

Aston University

# **ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL**

Information Handbook for Postgraduate  
Research Students

Academic Year 2012/13

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PLEASE NOTE: the information in this Handbook is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change.

## Welcome from Head of Aston University Graduate School

On behalf of Aston University Graduate School, I would like to welcome you to your research studies here at Aston.

Aston University Graduate School was formed with the objective of providing a supportive environment for all research students across the University with a view to widening and enriching your experience during your research studies. The Graduate School brings together under one umbrella the responsibility for maintaining the Quality Assurance of your research studies and the development of your training in core research and transferable skills thus enabling all research students studying at Aston to realise their full potential, whichever career path they choose.

Your School of Study is the major centre for the delivery of subject-specific postgraduate training and development. The University Graduate School will provide a focus for the sharing of ideas and best practice, such that these are implemented across the University. The Graduate School will support and promote cross-institutional working and, together with the Aston Postgraduate Research Society sponsored by Schools, is promoting both formal and informal events that will bring all research students together on a regular basis. See Appendix 1 for a diagrammatic representation of the Graduate School.

There is no doubt that your journey from enrolment to graduation will be a challenging one, but it should also be an enjoyable one and both the Graduate School team and your School of Study are here to give you full support and advice whenever you need it and the names of key contacts are provided in this Student Handbook.

Other information you will need during your study is also present in this Student Handbook or can be found on the [Graduate School website](#) which contains links to Support, Regulations, Training and Development, and other opportunities which you may wish to embark upon. During your training you will also be supported by a Graduate Development Team, with experts in different areas (eg Staff & Graduate Development, business issues, Library and IT, and Career Development) who collectively provide a range of training and development opportunities for all research students and research staff. Engagement in these opportunities provides an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and information across discipline boundaries, and is an important part of your research development. So please take advantage of all of the opportunities available to you while at Aston and enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding journey to the completion and award of your research degree.



Professor Martin Griffin BSc, PhD, FiBiol  
Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research  
Head of Aston University Graduate School  
Aston University

# 1. Introduction to Aston University

Founded in 1895 as the Birmingham Municipal Technical School and a University since 1966, Aston has an established record of academic excellence.

## ***The University's Mission***

We have broad strengths at Aston. We start from a position where our staff members have a strong commitment to teaching and to research and real strengths in both. We combine close and important links to our local community with a growing international reputation. This gives us an exciting and challenging mission – especially for a small university – to develop the three corners of our academic triangle: delivering an excellent learning experience for our students, enhanced by interaction with internationally recognised, relevant research, and linked to innovative support for local companies and engagement with schools and the community, involving students and staff in raising aspirations and attainment.

## ***The University's Vision is to be:***

### **A Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching**

- Creating intellectual challenge in a supportive environment
- Building partnerships to widen participation and enhance the professional and vocational focus of our programmes
- Offering flexible delivery tailored to individual needs

### **A Centre of Excellence in Rigorous, Relevant Research**

- Crossing boundaries: interdisciplinary and international
- From science and scholarship to practical application
- Delivering accessible research outputs to support industry, business, public policy and the professions

### **A Centre of Excellence in Community Engagement**

- Raising aspirations amongst families across our community
- Supporting the growth of business
- Recognised for best practice in knowledge transfer and the 'Knowledge Economy' through our work in Birmingham and the City Region.

## ***How is Aston organised?***

The Vice-Chancellor, as the principal academic and executive officer, is supported by the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor and three Pro-Vice-Chancellors, one of whom has responsibility for research across the University.

The academic activity of the University is organised in the Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP) and four Schools of Study.

- Aston Business School (ABS)
- School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS)
- School of Languages and Social Sciences (LSS)
- School of Life and Health Sciences (LHS)

## ***Where is Aston University?***

Aston University is only a few minutes' walk from the centre of Birmingham. Britain's second city is flourishing due to a period of regeneration and growth and is internationally recognised

as a leader in leisure, entertainment, business and sport with facilities to match. The city centre is a fusion of attractive squares, modern shopping arcades, diverse pubs and restaurants, and fine museums, theatres and art galleries. The University campus, together with Birmingham Science Park Aston, occupies a green and leafy 60-acre site right in the heart of the city.

### ***What is the Aston Triangle?***

Aston Triangle is the distinctive, attractive, urban home of a creative community incorporating the University's academic, residential and recreational facilities and Birmingham Science Park Aston. See <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/new-students/moving/maps/> on the Aston website for maps, directions and other useful information on finding your way around.

## **2. Your Personal Support Network**

### **2.1 Supervisor**

The Code of Practice for Research Degrees (see Appendix 2) includes an outline of your and your Supervisor's responsibilities to each other regarding your research; these may be expanded upon or clarified by your School of Study and will be included in the Learning Agreement you discuss with your Supervisor shortly after you start your research (see Appendix 3 for details).

Your Supervisor is your mentor and primary source of all help and guidance. S/he is there to guide and direct you. You should develop a good working relationship with your Supervisor and expect to have regular meetings. It is your joint responsibility to make sure these meetings are useful and productive, and also to ensure that records of the meetings are retained (see Appendix 5 for a template Record of Supervisory Meeting Form for doing this). The Meeting Form will provide the basis of research progress to discuss at the next meeting. In the early stages of your research, meetings with your Supervisor should be quite regular. In the latter stages, when you become more independent, these meetings will become less frequent, but perhaps more technically intense. At all stages of your research, the completed Meeting Forms from at least three formal meetings (one for each period of 3 months) will need to be submitted with your Annual Progress Report (see Sections 3.6 and 3.7 below).

If you are in any way unhappy about your interaction with your Supervisor, which might seem significantly different to other local students' experiences with their own Supervisors, then you should discuss the issues with the Postgraduate Tutor named on your Learning Agreement as a source of independent advice if the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well (see also Section 3.22).

### **2.2 Associate Supervisor**

In addition to your main Supervisor, it is likely that you will also have one or more Associate Supervisors who provide additional expertise and support; this is particularly useful when your research is interdisciplinary. Your Associate Supervisor(s) may also be able to suggest alternative methods or reference sources precisely because they will have a different skill set to your main Supervisor. Your Associate Supervisor(s) should be involved in some of your progression reviews jointly with your Supervisor and may also take part in your Qualifying

Report *viva voce* examination. The role of the Associate Supervisor in your research should be clarified at the meeting to discuss the Learning Agreement.

## **2.3 Advisor**

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for an Advisor to be appointed. An example of when the appointment of an Advisor may be involved is when the Supervisor has not previously supervised a research degree student to completion. The Advisor's primary role is to provide guidance to your Supervisor. If an Advisor is appointed, s/he may be present at meetings and will attend your Qualifying Report *viva voce* examination.

## **2.4 School Research Administrator**

The School Research Administrator in the central School office provides help and guidance on all aspects of your interactions with the University including regulations, your Annual Progress Reports, your thesis examination, and swipe card problems. If you have queries which cannot be resolved at a local level, you should visit the School Research Administrator for a discussion.

## **2.5 Associate Dean Research**

The Associate Dean Research oversees the School's research activity, including the research student experience, and is the final point of contact for your issues within the School.

## **2.6 Other Research Students**

You are working with other students around you at different stages of their own research. You should seek their advice on personal and academic issues. They can be a good source of help on how the University runs, where to find places in Birmingham, and what to do about any problems you might have with your studies.

## **2.7 Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS)**

Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS) is the University-wide research student society. It is funded through the University Graduate School and affiliated with the Students' Guild and was founded in 2010 with the aim of encouraging collaboration between Schools of Study and research groups. The Society is run by two postgraduate students from each School of Study. You will automatically become a member of APRS once you enrol but will need to register your interest by joining the APRS Facebook page '[Aston Postgraduate Research Society](#)' to keep up-to-date with news and events.

For details of the current School representatives and how to register, plus further information about APRS and individual School societies, visit: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/graduateschool/postgraduate-community/aston-postgraduate-research-society/>

If you wish to contact the Society Executive with a query, please email [aprs@aston.ac.uk](mailto:aprs@aston.ac.uk).

## 2.8 Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme

The transition to postgraduate study is exciting but can also sometimes be daunting. You may be new to the city or may live off campus, you may be the first in your family to go on to postgraduate study, you may be returning to education after some years, or may be the only one of your group of friends to come to Aston. Having the support of an experienced postgraduate student can help you to settle in quickly and make the most of your time here. The nature of support is primarily pastoral, and may include practical advice and tips which will help you to integrate into the University as a postgraduate student. The mentoring support is available in your first year and focuses on practical issues such as:

- Helping you to settle into the University and integrate into the postgraduate student community
- Getting to grips with University or School processes
- Finding out about accommodation
- Dealing with the 'culture shock' of a new environment
- Finding out about transport and getting about
- Making friends and getting involved with student societies
- Achieving a good life/study balance

As the relationship matures and you feel more settled, you may want to seek more specific support from your mentor, such as:

- Ideas on how to manage your time while studying and/or working
- What support is available on campus
- ...just having someone to chat to who understands your concerns

Postgraduate Mentors are NOT supervisors; they are there as an additional resource to support you through your studies. They can offer you a student perspective, having been in your shoes not so long ago!

### **What can you gain by having a Postgraduate Mentor?**

- Practical advice, encouragement and support
- Share another postgraduate student's experience, knowledge and skills
- Increased social and academic confidence
- Empowerment to make decisions
- Develop communication, study and personal skills
- Develop strategies for dealing with both personal and academic issues
- Identify goals and establish a sense of direction
- Gain valuable insight into the next stage of your university career

### **If you are a current postgraduate student, why not apply to become a Postgraduate Mentor?**

- Improve your communication and personal skills
- Develop your leadership and management qualities
- Reinforce your own study skills
- Receive full training and on-going support
- Increase your confidence and motivation
- Take advantage of a volunteering opportunity and contribute to the postgraduate student community

- Gain a certificate of participation
- Enhance your CV and employability skills
- Increase your social contact
- Gain recognition for your skills and experience
- Gain a sense of fulfilment and personal growth

If you are interested in this programme, or would like further details, please contact:

Email: [pgmentoring@aston.ac.uk](mailto:pgmentoring@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 5226

Website: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/get-involved/mentoring-at-aston-university/the-postgraduate-mentoring-scheme/>

## 2.9 Graduate Development Team

Your School will provide a range of training and development opportunities, the outline of which is detailed in Section 3.5 below. In addition, the University offers a wide range of other opportunities delivered by a number of central services which have specific expertise and experience in the areas that they cover. These Departments coordinate their activities through a Graduate Development Team which comprises:

- Business Partnership Unit
- Careers and Employability Centre
- Staff & Graduate Development (which has an overview role)
- Learning Development Centre
- Library and Information Services
- Research Support Office

ResearcherPlus (<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/researcherplus>) is a comprehensive programme of personal and professional development opportunities for research students. Administered by Staff & Graduate Development, the collection of courses and workshops covers a broad range of generic skills that support your ability to succeed on your programme and skills that will prepare you for future employment. The course provision is mapped against the national Researcher Development Statement (see Appendix 7 for details) and in broad terms the courses cover:

- Research Methods
- Research Skills
- Personal Skills and Effectiveness
- Professional and Career Development Skills
- Working with Others
- Teaching
- Communication Skills
- Business Skills
- Academic Writing Skills
- IT Skills

Further details of the Graduate Development Team, the Researcher Development Framework and the course provision offered through ResearcherPlus can be found at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/graduateschool/>. Access to these courses is an inclusive part of your learning experience at Aston, and we encourage you to talk to your Supervisor about which courses you should do and how you can schedule them over your period of research. Booking onto courses is easy – just go to the ResearcherPlus homepage (<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/researcherplus>) and follow the links to the booking system.

In addition to the courses, each Department in the Graduate Development Team offers other opportunities that are more personalised and often one-to-one. Please refer to each Department's website which can be accessed directly, or through <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/graduateschool/training/>. Information about some of the Departments in the Graduate Development Team is provided below and there are also resources, including access to the following, available in the Blackboard Researcher Development Module:

- The Good Viva
- The Good Supervision
- The Good Presentation
- The Good Doctorate

### 2.9.1 Careers and Employability Centre

Whether you have undertaken your postgraduate research degree as a step on the way to a career or you do not know what you want to do at the end of your course, the Careers Centre can help you. We can offer you guidance and support with your career planning. There are resources available through our website at [www.aston.ac.uk/careers](http://www.aston.ac.uk/careers) and in Careers Information area in the Careers Centre.

Our **Careers Guide** outlines all our services for students and graduates and is accessible through our website.

Our social media sites are linked from here:



Careers related information for postgraduate research students can be found on the **[Vitae website](#)**.



The Aston University Graduate School offers training courses for research students and post docs through its Research Skills Training Programme. Among other things, it covers aspects of career planning and development.

View details of courses offered by Staff & Graduate Development through [ResearcherPlus](#).

**Location:**

The Careers Centre is located on the first floor of the South Wing.

**Contact details:**

Email: [careers@aston.ac.uk](mailto:careers@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 4757

**Opening Hours**

9am-4.30pm Monday to Friday

## 2.9.2 Library and Information Services

***OPEN 24/6 WHEN IT MATTERS MOST***

Aston University Library & Information Services has achieved the government standard in Customer Service Excellence, meaning that the service is customer focused with friendly, knowledgeable and professional staff.

**Opening Hours**

Our opening hours are always displayed in the foyer and on the web site. We are open 24/6, from Sunday morning through to Saturday evening for many weeks of the year.

**Self Service**

We make our services as user-friendly as possible, so you can issue books, pay fines, borrow laptops and print documents even at night when there are no Library staff available.

**Membership**

You automatically become a member of the Library at enrolment. The barcode on your uniCARD shows your Library membership number. You will need your uniCARD to enter the Library and to take books out.

You are still a member of the Library if you are not based on campus and can make use of all the online Library facilities.

There are additional services available to part-time and distance learning students at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/library/additional-information-for/parttime/>. If you would like to use other UK University libraries, you will need to complete a SCONUL application form and return it to the enquiries desk at Aston University Library in advance. For further information see <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/library/usingotherlibs/>

## Access to resources

From the Library home page <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/library/> you can:

- search for books, journals and e-resources in your subject area;
- read about Library services and facilities;
- check how to reserve books and view your library record.

## Training and support

Our Information Specialists regularly provide training sessions to help researchers make the most of our resources. You can contact them at any time using the contact information below.

### Contact details:

Email: [library@aston.ac.uk](mailto:library@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 4525

### Find out more

Use the web site <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/library/> to find out more about facilities and services.

There is also information in the Library Matters section of the Blackboard Researcher Development Module.

## 2.9.3 Learning Development Centre

The Learning Development Centre (LDC) is a central service that aims to help all Aston students get the most from their academic study. The LDC provides advice, resources, and learning opportunities for the study skills that underpin your degree course.

You can make a small group or one-to-one appointment with a Learning Development Advisor or a student Writing Mentor, who can work with you to develop and express your ideas through your academic writing.

Our experienced team delivers a programme of workshops throughout the year, covering topics such as planning your assignments, developing your writing, using and referencing sources correctly, research methods, and preparing for presentations. You can sign up for just one session or follow an entire programme.

We provide a drop-in tutorial service to assist with maths and statistics development. Our tutors are available to work with you whether you're returning to maths after a break and want to refresh your skills, or if you want to further develop your existing maths knowledge.

Additionally, space is available for group study and you can reserve rooms with IT facilities to practice presentations.

If you are unable to visit the LDC for an appointment, you can use our Email Tutorial Service, available at the following address: [ldcetutorials@aston.ac.uk](mailto:ldcetutorials@aston.ac.uk). This service is similar to the one-to-one appointments we run in the Centre. For more information on the Email Tutorial Service and advice on how to prepare for an email tutorial, please go to:

<http://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/ldc/email-tutorial>.

Visit the Learning Development Centre module in Blackboard for study resources and more information. This can be accessed through the Researcher Development Module.

**Location:**

The Learning Development Centre is located on the first floor of the Library building.

**Contact details:**

Email: [ldc@aston.ac.uk](mailto:ldc@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 3040

Website: <http://www.aston.ac.uk/ldc>

**Opening Hours**

10am-5pm Monday to Friday, term-time

### **3. From Enrolment to Examination: key stages and important information**

#### **3.1 Enrolment and MAP (My Aston Portal)**

Before commencing your research, you will need to enrol with the University. The first stage is on-line pre-enrolment, during which you will be assigned a student number, username and password, followed in most cases by face-to-face enrolment at Aston at which you will be required to present your original identification and qualifications documents. Pre-enrolment and Enrolment is through the University portal, MAP (My Aston Portal).

