

Regulations for the Degree of Master of English by Research

at Sheffield Hallam University

Current Version for 2020-21

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Further information and advice on any aspect of these regulations is available from the Doctoral School, Research and Innovation Services, exts. 4047/4053/2045.

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E1 Principles

E1.1 Award title

Sheffield Hallam University ('the University') will award the degree of Master of English by Research to registered candidates who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research.

E1.2 Comparability of academic standards

The University will ensure that its research degrees are comparable in standard with those conferred throughout higher education in the United Kingdom.

E1.3 General requirements for study for the Master of English by Research

Programmes of research may be proposed in any area of English language and/or literature studies provided that:

- a) candidates can be expected to meet the University's academic standards;
- b) candidates can be trained and supported within an environment which is supportive of research;
- c) the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners in the form of a written thesis, which may be supplemented by material in other than written form. All proposed research programmes will be considered for approval on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.

E1.4 Master of English by Research award objectives

The Master of English by Research will be awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research enquiry appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

E1.5 Research Degrees Committee

The implementation and development of these regulations and their associated procedures will be overseen by a University Research Degrees Committee (RDC) established within the academic committee structure of the University's Academic Board (see Appendix A for the Sub-Committee's terms of reference and constitution).

E1.6 Review and Development of regulations

These regulations will be subject to regular review. They will seek to embody nationally-recognised good practice as recommended in the policies, codes and regulations of key external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency, funding councils, research councils etc.

E2 The admission of students

E2.1 General entry requirements

An applicant for Master of English by Research will normally be expected to hold either:

- a good honours degree in English language and/or literature, typically an upper second class honours or above, or
- the equivalent in the Humanities area, preferably with a significant element of English literature (or English language where appropriate).

Candidates will be required to submit a 1000 word proposal for the research topic as part of the application process and are encouraged to contact the Course Leader with a draft proposal.

E2.2 Non-standard entry qualifications

An applicant holding qualifications other than those above will be considered on their merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the proposed research programme.

In considering an applicant in this category, the University will look for evidence of the applicant's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Sources of such evidence may include:

- a) Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment; and
- b) confidential statements attesting to the applicant's academic attainment and fitness for research provided by referees who should not be proposed as supervisors or advisers for the project.

E2.3 Management of the selection process

The process of selecting appropriately qualified and/or experienced applicants for admission to a research degree will be managed within the Research Institute. The process will involve the judgement of more than one member of University academic staff with relevant expertise and experience.

E2.4 English Language Competence

As part of the admissions process, the University must satisfy itself that the applicant already has sufficient command of the English language to satisfactorily complete the programme of work and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Where English is not the applicant's first language, the applicant must show evidence of English language ability to the following (or equivalent) minimum level of proficiency: an overall IELTS score of 7.0 or above, normally with at least 6.0 in each component (for TOEFL equivalences, see the table below).

If necessary, an offer of a place to read for a research degree may be made subject to successful completion of an appropriate period of pre-sessional English

for Academic Purposes training to enhance performance on the research degree programme above the minimum levels of competence outlined above.

Applicants with a first degree or Masters taught wholly in English will not generally be required to provide other evidence of English Language proficiency.

These minimum University requirements may be supplemented by additional local requirements in Faculties, subject to confirmation by RDC.

<i>IELTS Band</i>	<i>TOEFL Paper-based</i>	<i>TOEFL Computer-based</i>	<i>TOEFL internet-based</i>
4.0	450	132	45
4.5	475	152	52
5.0	500	173	61
5.5	525	197	71
6.0	550	213	79
6.5	575	233	91
7.0	600	250	100
7.5 - 9.0	625 - 677	265 - 300	108 - 120

The regulations are reviewed, enhanced and maintained by the university Research Degrees Committee.

E3 Enrolment

All new and returning candidates are required to enrol on-line in liaison with the relevant Research Institute. This process involves payment of the appropriate tuition fee in return for access to the University's facilities and services. It is regarded as the formal start of a candidate's research programme and all subsequent key milestones along the route towards completion are related to this initial reference point.

E4 Approval of research programme

E4.1 Timescales for approval

All enrolled candidates are required to seek approval of their research programme, using the appropriate form (see Appendix B), normally according to the following timetable:

- a) Full-time students: within 1 month of enrolment
- b) Part-time students: within 2 months of enrolment

E4.3 Scrutiny of research programme proposals

Appropriate academic judgement will be brought to bear on the viability of each Master of English by Research proposal. This scrutiny will build on the initial pre-admission assessment of the acceptability of the research programme and will involve **at least two** academics or 'rapporteurs', at least one of which must be a

subject expert, and both from outside the supervisory team. The rapporteurs act on behalf of RDC as independent assessor of the research proposal.

