

Regulations for Research Programmes of Study (MPhil, PhD and MD[Res])

Academic Year: 2026/2027

Contents

GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	3
PART 1: Context	5
Section 1: Introduction	5
Section 2: Scope.....	5
Section 3: Principles.....	5
PART 2: Admission and Registration	6
Section 4: General Entry Requirements	6
Section 5: Special Case Admissions	7
Section 6: Registration.....	7
Section 7: Student-led Programme Transfers	8
PART 3: Attendance and Progression	9
Section 8: Attendance	9
Section 9: Progression	10
Section 10: Submission of Thesis.....	13
Section 11: Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) or UKRI Doctoral Focus Award (DFA) Students	14
PART 4: Requirements of a Thesis and Examination	14
Section 12: Requirements of a Thesis	14
Section 13: Availability of Theses	17
Section 14: Conduct of Examinations.....	18
Section 15: Examination Outcomes.....	20
Section 16: Posthumous and Aegrotat Award Provisions	23
Section 17: Notification of Results of Examinations.....	23
Section 18: General	23

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following list defines some of the terms used throughout this document.

Academic Regulations: the regulations agreed by the Senate committee of Imperial College London (“Imperial”) that articulate the rules governing all programmes of study and students registered on them in relation to academic matters. In addition to the academic regulations, the Council approves the ‘*Regulations of Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine*’, forming part of Imperial’s [governing documents](#), known as the “College Regulations”.

Active Research: part of the student’s study at the university in which they are carrying out specific research activity for their degree. Active Research would end when a student enters writing up status or has submitted their thesis for examination without entering writing up.

Credit Level: A numerical value denoting the depth of learning involved to meet the learning outcomes for that module. Aligned to the UK’s [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).

Early Stage Assessment (ESA): examination taken before 12 months of study (FT) or 24 months (PT) on a MD[Res] or PhD programme which confirms the suitability of the candidate to continue on their target award.

Enrolment: The annual procedure by which it is confirmed that students have progressed adequately, confirmed their mode of study and have made arrangements for the payment of fees for that academic year.

Late Stage Review (LSR): examination taken before 24 months of study (FT) or 48 months (PT) on a MD[Res] or PhD programme which confirms the suitability of the candidate to continue on their target award.

Programme of study: The approved curriculum leading to a specified and named award of the university as followed by an individual student.

Progress Review: A formal monitoring point completed by 36 months (full time) or 72 months (part time) to ensure that their research is progressing and can be completed within the expected timescales.

Progression: The movement from one stage of a programme to the next. Progression is subject to successfully meeting the requirements for each progression point (MPhil transfer to PhD, ESA, LSR)

Reassessment: The opportunity for a student to retrieve failure at a progression point (MPhil transfer to PhD interview, ESA, LSR) or final examination for their programme of study.

Registration: The act of confirming that the student has met the conditions of admission and commenced a programme of study. Registration occurs once at the beginning of the relevant programme of study.

Regulation: An agreed rule set by the university which must be followed.

Suspension to Regulations: Agreement by the Academic Registrar (or designated nominee) to exceptionally waive or amend an academic regulation for a student(s).

Target award: The named qualification for which a student registers.

Writing up status: period of enrolment in which all active research activity has been completed and the student is writing up their research in their final thesis.

PART 1: Context

Section 1: Introduction

1. These regulations apply to postgraduate research degrees for registered students of Imperial College London ('the university' or 'Imperial'). These regulations apply except where specific exemptions (either to specific regulations or to the regulations as a whole) have been approved by the Senate.
2. These regulations should be read in conjunction with the university's related policies and procedures and other supporting documentation published by the university.
3. The procedures and information given in any accompanying policies or procedures are considered to have the full authority of the regulations. However, appendices or footnotes may be amended or withdrawn as appropriate by the university without reference to the Senate.
4. It is a student's responsibility to ensure they have read and understood the regulations. A student's misinterpretation or lack of awareness of these regulations will not be considered a valid reason for non-compliance.
5. In the case of any dispute about the interpretation of these regulations, the decision of the Academic Registrar (or nominee) shall be final.

Section 2: Scope

6. These regulations apply to the awards listed below and to students registered at the university on programmes of study leading to these awards:
 - a. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), including Intercolated PhD as part of the MBBS programme
 - b. Doctor of Medicine (Research) (MD[Res])
 - c. Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
7. Unless specifically noted, all references to PhD in these regulations apply to students registered for an Intercolated PhD as part of the MBBS programme.
8. These regulations do not apply to taught undergraduate or postgraduate programmes (including MRes), to year 1 of 1+3 research programmes, or to the credit-bearing taught elements of integrated Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT)/Doctoral Focal Award (DFA) and Doctoral Training Centre (DTC)/Doctoral Landscape Award programmes, which are covered by the [Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study](#).
9. The Doctor in Engineering (EngD) is covered by separate regulations.

Section 3: Principles

10. The university's academic frameworks are designed to:
 - a. Ensure the university is able to manage and maintain academic standards.
 - b. Ensure consistency in the ways in which students experience the delivery of a programme of study.

