



A Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes

August 2011

Status of this document

These guidelines apply to all postgraduate taught degrees and those Masters by Research degrees which include a significant taught element and which have their own Board of Examiners, and to associated diplomas and certificates. They also apply to diplomas and certificates where there is no corresponding masters degree. The principles apply equally to course work aspects of other postgraduate degrees (for example the DClinPsychol) and should be followed as closely as is practicable.

The *Code of Practice* gives guidance on the University's recommended practice and explains the expected standards that staff and students should maintain. However, this does not mean that these recommendations cannot be waived in some situations if good reason to do so can be shown. The *Code of Practice* does not supersede the University Regulations.

The regulations relating to candidates for a taught postgraduate degree are specified in the University's *Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study* and the *Taught Assessment Regulations*.

Throughout this Code, reference is made to the College Committee with responsibility for postgraduate taught matters. Committee arrangements may be subject to change during the year – please contact your College Office for more information (see Appendix IV).

At the time of going to print, the following committees have responsibility for Postgraduate Taught student matters:

College of Humanities and Social Science: College Postgraduate Studies Committee
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine: College Postgraduate Taught Committee
College of Science and Engineering: College Learning and Teaching Committee

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1. Aims of the Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is a guide to recommended practice based upon the University's Regulations and reasonable expectations. Colleges and Schools may also have developed their own more detailed guidance to reflect subject specific practice. Therefore there may be certain circumstances when for good reason the College and School guidance varies from the recommended practice laid out in this Code. **Neither this Code nor College/School guidance supersedes the University Regulations.**

The University of Edinburgh offers a wide range of taught postgraduate degree programmes. This Code of Practice has been written both for students on such degree programmes and for the academic staff who organise and teach them. It aims to help students make the most of their time at Edinburgh, and to support the achievement of high standards of delivery.

The Code provides practical advice on things you might encounter in taking or running a taught postgraduate programme; it sets out guidance on procedures and good practice relevant to all types of taught postgraduate programmes; and draws attention to rights and responsibilities of both students and staff.

1.1 Essential reading

The Code of Practice is designed to be read in conjunction with three other documents: (i) *individual programme handbooks*, which are guidelines specific to particular degree programmes, (ii) *the University Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study*, which sets down University-wide and programme-specific regulations, and (iii) the *Taught Assessment Regulations*.

These documents are available to all students either in hard copy or online, and it is expected that students will read these documents before beginning their studies, and refer to them subsequently as needed (see Section 1.2 below). Similarly, it is expected that supervisors and Programme Directors will, in the course of their academic and administrative duties, read and refer to all of these documents. It will be assumed that both students and staff are familiar with these documents in the event of an appeal.

1.2 Responsibilities of students

The postgraduate student is expected to take full advantage of the facilities, teaching and supervision offered, and to keep the Programme Director informed of any circumstances affecting his/her academic performance. Students whose cultural, medical or other requirements might affect participation in any part of the programme must inform the Programme Director at the start of the programme. Since the student has ultimate responsibility for the final quality of all academic work submitted, he or she also has a responsibility to seek advice and help from the sources identified in this Code (see Section 5), should problems arise.

The student also has a responsibility to liaise regularly with his or her Programme Director and, when appropriate, with the dissertation supervisor, keeping them informed of progress, and submitting material at agreed times.

Postgraduate students are expected to be proactive and self-directed in all aspects of study; to make independent use of library and all other available resources; to embrace e-learning opportunities; to make full use of laboratory facilities; and to take the initiative in their use of information sources. For the responsibilities of the Programme Director and supervisor towards students, see Section 4.2 and 7.2 respectively.

1.3 *Responsibilities of Schools*

The overall responsibility for the conduct and governance of each degree programme, including those supplied by more than one School or College, should lie with one named School.

2. *Types of degree programmes*

Taught postgraduate programmes lead to a masters degree, a postgraduate diploma or, in some cases, a postgraduate certificate. Some programmes permit registration for a masters degree only, and some for a diploma only. In most subjects, students are concurrently registered for a masters/diploma, progression to masters or diploma being dependent on the assessment of the taught component of the degree. In addition, the masters degree and the diploma normally involve successful completion of a dissertation or project. The Moray House School of Education also offers taught provision leading to an advanced certificate.

2.1 Taught postgraduate degree programmes normally comprise advanced programmes of taught work together with project and dissertation components. Degree programmes may be designed primarily for vocational training and entry into professional, industry or service employment and may have a greater emphasis on taught and in-course project work. If your degree programme is designed primarily to lead into research programmes and research degrees, it may have greater research training and research project elements. Taught masters degrees may also act as conversion programmes in which the taught component is designed to enable students to achieve masters standards in an area other than the one in which they already hold a degree.

2.2 There are five main structures for taught postgraduate degree programmes:

2.2.1 Full-time degree programmes; generally offered over 12 months in which two semesters are mostly devoted to the taught component (and associated project work) and the remaining time to a research project and the preparation of a dissertation. Some discipline specific full time degree programmes may be offered over 24 months. There are also some discipline specific programmes that do not contain a research project or dissertation element.

2.2.2 Part-time degree programmes in which students follow the curriculum of classes provided for the full-time degree in question, but schedule attendance over a period of not less than 24 months and not more than 36 months, including preparation and submission of the dissertation. Some discipline specific part-time degree programmes do not contain a dissertation element.

2.2.3 Designated part-time degree programmes in which the taught component is scheduled specifically for part-time students and provided at specially determined times and intervals.

2.2.4 Specified degrees may be offered by intermittent study. In these particular and specified cases a candidate is required to complete individual modules, but is allowed to interrupt the programme of study between modules over a maximum period of three years for a certificate, four years for a diploma and six years for a masters degree.