E4.4 Role of Research Degrees Committee in approving research programmes

All applications for the Master of English by Research programme approval will be subject to approval by Research Degrees Committee, acting on behalf of the University. The Sub-Committee will satisfy itself that scrutiny at Research Institute level has been properly undertaken by monitoring decisions and processes.

E4.5 Supporting programme of related studies

To secure research programme approval, a candidate will be expected to agree with his/her supervisors an appropriate supporting programme of related studies. All candidates should seek training in how to search for materials, identify sources and use electronic databases. The main aim of the supporting programme is to allow students who have a particular interest to develop both their research topic and their academic research skills at Masters level. In order to achieve this, the programme is designed so that students acquire topic-specific research skills, familiarity with research methodologies, planning and structuring the dissertation, referencing, and other relevant skills, as well as in-depth subject knowledge. Development needs, where appropriate, will be identified during induction meetings. Identified development needs will be offered by the research supervisor and supplemented by students taking some or all of the Research Methods module (either in literature or linguistics), although not for credit. Students will not be expected to take any of the formal assessments (feedback will therefore be formative rather than summative). However, students wishing to gain credit for the module will pay the module fee.

E4.6 Modes of study

When seeking research programme approval, a candidate must confirm his/her study mode ie full-time or part-time. A full-time candidate will normally devote on average at least 35 hours per week to the research; a part-time candidate on average at least 12 hours per week. A candidate may seek approval from his/her Research Institute for a change of mode of study at any point in the programme (see List of Forms at Appendix B but also see E5.2 below).

E4.7 Confidentiality

Where a candidate or the University wishes the thesis to remain confidential after completion of the programme of research, application for approval must normally be made to the Research Degrees Committee at the time of research programme approval (see List of Forms at Appendix B). In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission must be made immediately to the Research Degrees Committee. The period approved must normally not exceed two years from the date of the oral examination, however in some instances

where publication of the thesis would prove detrimental to the candidate or the University, a further period of one year may be approved.

E4.8 Ethics Approval of Research Programmes

Any research undertaken by research degree candidates which involves direct contact with patients or healthy participants, whether clinical, biomedical or social research, or the secondary use of existing human and animal materials or specimens, must be subject to ethical review. Such reviews will be undertaken by Research Institute-based research ethics committees¹. As a minimum, candidates will complete an ethics checklist for review by this committee.

E5 **Timescales for Completion**

E5.1 Normal maximum permissible timescales

Candidates will normally be expected to complete their research programmes ie. have submitted a thesis for oral examination, **within 12 months for full-time students and 24 months for part-time students.**

E5.2 Change in mode of study

Where Research Institute-level approval is given for a candidate's change in mode of study (see E4.7 above) the maximum permissible time for completion of the degree will be recalculated on the basis of the proportion of time during which the candidate was studying in each mode.

E5.3 Break in Study

Where a candidate is prevented, by ill-health, personal reasons or other valid cause, from being able to meaningfully engage in their research and make progress, Research Institute-level approval may be given for study to be suspended, under the **Break in Study Policy and Procedure for Research Degree Students**. Candidates can apply for time out from their research via the RFBIS form, for periods of between 2 and 12 months in any one application. The Policy, RFBIS and Guidance Notes can be found on the Research Degrees Blackboard Site. The period of the agreed break will not count against the maximum permissible time indicated in E5.1 above.

E5.4 Timeliness of thesis submission

The candidate may submit a thesis for examination at any time within the maximum indicated in M5.1 above (but see E10.2 below) **and in any event must do so within the maximum permissible time.** If the candidate has not presented his/her work within this period, s/he may be deemed to have withdrawn

¹ Details of the University Research Ethics Policies are at <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics/>. Candidates requiring ethical approval or who are unsure as to the need for ethical review should contact their Director of Studies in the first instance. Further guidance is available from the Secretary to the University Research Ethics Committee on extension 2909.

from the University or, in exceptional circumstances, may seek approval for additional time to complete (see E5.5 below).

E5.5 Exceptional approval of additional time to complete

Research Institute-level approval will not normally be given to allow a candidate more than the maximum permissible time specified in E5.1 above. However, a candidate whose mode of study at the time of research programme approval was full-time may, with an **exceptional reason**, seek approval for up to a maximum of **12 additional months** to complete (up to 24 additional months for a candidate whose mode of study at the time of research programme approval was part-time). The application for approval must be made on the appropriate form (see List of Forms at Appendix B), with the written support of the candidate's supervisor/s. In such cases, Research Institute-level approval will be subject to endorsement by the Research Degrees Committee.

