Guidance And Procedures For The Preparation, Submission And Consideration Of Form R1

Application To Register For A Research Degree

Approved by the Board of Studies for Research Degrees

If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on line please notify research-admin@bolton.ac.uk so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

Preface

i. This guidance applies to all candidates seeking to register for one of the research degrees of MPhil, PhD via MPhil, or PhD direct (including the PhD by Published Work and PhD by Practice) and for the research stage of a Professional Doctorate award.

ii. The *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* (Section 3) require research proposals that were submitted with the original application to be formally approved by the Board of Studies for Research Degrees during the initial phase of study. The R1 form allows the suitability of the supervisory arrangements, the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposal, the available facilities and the programme of related studies. It also permits feedback to be received from an academic staff member to help guide further work.

iii. This guidance is intended to help candidates and supervisors to understand the process of completing and submitting an R1 form to register for a masters or doctoral-level research degree and to explain the procedures for the consideration of applications. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the more specific requirements noted on Form R1 (use Form R1 (PW) to apply to register for a PhD by Published Work, Form R1 (Prac) to apply to register for a PhD by Practice, and Form R1 (PD) for Professional Doctorate candidates)[1]. The most recent version of the relevant Form R1 must be used, accessed from the RDD web pages.

iv. When completing Form R1, candidates and supervisors should also have to hand the most recent version of the *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations*. These should be accessed from the relevant RDD web pages. Specific references in all Forms R1 are to the *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations*. The whole of the research proposal is to be contained within Form R1, although any supplementary information may be appended.

v. Before completing their R1, candidates should attend the Postgraduate Research Candidate Skills Development Programme session on 'Preparing Your R1' and/or access the associated on-line materials. They should also secure, via their Director of Studies or peers, one or two anonymised examples of successful postgraduate research proposals within their general subject area. (The equivalent of this session may be delivered within the taught content of professional doctorates.)

vi. Form R1 must be accompanied by an EFIT[2] certificate (from the online ethical clearance tool) to demonstrate that any ethical issues raised by the research have been or are being addressed according to the University's Research Ethics Review and Approval Procedures. (For the degree of PhD by Published Work or Practice by Route A – Retrospective, Form RE1 is not required because the relevant Form R1 (PW) or Form R1 (Prac) includes an alternative declaration).

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[1] Throughout this document the descriptor 'Form R1' or 'Forms R1' is used to encompass all versions of the Form, i.e. Form R1, Form R1 (PW), Form R1 (Prac), Form R1 (PD).
[2] EFIT is the Ethics Form Identification Tool which is an online system for securing ethical clearance for a research project.

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[3] Depending upon the prevailing organisational structure of the University, the local organisational unit might be a Faculty, Institute, School, Centre, Subject Department, Group, Field, Area or Division, or any other organisational unit which is constitutionally empowered to undertake the relevant activities.

Completing Form R1

1.1 General points

i. Every section of Form R1 must be completed whilst conforming to (and supplying as requested) the word counts specified for particular sections. The form <u>MUST</u> be word-processed to a high standard using Arial 11 font size as a minimum.

ii. Candidates and supervisors should note that a form which is filled in incorrectly will be returned for the corrections to be made before it is submitted for approval. It is important to be aware of the proper requirements for completing the form so that a decision on the application can be made as quickly as possible and successful applications can be registered.

1.2 Preamble

i. Note from the *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* (Sections 1.3-1.4) the definition of what constitutes an MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate. Indicate clearly on Form R1 whether the application is for Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy via Master of Philosophy, or Doctor of Philosophy (see Regulation 2.3), Professional Doctorate (see section 4 of Annex 6) and whether by full-time or part-time study (see Regulation 2.4).

ii. Insert the date the candidate initially enrolled in the University as a postgraduate candidate by research. Note that the starting date for registration purposes can be up to 4 months earlier than the date when the application is submitted (in the case of full-time candidates and part-time candidates of the PhD by Published Work or Practice) and 6 months earlier (in the case of all other part-time candidates), since the researcher is invariably already enrolled as a postgraduate candidate by research while the application is being prepared. Great importance is attached to the submission of applications within 4 or 6 months of initial enrolment and, if the start-date is to be back-dated more than 4 or 6 months, a separate covering letter will be needed explaining why (see *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulation* 4.5).

