



CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

Version 11 November 2015

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Practice provides clarification and guidance about the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their supervisors. It takes cognisance of national¹ and European² guidelines for research which introduced a requirement for Codes of Practice to assure minimum standards of provision across the sector and set postgraduate research in the context of career development with increased emphasis on personal and professional employability skills, the so-called Robert's agenda³.

The Code supplements the Research Degrees Regulations with its associated procedures for each milestone of a typical programme of postgraduate research, namely:

- Admission;
- Enrolment;
- Registration;
- Transfer from MPhil to PhD;
- Submission of the thesis;
- Oral examination;
- Graduation.

Much of the Code applies to PhD by Published Work, for instance regarding student and supervisor responsibilities and the examination process. Similarly, the award of Professional Doctorates also has substantial overlaps with the PhD in the conduct of research projects and their assessment. The Code complements existing regulations and handbooks for these awards.

In writing the Code, it is acknowledged that it seeks to address widely diverse needs and priorities across the postgraduate researcher population comprising: full-time and part-time students; recent graduates and experienced professionals; students based on campus, in the workplace, or abroad; students from home and overseas; those seeking intellectual challenge and the many seeking to exploit specific career and training opportunities. Therefore, the Code cannot be interpreted in a prescriptive manner. Rather, it offers a framework of good practice and a guide to the support that is available to promote and sustain a culture of quality in research and professionalism in the student-supervisor relationship.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11 – Research Degrees, January 2014.

² European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005/251/EC)

³ 'SET for success report' G. Roberts HEFCE, April 2002.

The Code is available electronically at website of the Graduate School at <https://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/62172.htm>

The website also contains related documents including:

- Research Degrees Regulations;
- Admissions and Enrolment procedures;
- Examination procedures;
- Code of practice for ethical approval.

There are also links to all of the forms and deadlines for the University Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the University Research Ethics Committee (REC), along with the committee's terms of reference and membership. Remember that the Regulations are mandatory so contain provisions that will be applied. The procedures are actually formal processes that also strictly apply.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Each research student has a supervisory team comprising two or three staff with experience of at least three previous successful completions between them. The timely progression and completion of the research are overseen not only by the supervisors but also by a Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC).

The FRDC offers the first level of peer review outside of the supervisory team, so supervisors and postgraduate researchers should find out who serves on the committee, when it meets and when its deadlines are. The FRDC also provides an opportunity for research student representation on a decision-making body, which is the most effective way to provide rapid feedback on research support in subject areas represented by the Faculty. Student representatives may consist of both full- and part-time students, as they reflect the typical constituency of the student body in the Faculty. Representation is limited to the part of FRDC meetings relating to policy and to the exclusion of discussions about the cases of individual student colleagues.

In particular, FRDCs provide useful feedback on the structure and content of the plan of work and other elements in the application for registration for a research degree programme. They have a key role in identifying suitable reviewers to approve the upgrading of registration from MPhil to PhD and in the appointment of examiners, as well as taking an overview of the student progression during the annual monitoring exercise.

Further important guidance to local procedures may be found in Faculty-based postgraduate research student handbooks, which cover specific procedures and conditions that apply within the Faculty, for instance presentation at School, Centre or Faculty Student Conferences, availability of subject-specific research methods training, codes of conduct in laboratories, etc.

The Faculty committees report to the University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which has ultimate responsibility for approval of the research degree programme at

each milestone and also sets policy for the management of all research degree programmes reporting, in turn, to Academic Board. The RDC is serviced by the Graduate School, who offer student support including Research Student Induction.