Although requests for additional time will be considered on their merits, approval will normally only be given where it is clear that delayed completion is the result of factors which are beyond the control of the candidate and/or supervisor(s) and could not be anticipated or planned for as part of good management of the research programme. Wherever possible, approval for interruptions to the progress of the research which are beyond the control of student and/or supervisor(s) should be sought via an application for suspension (see E5.4 above).

E5.6 Withdrawal from study

Where a candidate has discontinued the research, the withdrawal of registration must be notified to the Research Degrees Committee on the appropriate form (see List of Forms at Appendix B).

E6 **Supervision**

E6.1 Size of supervisory team

A research degree candidate must normally have two supervisors, one of which will be the Director of Studies. **Exceptionally**, where the proposed Director of Studies has substantial experience of successful supervision to completion at the level proposed, the Research Degrees Committee may approve the appointment of only one supervisor, the Director of Studies.

E6.2 Required expertise and experience of supervisory team

A supervision team must have appropriate subject expertise and must normally have a combined experience of supervising no fewer than **two** candidates to successful completion at the level proposed. Successful completion of the University's Research Supervisor Development Programme will be deemed equivalent to a successful completion. However, in all cases at least one supervisor on the supervisory team **must** have successfully supervised at least one student to the level proposed.

E6.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Studies

One supervisor will be designated as the Director of Studies with responsibility to ensure supervision of the candidate on a regular and frequent basis, and to act as the principal point of contact for administrative matters. They will also be accountable to the Research Institute in the first instance and to the RDC for the proper conduct of the research programme including compliance with relevant University policies, eg acting as Project Safety Supervisor under the revised Health and Safety Regulations. The Director of Studies must be a member of the permanent staff of, or have a contract of employment with, the University.

E6.4 Role of Advisers

In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.

E6.5 Restrictions on candidates acting as supervisors

A candidate for a research degree of any institution of higher education is ineligible to act as Director of Studies for research degree candidates but may act as a second supervisor or adviser.

E6.6 Change in supervisory arrangements

The approval of the relevant Research Institute must be obtained for any change in supervision arrangements (see List of Forms at Appendix B).

E7 Monitoring and supporting student progress

E7.1 Research Degrees Annual Feedback and Monitoring Exercise

The University will establish at least annually whether the candidate is:

- a) still actively engaged on the research programme;
- b) maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisors;
- c) likely to achieve the academic standards of the degree at the level in question;
- d) likely to complete successfully within the normal maximum permissible timescale (see M5.1 above).

As part of this process, the Research Degrees Committee will, at least annually, consider the outcome of the monitoring process within Faculties. In the light of this consideration, the Committee will take appropriate action which may result in student withdrawal for reasons which may include lack of engagement, lack of progress etc.

E7.2 Student Withdrawal

In line with E7.1 above and/or due to other factors, members of academic staff, who will normally be the supervisory team, may instigate a student withdrawal based on relevant evidence and sound academic judgement. *Some* examples of reasons for instigating a student withdrawal are as follows:

- lack of progress
- lack of engagement
- failing to meet the required standard of academic writing
- not meeting the student responsibilities as outlined in the University's Code of Practice.

Other internal or external factors which impact on candidates' registration status may also be taken into account when instigating a withdrawal. This could be for example where Home Office rules apply and where candidates do not have a valid visa for continuing their study at the University.

E7.3 Responsibilities of the PGR Lead and/or Postgraduate Research Tutor

To help the effective monitoring and support of research degree candidates, each Research Institute which admits research degree candidates will designate a senior member of staff as PGR Lead (Research Degrees). Research Institute support structures also allow for a supporting Postgraduate Research Tutor (or Tutors) to assist the PGR Lead in supporting the research student community.

E8 Examinations - General

E8.1 Stages of the examination

The examination for the Master of English by Research will have two stages: firstly the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by oral examination. Reasonable adjustments will be made to the oral examination for candidates with disabilities.

E8.2 Extenuating circumstances affecting the oral examination

- A candidate will normally be examined orally on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where for exceptional reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life, the Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination on the due date and time previously set, the Sub-Committee may agree that the oral examination be postponed to a suitable later date

Requests for consideration of such exceptional extenuating circumstances should be made by letter, as soon as possible before the date of the oral examination, to the Doctoral School for consideration by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee in consultation with the examiners. The candidate must also provide independent documentary evidence in support of the request, such as medical evidence. Letters from family members, friends, or supervisors are not normally acceptable. The letter should include the following information:

- Summary of the nature of the circumstances;
- Period of time to which the circumstances apply and the candidate's view of the effect of the circumstances on his/her ability to undertake the oral examination;
- An indication of the documentary evidence attached (eg. medical note, self-certification form) in support of the extenuating circumstances;
- Any other effects, or anything else which should be taken into account.