1.3 Section 1: The Candidate

Name/Present post and place of work/Funding sources/Qualifications[4]

Ensure all subsections here are fully completed. Poor quality and quantity of information will only result in delays in considering the application.

Training and Experience

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[4] See the *Research Degree Regulations, Sections* 2.1-2.2

An application is strengthened if it can refer to relevant material such as work experience, publications, or the title of an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation or project. The title of the candidate's master's thesis <u>must</u> be given if the application is for PhD direct (see Regulation 2.3). If there is nothing to add here insert "N/A".

Research Degree and Completion Period

i.   Full-time research requires at least 35 hours per week. Anything less is part-time, which requires at least 12 hours per week.

ii.   The *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* detail the periods of study for each route in Section 4 and this should be consulted before completing this part of Form R1.

1.4   Section 2:   Programme of Research

Title

Give the title of the proposed investigation or the proposed title of the thesis which clearly and succinctly indicates the topic of the research. This will form the *approved* title for the research once the Board of Studies for Research Degrees has approved the R1 and it will be recorded in the candidate information system. Any change to the title subsequently <u>must</u> be made using the form R9. (Candidates to register for PhD by Published Work or PhD by Practice are then required to list any work already published or completed and work whose publication is planned which is to be submitted for the award. Forms R1 (PW) and R1 (Prac) contain further guidance to be followed when providing this information).

Aim(s) and objectives of the investigation/Overall aim(s) of the research

i.   State the overall aim(s) of the research clearly and precisely. The intended outcome(s) of the research should be reflected in the aim(s) and the latter will guide the programme of research. The aim(s) should be sufficiently specific that achievement is discernible, but sufficiently general to provide a valuable overall summary of the intended outcome(s) of the research. Where applicable, the aim(s) should be numbered so as to be easily distinguishable in later sections and during consideration of the application.

ii.   Objectives are more detailed than aims and imply more specific, measurable and time-targeted goals. They deconstruct the aim(s) into a number of more concrete goals reflecting tasks which need to be completed in a particular way and by a particular time in order that the aim(s) can be achieved. Objectives usually form the basis of a timeline (for example a Gantt chart) used to set out the timing of and relationships between the objectives of the research (see later in this document).

Proposed plan of work/Development of the research – including its relationship to previous work – up to 1500 words

i. Read Sections 1.3-1.4, 3, and Annex 2 of the *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* and carefully follow the detailed guidance contained on the relevant Form R1. This is the core of the application, and often poses the greatest difficulty. One problem is that it may in some relevant cases be difficult to describe what is to be done beforehand, since the later stages of the research can often be determined by early stages. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the candidate to describe what it is planned to do or what has already been achieved in sufficient detail for a reader to decide whether the proposal is feasible and appropriate for the award to which it will lead. This section must:

    a. demonstrate that the candidate is familiar with the existing literature on the chosen topic and that it is from this literature that the chosen research problem has emerged;

    b. describe the research which it is intended to undertake or give an account of the development of the research and its intended outcomes;

    c. justify the MPhil or PhD level of the research (see Regulations 1.3-1.4).

    In the case of an application for PhD via MPhil it should also:

    d. indicate where the MPhil component ends and the PhD component begins;
    e. explain how the PhD component is a "significant original contribution to knowledge".

ii. In order to demonstrate the candidate's familiarity with the topic which it is proposed to investigate, this section requires a <u>brief</u> critical evaluation of the relevant literature (see the relevant R1 Form for further guidance). This is <u>not by any means </u>intended to form the first chapter of the thesis, but it should indicate that the candidate is aware of relevant historical and contemporary work in the area of the topic. A description of how research in the area of the topic has developed and its current position are required. All sources should be cited using a recognised academic style, with full bibliographical details provided in the References.

ii. This section also contains the description of what the researcher is intending to do or has already achieved, depending on the chosen route (see the relevant Form R1 for further guidance). It will address such issues as: how does the work relate to previous work, what theoretical developments are claimed, what research methods and research methodologies employed, what data obtained, what thesis or argument proposed and/or tested. This section is the key element of the application and it is important that it is rational, clearly presented and sets the proposed research in its appropriate

theoretical and methodological context.