Once you have enrolled, you will receive a University ID card (uniCARD) and your research start date will be confirmed as one of 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> April or 1<sup>st</sup> July, depending on which is closest to your date of enrolment. All research students are enrolled initially for an unspecified higher degree and may be recommended for progression to the MPhil, PhD or Professional Doctorate programme based on a satisfactory qualifying report or completion of progression point requirements. PhD/Professional Doctorate must be completed within three years (full-time students) or six years (part-time students) from the research start date and an MPhil within two or four years, respectively.

Your research programme details, including regulations applicable to your programme, details of your supervisor(s) and your projected thesis submission date, will be displayed on your MAP Home Page. If you believe any of these details is incorrect, you should contact the School Research Administrator. Your MAP Home Page will also display the following:

- Personal Details (you are responsible for keeping these up-to-date via MAP)
- Electronic Resources, including links to Blackboard and the University Library
- Student Finances, including a link to the online payments homepage
- Standard Letters available for you to request, including Confirmation of Student Status and Tier 4 Extension
- Recorded Absences
- Research Activities (see Section 3.6)

- University Contacts, including links to the Graduate School and The Hub (Student Support Services).

## **3.2 Re-enrolment**

All students are expected to re-enrol annually in September, irrespective of their research start date. The purpose of re-enrolment is to confirm that you are enrolled in the current academic year, rather than to confirm that you have completed (a further) 12 months of your research programme. The re-enrolment process therefore indicates the number of academic years (rather than calendar or research years) that you have been enrolled at the University. For example, a student with a research start date of January will re-enrol into their second academic year in October.

Re-enrolment is via MAP and you will be emailed when the MAP task is available for you to complete. As part of the re-enrolment process, you will be asked to confirm that you accept the University's regulations for the current academic year.

## **3.3 Contact and Communication**

We usually contact our students by email and will use the Aston email address that will be allocated when you enrol (not personal email accounts). All formal University correspondence will be sent to your Aston email address. There are University rules about students forwarding emails to non-Aston accounts – details will be provided by School computer technicians. If you experience any problems with email, email the helpdesk on [isa\\_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk](mailto:isa_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk), telephone 0121 204 3445 or visit Room 477 on the fourth floor of the Main Building.

Internal post is distributed through the postgraduate research student pigeon holes; students are advised to check the pigeon holes regularly.

All postgraduate students should have access to email, telephone and fax facilities for University business. You can get details of fax facilities from your School Research Administrator.

Personal phone calls may be made via the switchboard and are billed to the individual. A limited stationery supply is available for research use. Again, contact your local Research Administrator for details. Telephone support is provided by contacting [telephones@aston.ac.uk](mailto:telephones@aston.ac.uk).

You must advise your Supervisor or, if unavailable, another appropriate member of staff (eg Associate Supervisor, School Research Administrator) of any illness, holidays or other occasions when you will be absent from the University or from your research, or of any other circumstances likely to affect your work (see also Sections 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13). Please be aware that an extended period of lack of communication over three months, without good reason, may lead to your Supervisor recommending to the School Research Committee that you be voluntarily withdrawn from your research programme.

### 3.4 University ID Card (uniCARD)

Students are issued with an individual University ID card (uniCARD). This Card has an **ID** number, which is **registered to you**. The system logs the use of this Card. Please do not loan your Card to anyone else; if you do, you will be in breach of University Regulations and subject to disciplinary action. All *bona fide* members of staff, students and registered visitors will be issued with a Card for their own use.

Cards must be worn at all times. Cardholders are available from Security. Any student not wearing their Card will be asked to leave the building. Information is available at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/ict/studentguide/unicard>

If you lose your uniCARD, you must report the loss as soon as possible to Information Systems Aston (ISA), located in Room 477 on the fourth floor of the Main Building, or telephone 0121 204 3445; email [isa\\_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk](mailto:isa_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk). You can also report a lost Card via the website.

If you lose your Card, there is a replacement charge of £10. If the Card has been stolen it will be replaced free of charge on receipt of a police report number.

### 3.5 Core Research Skills Training

University and School regulations require all PhD/Professional Doctorate students to complete at least 90 hours of core research skills training during their degree, and MPhil students to complete at least 60 hours. Students with an approved MSc in Research Methods may be exempt from some of the University skills training requirements on request (check with your Supervisor if you think you may be exempt) and students on Professional Doctorates may meet the requirement through the taught element of the programme. Occasionally, there may also be other reasons for granting an exemption. Further details on permissible grounds within your School of Study are provided in Section 4 of this Handbook. Your Supervisor will review your training needs with you when you meet to discuss the Learning Agreement, and a Training Needs Analysis form is appended to the Learning Agreement for that purpose (see Appendix 3a). Your skills development will be reviewed at least annually, at the time of the Annual Progress Report, and you should keep the record of training undertaken, and to be taken, up-to-date.

The training and development activities that can count towards research skills training hours are:

- Internal courses and workshops offered by Departments represented in the Graduate Development Team and offered through the course booking system (see details in Section 2.9 above). This includes Module IS4001: Research Skills and Professional Development which, if completed, counts for 20 hours, plus 20 hours if the associated assessment is undertaken;
- Internal courses and seminars offered by your School;
- Poster presentations at conferences, seminars or poster competitions (10 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 5 hours for University events);
- Oral presentations at conferences/seminars (15 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 8 hours for University events);
- External workshop requiring active participation: 5 hours.

You are required to submit details of the skills training undertaken to your Supervisor for inclusion in your Annual Progress Report for the School Research Committee at the end of each year of your research. Details of your skills training can be recorded when you report on your research activities (see Section 3.6 or 4.7 below). You will need to submit a full list of the 90/60 hours with your thesis for forwarding to the examiners.

### **3.6 Recording Your Research Activities – International Students**

If you are an international student from outside the EU, you will be required to report on your research activities on a monthly basis (or every two months if you are part time) because the University is legally required to confirm that you are engaging with your research on a regular basis and the recording of your research activities will provide a means of confirming that that is the case.

You will be invited to record your research activities via the University portal, MAP (My Aston Portal), each month by following a guided process. Once you have recorded your research activities for the relevant period (eg library induction, conference attendance, seminars, data collection), you will submit them to your Supervisor, through MAP, for his/her approval and/or comment. Your Supervisor will indicate which of the activities, or what proportion of them, are eligible to contribute towards your skills training. Using MAP, you will be able to print out a list of all of the research activities you have recorded and a list of the approved skills training hours.

### **3.7 Qualifying Report**

Towards the end of your first year (second year for part-time students) you are required to submit a report of your research to your Supervisor. The report should be a minimum of 6,000 words, or as specified by your School, and should include a literature review, a methodology section, a description of research already completed, a discussion and detailed plans for the research you intend to undertake for your higher degree. A 'Guide to the requirements for the Qualifying Report' is shown in Appendix 6.

You will be assessed on the content of your report at a *viva voce* examination conducted by your Supervisor, Advisor (if appointed) and at least one other member of academic staff. The purpose of the *viva* is not only to ascertain your academic potential but also to provide independent advice on your research that students usually find very helpful. A joint report on your performance will then be submitted to the School Research Committee, within an Annual Progress Report, making an appropriate recommendation as to your progress: ie that you be enrolled for a PhD, Professional Doctorate or MPhil degree or that you be asked to withdraw. You will receive a letter of confirmation and a copy of the Report in due course.

You should be aware that it is your responsibility to inform the Examiners, in writing, before the qualifying *viva voce* examination of any factors (eg medical reasons) that may affect your progress. If the decision is to recommend a student's withdrawal, the student will usually be offered the opportunity to make representations.

### 3.8 Progression at End of Second Full-Time/Fourth Part-Time Year

Before the end of your second year (fourth year for part-time students) you are required to complete a minimum of *either* an oral presentation of all or part of your research (eg your research undertaken in your second year) *or* write up all or part of your research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication). Your Supervisor will consult with you about which task you are expected to complete. The format of the oral presentation and the paper will be specified by your School. The oral presentation will be between 30-60 minutes. You will be provided with structured feedback, normally by your Supervisor and the member of academic staff who assessed your Qualifying Report. The feedback form should be submitted with your Annual Progress Report for the year (see next section). The form for providing feedback on an oral presentation is in Appendix 4. Each School has an approved form for providing feedback on a written paper (see Appendix 9 for LHS).

### 3.9 Annual Progress Report

At the end of each year of enrolment, your Supervisor is required to report on your progress. This includes submitting copies of the Record of Supervisory Meeting Forms (see Appendix 5 for details) from at least three (usually quarterly) formal meetings held during the research year and your revised Training Needs Analysis form, updated to reflect further skills development requirements identified following review.

If your work is satisfactory and you have completed any additional requirements for the year in question (eg the oral presentation/written paper on your research referred to in Section 3.8), you will be allowed to proceed to the next year of your MPhil/PhD/Professional Doctorate. Part of the Annual Progress Report will be completed in consultation between you and your Supervisor and part of it is for you to complete on your own. This provides you with the opportunity to comment on the supervision that you have received over the previous year, in confidence, and will not be shown to your Supervisor without your permission. A letter of confirmation and a copy of the Annual Progress Report will be sent to you in due course.

### 3.10 Thesis Submission Time Limits and Obtaining an Extension

The prescribed time limits for the submission of your thesis for examination are detailed in the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis as follows:

a Full-time students

		MSc/MA (by Research )	MPhil	PhD/Professional Doctorate
	Earliest date for submission:	not applicable	after one year	after two years
	<b>Maximum time allowed:</b>	one year	two years	three years

b Part-time students

	Earliest date for submission:	MSc/MA (by Research) not applicable	MPhil after two years	PhD/Professional Doctorate after four years
	<b>Maximum time allowed:</b>	two years	four years	six years

While it is desirable that your thesis should be submitted within the prescribed time limit, the Regulations allow you to apply to the School Research Committee for a **maximum** one year extension of time if you can provide a good reason as to why the thesis cannot be submitted on time. Your application should be made through the Research Administrator in the School Research Office at least one month before the thesis is due to be submitted. It should be accompanied by a timetable, detailing how your thesis will be completed within the additional time requested together with a letter of support from your Supervisor.

If your extension is approved, you will be considered to be writing up your thesis for the period of the extension and you should ensure that you re-enrol (in August/September, irrespective of your research start date) via MAP. You will then be required to submit your PhD/Professional Doctorate thesis within a **maximum** of four full-time/seven part-time years and you and your Supervisor should be working towards this absolute final submission date from the outset of your research programme. It is extremely unlikely that you will be granted an extension of time of more than one year. Such a request would require a waiver of regulations and is only likely to be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. Research Councils impose heavy penalties on departments and institutions whose students take longer than four full-time years to submit a PhD thesis and your Supervisor and the School Research Committee are very much aware of the importance of this deadline.

### 3.11 Leave of Absence

Under special circumstances (eg documented ill-health), it is possible to take a leave of absence from your research. It is very important that this is done at the appropriate time, when the illness or other sufficient cause is current. You should discuss requesting a leave of absence with your Supervisor so that s/he is kept fully informed of your situation and can show their support by countersigning your request.

If you are a sponsored student, your Supervisor may request on your behalf that your funding is suspended until such time as you return to your research studies. If this is to happen, you will receive a letter notifying you of this when your leave of absence is confirmed. The letter will ask you to inform the School Research Administrator when you are returning so that the reinstatement of your maintenance grant can be arranged.

You should also be aware that a leave of absence will affect the date when your Annual Progress Report will be due and the date for submission of your thesis. For example, if your research start date is 1 October and you are granted a six month leave of absence, your Annual Progress Report would change from being due on 30 September to being due on 31 March.

Students on leave of absence should nevertheless complete the annual re-enrolment process.

### 3.12 Vacation

The General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis state that: 'A research student may be allowed up to six weeks vacation a year by prior arrangement with their Supervisor, or a vacation allowance as specified by their sponsor.' Please note that this is a total of 30 working days (excluding days when the University is officially closed for Christmas, Easter and Bank Holidays) across the full 52-week calendar year. You should discuss any arrangements for taking leave with your Supervisor prior to doing so. You can also expect your Supervisor to let you know when s/he will be absent for a prolonged period. Students with a Tier 4 Visa should also read the next section.

### 3.13 Tier 4 Student Authorised Absences

As part of the Points-Based Immigration System (Tier 4), Aston University as an educational sponsor for overseas students is responsible for monitoring student attendance and must record all different types of student absences for overseas students. Under the UK Border Agency (UKBA) regulations, if you have a Tier 4 Visa you must be present on the University premises for the purpose of your research studies, for the entire duration of your course, unless you apply for, and are granted, a monitored 'authorised absence' from your School, for a specific period of time. If you need to leave the UK during your doctoral studies you must obtain written permission from your School Research Office for short periods of absence, for example to undertake research overseas, to return home due to bereavement, an illness or a family celebration. If your School approves your absence, you will be given a Letter of Authorised Absence which you must show at immigration when you return to the UK. It is essential that you inform the Research Administrator in your School of any absence as soon as possible. ***Please note that the UK Border Agency may not allow you to re-enter the UK if you do not have written permission from Aston University to be absent from your studies.***

**It is very important that those students under the Tier 4 system keep up-to-date with current immigration regulations as these may change in the future. You should check the International Student Support Unit (ISSU) website, your emails, MAP and Blackboard regularly for updates. Further information can be found at:**

**<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/studentssupport/issu/immigration/>**

### 3.14 Your Thesis/Portfolio

Three copies of your thesis/portfolio\* and two copies of your thesis summary should be submitted to the Research Administrator in the School Research Office by the submission date (see Section 3.10). You should submit loose-bound copies, in a format described in the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses. The length of your thesis will depend very much on the nature of your research but University regulations have set an upper limit of 80,000 words. If you anticipate exceeding this limit by more than 25% you should seek the advice of your Supervisor.

*\*If your Supervisor does not wish to receive a hard copy of your thesis, only two copies of your loose-bound thesis need be submitted.*

### 3.15 Your Viva Voce Examination

As your submission deadline draws near, your Supervisor will nominate an internal and an external examiner for your *viva voce* examination. An independent chairperson will also be nominated by your School's Research Office. Once approved by the Associate Dean of Research and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, your Supervisor will arrange your *viva*. This should be held within three months of the date you submitted your thesis. If your Supervisor wishes to be present at the *viva*, s/he must consult with you and obtain your agreement beforehand. During your *viva*, you will be questioned about your research, including: your literature review, choice of methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Such examinations vary in duration but can often last about three hours. Further information about the Conduct of the *Viva Voce* examination is provided in Appendix C of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees in Appendix 2.

At the end of a PhD/Professional Doctorate *viva*, the examiner will make one of the following recommendations:

That you:

- I. Be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/Professional Doctorate.
- II. Make minor corrections to your thesis within 3 or 6 months, as specified by the examiners, before the award is made.
- III. Revise and resubmit your thesis within 12 months on the basis of existing work or within 2 years on the basis of additional work. The Examiners decide whether another *viva voce* examination is required.
- IV. For PhD submissions: be awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy (corrections within 3 or 6 months as specified by the examiners may be required).
- V. For PhD submissions: revise and resubmit your thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy.
- VI. Not be awarded a degree.
- VII. that the unsuccessful DProf thesis or portfolio be recommended to the relevant Board of Examiners as equivalent to the Master's thesis (in cases where there is a linked Masters only).

For MPhil candidates, the examiners can recommend that the degree is awarded, that minor corrections are required within 3 or 6 months as specified by the examiners, that the thesis be revised and resubmitted on the basis of existing or additional work (within 1 or 2 years respectively) or that no degree be awarded.

If you are required to submit a revised thesis, you will be invoiced for a resubmission fee (usually at the time you resubmit your thesis).

### 3.16 Laboratory Records and Intellectual Property (IP)

Note that, generally, Research Councils require that primary research data be stored for a period of ten years. As well as storing your research data, you should also maintain a working log book of your activities and ideas, irrespective of whether you are involved in laboratory or desk-based research. Your log book need not necessarily be paper-based; it might instead be a folder on your computer containing one or more Word documents

recording your activities and ideas. Whichever method you use, you should ensure that you get into the habit of making your records as complete as possible.

Each time you make an entry in your log book, the page should be signed and dated by someone else, ideally an academic not directly connected with your research project. The log book should be handed in to your Supervisor when you leave the University.

Your original work in your log book would be the primary claim of priority in any dispute regarding patenting or Intellectual Property (IP) issues and, if a patent is filed, the laboratory records will potentially be required for 20+ years. As a research student, you should be aware of IP issues, including the University's IP Policy. If you wish to discuss the implications of IP for your research, you should do so with your Supervisor in the first instance.

### **3.17 Ethics**

All research students should take the time to reflect on the ethical implications of their research and are expected to adhere to the standards of work performance and conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University as set out in the Research Code of Conduct (see Appendix B of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees in Appendix 2).

If you undertake any research involving human participants then you may require ethical approval from the University. There is useful information about the ethical approval process online at: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/ethics-policy-and-procedures/>

For further information, please contact your Supervisor or the Research Administrator in the School Office.