2.2.5 Specified degrees may be offered on distance learning or e-learning bases. For candidates on these degrees the normal requirement to be resident in or near Edinburgh may not apply.

3. *What happens when the course begins?*

Taught postgraduate students have only a short period of time to become accustomed to the culture of the University. The induction programme and programme handbook are intended to help students settle in as quickly as possible and make the best use of the University's resources during their programme.

3.1 *The induction programme (for campus-based students)*

Before classes start, a programme of induction sessions is run; usually at University, College and School level. As well as welcoming students, the University and College induction programmes provide an overview of the institution and of support services available to students. School programmes introduce students to the academic staff who will be teaching and supervising them, to the learning and working environment and to the resource base, and will also provide an opportunity for students to ask questions about their programme.

Induction programmes should inform students about the following:

- the University's *administrative structures and its teaching and research* and how taught postgraduate degree programmes fit into these;
- *University-wide support services*, both academic and pastoral, available to taught postgraduate students, including those offered by the Students' Association. (The Students' Association can offer independent, confidential advice on both University and personal matters (see Appendices III and IV));
- *academic support services*, in particular library and computing services, and including College or School arrangements for access and training in the use of these facilities (see Section 5.1);
- opportunities for further training and *skills development* (see Section 5.1);
- *pastoral support* within Colleges and Schools (see Section 5.2);

Programmes for which registration is permitted at any time of year may have no specific induction programmes. However, information for new students is available on the University website.

Weblink:

University New Students website:

www.ed.ac.uk/new-students

3.2 *The programme handbook*

All students should receive a programme handbook, which they are expected to read carefully and refer to throughout the programme. Amongst other things, the programme handbook should contain information about:

- the *overall programme structure*, including the requirements for passing, outlines of the content of each course module or unit (including optional electives available in that year) and a complete timetable;
- the *teaching approach* adopted (the role of lectures, practicals, field courses, seminars, tutorials and research projects) and the kind of *learning strategies* that the School expects students to adopt;
- the *methods of assessment*, including; in-course informal as well as end-of-course formal assessment requirements for the degree; relative weighting between different parts of the programme; the deadlines for submission of assessed work and the College or School policy on late submission; the University's postgraduate marking scheme; information about progression; guidelines concerning assessors' expectations for different types of assessed work, including the dissertation; conduct of examinations and boards; and the University's policy on plagiarism;
- *approach to dissertation supervision*, including details of deadlines for completion of plans or timetables referred to in Section 7.2.2 and the action to be taken in the event of a failure to meet deadlines or remain in appropriate contact;
- advice for *part-time* students as to how the courses will be scheduled over their period of study, and of the School's requirements in order to progress to the second and subsequent years;
- specific *academic support services and facilities* available to students (see Section 5.1);
- *pastoral support* available to students including advice on contacting the degree Programme Director, Director of Studies or, where appropriate, the School Postgraduate Director (sometimes called the Head of Graduate School) (see Section 5.2);
- the channels and opportunities available for *student representation, and for students' participation in programme monitoring, feedback, evaluation and development* (see Section 9);
- *appeals and complaints procedures*;
- any *additional costs* students might incur because of required components of the programme; and
- *reference to other key documents* such as the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study and this Code.

4. Programme organisation and the Programme Director

4.1 Programme organisation

All degree programmes have procedures and mechanisms to ensure

- that the programme is of sound academic value;
- that it is run in such a way that students are able to make the most of the academic opportunities presented, and
- that staff and other resources are used efficiently.

4.1.1 The role of the School

Most postgraduate programmes are taught wholly or mainly within a single School, which is responsible for the governance of the programme. In the case of programmes that are explicitly cross-School or College, *one* of the Schools involved will be identified as having responsibility. A Programme Director is appointed to take day-to-day responsibility for the degree (see Section 4.2 below). However, the relevant Head of School has jurisdiction, together with the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters and, in some Schools, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, over proposals to inaugurate, continue or alter taught postgraduate programmes, the allocation of teaching and supervisory duties, and major resource allocation. The School has responsibility for providing clerical support for administration of the programme.

4.1.2 The role of the College

The postgraduate section of the College Office supports the Programme Director in administering the formal aspects of applications, admissions and examinations, and provides support through the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters.

4.1.3 How changes are made

Student feedback is sought regularly and used for annual programme evaluations, which influence the development of the programme (see Section 9.3). In addition, programme reviews (see Section 9.5) take a longer term and more strategic view of the development, resourcing, improvement and continuation of school programmes.

Proposals to make a *major* change in a taught postgraduate degree programme usually originate in a School but have to be discussed in a number of fora. Any such changes must be approved by the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters, as appropriate. University-wide changes in policy on taught postgraduate education are brought to the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee and/or Learning and Teaching Committee.

4.2 The Programme Director

Each degree programme is organised by a named and formally designated person. This person (who usually has the title of Programme Director, although the title can vary), is responsible to the Head of School for the conduct of the masters/diploma programme. The Programme Director also acts as an intermediary between the programme staff and students. In large programmes, the Programme Director may be supported by a programme team. The

Programme Director should be fully conversant with all codes and regulations that are relevant to the programme.

