
    - iii. sound decision-making dealing with complex issues both systematically and creatively in the absence of complete data and be able to communicate their conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

#### **4. CO-OPERATION**

11. The University College and Solent University encourage co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards. Such co-operation is intended to:-
  - a. encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
  - b. extend the student's own experience and perspectives of the work;
  - c. provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
  - d. be mutually beneficial; and
  - e. enable the student to become a member of a research community (where appropriate).
12. Co-operation with one or more bodies external to the University College may be formal or informal. Formal co-operation is known as collaboration and will normally require financial support for the project from the Collaborating Establishment and/or use by the student of its facilities and other resources, including supervision.
13. In such cases a formal letter from the Collaborating Establishment confirming the agreed arrangements should be submitted with the application, except where the collaboration is an integral part of the project. The name(s) of the Collaborating Establishment(s) will appear on the student's thesis and degree certificate.
14. Informal co-operation need not require financial support for the project but could allow the student access to facilities and resources. In both cases, however, it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies (DoS) to ensure that prior permission is obtained from the relevant persons at the chosen establishment(s) for the use of necessary facilities, resources and access before embarking on the research project. All such agreements must be reported to the relevant Doctoral Review Panel (hereafter DRP) as part of the application for project approval.

#### **5. ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION**

15. An individual may apply to be admitted to read for a research degree of:-
  - a. Master of Philosophy;
  - b. Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy;
  - c. Doctor of Philosophy by Prior Publication;
16. An applicant for admission to read for a research degree should hold:-
  - a. a first or upper second class honours degree of a UK University or a qualification which is regarded by NARIC<sup>4</sup>, the DRP, the Chair of AECC University College Research

Degree Sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University Research Degree Committee (RDC) as equivalent to such an honours degree; or

- b. a Masters degree of a UK University or a non UK qualification which is regarded by the DRP, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degree Sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC as equivalent to a Masters degree; or
- c. other qualifications, publications and/or appropriate professional training and experience, which the DRP, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degree Sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC considers equivalent to a or b above.

17. Permission to register directly for a Doctor of Philosophy award with advanced standing will only be considered where an applicant can demonstrate:-
  - a. they have achieved the equivalent of the MPhil transfer stage at another University; or
  - b. they have considerable research experience, including peer reviewed publications or public exhibitions/ performances and can provide evidence that following the MPhil/PhD route will be disadvantageous.

### **English Language Qualification**

18. For applicants whose first language is not English it is necessary to demonstrate a satisfactory standard in English. This may be demonstrated either by holding a first degree from a UK University taught in English or a degree that has been taught and assessed in English or by reaching a satisfactory standard in an approved test equivalent to, an overall IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 6.5 with minimum sub-scores of 6.0 in all component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking) or an overall TOEFL IBT 94- 95 score, with a minimum score of 22 in each of the four component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking). Students requiring visas must meet the English language requirements of the UK Government ([Student visa : Knowledge of English - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
19. Permission to present a thesis in another language is not allowed.

### **Admission to a research degree programme**

20. All applicants must complete the AECC University College application form, which requires details of the student's academic achievements, a research proposal and source of funding, and the student must provide copies of any qualifications (presentation of the originals will be required as part of the enrolment process).
21. Applications will be submitted via AECC University College Registry. The application will be assessed by the AECC University College Doctoral Coordinator (hereafter DC) for potential suitability. If the Coordinator believes the applicant and proposal are suitable and the University has the relevant expertise and capacity to supervise the student and an appropriate research environment, they will arrange for an interview panel consisting of a member of the AECC University College DRP and a member of the potential supervisory team, using the University College Template.
22. The Interview Panel must satisfy themselves that:-
  - a. the student is suitably qualified and has access to adequate financial support for the duration of registration;
  - b. the student is embarking on research in a field that will yield a viable research project within the designated time limit and for which expert supervision is available within the University College;
  - c. the University College is able to provide appropriate facilities and resources, taking into account any special learning needs;
  - d. there is critical mass of relevant research and researchers at the University College; and
  - e. there has been an appropriate preliminary allocation of DoS and co-supervisor(s).
23. In cases where a student's work forms part of a larger group project, each individual project must in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award. The application should indicate clearly each individual



contribution and its relationship to the group project.

24. Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, the interview panel must establish to its satisfaction that the terms on which the research is funded do not detract from the fulfilment of the objectives and requirements of the student's research degree.
25. The interview panel can:-
  - a. recommend the applicant for acceptance, in which case the panel must include an indicative training needs analysis;
  - b. reject the applicant, giving reasons.
26. Where the applicant is recommended for acceptance, the DC must finalise the proposed supervisory team and the relevant Head of School must approve both the staff and the physical resource commitment.
27. The application will be considered and if appropriate endorsed by the University College Research Degrees Sub-committee, for submission to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC, for formal consideration/approval of the student's registration on behalf of the validating University.
28. New students can only register on the Solent University RDC approved registration dates.
29. AECC University College Registry are responsible for monitoring timelines and progress- chasing to ensure applications are dealt with in a timely fashion.