iii.   Many standard proposals involve some form of data collection and analysis. It is essential that the candidate indicates what form the data will take and how it will be analysed. Statements such as "A questionnaire will be distributed and the responses analysed using the computer" are not adequate, and raise the suspicion that the candidate has not foreseen what the data will be like or precisely how it will be analysed. The candidate must be able to demonstrate a reasonable understanding of these matters in the application itself. Remember that the definitions of MPhil and PhD specify require holders of these degrees to possess an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field.

iv.   It is important in the explanation of the research to define and justify the research methodology used and to explain why this particular methodology is chosen in preference to other methodologies. This is particularly important in those submissions which seek to argue that part of the originality of the research is contained within the application of a specific methodology to an existing problem. Remember that members of the Board of Studies for Research Degrees represent a variety of disciplines. They will not necessarily be familiar with the specific methodology chosen but they will expect to be able to understand from the proposal document, how the candidate has chosen their particular methodological approach in preference to others and how it will help to define the research problem.

v.   It is often useful to incorporate in this section a list of the stages through which the research is expected to pass from the date of enrolment as a postgraduate candidate by research and the approximate planned duration of each stage (in weeks or months). A diagrammatic representation should be used for this timeline.

vi.   In writing this section, keep the stated aim(s) in mind. It is helpful if the description or objectives of the research state explicitly how they relate to the aim(s) (for example, "This will fulfil aim 3"). It is also important to keep to the word limits specified in the relevant Form R1 and to include the word count. An application in which the limits are exceeded is likely to be returned with a request that it should be edited.

*For **Doctorates:** State clearly and succinctly the original contribution to knowledge to be made by this research*

i.   In the case of PhD applications it is important to stress the 'original contribution to knowledge' which the work will make. The 'originality' of a research topic may take various forms, for example:

        a.   the application of a theory or model in a new context;
        b.   the identification of new subject matter or new interpretations of existing subject matter;

c.   the development of new theory or significant refinement to existing theory;

d.   the development of new methodological approaches or the application of existing approaches in novel ways;

e.   empirical investigations leading to the discovery of new insights within a defined field.

What is important is that the proposal makes clear and justifies the precise nature of the originality of the intended research. Paragraph 1.4 of the Regulations should be consulted.

Resources

This should declare how the candidate will have access to necessary 'hardware, software, methods and tools', including library, laboratory and computing facilities, and where these are located. If there is a collaborating establishment, any facilities of theirs which will be used should be stated here.

Collaborating Establishment

i.   Read *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulation* 1.5 and note the importance placed upon the existence of a collaborating establishment for certain types of research. A collaborating establishment is an entity which is actively involved in and/or providing support for the research by offering facilities such as laboratories, equipment, materials, or a substantial amount of expert advice on some aspect of the project.

ii.   The definition of collaboration includes instances where at least one of the candidate's proposed supervisors or advisors is employed by the external entity and where they will be supervising or advising with the knowledge and support of their employer[5]. It encompasses collaborative funding schemes such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships but excludes candidates admitted under pre-existing written agreements between the University and another entity governing their joint management of research degree programmes.

iii.   If there is a collaborating establishment, fill this section in. If there is no collaborating establishment, insert "N/A". If there is a collaborating establishment, a letter (or equivalent evidence) from them to indicate their awareness of and support for the research must be appended to Form R1. (This requirement does not however apply where collaboration is an integral part of the project and funding, e.g. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships).

1.5   Section 3:   Related Studies

i.   The *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* (Section 3.1(ii) and

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[5] If supervision or advice is being provided in an independent capacity, then a written agreement must be drawn up governing the supervisor's or advisor's duties, time commitment and any remuneration, to be signed by the Head of the relevant local organisational unit and the supervisor/advisor.