4.2.1 *Responsibilities towards students*

The Programme Director is responsible for:

- the overall *direction, conduct, governance, organisation, assurance of quality*, and all other matters delegated to him or her by the Head of School;
- *settling new students onto the programme, and providing necessary information about the programme*, including organising local sessions as part of the induction programme (or, in the case of online or distance learning students, making sure equivalent online information is available); producing the programme handbook; and providing any further information and guidance at later stages in the degree;
- making necessary arrangements for *student access to academic services and facilities*;
- registering students on courses on the Student Record;
- *monitoring students' progress and providing relevant advice* about study skills, choice of elective courses and dissertation topics. Such monitoring and advice may take place informally and/or formally by regular meetings and/or online contact with individual students and with student groups throughout the taught and dissertation periods of the programme;
- ensuring that all students have suitable *projects and supervisors* for their dissertations;
- being available as a first line of *pastoral support*;
- ensuring that properly constituted staff/student liaison committee meetings or, in the case of online or distance learning students, online discussion boards, are conducted at least twice in each year, assisting in the formulation and conduct of the committee, taking actions as appropriate, and keeping an adequate record of all such student-related procedures; and
- creating adequate opportunities for *student feedback* on programme content, delivery and administration and ensuring that this input is taken into account in any development or review.

4.2.2 *Responsibilities towards staff*

The Programme Director is responsible for running the masters programme, including:

- coordinating any efforts to *promote* the programme;
- *advising and coordinating the efforts of* individual teachers and supervisors;

- overseeing and coordinating completion of *programme evaluation*, in line with academic audit and quality assurance procedures; and
- overseeing and coordinating *curriculum development* and any periodic strategic reviews of the content and direction of the programme.

5. *Support services and how to use them*

A comprehensive range of academic and pastoral support services exists at University, College and School levels. Their purpose is to enable students to make the most of their programme and to avoid or overcome difficulties.

5.1 *Academic support services and skills development*

5.1.1 *English language tuition*

Students taking courses and candidates for examination must be able to communicate fluently in English. Students whose first language is not English will, unless exempted, be required to sit an English test in Edinburgh prior to matriculation. The Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM test) is used for diagnostic purposes. It is in the student's interest that the language test is strict, in order to ensure that appropriate remedial action is specified, and to avoid problems in assessments. If a student has not achieved a satisfactory standard in the TEAM test, he or she may be *required* or *recommended* to undertake remedial English language tuition at the English Language Teaching Centre. It is the Programme Director's responsibility to advise the student of the importance of remedial English language training and to seek to ensure that the student attends. It is the student's responsibility to attend classes as required or recommended by the English Language Teaching Centre. Online distance learning students are not required to take the TEAM test.

5.1.2 *Study skills*

The postgraduate student is expected to take full advantage of the facilities, teaching and supervision offered, to be proactive and self-directed in all aspects of study; to make independent and adventurous use of library and all other available resources; to embrace e-learning opportunities; to make full use of laboratory facilities if appropriate; and to take the initiative in their use of information sources. Schools provide additional information, support and training in academic skills to help students to complete their degrees. Much of this training takes place informally, as an integral part of coursework or tutorial support and supervision.

Books on study skills are available in University libraries. Information on the full range of resources can be found in the Library's Online Catalogue. A list of recommended study skills books and advice handouts is provided by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) on their website in the postgraduate learning resources section. The study skills workshops provided by the IAD are aimed at undergraduate students but postgraduates are permitted to attend most of the sessions.

Please note, plagiarism is an offence against University discipline. See Section 10.5 below for more information about this.

Weblinks:

Library Online Catalogue:

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/library-museum-gallery

Institute for Academic Development (IAD):

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development

5.1.3 *Tutorial assistance*

Teaching staff are expected to be available to tutor and advise students by email as well as online and face-to-face as appropriate. Where students are expected to lead seminars or make presentations of their work, they should be encouraged to seek tutorial assistance in order to ensure that their input is of appropriate substance and standard.

5.1.4 *Library resources*

Students should make appropriate use of online and physical library facilities to support both taught and research elements of their work, dependent on whether they are based in Edinburgh or undertaking online or distance learning.

5.1.5 *Computing resources*

For students based in Edinburgh, Schools must ensure that adequate computing facilities are available, and that students receive appropriate, relevant training. Students should be fully competent in word processing, data analysis, use of the web and communication by email. All students are registered for email usage. The University has a policy on the use of email as a method of contacting students which is available on the Academic Services website.

5.1.6 *Skills development*

The acquisition of a range of transferable skills, such as report writing, giving presentations, and time and project management, is an important part of postgraduate study. Many of these skills will be developed informally during the taught and project-based components of the degree. Specific skills development workshops or modules are also incorporated within some taught Masters programmes (see individual programme handbooks for details). Information on other sources of postgraduate skills development, training and support (for example through the Careers Service, Library and Students' Association), as well as information on postgraduate skills development for online and distance learning students is available from the Institute for Academic Development website.

5.1.7 *Provision for part-time students*

The University requires Schools to ensure provision of support services to part-time students. It is essential, therefore, that in the design and scheduling of courses, care is taken to ensure an adequate delivery of these support services at appropriate times.

5.1.8 *Provision for disabled students*

The Student Disability Service (previously the Disability Office) can provide information and advice to Programme Directors, staff and students. Student Disability Service staff can advise

on helping students to access a range of support including study skills support, specific examination/assessment arrangements and providing Student Support Assistants such as proof readers, library helpers etc. If students have a specific disability (including dyslexia, Asperger's Syndrome, autism and mental health issues) which might need to be taken into account during their studies they are urged to contact the Student Disability Service at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.1.9 *Immigration and visa advice*

Students must go to either the International Office or the Advice Place for immigration advice.

International students must make sure that they are aware of and adhere to the immigration and visa requirements and rules relating to the time they spend in the UK. It is important for students to note that, by law, the provision of immigration advice is regulated and in the University this can only be provided by specific named people who meet the required competencies and work in accordance with the Code of Standards as defined by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. In addition students should note that there are implications for immigration if there is a change of status (for example from full-time to part-time) and there are serious implications if students fail to renew visas before they expire. The length of time this takes can be quite long, and students are advised to seek help well in advance of the visa expiry date.