The Chair of the Research Degrees Committee and the Examiners will normally disregard circumstances which candidates are expected to cope with as part of the normal difficulties and distressing aspects of life which may occur. Their consideration will include the following:

- Severity and timescale of the circumstances
- Extent to which the circumstances can be linked to timing of the oral examination
- Documentary evidence available eg medical note

E8.3 Location of the examination

The oral examination will normally be held in the UK. Exceptionally, on receipt of a justifiable case by the candidate's Director of Studies, the Research Degrees Committee may give approval for the examination to take place overseas via video-conferencing.

E8.4 Involvement of supervisors in the oral examination

Supervisors may, with the consent of the candidate, attend the oral examination and speak if called upon, but must not participate in the preliminary private meeting of the examiners, and must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.

E8.5 Independent Chair

All research degree oral examinations from the 2013-14 session onwards will have oversight by an independent chair. In line with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Part B, Chapter 11) the chair will be a non-examining chair who may not contribute to the assessment judgement. The overarching role of the Chair is to ensure that:

- the viva voce examination process is rigorous, fair, reliable and consistent;

- the candidate has the opportunity to defend the thesis and respond to all questions posed by the examiners;
- the questioning of the candidate by the examiners is conducted fairly and professionally;
- the examiners adhere to the University's regulations and procedures;
- advice is given about the regulations to the examiners and the candidate if required.

Although the chair will not take part in the formal assessment process, they will normally have the following:

- access to a copy of the thesis during the examination,
- sight of the examiner's preliminary reports before the examination commences, and
- will sign off the examiners' joint recommendation form when the examiners have completed their assessment in order to verify that due process has been followed
- will complete a short report on the oral examination for audit purposes.

E8.6 Recommendations on conferment of the degree

Following completion of the examination, the examiners will make a recommendation on the award of Master of English by Research, via the Doctoral School staff, to the Vice Chancellor, who acts on behalf of the University's Academic Board in conferring the degree.

E8.7 Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards

The degree of Master of English by Research may be awarded as an aegrotat or posthumously on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate that is ready for submission for examination (or equivalent published material or papers accompanied by a critical introduction for an aegrotat award). In such cases the University's Research Degrees Committee shall seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the oral examination taken place. Please see **Policy for Research Degrees Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards** on the Research Degrees Blackboard site.

E8.8 Procedures for handling allegations of research misconduct

The University has comprehensive regulations and procedures for dealing with research misconduct. A copy can be found on the web at http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/research-ethics-procedures.pdf.

E8.8 Grounds for declaring examinations null and void

The Research Degrees Committee must ensure that all examinations are conducted wholly in accordance with the University's regulations. If the Sub-Committee is made aware of any non-compliance, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.

E9 Preparation for the Examination

E9.1 Approval of examination arrangements

The Director of Studies must seek the Research Degrees Committee's approval (see List of Forms at Appendix B) for the candidate's examination arrangements normally **no later than one month** before the expected date of submission of the thesis. The examination may not take place until the examination arrangements have been approved. In special circumstances the Research Degrees Committee may act directly to appoint examiners and arrange the examination of a candidate.

E9.2 Procedure for submitting the thesis

The Director of SRD's staff will notify the candidate of the procedure for submission of the thesis (including the number of copies to be submitted for examination) and any conditions to be satisfied before the candidate may be considered eligible for examination.

E9.3 Notification of date of oral examination

The Doctoral School staff will notify the candidate, all supervisors and the examiners of the date of the oral examination.

E9.4 Briefing of examiners

The Doctoral School staff will send a copy of the thesis to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report form (see List of Forms at Appendix B) and the University's regulations, and will ensure that the examiners are properly briefed as to their duties.

E9.5 Completion of examiners' preliminary reports

The Doctoral School staff will ensure that all the examiners have completed and returned their preliminary reports to the University before the oral examination takes place.

E10 The Candidate's Responsibilities in the Examination

E10.1 Timely Submission of the thesis

The candidate must ensure that the thesis is submitted to the Doctoral School staff within the relevant normal maximum permissible timescale (see M5.1).

E10.2 Responsibility for the decision to submit the thesis

The submission of the thesis for examination must be at the sole discretion of the candidate. Although a candidate would be unwise to submit the thesis against the advice of the supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Similarly, candidates

should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.

E10.3 Satisfying conditions of eligibility for examination

The candidate must satisfy any conditions of eligibility for examination required by the University.

E10.4 Candidate's exclusion from arrangement of the examination

The candidate must take no part in the arrangement of the examination and must have no formal contact with the external examiner(s) between the appointment of the examiners and the oral examination.