Annex 2) emphasise the requirement that all candidates must follow a programme of related studies and acquire competence in relevant research methods. In addition, holders of a PhD from a UK University are expected to have developed a wide range of employment-related skills and attributes, beyond those associated solely with conducting research. In some cases, there may be a requirement to undertake a designated period of work placement/practicum during the studies and this must be made clear in this section of the form so that it forms part of the approval from the Board of Studies for Research Degrees. The completion of this work placement/practicum will then be entered on the final transcript.

ii. At the time of the oral examination, candidates will be required to certify that these studies have been completed. In addition to candidates' required engagement with the University's Postgraduate Research Candidate Skills Development Programme, this section should include any actual or planned attendance at, for example, courses in research methods and advanced subject units from relevant courses in the University and elsewhere, attendance at specified internal and external research events and the like.

1.6 Section 5: Statement by the Candidate

Note: the candidate <u>must</u> complete ethical clearance via the EFIT online system and attach the certificate to the R1 form.

The candidate <u>must</u> sign and date the form.

1.7 Section 6: Supervision

(This section should be completed by the Director of Studies after consultation with the Head of the local organisational unit, the Research Coordinator and the candidate)

i. The University considers the expertise of the supervising team to be a very important aspect of an application. Supervisors need to be familiar with the research topic, and at least one of them must have had experience of 'successful' supervision. The *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations* (Section 5.1) require that <u>a supervision team shall normally have had a combined experience of supervising not fewer than two candidates to successful completion</u>. In the case of an application to register for PhD, at least one of the supervisors must have successfully supervised to PhD level.

ii. Read *Postgraduate Research Degree Regulation* Section 5 in full. It is usual for the Director of Studies to be a full-time University staff member, since the Director of Studies is expected to supervise the candidate regularly to monitor progress and provide guidance. If the Director is not on the University's staff, a reason must be given in a covering letter and this should also explain what arrangements have been made for the Director to meet the candidate regularly and frequently. Ensure that the name, qualifications, position and place of work of the Director and Second Supervisor(s) are given, <u>and</u> that

the figures showing the numbers of current and previously-supervised successful research degree candidates are inserted.

iii. The CV's of the Director and Second Supervisor(s) need to be provided as appendices unless the individuals concerned have previously been approved as supervisors by the Board of Studies for Research Degrees. The CV should describe the person's research interests, existing and previous research degree supervising and examining experience, and publications. If necessary, the list of publications can be abbreviated.

iv. Please note that an advisor is a person who will advise on particular, specific aspects of the research but is not responsible for the research's overall progress (as a supervisor is). For example, applications may need an advisor for statistical aspects of the research. If an advisor is appointed, a brief indication of the area of advice should be given.

1.8 Section 7: Recommendation by the Supervisors

Each supervisor **must** sign, or alternative documentary evidence must be provided that they recommend registration on the basis of the R1 presented.

1.9 Section 8: Confirmation of support at local level

The candidate's School-based Research Coordinator should sign and date the form.

2. Sending Form R1 To The University's Research Degrees Administrator[6]

i. Number any appendices.

ii. Append to the Form, if required:

   a. A covering letter explaining why more than 4 months backdating (for full-time candidates and part-time candidates of the PhD by Published Work or Practice), or 6 months backdating (for all other part-time candidates) is being requested (see 'Preamble' above).

   b. A covering letter from any collaborating establishment (see 'Collaborating Establishment' in 1.4 above).

   c. The CV's of the supervisors (see 1.7 above).

   d. A letter explaining why the Director of Studies is not a member of University staff and how supervision will function (see 1.7 above).

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[6] For Professional Doctorate Candidates, the R1 is considered by the assessment board constituted for the purpose in the relevant academic department and the R1 received by the Board of Studies for Research Degrees (for approval where supervisors have not supervised doctorates previously).

The candidate's School-based Research Coordinator should now pass the application to the University's Research & Doctoral Division (via research-assessment@bolton.ac.uk**) so that the student information system can be updated and arrangements made for feedback.**

3.   Feedback From An Academic Staff Reviewer

3.1   The Research Degrees Administrator (or their nominee) will arrange for the complete R1 form to be sent to an academic staff member (the 'Reviewer') who is qualified and experienced as a doctoral supervisor. The Reviewer will be selected in such a way that they are independent of the candidate and the supervisory team. The request will be for the return of the R1 with the feedback completed within 7 days.