### **Admission to a research programme by prior publication**

30. Members of University College staff beyond the probationary period may apply to submit a portfolio of their previously published works for consideration for the award of PhD.
31. Those who wish to undertake such a submission must be supported by their Head of School
32. Applications will be considered initially by the AECC University College Doctoral Coordinator and DRP or appropriate reviewer co-opted by the Doctoral Coordinator.
33. The work submitted must, in aggregate, be broadly comparable in quality and quantity to that expected to be embodied in a PhD thesis in the same discipline and have been published within the past five years.
34. Jointly authored works will only be considered if the applicant is the first author, or if the application is accompanied by testimonials from the co-author(s) as to the percentage of the applicant's substantive contribution to the published work(s).
35. If the DC and DRP determine that there is a prima facie case for a PhD by prior publication the DC will establish an interview panel which will proceed with the admissions process as outlined above.

### **Change to the Approved Research Programme**

36. Where a student wishes to make a substantial change in the academic discipline and/or expert supervision of the approved research project, the student will be required to withdraw from the programme of research. Provided the University College is able to offer adequate expert supervision in the new area of research and there is a critical mass of relevant research and researchers at the University College, the student may be considered for re-registration by submitting a new application as if it was a first application.

### **Confidentiality**

37. A thesis is made publicly available upon successful completion. However, where an applicant, their collaborative establishment or their funder/funding body wishes the research and thesis to remain confidential for a period after completion of work, an application for consideration by the AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-

committee shall be made at the time of admission. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission should be made to AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee. The period approved will not normally exceed two years from the date of the viva examination. Any such approvals must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

## 6. REGISTRATION

38. A student may register on a full-time or a part-time basis. A full-time student should devote on average at least 35 hours per week to the research; a part-time student on average at least 17.5 hours per week. A full-time student may undertake a small amount of paid work compatible with their full-time studies with the expectation that the total demand on their time for teaching duties within the University College is no more than six hours per week.

### The registration period

39. The minimum, standard and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

6.37.

<b>MPhil</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Full-time *	18 months	24 months	36 months
Part-time	36 months	48 months	72 months
<b>PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration &amp; including that period of MPhil registration)</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Full-time *	24 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	72 months	96 months
<b>PhD by prior publication (University staff only)</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Part-time	6 months	12 months	18 months

*\*Including any writing-up period.*

40. To be eligible for an award a student must be registered on the award and all awards must have been completed, including periods of formal suspension, within the approved maximum registration periods. The maximum registration period for an MPhil award shall be 36 months (full-time), 72 months (part-time). The maximum registration period for a PhD award shall be 48 months (full-time), 96 months (part-time). The maximum registration period for a PhD by prior publication award shall be 18 months (part-time).
41. Students are expected to complete their programme within a standard period of study. A student who has made unusually rapid progress with a programme of research may apply to the AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee for permission, exceptionally, to submit a thesis in advance of the minimum period of registration set out. Such requests will be considered very carefully and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Any such approvals must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.
42. Throughout these regulations for the purposes of calculation of minimum or maximum permitted periods for each stage of the programme of study, the equivalent period of part-time registration will be considered to be twice that of the actual full-time period unless otherwise stated.

### Transfer of registration mode

43. A student may change registration mode at any point during their studies.
44. Where a student transfers from full-time to part-time registration, for purposes of calculation (minimum or maximum registration periods) the equivalent period of part-time registration will

1.1.

be considered twice that of the actual full-time period of registration remaining to the student at the date of the transfer being granted.

45. Where a student transfers from part-time to full-time registration, for purposes of calculation (minimum or maximum registration periods) the equivalent period of full-time registration will be considered to be half that of the actual part-time period of registration remaining to the student at the data of the transfer being granted.
46. These rules apply on the same pro-rata basis to MPhil registration.

### **Extensions**

47. AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee may, because of circumstances beyond a student's control, exceptionally recommend an extension of a student's period of registration beyond the permitted maximum, normally for not more than one year. A student seeking such an extension should normally apply at least 6 months prior to the end of the registration period. Retrospective extension of registration will not normally be granted. Pressure of work will not be considered as grounds for extension. Any such requests must be submitted to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for approval.

### **Withdrawal**

48. A student may elect to withdraw from their programme of research at any time.
49. Where a student has discontinued their programme of research, the withdrawal of registration must be notified to AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC and where relevant UKVI.
50. A student who has failed to engage with their supervisory team and/or has not responded to formal correspondence from the University for a period of 60 days will be deemed to have withdrawn their registration and the withdrawal will be notified to AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC and where relevant UKVI.
51. A student must register as a student of the University, and continue to re-register on an annual basis relevant to their initial month of entry, until submission of the thesis has taken place. At the time of registration, a student must pay such annual fees as published by the University College.
52. Students who have withdrawn from their programme of research and wish to re-register must submit a new application as if it was a first application. Neither AECC University College nor Solent University are under any obligation to re-admit students.