E10.5 Candidate's declaration

The candidate must confirm (see List of Forms at Appendix B) their intention for the thesis to be assessed by completing a declaration form. This must be done at first assessment and also for resubmissions. The declaration will confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award (for example at another institution) but see E4.5 for treatment of the Supporting Programme of Related Studies. The candidate will not be precluded from incorporating in the thesis, covering a wider field, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, provided that it is indicated, on the declaration form and also in the thesis, which work has been so incorporated (for example where some of the work may have been developed from other masters study)

E10.6 Required format of the thesis

The candidate must ensure that the format of the thesis, as submitted for examination and as finalised following examination, is in accordance with the requirements of the University's regulations (see section E11).

E11 Thesis

E11.1 Format requirements

The following format requirements, which are based on guidance in the ISO 7144 (1986) standard, must be adhered to in the format of the submitted thesis as follows:

- a) Theses must be bound as indicated in E11.2;
- b) theses must normally be in A4 format; the Research Degrees Sub-Committee may give permission for a thesis to be submitted in another format where it is satisfied that the contents of the thesis can be better expressed in that format;

- c) copies of the thesis must be presented in a permanent and legible form either in typescript or print; where copies are produced by photocopying processes, these must be of a permanent nature; where word processor and printing devices are used, the printer must be capable of producing text of satisfactory quality; the size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, must not be less than 2.00 mm for capitals and 1.5 mm for x-height (that is, the height of lower-case x);
- d) the thesis must be printed on the recto side of the page only; the paper must be white and within the range 70 g/m² to 100 g/m²;
- e) double or one-and-a-half spacing should be used in typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used.
- f) pages must be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages. Page numbers must be positioned centrally at the bottom of the page, 20 mm above the edge;
- g) the title page must give the following information:
 - the full title of the thesis;
 - the full name of the author;
 - that the degree is awarded by the University;
 - the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements;
 - the Collaborating Organisation(s), if any; and
 - the month and year of submission.

E11.2 Binding of theses

Theses should be submitted for examination in a temporarily bound form which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed.² A thesis submitted in a temporarily bound form must be in its final form in all respects except the binding, the incorporation of any amendments required by the examiners and the removal of any previously published material (see E11.7).

Following examination and the incorporation of any amendments required by the examiners, the thesis must be bound in purple binders cloth, in a permanent binding of the approved type before the degree may be awarded. The University Learning Centre copy must be bound as follows:

- a) the binding must be of a fixed type so that pages cannot be removed or replaced; the front and rear boards must have sufficient rigidity to support the weight of the work when standing upright; and
- b) in at least 24pt type the outside front board must bear the title of the work, the name and initials of the candidate, the qualification, and the year of

² For instance, thermal-binding which is a method of binding single pages by gluing them together on the spine of a document.

submission; the same information (excluding the title of work) must be shown on the spine of the work, reading downwards.

The candidate must confirm that the contents of the permanently bound thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except the binding and the incorporation of any required amendments.

E11.3 Submission of theses in English

Except with the specific permission of the Research Degrees Committee, the thesis must be presented in English (see paragraph M4.6).

E11.4 The Abstract

There must be an abstract of approximately 300 words bound into the thesis which provides a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to knowledge in the subject. This should be single spaced and one side of A4 paper in length. A loose copy of the abstract must be submitted with the thesis. The loose copy of the abstract must have the name of the author, the degree for which the thesis is submitted, and the title of the thesis as a heading.

E11.5 Objectives and referencing

The thesis must include a statement of the candidate's objectives and must acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and any assistance received.

E11.6 Inclusion of published work

The candidate is free to publish material in advance of the thesis and reference must be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of published material may be submitted with the initial soft bound copy of the thesis for examination. However, to respect copyright laws, any such published material must be removed from the final copy of the thesis before it is published.

A thesis submitted in a temporary bound form must be in its final form in all respects except for the binding, the incorporation of any amendments required by the examiners and the removal of any previously published material.

Following examination and the incorporation of any amendments required by the examiners, the thesis must be submitted in electronic form (PDF/A format) to rdcadmin@shu.ac.uk together with a Thesis Deposit Form. PDF/A is a standardised version of the PDF format which is suitable for the University's long-term archiving requirements.

The candidate must confirm that the contents of the electronic thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except the incorporation of any required amendments.

E11.7 Maximum word limit

The text of the thesis should normally not exceed 30,000 words excluding ancillary data and references.

E11.8 Dissemination of research findings

Following the award of the degree, The Doctoral School ' staff will send the electronic copy of the thesis in PDF/A format to the University Library. The thesis will be uploaded to the Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) and the metadata will be made available through the Electronic Thesis online Service (EThoS) of The British Library. The Director of Studies will be responsible for sending a link to the thesis to any Collaborating Organisation.

However, in cases where candidates are granted an embargo period, usually of 12 months, to curtail dissemination of their research for other publishing reasons, then the full text of thesis will not be made available until the embargo period expires.