### **3.18 Data Protection**

If you are running experiments involving data about human participants, you will need to be aware of the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1998. More information is available on the website at: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/data-protection-policy-and-procedures/>; a paper copy of the University's Guidelines for Data Users is available from the School Research Office. This covers such issues as what kinds of data may be kept, how it is stored, and the participants' access to data about themselves.

### **3.19 Academic Malpractice**

The Regulations on Student Discipline include the following examples of academic malpractice. If an allegation of academic malpractice is brought against a student, the student will be subject to disciplinary proceedings; the penalties which may be applied when an allegation is found to be proven are detailed in the [Regulations on Student Discipline](#):

**Plagiarism** is a form of cheating in which a student uses, without acknowledgement, the intellectual work of other people and presents it as his or her own. It includes copying passages, sentences or even phrases from other work, without quotation marks. It also

includes presenting the ideas or arguments of others as your own, i.e. without acknowledging the source. Please note that this applies to material retrieved from the internet as well as books, journals and periodicals. It applies even if you have paraphrased (changed the wording), or taken ideas from another student, or any unpublished material. If you are in any doubt about how to acknowledge your sources and reference correctly, seek advice from your Supervisor.

**Collusion** is where two or more students have worked together to produce a piece of work which is then submitted for assessment as the work of only one of the students.

**Fabrication** of data and the deliberate augmenting, amending or omission of data, with the intention to deceive, is another form of cheating. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain the integrity of the data at all stages of the research. If data are excluded from analysis for any reason, if hypothetical data are discussed at any point, or if any corrections are applied to data, then this must be made explicit. Students must retain raw data and evidence of informed consent by participants, where appropriate.

### **3.20 Quality Management: What it is and how to play your part**

At the end of each research year, Supervisors must submit an Annual Progress Report on the performance of each of their research students, in consultation with the student. These Reports are considered by the Associate Dean Research on behalf of the School's Research Committee and issues arising may form part of the School's Annual Monitoring Report on Research which is subsequently considered by the University's Graduate School Management Committee.

Aside from maintaining regular contact with your Supervisor and recording the outcomes of your meetings, your input will also be extremely valuable for evaluation purposes.

#### **Course Evaluation**

Teaching staff welcome constructive feedback on workshops and seminars. Your input may be sought through questionnaires, representation on various committees or by asking you to take part in group evaluation exercises.

Postgraduate representatives play an important part in relaying the requirements and concerns of postgraduate students to the committee structure of the School and of the University. There are postgraduate representatives on School Research Committees and on the University's [Graduate School Management Committee](#).

As a postgraduate representative, you are asked to:

- make yourself known to all other postgraduate students
- agree a system by which students can communicate effectively with you over matters of student concern
- attend relevant Committee meetings and raise student issues as necessary
- feed back to other postgraduate students the content and outcome of meetings and discussions.

### 3.21 Important University Documents and Rules and Regulations

For all important University documents please go to the following links on the website:

<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/new-students/regsandpolicies/>  
<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/graduateschool>

The Registry's Regulations and Policies Page includes the following important areas:

- [Research Regulations, Procedures and Codes of Practice](#)
- [Academic Appeals Procedures](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedures](#)
- [Disciplinary Regulations for Students](#)

### 3.22 Student Representations

The University has approved procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals (see section above for links to documents).

The General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis state that research students who are dissatisfied with their conditions of work or the quality of their supervision should wherever possible discuss the difficulties with their Supervisor but that if that is not appropriate, the student should approach the Associate Dean Research or their nominee or, where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean. If the difficulties remain unresolved, the student may refer the complaint to the Executive Dean under the procedures detailed in the School/Departmental stage of the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). If the Supervisor is also the Executive Dean, or the Executive Dean has been otherwise involved at an earlier stage, the complaint may be referred to the Chief Operating Officer or their nominee under the procedure detailed in the University stage of the Student Complaints Procedure.

If you are unsure who to approach in the first instance, please contact Gill Pilfold, your School PG Research Administrator. If you wish to speak with someone outside your School of Study, please contact Alison Birch, Assistant Registrar, Graduate School, based in the Registry (email [a.j.birch@aston.ac.uk](mailto:a.j.birch@aston.ac.uk)).

The Advice and Representation Centre in the Students' Guild (see Section 5.1) is a source of independent advice for students who may be experiencing difficulties of any kind.

## 4. School Specific Information

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### Welcome from Associate Dean Research & Enterprise

*I am delighted to welcome you to Aston University and the School of Life and Health Sciences. You can be assured that you are joining one of the top research Schools in the country. Indeed, we pride ourselves on the quality and volume of internationally excellent and world leading research with relevance to health care and societal needs. We work positively to promote a translational framework to support knowledge and development of clinical products, policy and practice across the lifespan.*

*With over 100 postgraduate research students now enrolled within the School we have both a dynamic academic and social environment. That's not to say that there isn't hard work ahead but you can be sure of our support every step of the way to help make your time here at Aston both productive and enjoyable.*

*I wish you every success with your continuing studies.*



Dr Ian Stanford

Associate Dean, Research and Enterprise, School of Life and Health Sciences

## 4.1 Introduction to School

The School offers a range of HEFCE funded undergraduate programmes spanning the life and health sciences, all of which were rated as excellent in the last Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) teaching assessment. The current undergraduate activities within the school are divided into the four subject groups of Biology/Biomedical Sciences, Psychology, Optometry/Audiology and Pharmacy. These groups have responsibility for the design, delivery and operation of the programmes in their area and activity is coordinated through their Programme Management Committees. The School's Learning and Teaching Committee and Teaching Quality Committee provide an over-arching mechanism for quality control which acts to co-ordinate common areas of activity and to disseminate good practice. All academic staff are members of one of the research groups within the School.

### ***Postgraduate Taught:***

The School offers an extensive range of taught postgraduate programmes (see <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lhs/postgraduate-study/courses/> ) that are focused upon the developing career needs of both recent graduates and re-entry students and these are supplemented by a range of short courses aimed at practising psychologists, pharmacists and optometrists for continuing professional development.

### ***Postgraduate Research:***

Within this framework, the School has developed an extensive range of exciting research opportunities. We have a strong research environment which ensures that our postgraduate research students can develop expertise in cutting-edge scientific research, underpinned with a formal training programme in research skills and professional development. This enables successful students to graduate with technical expertise in their chosen area and a range of generic skills in information retrieval; critical analysis; hypothesis design and testing and communication.

Lecture theatres and tutorial rooms are provided through a central University booking service. The University received major capital funding from HEFCE to upgrade its main lecture theatres and all are now equipped with full AV equipment including digital projection and sound systems. The School has a large computer laboratory equipped with Pentium workstations linked to a network of School servers and a range of University servers. The School is integrated into the Blackboard 9 virtual learning environment which is used to support learning for many of the modules relevant for postgraduate students.

## 4.2 Facilities

The School made a £2 million investment in research laboratories and equipment between Autumn 2005 and 2007 and continues its development of existing and new specialised research facilities which include:

Wellcome Trust Laboratory for MEG Studies  
Aston MRI Research Unit  
Optegra Birmingham Eye Hospital

Nutrition and Behaviour Laboratory  
Vascular Imaging and Research Laboratory

**The Wellcome Trust Laboratory** is used by a number of research groups in the School, each with the aim of visualising brain function on a millisecond by millisecond time scale. Current areas of interest include vision research, auditory function, language processing, motor systems and cognition. The facility also carries out clinical trials. The Laboratory's MEG system features 275 MEG sensor channels, a proprietary 29-channel reference array for noise cancellation and an integrated 64-channel EEG system.

**The Aston MRI Research Unit** is housed in the Aston University Day Hospital and is part of the newly created [Aston Brain Centre](#). The MRI is a state-of-the-art 3T Trio scanner system from Siemens Medical Systems capable of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), high quality anatomical imaging, Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) and Diffusion Tensor Imaging (DTI).

**The Optegra Birmingham Eye Hospital** was acquired by Optegra in July 2010 as a collaboration between the University and Optegra in the areas of ophthalmic research and development.

**The Nutrition and Behaviour Laboratory** utilises industry standard equipment and is staffed by experienced specialists dedicated to the psychological impact of nutritional components, dietary supplements and whole foods. Research is carried out into the effectiveness of weight management programmes, feeding and excessive eating studies, the analysis of biological samples, and the collection and analysis of anthropomorphic data.

**The Vascular Imaging and Research Laboratory** is the first UK laboratory dedicated to investigating the role of both systemic and ocular circulation in the onset and progression of ocular disease. By using the eye as a 'window' to the vascular health of the human body, it also looks for risk factors associated with the onset and/or progression of diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

The School is also home to three research centres of excellence:

Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing (ARCHA)  
Aston Brain Centre (ABC)  
Health Research and Innovation Cluster (AHRIC)

**The Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing (ARCHA)** vision is to be an internationally-regarded centre of inter-disciplinary research excellence in advancing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of age-associated decline. Its focus is primarily on vision, hearing, metabolic, vascular and cognitive functions.

**The Aston Brain Centre (ABC)** is a new, purpose-built, integrated research environment for the study of neurodevelopment in health and disease. Its mission is to develop translational applications of fundamental neurophysiological research to clinical service provision. The Centre works in two main streams:

- Neurodevelopment; the study of brain development in health and disease
- Translational research or the medical application of fundamental research to diagnosis, therapy and treatment.

The ABC is also leading the way in the development of humane research techniques to replace the use of animals, especially primates, in neuroscience research and is home to the Human Brain Tissue Laboratory.

**The Aston Health Research and Innovation Cluster (AHRIC)** promotes, supports and develops research across the Aston Schools. Its aims are to facilitate interdisciplinary research that transcends schools and subject areas within Aston. It also provides excellent networking opportunities for researchers and clinicians to connect and extend their mutual research interests, encourages pooling and sharing of research expertise and specialist resource and establishes and coordinates strategic research programmes within the University and with healthcare organisations.

\*\*\*\*\*

Research in Life and Health Sciences focuses on extending our understanding of the processes of health and disease at the molecular, cell and whole body level – and understanding the personal and social context in which they occur.

As part of its postgraduate activities, the School aims to provide:

Broad-based training for students from a range of disciplines in research skills and in transferable employment-related skills

Equipment and human resources to facilitate research

A formal supervisory relationship with sufficient flexibility to meet the changing needs of the student

An active research environment in which students interact with peers and experienced researchers conducting a wide range of research

Knowledge and understanding of the ethical responsibilities of research

### Postgraduate Degrees

Research degrees are offered at Masters and Doctoral levels. The difference between these degrees is in the extent and originality of the research submitted and the level of formal taught training. According to Aston University regulations, a PhD and a PD (Professional Doctorate) represents ‘a *substantial original contribution to knowledge*’ (REG/09/364 - section 1.2(c)). The PhD/MPhil degree can be studied full or part-time while the PD degree is part-time and distance learning. Most studentships are awarded on a full-time basis.

Each postgraduate research student joins one of nine research groups and as part of the group, will contribute to, and gain from, a vibrant research culture and seminar series.

## 4.3 Research Areas and Groups

<b>Executive Dean (Head of School)</b>	Prof Helen Griffiths
<b>Associate Dean, Research and Enterprise</b>	Dr Ian Stanford

<b>Research</b>	<b>Associate Directors</b>	<b>Research Groups</b>	<b>Research Group Conveners</b>
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Areas			
<b>Biomedical Sciences</b>	Prof Cliff Bailey	Communicable Diseases Chronic Diseases Molecular & Cell Biology	Dr Andrew Devitt Prof David Poyner Prof Roslyn Bill
<b>Neurosciences</b>	Prof Joel Talcott	Neurophysiology & Clinical Neuroimaging Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience Sensory & Perceptual Systems	Prof Ian Holliday Dr Nathan Ridout Prof Mark Georgeson
<b>Health Sciences</b>	Prof Helen Pattison	Health & Lifespan Psychology Medicines Research Unit Ophthalmic Research Group	Dr Rachel Shaw Prof Andy Pitt Dr Leon Davies

<b>Associate Director, Postgraduate Research Student Training and Postgraduate Tutor</b>	Prof Brian Roberts
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## Biomedical Sciences

Cross-group and cross discipline research focuses upon addressing:

Chronic diseases including inflammatory, cardiovascular, proliferative and neurodegenerative conditions

Communicable diseases and host responses to infection

Synthesis of novel therapeutic agents for the prevention and treatment of these clinically and socially important conditions

Molecular mutation, novel expression systems and genomic and proteomic analysis

The three research groups are:

Communicable Diseases

Chronic Diseases

Molecular & Cell Biology

## ***Communicable Diseases***

Clinical microbiologists are working with practitioners to: Improve understanding of the host response to transmissible agents in health and disease; develop innovative approaches for early, sensitive and specific diagnosis, control and treat infectious diseases; design new drug treatments which are effective against resistant organisms; develop improved medicines through formulation or delivery; evaluate the efficacy of anti-infectives in vivo; improve practitioner understanding to ensure appropriate and effective use of anti-infectives within the healthcare environment.

## ***Chronic Diseases***

Objectives are to improve understanding of the biological processes that control chronic disease including inflammation, fibrosis and cellular nutrition; to develop improved methods of disease prevention, management and therapy through nutritional, medicinal and behavioural intervention; to advance understanding of behavioural processes that influence the development, management and self-management of chronic disease.

## ***Molecular & Cell Biology***

This team undertakes fundamental scientific research to understand health and disease at both cellular and organismal levels. Studies utilise a wide array of techniques including real-time microscopic imaging of live cells and their components, surface-plasmon resonance, molecular mutation, novel expression systems, and genomic and proteomic analyses. This research capacity is directed towards the characterisation and manipulation of key molecular mechanisms underlying normal and pathological cell function.

## ***Neurosciences***

Neurosciences at Aston provides a collaborative workplace for investigative research by cognitive neuroscientists, psychologists, computer scientists, audiologists, optometrists, ophthalmologists, and vision and auditory scientists.

The mission of Neurosciences is to be a centre of excellence for research leading to an understanding of fundamental aspects of human brain processes, including the functional organisation of the human brain in health and disease, and to the development of new methods and technology for this purpose.

Research methodologies include theoretical, computational, neuroimaging, psychological and psychophysical approaches to understanding brain function, basic brain mechanisms and pathophysiological aspects of diseases.

The three research groups are:

Neurophysiology & Clinical Neuroimaging  
Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience  
Sensory & Perceptual Systems

## ***Neurophysiology & Clinical Neuroimaging***

The main focus of this research group is the development and application of non-invasive functional imaging techniques to the study of cortical structure and function. These techniques allow us to study, at the regional level, which areas of the brain are implicated in specific cortical functions, and what happens to this functional network in disease. Our work is therefore a mixture of fundamental neuroscience: addressing the key question of how the brain performs the complex operations that define a person and their interaction with the environment; and clinical research, which we hope will have a direct impact in diagnosis and treatment of neurological diseases. Our strong focus for the future is on the developing brain and the application of our methods to the study of the child brain and behaviour.

## ***Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience***

This group unites scientists who have diverse backgrounds but who share a common interest in understanding the mechanisms of cognitive and affective processes in typical and clinical populations. We do this by applying an array of techniques including: behavioural and molecular genetics, functional and structural neuroimaging, psychophysics, and neuropsychological and behavioural psychometrics, to understand the factors that underpin human cognitive function in normal development, ageing and in neurological impairment.

## ***Sensory & Perceptual Systems (SPS)***

Researchers in this research group aim to investigate and understand human sensory systems and human perception, especially the major communicative senses of vision and hearing (including speech), how they work, and how they sometimes go wrong. We do this through psychophysical experiments, computational modelling, theoretical analysis, and brain imaging techniques (MEG & fMRI), and we apply this knowledge to clinical aspects of human perception, including the restoration of hearing through cochlear implants.

## **Health Sciences**

Aston University provides a focus for a wide range of integrated, collaborative, multidisciplinary Health Sciences research which is grouped into three key areas:

Health and Lifespan Psychology, which primarily investigates the psychological aspects of health and illness throughout the lifespan

Medicines Research, which involves a range of disciplines including drug formulations, drug delivery, social and behavioural science and clinical pharmacology

The Ophthalmic Research group, where clinical and applied investigations are targeted at the use, development and restoration of vision.

## ***Health & Lifespan Psychology***

Research carried out by the Health & Lifespan Psychology research group encompasses a number of areas broadly classified as health and applied developmental psychology, including critical psychology approaches. The group uses a wide range of primary and

secondary research methodologies - from experimental, survey and epidemiological techniques to innovative qualitative approaches, such as discursive and phenomenological methods and longitudinal interviewing. The group also conducts high quality systematic reviews, meta-analyses and meta-syntheses of qualitative evidence. Much of the group's research is carried out in collaboration with the community - predominantly field-based research in clinical, healthcare and educational settings.