3.2   The Reviewer will read the R1 with a view to giving constructive feedback to the candidate and their supervisors, in line with the criteria in the feedback section of the R1;

        a. whether technical proficiency in English language in the written submission including style, clarity, spelling, grammar and punctuation is demonstrated
        b. the accuracy of the title
        c. the clarity of the aim(s) and their relationship with the previous and proposed work;
        d. whether the literature review indicates familiarity with current literature;   whether the research methods and proposed work are appropriate and clearly described;
        e. whether the plan of work is clear and reflects the aim(s);
        f. whether the research is practically feasible in the time;
        g. in the case of a PhD proposal, whether there is a clear indication of the   anticipated original contribution to knowledge to be made by the research;
        h. the expertise and experience of supervisors.

3.3   The Reviewer will then sign and date the R1 and return the form to RDD so that a copy can be placed in the student file and update the student records system accordingly.

3.4   The Research Degrees Administrator (or nominee) will ensure that the candidate and their supervisors receive the feedback on the R1 via email.

3.5   The DoS convenes a meeting of the Academic Reviewer and Applicant to discuss the feedback form.

Note: if the Academic Reviewer considers that the Applicant has not had a realistic engagement with the R1 then they can require a revised submission. The Applicant must send this to the DoS and Academic Reviewer within 14 days. In this case the DoS sends the

revised version to Research-Assessment@Bolton.ac.uk and SITS will be updated if the project title has changed. In this case stages 3.2 to 3.4 should be followed prior to review meeting described in 3.5.

4. Consideration By The Board Of Studies For Research Degrees

4.1   The Secretary to BoSRD will ensure that the R1 is placed on the next agenda of the Board to be <u>received</u> for information **unless** any member of the supervisory team is new to doctoral supervision, in which case the R1 will become a substantive item for <u>approval</u>. If the latter case applies then following the Board meeting the Secretary will communicate the outcome to the interested parties. If new supervisors are required then only this section of the R1 needs to be amended for approval by the Board.

R1 Process Flowchart

Applicant:
- downloads relevant R1 form from: https://www.bolton.ac.uk/join-us/research-programmes/research-policies-and-documents/research-documents/ and completes the relevant sections.
- Applicant completes ethical clearance process using the EFIT online tool and obtains a certificate.

For PhD/MPhil

For Professional Doctorates

Applicant emails the completed R1 form and EFIT certificate to the Director of Studies (DoS)

Applicant completes an R1 and EFIT clearance as part of the relevant taught module and validated prof doc requirements.
Following the relevant Assessment Board for the taught modules the Programme leader passes the R1 on.

DoS completes the form with DoS and second supervisor details.

Send the R1 (with EFIT certificate) to the local **Research Coordinator** for School support and approval for the project.
Note: if the Research Coordinator identifies issues at this stage then they liaise with the appropriate colleague to ensure the R1 can be approved.

Research Coordinator emails the R1 to the **Research Degrees Administrator (Secretary to BoSRD)** via Research-Assessment@Bolton.ac.uk. Indicating if supervisors are new (i.e haven't supervised at UoB previously) and attach supervisor CVs.

Research Degrees Administrator:
- Document checked for completeness
- R1 logged in SITS (supervisors & research title) and student file. **NB:** this is the R1 submission date.
- EFIT certificate placed in student file.
- R1 form: sent to an **Academic** Reviewer (refer to para. 3.1 of the Guidance Note): feedback requested in 7 days.

Academic reviewer: reviews the R1 and completes the formative feedback report. Completed R1 with feedback emailed to Research-Assessment@Bolton.ac.uk

Research Degrees Administrator:
- Replaces R1 on file with the version containing the formative feedback
- Completed R1 with feedback (no EFIT certificate) emailed to **applicant** and **DoS**.
- Added to BoSRD agenda for information or **substantive** item where new supervisors are proposed