### **Suspension**

53. Where the student is prevented, by ill-health or other compelling cause, from making progress with the research, the registration may be suspended by the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee for a period of not less than a month and normally not more than six months, to a maximum of 1 year. Appropriate medical evidence will be required to support requests for suspension on health grounds. Retrospective suspension of registration will not normally be granted. Pressure of work will not be considered as grounds for suspension unless the work and study are inextricably linked. Any such approvals must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

### **Serious illness during registration**

54. When a student is ill and unable to study, they must inform their supervisor and AECC University College Registry. Where a student is absent for a period of 6 weeks or more through illness AECC University College Registry will automatically suspend the student, inform the Chair of Solent University RDC and where relevant inform UKVI.

### **Staff Registration**

55. Members of staff of the University College are permitted to apply to register for a

research degree through Solent University. To ensure that the proposed programme of work can be completed within the designated timescale, the amount of time the applicant can devote to the research must be agreed with the Head of School before registration and giving due regard to the requirements of part-time registration indicated at 38. Applications from staff will be considered in accordance with the standard entry criteria. Payment of fees

56. A student who is in fees arrears will not be eligible to be progressed, re-enrolled, examined, receive tuition or have access to Solent University or AECC University College facilities and resources until the outstanding debt has been cleared or a payment plan agreed. Students will be informed in writing by the University College of the intention to impose sanctions. Any subsequent failure to clear any debts will result in withdrawal of registration.
57. Students whose registration has been withdrawn through debt and who wish to resume their studies following payment of the outstanding debt must submit a new application as if it was a first application. The University is under no obligation to re-admit students.

### **Dual registration**

58. If a student wishes to concurrently register for another award at Solent University<sup>1</sup>, AECC University College or another Higher Education Institution, the express permission of the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC is required.

### **Induction**

59. New students must attend induction sessions arranged for incoming postgraduate research students delivered by AECC University College and by Solent University as appropriate. The supervisory team will also undertake a training needs analysis with new students incorporating any relevant activities and how these will be provided. The training should be designed to ensure competence in research methods and/or knowledge related to the subject of the thesis. The agreed training programme must be recorded in the Annual Monitoring progress review report.
60. All new students registered for MPhil or MPhil/PhD, whether full-time or part-time, must successfully complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods course provided by Solent University during their first year of registration. Exceptions must be recommended by the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and will only be considered where the supervisory team confirms in writing that they are satisfied that the student has sufficient understanding of the elements covered in the course from a previous qualification or experience. All such requests must be approved by the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

## **7. SUPERVISION**

### **Appointment of a supervisory team**

61. It is the responsibility of the Doctoral Coordinator (DC) to propose and get approval for the supervisory team as part of the admission process.
62. A supervisory team will be comprised of two to three supervisors:
  - a. the first supervisor, the DoS must be an AECC University College of staff
  - b. the second, or subsequent supervisor(s), may be either an AECC University College or Solent University member of staff or, exceptionally, external
  - c. at least one supervisor must hold a doctorate, normally the AECC University College or Solent University member of staff
  - d. at least one supervisor must have experience of supervising at least one student through to successful completion of the research degree in question (or a research

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding the PGCert in Research Methods

degree at a higher level).

63. A supervisory team
  - a. will have expertise in the relevant subject or discipline area of research and knowledge of those methodologies and skills required for the research
  - b. may also include an external supervisor as a subject or methodology specialist, but not as the first supervisor. This may be of particular relevance for Professional Doctorates where the additional input of Professional Practice experience is required.
  - c. will engage in supervisory development every 3 years
64. In appointing supervisory teams, the DC should be mindful of the diversity, equality, and inclusivity balance of individual teams, where possible.
- 7.38.
65. Members of staff have a duty to make an appropriate declaration where there are personal conflicts of interest with other members of the supervisory team, or with the research student.
66. No supervisor should have any conflict of interest with the research student.
67. The University College and Solent University believe that effective supervision is a skill that is best learnt experientially, with the support of more experienced colleagues (the apprenticeship model). Schools should, therefore, encourage staff who are new to supervision to gain experience of the supervisory process through serving as second supervisors and on DRP. A DoS who has not seen a student through to successful completion of the research degree in question (or a research degree at a higher level) should be paired with an experienced second supervisor.
68. The DoS will undertake management of the supervisory team's procedural and monitoring responsibilities. The DoS will have the responsibility to ensure that the student is supervised on a regular and frequent basis by the supervisory team and that student progression reviews are undertaken within timeframes stipulated by these regulations.
69. Staff members who have been admitted to undertake a PhD by Prior Publication will normally be appointed a DoS, and co-supervisor. The DoS will be a member of staff with broad disciplinary experience and have experience of supervising at least one student to the successful completion of a UK doctoral level degree or equivalent international qualification. They will have responsibility to ensure the student progression within the timeframes stipulated by these regulations. Where the DoS does not have prior supervisory experience of the PhD by Prior Publication, this will be provided by the co-supervisor or an advisor to the supervisory team.
70. Exceptionally, where an AECC University College supervisor leaves the University College at a point where the student is near to completion and/or it would disadvantage the student, the supervisor may be asked to continue as an external supervisor.
71. In addition to the supervisors, an advisor or advisors may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.
72. The supervisory team will have responsibility for considering and advising the student on both the health and safety and the ethical aspects of any research proposal, including any parts that may be carried out away from the University College.