5.2 *Pastoral support*

The Programme Director has responsibility for ensuring the pastoral support of their students. In the case of some programmes the execution of this responsibility is devolved to other designated members of staff but the overall provision remains the ultimate responsibility of the Programme Director. All students must be made aware of the person designated to provide pastoral support.

Students may experience cultural, health or personal problems during their programme of study. The University has evolved a range of pastoral support mechanisms and services to help students through such problems and difficulties. Further sources of support are listed in Appendix IV.

5.2.1 *Programme Director*

The first point of contact for students experiencing difficulties or problems should be the Programme Director, or equivalent (in some cases there may be a named person such as a 'postgraduate director of studies' who has special responsibilities to support students). In all cases, help should be available at regularly held office hours, as well as by telephone and email.

Students are *required* to consult the Programme Director, and to do so immediately, where a problem is impairing their academic performance. The Programme Director may offer the means to resolve problems, and may also ask other members of staff to help or refer the student to other University support services.

5.2.2 *Other support*

If a student is dissatisfied with the support available from the Programme Director, or other responsible person, or if he or she feels unable to talk to these people for any reason, the student is free to approach the School Postgraduate Director (or Head of Graduate School), or, if appropriate, the chair of the staff/student liaison committee. Students with problems that cannot be resolved in this way may consult the Head of School either directly or through the School Postgraduate Director (or Head of Graduate School). If this route cannot resolve the problem, students may consult the Secretary of the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters, who may refer the matter to the Convener of the Committee. Students may also bring academic issues to the attention of the examiners. Independent and confidential advice on a wide range of issues is available from the Advice Place (see Appendix IV).

5.2.3 *The Special Circumstances Committee*

The Special Circumstances Committee deals with personal, medical and compassionate matters, and with academic matters relating to supervision, teaching and learning, and with resource provision. Any personal circumstances that may have adversely affected a student's performance in an assessment must be reported to the Programme Director or other such responsible person, in order to be considered, if necessary, within the context of the business of the Special Circumstances Committee. Documentary evidence should be produced; *responsibility for producing the documentary evidence rests with the student.*

The Special Circumstances Committee communicates the likely consequences of special student circumstances upon assessed work to the Board of Examiners for their consideration, but does so only when it is in the interests of the student, and only with the student's prior agreement.

6. *The taught component*

6.1 *Teaching and learning approaches*

The teaching and learning approaches adopted in programmes vary according to the type of programme, and are shown in the programme handbook.

Good practice requires that both the content of the taught component and the manner of delivery attain a suitably advanced level appropriate to postgraduate study. A high level of proactive input by students is expected. In the case of vocational programmes, teaching content and methods are influenced by the specific needs and practices of the professions, services and industries to which they relate. Research programmes are designed to equip students with the training and skills needed to proceed to working in a research environment, or to postgraduate research degrees. In consequence, training in research enquiry, design, conduct, analysis, reporting and critique may be more dominant. In the case of conversion programmes some of the teaching methods employed may be more akin to those used in final honours courses. Details of programme structure, including compulsory core and optional courses, are provided in the programme handbook. In certain circumstances, and with agreement, students may substitute courses from other degree curricula for part of their programme.

6.2 *Undergraduate content*

Where it is appropriate that advanced level undergraduate courses are included in the taught component of a postgraduate programme, standards are higher for postgraduate students and assessment methods may differ. In all cases, postgraduate students will receive additional learning opportunities to ensure their work is sufficiently advanced and of postgraduate level.

7. *The dissertation component*

Masters degree programmes normally include submission of a dissertation which may be the written output of a practical or investigational project. Depending on the length of the coursework component, students completing a diploma rather than a masters degree may be set a lesser piece of project work, in lieu of a dissertation (see programme handbook). Students should make full use of the experience and guidance of staff members, and plan their progress through the dissertation with the help of staff, especially the supervisor. Different arrangements apply to some Edinburgh College of Art taught postgraduate programmes; details are available in the programme handbook.

7.1 *The nature of the masters dissertation*

The dissertation is an extended piece of scholarship in which a student has the opportunity to study in depth a topic chosen on the basis of the student's own interests, the staff available to supervise, and the feasibility of the topic proposed in the light of resources and time available. The Programme Director may be able to help students in developing dissertation projects involving industrial partners.

The dissertation is distinguishable from assessed course work by the greater *depth* of investigation, analysis, comprehension and critique demonstrated. Masters students are not expected to research their work as exhaustively as is typical of a higher research degree. Students, supervisors and examiners should be aware that the masters dissertation is primarily a teaching, learning and examining medium, not a medium for the presentation of research outcomes to public and peers.

The dissertation may vary in the breadth of coverage, but it must have a clear *focus* with definable objectives and boundaries, achievable in the time and word limit available.

The relative importance of theoretical and investigational content also varies. Some programmes require students to conduct primary empirical work; others do not. Investigational work should add something to the study which is not available in the literature, and be manageable given the time and resources available.

7.2 *Supervision*

Supervisors are normally selected on the basis that they have expertise in the field or topic chosen for the dissertation, and are available and willing to support the student during the period of study. Specific expertise may not always be available for all dissertation topics; but general expertise in the broad area of the dissertation is usually adequate for a masters dissertation. Students must make early contact with potential supervisors in order to ensure suitability and availability.