11. The university's academic framework operates within the parameters of both the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).
12. The university's research degrees are not credit-rated but are aligned with the academic levels of the FHEQ and the QF-EHEA as follows:

Qualification	FHEQ Level	QF-EHEA cycle
PhD	8	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
MD[Res]	8	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
MPhil	7	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications

PART 2: Admission and Registration

Section 4: General Entry Requirements

13. The normal minimum entrance requirements for registration for PhD or MPhil programmes are:
 - a. Normally, at least an upper second class honours degree and a Master's degree from an approved UK university / institution, or degrees approved by the university as of comparable standards awarded by recognised overseas universities / institutions in subjects deemed appropriate for the programme to which admission is sought; or
 - b. An MSci or MEng degree awarded with at least upper second class honours; or
 - c. A qualification at FHEQ Level 7 such as; a registrable qualification in Medicine or a Master's degree, awarded by an approved UK university / institution, or qualifications approved by the university as of comparable standards awarded by recognised overseas universities / institutions in subjects deemed appropriate for the programme to which admission is sought; or
 - d. A professional or other qualification obtained by written examinations and approved by the university for admission; and
 - e. The minimum English language entry requirement as set out for the programme of study.
14. The entry requirements for the Intercolated PhD programme taken as part of the MBBS award are:
 - a. Satisfactory Performance in the early year(s) of the MBBS programme with no previous examination resits; and
 - b. A BSc classification of at least an Upper Second Class Honours.
15. The normal minimum entrance requirements for registration for the MD[Res] programme:
 - a. a registrable qualification appropriate to the programme to be followed awarded by a UK university in Medicine, or a qualification of an equivalent standard appropriate to the programme to be followed awarded by a university outside the UK; and,

- b. be eligible for full registration or hold limited registration with the General Medical Council (GMC).
- 16. Where a student's eligibility for registration on an MD[Res] changes during their studies, as they have become temporarily or permanently ineligible for full registration or ceased registration with the GMC, the university reserves the right to review their continued study on the MD[Res].
- 17. All programmes of study in the university are conducted in English. All students must fulfil the English Language requirements for admissions. Any specific departmental requirements above the university minimum set out in 13a-e should be specified to students in advance of application.
- 18. Every applicant must make an application to the university in accordance with the procedure set out in the [Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy](#).
- 19. Research degree students may be permitted to transfer their research degree registration status from another university or institution to Imperial with exemption from part of the programme. Applicants accepted under these arrangements are required to undertake active research and follow a programme of study at Imperial of not less than 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. Students are not permitted to enter the Writing Up Period during this time. For further details governing the transfer of registration see the relevant section of the [Admissions with Advanced Standing for Doctoral Students](#)
- 20. Applicants who have previously enrolled on a postgraduate research degree programme at the university and who subsequently withdrew, either voluntarily or due to academic failure, will not normally be re-admitted to undertake research in the same or a closely related academic field, including with advanced standing.

Section 5: Special Case Admissions

- 21. The university will consider applications where the applicant's qualifications are at the required level, but where the grades achieved do not meet the university's normal minimum entry requirements. In such circumstances, it will be at the discretion of the admitting department to make a special case, which will only be valid for someone who has considerable work experience that compensates for the degree grades being below the minimum requirement. If the department wishes to offer a place to such an applicant, the Programme Director will make a case to the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or department equivalent) for consideration. Once a decision has been made it will be conveyed to the Programme Director and Department Administrator, who will submit the decision to Admissions for approval. Subject to these requirements being fulfilled, Admissions will then issue the offer.
- 22. At the discretion of the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or department equivalent), registration for an MD[Res] may be permitted if 15.b has not been met provided the project does not involve contact with patients.

Section 6: Registration

- 23. Postgraduate research degree students must be registered on their target award and for the full length of their programme of study, including any Authorised Interruptions of Study.

24. PhD students may be permitted to undertake research at an institution approved by Imperial under the Partner Research Institution (PRI) Scheme subject to the requirements set out in para [42](#).
25. PhD students may be permitted to undertake research at a university approved by Imperial under the Split PhD Scheme subject to the requirements set out in para [43](#).
26. Students will remain registered on their programme until completion, which would include any additional time to complete amendments.
27. A student will not normally be permitted to register concurrently for more than one award of Imperial or of any other university or institution unless the scheme under which concurrent registration will operate has been approved by the Senate. Nor will any person be admitted to any assessment leading to an award of Imperial who has been admitted for assessment leading to the comparable award of another university or institution unless they have pursued separate prescribed programmes of study leading to the assessments concerned.

Section 7: Student-led Programme Transfers

28. A student registered directly for the award of MPhil may be permitted to transfer to PhD following an examination which includes a written report and an oral examination of that report. The assessment panel will include an external assessor, a member of university academic staff other than the supervisor(s) and may also include an assessor from another university department, division or institution. A transfer from MPhil to PhD can only be considered at least 12 months (full time) or 24 months (part time) from the date of the initial MPhil registration. Students that are to be successful at the transfer examination must meet the requirements of the Early Stage Assessment (ESA).
29. If a student is unsuccessful in their transfer examination, they will be permitted one further opportunity which should be completed within 6 months of their initial examination.
30. The university may permit a student to transfer from PhD to MPhil, subject to approval by the supervisor and the Director of Postgraduate Studies.
31. The university may permit a student to transfer from MD(Res) to PhD, or from PhD to MD(Res)¹, in accordance with the conditions specified by the university, provided that no transfer is permitted after entry to the examination for either one of these degrees.
32. The transferred registration will be dated from the date of the initial registration for the degree from which transfer has been made.
33. On transfer of registration, the registration for the original degree will lapse.
34. Any request to change mode of study, full time to part time or vice versa, must be approved by the supervisor and the Director of Postgraduate Studies, in accordance with the [Student-led Changes to Registration Status Procedure](#).