### **Change in a supervisory team**

73. The DC is responsible for the oversight of supervisory teams and in the event that a supervisor needs to be permanently or temporarily replaced the DC should recommend a suitable replacement to AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-Committee, for consideration and submission to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for formal approval.

## **Supervisors**

74. All supervisors should be appropriately qualified, that is they should have a doctorate and be an active researcher with discipline or methodological expertise, or they must be an experienced and active researcher as evidenced by a track record of public output and/or previous PGR completions.
75. All supervisors are expected to be active in terms of their own Continuing Professional Development. It is expected that supervisors will regularly refresh their currency with Solent University's mandatory doctoral supervisor training sessions or equivalent training provided through AECC University College, as agreed with Solent University, and avail themselves of the development opportunities provided by AECC University College and other sector bodies. Failure to do so may constitute grounds for the DRP to decline to approve supervisory teams.
76. All AECC University College supervisors are required to attend Solent University's supervisors' training prior to, or within 6 months of, starting to supervise.
77. Members of staff may not act as supervisors if they are currently registered for a research degree (this does not apply to staff members registered for a doctorate by previously published works). Upon being awarded their research degree, staff members will become eligible to hold the role of supervisor.
78. If a member of staff is currently a DoS and decides to study for a research degree, they must cease undertaking this role immediately for the duration of their studies. With the consent of the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC, the member of staff may exceptionally remain on the supervisory team as co-supervisor.
79. If the DoS were to be temporarily unavailable, students should be informed of who would be their first point of contact. This would normally be the second supervisor. In the event of a supervisor becoming unable to continue supervising a research student, a replacement supervisor will be nominated, after consultation with the DC, and submitted to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC, for approval. In the meantime, the designated person (see above) will assume the role of the DoS.

## **Supervisory meetings**

80. Student needs for supervision vary depending on the rate of their progress, where the student is in the life cycle of their research project, and by the nature of the discipline. Based on the student needs there should be explicit agreement between students and supervisors on the actual frequency of supervisory meetings. As a minimum, meetings for full-time students should be at least every 6 weeks and for part-time students at least every 8 weeks.
81. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that a written record of each supervisory meeting is kept. This record must be agreed between the student and the supervisors present at the meeting and must include the date, subjects discussed, and agreed outcomes.
82. Copies of all supervisory meeting records must be submitted by the student to AECC University College Registry at the relevant progression monitoring points within the current academic session. Registry will provide this information to Solent University as required.
83. The supervisory meeting record will be included as part of the annual monitoring process of postgraduate research student progress.
84. The supervisory meeting record may be referred to in the event of an appeal or complaint.

## 8. MONITORING AND PROGRESSION

### Annual Progression and Independent Review

85. The progress of students must be formally reviewed annually by a monitoring panel arranged with the DC and DRP. Students will be required to submit evidence of their engagement with supervision and a record of their academic progress, which should normally cover the following:
  - a. a record of work achieved in the previous 12 months
  - b. a plan of work for the next 12 months
86. The DC will be responsible for appointing members of the monitoring panel and, at a minimum the panel must consist of members of the relevant DRP and academic staff with relevant expertise.
87. Where appropriate, additional information may be required.
88. AECC University College Registry will communicate the outcome of the panel to the student and supervisory team.
89. If there are serious concerns about the progress of the student raised by the DoS, the panel may recommend that the student is placed on a 3-month probation period with an agreed action plan. If there is no improvement in the student's performance the panel should recommend to AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee that the student's registration is terminated or require the student re-register for an MPhil. Any such approvals must be approved by the Solent University RDC
90. Where AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee confirms termination of registration or transfer to MPhil, the student will have the right of appeal.
91. The DRP will review all the reports and the Doctoral Coordinator will present the key findings to AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC as required.

## 9. ASSESSMENT

### Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD

92. A student initially registered for MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD, who has satisfactorily completed all applicable monitoring requirements and wishes to transfer to PhD, shall inform the Doctoral co-coordinator, after consultation with their DoS. Transfers will normally take place between 12-18 months of full-time study or 24-36 months of part-time study.
93. The DoC shall convene a Transfer Panel which should consist of an independent Chair (who will be an experienced supervisor), and two active researchers who will be members of the DRP or be co-opted to provide appropriate discipline expertise. The assessors will be internal to the University College or Solent University. An external assessor may be appointed, on an exceptional basis, if approved by the DC.
94. In support of the application, the student shall be required to submit evidence in the form of a full transfer report, plus other material subject to the nature of the research, and attend a viva at which they must successfully demonstrate their work has the potential to meet the learning outcomes of a level 8 award. While specific requirements may vary from discipline to discipline, a typical thesis based study should require a full transfer report of 10,000 - 20,000 words; whereas a practice-based project would normally require an artefact plus supporting document addressing the areas outlined below.
95. A full transfer report would normally take the form of a coherent document in the style of a thesis that includes the following :
  - a. An introduction that sets out the contextual rationale to the work, and an appropriate