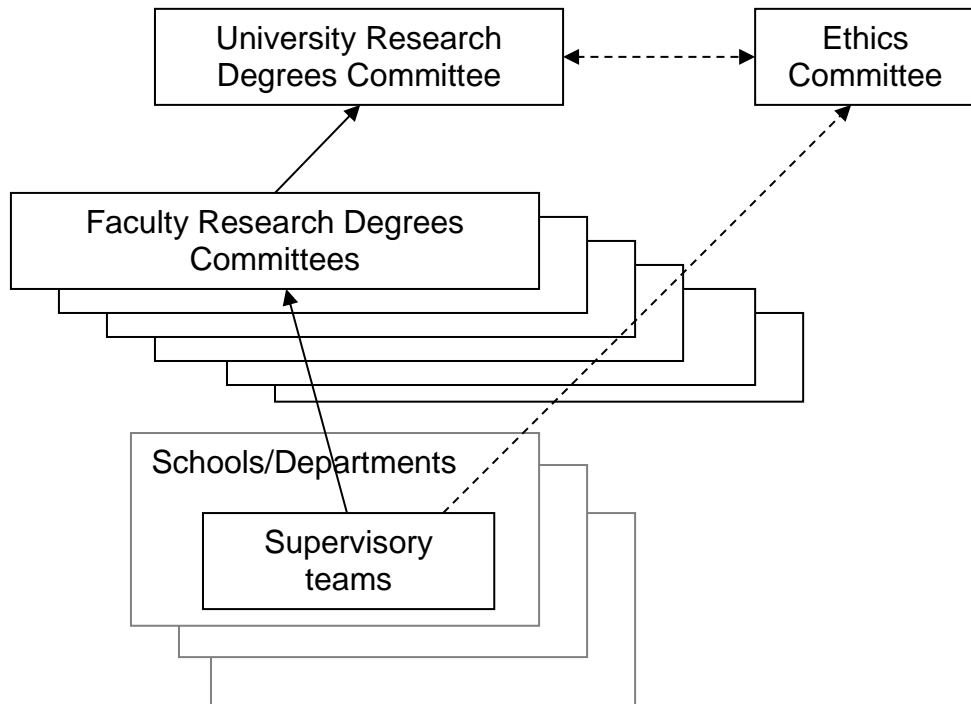


Fig 1. Schematic of the institutional arrangements for quality assurance of research

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Quality research often relies on a critical mass of co-ordinated effort. It is important to recognise that research infrastructure depends on formal assessments of quality applied to aggregate research groups, and feedback from researchers themselves also points to the value of networking within and outside of the institution.

Opportunities to meet fellow researchers extend beyond the local and institutional student inductions, and include research methods training sessions offered centrally and within Faculties. In addition, a number of Faculties host Research Student Conferences, often organised by students themselves, which run in parallel with year-long Research Seminar Programmes. In some cases, presentation at the Research Student Conference is part of the independent peer review at the transfer stage to PhD registration.

The research environment would not be complete without bringing supervisors up-to-date with current developments in the management of postgraduate research. This is done in Supervisor Workshops, held several times a year, with discussion of regulatory, supervisory and examination practices.

The remainder of the Code addresses issues connected with the milestones in research degree programmes.

APPLICATION

Applications for places to undertake a post-graduate research degree come to the Postgraduate Admissions tutor in the appropriate School/Faculty who will, on behalf of the School/Faculty, ensure that applicants are appropriately qualified to undertake the proposed research programme as defined in the current Research Degrees Regulations, that appropriate funding is available to support the proposed research programme including payment of tuition fees, and appropriate supervision can be given. Where these requirements are met the applicant will be invited for interview. Where it is not practical to invite a prospective student for a face to face interview, such as in the case of international students, preliminary contact and initial discussions with the applicant may take place by telephone or email. However, before any final offer is made a face to face interview must be conducted by video conferencing or other visual media to assist in future applicant verification. Guidance on appropriate methods for the conduct and recording of interviews is available from the International Admissions team.

SELECTION

Applicants who have satisfied the entry requirements above will be selected by a minimum of two members of the University staff each of whom are appropriately qualified and experienced and have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures.

Any research projects where the researcher is funded by the University and is expected to register for a post-graduate research qualification must be open to competition in compliance with the University's Equal Opportunities Policy. This applies whether funding comes from the Faculty or from sources external to the University.

Where the researcher is employed in a salaried position, recruitment will follow standard procedures for appointment according to the University's personnel department. The

researcher appointed should be given full information of salary details before taking up the post.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The suitability of international students for starting on a post-graduate research programme, as judged by academic qualifications, relevant experience and competence in the use of the English language (orally and in writing), must be established in advance. Acceptable English Language credentials for post-graduate programmes are a pass grade at GCSE/GCE Ordinary level or equivalent to an IELTS (International English Language Testing Service) score of 6.5. Please note that this is a minimum requirement and some Schools/Faculties may set higher requirements for English Language oral and written. Guidance on other acceptable equivalent English Language qualifications is available from the International Admissions team.

ADMISSION

Details of the admissions process, including the required content of the letter sent to the student, are listed in the University's Admissions Code of Practice accessible on the LJMU intranet site. This stipulates the content of admissions letters and additional action required on admission for specific groups of students, which are required to meet our legal obligations.