7.2.1 *The role of the dissertation supervisor*

Although the role of the dissertation supervisor will vary from discipline to discipline, it is likely to include:

- *guiding the student in focusing the study* and in drawing up a written plan or timetable and outline for the dissertation, in line with Section 7.2.2 below, to ensure that a manageable piece of work is envisaged;
- *establishing* and recording in writing effective means of communication with the student;
- *ensuring as far as possible that the student has the resources required to complete the projected work*;
- *advising the student on relevant literature*, and, where appropriate, on *methodology*;
- *monitoring progress* against the agreed plan and timetable for the work and taking appropriate action as laid down in the Programme Handbook if the student does not keep in contact;
- *reading and commenting on draft chapters* of the dissertation. It is generally preferable that this is done in stages with the supervisor seeing at least some draft chapters early on, as they are written, so that the student can incorporate any feedback into subsequent writing; and
- where relevant, advising on *ethical* and *safety implications* of the work.

7.2.2 *Planning*

A short written proposal or concept note should be prepared, indicating the aims and justification of the dissertation, specific research questions, literature and investigative work to be covered, and a provisional outline of chapter titles and sub-headings. There should also be *a written plan or timetable* indicating how the work is going to be undertaken and identifying critical points when the supervisor and student should meet or otherwise be in contact with each other.

7.2.3 *Rights and responsibilities of students and supervisors*

Students have responsibilities to liaise with their supervisors regularly and to hand in material at agreed times. Students experiencing difficulties in liaising with supervisors, or other staff members, should contact the Programme Director without delay. Supervisors have responsibilities to respond promptly and appropriately, by making constructive suggestions both at the planning stage and in response to the material submitted. The responsibility for the academic quality of the dissertation is ultimately the student's alone.

Students should be made aware that approval by a supervisor, and following the supervisor's advice and guidance carries no guarantee of success at examination. Any such approving or guiding comments cannot constitute grounds for subsequent appeal.

Students should be aware of the particular importance of acknowledging the work of others and of avoiding plagiarism (see Section 10.5).

Students should always get in touch with their dissertation supervisor and/or Programme Director as soon as any problems emerge. If supervisors know they are to be unavailable to students for an extended period (for example over the summer), they should ensure that their students are fully aware of this and make back-up supervisory arrangements.

7.2.4 *Dissertation study away from Edinburgh*

Leave of absence is not normally permitted, however for campus-based students, in exceptional cases and where there are good academic reasons, it may be possible for students to undertake studies related to their dissertation projects away from Edinburgh. Appropriate leave of absence must be obtained through the Programme Director.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to ascertain (and have a written record signed by the student), *before the student leaves Edinburgh*, that the student;

- has firm arrangements in place regarding appropriate supervisor/supervision at both Edinburgh and the other site;
- has the plan of work agreed between the Programme Director, the Edinburgh supervisor and the place at which the work will take place, and that this plan will deliver information suitable for the preparation of a dissertation to masters standards;
- has established to the satisfaction of the Edinburgh supervisor and the Programme Director that the remote site has the resources available for the work planned, and that the work can be completed within the given time scale;
- has in place points of contact at the remote site such as to allow adequate pastoral care and oversight of the student's work;
- has established effective communication links between student and supervisor at Edinburgh; links must be regularly used and recorded;
- has established the means to have their progress regularly updated, and the use of these means monitored;
- has suitable arrangements made for the analysis and reporting of the work; and
- has agreed to be available to return to Edinburgh if required so to do by the Programme Director.

(Different arrangements apply for students who are undertaking online or distance learning courses – please see course handbooks or contact your College Office for more information.)

7.3 *Formal requirements*

The programme handbook sets out the formal requirements for the dissertation, such as length, style, structure, format, and deadline for submission. Further guidance can be obtained from staff. The usual deadline for dissertation submission is the third Friday in August, 17 August 2012 for this academic session, unless an alternative date has been approved by College. The deadline for submission of dissertations may only be extended in exceptional circumstances and with the prior approval of the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters. Resubmission of a revised dissertation is not permitted for postgraduate masters programmes unless this has been approved by the appropriate Senatus Committee.

8. *Assessment procedures and academic feedback*

Assessment procedures are laid out in programme handbooks, and details may be found in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations. Assessment is in most cases a two-stage process. The taught component is assessed at the end of the semester in which the course is held or at the end of the taught component of the programme. Progress to the dissertation component is conditional on a good performance in continuous assessment and examinations at the first attempt.

8.1.1 *The Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme*

The postgraduate common marking scheme is used for degree assessment and is available online. See Regulation 29 in the Taught Assessment Regulations for more information)

Candidates wishing to proceed to a masters degree must pass the assessment requirements of the initial (taught) stage at an appropriate level *at the first attempt* before progression to the dissertation.

Resubmissions of revised dissertations are not permitted for postgraduate masters programmes unless this has been approved by the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee on the basis of a case submitted by the relevant College Committee.

The marking scheme and the award of distinction, together with any local criteria concerning assessment, should be clearly defined at the start of the degree programme, and published in the programme handbook. The weighting of each part of the assessment must be made clear, with a note of any part where a threshold score is mandatory for further progress.

8.1.2 *The Board of Examiners*

Boards of Examiners comprise the main teaching staff involved with the programme together with the external examiner(s). Members are expected to attend meetings of the board; when considering the taught element, and subsequently when considering the dissertation element. The meetings of all boards of examiners must be minuted. The conduct of the Examination Board and the role of the external examiner are elaborated in the University's Taught Assessment Regulations and guidance for Boards of Examiners.

8.2 *Diploma students*

Students achieving between 40% and 49% in the taught component of the programme may be allowed to proceed to diploma studies, which may include further coursework, essay writing or project work as appropriate (see programme handbook).

8.3 *Award of distinction*

The award of distinction recognises exceptionally high achievement. Taught Assessment Regulation 52 defines the requirements for distinction.