¹ Subject to meeting the additional entry requirements for MD[Res], see para 15

PART 3: Attendance and Progression

Section 8: Attendance

35. Students are required to pursue a regular programme of study at the university under the direction of their supervisor(s), and in line with the [Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership](#).
36. The MPhil or MD[Res] programme of study will require attendance at training courses and lectures as prescribed by the Early Career Researcher Institute and a student's department. Failure to complete the requisite training courses may prevent a student from entering for examination (see para 58).
37. The PhD programme of study will require attendance at training courses and lectures as prescribed by the Early Career Researcher Institute and a student's department (see para 57). Failure to complete the requisite training courses may result in a student's registration being transferred from PhD to MPhil or prevent a student from entering the PhD examination (see para 59 and 60).
38. A student accepted under transfer of registration arrangements in para 19 may be exempted from part of the programme of study for the PhD provided that the programme of study followed at the university includes no less than 12 months full time or 24 months part time of active research. The milestone and training course requirements for a student accepted under a transfer of registration will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
39. A programme of study must be pursued continuously except where a student has been granted an Authorised Interruption of Studies through the [Student-led Changes to Registration Status Procedure](#).
40. Students are required to undertake the majority of their research at the university except where their registration makes provision for study elsewhere (see paras 41 to 43). In such cases PhD or MD[Res] students are required to spend a minimum of 12 months in attendance at the university. MPhil students are required to spend a minimum of 6 months in attendance at the university.
41. Where students plan to carry out research away from the university for a period of two weeks or more as part of their programme, the [Guidelines for external study leave](#) must be followed.
42. The minimum attendance requirement for students registered under the Partner Research Institution (PRI) scheme is a minimum of two months each academic year regardless of the location of the PRI. The two-month per year attendance requirement does not apply after a student has entered the writing up period.
43. The minimum attendance requirement for students registered under the Split PhD Scheme is 12 months over the duration of the active research section of the programme (i.e. excluding any period of registration in which the student is on an interruption of study or in writing up period) regardless of the location of the host institution.
44. In line with the university's [Research Degree Student Leave Policy](#), students, including international students with a student visa, are entitled to a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of

40 days per year (including public holidays and university closure days) of annual leave (pro rata for part time students).

Section 9: Progression

45. The university has identified a number of milestones for PhD and MD[Res] students to achieve through their programme of Study. The university requires that a student's progress during PhD and MD[Res] registration must be formally monitored at key stages after the date of initial registration: Early Stage Assessment (ESA) by 12 months (full time) and 24 months (part time); Late Stage Review (LSR) by 24 months (full time) and 48 months (part time); and a Progress Review by 36 months (full time) and 72 months (part time).
46. Where a candidate has entered for examination between 18 and 24 months (30 – 36 months) for part-time students) from their initial registration may be exempted from the review above.
47. MPhil students are not required to complete an ESA, LSR or Progress Review, and will be reviewed in line with agreed departmental procedures.
48. Some departments require students to submit an Initial Research Plan within three months (full time) and six months (part time) from initial registration. Where this is a requirement, the department is responsible for ensuring that students are made aware of this.

Early Stage Assessment (ESA)

49. The university requires that assessment of a student's PhD or MD[Res] research potential, to determine whether their registration on their programme can continue, will be determined by an examination. The ESA must be completed by 12 months (full time) and 24 months (part time), which will include one opportunity for re-assessment. Any extension to this deadline would require approval. The assessment involves the submission of a written report and an oral examination on the report. The assessment panel will include at least one independent academic assessor (a member of academic staff independent from the research 'group', i.e. from the project and the supervisor) in addition to the supervisor(s).
50. The purpose of the Early Stage Assessment is to confirm that the student:
 - a. understands their research problem adequately;
 - b. has a critical awareness of the relevant literature on the subject;
 - c. has the capacity to pursue research.
51. Students are required to submit their ESA through Turnitin and must follow the university's [*Guidance for Students on Submitting an Early Stage Assessment \(ESA\) to Turnitin*](#).
52. The decision to allow a student's PhD/MD[Res] registration to continue must be based on the following factors:
 - a. The student must submit a written report
 - b. The written report must be submitted to Turnitin
 - c. The student must be orally examined on the report.

These arrangements apply to all PhD and MD[Res] students whether full time or part time, registered under the Partner Research Institute (PRI) Scheme, Split PhD Scheme or for Joint PhDs (unless a variation has been approved by the university).

53. If the university determines that a student's progress is such that they cannot continue, the student may be required to withdraw from the university at this stage. Alternatively, for those registered for a PhD, the university may transfer their registration to the degree of MPhil. The date of MPhil registration would, in this case, be backdated to the date of the initial PhD registration.

Late Stage Review (LSR)

54. The university requires that a review of a student's PhD/MD[Res] research ability will be undertaken to determine whether registration of the PhD can continue. The form of the review will be determined by the student's department and approved by the Director of Postgraduate Studies. Faculty Education Committees (or equivalent) will maintain oversight of departmental LSR requirements via an annual audit. The LSR must be completed by 24 months (full time) and 48 months (part time), which will include one opportunity for re-assessment. Any extension to this deadline would require approval. The assessment panel will include at least one independent academic assessor (a member of academic staff independent from the research 'group', i.e. from the project and the supervisor) in addition to the supervisor(s).
55. The purpose of the Late Stage Review is to confirm that the student:
- a. understands their research problem adequately;
 - b. has a critical awareness of the relevant literature on the subject;
 - c. has the capacity to pursue research;
 - d. has a reasonable plan for future work;
 - e. will complete within the registration period.