In particular, the letter of admission will confirm the degree for which the student will apply to register with RDC, the name of the initial academic supervisor, the topic of research, the expected start date, duration and mode of study, cost of tuition fees and any other conditions of acceptance - such as gaining degree or IELTS qualifications, or specific bench fees.

ENROLMENT AND PAYMENT OF FEES

Candidates for research degrees are required to enrol at the beginning of their research programme as students of the University and re-enrol on the anniversary of first enrolment thereafter. Payment of full-time or part-time fees is required from or on behalf of students, at least until the minimum period of registration has been completed, and thereafter according to whether students are continuing their research or are writing up the thesis. Students who are writing up a thesis are charged a "writing-up" fee for the year.

All research students enrolled at the University and funded by outside research grants and/or contracts may be eligible for support for their research activity through the University's Postgraduate Fee Waiver Scheme, which is subject to the continuation of the sponsorship. In the event of withdrawal of sponsorship, the University cannot guarantee to continue to support a student.

Students on University-funded projects may enroll for a research qualification provided that the duration of the research enables the award of a degree to be attained within the life of the project. Normally the funds will be made available for at least the minimum period of registration and would be renewed annually where appropriate, pending

evidence of satisfactory progress. Progress is formally monitored each year at both Faculty and University level.

Fees are required to be paid each year, in advance, except in the case of self-supporting students, who may be permitted to pay by instalments. During the period when students are writing-up their thesis and have paid only a 'writing-up' fee, they may continue to use the University's learning resource facilities. Students 'writing-up' may also have access to the University's computing facilities and to their supervisors for occasional consultations in order to review their progress on writing up and obtain feedback on drafts of the thesis. It is assumed they have no further use of laboratory facilities or data collection equipment or other materials. They shall not undertake any further data collection activities using the School's facilities, except in exceptional circumstances agreed by both Director of School or Head of Department and the Director of Studies.

Students whose fees are covered under the University's Postgraduate Fee Waiver Scheme must apply for a fee waiver prior to enrolment.

The University reserves the right to suspend or discontinue a student's period of supervised research, if it is established that: (i) a breach of the University's Code of Behaviour has occurred; (ii) research misconduct has occurred; or (iii) the research performance of the student is judged by the University Research Degrees Committee (informed by the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee) to be wholly unsatisfactory for continuation of study.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Full-time students are expected to be engaged on their research degree programme for a minimum of 35 hours per week over 45 weeks of the year. Full-time students are expected to agree any authorised absences from the University, for example field trips, attendance at conferences, holidays etc, in advance with their supervision team. Students must also inform their supervision team of any unforeseen absences, for example absence through illness, at the earliest opportunity.

Part-time students are expected to be engaged on their research degree programme for a minimum of 12 hours per week over 45 weeks of the year. The University recognises that many part-time students are also working full-time and will be subject to the requirements of their employer in terms of taking annual leave etc. However, it is expected that part-time students will agree any authorised absences relating to their research degree programme, e.g. field trips, in advance with their supervision team and will also advise their supervision team of any planned holidays and unforeseen absences as a matter of courtesy.

INDUCTION

Students are required to attend an induction session offered by their home School/department or Faculty on commencement of their period of research. The induction session will orientate students to the personnel, organisation and structure of their home School/department or Faculty; the processes involved in enrolling and registering for a research programme; the dates and deadlines relevant to their

programme of study; duties and responsibilities of students and supervisors; and any other matters related to their programme and period of research. The induction programme will be supported by a Postgraduate Student Handbook which will be updated annually.

In addition, students are also required to attend the University's Research Student Induction workshop which is offered by the Graduate School several times per year. This fleshes out the research degree regulations and procedures, the contents of this Code, provision for learning and information systems and the research training programme. It also explains the importance of ethical approval in the context of research involving human subjects.

REGISTRATION OF A PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH

Registration is a key milestone in the research programme. It refers to the approval by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and the University's Research Degrees Committee of the terms of the research degree programme. This requires a plan of work that is systematic, specific and time-staged, as well as confirmation of the composition of supervisory team and other resources for the project.

Registration of a research degree programme is expected to take place within 3 months of initial enrolment for full-time students and within 6 months for part-time students. The application is first made to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee on the appropriate form available from the Graduate School website. Note that this is different from the process of enrolment, which refers to procedural requirements to grant access to supervision and University facilities and takes place at the very start of the period of study and at yearly anniversaries of that date.