8.4 *Marking and academic feedback*

Marking should, where possible, be anonymous. Staff should mark coursework promptly and supply written feedback. Degree examination marks and assessed coursework marks are provisional prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Marks released to students prior to the meeting of the Board are provisional and have no status until they are approved or modified by the Board. Schools which use assessed coursework as part of the examination process should normally also provide candidates with the assessed coursework marks at the time that the assessment is marked. This is to enable their use as a teaching medium and as a measure of each candidate's progress and performance. Where such marks count towards the overall result of the course and are released prior to confirmation by the Board of Examiners, candidates will be advised (both in the programme handbook and on the posted mark sheet) that the marks are provisional and without status and may be modified when considered at the Board of Examiners meeting.

Display of provisional marks must retain anonymity. If the provisional mark is below 50%, the student should seek guidance from the relevant member of staff. If the student's marks are persistently low, the marker(s) should notify the Programme Director.

Students should be given written notification of their coursework results once these have been agreed by the Board of Examiners, and be advised about progression to the dissertation component of the masters degree or completion of additional work as necessary for the possible award of diploma.

The dissertation must be marked by two internal examiners, or by one internal examiner and the external examiner. Comments must be available to the student after the Board of Examiners has met. Students should note that, in those exceptional cases where the examiners' recommendation is that a dissertation should be resubmitted after minor revisions, and this has been approved by the relevant Senatus committee, the original examiners will assess whether the revisions have been properly incorporated.

8.5 *The external examiner's role in assessment*

The role and duties of the external examiner are set out in the University's Code of Practice for External Examiners.

8.6 *Late submission*

The University expects students to meet published deadlines. Where work is not submitted on time, students will be penalised (normally by deducting marks) unless there are extenuating circumstances. Late submission policy is included in the programme handbook.

8.7 *Dealing with illness and distress*

Students suffering from illness or distress during any assessment, or period of coursework directly related to any assessment, should obtain a medical certificate from their doctor, or other appropriate documentation from a responsible independent person as soon as possible, and report the situation to the Programme Director without delay. The student should request written confirmation that this information has been received and that it will be considered by the Special Circumstances Committee.

8.8 *Oral examinations*

Some courses include an oral examination as well as a written component. Where this is the case, information will be provided in course handbooks.

Weblinks:

Postgraduate common marking scheme

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme

University's Feedback Standards and Guiding Principles

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/assessment

Code of Practice for External Examiners

www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Quality/QA/Ext%20examiners/CoPEExternalExaminers.pdf

9. *Programme evaluation and student feedback*

Student feedback provides an invaluable input to the review and development of both curriculum and programme organisation. Different procedures to facilitate this have evolved in Schools, but in all cases students have three potential avenues for conveying their views: through individual programme evaluations; through representation on relevant committees; and through the survey of taught postgraduate students. The following indicates good practice.

9.1 *Course and programme evaluation*

The University has standardised questionnaires to be completed for each taught course, the dissertation component, and for the degree programme as a whole. Individual students' comments are anonymous. A report of previous years' evaluations should be made available to current students in School offices.

9.2 *Staff/student meetings (for campus-based students)*

Each degree programme should have at least one elected student representative (more in the case of programmes with large numbers of students) whose names are available on School notice-boards. The representative(s) can raise academic, welfare, resource, and any other issues of general and particular concern on behalf of class members individually or severally, either informally with the Programme Director or through the formal structures and procedures that should be outlined in the programme handbook. There should be a staff/student liaison meeting, or, for online or distance learning students, online liaison meetings, at least twice yearly.

If you wish to raise specific policy or school issues you can do this via your school or class postgraduate representative. For details of your representative please contact your School Postgraduate Director or Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA). EUSA sabbatical officers also represent students on many University committees. You can contact them by email at: postgrad@eusa.ed.ac.uk.

9.3 *Student feedback*

All evaluation questionnaires for each programme are analysed, and all staff-student meetings are recorded in detail. On the basis of these sources and any further informal student feedback, course organisers are obliged to write a report for each course or module. These course evaluation reports should indicate the range and strength of student feedback, any issues of concern raised by students, and any action to be taken by staff to improve the programme, or courses within it, in future years. The course evaluations, and any changes in the individual course or the degree programme as a whole, are discussed annually by the programme team, under the responsibility of the Programme Director.

9.4 *National taught postgraduate survey*

The University participates in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). Postgraduate students are asked to complete this online questionnaire about their experiences at the University. This provides an opportunity to collect comments about the University's services and facilities as well as on individual degree programmes. The resulting information is invaluable in comparing the experiences of students in different Colleges and Schools and this informs decision making at all levels within the University.

Weblink:

More information about PTES is available on the Higher Education Academy's website:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/surveys/ptes

9.5 *Programme reviews*

In addition to annual course evaluation and School reviews, the College Committee with responsibility for taught postgraduate matters must conduct reviews of all degree programmes at least once every six years. Some programmes may also be reviewed or accredited by external bodies. Student feedback is a vital and highly valued aspect of all such reviews.

9.6 *Further information*

Advice and support in any matter of representation is available from the elected office bearers of the Students' Association, especially from the EUSA Postgraduate Convener or Vice President Academic Affairs. Any general matters relating to University policy can also be raised through the Students' Association Office; for more information and contact details see the EUSA website.

10. *If things go wrong*

Problems of either an academic or personal nature must be identified and raised quickly in the ways suggested above. Informal approaches to staff, administrators and the Advice Place are often the quickest and most effective ways to resolve difficulties. Nevertheless, formal channels occasionally have to be used in situations of difficulty or conflict (see Section 5.2).