### ***Medicines Research Unit (Pharmacy)***

Research within Aston Pharmacy School is focussed upon the effectiveness of drug therapies from dosage form design to patient application. Our research embraces pharmaceutical technology, drug delivery, therapeutics assessment and cost effective, evidence-based medicines management.

The key Pharmacy research areas are drug delivery and evidence-based practice. Therefore, Aston Pharmacy School has researchers with strong expertise in pharmaceutical sciences, drug delivery, social and behavioural science, health services management and professional services development.

### ***Ophthalmic Research Group***

Optometrists and ophthalmologists work within an integrated investigative framework to advance significantly our understanding of the development, use, preservation and restoration of ocular function. Using bidirectional transfer of research between structure, function and clinical application provides the flexibility to address a range of contemporary research issues: the development and management of refractive error; the diagnosis and management of major ocular pathology and the management of ocular dysfunction and pathology in the ageing eye.

## **4.4 School Research Student Society**

The School's Research Student Society Chair is Matt Hird, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Biomedical Sciences PhD student : [hirdm@aston.ac.uk](mailto:hirdm@aston.ac.uk)

The Society organises social events throughout the year and is a useful way for new and existing research students to meet and exchange ideas and experiences. We encourage you to take full advantage of this source of support as research students can sometimes feel isolated when commencing research, especially if unfamiliar with the University or new to life in UK.

## **4.5 Training**

### ***Professional Development***

The School of Life and Health Sciences runs a seminar series that is mandatory for all new PhD/MPhil students in the School. If you are registered for the PhD or MPhil degree, this Course is offered through the module on Professional and Transferable skills for Research

Students and you can receive an Aston Certificate in 'Professional and Transferable Skills' upon completion. When confirmed, the Programme for this course will be available upon enrolment and will also be posted on Blackboard VLE. These hours will count towards your 90/60 research skills hours' requirement by submission.

In Term 1 the content is delivered primarily each Wednesday afternoon, focussing on library and bibliographic skills, research ethics and teaching skills, concluding with a three day intensive session in November concentrating on academic writing skills. The remaining sessions in Term 2 deal with more practical skills and will feature another intensive 3 day session for the convenience of 1 January starters.

***ALL** students are required to attend these sessions unless an exemption/partial exemption\* has been specified within your Learning Agreement so students must **NOT** commit themselves to any **other** activities during these times. Supervisors have been informed of this requirement and so should not ask you to make any commitments that clash with these sessions.*

\*The main route to gain exemption from the Year 1 PG Training & Skills Programme is for the supervisor to apply on the basis that a PhD student already has an MRes or an MSc in Research Methods in a subject area directly relevant to their PhD. The application should include clear information on what was covered in the Masters programme that would justify an exemption.

It is possible in principle to exempt a student from the Year 1 PG Training & Skills sessions even without an appropriate Masters qualification but only under very specific circumstances. General professional experience is not a basis for exemption unless it can be demonstrated unequivocally that the prospective student has worked mainly in a research environment, has presented their research at conferences, has published research papers and has been involved with research ethics procedures. If the supervisor believes that this can be demonstrated, then a summary statement of the student's research-relevant experience should be submitted for consideration.

Applications for exemption by either route should be made to the LHS Research Office as soon as possible and certainly no later than the completion of the Learning Agreement (due within the first month after initial registration). Applications after the completion of the Learning Agreement will not normally be considered.

**NB: If you are a registered student with visiting or honorary status at Senior Lecturer or above, please contact the School PG Research Office directly about exemptions**

You will be expected to apply what you learn during these workshops to your day-to-day research activities. Some parts of the course might include book-your-own sessions with Staff and Graduate Development or with the Careers Service, or might include undergraduate lectures that can be supplemented by seminars. You should keep your Supervisor informed of your activities and achievements.

### ***Internal courses and seminars offered by the School***

Please note that, to ensure adequate diversity of skills training, no more than 20 hours in total can be credited towards your overall skills hours' requirement via this route.

### ***Other training courses***

ResearcherPlus is the access point for information about Aston University's programme of professional and personal development opportunities for research students, research staff

and research managers. Please talk to your Supervisor if you are interested in attending any of these courses. See : <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/researcherplus/research-students/>

### **Postgraduate Research Day**

The School holds a Postgraduate Research Day in late June / early July each year at which all PhD/MPhil students are expected to present posters or talks on their current work. *Taking part in this event is also a requirement, even for students otherwise exempt from the Professional & Transferable Skills Programme*, but please note that it is widely regarded as an enjoyable and informative occasion for both staff and students. Details of this event will be circulated by the Postgraduate Tutor and the PG Research Office in due course.

## **4.6 Risk Assessment**

During your first year it is essential that you be instructed on risk assessment and that you carry out a formal risk assessment for your research project.

This should appear as an Appendix in your Transfer/Qualifying report (it does not contribute towards the word count of your report) and is a condition of qualifying for further registration with the University. Your assessors will check this either during or before your viva. You must also lodge a copy of your risk assessment with the Health and Safety Officer who will forward it to the School Health and Safety Advisory Committee. Please ensure you have a copy of the latest Health and Safety Document. It will be available on the LHS Research Student BB site for 2012 or from Julie Taylor, PG Research Admissions Officer, School Office, MB625, or Mike Robinson, the School's Technical Services Manager, MB621B.

Note that under the Health and Safety at Work Act, it is a legal requirement to perform a risk assessment prior to starting any new experimental procedure.

## **4.7 Recording Your Research Activities – UK/EU Students**

If you are a UK/EU student, your progress should be formally reviewed by your Supervisor every three months, **at least**, with both you and your Supervisor keeping a copy of the recorded outcomes of these meetings.

You will also be expected to record your research activities via the University portal, MAP (My Aston Portal) at this time by following a guided research engagement process.

Once you have recorded your research activities for the relevant period (e.g., library induction, conference attendance, seminars, data collection), you will be able to submit them to your Supervisor, through MAP, for his/her approval and/or comment. Your Supervisor will then have the opportunity to make comments and to also indicate which of the activities, or what proportion of them, are eligible to contribute towards your skills training. Using MAP, you will be able to print out a list of all of the research activities you have recorded and a list of the approved skills training hours. This record can then be retained by you and your Supervisor and included within your Annual Reports.

## 4.8 Recording Your Research Activities – International students (non EU)

If you are an international (non EU) student, you MUST engage via MAP every month for Tier 4 viva purposes but you will also be expected to use this process to record your research activities which will be formally reviewed by your Supervisor.  
[See 3.6 for important information.]

## 4.9 Contacts

All your administrative support is located on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor within the Main School Office and adjacent area. You will have met Julie Taylor, PG Research Admissions Officer, when you applied and were enrolled: [j.a.taylor@aston.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.taylor@aston.ac.uk) 0121 204 4019

For advice, guidance or support once you have begun your research, please contact:

Gill Pilfold: [g.m.pilfold@aston.ac.uk](mailto:g.m.pilfold@aston.ac.uk) 0121 204 3880

or

Matt Richards: [m.richards3@aston.ac.uk](mailto:m.richards3@aston.ac.uk) 0121 204 5020

or pop in to the School PG Research Office in MB621a to see us. As far as possible, our door is always open to our students so please don't hesitate to come along if you need our help.

Enquiries about purchasing or finance can be made via the PG Research Office initially and you will then be directed to the relevant contact.

We will normally get in touch with you using your Aston email address so please let us know immediately if you experience any problems with email and inform ISA in MB482, extension: 5240.

Internal post is distributed through the postgraduate research student pigeon holes located within the Main School Office suite on 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Main Building. Please remember to check the pigeon holes regularly!

You can also find lots of useful information on our School's research web pages :

<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lhs/research/>

## 4.10 LHS PGR student blackboard site

Useful information, including notes for the Professional Development Course, is available via the LHS PGR BB site: '**Information for ALL LHS PGR students**'.

Each student is automatically registered to this site on enrolment but if you have any difficulties, please contact the PG Research Office.

## 5 University Resources and Information

### 5.1 The Advice & Representation Centre

ARC (the Advice and Representation Centre) is the Guild's independent representation service for Aston students.

ARC staff are able to represent students at formal hearings and appeals.

Visit the ARC for independent advice and support with:

- Academic appeals
- Access to Learning Fund applications & appeals
- Course related issues
- Disciplinary matters
- Exam boards
- Money advice
- Off campus accommodation
- University sanctions
- and more...

#### **Location:**

The ARC is located on the first floor of the Students' Guild

The Advice and Representation Centre is also the source of information about all non-campus accommodation available to Aston students via the web link at <http://www.astonstudentpad.co.uk>

#### **Contact details:**

Email: [arc@aston.ac.uk](mailto:arc@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 4848

Web: <http://www.astonguild.org.uk/advice>

#### **Opening Hours**

Monday – Friday: 10am to 4pm

### 5.2 Central Teaching Operations

Central Teaching Operations are responsible for the allocation and booking (internal and external) of all University teaching/function rooms; and the management and co-ordination of support for teaching facilities. Student societies are able to make room bookings for society meetings through The Hub. The [Central Teaching Operations](#) website provides more information on the services provided.

#### **Student Guild Bookings 2012/13**

1. One person should take responsibility for the booking of the room; the bookings should be made by visiting The Hub on Wednesday afternoon between 2-4pm (term-time only) or by sending an email to [l.richards2@aston.ac.uk](mailto:l.richards2@aston.ac.uk). Emails are dealt with on a Wednesday afternoon only. Please give an indication of numbers attending and whether the room is required for one date only or for the same day all term, and please inform AV-Support (email: [av-support@aston.ac.uk](mailto:av-support@aston.ac.uk)) if you plan to use the equipment in the room. **No food or drink is allowed in the rooms.**  
**If the event is to attract VIP guests and/or speaker(s), advice should be sought from the Marketing and Communications team at Aston.**
2. The person making the booking will be required to provide contact details such as Student Number, contact telephone number and email address.
3. Bookings are made on a first come, first served basis.
4. Teaching takes priority, so some rooms may not be available, particularly during the examination periods. Please note that it may be necessary to change rooms at short notice.
5. If the booking is for after 6pm, an id number will be issued to the person booking the room. The id number should be quoted to Security staff who will then issue the key - only to the person named on the booking.

### 5.3 Chaplaincy

#### Religious Provision: Chaplaincy at the Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Centre

The University has a multi-faith team of Chaplains who are here to support students of all faiths or of none.

The Chaplains provide a welcome and offer support to all students regardless of faith or background.

The Chaplains run a programme of events at the Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Centre which are open to all.

Faith societies and other groups can use the Centre for meetings, reflection and worship. There is a range of Guild societies which offer you the chance to meet, talk and worship with other people who share your faith. There is also a prayer facility within the Students' Guild.

If you would like to know more, pop in (we are located opposite the Library) or contact us.

#### Contact details:

Email: [chaplaincy@aston.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 4729

Web: <https://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/health-wellbeing/chaplaincy>

### 5.4 The Finance Centre - Credit Control and Cashiers

The Finance Centre is the place to visit the Finance Credit Control and Cashier section, to pay accommodation fees and tuition fees.

Additional information about the services offered in the Finance Centre can be found on the web (see below for details). Please visit the Fee Collection Help Desk with your tuition and accommodation payment queries, or visit the Cashier Desk to make payments.

Credit Control is responsible for collecting your tuition fee and/or accommodation fee payments and is also your main contact if you are having difficulties paying your fees. Call into the Finance Centre on a 'drop in' basis to see a member of the Credit Control team who will be pleased to discuss and sort out any queries you may have or, if you prefer, you can book an appointment. There are confidential interview rooms if you would like to talk to someone in private. Where appropriate we will liaise with staff in your School and Central Departments to help resolve your queries.

For more information see the student finance website either through [New Students Finance Information Website](#) link or through the Current Student link [Current Students Finance Information Website](#).

**Contact details:**

Email: [Creditcontrol@aston.ac.uk](mailto:Creditcontrol@aston.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 0121 204 4355

You can also pay online by clicking on: [www.aston.ac.uk/payments](http://www.aston.ac.uk/payments)

If you have any queries about the amount of fee you are being charged, please contact:

Tuition Fees Charges

In Person: Visit The Hub Advice Zone  
Email: [registry@aston.ac.uk](mailto:registry@aston.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 0121 204 4689

Accommodation Fees Charges

In Person: Visit the Accommodation Office –  
Ground Floor, Stafford Tower  
Email: [accom@aston.ac.uk](mailto:accom@aston.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 0121 204 4704/4707

## 5.5 The Hub Advice Zone - Student Support Services

The Hub is one of the top five most highly rated student services at Aston University. You are welcome to contact the Hub for immediate access to information, advice and support on a wide range of subjects and/or because you need to speak to someone from one of our related support departments.

Support departments accessed through the Hub Advice Zone include:

- Counselling Service
- Disability and Additional Needs Unit (DANU)
- International Student Advisers for immigration advice
- Registry
- Student Advisers (for advice about academic issues, academic finance, income tax and council tax, housing and money advice)

- Student Funds Administrator (for extra funding such as the Access to Learning Fund for UK students and the Susan Cadbury Fund for International and EU students).

The Hub Advice Zone is also the place to collect **University letters** pre-ordered on MAP.

**Location:**

The Hub is located on the ground floor of the Main Building on the east side of the upper foyer.

**Contact details:**

Email: [thehub@aston.ac.uk](mailto:thehub@aston.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 204 4007

**Opening Hours in the Advice Zone**

Undergraduate Term-time: 9.30am to 5pm (10am to 5pm on Wednesdays)

Undergraduate Vacations: 10am to 4pm

**5.5.1 Counselling Service**

The University Counselling Service is a confidential and professional service, staffed by qualified and experienced counsellors.

Meeting with a counsellor offers the opportunity to discuss issues that may be affecting you either personally, or in your academic work. These could include issues such as relationship difficulties, anxiety and stress, loss of motivation. No topic is too small or too large to bring to the service and, each year, many students benefit from talking with a counsellor.

Counsellors do not give advice or tell you what to do. Our role is to help you take responsibility for your own decisions, to become more aware of your own resources and to work with you in developing skills which will help you to manage your own difficulties and concerns more effectively.

The service is situated on the ground floor of the Main Building. Appointments can be made through The Hub in person, by telephone: 0121 204 4007 or you can email the Counselling Service on [counselling@aston.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@aston.ac.uk). Further information can also be found on the Service web site: [www.aston.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.aston.ac.uk/counselling)

**5.5.2 The Disability and Additional Needs Unit (DANU)**

DANU provides advice and guidance if you have a disability. They can help to co-ordinate any support you require if you have a physical, sensory or hidden disability, mental health or specific learning difficulty. The service is confidential and we will only liaise with teaching and other support staff within the University to help make adjustments which support your studies if you give us permission to do so, although the support we can offer may be limited if you do not want your School to know about your disability.

We also:

- run a personal assistance scheme which employs support workers to assist you if you require extra assistance with study-related tasks;

- assist you with applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and other sources of funding;
- advise teaching areas about the provision of individual examination arrangements and course adaptations (with your consent);
- make arrangements for Personal Evacuation Plans;
- provide screening for dyslexia and make referrals to educational psychologists for full diagnostic assessments if you think you may have specific learning difficulties and would like help with this;
- can help provide assistive technology support and advice through the Assistive Technology Officer.

**Contact details:**

Email: [danu@aston.ac.uk](mailto:danu@aston.ac.uk)  
 Telephone: 0121 204 4007  
 Web: [www1.aston.ac.uk/disability/](http://www1.aston.ac.uk/disability/)

**5.5.3 International Student Advisers**

The University has qualified, experienced immigration advisers who provide free immigration advice to Aston students. The team's immigration advice was ranked fourth best out of all the UK universities who took part in the International Student Barometer survey in the autumn of 2011. The advisers can assist you with a range of issues including immigration advice about student visas and work visas, cultural and social activities and English language support sessions.

They also organise International Orientation week, which is the first of the two September Aston Welcome weeks especially for international and EU students, designed to help you settle into your new environment and make you feel more at home.

**Contact details:**

Email: [issu@aston.ac.uk](mailto:issu@aston.ac.uk)  
 Telephone: +44 121 204 4567  
 Web: [www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/studentssupport/issu/](http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/studentssupport/issu/)

**5.5.4 Registry**

Registry provides a range of administrative support services for students throughout your time at Aston, from initial application to graduation.

The Registry's Student Records section is responsible for all student records from initial enrolment through to graduation. [The Student Records webpage](#) provides more detailed information on the services provided, which include: enrolment, tuition fee invoices, contact with student sponsors, and issue of degree certificates.

## 5.6 The Students' JobShop

The Students' JobShop provides a wide range of reliable part-time term time and full-time vacation employment to Aston's students. This allows you to combine your academic career with some paid employment.