E11.9 Confidentiality restrictions

The Research Degrees Committee may agree (see M4.8) that a confidentiality restriction be placed on the thesis for a specified period. In such cases, for the duration of the period, the thesis will not be made freely available in the Learning Centre of the University (and Collaborating Organisation, if any) and copies of the abstract, title page and contents will not be available in the British Library. Instead, the thesis must, immediately on completion of the programme of work, be retained by the University on restricted access and be made available only to those who were directly involved in the project.

The Research Degrees Committee may approve an application for confidentiality normally only in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. A thesis must not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. Although the normal maximum period of confidentiality restriction is two years, in exceptional circumstances the Research Degrees Committee may approve a longer period. However, where a shorter period would be adequate, the Research Degrees Committee will not automatically grant confidentiality for two years.

E11.10 Copyright

Copyright in the thesis submitted for examination remains with the candidate. All other intellectual property rights embodied in submission pieces are owned by the University. The physical copies of the thesis submitted for assessment become the property of the University, whilst other artefacts for assessment remain the personal property of the candidate.

E12 Examiners

E12.1 Size and composition of examining team

A candidate must be examined by at least two and normally not more than three examiners (except where paragraph E13.5 applies), of whom at least one must be an external examiner. The examining team must have suitable experience and expertise, be unbiased, and be clearly independent of the supervisor, of the student, and of each other in order that no conflicts of interest arise.

E12.2 External Examiners

An external examiner must be independent both of the University and of the Collaborating Organisation and must not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor or adviser. An external examiner must not normally be a supervisor of another candidate at the University. Former members of staff and former students of the University may normally not be approved as external examiners until three years after the termination of their association with the University. The Research Degrees Committee must also ensure that an external examiner is not approved so frequently that his/her familiarity with the Research Institute might prejudice objective judgement.

E12.3 Internal examiners

An internal examiner is defined as an examiner who is:

- a) a member of staff of the University; or
- b) a member of staff of the candidate's Collaborating Organisation.

E12.4 Exclusion of supervisors from examining teams

Members of the candidate's supervisory team may not be appointed as examiners for that candidate.

E12.5 Examiners for candidates who are University staff or staff of collaborating organisations

Where the candidate and the internal examiner are both members of staff of the same organisation, a second external examiner must be appointed. This means that the candidate will have one internal and two external examiners to ensure objectivity prevails in the examination.

E12.6 Examiners' expertise

Examiners must be experienced in research in the general area of the candidate's thesis and, where practicable, have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined.

E12.7 Examiners' experience

At least one external examiner must have substantial experience (i.e. at least several instances) of examining research degree candidates in the field and at the level in question. Where this is not possible, for example in emerging subject areas, the Research Degrees Committee may exercise its discretion by ensuring that the proposed examining team includes an internal examiner who has significant examining experience outside the University.

E12.8 Exclusion of candidates from examining

No candidate for a research degree may act as an examiner.

E13 **First Examination**

E13.1 Preliminary assessment of the thesis

Each examiner will read the thesis and submit (see List of Forms at Appendix B), an independent preliminary report on it to the Doctoral School staff before any oral examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner must confirm that they have read the thesis and will assess the student at an oral examination.

E13.2 Examiners' action following the examination

Following the oral examination the examiners must, where they are in agreement, submit to the Doctoral School staff a joint report and recommendation (see List of Forms at Appendix B) relating to the award of the degree. The examiners' preliminary reports and joint recommendation must together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to justify the chosen recommendation (see E13.3 below). Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations must be submitted.

E13.3 Recommendations available to the examiners

Following the completion of the examination the examiners may recommend³ that:

- a) the candidate be **awarded** the degree; or
- b) the candidate be awarded the **degree subject to amendments** being made to the thesis (see paragraph E14.4); or
- c) the candidate be permitted to re-submit for the degree and be **re-examined**, with or without an oral examination (see section E14); or

³Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they must make it clear that the final decision rests with the Vice-Chancellor acting as Chair of the Academic Board.

- d) the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see paragraphs E14.8).

Where amendments are required (as in option b) the candidate must submit the corrected thesis **within four months FTE of the date of the oral examination**. The Research Degrees Committee may, where there are good reasons, approve an extension of this period.

E13.4 Amendments to the thesis

Where the examiners recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s) (see sub-paragraph E13.3b), they must indicate on the appropriate form what amendments are required (see List of Forms). The examiner responsible for checking the amendments should normally respond within 4 weeks.

E13.5 Dissenting Examiners

Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Research Degrees Committee may:

- 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 – especially if the internal examiner(s) disagree(s) strongly with the view of the external examiner; any such appointment must be made in accordance with the approved procedures for the appointment of examiners.