10.1 *Complaints procedure*

The University is committed to finding practical and timely resolutions to complaints that allow students to re-focus on their academic work as soon as possible. Details of the University's complaints process are available on the University website.

10.2 *Personal harassment*

The University has adopted a Code of Practice to deal with personal harassment which includes any behaviour unwelcome to the recipient on a wide variety of grounds. The Code contains definitions of types of harassment, as well as advice on seeking informal assistance and the procedures for making a formal complaint. The Code is available from College Offices and student support services including the Advice Place.

10.3 *Academic Appeals*

A candidate has the right to lodge an appeal against the results of an examination. An examination is understood to include any written, practical or oral examination, continuously assessed course work or dissertation counting towards the final assessment. In the preparation of an appeal, an appellant may seek guidance from the Programme Director, the EUSA Advice Place and others identified above as giving student support.

Under the University Appeal Regulations there are two formal grounds under which a taught postgraduate student may submit an appeal. These are

- Ground A:
Substantial information **directly relevant** to the quality of performance in the examination which for **good reason** was not available to the examiners when their decision was taken.
- Ground B:
Alleged irregular procedure or improper conduct of an examination.
For this purpose 'conduct of an examination' includes the conduct of a meeting of the Board of Examiners.

In relation to Ground A above, it should be noted that it is the responsibility of the candidate to bring to the attention of the Board of Examiners any factors which may have an adverse impact upon their performance in an examination, for example personal illness or the illness of a close relative or partner immediately before or during the examination. This should be notified in writing as soon as possible and, in any event, before the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Ignorance of this requirement cannot be taken to constitute good reason for not doing so.

Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Appeals Section, Registry Academic Services, Old College, email: academic.appeals@ed.ac.uk, within six weeks of the final result being issued. Late appeals will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The appeal submission should state clearly the ground(s) under which the appeal is submitted and an explanation as to why. All relevant information and supporting documentation should be submitted at the outset. Once received, an appeal will be dealt with according to the

University's academic appeals procedure and will be considered by members of the University Postgraduate Appeal Committee.

Further information on the University appeal procedure and details of the University Academic Appeal Regulations can be accessed on the Registry Academic Services website.

Students considering appealing appeal are strongly encouraged to contact an Academic Advisor at the EUSA Advice Place for independent advice.

Weblinks:

Registry Academic Services website at:

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/academic-appeals

Advice Place academic advice team:

www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/academic-advice

or by emailing: advice@eusa.ed.ac.uk

10.4 *University discipline*

Students, by matriculating, automatically become subject to the University's Code of Student Discipline. There are detailed regulations governing University examinations, libraries, the use of computing facilities, accommodation, and the use of automatically processed data and matters concerning health and safety. In the unlikely event of students being subject to University discipline, advice is available from the Students' Association. The University's Code of Discipline may be found on the University website.

10.5 *Plagiarism and Cheating*

Plagiarism and cheating are offences against University discipline. The full text of the University's regulation on plagiarism and cheating can be found on the University's Academic Services website, including specific guidance on plagiarism.

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/discipline/plagiarism

10.6 *Edinburgh University Students' Association*

Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) is the body which represents students at the University and provides a number of valuable services and support mechanisms which are confidential and independent of the University.

If you have been experiencing specific difficulties during your studies which you are not sure how to address, or you have not been able to resolve these issues to your satisfaction, you can contact the EUSA Advice Place. Their experienced staff will be able to advise you on University procedures, practices and ways of resolving difficulties.

Appendix I

Health and Safety

The University has a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all employees and students whilst at work, and of all visitors to University premises. The University Health and Safety Policy contains the University Court's Health and Safety Policy statement and advice on general precautions as well as on precautions with particular hazards. The successful implementation of the University Policy requires the full support and active co-operation of all employees and students. The Policy also contains a summary of the scheme of enforcement of the Act, including the fact that the Health and Safety Executive can bring criminal proceedings against the University or any individual for a breach of any duty under the Act, or its attendant Regulations.

With regard to the safety of postgraduate students, the Health and Safety Policy advises that academic staff who supervise experimental work carried out by postgraduate students are required to give careful attention to the health and safety of those under their supervision. This applies not only to work on University premises but also in supervised fieldwork and to University work carried out elsewhere either in the UK or abroad. To fulfil its function, the degree of supervision must have reasonable regard to the level of training and expertise of the staff or students being supervised. During the absence of the Programme Director or dissertation supervisor, a named person should be available to ensure that established health and safety procedures are maintained.

The University has a duty to ensure that postgraduate students do not create unsafe conditions by unauthorised initiatives and that supervision must be adequate to meet this requirement. Accordingly, prior to the commencement of any hazardous work or activity, the supervisor should provide, obtain or agree to appropriate procedures which would obviate foreseeable dangers and thereafter should keep in regular touch with the student's work. This process of preparatory and ongoing risk assessment and avoidance is necessary to ensuring that any such research work can proceed safely and without risks to health, whatever type of hazard may be involved.

If the work activity in question involves the use of substances or biological agents hazardous to health, or of hazardous equipment, an agreed formal written risk assessment must be in place before the work can commence in order to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations, respectively. Activities involving Genetically Modified Organisms must comply specifically with the Regulations. Supervisors must keep themselves informed of the University's health and safety requirements and School health and safety procedures, and of changes in these, and must ensure that the student does the same.

The University Health and Safety Policy is published in eight separate parts, each of which relates to specific aspects of University work. It is the duty of all employees and students to observe those parts of the Health and Safety Policy that are relevant to their own work, and to take account of other health and safety guidance material. Any questions or problems about matters of health and safety should be taken up initially with the School Safety Adviser. The Director of Health and Safety, the University Radiation Protection Adviser, the Biological Safety Adviser and other professional members of the Health and Safety Department are also available to help. The current edition of the complete University Health and Safety Policy is available on the University website.