Working part-time will not only help you financially, but will also improve your employability skills, making you more employable.

A one-to-one advice and guidance service is available to help you compile CVs (resumés) for part-time employment, assistance with interview techniques, guidance on employment law and help with job searches.

### Contact details:

Email: [jobshop@aston.ac.uk](mailto:jobshop@aston.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 0121 204 4844  
Web: <http://www.astonguild.org.uk/jobshop>  
Location: First floor, Aston Students' Guild

### Opening Hours

Monday – Friday: 10am to 4pm

## 5.7 Equality and Diversity

Aston University undertakes to promote equality and diversity within the University Community in all aspects of its work. It aims to ensure through its admissions policies for students and its recruitment and selection processes for staff that it encourages applications from all groups represented in the wider community at a local, national and international level. The University will endeavour not to discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly or indirectly, against students or potential students, staff or potential staff. This commitment applies to all functions of the University and to any stage of an individual's career at Aston. The Equality and Diversity Policy Statement, the Equal Opportunities Policy for Students and a number of other policies relevant to equalities can be found on the Equality and Diversity website at: <http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/equalops/>

The University promotes a culture that supports and encourages dignity and respect between all members of the University Community. There is a *Dignity at Aston Policy* which aims to prevent harassment, bullying, intimidation and violence at work and study. If you have any concerns that you are being treated in a way that contravenes our policy you should consult the guidance at: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/equalops/policies/harassmentpolicy/>

The University also has policies relating to a number of specific equality issues, including disability (see DANU), sexual orientation and religion and belief. The Code of Practice on Religion and Belief sets out the circumstances under which arrangements may be made to enable students to observe your own religious festivals. You should read this carefully since you have a responsibility to inform staff about any requirements or requests you may have, for example, in relation to examination dates. The Code of Practice on Religion and Belief can be found at: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/policy-procedures/equality-diversity/religionbelief/>

If you have any questions about equality and diversity at the University or you would like advice and guidance on any matter to do with equality of opportunity please contact Jane Tyrrell on extension 4587 or by email at: [j.m.tyrrell@aston.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.tyrrell@aston.ac.uk)

## 5.8 Information Systems Aston (ISA)

Aston has extensive ICT facilities with more than 1500 student desktop computers which are located in over 50 separate computer labs across the campus.

Many labs can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offer a range of networked software packages, database systems, modelling tools, computer-aided learning materials and access to online sources of information for research.

ICT facilities are free to students and are linked by our Local Area Network, which spans the campus and provides high speed access to other networks worldwide. An extensive wireless network is also available for students wishing to use their own computing equipment.

To help you use the ICT facilities available, ISA have created a Student Computer Guide which contains information on all of the services provided including email, My Aston Portal (MAP), Virtual Learning Environments and much more. You can view the guide online at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/ict/studentguide>.

Follow us on Twitter @isa\_helpdesk for tips, latest issues and new service information.

### Contact details for ISA Helpdesk:

Email: isa\_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk  
Telephone: 0121 204 3445  
Location: Main Building, East 477

## 5.9 JS Campus Bookshop

Academic and Professional Bookseller of the Year 2006-2012

- All core textbooks stocked
- Our database of over 2 million books can quickly identify your needs
- Fast personal order service
- Online ordering when we're closed
- Secondhand textbooks bought and sold
- Stationery and computer consumables at competitive prices
- Reading lists service for lecturers and students
- Special offers and discounts available
- Competitive with online retailers

**Open Monday – Friday 9am-5.00pm**

### Contact details:

Email: [as@johnsmith.co.uk](mailto:as@johnsmith.co.uk)  
Telephone: 0121 333 3361

Fax: 0121 333 5142  
 Web: [www.jscampus.co.uk](http://www.jscampus.co.uk)  
 Location: 1st Floor, Aston Students' Guild

## 5.10 JS Campus Guild Shop

Providing an extensive range of products, including:

- Academic stationery
- Aston branded stationery
- Aston branded clothing
- Sandwiches and snacks
- Newspapers and magazines
- Confectionery and drinks
- Greetings cards  
and much more .....

**Open Monday – Friday 9am-5.00pm**

### Contact details:

Email: [an@johnsmith.co.uk](mailto:an@johnsmith.co.uk)  
 Telephone: 0121 333 5286  
 Fax: 0121 333 5154  
 Web: [www.jscampus.co.uk](http://www.jscampus.co.uk)  
 Location: Ground Floor, Aston Students' Guild

## 5.11 Sport Aston Facilities

Venue	Opening Hours	Contact
Sport Aston Gym	07:00-22:30 Mon-Fri 09:30-18:30 Sat & Sun	Tel. 0121 204 4623
The Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre	09:30-22:30 Mon-Fri 09:30-18:30 Sat & Sun	Tel : 0121 204 4623
The Doug Ellis Woodcock Swimming Pool	Mon: 07:00-08:45 & 12:00-19:30 (pool closed between 14:30-15:10 during school term time) Tue: 07:00-08:45 & 12:00-16:30 Tue: Ladies only pool 16:30-17:10 (term time only) Tue: Ladies only Aqua Aerobics 17:10-17:40 (term time only) Wed: 07:00-08:45 & 12:00-19:30	Tel : 0121 204 4623

	Thu: 07:00-08:45 & 12:00-18:45 Fri: 07:00-08:45 & 12:00-18:45 (pool closed between 14:30-15:10 during school term time) Sat: 13:00-16:45 Sun: 10:00-16:45 Pool opening hours are subject to change. For up to date times visit the website. <a href="http://www.aston.ac.uk/sport">www.aston.ac.uk/sport</a>	
Gem Sports Centre	11:30-22:30 Mon-Fri 09:30-17:30 Sat & Sun	Tel. 0121 204 4626
Aston Student Village and Gosta Green Pitch	10:00-22:00 Mon-Fri 10:00-17:00 Sat & Sun	Tel. 0121 204 4626 or 0121 204 4623
The Recreation Centre (Great Barr)	Available for hire 7 days a week with prior arrangement	Tel. 0121 358 4564

### **Sport Aston Gym at The Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre**

- 100+ station gym
- State of the Art 'Life Fitness' equipment
- Supervised gym at all times by qualified gym instructors
- Light, spacious and modern gym

Excellent range of fitness equipment:

- Cardiovascular machines - bikes, treadmills, rowers, cross-trainers and steppers
- Fixed resistance for upper and lower body training
- Free weights including Hammer Strength machines, dumbbells and Smith machines
- Suitable for all users and fitness levels

Student memberships available:

- Academic year memberships
- 3 month memberships
- 12 month memberships
- 'Gold', 'Silver' & 'Bronze' memberships available which can include Gym, Swim Aerobics and Yoga classes

All academic memberships the equivalent of under £6 per week!

## **Swimming Pool at The Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre**

- Beautiful Edwardian 25m pool
- Fast, medium and slow laned swimming at all times
- New changing facilities with individual shower cubicles

Students can access the pool by:

- 'Pay as you go'
- Academic year memberships
- 3 month memberships
- 12 month memberships
- '12 swims for the price of 10' cards

Memberships can be upgraded to include our superb [delete: new] Sauna and Steam Rooms.

## **The Doug Ellis Woodcock Sports Centre Hall & Dance Studios**

Available for:

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Netball
- Volleyball
- Aerobics and Yoga

Bookings can be made up to 8 days in advance.

Aerobics & Yoga are available at the new 2 storey Dance and Martial Arts Studio. Classes can be booked on the day at Reception.

A range of classes is available throughout term-time and holidays to suit all levels of fitness and experience.

Aerobics classes include:

- Zumba
- Body Energize
- Aqua Aerobics
- Thighs, Tums & Bums
- Total Tone / Fit Mix
- Studio Cycling

Yoga classes include:

- Dynamic Yoga
- Pilates
- Yogalates

- Hatha Yoga
- Ashtanga Yoga

Please check out our website ([www.aston.ac.uk/sport](http://www.aston.ac.uk/sport)) or the notice boards in the Sports Centre for specific timetables each term and during vacations.

### **Gem Sports Hall**

Available for:

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Netball
- Volleyball
- Indoor Cricket Nets
- Table Tennis (available in aerobics studio)
- 2 Squash Courts also available for Squash or Racquetball

Bookings can be made up to 8 days in advance.

### **Aston Student Village & Gosta Green Pitches**

The Aston Student Village Pitch: three 5-a-side pitches or one 8-a-side pitch located in the heart of the campus. 3G pitch suitable for Football and Hockey training.

Gosta Green Custom Built 3G 5-a-side Football pitch located on campus.

Bookings can be made up to 8 days in advance.

### **Outdoor Recreation Centre**

Located 8 miles away in Great Barr, our Outdoor Recreation centre is a 48 acre site and is home to many of our outdoor sports teams. Facilities include:

- Football Pitches
- Rugby Pitches
- Cricket Square
- Bar & Pavilion
- Changing Facilities
- Ample Parking

Find out more from the website: [www.aston.ac.uk/recreationcentre](http://www.aston.ac.uk/recreationcentre)

For more information about any of our sports or facilities please go to our website: [www.aston.ac.uk/sport](http://www.aston.ac.uk/sport) or email [sportsenquiries@aston.ac.uk](mailto:sportsenquiries@aston.ac.uk)

## **6. Student Resources**

### **6.1 Work Space**

All students in the School can expect to have their own work space and access to computing resources reserved for their use. The allocation of this space is the responsibility of your School.

### **6.2 Photocopying**

The School normally provides photocopying facilities for research use free of charge. Please contact your Supervisor or Research Administrator for details of where to find the best photocopier to use and restrictions on its use.

### **6.3 Conference Travel**

The discussion and planning of conference attendance should form part of your personal development plan. Specific advice can be obtained from your Supervisor. Authorisation to attend must be obtained before you travel. See your School Research Administrator for the forms that need to be completed prior to travel. You will need to discuss the financial details of attending external meetings with your Supervisor. Some of you will have access to project funds, some of you will need your Subject Group or your Supervisors' own account to provide the funds.

#### **6.3.1 Travel Insurance**

Aston employees, students and other non-employees travelling on the business of Aston University who travel outside of the UK are covered by Aston University travel insurance. When you travel you should always take a copy of the current insurance confirmation letter. For a copy please visit <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/finance/insurance/travel-insurance/>. This also provides the details of current cover.

This letter will act as confirmation to any third party that you hold the necessary travel insurance, for example, when making Visa applications, medical emergencies, lost luggage etc. The letter contains a 24/7 telephone number (+44 (0)20 7902 7405, quoting UMAL/117) where advice re any medical emergency can be obtained. The letter should be retained separate from your main luggage, in case of loss, in order to allow you to more easily obtain assistance.

Recognising the risks staff and students may face when deployed overseas, Control Risks, the leading international security consultancy, now provides security advice and support to travellers in addition to the online destination service Travel Security Online (see UMAL website for details: <http://www.umal.co.uk/umal/professional.html>). This security advice and support is provided by the fully equipped Global Security Centre at Control Risks' Head Office in London. It is staffed 24 hours a day by a dedicated team of experienced security consultants, providing assistance with any security and incident management situations that may arise. Should you become aware of, or are caught up in, an incident you may call the Global Security Centre for advice and support. The Global Security Centre's experienced consultants will be able to respond immediately and provide callers with all important reassurance and practical advice. Should you need to use this service whilst travelling, the contact details are:

Tel: +44 (0)20 7939 8658  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7970 2234  
E-mail: [gsc@travelsecurity.com](mailto:gsc@travelsecurity.com)

PLEASE REMEMBER...

- Always carry this summary with you.
- Keep a separate record of the telephone and fax numbers above.

To ensure insurance cover is in place please ensure you complete the procedure for international travel which can be found at [www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/policy-procedures/other/international-travel/](http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/policy-procedures/other/international-travel/).

Operative time of cover – All business trips, including incidental holidays, outside the United Kingdom.

Definition of United Kingdom - shall mean England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (excluding Channel Islands and the Isle of Man).

Note any worldwide trips to areas deemed hazardous by the Foreign and Commonwealth: travel to these areas should be carefully considered in advance of the trip. Cover will not apply automatically. Areas are listed on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)) under travel advice for countries.

Medical Exclusions – the current policy does not require declaration of pre existing medical conditions. It does require individuals who are undergoing current treatment or have a specific health concern to seek the advice of a Qualified Medical Practitioner as to whether they are advisable to travel. The policy will exclude expense claims for a journey undertaken against the advice of a Qualified Medical Practitioner or for the purpose of seeking medical advice or treatment.

Medical Expenses/Personal Baggage/Money/Business Equipment excess is Nil.

Age Exclusion – Persons under 16 and over 75 years of age.

This insurance excludes students travelling abroad on Placement. For details of insurance arrangements for these students, contact should be made with the individual School Placement Officers.

For a full definition of exact cover, queries or amendments to cover refer to the following website: <http://www.umal.co.uk/umal/professional.html>

If you have any other matters of concern re insurance the contact details are:

A P Hawkesworth, Head of Strategic Risk and Insurance  
Telephone: 0121 204 4387,  
Email: [a.p.hawkesworth@aston.ac.uk](mailto:a.p.hawkesworth@aston.ac.uk)

## 7. Health & Safety

All new postgraduates are given a copy of the Health and Safety Policy Document at enrolment when a School-wide talk on Health and Safety Issues takes place.

### 7.1 First Aid & Accidents

For minor accidents during office hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm), contact your local First Aid Officer for assistance in the first instance. S/he should have been made known to you at your local Health & Safety induction.

Alternatively, if medical help is required inside normal working hours and the person is mobile, you can visit the Health Centre drop-in centre. The drop-in centre is in the basement of Boots the Chemist, which is situated on the High Street in the centre of Birmingham:

Halcyon Medical  
(Boots - lower ground floor)  
67-69 High Street  
Birmingham  
B4 7TA

Telephone: 0845 072 4632  
Email: [halcyonmedical@nhs.net](mailto:halcyonmedical@nhs.net)  
Website: [www.halcyonmedical.co.uk](http://www.halcyonmedical.co.uk)

If the person is not mobile, if movement could worsen the condition or if they are unconscious, contact Security immediately on emergency extension 222 (internal), 2222 (from Residences) or 0121 359 2922 (external, including from a mobile). Notify them of the location of the ill/injured person, the nature of the illness/injury, and the extension number of the nearest internal telephone. The Security team will provide first aid assistance and contact the ambulance service for you, if required. All accidents must be reported on a University Accident & Incident Report Form which can be downloaded from the Safety Office webpages.

### 7.2 Security/Working Out of Hours

The University Security Officers are based in the Main Building Reception area. They can be contacted on extension 4803 (the emergency extension is 222 (internal), 2222 (from Residences) or 0121 359 2922 (external, *including from a mobile*)).

In general, it should not be necessary to work out of hours and you are strongly encouraged to work within the normal University day (8.00am-6.00pm). If, however, you need to work out of hours in the Main Building, you must use your uniCARD to gain access via the 'Out of Normal Hours' Entrance – this is off Potter Street. The times when your uniCARD will have to be used to gain entry will be as follows:

Monday-Friday	8pm-6am
Saturday	1pm until Monday 6am

There will be other times that the Building will be closed (Bank Holidays, etc) and these will be notified in advance.

Please remember to wear your uniCARD.

### 7.3 Working Alone

Postgraduate students may undertake office or laboratory computer work alone as long as (out of hours) the University's Guidance on Lone Working is followed. Students must not work alone on any procedures involving risk of harm. If in doubt, check with your academic Supervisor.

### 7.4 Fire safety

**Smoking is not allowed anywhere within any Aston Building.**

The Main Building features a two-stage fire alarm system. Stage one is an intermittent siren signalling that a fire has been detected and to prepare for evacuation. A continuous siren indicates the need to evacuate immediately. **The lifts must not be used for evacuating the building.**

**All Fire Exits** – that is, those doors with a push bar or glass bolt, are fitted with alarms – **use of these doors at any time will set off the alarms which also register in the central University security point in the foyer of the main building.**

For **Emergency use** only – you will notice that there are door release buttons close to the magnetic locks on the doors. Use of this mechanism will also activate the alarm.

The Fire Safety Procedures can be found on the University Safety Office's website.

### 7.5 Recharging of Personal Electrical Equipment

It is a requirement in the University that any personal electrical items have a valid electrical safety certificate. Therefore, any personal device, eg mobile phone charger, PDA, must be safety tested before being plugged in. In addition, portable electrical equipment must be visually inspected prior to use and defective equipment must be withdrawn from use immediately.

## 8. Further Information

### 8.1 Dentist

There is a dental practice in the Vision Sciences Building, telephone 0121 204 4310.