These arrangements apply to all students whether full time or part time, registered under the Partner Research Institute (PRI) Scheme, Split PhD Scheme, or for Joint PhDs (unless a variation has been approved by the university).

56. If the university determines that a student's progress is such that they cannot continue, the student may be required to withdraw from the university at this stage. Alternatively, for those registered for a PhD, the university may transfer their registration to the degree of MPhil. The date of MPhil registration would, in this case, be backdated to the date of the initial PhD registration.

Professional Skills Development Requirements

57. As part of their programme of research, the university requires all PhD and MD[Res] students to achieve a minimum of four Early Career Researcher Institute professional skills credits and to complete the compulsory online plagiarism awareness course and the Research Security e-training course² as follows:

² The requirement to complete the Research Security e-learning course is for new students registered from 1 September 2026. Students that commenced prior to 1 September 2026 are not required to take the course but are encouraged to do so.

- a. By the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) – 2 credits plus the plagiarism awareness course and Research Security e-training course
 - b. By the Late Stage Review (LSR) – a further 2 credits
58. Students who are direct entry MPhil, or those required to transfer to an MPhil having first registered for a PhD, must complete a minimum of two professional skills credits plus the plagiarism awareness course before Examination Entry. Failure to complete the requisite training courses may prevent a student from entering the MPhil examination.
59. If a PhD or MD[Res] student has not achieved a minimum of two professional skills credits and completed the plagiarism awareness course by the date of their ESA, then provided they pass the academic requirements of the ESA, the student can still progress with their research programme. However, a condition of their progression will be to set a deadline for achieving the required number of professional skills credits and if not already completed, the plagiarism awareness course. This deadline will be set by the department, in agreement with the Early Career Researcher Institute.
60. If a PhD or MD[Res] student has not achieved a minimum of four professional skills credits and completed the plagiarism awareness course by the date of their LSR, then provided they pass the academic requirements of the LSR, the student can still progress with their research programme. However, a condition of progression will be to set a deadline for achieving the required number of professional skills credits and if not already completed, the plagiarism awareness course. This deadline will be set by the department, in agreement with the Early Career Researcher Institute.

Doctoral Academic Communication Requirement

61. As part of their programme of research, the university requires all PhD and MD[Res] students registered from 1 September 2025 onwards to complete the Centre for Academic English academic-communication diagnostic training by the ESA.
62. If a PhD or MD[Res] student registered from 1 September 2025 onwards has not completed the Centre for Academic English academic-communication diagnostic training by the date of their ESA, then provided they pass the academic requirements of the ESA, the student can still progress with their research programme. However, a condition of their progression will be to set a deadline for completing the training. This deadline will be set by the department, in agreement with the Centre for Academic English.

Progress Review

63. A formal monitoring point for PhD and MD[Res] students must be completed by 36 months (full time) or 72 months (part time) to ensure that their research is progressing and can be completed within the expected timescales. At this point students are normally expected to demonstrate that they are on track to complete all experimental work or collection of material related to their thesis. At this Progress Review students should submit a timetable of remaining work to be completed in order to meet the expected thesis submission deadline. The plan must be recommended by the Main Supervisor and approved by the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee) who will confirm that the milestone has been completed. A Progress Review is not required where a student has been granted permission to submit their thesis prior to completing 36 months (full time) or 72 months (part time) or have already entered writing up period.

Writing Up Period

64. MD[Res] and PhD students may be permitted to enter a writing up period after completing their active research period, subject to demonstrating that they will be in a position to submit their thesis within 12 months (full time) or 24 months (part time) through the Progress Review. Students remain registered during the Writing Up Period.
65. To enter Writing Up Period, PhD and MD[Res] students must normally have completed 36 months (full time) or 72 months (part time) of continuous study from the initial date of registration).
66. A PhD or MD[Res] student can request to enter the Writing Up Period earlier than 36 months. Except in circumstances as set out in paras 19 and 28, a student must have completed 24 months (full time) or 48 months (part time) active research at the university before entering the Writing Up Period. The request must be recommended by the Main Supervisor and approved by the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee). This would not reduce the maximum period of registration permitted for that student but would bring forward the expected thesis submission deadline. Any extension to this deadline would require an approved [thesis submission deadline extension request](#).

Examination Entry

67. The deadline for submission of an examination entry form will be 44 months (FT) and 88 months (PT) for a PhD or MD[Res], and 20 months (FT) and 40 months (PT) for an MPhil, subject to any other regulations that may impact on these deadlines, and unless a thesis submission deadline extension request has been approved by the university.

Section 10: Submission of Thesis

68. The decision to submit a thesis rests with the student alone.
69. A student shall be examined in accordance with the regulations in force at the time of their entry or re-entry.
70. A student will be required to submit a copy of their thesis in accordance with university guidelines.
71. A student may bring to the viva voce examination a copy of their thesis paginated in the same way as the copies submitted electronically to the university.
72. The deadline for submission of thesis will be 48 months (FT) and 96 months (PT) for a PhD or MD[Res], and 24 months (FT) and 48 months (PT) for an MPhil, subject to any other regulations that may impact on these deadlines, and unless a [thesis submission deadline extension request](#) has been approved by the university.
73. Where a student has been required to transfer to MPhil following their ESA or LSR the limits below apply:
 - a. Transfer after ESA: Students must normally complete the MPhil within 12 months (full-time) or 24 months (part-time)
 - b. Transfer after LSR: Students must normally complete the MPhil within 6 months (full-time) or 12 months (part-time)

74. On submission of their thesis, the student will complete the declaration (see Section 13: Availability of Thesis).
75. Entry to examination will not be permitted in cases where the thesis has not been submitted by the given thesis submission deadline, unless a [thesis submission deadline extension request](#) has been approved by the university. Students that fail to submit their thesis, and no request to extend the deadline is submitted, may be withdrawn from their programme of study.