- set of aims and objectives;
  - b. A critical literature review that provides a comprehensive contextualisation of the research and demonstrates that by satisfying the aims of the project, an appropriate contribution to knowledge will be achieved;
  - c. A research methodology that demonstrates how the methods selected will achieve the desired aims and objectives and fully justifies the approach taken;
  - d. A presentation and consideration of any findings to date, including a demonstration of how the final results of the project will satisfy the requirements of the research in addressing the project aims; and
  - e. An outline of the subsequent steps necessary to complete the research, including a timetable of completion of the thesis from the date of initial registration; and a chapter- by-chapter outline of the final thesis.
96. The Chair of the Transfer Panel will submit a report to AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee with one of the following recommendations:
- a. transfer to PhD;
  - b. the transfer report be referred back to the student for amendment and resubmission to the Transfer Panel within 3 months (full-time) or 6 months (part-time);
  - c. the student's registration to remain as MPhil; or the student's registration be terminated.
97. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee shall satisfy itself that the student has made sufficient progress and that the assessors have determined that the proposed programme of work provides a suitable basis for work at PhD standard which the student is capable of pursuing to completion.
98. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee will submit its decision to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for consideration/formal approval
99. Following outcome b. above, the decisions available for the reconvened Transfer Panel will be a, c, or d.
100. A student who has been unsuccessful in their transfer may appeal the decision (refer to the appeal section within these regulations).
101. A student registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to transfer the registration to PhD. In such cases the student must comply with the transfer regulations.
102. A student who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee for the registration to revert to that for MPhil, provided that the maximum permitted period for MPhil registration is not exceeded. Exceptionally, a student who has passed the MPhil/PhD transfer stage and is within their maximum period of PhD registration may request in writing – at the time of submitting their PhD thesis – that the thesis be considered for an MPhil. Any such decisions must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

## 10. EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH AWARDS

### Submission of thesis

103. The submission of the thesis for examination or re-examination is at the sole discretion of the student.
104. The length of the thesis will not normally exceed the following:
- a. PhD               80,000 words
  - b. MPhil           40,000 words
105. Where the submission includes material in other than textual form, the written thesis should normally be within the range:
- a. PhD               30,000 – 40,000 words



b. MPhil 15,000 – 20,000 words

106. Where the submission is for a PhD by Prior Publication the portfolio of works must be broadly comparable in quantity to that of a PhD thesis above and must include a framing document / introductory section that explains the unifying themes that run through the research, and places the works in the context of existing work in the field and the student's research career. The framing document / introductory section should be approximately 10,000 words in length.
107. Before submitting the student must ensure that the thesis:
- a. is submitted electronically to the online submission tool Turnitin via the University College's online learning platform and the report is included as part of the submission;
  - b. format and binding (where required) follows Solent University guidance;
  - c. is submitted within the registration period, or following an oral examination outcome of resubmission within the period granted for resubmission; and
  - d. is accompanied by the University College's thesis declaration form, which requires a statement identifying:
    - i. the aspects of the thesis which have already been published; or
    - ii. where published work has been jointly authored with others, which part(s) of the work(s) are the student's responsibility; any aspects of the thesis which have already been submitted for a degree or comparable award; and
    - iii. any other relevant statements.

## **EXAMINERS**

108. A student will be examined by at least two and not more than three examiners of whom at least one will be an external examiner. Internal examiners should have experience in the general area of the student's work. External examiners should have experience in the specialist area of the student's thesis and demonstrate a consistent and extensive record of relevant publication. The examination team as a whole should have substantial experience of successful supervision and examination of research degree students. Normally, the external examining team should have completed a minimum of two examinations.
109. Where the thesis includes submission of a non-textual form, or is a portfolio of previously published works, it is desirable that at least one examiner has previous experience in examinations of such formats.
110. Where the student is a member of University College staff the examiners must all be external to the University College, but may include a Solent University member of staff who does not have any conflict of interest.

### **Internal examiners**

111. No member of the student's supervisory team will act as an internal examiner. An internal examiner should declare any potential conflict of interest with the student before the appointment is made. An internal examiner may have acted as panel member at the student's Transfer.

### **External examiners**

112. An external examiner must be independent of AECC University College and Solent University and must not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or advisor, and must have no other conflict of interest involving the PGR student.
113. Former members of staff of AECC University College or Solent University should not be approved as external examiners until at least three years after the termination of their employment with AECC University College or Solent University. Where an internal examiner has recently left either institution following a student's viva and the student is eligible for a further viva, their continuation in the role will be reviewed as to the interests of the student.

114. A nomination for an external examiner who has been in formal collaboration, or who has authored a research paper, with a member of the supervisory team or the doctoral student within the three years prior to the examination, would not normally be regarded as independent.

### **Appointment process**

115. The supervision team should discuss potential examiners with the student prior to requesting approval of an examination panel. The DoS should submit for DRP approval proposals for the student's examiners at least six months before the expected thesis submission date. The student's examination may not take place until the arrangements have been approved. In special circumstances, the DRP may act directly to recommend examiners and arrange the examination of a student. The DRP recommendation should be considered by AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and submitted to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for formal approval.
116. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee should ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that their familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement.
117. A PGR student registered at AECC University College, Solent University or another University cannot act as an examiner.