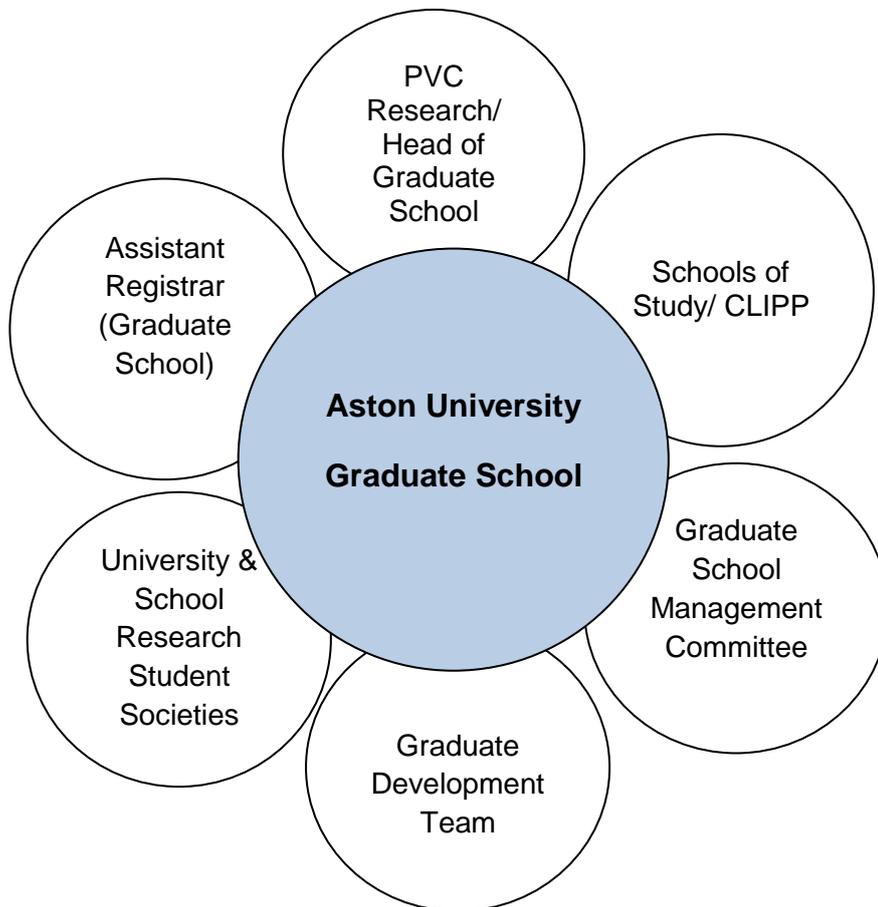
### 8.2 Car Parking

The University does not provide student car parking, except in very exceptional circumstances for welfare or medical grounds. If you feel you have a case to be considered, please contact The Hub in the Main Building or email [thehub@aston.ac.uk](mailto:thehub@aston.ac.uk).

### **8.3 Mobile Phones and Pagers**

The use of mobile phones and pagers is NOT ALLOWED in any examination, lecture, practical class or clinic. You should ensure that they are switched off.

## Appendix 1: Aston University Graduate School – key stakeholders



## Appendix 2: Code of Practice for Research Degrees



# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

Applicable to students in all years of programmes

### Contents

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## 1 Foreword

This document is one of a suite of inter-related documents which forms an overall institutional policy for the conduct of research degrees, and which includes the institutional response to the precepts set out in the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes (September 2004). University staff and students are expected to be familiar with the sections of the University code that are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities. The University code defines minimum standards for research degrees which may be supplemented at the School level by additional advice contained in School codes of practice/guidelines or in student handbooks.

Where Regulations are referred to in the text the references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis.

## 2 Definitions

### 2.1 Research

The definition of research in this document draws on the definitions used in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its predecessor, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008.

"Research" for our purposes is defined as 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding' (RAE), which is 'effectively shared' (REF). Following the REF definition, 'It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship\*; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It **excludes** routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.

\*Scholarship for REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.' [REF 02.2011 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions']. Journal articles and monographs are also important forms of scholarship.

### 2.2 Research Programmes

The University Code of Practice is intended to apply to a wide range of research qualifications: MPhil, PhD, Professional Doctorates, and the University award of MSc/MA (by Research), although not all sections of the document apply equally to all types of research programme.

### **3 Institutional Arrangements**

#### **3.1 Regulations**

Regulations cover:

- a requirements for admission to the programme;
- b procedures for considering claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or prior certificated learning (AP(E)L/APL);
- c the academic and procedural requirements for research awards, including supervisory arrangements;
- d the requirements for progression, including monitoring and review arrangements for the award, and the minimum and maximum periods within which the programme may be completed;
- e assessment methods, requirements and procedures, including the criteria for achieving the award;
- f procedures for dealing with research misconduct; \*
- g information on the University's complaints and appeals processes.

In addition to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, there are also General Regulations for Research Degrees for Staff and Graduates of Aston University. These Regulations cover academic staff candidates for PhDs, the degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Letters, and the PhD by Previously Published Work.

Regulations are available to staff, students, applicants and graduates via the University's intranet.

#### **3.2 Target Setting and Monitoring**

- a Recruitment targets for research degrees are proposed by the Schools and agreed by the University Executive.
- b Research degrees are reviewed on an annual basis by School Research Committees in accordance with the University annual programme review policy approved by the Senate. Factors to be considered in the annual programme review process by the School Research Committees are:
  - i recruitment profiles; submission and completion times and rates; pass, referral and fail rates; withdrawal rates;
  - ii analysis of comments from Examiners;
  - iii feedback from research students, graduates and external stakeholders;
  - iv feedback from the Equal Opportunities Advisor;
  - v provision of research and generic skills training;
  - vi any appeals or complaints dealt with at the School level.The University's Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, ensures that these factors have been given due attention.
- c The University's Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, monitors the number of appeals referred to the

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\* expanded in more detail in the University's Code of Practice for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct, REG/04/77, approved by the Senate in January 2004.

Academic Appeals Committee by research students, examines the reasons for them and, from analysis of appeals upheld, ensures that any necessary follow up action is taken to prevent re-occurrence.

## **4 The Research Environment**

The University is committed to only accepting research students to an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, where high quality research is occurring and where the appropriate conditions for admission can be met.

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University and all members of the University's research community are responsible for maintaining professional standards. The University's Code of Conduct for Research (Appendix B), prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected by all persons engaged in research at the University.

## **5 Selection, Admission and Induction of Students**

### **5.1 Selection and Admission**

The selection of research students must follow the requirements set out in the Regulations and any additional criteria set by the School and approved by the appropriate School Research Committee and the Graduate School Management Committee. The admissions criteria should be available to applicants both via the web and in printed form.

The selection of students should take into account any declared special needs the student may have, and consideration of how such needs may be supported.

Students may only be admitted to a research programme with the involvement of at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the School's Associate Dean Research. Staff responsible for admissions must attend the requisite training provided by the University.

Students may only be admitted to the University if their application has been approved by the School's Associate Dean Research (Regulation 3.1).

Students must be sent a formal offer letter which should normally include the following information:

- a the expected duration of study;
- b the expectations of the student in terms of attendance, progress reports, contact with supervisors;
- c arrangements for enrolment;
- d references to the University's Regulations, student handbook, sources of funding;
- e a clear indication of the financial costs of the programme;
- f the requirements and conditions of any sponsor;
- g an outline of any opportunities to undertake teaching or other duties and any conditions associated with these;

- h reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information.

Other information to be provided early in the students' attendance includes:

- a details of health and safety procedures;
- b University and School Regulations;
- c good practice in research; \*
- d guidance on research ethics; \*
- e guidance on intellectual property rights.

## 5.2 Induction

Students will be provided with an appropriate induction programme and introductory material providing details about where they can find essential information.

The student should meet his/her Supervisor at the earliest opportunity to discuss their respective responsibilities. For distance learning research students and other students who are away from the campus for a significant part of their research, appropriate arrangements for regular contact will be established and monitored by the Schools.

## 6 Supervision

All research students must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff of the University, as defined in Section I of the Statutes of the University or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow (Regulation 6.1a). The Supervisor should have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively. A research student's supervision should be supplemented by one or more Associate Supervisors where this is considered beneficial (Regulation 6.3). The role of any Associate Supervisor(s) will be clarified at an initial meeting with the student and documented in the Learning Agreement (see Section 6.2).

No person may be the Supervisor for more than nine research students (maximum six FTEs) at any time without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research (Regulation 6.1c).

All new Supervisors who have not previously been involved in supervising research students must attend the University's training sessions on supervision as provided by Staff & Graduate Development. The Associate Dean Research in each School must appoint an Advisor for a Supervisor who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion. The Advisor must be a member of the Academic staff who has supervised and examined at least one successful candidate for PhD/Professional Doctorate.

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\* see Appendix B, Research Code of Conduct.

\* see Appendix B, Research Code of Conduct.

The University expects that existing Supervisors will take the initiative to update their knowledge and skills on a regular basis and attend an 'update' training session provided by the Centre for Staff and Graduate Development at least every three years.

All research students must also be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of Academic Staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where a student finds that the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well. The second member of academic staff may be from outside the specific area of the student's research topic (e.g. Postgraduate Research Tutor or Associate Dean Research). The same appointments would normally be expected to continue throughout the duration of a student's research programme.

In the event that a Supervisor leaves the University during a student's research programme, every effort will be made to appoint an appropriate alternative Supervisor and, where possible, to retain the involvement of the original Supervisor as an Associate Supervisor.

## **6.1 Responsibilities of Supervisors**

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

- a providing satisfactory guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial;
- b being responsible for monitoring the student's progress;
- c establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student, and which should include structured interactions at least every 3 months to report, discuss and agree progress (Regulation 8.1);
- d ensuring his/her reasonable accessibility to the student when the student needs advice;
- e having input into the assessment of a student's development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning;
- f providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, including his/her overall progress;
- g ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct his/her research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct;
- h providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support;
- i helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, by encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences, supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events; and, where appropriate, to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals.

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\* set out in detail in the University's Code of Practice for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct, REG/04/77

## **6.2 Responsibilities of research students**

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their theses within the periods of study as prescribed in Regulations for their particular degrees.

Students are also responsible for:

- a taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor;
- b ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with University Regulations and School guidelines and procedures relating to their degree, relevant Codes of Practice and other University and School requirements, health and safety advice, the monitoring of progress and terms of any sponsorship;
- c setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- d ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University's requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress;
- e discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings;
- f initiating supervisory meetings where necessary;
- g in conjunction with their Supervisor, identifying their training needs and attending research training;
- h deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of study and before the end of the maximum period of study specified in the Regulations), taking due account of the Supervisor's opinion;
- i ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor's responsibilities (see section 6.1 above);
- j advising their Supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances likely to affect their work.

Supervisors and students will complete individual Learning Agreements as an aide memoire to covering these points. A Training Needs Analysis will be completed at the same time as the Learning Agreement.

## **7 Progress and Review Arrangements**

At least every three months a student's progress should be formally reviewed by the Supervisor, with both student and Supervisor keeping a copy of the recorded outcomes of the meetings or other interaction if students are studying at some distance from the University.

At the end of each year of research the Supervisor must submit to the School Research Committee a report on the performance of each research student for their consideration. The annual progress report will include a review of the student's Training Needs.

For MPhil/PhD students, at the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year of research the annual report will contain a recommendation concerning the student's progression to either the MPhil or PhD degree programme, based on the student's report on the research work and a *viva voce* examination (Regulations Section 8: Reports). Professional Doctorate students will have a similar progression point specified for their programme. Before the end of the second year (fourth year for part-time students) MPhil/PhD and Professional Doctorate students are required to complete a minimum of *either* an oral presentation of all or part of their research *or* write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication). The Supervisor will consult with the student about which task he or she is expected to complete.

All Schools should have clear and transparent procedures for the monitoring of student performance and students should be notified in writing by the School of their review timetable and of the outcomes of the key stages above.

## **8 Development of Research and Other Skills**

The University will provide training in research and generic skills appropriate, wherever possible, to a student's individual needs and as defined in the Training Needs Analysis initiated at the beginning of the first year as part of the Learning Agreement and updated on an annual basis thereafter. Training will be provided by the Schools, and by the Graduate Development Team. Provision of skills training will be kept under review by Schools as part of their annual review of research degrees programmes, and by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Guidance, support and training will be provided to, and will be expected to be undertaken by, students who have opportunities for teaching and/or assessing.

## **9 Feedback Mechanisms**

As part of the annual programme review process, Schools will consider and where necessary respond to feedback from research students, graduates, Examiners, employers, sponsors and other external stakeholders, and the University's Equal Opportunities Advisor. School Annual Programme Review Reports are subsequently considered by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Students will be given the opportunity to provide confidential individual feedback as well as the opportunity to take part in research committee meetings or staff-student consultative meetings. Students will be informed of actions taken in response to their feedback.

## **10 Assessment**

The assessment of students is on the basis of an appropriate body of work, as specified in the Regulations for that award and a *viva voce* examination conducted according to the guidance set out in Appendix C, Conduct of the *Viva Voce*.

Two Examiners are appointed to consider the candidate and one Examiner must be external to the University. In the case of staff candidates, both Examiners must be external to the University (see General Regulations for Research Degrees for Staff and Graduates of Aston University). The Internal Examiner may not be the student's Supervisor, the Advisor to the Supervisor (if appointed), an Associate Supervisor (if appointed), or otherwise involved in the supervision of the student (e.g. a member of a supervisory team).

All Examiners must be appropriately experienced in research as judged by the Associate Dean Research and the Senate, and at least one of the Examiners must have experience of successful PhD supervision or PhD examination.

Recommendations for the appointment of Examiners must be submitted using the form designed for this purpose.

All Examiners' appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

Examiners must submit individual independent written reports on the student's thesis before the *viva voce* and a joint written report after the *viva voce*.

For all *viva voce* an independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed, normally from within the relevant School, except for staff candidates when the Chair should normally be from a different School. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment (see Appendix C for further guidance).

## **11 Student Representations**

The University has approved procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals which may be found on the Registry website.

RPS/SJDQSC working parties/research/2004  
Last updated August2012/REGISTRY/AJB

## **References and Acknowledgements**

- QAA (2004) Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes.
- HEFCE (2003) Improving standards in postgraduate research degree programmes, consultation paper May 2003/23, and consultation responses.
- Aston University, School Codes of Practice and Learning Contracts.
- University of Bath, Regulations 2004/05.
- University of Birmingham Regulations and Codes of Practice 2004/05.

## Appendix A: VITAE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT (ISBN 978-1-906774-19-6)\*

The UK is committed to enhancing the higher-level capabilities of the UK workforce including the development of world-class researchers. Researchers are critical to economic success, addressing major global challenges, and building a leading knowledge economy.

The Researcher Development Statement (RDS) sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers.

The RDS is for policy makers and research organisations that provide personal, professional and career development for researchers in higher education.

The Researcher Development Statement is derived from the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), a major new approach to researcher development, which aims to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base.

The RDS and RDF will contribute to researcher training and development in the UK by providing a strategic statement (RDS) and operational framework (RDF) to support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers<sup>1</sup>, the QAA Code of practice for research degree programmes<sup>2</sup> and the ‘Roberts’<sup>3</sup> recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff.

The RDS is structured in four domains, which encompass what researchers need to know to do research, how to be effective in their approach to research, when working with others, and in contributing to the wider environment. Within each of the domains are three sub-domains and associated descriptors, which describe different aspects of being a researcher.

<p><b>Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual abilities</b></p> <p>The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research.</p>	<p><b>Domain B: Personal effectiveness</b></p> <p>The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher.</p>
<p><b>Domain C: Research governance and organisation</b></p> <p>The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research.</p>	<p><b>Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact</b></p> <p>The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.</p>

The Researcher Development Statement is an evolution of the Research Councils’ Joint Skills Statement (JSS)<sup>4</sup> and replaces the JSS as the key reference statement for the development of postgraduate researchers’ skills and attributes and researchers employed in higher education. All the skills and attributes of the JSS have been incorporated into the RDS. A two-way mapping of the RDS and the JSS is available on the RDF section of the Vitae website.

For more information and to comment on the Researcher Development Framework and associated Statement go to [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/505181/Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html> <sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

<sup>3</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set\\_for\\_success.htm](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/jss>

*\*The Vitae Researcher Development Statement is copyright Vitae®, © 2010 Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited. It can be accessed at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Researcher%20development%20statement.pdf>*

## 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University's commitment to research, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University's research community to maintain professional standards. This Code of Conduct prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected by all persons engaged in research at the University.

