

Split-Site Research Degree: Principles and Procedures

This document provides specific guidance to Faculties on the approval, management and operation of a split-site research degree. It is closely related to the University's [Education Partnerships Policy](#).

1. Overview

- 1.1 A split-site research degree is defined as a programme which leads to the University of Southampton award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). It requires students to be solely in candidature at the University of Southampton whilst spending a significant period of time conducting research away from Southampton at another approved partner institution, normally overseas. A split-site research degree is regarded as an education partnership arrangement and therefore subject to the University's [Education Partnerships Policy](#).
- 1.2 The effort, time and costs involved in the development and ongoing management of a split-site research degree may outweigh the financial or other benefits to the School. Such collaborative arrangements require an institutional-level agreement and will not be approved if the School cannot demonstrate that a regular and continuing intake of students will be achieved.
- 1.3 All split-site research degrees are governed by the University of Southampton Regulations as specified in the [University governance webpages](#).

2. Exclusions

- 2.1 On occasion, in order to pursue their research or to conduct fieldwork, a student may need to be temporarily located at another higher education institution, organisation/company or other location external to the University of Southampton. Such arrangements are made on an individual basis between the student, their supervisory team, and the external institution or organisation/company and are not considered to be split-site research degrees as they do not involve institution-to-institution agreements.
- 2.2 [Research degrees that include periods of off-campus study](#) provides further information on the types of arrangements set out in paragraph 2.1 above and sets down the procedure that Schools should follow.

3. Principles

- 3.1 All split-site research degrees require a University of Southampton academic member of staff nominated and approved by the School to lead the arrangement. The individual should work closely with supervisory teams and the partner institution.
- 3.2 A split-site research degree should only be made with an institution of good academic standing, which can provide an excellent environment for the University's research students.
- 3.3 A split-site research degree must not be set up for an individual research student as establishing a split-site partnership can be a lengthy process and suitable timescales need to be considered by both parties. A split-site research degree may be set up for a single cohort (normally at least three students) or for multiple cohorts recruited over a number of years (minimum of three students over the term of the agreement). The cohort size and number of recruitment cycles must be specified and

will be taken into account during the approval process to ensure that the arrangement will be sustainable.

- 3.4 A split-site research degree should be reviewed regularly, at least every five years, as stated in the [Education Partnership Policy](#).
- 3.5 There must be an institutional level Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for all split-site research degrees, setting out the rights and responsibilities of the University of Southampton and the partner institution. An Individual Doctoral Agreement (IDA) is also required and must be completed for each student undertaking the programme. All periods of time to be spent at each institution will be clearly specified in the IDA for each student.
- 3.6 All provision should be in line with the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#).

4. Approval process

- 4.1 An offer to study a split-site research degree must not be made to any applicant without the approval process having first been completed.
- 4.2 The procedure for approval of a split-site research degree is set out in the [Education partnership Policy](#). Education partnership arrangements, including those for a split-site research degree, are normally approved for a maximum period of five years.
- 4.3 A split-site research degree will lead to a single University of Southampton award and is therefore judged to be lower risk than a Joint or Double PhD. As such, it is not necessary to convene a full collaboration approval panel to consider the proposal. Stages 1 and 2 of the Partnership Approval Process (as set out in Section 4 of the [Education partnership Policy](#)) must, however, be followed.

- 4.4 Following approval of the due diligence (Stage 2), the Education Partnerships Subcommittee will consider the split-site research degree proposal and the due diligence and, subject to no concerns having been raised, will make a recommendation to Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) on approval of the partner institution and the proposed collaboration.
- 4.5 Following approval of the partner and the proposed collaboration by ESEC, an MoA must be drafted and signed (see Section 5 below).

5. The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and the Individual Doctoral Agreement (IDA)

- 5.1 An MoA must be signed at institutional level by the President and Vice-Chancellor (or his nominee) and the authorised signatory at the partner institution. The University of Southampton's Legal Services Team is responsible for drafting the MoA and arranging for both parties to approve and sign the agreement.
- 5.2 In addition to the MoA, each research student shall enter into an IDA. The IDA will be signed by the student, agreed by the student's Main Supervisor from the University of Southampton and one supervisor from the partner institution and then approved by the relevant Faculty Director of the Graduate School at Southampton. No student will be enrolled onto a Southampton split-site research degree until the IDA is agreed and signed.

6. Residency requirements and periods of time to be spent at Southampton

- 6.1 Students enrolled on a split-site research degree must adhere to the residency requirements as specified below:

- To attend Southampton for at least twelve months across the full duration of their candidature (not necessarily over a continuous time period). Although this is a minimum requirement, Schools may consider it appropriate to make the time spent in Southampton longer. The residency requirement will include:
- A period of time at the start of the programme to engage with induction activities and to meet the supervisory team so that the initial objectives of the research project can be discussed.
- Attendance at any mandatory, recommended or optional research or generic skills training where these are not available online.

6.2 The exact timings for the periods of residency to be spent at Southampton must be agreed at the outset and stated in the student's IDA.

6.3 Students on a split-site research degree will attend all periods of residency by their own arrangement and at their own expense. Residency visits are not funded by the tuition fees for the programme, and the School must communicate this clearly in its correspondence to the student.

6.4 When setting residency requirements, Schools should consider the position regarding visas for international students, the terms of which may vary according to the country concerned. Schools must therefore obtain detailed guidance from the [Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service](#) when developing a split-site research degree programme.

7. Recruitment, selection and admission

7.1 The recruitment and selection of applicants to a split-site research degree must be made in accordance with the requirements set out in the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#).