E13.6 Use of additional external examiners following examination

Where an additional external examiner is appointed under sub-paragraph E13.5c, he/she must prepare an independent preliminary report on the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination. The additional examiner must not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner, the examination process will be completed as set out in paragraph E13.3.

E13.7 Use of a further examination to supplement the oral

A further examination in addition to the oral examination may be requested by the examiners. In such cases the approval of Research Degrees Committee must be sought without delay. Where such an examination is arranged following an oral examination, it must normally be held within two calendar months of the oral examination unless the Research Degrees Committee permits otherwise. Any such examination must be deemed to be part of the candidate's first examination.

E13.8 Outright failure

The Academic Board may decide, on the recommendation of the examiners, that the degree be not awarded and that no re-examination be permitted. This would normally apply in cases where breaches of ethics had taken place or plagiarism had been proven. In such cases, the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, to be forwarded to the candidate by the Doctoral School staff.

E14 **Re-examination**

E14.1 Requirements for re-examination

One re-examination may be permitted by the Research Degrees Sub- Committee, subject to the following requirements:

- a) a candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners at the first examination, including where appropriate the oral examination or any further examination required may, on the recommendation of the examiners and with the approval of the Research Degrees Committee, be permitted to revise the thesis and be re-examined;
- b) the examiners must provide the candidate, through the Doctoral School staff, with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission; and
- c) the candidate must submit for re-examination **within the period of one calendar year from the date of the oral examination**. The Research Degrees Committee may, where there are good reasons, approve an extension of this period.

E14.2 Appointment of an additional external examiner for the re-examination

The Research Degrees Committee may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination; any such appointment must be made in accordance with the approved procedures for the appointment of examiners.

E14.3 Forms of re-examination

There are four forms of re-examination:

- a) where the candidate's performance in the first oral examination was satisfactory but the thesis was unsatisfactory and the examiners on re-examination certify that the thesis as revised is satisfactory, the Research Degrees Committee may exempt the candidate from further examination, oral or otherwise;
- b) where the candidate's performance in the first oral examination or further examination was unsatisfactory and the thesis was also unsatisfactory, any

re-examination must normally include a re-examination of the thesis and an oral examination (but see E14.11);

- c) where on the first examination the candidate's thesis was satisfactory but the performance in the oral and/or other examination(s) was not satisfactory the candidate must be re-examined in the oral examination(s), **within 6 months**, without being requested to revise and re-submit the thesis;
- d) where on the first examination the thesis was satisfactory but the candidate's performance in relation to the other requirements for the award of the degree was not satisfactory, the examiners may propose instead a different form of re-examination to test the candidate's abilities; such examination may take place only with the approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

E14.4 Preliminary assessment of the thesis on re-examination

In the case of a re-examination under sub-paragraphs E14.3a, b or c, each examiner must read and examine the thesis and submit an independent preliminary report (see List of Forms at Appendix B) on it to the Doctoral School staff before any oral examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner must consider whether the revised thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree (as set out in paragraph E1.4) and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination.

E14.5 Examiners' action following the re-examination

Following the re-examination of the thesis under sub-paragraph E14.3a or following an oral or other examination under E14.3b, c or, d, the examiners must, where they are in agreement, submit to the Doctoral School staff, a joint report and recommendation (see List of Forms at Appendix B) relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners must together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to justify the chosen recommendation (E14.6).

Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations must be submitted.

E14.6 Recommendations available to the examiners following re-examination

Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend⁴ that:

- a) the candidate be awarded the degree; or

⁴Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they must make it clear that the decision rests with the Vice-Chancellor acting as Chair of the Academic Board.

- b) the candidate be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis (see paragraph E14.7); or
- c) the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see E14.12).

E14.7 Amendments to the thesis following re-examination

Where the examiners recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal and/or the external examiner(s) (see sub-paragraph E14.6b), they must indicate on the appropriate form what amendments are required (see List of Forms at Appendix B).

E14.8 Dissenting examiners following re-examination

Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Research Degrees Committee may:

- 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 – especially if the internal examiner(s) disagree(s) strongly with the view of the external examiner; any such appointment must be made in accordance with the approved procedures for the appointment of examiners.

E14.9 Use of additional external examiners following re-examination

Where an additional external examiner is appointed under sub-paragraph E14.2, he/she must prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination. The examiner must not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the examination process will be completed as set out in paragraph E8.5.

E14.10 Use of a further examination to supplement the oral on re-examination

A further examination in addition to the oral examination may be requested by the examiners. In such cases the approval of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee must be sought without delay. Where such an examination is arranged following an oral examination, it must normally be held within two calendar months of the oral examination unless the Research Degrees Sub-Committee permits otherwise.