Researchers should, in all aspects of their research:

1. Observe legal and ethical requirements laid down by the University or any other bodies properly laying down such requirements, including those of any countries outside the UK where the research is being conducted;
2. Ensure that methods and results should, subject to appropriate confidentiality commitments to individual privacy or commercially protected information, be open to independent scrutiny through appropriate documentation of methods and storing of data;
3. Demonstrate honesty, accountability, integrity and professionalism, observe fairness and equity, and avoid, or declare, conflicts of interest;
4. Ensure clear and honest attribution and acknowledgement of the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others;
5. Ensure the rights, safety and wellbeing of those associated with the research, both as researchers and subjects of research, including that there are suitable additional insurance provisions in place where necessary (eg where clinical intervention with a subject is required).
6. Comply with guidance concerning the funding of the research project issued by the University, funding body/ies and/or other relevant organisational body/ies, including guidelines for purchasing resources and employing staff, and requirements for monitoring and audit;
7. Raise any concerns (eg risk or harm to participants, financial irregularities, potential conflicts of interest) with the Executive Dean of the School as soon as they become aware of them.

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) has compiled a checklist of key good practice points which should be considered when embarking on any research project and researchers are strongly advised to use this and keep a brief record of their responses.

The checklist may be particularly helpful for **collaborative projects** involving researchers from partner organisations, including outside the UK, in order to ensure that all parties involved have considered the key points and reached agreement on standards and procedures to be followed. The checklist is provided in Section 4 below and is also available at [www.ukrio.org](http://www.ukrio.org).

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\* title changed from Research Code of Practice, June 2005

Further advice on collaborative provision, including a risk assessment *pro forma*, is available on the University website at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/collaborativeprovision/>

## **2. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Senate of the University, through its Research Committee, has general responsibility to ensure compliance with the Code across the University. Executive Deans have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the Code in their Schools. All staff and students undertaking research must familiarise themselves with the Code and ensure that its provisions are observed. The University will ensure all newly appointed researchers and research students are made aware of the Code, and the Supervisors of students involved in research will seek to ensure that students comply with the Code.

## **3. RESEARCH PRACTICES**

### **3.1 Guidance from Professional Bodies**

1. Where available, researchers will observe the standards of research practice set out in guidelines and codes of practice published by scientific and learned societies, relevant research councils, sponsoring charities, regulatory bodies, the Department of Health/National Health Service and other relevant professional bodies.
2. All researchers should be aware of the legal requirements which regulate their work and should ensure that all participants, including those from outside the UK, are also aware of them.

### **3.2 Research Methods and Data**

1. There should be clarity at the outset of each research programme as to the ownership of, where relevant, data and samples used or created in the course of the research, and the results of the research. This is particularly important in the case of collaborative research projects.
2. Research methods adopted in the conduct of the research must be fully documented in a manner that would facilitate their replication by independent researchers.
3. Experiments should be conducted in accordance with the University Health and Safety Policy Document.
4. Research data must be recorded in a durable and auditable form so that they can readily be recovered. They must be retained intact normally for a period of at least five years (or the minimum period defined by research sponsors or relevant professional or statutory bodies, whichever is the longer) from the date of any publication based on it. Back-up records should always be kept for data stored on a computer or electronically. Research Groups, Institutes or Schools must establish procedures for retention of research data in a form which would enable retrieval by a third party, subject to any limitation imposed by the confidentiality of individuals or commercially sensitive data. Research data related to publications should be available for discussion with other research workers, except where confidentiality provisions prevail.

5. It is the duty of any principal investigator in any research project to comply with the Data Protection Act, and to ensure that copyright is not breached.
6. Confidentiality provisions relating to publications may apply in circumstances where the University or the research worker has made or given confidentiality undertakings to third parties or confidentiality is required to protect intellectual property rights. It is the obligation of the research worker to enquire as to whether confidentiality provisions apply and of the head of research group/institute, or School, to inform research workers of their obligations with respect to these provisions.

### **3.3. Ethical Practice**

The University's Ethics Documentation is available on the University website at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/ethics-policy-and-procedures/>.

#### **3.3. a. Research Involving Human Participants**

1. All research involving human participants should be registered via the University online ethical registration system and, where appropriate, be considered and approved either by the relevant School Research Ethics Committee or, for projects carrying a higher risk, the University Ethics Committee. Approval from other regulatory bodies such as the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority or the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee of the UK should also be sought where necessary.
2. Researchers should ensure the consent of participants in research, along with the confidentiality of any personal information, and that the research fulfills any legal requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

#### **3.3. b. Research Involving Animals**

1. Research involving animals should have approval through the appropriate Ethical Review Process, and may require Home Office licenses for the institution, the investigator and the project.
2. Researchers should consider, at an early stage in the design of any research involving animals, the opportunity for reduction, replacement and refinement of animal involvement.

### **3.4 Supervision**

1. It is the responsibility of Executive Deans to ensure that appropriate direction of research and supervision of researchers is provided. Training in supervisory skills should be provided where appropriate.
2. Supervision of research must be in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and with any requirements which may be prescribed from time to time by the Senate through its Learning and Teaching or Research Committees.
3. A person must only accept appointment as a member of the Supervisory team for a research student if that person expects to be able to discharge their responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

### 3.5 Publication of Results

1. Anyone listed as an author on a publication should accept responsibility for ensuring that he/she is familiar with the contents of the paper and can identify his/her contribution to it. The practice of honorary authorship is unacceptable.
2. Any person who has participated in a substantial way in conceiving, executing or interpreting at least part of the relevant research should be given the opportunity to be included as an author of a publication derived from that research.
3. A publication must contain appropriate reference to, and acknowledgement of, the contributions made by all participants who have made what might reasonably be regarded as a significant contribution to the relevant research. In particular the work of research students, research staff and support staff should be recognised in any publication derived from research to which they have made a significant contribution.

### 3.6 Conflict of Interest

1. A conflict arises when a person's judgement concerning a primary interest, such as scientific knowledge, could be unduly influenced by a secondary influence, such as financial gain or personal advancement.
2. A researcher must make full disclosure of any personal potential or actual conflict of research interest. Conflict of interest includes any personal or close family affiliation or financial involvement with any organisation sponsoring or providing financial support for a research project undertaken by a research worker. Financial involvement includes direct personal financial interest, provision of personal benefits (such as travel and accommodation) and provision of material or facilities for personal use. The provision of sponsored studentships, or elements of travel/accommodation for a student, is excluded from this definition.
3. A disclosure of a personal conflict of interest must be made to the Executive Dean as soon as reasonably practicable.
4. A researcher must comply with a direction made by the Executive Dean in relation to a personal conflict of interest in research. Executive Deans may seek advice from the Chief Operating Officer in cases of doubt.

### 3.7 Misconduct in Research

1. Misconduct in research is constituted by a failure to comply with the provisions of the Code, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - Fraud: deliberate deception, including fabrication or falsification of research data, and the omission from analysis and publication of inconvenient data
  - Plagiarism and piracy: the copying or deliberate exploitation of another person's ideas, work or research data, without appropriate acknowledgement
2. The University has a separate policy and Code of Conduct covering misconduct. This code must be adhered to at all times:
  - *Aston University: Code of Practice for dealing with allegations of Research Misconduct*

#### **4. UKRIO's RECOMMENDED CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCHERS**

The following Checklist is included in the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)'s *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct* (<http://www.ukrio.org/ukR10htre/UKRIO-Code-of-Practice-for-Research1.pdf>).

The Checklist lists the key points of good practice in research for a research project and is applicable to all subject areas.

#### **Before conducting your research, and bearing in mind that, subject to legal and ethical requirements, roles and contributions may change during the time span of the research:**

- 1 Does the proposed research address pertinent question(s) and is it designed either to add to existing knowledge about the subject in question or to develop methods for research into it?
- 2 Is your research design appropriate for the question(s) being asked?
- 3 Will you have access to all necessary skills and resources to conduct the research?
- 4 Have you conducted a risk assessment to determine:
  - a whether there are any ethical issues and whether ethics review is required;
  - b the potential for risks to the organisation, the research, or the health, safety and well-being of researchers and research participants; and
  - c what legal requirements govern the research?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal and ethical requirements and other applicable guidelines, including those from other organisations and/or countries if relevant?
- 6 Will your research comply with all requirements of legislation and good practice relating to health and safety?
- 7 Has your research undergone any necessary ethics review (see 4(a) above), especially if it involves animals, human participants, human material or personal data?
- 8 Will your research comply with any monitoring and audit requirements?
- 9 Are you in compliance with any contracts and financial guidelines relating to the project?
- 10 Have you reached an agreement relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?
- 11 Have you reached an agreement relating to collaborative working, if applicable?
- 12 Have you agreed the roles of researchers and responsibilities for management and supervision?
- 13 Have all conflicts of interest relating to your research been identified, declared and addressed?
- 14 Are you aware of the guidance from all applicable organisations on misconduct in research?

#### **When conducting your research:**

- 1 Are you following the agreed research design for the project?
- 2 Have any changes to the agreed research design been reviewed and approved if applicable?
- 3 Are you following best practice for the collection, storage and management of data?
- 4 Are agreed roles and responsibilities for management and supervision being fulfilled?
- 5 Is your research complying with any monitoring and audit requirements?

#### **When finishing your research:**

- 1 Will your research and its findings be reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?

- 2 Will all contributions to the research be acknowledged?
- 3 Are agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship being complied with?
- 4 Will research data be retained in a secure and accessible form and for the required duration?
- 5 Will your research comply with all legal, ethical and contractual requirements?

## **REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Code of Conduct draws upon the following documents:

- UK Research Integrity Office (2009) *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct*
- Office of Science and Technology (2002) *Statement by the Director General of the Research Councils and the Chief Executives of the Research Councils on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice*
- The Wellcome Trust (2002) *Guidelines on Good Research Practice*
- EPSRC (1999) *Good Practice in Scientific and Engineering Research*
- Medical Research Council (2000) *MRC Good Research Practice*
- BBSRC (2004) *Statement on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice*
- Aston University (2004) *Statutes; Codes of Practice; Terms of Reference of Committees*
- Birmingham University (2002) *Code of Research Practice*

Approved by the Senate January 2004 (REG/04/76); updated in line with Senate approval of new institutional Code of Practice for Research Degrees June 2005. Approved by the Senate October 2010 following revisions to take account of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO)'s *Code of Practice for Research: Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct*.

## **Appendix C: Conduct of the *viva voce* examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio**

The following paragraphs present guidance for the arrangements for and conduct of the *viva voce*.

### **1. The Chair of the *Viva Voce***

An independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed for all *viva voce*. The Chair should be selected by the School's Associate Dean Research from a pool of suitably qualified Academic Staff who have experience of research degree assessment.

The Chair should be independent in that he or she should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners.

The Chair must be impartial and cannot therefore be the student's Supervisor or Internal Examiner, and must be from a different research area. The Chair must not be nominated by the Supervisor or Internal Examiner. In the case of a staff candidate, the Chair should be from a different School.

### **2. The Role of the Chair**

The role of the Independent Chair is to:

- i) ensure the *viva voce* examination is conducted in an open, professional, and non-intimidating manner by all parties involved;
- ii) be prepared to intervene in the process if the above requirements are not complied with;
- iii) ensure that only those parties who should be actively involved in the *viva voce* process are participating and that other attending parties (such as a Supervisor) do not take an active role;
- iv) suggest appropriate breaks in particularly long examinations;
- v) provide an opinion on points of order or University regulations if requested to do so by the Examiners or the student;
- vi) sign at the end of the *viva voce* examination to confirm that the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias.

### **3. Arrangements for the *Viva Voce***

The Supervisor should notify the Examiners, the student, and the Independent Chair, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending the *viva voce* examination.

The Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis.

### **4. Purpose/Aim of the *Viva Voce***

- i) Provides the student with an opportunity to defend his or her thesis;

- ii) assists the Examiners in their decision as to whether or not the student has met the requirements for the degree;
- iii) examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies;
- iv) allows detailed discussion of the thesis;
- v) explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis;
- vi) clarifies points of ambiguity;
- vii) satisfies the Examiners that the thesis is the student's own work.

## 5. Conduct of the *Viva Voce*

- i) The *viva voce* should be held in a suitable room without interruptions from others;
- ii) if any of those who should be attending are unable to be present, then the *viva voce* must normally be re-arranged;
- iii) time should be made available on the day of, and before the *viva voce*, for Examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary reports and to discuss the approach to the examination;
- iv) the Chair should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the form the *viva voce* will take and what happens afterwards. The Chair will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour, but should not hesitate to do so if this is the case;
- v) each Examiner should contribute, but with the External Examiner taking the lead;
- vi) there are no rules governing the length of the *viva voce*. It is at the Examiners' discretion to make the *viva voce* as long or short as they think necessary. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/requested;
- vii) there may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the questioning becomes aggressive, he or she should intervene;
- viii) the Supervisor may be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions;
- ix) no-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

## 6. After the *Viva Voce*

- i) The student and Supervisor (if present) should be asked to withdraw;
- ii) the Examiners should deliberate;
- iii) the Examiners may invite the student and Supervisor to hear the recommendation (noting that this is provisional only);
- iv) the Examiners' Reports on the *viva voce* examination and the Joint Recommendation should be completed and submitted to the appropriate School Office, together with a list of any corrections or revisions, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the *viva voce*. The Examiners must also provide the student with a copy of any corrections and revisions;
- v) the Independent Chair should sign the Examiner's report on the *viva voce* examination to indicate whether or not the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias;
- vi) there must be formal approval of recommendations by the University's Senate or Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

REG/SJD

Last updated (Registry/AJB) August 2012

## Appendix 3: Learning Agreement

### ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

### POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES

### LEARNING AGREEMENT

#### 1. Introduction

This document forms an Agreement between a student and their Supervisor, setting out agreed responsibilities of each party. This document is intended to be personal to the relationship between a student and Supervisor and, as such, should be amended to the satisfaction of both. This should be done within one month of the student's start date at a meeting involving the Supervisor, the student and any Associate Supervisor(s). Once completed, a copy should be submitted to the School Research Office.

#### 2. Student Details

Student's Name:	
Research Group:	
Research Start Date:	<i>1 October / 1 January / 1 April / 1 July</i> Year: _____
Type of Registration:	<i>Full-time / Part-time</i>
Degree aimed for:	<i>MPhil / PhD / DBA / Professional Doctorate</i>
Supervisor:	<i>(include name, email address, phone number and office location)</i>
External Contact (if appropriate):	<i>(include contact details)</i>
‡ Advisor (if appointed):	
* Associate Supervisor(s) (if appointed):	<i>(include email address, phone number and office location)</i>
** Associate Director of Research for Research Area:	<i>(include email address and phone number)</i>
~ Postgraduate Tutor:	<i>(include name, email address, phone number and office location)</i>
Skills Training hours:	<i>60 / 90 / Exempt / Other~* _____</i>

‡ An Advisor to the Supervisor will be appointed by the Associate Dean Research where appropriate. If appointed, the Advisor will also attend the *viva voce* examination of the student's Qualifying Report.

\* The role of any Associate Supervisor in the supervision of the student should be clarified at this meeting.

\*\* The Associate Director of Research may be approached for academic advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the Supervisor.

~ The Postgraduate Tutor is a source of independent advice if the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well.

~\* For information on full or partial exemption, please refer to School specific information.



In cases where the University claims ownership of Intellectual Property, where possible the University seeks to exploit Intellectual Property and will share any net income with staff and students in accordance with a scheme approved by the University Council.

## **5. Extract from the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees (REG/08/385(1)), with further clarification/information (in italics) specific to the School (if appropriate)**

### **5.1 Responsibilities of supervisors**

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

- (a) providing satisfactory guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial
- (b) being responsible for monitoring the student's progress
- (c) establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student, and which should include structured interactions at least every 3 months to report, discuss and agree progress (Regulation 8.1)
- (d) ensuring his/her reasonable accessibility to the student when s/he needs advice
- (e) having input into the assessment of a student's development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning
- (f) providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work including his/her overall progress
- (g) ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct his/her research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct (which are set out in detail in the University's Code of Practice for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct, REG/04/77)
- (h) providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support
- (i) helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, by encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences, supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events; and where appropriate to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals.

### **5.2 Responsibilities of research students**

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their theses within the periods of study as prescribed in regulations for their particular degrees.

Students are also responsible for:

- (a) taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor

- (b) ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with University regulations and School guidelines and procedures relating to their degree, relevant Codes of Practice and other University and School requirements, health and safety advice, the monitoring of progress and terms of any sponsorship
- (c) setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research
- (d) ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University's requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress
- (e) discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings
- (f) initiating supervisory meetings where necessary
- (g) in conjunction with their Supervisor, identifying their training needs and attending research training
- (h) deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of study and before the end of the maximum period of study specified in the regulations), taking account of the Supervisor's opinion
- (i) ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor's responsibilities (see section 5.1 above)
- (j) advising their Supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances likely to affect their work.

