

# GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH RDC-A

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# GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH

## A1 FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 All awards

The University shall award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master in Professional Studies (M.Prof) and Doctor in Professional Studies (D.Prof) to registered candidates who have successfully completed approved programmes of supervised research. Awards may be made for research conducted entirely or primarily at the University; for research conducted entirely or primarily at a distance from the University, via distance learning; or for research conducted primarily using the facilities of another organisation of institution as a “split-site arrangement” (see Section 1.4).

### 1.2 Masters' Level

- i) The degree of **MPhil** or **M.Prof** shall be awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic, has demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, and has presented and defended a thesis in oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners. In the case of the **M.Prof**, the work will be based upon, for example, a portfolio of reports and briefings, and/or investigative or creative work in the candidate's area of professional practice, which will form part of the material to be examined. The format of the thesis may differ according to the requirements of the area of professional practice in question.
  
- iii) The degree of **MPhil by Completed Work** shall be awarded to a candidate who is a staff member of Teesside University at the time of a *prima facie* case being made for application, whose previously completed submitted work has demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the overall theme, to the satisfaction of the examiners, and an assessment of its context in relation to the developing state of the art in the subject concerned.

The candidate must present and defend the thesis in oral examination to the satisfaction of examiners, the conduct of which will be in accordance with the regulations for the award of MPhil.

### 1.3 Doctorate Level

- i) The degree of **PhD** shall be awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge, has demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, and has presented and defended a thesis in oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- ii) The degree of **D.Prof** shall be awarded to a candidate who has successfully completed an approved programme of research which will be based upon, for example, a portfolio of reports and briefings, and/or investigative and creative work, which will form part of the material to be examined, culminating in the submission of an individual thesis, and if appropriate, other media formats, and defending the submission in oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners. The outcome of the programme must represent an independent and original contribution to knowledge in the area of professional practice in question and must be of an equivalent standard to that required of a candidate for the award of PhD. The work must be communicable, and the method open to rigorous critique. The format of the thesis and submission may differ according to the requirements of the area of professional practice in question.
- iii) The degree of **PhD by Completed Work** shall be awarded to a candidate who is a staff member of Teesside University at the time of a prima facie case being made for application, whose submitted work has demonstrated an independent and original contribution to knowledge, to the satisfaction of the examiners and an understanding of the research methodology employed in its creation, and assessment of its context in relation to the developing state of the art in the subject concerned.

The candidate must present and defend the thesis in oral examination to the satisfaction of examiners, the conduct of which will be in accordance with the regulations for the award of PhD.

#### 1.4 Collaborative and split-site programmes of research

The University shall encourage co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards. Such co-operation shall be intended:

- (i) to encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
- (ii) to extend the candidate's own experience and expertise and perspectives of the work;
- (iii) to provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
- (iv) to be mutually beneficial;
- (v) where appropriate, to enable the candidate to become a member of a research community.

A programme of research may be supported primarily by an external organisation but conducted wholly within the University's facilities; or a programme of research may be supported jointly by an external organisation and the University but conducted primarily in the external organisation's facilities. Where the University bears the primary responsibility for providing academic support and facilities with the support of the external organisation, this shall be called a *standard collaborative arrangement*. Where the external organisation bears the primary responsibility for providing professional support and facilities, or where the programme of research takes place primarily using the external organisation's facilities, this shall be called a *split-site arrangement*.

For the purposes of the research degree regulations, one or more bodies external to the University, with whom standard collaborative or split-site arrangements are formed, shall be referred to as "Collaborating Establishments". Both standard collaborative arrangements and split-site arrangements shall be formalised between the University and any Collaborating Establishment.

In all such cases, formal documents from the Collaborating Establishment(s) setting-out the proposed arrangements should be submitted with the candidate's application, except where collaboration is an integral part of the funding of the project (as, for instance, with Research Council CASE awards).

The name(s) of the Collaborating Establishment(s) shall appear on the candidate's thesis and degree certificate.

1.5 For both standard collaborative and split-site arrangements, where relevant, the following must be formally confirmed and approved at the point of Registration:

- a) responsibilities, resources and/or facilities provided by both the University and the Collaborating Establishment, clearly defined and mutually agreed;
- b) resources and/or facilities provided by the Collaborating Establishment, that are required for the programme of research, will be available for the duration of the programme of research; or, if not so available, then a pre-determined point up to which such resources and facilities will be available shall be identified and mutually agreed and alternative arrangements negotiated;
- c) supervisory responsibilities that are fulfilled by the Collaborating Establishment will normally conform with the University's Regulations and Code of Practice; this includes requirements for supervisors to be appropriately qualified to supervise and/or to undertake any developmental and/or support activity deemed appropriate by the University for the purposes of supervising research degree candidates;
- d) if the Collaborating Establishment is also the candidate's employer, written confirmation from an authorised signatory of the Collaborating Establishment that the programme of research is supported; if the programme of research is based on the candidate's professional practice and the programme of research is to take place primarily at the candidate's place of employment, written confirmation from an authorised signatory of the Collaborating Establishment that the candidate has permission to undertake the programme proposed is required.