E14.11 Dispensing with the oral examination on re-examination

In the case of a re-examination under sub-paragraph E14.3b, where the examiners are of the opinion that the thesis is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination, they may recommend that the Research Degrees Committee dispense with the oral

examination and not award the degree under sub-paragraph E14.6c (see also paragraph E14.12).

E14.12 Failure on re-examination

The Academic Board may decide, on the recommendation of the examiners, that the degree be not awarded and that no re-examination be permitted. In such cases, the examiners must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, to be forwarded to the candidate by the Doctoral School staff.

E15 Appeals Against the Recommendations of the Examiners

The University has specific appeals procedures for research degree candidates. These were reviewed and updated during the 2005-6 academic session to meet statutory requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The appeals procedures were updated again in the 2014-15 session. The revised procedures can be found on MyHallam in the 'Rules and Regulations' section.

E16 Complaints relating to the quality of the candidate's learning experience

The University has a comprehensive complaints policy and procedures against teaching or service-related provision covering students on all programmes of study. A copy of these can be found on MyHallam in the 'Rules and Regulations' section.

Research Degrees Committee**Terms of reference 2020-21**

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Purpose
To be accountable to the Creating Knowledge Board for delivery and development of the University's Research Degree Provision (PhDs, Professional Doctorates, MPhils and Masters by Research).
2. Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Shaping and direction: Establishing overall direction, prioritisation and coherence of research degree provision. b. Oversight of delivery: Ensuring that strategic plans and programmes of activity are in place, reviewing delivery of these, and ensuring that emerging difficulties and questions are resolved. c. Resourcing: Prioritising and allocating of strategic resources, and identifying external resources to support delivery of strategic outcomes. d. Risk identification and management: Identifying and reviewing strategic risks and agreeing and monitoring actions to address them. e. Communication and engagement: Overseeing plans and activities to communicate with and engage internal and external audiences with work under the committee. f. Equalities: Ensuring that the equality and diversity impacts of decisions and actions are reviewed and addressed.
3. Specific responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic governance of research degree regulations, policies and procedures regarding research student progression, assessment, and supervision (including authority to approve changes to regulations; institutional oversight of research degree examinations, supervisory capacity and workplanning, and research student learning contract content)

2. Research degree quality and standards, external and internal audits and reviews (e.g. Research Excellence Framework, QAA audit)
3. Home and International research student recruitment strategies, including marketing, portfolio of provision, and collaborations (including oversight of student numbers, income streams, conditions of award, CMA compliance, and E&D monitoring)
4. Student experience and voice (including research student and supervisor training and development, community activities, retention, employability, opportunities for feedback, relations with the Students' Union regarding the student experience, and external assessments e.g. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey)
5. Fees policy, scholarships, and external funding (including oversight of collaborative partnerships, and relationships with external funders.)

4. Membership

Chair	Doug Cleaver, Director, Doctoral School		
Members	PGR Lead from each of the 4 Research Institutes	Chair of Research Ethics Committee	Head of Doctoral Training
	A Professional Doctorate Programme Lead	Head of Library Research Support	Doctoral Policy and Process Manager
	A Masters by Research Programme Lead	Representative from Teaching Quality Committee	Doctoral School Manager

- The Committee and its constitution will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains necessary and fit for purpose. The Chair will lead the review.
- Secretarial support for the Committee will be provided by the Doctoral School

5. Meetings

- Meetings to initially be held monthly
- Meetings to last no longer than 2 hours
- Quoracy of 6 members.

6. Operational groups reporting to the Research Degrees Committee

- Task and finish groups established as and when required

CURRENT LIST OF MASTER OF ENGLISH BY RESEARCH

Form	Description
RF1M	<i>Application for Approval of Master of English by Research Programme</i>
RF3	<i>Application for Approval of the Examiners and Thesis Title</i>
RF4	<i>Notification of the Arrangements for the Oral Examination</i>
RF5M	<i>Examiner's Preliminary Report and Recommendation on a Candidate for the Degree of Master of English by Research</i>
RF6M	<i>Examiners' Final Recommendation on a Candidate for the Degree of Master of English by Research</i>
RF7M	<i>Examiner's Preliminary Report and Recommendation on the Re-examination of a Candidate for the Degree of Master of English by Research</i>
RF8M	<i>Examiners' Final Recommendation on the Re-examination of a Candidate for the Degree of Master of English by Research</i>
RF9	<i>Application for Changes to Registration (Additional Time to Complete, Change in Mode of Study, Change of Supervisory Arrangements, Shortening of Period of Registration, and Notification of Withdrawal of Registration)</i>
RFBIS	<i>Application for Break in Study</i>
RF10	<i>Application for Transfer of Registration to Sheffield Hallam University</i>
RFConf	<i>Application for Confidentiality of Thesis</i>