Weblink:

University Health & Safety Policy

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/health-safety/policy-cop/policy

Appendix II

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act 1998 concerns the 'processing' of personal data. The definition of personal data is complex, but for day-to-day purposes assume all information about living, identifiable individuals is personal data. Processing includes collection, consultation, disclosure and deletion of information; it is hard to think of an activity which would not fall within the Act's definition of 'processing'. When processing personal data the University must comply with the eight data protection principles set out in the Act, and notify the Information Commissioner of all the purposes for which it processes personal data.

Responsibilities of staff

All staff are responsible, with the guidance of the University's Data Protection Officer, for fulfilling the University's obligations under the terms of the Act when using personal data for University purposes. Staff must ensure that the processing of any personal data for which they are responsible is in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. See the data protection guidance weblink below.

Students

Academic and academic-related staff are responsible for the conduct in these matters of the students whom they supervise. The University has adopted the following policy governing use of personal data by students:

- a. A student should only use personal data for a University-related purpose with the knowledge and express consent of the Programme Director or dissertation supervisor.
- b. The use of personal data by students for University purposes should be limited to the minimum consistent with the achievement of academic objectives. Wherever possible, data should be de-personalised by removing not just names, but all information that would enable individuals to be identified.

Use of personal data by students is subject to the regulations set out below. The University's policy is based on the principle that students must only use personal data under the guidance of a member of staff. A breach of these regulations is an offence against University discipline.

1. Students must not construct or maintain files of personal data for use in connection with their academic studies/research without the express authority of the Programme Director or dissertation supervisor.
2. When giving such authority, the member of staff shall make the student aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act and of the appropriate level of security arrangements required for the particular set of personal data.
3. Students must abide by the data protection principles and follow the instructions of the University in relation to any uses of personal data for University purposes.

Weblinks

University's Data Protection Policy:

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/UoEDPPolicy.htm

and supporting guidance:

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DataProtection.htm

Data Protection Guidance for student research projects:

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/Students/DPGuidanceForStudentResearchProjects.htm

and further advice can be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer, www.ed.ac.uk/records-management

Appendix III University Codes of Practice, Regulations and other useful information

Abuse of Alcohol by Students - Code of Practice

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/policies

Abuse of Drugs by Students - Code of Practice

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/policies

Assessment Regulations

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment

Computing Facilities

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/computing-regulations

Complaint – how to make one

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/student-complaints

Contacting students by email – University policy

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/policies

Data Protection - Use of Personal Data by Students

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/dp_student_statement.htm

Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study

www.drps.ed.ac.uk/

Disability Policy

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/disability-office

Discipline, Code for students

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/discipline/code-discipline

Disclosure of Information about Students - Guidelines

www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/Students/DisclosureOfStudentInfo.htm

Available from EUSA:

Edinburgh University Students' Association, *Postgraduate Survival Guide*

Edinburgh University Students' Association, *International Student Post-Arrival Guide*

Edinburgh University Students' Association, *Guide to Members' Services*.

Edinburgh University Students' Association, *Accommodation Guide*

Welfare and other useful information is available from the Advice Place section of EUSA's web site: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/

International Pre-Arrival Guide

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/new-students>

Library Regulations

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/library-regulations

University Dignity & Respect policy

www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Dignity_and_Respect_Policy.pdf

Plagiarism guidelines

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-taught/discipline/plagiarism

Research - Code of Practice

www.research-innovation.ed.ac.uk/information/New-Code-of-Practice-for-Research.pdf

Smoking - University Policy

www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Smoking_Policy_on.pdf

Student Information Pages

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/

Student Mental Health - Code of Practice

www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/disability-office/home

(Information correct at time of going to print)

Appendix IV Sources of additional advice and information

The Advice Place: Potterrow, Bristo Square King's Buildings House www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/advice/	650 9225 651 5822
Careers Service: 3rd Floor, Main Library Building, George Square Weir Building, King's Buildings www.ed.ac.uk/careers	650 4670 650 5773
Chaplaincy Centre, 1 Bristo Square www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy	650 2595
College Offices: College of Humanities & Social Science, David Hume Tower, George Square www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/humanities-soc-sci College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, Chancellor's Building, 49 Little France Crescent www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/medicine-vet-medicine/home College of Science and Engineering, Weir Building, King's Buildings www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/science-engineering/home	650 4086 0131 242 6460/1 650 5737
Student Disability Service, 3 rd Floor, Main Library, George Square www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service	650 6828 (voice) 650 9371 (text)
Edinburgh University Students' Association, Potterrow, Bristo Square http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/	650 2656
Health and Safety Department, 9-16 Chambers Street www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/health-safety/	651 4255
Health Service, Richard Verney Building, 6 Bristo Square www.health-service.ed.ac.uk/	650 2777
Institute for Academic Development www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development	
English Language Teaching Centre www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching	650 6200
International Office, 57 George Square www.ed.ac.uk/international-office	650 4296
Library Online Catalogue www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/library-museum-gallery	

Records Management Section - which can give advice and guidance on data protection, freedom of information and records management Email: recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk	651 4099
Academic Services, Academic Registry, Old College, South Bridge www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services	650 2140/60
Student Accommodation Service, Pollock Halls of Residence www.ed.ac.uk/accommodation-services	667 1971
Student Counselling Service: 3rd Floor Main Library, George Square Paterson's Land, Moray House www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling	650 4170 651 6200

(Information correct at time of going to print)