## **11. EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS**

118. The examination for the MPhil and PhD will have two stages: firstly preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by viva or approved alternative examination.
119. Students wishing to submit their work for examination should notify AECC University College Registry, who will provide guidance on process for the submission of the thesis (including the number of copies to be submitted for examination) and any conditions to be satisfied before the student may be considered eligible for examination.
120. Once the thesis is received and accompanied by a completed Turnitin report checking for academic misconduct, the DoS will confirm the date of the viva to the examiners, the student, all supervisors and an independent chair will be appointed. Where the student is submitting a thesis comprising previously published works, only the framing document / introductory component shall be required to be submitted to Turnitin.
121. AECC University College Registry will send a digital copy of the thesis and the relevant regulations to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report pro-forma and instructions on how to complete it.
122. Each examiner should read and examine the thesis and submit an independent preliminary report before any viva or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the viva.
123. The preliminary report forms are to be completed independently and without formal or informal consultation between examiners, whether external or internal. An examiner having received the thesis and wishing to contact another examiner, the student or any member of supervisory team should do so only through AECC University College Registry until the oral examination.
124. Once a thesis has been submitted, members of supervisory teams may not directly contact the examiners. Contact for any reason should be made only through AECC University College Registry. Students may not directly contact their examiners between the appointments of the examination team until the final award is made and should have no involvement in the formal appointment of examiners or the arrangements for the viva.

125. External examiners are required to submit their reports at least five working days before the viva, which will be circulated to the examination panel. An examination cannot normally take place until a preliminary report has been received.

### **Conduct of the viva**

126. A student will be examined orally on their thesis and on the field of study in which their research lies.
127. Where for reasons of disability or comparable valid cause the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo a viva, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval must not be given because the student's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
128. The oral examination will be conducted by the examiners and will be chaired by an independent Chair from the register of AECC University College independent chair approved by Solent University RDC on the recommendation of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee.
129. The role of the chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted with due regard to fair play and in compliance with these regulations. The chair also acts as a source of experience and guidance to the examiners about the conduct of the examination.
130. The viva will normally be held in the UK. In special cases, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee may give approval for the examination to take place abroad or via remote meeting technology. The University College has published supplementary regulations for the conduct of remote vivas. Any such decisions must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.
131. One supervisor may, with the express written permission of the student, attend the viva. They may not contribute to the discussion.
132. Recording of the viva will not normally be permitted.

### **Outcomes of the examination for PhD**

133. Following the viva the independent chair should require the examiners to complete the viva report forms and, where appropriate, that feedback is provided to the student. When the examiners have made their decision, they may elect to communicate it to the student immediately following the viva.
134. The chair will also oversee the completion of reports relating to minor or major revisions and will liaise with the externals about the action to be taken in response to any resubmission required of the student.
135. Where the examiners agree, the chair will submit a joint report on the appropriate form including the decision relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and the Chair of Solent University RDC to be satisfied that the outcome chosen is correct. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.
136. Following the completion of the examination for PhD the examiners may decide that:
- a. the student be awarded the degree;
  - b. the student be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners;
  - c. the student be awarded the degree subject to major amendments being made to the thesis within 6 months to the satisfaction of the examiners;
  - d. the student be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, without a viva;
  - e. the student be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12

- months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, with a viva
- f. in the case of a PhD examination, the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of an MPhil thesis within 6 months revised to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
  - g. the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
137. In cases where the student does not achieve the assessment criteria for the award of PhD, the normal expectation is that the examiners will make one of the recommendations set out in b- e above, each of which allows the student a further opportunity to satisfy the assessment criteria within a fixed deadline. Re-submitted theses received outside the period stipulated will not be eligible for assessment for an award.
  138. b. should be used where the requirements of the degree have been met, except that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed and a re-examination is not required. Following the viva, these amendments will be stipulated by the examiner(s), on the guidance form, which will be sent to the student after the viva. These amendments must be completed by the student within three months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
  139. c. should be used where the requirements of the degree have been largely met, except that a major revision is needed to an aspect of the thesis. Following the viva, these amendments must be completed by the student within six months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
  140. d. should be used where, although the requirements of the degree have been partly met, the thesis contains major deficiencies, but the examiners believe with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved. Following the viva the student will receive a written statement of the amendments required, signed by each examiner. The student must complete the amendments within twelve months from the date the written statement was sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without the need for a further viva.
  141. e. should be used where, although the requirements of the degree have been partly met, the viva and/or the thesis contains major deficiencies, but the examiners believe with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved. Following the viva, the student will receive a written statement of the amendments required, signed by each examiner. The student must complete the amendments within 12 months from the date the written statement was sent. The amended thesis should be subject to a further viva.
  142. f. should be used where the examiners identify major deficiencies with the thesis and do not consider that with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved, but that the student should be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the criteria for an MPhil award. The revised MPhil thesis should be submitted within 6 months and should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without further viva.
  143. g. should be used where the examiners believe that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that an award cannot be made. Where it is confirmed that the degree should not be awarded and that no re-examination should be permitted, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the students.
  144. Examiners may indicate informally their decision on the result of the examination to the students.

