Supervisors and heads of discipline are responsible, usually at the end of the probationary period, for making recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee about which research degree students should be registered for. They are also responsible for making recommendations about degree registration changes, if and as appropriate, at any stage prior to submission of the thesis for examination.

The requirements of each research degree are defined by the award regulations. In summary:

**Master of Philosophy**

The thesis must be of good presentation and style, and show evidence of the student’s proficiency in the methods and techniques of research, demonstrating an adequate knowledge and discussion of the literature in a specific field of study. It must show initiative, independence of thought and must be a distinct contribution to scholarship.

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The thesis must be of good presentation and style and show evidence of being a significant contribution to knowledge and of the student’s capacity to pursue further research without supervision. The thesis should contain a significant amount of material worthy of publication.

**Process**

These procedures seek to reconcile the interests of the student and the staff responsible for their studies as well as those of the University whilst ensuring that the wider expectations of fairness are met. They are concerned with both responsibilities and entitlements and are intended to reflect the principles of natural justice, as well as being transparent and timely.

Where a student’s work is not of the required academic standard for the research degree for which they wish to be registered, the supervisors are required to arrange a meeting with the student to:

(a) explain clearly how their work does not meet the requirements of the degree for which they wish to be registered

(b) explore with the student whether the standard of their work could be improved sufficiently to overcome the shortcomings as identified by the supervisors

(c) if appropriate, agree with the student what they are required to do by a specified deadline to demonstrate that they are able to improve their work to the academic standard required for the degree for which they wish to be registered

1 Where the student declines to attend a meeting with the supervisors, the
procedures outlined in 4. (a) – (c) and (d) 1. and 2. should be carried out by correspondence.

(d) after the meeting, write to the student to:

i. confirm the discussion of points (a) – (b), and if appropriate (c), as outlined above

ii. confirm that the head of discipline\(^2\) will be asked to recommend to the Research Degrees Committee that the student is registered for the research degree that the standard of their work is deemed to be appropriate to, or if it has been agreed that the student should be given an opportunity to demonstrate by a specified deadline that they can improve the standard of their work, what will happen if they are unable to improve the standard of their work

iii. encourage the student to seek help and advice from someone else (e.g. the head of discipline, third party monitor, associate dean research or Higher Degrees Officer) if they have concerns or difficulties that they do not wish to discuss with the supervisors

(e) inform the head of discipline that the student’s work is not of the academic standard for the degree for which they wish to be registered and the action that has been or is being taken to address the situation.

The supervisors are responsible for preparing a written report recommending the research degree for which the student should be registered for the Research Degrees Committee. The report should:

(a) outline why the student’s work is not of the academic standard required for the degree for which they wish to be registered

(b) provide details of the action taken to address the situation

(c) confirm that the student has:

i. received written confirmation about the proposed degree registration

ii. been encouraged to seek help and advice from other appropriate members of staff

(d) include appropriate documentary evidence.

The report must be ratified by the head of discipline and copied to the student before being sent to the Research Degrees Office.

The report recommending the student’s degree registration will be referred to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, who may:

(a) ratify the degree registration recommendation

(b) arrange for the student’s work to be assessed by a suitably qualified external assessor

\(^2\) If the head of discipline is also one of the student’s supervisors, the associate dean research or another independent senior member of the academic unit should be
involved.

(c) with the agreement of the supervisors and head of discipline, grant permission for the degree registration to be reconsidered once specified conditions have been fulfilled.

In the case of (b) a decision about the degree registration will be made on receipt of the external assessor’s report, and in consultation with the head of discipline.