DoS: convenes a meeting of the Academic Reviewer and Applicant to discuss the feedback form.
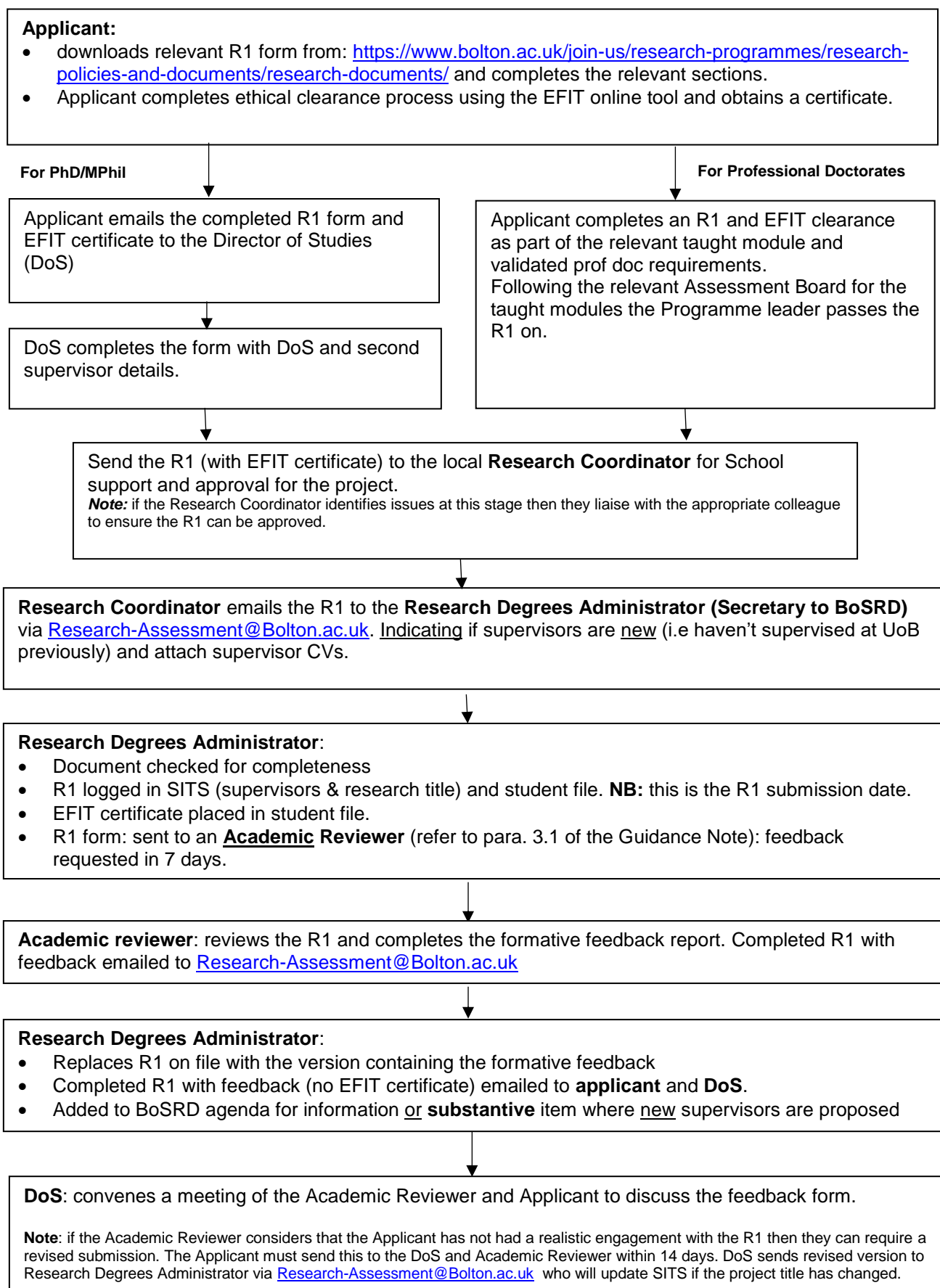
Note: if the Academic Reviewer considers that the Applicant has not had a realistic engagement with the R1 then they can require a revised submission. The Applicant must send this to the DoS and Academic Reviewer within 14 days. DoS sends revised version to Research Degrees Administrator via Research-Assessment@Bolton.ac.uk who will update SITS if the project title has changed.

Guidance And Procedures For The Preparation, Submission And Consideration of Form R1	
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