#### 1.6 Aegrotat Awards

The following Aegrotat awards may be conferred:

Aegrotat MPhil  
Aegrotat M.Prof  
Aegrotat PhD  
Aegrotat D.Prof

## **A2 Postgraduate Descriptors for “M” and “D” level work**

In framing their programmes of work, candidates and their supervisory teams will give consideration to the following “M” and “D” level descriptors of the outcomes of study as developed from the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2008.<sup>1</sup>

### **A2.1 Masters Level**

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a) a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
- b) a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- c) originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- d) conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - i) to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
  - ii) to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate;
  - iii) to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- e) deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- f) demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- g) continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf>

And holders will have:

- h) the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - i) the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
  - ii) decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations;
  - iii) the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

## **A2.2 Doctorate Level**

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a) the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- b) a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- c) the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- d) a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- e) make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- f) continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches;

And will have:

- g) the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

## **A3 Registration<sup>2</sup>**

- 3.1 Registration takes place concurrently with first enrolment.
- 3.2 Registration is the approval of the Postgraduate Research Assessment Board, acting on behalf of the University, in relation to the following:
- (i) the suitability of the candidate to undertake research;  
and
  - (ii) the programme of research;  
and
  - (iii) the supervision arrangements and research facilities.
- Since this approval requires appropriate academic judgement to be brought to bear on the viability of each research proposal, The Board shall be composed of persons who are, or have recently been, engaged in research and who have appropriate experience of successful supervision of research degrees or relevant professional experience pertinent to the candidate's programme of research.
- 3.3 The Board may, as appropriate, delegate responsibility for determining the requirements of Registration, to appropriately qualified staff in Academic Schools. First consideration of applications is undertaken by a review panel convened as a sub-group of, and reporting to, the Postgraduate Research Assessment Board, with the authority to approve all aspects of research degree Registration. No candidate may be Registered without being approved by a formally recognised signatory from The Board, normally the Chair or Secretary to The Board.
- 3.4 Candidates must have at least two approved supervisors, including a Director of Studies with responsibility for regular and frequent supervision. Candidates for research degrees by Completed Work only require one advisor during their Registration.

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<sup>2</sup> For students with first entry between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2012, Regulations dated Academic Year 2011-12 apply; for first entry prior to 1 September 2007, Regulations Edition 13 September 2007 apply.



## **A4 Academic Progress Review<sup>3</sup>**

### **4.1 Annual Review**

All students on MPhil, MProf, PhD or DProf must undertake an Annual Review at the end of each of their Registration years to confirm whether they continue on the MPhil, PhD, MProf or DProf programme.

## **A5 Examination**

- 5.1 The examinations for all research degrees have two stages;
- (i) submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis;
  - (ii) defence of the thesis by oral examination (or an approved alternative).
- 5.2 It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the thesis is submitted before the expiry of the registration period, and to ensure that any conditions of eligibility required by The Board are met.
- 5.3 A candidate will be examined by at least two examiners, of whom at least one will be external to the institution and the candidate's collaborating establishment. In the case of the M.Prof and D.Prof, one of the examiners should have up-to-date professional expertise.
- 5.4 The Postgraduate Research Assessment Board will consider the reports and recommendations of the examiners before coming to a decision on the result of the examination.
- 5.5 The Postgraduate Research Assessment Board may, subject to its requirements, permit one re-examination of which there are five possible forms.
- 5.6 Where the recommendations of the examiners are not unanimous, the Postgraduate Research Assessment Board may:
- (i) accept a majority recommendation;

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<sup>3</sup> For students first registered between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2012, Progression Regulations dated Academic Year 2011-12 apply. For students first Registered between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2017, Progression Regulations dated Academic Year 2016-17 apply. For students first Registered between 1 September 2017 and 31 August 2018, Progression Regulations dated Academic Year 2017-18 apply.

or

- (ii) accept the recommendation of the External Examiner;

or

- (iii) require the appointment of an additional External Examiner.

**A6 Thesis**

The thesis shall be submitted in accordance with the formatting and submission Regulations specific to the level of award.

**A7 Awards of MPhil and PhD by Completed Work**

Awards by submission of completed work are governed by specific admission and programme criteria, as set out in Section RDC-D of the Regulations, but are examined under the General Examination Regulations, as set out in Section RDC-E of the Regulations.

**A8 Review of an Assessment or Examination Decision**

A candidate may, in certain circumstances, request a review of an assessment or examination decision. Such a review may only be requested in relation to a decision of The Board after consideration of the recommendation of assessors and/or examiners and in accordance with the University's Academic Appeal Regulations.

**A9 Research Ethics and Integrity**

**9.1 Ethical Clearance**

The University has a Research Ethics and Integrity Committee and each School has a Research Ethics Sub-Committee. The School Research Ethics Sub-Committees review ethical issues raised by individual projects. All candidates for a higher degree by research should be familiar with the University's *Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Research Ethics and Framework and Code of Practice to Ensure Research Integrity*.

For PhD, MPhil, DProf and MProf, Ethical Clearance must normally have been obtained by the time of Annual Review at the end of Year 1. Failure to obtain ethical Clearance will delay the approval of progression to Year 2. A copy of the appropriate Release or Approval form which, when signed off by the Chair of the relevant School Research Ethics Committee, constitutes Clearance, may be requested to confirm ethical Clearance prior to such approval. Ethical Clearance is not required for PhDCW or MPhilCW because the research work should already have been completed prior to registration for the degree. Work conducted at Teesside for the award consists purely of written work.

Any candidate submitting a thesis for examination who cannot provide evidence of Ethical Clearance if requested will not be permitted to submit and may be referred under the terms of the University's *Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degrees Programmes*.

## **9.2**      Ethical Clearance for Changes to Research Programmes

Where, during the course of the research, the nature of methods changes substantially from that in the original proposal, the candidate shall apply for a revised Ethical Clearance as appropriate.

## **9.3**      Research misconduct

Where evidence of research misconduct comes to light during research for and preparation of the thesis, or in examination, action should be taken in accordance with *Regulations Relating to Research Misconduct on Research Degree Programmes*.

## **9.4**      Data management; Intellectual Property Rights

Candidates for higher degrees by research should be familiar with, and adhere to, the University's guidance on data protection and data management; and with the "*Intellectual Property Policy (Students)*".