Section 11: Intercalated PhD Students

76. Students undertaking the MBBS at the university who opt to take an Intercalated PhD follow the progression requirements and submission deadlines for ESA and LSR as set out in 48, 53 and 56.
77. Students must normally submit their thesis for examination within 36 months (full time) or 72 months (part time) of the date of the initial PhD degree registration. Entry to examination will not be permitted in cases where the thesis has not been submitted by the given thesis submission deadline, unless a [thesis submission deadline extension request](#) has been approved by the university.

Section 11: UKRI funded Studentships

78. Students undertaking a PhD as part of a Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT)/UKRI Doctoral Focus Award (DFA) or Doctoral Training Centre (DTC)/Doctoral Landscape Award follow the progression requirements and submission deadlines for ESA and LSR as set out in their programme handbooks.
79. Entry to examination will not be permitted in cases where the thesis has not been submitted by the given deadline, as set out in the CDT/ DFA or DTC/Doctoral Landscape Award programme handbook, unless a [thesis submission deadline extension request](#) has been approved by the university.

PART 4: Requirements of a Thesis and Examination

Section 12: Requirements of a Thesis

Thesis for an MD[Res] or PhD degree

80. The thesis shall:
- consist of the student's own account of their investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of registration under supervision for the degree;

[The part played by the student in any work undertaken jointly with the supervisor(s) and/or fellow research workers must be clearly stated by the student.]
 - and form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;

- c. and be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;

[A series of papers, whether published or otherwise, is not acceptable for submission as a thesis. Research work already published, or submitted for publication, at the time of submission of the thesis, either by the student alone or jointly with others, may be included in the thesis. The published papers themselves may not be included in the body of the thesis, but may be adapted to form an integral part of the thesis and thereby make a relevant contribution to the main theme of the thesis. Publications derived from the work in the thesis may be attached as supplementary material to the thesis.]

- d. and give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings, include discussion on those findings and indicate in what respects they appear to the student to advance the study of the subject; and, in so doing, demonstrate a deep and synoptic understanding of the field of study, (the student being able to place the thesis in a wider context), objectivity and the capacity for judgment in complex situations and autonomous work in that field;
- e. and be written in English and the literary presentation shall be satisfactory, although a student may make application for a thesis in the field of modern foreign languages and literatures only to be written in the language of study, to be considered on an exceptional basis by the Early Career Researcher Institute; in such cases the thesis shall include additionally a submission of between 10,000 and 20,000 words which shall be written in English and shall summarise the main arguments of the thesis;
- f. and not exceed 100,000 words for a PhD or 50,000 words for an MD[Res];

[The bibliography is excluded from the word count; footnotes are included within the word count; appendices are excluded from the word count and should only include material which examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis, but to which they may refer if they wish.]

- g. and include a full bibliography and references;
- h. and demonstrate research skills relevant to the thesis being presented;
- i. and be of a standard to merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form (for example, as a monograph or as a number of articles in learned journals).

81. In addition, for the MD[Res] the thesis will:

- a. deal with any branch of medicine, or surgery or medical science.

Thesis for the MPhil degree

82. The thesis shall:

- a. consist of the student's own account of their investigations, the greater proportion of which shall have been undertaken during the period of registration under supervision for the degree;

[The part played by the student in any work undertaken jointly with the supervisor(s) and/or fellow research workers must be clearly stated by the student.]

- b. and be either a record of original work or of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and shall provide evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly;
- c. and be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument which represents a contribution to learning;

[A series of papers, whether published or otherwise, is not acceptable for submission as a thesis. Research work already published, or submitted for publication, at the time of submission of the thesis, either by the student alone or jointly with others, may be included in the thesis. The published papers themselves may not be included in the body of the thesis, but may be adapted to form an integral part of the thesis and thereby make a relevant contribution to the main theme of the thesis. Publications derived from the work in the thesis may be attached as supplementary material to the thesis.]

- d. and give a critical evaluation of current research and advanced scholarship in the field of study, describe the method of research and its findings and include a discussion on those findings;
- e. and be written in English and the literary presentation shall be satisfactory, although a student may make application for a thesis in the field of modern foreign languages and literatures only to be written in the language of study, to be considered on an exceptional basis by the Early Career Researcher Institute; in such cases the thesis shall include additionally a submission of between 10,000 and 20,000 words which shall be written in English and shall summarize the main arguments of the thesis;
- f. and include a full bibliography and references;
- g. and shall not exceed 60,000 words;

[The bibliography is excluded from the word count; footnotes are included within the word count; appendices are excluded from the word count and should only include material which examiners are not required to read in order to examine the thesis, but to which they may refer if they wish.]

Requirements Applicable to Theses Submitted for the Degrees of MPhil, MD[Res] and PhD

- 83. The greater proportion of the work submitted in a thesis must have been undertaken after the initial registration for a research degree, except that in the case of a student accepted under paragraph 19 there shall be allowance for the fact that the student commenced their registration at another university or institution.
- 84. A student will not be permitted to submit as their thesis one which has been submitted for a degree or comparable award of Imperial or any other university or institution, but a student shall not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis covering a wider field work which they have already submitted for a degree or comparable award of Imperial or any other university or

institution provided that they shall indicate on their entry form and also on their thesis any work which has been so incorporated.