### **Outcomes of the examination for MPhil**

145. Following the completion of the examination for MPhil the examiners may decide that:-
  - a. the student be awarded the degree;
  - b. the student be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to

- the thesis within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
  - c. the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
146. In cases where the student does not achieve the assessment criteria for the award of MPhil, the normal expectation is that the examiners will recommend b above, which allows the student a further opportunity to satisfy the assessment criteria within a fixed deadline. Re-submitted theses received outside the period stipulated will not be eligible for assessment for an award.
147. b. should be used where the requirements of the degree have been met, except that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed and a re-examination is not required. Following the viva, these amendments will be stipulated by the examiner(s), on the guidance form, which will be sent to the student after the viva. These amendments must be completed by the student within three months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
148. In the case of c. the student will be informed that no further submission of this portfolio will be accepted for consideration of the award of MPhil.

### **Outcomes of the examination for PhD by Prior Publication**

149. Following the completion of the examination the examiners may decide that:-
- a. the student be awarded the degree;
  - b. the student be awarded the degree subject to amendments to being made to the framing document / introductory section within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
  - c. the material submitted in the portfolio falls short of the requirements, and the student not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
150. In the case of b. the student must be provided with written guidelines on the additional material required and/or corrections to be made to the framing document / introductory section.
151. In the case of c. the student will be informed that no further submission of this portfolio will be accepted for consideration of the award of PhD.

### **Monitoring of the examination and award of research degrees**

152. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee will consider the reports and decision(s) of the examiners in respect of the student, and on the basis of the examiners' decisions will recommend the outcome to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for consideration/approval.
153. Where the examiners' recommendations for vivas and / or re-examinations are not unanimous, the Chair of AECC University College Research Degree, will appoint a sub-committee to consider the outcome in line with the options below:
- a. accept a majority recommendation (if the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - b. accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
  - c. require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- 11.39. and will make recommendation through the University College Research Degree sub-Committee to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC for approval. The sub-committee will meet either in person or virtually via online mechanisms as required by the timing of individual oral examinations.
154. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further viva within 2 months of appointment, which will be considered as part of the first examination. The additional examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the sub-committee of AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee he should make a decision and submit a recommendation through AECC

University College Research Degrees sub- committee to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

155. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee on behalf of Solent University RDC must ensure that all examinations are conducted and the recommendations of the examiners are presented wholly in accordance with the relevant regulations. In any instance where AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee on behalf of Solent University is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process Solent University RDC must be informed; RDC may declare the examination null and void and require the appointment of new examiners.

### **Posthumous awards**

156. An award may be conferred posthumously where a student was close to completing their course of study. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee will consider each case on an individual basis and make a recommendation to Solent University RDC.

### **Aegrotat awards**

157. An Aegrotat award of MPhil or PhD may be conferred where a student was close to achieving an award but due to illness or other valid reason, as recommended by AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee and approved by Solent University RDC, is unlikely to be able to complete their studies within the maximum registration period.

## **12. RE-EXAMINATION**

158. One re-examination will be permitted, subject to the following:-
  - a. The original viva outcome was 136 d. or e. *'the student be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners with or without a viva'*;
  - b. The student has been provided with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission; and
  - c. The form and nature of the re-examination has been agreed by the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC. Where there is good cause a variation of the form of re-examination may be approved.
159. Where there is compelling evidence, AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee may exceptionally approve an extension of this period. Any such extensions must be reported to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.
160. AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee, in discussion with the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC may require that an additional external examiner to be appointed for the re-examination.
161. Each examiner should read and examine the thesis and submit, on the appropriate form, an independent preliminary report before any viva or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination.
162. Following the re-examination of the thesis, either including or excluding a viva or other examination as agreed by AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee and approved by the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC the examiners may, where they agree, communicate it to the student. They must submit a joint report and decision on the appropriate form relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee and the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC to be satisfied that the outcome chosen is correct.
163. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.

164. Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend that:-
- a. the student is awarded the degree;
  - b. the student is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within 2 months;
  - c. the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis within 6 months amended to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
  - d. the student is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined.