## 6. **Documentation and Other Useful Information**

**Discussion of relevant documentation and other useful information, as detailed below, and confirmation that the student has, or knows how to access, further details:**

- Code of Practice for Research Degrees, including Research Code of Conduct appendix (*available on the intranet at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/researchregulationsandprocedures/>*)
- General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (*available on the intranet at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/researchregulationsandprocedures/>*)
- Special Regulations for the programme (if applicable)
- Record of Supervisory Meeting Form (*in Student Handbook*)
- Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report (*in Student Handbook*)
- Presentation Feedback Form (*In Student Handbook*)
- School Health and Safety Policy Document
- Health and Safety information specific to student's research environment (if relevant)
- Academic Appeals Procedure (*available on the intranet at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/researchregulationsandprocedures/>*)
- Student Complaints Procedure (*available on the intranet at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/researchregulationsandprocedures/>*)
- Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme (*in Student Handbook*)

## 7. **Skills Training**

All students must normally attend:

- a health and safety course as soon as possible after enrolment;
- a teaching skills course prior to undertaking any teaching or demonstrating in the School (sessions on teaching and assessment are offered via the School's postgraduate training programme or Staff & Graduate Development).

The student and Supervisor should discuss other courses/seminars/conference sessions to be attended to meet the professional and personal development needs of the student and contribute towards the regulatory requirement to undertake appropriate skills training during the research programme (60 hours for MPhil/90 hours for PhD).

The choice of the remaining training to be undertaken should be agreed between the Supervisor and the student, noting that not all of the hours need to be agreed at the initial meeting and that the student's development needs should be reviewed at least annually. A Training Needs Analysis form is appended to this Agreement to aid the discussion and to record decisions. The training and development activities that can count towards the skills training hours are:

- Internal courses and workshops offered by Departments represented in the Graduate Development Team. This includes Module IS4001: Research Skills and Professional Development which, if completed, counts for 20 hours, plus 20 hours if the associated assessment is undertaken;
- Internal courses and seminars offered by the School;
- Poster presentations at conferences, seminars or poster competitions (10 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 5 hours for University events);
- Oral presentations at conferences/seminars (15 hours per event if activity is external to the University; 8 hours for University events);
- External workshop requiring active participation: 5 hours.

The student should keep a record of the skills training undertaken on the Training Needs Analysis form and this will be reviewed by the Supervisor and student at the time of the Annual Progress Report. A revised version of the Training Needs Analysis form, reflecting any changes made as a result of the annual review, will then be submitted with the Annual Progress Report.

A full list of the 90/60 research skills training hours will need to be submitted with the thesis for forwarding to the Examiners.

## 8. **Declaration by the Student**

I have read and agree with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. I have discussed the recommended skills training with my Supervisor(s) and completed a Training Needs Analysis form which will be subject to annual review. I have read the School Health and Safety Policy Document and have been advised of any particular hazards and precautions associated with my research area. I understand that I must not undertake any teaching without the prior agreement of my Supervisor. I am satisfied with both my responsibilities and those of my Supervisor as outlined above.

.....  
Signature of Student

.....  
Date



## Appendix 3a: Training Needs Analysis

### ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

#### Post Graduate Research Student Training Needs Analysis

The development opportunities available to research students are offered through a variety of sources; locally within the research group, at School level, and at institutional level through ResearcherPlus. To ensure satisfactory progress through your PhD, and in terms of your future career and employability, it is important that you consider what skills you need to develop and plan how this might be achieved over the duration of your PhD.

The training needs analysis is conducted against a national [Researcher Development Framework](#) (RDF) which is endorsed by the Research Councils and other research funders. The RDF contains greater detail about how to interpret each of the domains. Development in many of the aspects is achieved directly as a consequence of studying for a PhD, but for many others development can be achieved by attending or participating in other activities.

Use the tables below to indicate against each topic your development needs as agreed between you and your Supervisor. Course topics currently available through ResearcherPlus have been listed; visit the [ResearcherPlus website](#) for more information and to book a place on a course.

Additional spaces have been provided to allow you and your Supervisor to consider other skills development that may be available elsewhere (eg at School level or externally). Your training needs should be reviewed annually.

ResearcherPlus course topics mapped against RDF domains	Required	Optional	Date to be completed	Additional comments	Date completed
<b>Professional and intellectual attributes: Includes sub-domains of knowledge base, cognitive abilities, and creativity</b>					
An Introduction to Designing Questionnaires and Surveys					
Managing & Conducting Qualitative Research Interviews					
Running Focus Groups					
Qualitative Research Interviews; Improving your Practice					
NVivo – an introduction					
Endnote					
Microsoft Excel Levels 1, 2 & 3					
Microsoft Word Intermediate and Advanced					
Giving feedback					
Reading & Note-taking for Academic Purposes					
<b>Personal Effectiveness: Includes sub-domains personal qualities, self-management and personal &amp; career development</b>					
An Introduction to Project Management					
Managing your PhD					
Managing your Time					
Making Effective Job Applications					

ResearcherPlus course topics mapped against RDF domains	Required	Optional	Date to be completed	Additional comments	Date completed
Doing Well in Interviews					
Careers and Personal Development Planning					
<b>Research governance and organisation: Includes sub-domains professional conduct, research management, and finance, funding and resources</b>					
Manual Handling					
Copyright					
Introduction to Project Management					
Microsoft Project					
<b>Engagement, Influence and Impact: Includes sub-domains working with others, communication and dissemination, and engagement and impact</b>					
Presentation Skills for New Researchers					
Microsoft PowerPoint					
Microsoft Word for Researchers, Intermediate and Advanced					
Being Effective in Meetings					
Viva Preparation and Presentation					
Writing for Publication					

ResearcherPlus course topics mapped against RDF domains	Required	Optional	Date to be completed	Additional comments	Date completed
Writing your Thesis					
Laboratory demonstrating					
Demonstrating in Computer Labs					
Tutoring small groups					
Aston Cert: An Introduction to Learning & Teaching in HE(Level 7 module, 20 credits)					
Being an Effective Team Member					
Motivating Others					
<b>Cross- Domain provision</b>					
<p><b>10 credit Level 7 module – Research Skills and Professional Development.</b>  Offered as a 3-day intensive course, this covers: critical and analytical thinking and reading, research ethics, referencing and plagiarism, presentations skills, preparing poster presentations, managing your PhD, working with your Supervisor, team working, learning styles and reflective practice. The module is assessed through a literature review (3000 words), a presentation, and the development of a project plan. Open to all PhD students, some students simply attend the module, others also complete the assessment.</p>					

<b>Signed</b>	<b>Print Name</b>	
<b>Student:</b>	<b>Student:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Supervisor:</b>	<b>Supervisor:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## Appendix 4: Presentation Feedback Form

### ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

#### Presentation Feedback Form

Name of Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Forum: \_\_\_\_\_

	General comments	Best part in each heading	Suggestions for improvement	Excellent/ Very Good/ Good/ Average/ Poor
<b>Structure</b> - clearly defined introduction, including aims / objectives				
<b>Content</b> - including appropriateness for audience				
<b>Presentation delivery and coherence</b> – Pace, engagement with audience, use of visual aids				
<b>Critique of subject</b>				
<b>Conclusions</b> - clearly signposted and coherent				
<b>Handling of questions</b>				
<b>Overall</b>				

Name of assessors providing feedback: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: Record of Supervisory Meeting Form

This form has been designed to assist you in maintaining a record of your formal meetings with your Supervisor. A formal meeting is a meeting where progress is carefully considered and reviewed. Initially, these should occur approximately once a month, and at least once every three months throughout your research degree. You should consider the use of these notes as part of the personal management aspect of research planning.

Copies of these meeting records should be forwarded to the School Office with your Annual Progress Report forms.

### ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

#### RECORD OF SUPERVISORY MEETING

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Supervisor:</b>	<b>Associate Supervisor:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time From:</b>	<b>Time To:</b>
<b>Working Title:</b>		
<b>Points Raised/discussed:</b>		
<b>Proposed Action by Student:</b>		
<b>Proposed Action by Supervisor:</b>		
<b>Agenda for Next Supervisory Meeting:</b>		
<b>Time and Date of Next Planned Meeting:</b>		
<b>Supervisor's Signature</b>	<b>Student's Signature</b>	

# Appendix 6: Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report

## ASTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

### Requirements for Qualifying Report

Students and Supervisors should also refer to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, specifically the section on Qualifying Reports (Regulation 8.3).

**In approving these requirements, the School's Research Committee has specified that Qualifying Reports should be a minimum of 6,000 words.**

\*\*\*\*\*

The Qualifying Report should show evidence that the student has:

- read widely around the subject area
- identified the scope and aims of their research
- gained a detailed knowledge of previous work of direct relevance to their own research
- understood the implications of previous work for their own research
- planned and designed appropriate research work for the remaining years of study
- considered ethical issues surrounding their proposed research
- undertaken a risk assessment, and carried out relevant risk-management practices
- demonstrated necessary practical skills or identified how and when these will be achieved
- sourced any participants / animal subjects / samples etc necessary to undertake their research
- appropriately acknowledged and referenced original sources and secondary literature
- demonstrated the writing skills necessary to author a clear, concise and well-written thesis
- considered the pace at which work must be completed in order to submit their thesis on time
- the ability to fulfil the requirements of a PhD (a substantial original contribution to knowledge) or an MPhil (a contribution to knowledge).

The piece of written work submitted should demonstrate the student's theoretical and methodological competence. The elements of the report may or may not constitute chapters of the thesis but should in all cases provide:

- an overview of the main problem to be studied
- an overview of the principal literature or other context for the research
- an account of the work already carried out
- a general strategy for future work, including a work plan and details about ethics submission/approval where relevant
- a timetable for the remaining work envisaged
- a provisional table of contents for the final thesis.

The report should include both theoretical and empirical work. Theoretical work might include a literature review, theoretical analysis and a statement of main research objectives, methods and anticipated outcomes. Experimental work would normally be expected to include the report from one study. In cases where this work is not expected at this point, the chapter could include a report of preparatory work, ongoing empirical work, or pilot studies.

The student should submit the Qualifying Report to the Supervisor within 10 months (if full-time) or 22 months (if part-time) of the research start date. The Supervisor will arrange for an examination of the content of the report at a *viva voce* examination conducted by the Supervisor, the Advisor (if appointed) and at least one other member of the Academic Staff (Regulation 8.3(a) of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis) before the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> (full-time) or 24<sup>th</sup> (part-time) month.

## Appendix 7: Researcher Development Statement

The UK is committed to enhancing the higher-level capabilities of the UK workforce including the development of world-class researchers. Researchers are critical to economic success, addressing major global challenges, and building a leading knowledge economy. The Researcher Development Statement (RDS) sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers.

The RDS is for policy makers and research organisations that provide personal, professional and career development for researchers in higher education.

The Researcher Development Statement is derived from the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), a major new approach to researcher development, which aims to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base.

The RDS and RDF will contribute to researcher training and development in the UK by providing a strategic statement (RDS) and operational framework (RDF) to support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers<sup>1</sup>, the QAA Code of practice for research degree programmes<sup>2</sup> and the ‘Roberts’<sup>3</sup> recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff.

The RDS is structured in four domains, which encompass what researchers need to know to do research, how to be effective in their approach to research, when working with others, and in contributing to the wider environment. Within each of the domains are three sub-domains and associated descriptors, which describe different aspects of being a researcher.

<p><b>Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual abilities</b></p> <p>The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research.</p>	<p><b>Domain B: Personal effectiveness</b></p> <p>The personal qualities and approach needed to be an effective researcher.</p>
<p><b>Domain C: Research governance and organisation</b></p> <p>The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research.</p>	<p><b>Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact</b></p> <p>The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.</p>

The Researcher Development Statement is an evolution of the Research Councils’ Joint Skills Statement (JSS) and replaces the JSS as the key reference statement for the development of postgraduate researchers’ skills and attributes and researchers employed in higher education. All the skills and attributes of the JSS have been incorporated into the RDS and their distribution is identified in the table below. A two-way mapping of the RDS and the JSS is available on the RDF section of the Vitae website.

For more information and to comment on the Researcher Development Framework and associated Statement go to [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)

<sup>1</sup> [www.researchconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

<sup>3</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set\\_for\\_success.htm](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm)

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## **Appendix 8: Rights and Responsibilities of Students – Behaviour on Campus**

Aston University functions on a basis of tolerance and appreciation of diversity, rigorous discussion and appraisal of ideas, and mutual support in achieving personal and collegiate aims.

There are policies and codes of practice which support these functions. Some involve legal obligations on both the University and its members, including students. You can find these on the Registry part of the University web site. As an Aston student you agree to abide by the University Regulations, including those relating to academic and general discipline. You do this when you enrol with the University.

Regulations and policies are written in language that may not be very specific or clear so this guide sets out expectations which, if you abide by them, will keep you out of trouble and make your experience and that of others within the University a pleasant and rewarding one.

### **We expect you:**

- not to disrupt teaching/learning sessions with inappropriate talking, horseplay or other behaviour;
- to turn off mobile phones during classes and at other times and places when it is considerate eg in the library;
- to prepare for and participate in class sessions as requested by the organiser;
- to respect the efforts of the session leader to direct and inform you;
- to use resources such as computer rooms, the library and other facilities sensibly and with consideration of other users;
- to maintain a safe, clean and tidy environment on the campus and in the buildings of the University;
- to show respect for your fellow students and employees of the University - even when you disagree with them.

### **You can expect:**

- timetabled sessions to occur as published, unless changed with due notice to you with notice of alternative arrangements for such sessions;
- good quality academic input in class sessions;
- appropriate supporting resources to back up your class sessions;
- timely feedback on assessments and other work;
- comfortable, clean and safe working conditions appropriate for the type of activity you are engaged in;
- a supportive network in the University when you need help with academic and personal issues;
- respect from other members of the University.

### **If things go wrong with what the University provides:**

- let someone know – if in doubt, see the School Research Administrator and s/he will direct you;
- use the feedback mechanisms provided by the University – student representatives, Guild, Welfare services.

**If other students are disruptive:**

- let someone know – School Research Office, Residential Services, Security – whoever is appropriate. If in doubt ask the School Research Administrator;
- you may talk to a University officer in confidence for advice before action is taken;
- you may be asked to provide evidence in a disciplinary hearing. This might appear intimidating to an individual. However, if the complaint is shared by others you can collectively bring it to our attention and get our support in handling the process. We cannot act without specific information and evidence.

**If you are disruptive:**

- there are disciplinary procedures, at School and at University level;
- sanctions are applied. These range from written reprimands through fines to exclusion from campus, depending on the severity of the offence;
- note that students excluded from campus may miss examinations, with impact on their graduation date;
- non-payment of fines will leave you in debt to the University and graduation will be delayed until you clear the debt;
- reprimands in your files might have to be declared in a character reference to future employers.

This document is advisory and does not take precedence over any University regulation.

The following link will take you to the appropriate regulations (you can find them under 'Current Students' on the university homepage):

**<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/>**

## Appendix 9: Feedback Form for End of Year 2 Draft Research Paper (LHS)

Name of Student:

Title of Paper:

Date of Submission:

	Rating in each category ( <i>highlight the most appropriate bullet point</i> )	Specific comments / points to note / suggestions for improvement
Quality of contribution to the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent; original &amp; innovative contribution</li> <li>• Good work, with innovative elements</li> <li>• Adequate quality but little originality / innovation</li> <li>• Largely insignificant contribution</li> <li>• Questionable work</li> </ul>	
Significance for theory and/or practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very significant</li> <li>• Significant</li> <li>• Potentially significant contribution, after further development</li> <li>• Relatively low significance</li> <li>• Marginal or no significance</li> </ul>	
Research design and methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophisticated design; rigorous methodology</li> <li>• Appropriate design; well executed methodology</li> <li>• Some areas for improvement in design or methods used</li> <li>• Poor design; inappropriate approach and/or serious methodological flaws</li> <li>• Insufficient information to judge</li> </ul>	
Knowledge of the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth and up-to-date</li> <li>• Good use of literature</li> <li>• Adequate use of literature, but some gaps in expected references</li> <li>• Lacks coherent knowledge of the field</li> </ul>	
Organisation, structure, and clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent writing; well structured, future development made clear</li> <li>• Well written and structured, adequate indication of future development</li> <li>• Adequate standard of writing but scope for</li> </ul>	

	<p>improvement; development needs more explanation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs significant revision; insufficient detail of development plan</li> <li>• Major revision required, including narrative structure and quality of writing</li> <li>• Not acceptable</li> </ul>	
Overall rating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent</li> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Adequate</li> <li>• Poor</li> <li>• Fail</li> </ul>	

**Name of assessors providing feedback:**

*(usually main supervisor & previous other assessor of Qualifying Report)*

**Date:**