85. A student may submit the results of work undertaken in conjunction with their supervisor and/or with fellow research workers provided that the student states clearly their own personal share in the investigation (see also paragraphs [80.a](#) and [82.a](#)).
86. A thesis must be presented for examination in a final form in an electronic format conforming to the university's [thesis submission and viva examination procedures](#). Students must include a short statement in their words, that the work is their own and that all else is appropriately referenced, including any work generated by an artificial intelligence and/or machine learning programme. If students refer to material within a published work where they are a co-author, it must be made clear in this originality statement what their contribution to the work was. Additionally, direct use of text from the published work should be specifically limited to text that students made a major contribution to the writing of. For advice on ensuring students have permission to reuse their work in their thesis, please refer to the university's guidance on [reproducing your own published work](#).
87. After the examination has been completed, and before the degree is awarded, successful students are required to submit to the university, for depositing with the university library, one copy of the thesis in electronic format conforming to the instructions issued by the university.
88. Every student is required to submit an abstract with their thesis of not more than 300 words.

Section 13: Availability of Theses

89. It is a requirement for the award of the degree that copies of successful theses, as specified in para [87](#), are deposited in the university library in electronic format. The electronic copy shall be deposited in Spiral, the university digital repository.
90. Subject to paragraphs [91](#) and [92](#), students will at the time of entry to the examination be required to sign a declaration in the following terms:
 - a. I authorise that the thesis presented by me in [year] for examination for the PhD/MD[Res]/MPhil degree of Imperial College London shall, if a degree is awarded, be deposited in the Spiral, and, if required, in the National Thesis Service, where it will be made available for public reference.
 - b. I authorise Imperial College London authorities to copy the submission, or, without changing the content, translate it to any medium or format, for the purpose of security, back up and preservation.
 - c. I authorise Imperial College London authorities to supply a copy of the abstract of my thesis for inclusion in any published list (hard copy or electronic) of theses offered for higher degrees in British universities.

- d. I understand that before my thesis is made available for public reference and copying, the relevant statement regarding copyright licence³ is included at the beginning of my thesis.
 - e. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party. I attach copies of all permission documents to my thesis. Where I have not been able to obtain the necessary rights or permissions for the inclusion of certain material in my thesis I hereby affirm that I have exercised my best endeavours to secure these and have appended copies of my letters/emails seeking these to the thesis.
 - f. I understand that in the event of my thesis not being approved by the examiners, this declaration will become void.
91. A student, together with their supervisor, may apply to the university for an embargo to their thesis and/or the abstract for an appropriate period, on the grounds of commercial exploitation or patenting or in other appropriate circumstances and in accordance with the procedure adopted by the university for consideration of such applications.
92. From 1 March 2013 all theses will be automatically open access in Spiral save where the student, together with their supervisor, applies for an embargo⁴.

Section 14: Conduct of Examinations

General

93. Students for postgraduate research degrees must submit a thesis and be examined orally, save as prescribed otherwise in subsection: and in [Section 16: Posthumous and Aegrotat Award Provisions](#).
94. The outcome of the examination is determined by two or more examiners acting jointly.
95. Examiners will be appointed for each student in accordance with the [Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees](#).
96. All matters relating to the examination must be treated as confidential. Examiners are not permitted to divulge the content of previously unpublished material contained in a student's thesis until such time as any restrictions on access to the thesis, which have been granted by the university, are removed.
97. The examiners shall prepare independent preliminary written reports on the thesis to assist in conducting the viva voce examination (or the preparation of the joint report in those cases where no viva voce examination is held). Copies of the preliminary reports should be submitted together with the joint report. The preliminary reports will not normally be released to students but will be made available to the members of an Appeal Committee in the case of an appeal against the result of the examination for consideration at an Appeal Committee hearing. In such an event the preliminary reports will also be provided to the student. After any viva voce examination, a joint

³ From 1 October 2018, a student may choose which Creative Commons copyright licence shall be applied to their thesis, subject to any requirements set by the funding body. The exact wording of the statement with regards to each type of licence is in the handbook and must be added to the beginning of the thesis. NB prior to 1 October 2018 all theses are published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial No Derivatives licence.

⁴ Details of open access arrangements for submissions made prior to March 2013 can be found in previous versions of these regulations.

final report shall be prepared. The joint final report will be released routinely to students for their personal information.