- 7.2 All recruitment, selection and admission information and the arrangements for induction, must be made available to applicants, students and to all members of the supervisory team at Southampton and the partner institution.

8. Enrolment

- 8.1 Research students are required to enrol each year in accordance with the University of Southampton's Enrolment Policy.
- 8.2 Students may also need to temporarily register with the partner institution whilst studying away from Southampton should this be a requirement of that institution.

9. Tuition fees

- 9.1 The following model of tuition fees typically applies to a split-site research degree:
- For the time spent at Southampton: The annual full-time tuition fee for international postgraduate research students will apply. The fee will be charged pro-rata in any one year.
 - For the time spent at the partner institution: The annual tuition fee to be paid to the University of Southampton will be agreed by both partners.
- 9.2 A fee may also be payable to the partner institution for the provision of supervisory support and the use of facilities during the period of time spent studying away from Southampton. This fee will be negotiated by the School operating the split-site research degree with the partner institution.

10. Research training and transferable skills training

- 10.1 In accordance with the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#) (*Research Training and Transferable Skills Training: Academic Needs Analysis*), students' personal and professional developmental needs, including transferable skills (e.g. English language support) should be assessed within three months of entry to their degree programme.
- 10.2 Arrangements for the timing and location of training provision should be agreed at the outset of the student's programme and stated in the IDA. Once the student's training needs have been identified, the School should clearly set out this information in writing to the student and, if required, the timing of any assessment.

11. Supervision

- 11.1 The responsibilities of the supervisory team are set out in the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). Supervision arrangements must be clearly specified in the IDA.
- 11.2 The student's supervisory team should be based at Southampton, with an additional named contact(s) at the partner institution identified. Composition of the supervisory team should comply with established criteria as set out in the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). Consideration must be given to the level of input to be provided by the partner institution and this must be clearly defined at the outset and specified in the IDA.
- 11.3 As specified in the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#), the University expects that supervisory meetings should take place at least once a month for full-time students (with timings adjusted accordingly for part-time students) and more frequently at the start of candidature. During periods of residency, supervisory meetings should take place face-to-face and by electronic

means (e.g. videoconference) when the student is at the partner institution.

- 11.4 The timing of, and arrangements for, supervisory visits to support the student at the partner institution when they are away from Southampton must be agreed at the start of the student's programme. It is expected that the partner institution will provide any additional sources of support to the student when needed.

12. Progression monitoring and review

- 12.1 The supervisory team is responsible for ensuring that student's progress is monitored throughout candidature in accordance with the expectations of the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). Arrangements for monitoring the progress of split-site research degree student outside of the first, second and third progression review must be discussed and agreed with the partner institution and the student at the outset and documented in the IDA.
- 12.2 The supervisory team and the student should establish a mutually agreed series of meetings to discuss the progress of the research project and to resolve any problems that have arisen. Supervisory meetings must be fully documented and should involve appropriate communication between members of the supervisory team, the partner institution, and the student to ensure that all parties are able to identify any issues and for any actions to be taken. Regular supervisory meetings will also contribute to the record of the student's progress, whether face-to-face or by electronic means (e.g. videoconference). The use of PGR Manager is mandatory and is an important mechanism for recording supervisory meetings and informal progression discussions, as well as regarding formal progression reviews. Effective supervision, and good organisation and planning on the part of both the student and members of the supervisory team, are fundamental to the success of a split-site research degree.

13. The Examination

13.1 Arrangements for the examination are set out in the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision \(Examination\)](#). If it is intended that the *viva voce* will take place in Southampton, discussions with the student regarding the date of the *viva voce* should take place well in advance to enable travel and residency arrangements to be made. Videoconference (or other suitable technologically-based communication) arrangements can be made for the conduct of the *viva voce*, provided all parties agree to these arrangements and all necessary safeguards are in place to facilitate the smooth running of the examination.

14. Award

14.1 On successful completion, the student will be awarded by the University of Southampton and will be invited to attend a graduation ceremony at the University of Southampton.

15. Student Complaints and Academic Appeals

15.1 In accordance with normal practice, research students and supervisors should be made aware of the procedures and processes for addressing student complaints and academic appeals. The University of Southampton's procedures should also be invoked if a student [complaint](#) or an [academic appeal](#) is made in connection with the student's period of study at the partner institution.

16. Renewal of a Split-Site Research Degree

- 16.1 Education partnership arrangements are reviewed every five years in order to enable the University of Southampton to satisfy itself that arrangements for the partnership, as set out in the MoA, continue to be met. The procedure for the review and renewal of a split-site research degree is set out in the [Education partnership Policy](#).
- 16.2 A split-site research degree leads to a University of Southampton award and is therefore judged to be a lower risk education partnership model. As such, it is not necessary to convene a full collaboration approval panel (stage 3 of the full partnership approval and renewal process). Stages 1, and 2 of the process (as set out in Section 4 of the [Education Partnership Policy](#)) must, however, be followed.
- 16.3 Following approval of the due diligence (Stage 2), the Education Partnerships Subcommittee will consider the renewal proposal and the due diligence and, subject to no concerns having been raised, will make a recommendation to ESEC on re-approval of the partner institution and split-site research degree collaboration.
- 16.4 Following re-approval of the partner and the renewal of the split-site research degree by ESEC, the MoA must be renewed. Where the MoA is in place for a period longer than five years, a review is still required to take place every five years.

Document Information	
Author	QSAT
Owner (committee)	AQSS
Approved Date	July 2014, August 2016 [Chair's Action], March 2023 [Chair's Action]

Last Revision	September 2024 Terminology updated to match revised Education Partnerships Policy
Type of Document	Procedures