*Note: The student cannot be awarded the degree subject to major amendment after re-examination.*

165. In cases where the student does not achieve the assessment criteria for the award of PhD, the normal expectation is that the examiners will make one of the recommendations set out in para 163 b-c., both of which allows the student a further opportunity to satisfy the assessment criteria within a fixed deadline. Re-submitted theses received outside the period stipulated will not be eligible for assessment for an award.
166. b. Where the examiners are satisfied that the student has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the student amending the thesis to the satisfaction of one or more of the examiner(s). In this case they should indicate to the student in writing what amendments and corrections are required. These amendments must be completed by the student within two months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
167. c. Where the examiners identify major deficiencies with the thesis at re-examination the student cannot be re-examined subject to further major amendments, but the examiners may consider it appropriate for the student to be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the criteria for an MPhil award. The revised MPhil thesis should be submitted within 6 months and should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without further viva.
168. d. Where the examiners believe that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that an award cannot be made and the sub-committee confirms that the degree should not be awarded, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the student by AECC University College Registry.
169. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the sub-committee of AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee will-
- a. Accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - b. Accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
  - c. Require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
170. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further viva examination within 2 months of the original re-examination. That examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the sub-committee will determine the outcome and submit to AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee. AECC University College Research Degrees sub-committee will make a recommendation to the Chair/Deputy Chair of Solent University RDC.

### **Illness during a transfer, examination or re-examination**

171. Where a student is ill during their transfer, viva examination or re-examination they must notify the University College, providing documentary evidence, and the University College will reschedule the examination. AECC University College Registry will keep Solent University informed in such cases

## 13. APPEALS – AECC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS

172. The AECC University College Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure (postgraduate research students) will apply.
173. An appeal can only be lodged by the student and cannot be made by a third party, unless at the time the appeal is lodged the student has evidence that they are suffering from such physical or mental incapacity so as to prevent the student acting for themselves. A judgement in this matter will be taken by the AECC Academic Registrar based on the available evidence
174. A student may make a formal appeal to the AECC Academic Registrar, to request reconsideration of academic decisions, that is:-
  - a. a decision to withdraw a student through lack of academic progress and/or failure to engage;
  - b. a decision to suspend a student due to ill health; or
  - c. the outcomes of an examination (including MPhil transfer) decisions.
175. If a student is dissatisfied about other aspects of their experience, including withdrawal for non-payment of fees, they should use the complaint procedure.
176. Disagreement with the academic judgement of supervisors, examiners, DRP, AECC University College Research Degrees Sub-committee or Solent University RDC does not itself constitute grounds for appeal.
177. Given the existence of procedures for complaints available to students during their study, together with the monitoring arrangements for postgraduate research students, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study will not constitute grounds for appeal against an academic judgement.

### Review stage

178. Students may request a review of the decision of the AECC University College Academic Appeals Board where they are dissatisfied and one of the following applies:
  - i. the procedures followed at the University College did not follow appropriate arrangements and that this influenced or may have influenced the decision in some way;
  - ii. the outcome was unreasonable, in the circumstances;
  - iii. new material evidence has become available which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process. Students wishing to present additional evidence, must also demonstrate that it was not previously available, and explain why.
179. Research students wishing to request a review may submit a second stage appeal to the Solent University Complaints and Appeals Manager within 10 working days asking for the decision and/ or process to be reviewed by the Chair of Solent University RDC (or their nominee in their absence) and a member of RDC not previously involved with the student.
180. The Chair of RDC and RDC member will review the evidence and may interview the student and/or member of staff and examiners, and will determine if the process followed was fair, transparent and robust and the outcome and recommendations appropriate. The student's Director of Studies and the AECC University College Academic Registrar will be informed of the Chair and RDC member's decision within 20 days of Solent University Policy, Governance & Information receiving the appeal.
181. Where the Chair and RDC member uphold the original outcome and recommendations Solent University will issue a completion of procedures letter, which



includes the details of how to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

182. Where the Chair and RDC member do not uphold the original outcome and recommendations, they will determine the appropriate action(s), taking into account the student's desired outcomes, and in discussions with relevant colleagues at AECC University College. If the student does not accept the proposed actions Solent University will issue a completion of procedures letter.

183. In all cases AECC University College will be informed of the outcome

## **14. STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

184. Where a student is dissatisfied with their learning experience or with the services provided by the University College they should use the AECC University College students complaint policy published on the VLE.

185. If on completion of Stage 2 of the policy a PGR student believes that their complaint has not been handled properly or fairly, they may submit a request for a review to Solent University. (This will be a Stage 2 complaint under Solent University's Student complaints procedure).

186. The grounds under which a student may request a review are:

- procedural irregularity in the conduct of the complaint procedures
- new evidence is available which was not available at the time of the investigation during Stage Two
- that the decision and outcome of the Stage Two complaint were unreasonable in the light of the evidence provided.

187. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the complaint investigation shall not in itself constitute an acceptable reason for review.

## **15. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

188. AECC University College and Solent University are committed to helping and supporting students understand the expectations associated with academic writing and provide advice, guidance and self-help material so that students can fully understand what is considered unacceptable behaviour. Students are expected, with the support provided by the University College, to ensure they are fully aware of what constitutes good academic conduct and consequently academic misconduct.

189. The University College will identify any incidence that meets the definition of academic misconduct and will bring this to the attention of the student. All suspected cases will be investigated and where appropriate an academic penalty will be imposed under the AECC University College Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy available on the VLE.

190. The decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel is considered to be one of academic judgement against which students may not appeal. However, appeals may be lodged on the grounds set out in the University College policy.

191. Students who wish to appeal on these grounds must submit their appeal to Solent University, by contacting the Complaints and Appeals Manager at Solent University.