98. In their preliminary discussions, the examiners will discuss whether they have any concerns relating to the integrity of the research, including suspected plagiarism. Where the examiners have no concerns, the viva shall proceed. Where the examiners have minor concerns, the student and supervisor will be informed that these will be explored during the viva. Where the examiners have major concerns, the student and supervisor will be informed that the viva will be postponed and the procedures for the investigation of research misconduct will be initiated. The outcome of the procedures for the investigation of research misconduct will confirm whether the viva can proceed or not.
99. In exceptional circumstances, if the examiners have significant concerns regarding the quality of the thesis provided for examination, the student and supervisor will be informed that the viva may be postponed whilst advice is sought on the appropriate course of action.
100. Each joint final report of the examiners shall indicate whether the thesis meets the requirements specified in paragraphs 80 - 82 as appropriate and shall include a reasoned statement of the examiners' judgment of the student's performance.
101. Examiners have the right to make comments in confidence to the university in a separate report. Such comments should not normally be concerned with the performance of the student but may cover, for example, matters which they wish to draw to the attention of the university.
102. The supervisor shall not be invited unless the student indicates otherwise at the point of entry to the examination. If invited to attend as an observer, the supervisor does not have the right to participate in the examination of the student but may contribute if invited to do so by the examiners. The viva voce examination shall be held in private. In exceptional circumstances and also in the early stages of a joint or collaborative degree the Academic Registrar may appoint an independent observer to attend a student's viva.
103. The viva voce examination will normally be conducted at one of the university campuses with both examiners present. The university may, however, exceptionally agree that the examination be conducted elsewhere and/or remotely via video conferencing facilities if there are circumstances which make this expedient. The positive consent of the student should be obtained for the viva to be conducted in these exceptional circumstances.
104. Except as provided in paragraphs 109.d and where the outcome of the procedures for the investigation of research misconduct determines that a viva should not take place, the examiners, after reading the thesis, shall examine the student orally on the subject of the thesis and, if they see fit, on subjects relevant thereto.
105. Students are required to present themselves for the examination at such place and time as the university may direct.
106. If the examiners are unable to reach agreement, their reports shall be referred to a panel comprising the Director of the Early Career Researcher Institute, a University Consul for the appropriate Faculty and the Academic Registrar (or nominee[s]), which shall determine the action to be taken.

107. A student that is unsuccessful in examination for their target award, outright fail (PhD, MD[Res] or MPhil) or permitted to resubmit for an MPhil only (PhD), will not be permitted to re-enter for their target award examination. A student may however apply to the university to register for another programme of study leading to the submission of a thesis on a different topic.

Section 15: Examination Outcomes

PhD Examination outcomes

108. The following options are open to examiners in determining the result of the PhD examination:

- a. Pass: The student is permitted to submit typographical amendments within one month which can be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.
- b. Pass, subject to minor amendments: The student must submit amendments within six months, which must be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.
- c. Not pass, further viva voce examination required: If the thesis meets the criteria for the award, but the student fails to satisfy the examiners at the viva voce examination, the examiners may determine that the student be permitted to re-present the same thesis, and submit to a further viva voce examination within six months.
- d. Not pass, major amendments required: If the thesis does not meet the required criteria for the award, but the examiners consider there is sufficient merit in the work, the student is permitted to re-present their thesis following revision and resubmit within 18 months for examination by the same examiners. The examiners may at their discretion exempt from a further viva voce examination, on re-presentation of their thesis, a student who under this regulation has been permitted to re-present it in a revised form. This outcome is only available to examiners at the first examination of the student.
- e. Fail PhD: If, after completion of the examination including the viva voce examination or re-examination for the PhD degree, the examiners determine that a student has not reached the standard required for the award of the degree nor for the re-presentation of the thesis in a revised form for that degree, they shall consider whether the thesis does or might be able to satisfy the criteria for the award of the MPhil degree. If they so decide, the examiners shall submit a report which demonstrates either (a) how the criteria for the MPhil degree are satisfied, or (b) what action would need to be taken in order for these criteria to be satisfied⁵. Thereafter the following conditions and procedures will apply:

Either

- i. a student will be informed that they have been unsuccessful at the examination for the PhD degree, but that their examiners have indicated that they have reached the standard required for the award of the MPhil degree or with minor amendments to their thesis they will satisfy the criteria for the degree, and that

⁵ In reporting they shall have regard to the different normal maximum lengths of the thesis for the PhD and MPhil degrees but shall have discretion to waive the thesis length for the degree if appropriate.

they may be considered for the award of the MPhil degree if they indicate within two months that they wish to be so considered. Any minor amendments required shall be made within three months of the student indicating that they wish to be considered for the MPhil, and the amended thesis shall be submitted to the examiners, or nominee, for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.

1. a student who indicates that they wish to be considered for the award of the MPhil degree under this regulation will not be required to submit the thesis, as may be required under the Regulations for the MPhil degree, or to undergo a viva voce examination thereon, but will be required to fulfil the requirements for the MPhil examination in all other respects.
2. a student who has reached the standard for the award of the MPhil degree who does not indicate that they wish to be considered for the award of that degree within the period given in paragraph 109eⁱ will be informed that they have failed to satisfy the examiners for the PhD degree and that they may no longer be considered for the award of the MPhil degree.

Or

- ii. if the thesis, though inadequate, shall seem of sufficient merit to justify such action, the examiners may determine that the student be permitted to enter the examination for the MPhil degree and re-present their thesis in a revised form within 12 months (full-time) or 24 months (part-time). The examiners may at their discretion exempt from a further viva voce examination, on representation of their thesis, a student who under these Regulations has been permitted to re-present it in a revised form.
- f. Outright Fail. The examiners may determine that the student has not satisfied them in the examination and that there is no reassessment opportunity available to the student. The examiners shall not, however, save in very exceptional circumstances, make such a decision without submitting the student to a viva voce examination.

MD[Res] Examination outcomes

109. The following options are open to examiners in determining the result of the of MD[Res] examinations:

- a. Pass: The student is permitted to submit typographical amendments within one month which can be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.
- b. Pass, subject to minor amendments: The student must submit amendments within six months, which must be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.⁶

⁶ Where the initial examination was held prior to 1 September 2026, the deadline for submission of amendments will remain at 3 months.

- c. Not pass, further viva voce examination required: If the thesis meets the criteria for the award, but the student fails to satisfy the examiners at the viva voce examination, the examiners may determine that the student be permitted to re-present the same thesis, and submit to a further viva voce examination within six months⁷.
- d. Not pass, major amendments required: If the thesis does not meet the required criteria for the award, but the examiners consider there is sufficient merit in the work, the student is permitted to re-present their thesis following revision and resubmit within 18 months for examination by the same examiners. The examiners may at their discretion exempt from a further viva voce examination, on re-presentation of their thesis, a student who under this regulation has been permitted to re-present it in a revised form. This outcome is only available to examiners at the first examination of the student.
- e. Outright Fail. The examiners may determine that the student has not satisfied them in the examination and that there is no reassessment opportunity available to the student. The examiners shall not, however, save in very exceptional circumstances, make such a decision without submitting the student to a viva voce examination.

MPhil Examination outcomes

110. The following options are open to examiners in determining the result of the MPhil examination:

- a. Pass: The student is permitted to submit typographical amendments within one month which can be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.
- b. Pass, subject to minor amendments: The student must submit amendments within six months⁸, which must be reviewed by the examiners, or nominees.
- c. Not pass, further viva voce examination required: If the thesis meets the criteria for the award, but the student fails to satisfy the examiners at the viva voce examination, the examiners may determine that the student be permitted to re-present the same thesis, and submit to a further viva voce examination within six months.
- d. Not pass, major amendments required: If the thesis does not meet the required criteria for the award, but the examiners consider there is sufficient merit in the work, the student is permitted to re-present their thesis following revision and resubmit within 12 months for examination by the same examiners. The examiners may at their discretion exempt from a further viva voce examination, on re-presentation of their thesis, a student who under this regulation has been permitted to re-present it in a revised form. This outcome is only available to examiners at the first examination of the student.
- e. Outright Fail: The examiners may determine that the student has not satisfied them in the examination and that there is no reassessment opportunity available to the student. The

⁷ Where the initial examination was held prior to 1 September 2026, the deadline to complete the new examination will remain at 18 months.

⁸ Where the initial examination was held prior to 1 September 2026, the deadline for submission of amendments will remain at 3 months

examiners shall not, however, save in very exceptional circumstances, make such a decision without submitting the student to a viva voce examination.

Reassessment

111. Where a student has been required to complete some form of reassessment (minor or major amendments, complete a new viva or re-submit for an MPhil), they are required to meet the deadlines set for that outcome.
112. Where a student has not met the deadlines, and a [thesis submission deadline extension request](#) has not been approved by the university, they may be withdrawn from their programme of study.

Section 16: Posthumous and Aegrotat Award Provisions

113. In line with the university's [Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees](#), examiners may recommend that a posthumous MPhil, MD[Res] or PhD should be made following the death of a student.
114. In line with the university's [Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees](#), examiners may recommend the award of an aegrotat MPhil, MD[Res] or PhD if it is considered that a student's diagnosis of a terminal/debilitating illness or their incapacitation would preclude them from making the final submission of the thesis, undertaking the viva, amendments to the thesis or a resubmission of the thesis.

Section 17: Notification of Results of Examinations

115. After the examiners have reached a decision, the student shall be notified by the Academic Registrar of the result of their examination. The degree shall not be awarded until an electronic version of the successful thesis has been deposited with the university library (see para [87](#)).
116. A degree certificate under the seal of the university shall be subsequently delivered to each student who has been awarded a degree.
117. The degree certificate will bear the names of the student in the form in which they appear in the records of the university at the date of issue.
118. A student that successfully completes an award of MPhil, MD[Res] or PhD shall automatically be awarded the Diploma of Imperial College London (DIC).

Section 18: General

119. Except insofar as para [85](#) applies, the work in the thesis submitted by the student must be their own and submission of a thesis for examination will be regarded as a declaration of this fact.
120. All work submitted as part of the requirements for any examination of the university must be expressed in the student's own words and incorporate their own ideas and judgments. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as though they were the student's own and is an examination offence. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of another must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in the proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if another person's

ideas or judgments are summarised, the student must refer to that person in their text and include the work to which reference is made in the bibliography.

121. Allegations of plagiarism will be considered in accordance with [Procedures for the investigation of research misconduct](#), as will any other allegations of examination misconduct, including, but not limited to:

- a. deliberate attempts to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others;
- b. the invention or fabrication of data;
- c. the submission of work commissioned from another person.

122. The university has an [Academic Appeals Procedure for Research Programmes](#). Students must submit their academic appeal to the Registry within 20 working days of the formal publication of the result(s) against which they are appealing.

Document Control

Document title:	Regulations for Research Programmes of Study		
Version:	1.0	Date:	September 2026
Location:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\2. Regulations\01. Academic Regulations\Academic Regulations 2026-27\Research Degrees		
Initially approved by and date:	Senate June 2026		
Version approved by and date:	Senate June 2026		
Version effective from:	September 2026		
Originator:	Academic Registrar		
Contact for queries:	Deputy Director (Academic Quality and Standards)		
Cross References:	Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy Admission with Advanced Standing for Doctoral Students Policy Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership Student-led Changes to Registration Status Procedure Guidelines for external study leave Research Degree Student Leave Policy Guidance for Students on Submitting an Early Stage Assessment (ESA) to Turnitin Thesis submission deadline extension request Thesis submission and viva examination procedures Reproducing your own published work Procedure for Appointment of Examiners for Research Degrees Policy for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Postgraduate Research Degrees Procedures for the investigation of research misconduct Academic Appeals Procedure for Research Programmes		
Notes and latest changes:			