During the initial period of research leading up to registration, the student will normally be engaged in a literature review to identify the main research hypothesis/questions for the study and the key methodologies to underpin the research. The research topic should be developed in consultation between student and designated supervisors as soon as possible in the light of what is appropriate for the discipline concerned so that a formal application for registration can be made within the expected time limits. Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that any delay in this process is communicated to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

The following should be taken into account when determining the programme of work for individual candidates:

1. the appropriateness of the qualifications of the candidate for the proposed programme of work;
2. whether, on the information available, the proposed programme of work is of the depth and quality required to obtain the degree for which the candidate is to be registered;
3. the timescale of the programme of work when set against the designated registration period for the award;
4. whether, in so far as can be predicted, the necessary resources (e.g. library, computing, laboratory facilities, technical assistance) will be available;

5. whether proper supervision can be maintained throughout the research degree, including any periods in which a member of the supervisory team is on sabbatical leave;
6. the team of supervisors must have a collective experience (determined as at least 3 students between them) of successful supervision to completion for MPhil/PhD at UK Universities;
7. the work outlined complies with Health and Safety regulations and ethical requirements.

A typical plan of work will briefly outline the rationale for the choice of research question, position the research in the context of the published literature, clearly identify the key methodologies required in the conduct of the research, articulate the novel contribution of the work and how this is to be achieved and, and provide a time plan for the completion of the full research programme. Citations of indicative references are expected throughout.

The completed Registration form should be submitted to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) which will appraise the application for suitability and either return to the student with required corrections or pass onto the University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) with their recommendation. The scheduled meetings of the University's Research Degrees Committee and submission deadlines for each meeting are published on the Graduate School web pages. Submissions for each meeting must be with the Faculty Research Degrees Committee in advance of the meeting at which they will be considered. Dates for receipt by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee are published within each Faculty.

The start date of a registered programme of research is the same as the date of initial enrolment. Applications for registration are submitted, in the first instance, to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) within the following time frames:

Full-time students within 3 months of initial enrolment
Part-time students within 6 months of initial enrolment

A longer interval may be permitted in very exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the University Research Degrees Committee, up to a maximum of 12 months

Following scrutiny by the FRDC applications for registration will be forwarded to the University RDC for approval.

Research using human participants will require approval from the University's Research Ethics Committee and, in the case of research involving NHS patients, approval from an ethics committee within the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) is required before the registration is complete and the research work can proceed. Students and supervisors must ensure that appropriate ethical approval is sought at the earliest opportunity.

The Research Degree Regulations allow variability in the period of registration to accommodate circumstances where individuals have unanticipated difficulties in the rate of progress with the research programme. It is also possible to change mode of study

from full time to part time, or part time to full time to accommodate any changes in personal circumstances.

The minimum and maximum periods of registration shall normally be as follows:

MPhil

	Minimum	Maximum
full-time	12 months	24 months
part-time	24 months	48 months

PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration and including that period of MPhil registration)

	Minimum	Maximum
full-time	33 months	48 months
part-time	45 months	84 months

PhD (direct)

	Minimum	Maximum
full-time	24 months	36 months
part-time	36 months	72 months

Full-time PhD students are expected to complete their programme of research, write and submit their thesis for examination within 36 months. This allows a further 6-12 months for examination and any subsequent corrections. Part-time PhD students are expected to have submitted their thesis for examination within 72 months.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The remit of the University Research Ethics Committee is to consider and approve projects where ethical issues arise from research involving human subjects. Ethical issues may concern the administration of a substance or sampling of body fluids, but also assessing the fitness of a participant during physical exertion, or even questionnaire-based research whether or not this involves vulnerable subjects.

In all cases, formal approval from the University Research Ethics Committee must be sought before commencement of the study. Application for approval involves due consideration of the following issues:

- informed consent, including submission of a consent form and participant information making clear the volunteers rights to withdraw from the study at any time;
- confidentiality of the information acquired, including provision for keeping it secure and, if necessary, destroying the information when no longer required;
- analysis of the risk to the participants, and to the researcher, as appropriate;

It is good practice to submit the Ethics approval application in parallel with the application to RDC for registration on a research degree programme, so that the plan of work already has approval at Faculty level.

APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORS

A student's supervisory team must be approved by the University RDC at the time of registration however responsibility for overseeing the supervisory arrangements rests with the Faculty Research Degrees Committee, who will be monitoring supervisory arrangements in parallel with timely progression of the research degree programme during the Annual Monitoring Exercise. The Director of Studies will have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor the research student effectively. The Director of Studies is also the primary point of contact in communications with the FRDC and URDC.

There will be one or two additional supervisors attached to the programme, depending on the specific academic expertise in terms of both knowledge and experience that is needed. Their presence is important to enhance quality assurance, to ensure continuity of supervision, in spreading the supervisory load and often in a mentoring role as part of staff development.

The nature of research supervision is such that no supervisor should undertake the supervision of more students than he/she can give adequate guidance to. The limit will vary from one subject to another but may be given a normal maximum, according to such factors as the supervisor's experience and other duties. The normal expectation would be that no member of staff shall undertake the role of Director of Studies for more than six students (where a member of staff is acting as Director of Studies for part-time students the number of students should be calculated on a FTE basis where a part-time student equates to 0.5FTE).

In exceptional circumstances the University Research Degree Committee may approve a Director of Studies supervising more than the expected norm based on a recommendation from the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee. In making such recommendations Faculty Research Degree Committees should pay due regard to the additional work-load of the member of academic staff, the level of supervision being undertaken as second or third supervisor and the circumstances of students currently being supervised e.g. writing up students.

If a supervisor retires or resigns from the University or is granted leave of absence, it is the responsibility of the FRDC to alert the Director of School or other appropriate manager of the need to nominate a suitable replacement so that effective supervision may continue. Alternatively, the supervisor may wish to retain a role on the supervisory team: this can be accepted provided the supervisory duties can be maintained. The Graduate School must be notified of any changes to a student's supervisory team and changes must be approved by the University Research Degree Committee.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS

Team supervision is an essential requirement of the Research Degrees Regulations for a reason – to ensure that the research programme meets the particular requirements of structure and progression leading to an academic award and timely completion. It is therefore essential for the student to meet with the complete supervisory team on a regular basis. Preferably, this will involve submission of a brief written report on progress prior to the meeting, and mutual agreement of a written outline of work to be carried out before the following meeting. This enables prompt feedback to be given, not only on the content of the work, but also the structure and style of the written report. A record of the frequency and outcome of supervisory meetings should be kept as a matter of best practice.

The responsibilities of supervisors include:

- being fully aware of the Regulations of the University with regard to all research qualifications;
- ensuring that students are aware of current developments in both the specific and wider area of research;
- giving guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources, attendance at taught classes (including the training courses run by the Graduate School), about requisite scientific and technical methodologies (including arranging for instruction and technical training where necessary) and about the dangers of plagiarism;
- maintaining contact through regular tutorial and seminar meetings, in accordance with the Graduate School's policy and subject to agreement with the student;
- being accessible to students at other appropriate times;
- giving detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the completed thesis may be submitted within the scheduled time;
- providing a formal annual report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and alerting the Faculty Research Degrees Committee to any issues of particular concern;
- requesting written work as appropriate and returning such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time; the normal period for revision of written work should be agreed between the student and the supervisor(s) at the outset of the registration period;
- arranging as appropriate for students to talk about their work to staff or at graduate seminars and to have practice in oral examinations;
- ensuring that students are made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below that generally expected;
- preparing a formal record of student progress on the research project, training programmes and related studies;
- ensuring that the particular needs of international students or other students with diverse backgrounds are taken fully into account during the early stages of research and giving help and advice on language problems and training where necessary;

- ensuring that annual reports are completed in accordance with University procedures;
- providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support;
- encouraging publication of part(s) of the thesis and presentation at conferences and other appropriate events and assisting with seeking funding for the student to attend such events
- managing any budget provided for the research project;
- instigating formal mechanisms for suspending, extending or withdrawing the student's registration when appropriate;
- ensuring that a draft of the thesis submitted by the student to the supervisor is read within a reasonable period of time so that constructive comments may be given to the student before the work is submitted formally for assessment;
- assisting with the selection of the Examiners, informing the student of the names of the Examiners when formal arrangements have been agreed by the University Research Degrees Committee, and making all necessary examination arrangements;
- ensuring that candidates are adequately prepared for the oral examination, understand the expectations of the examiners, and the role of the oral examination in the overall examination process;
- advising students of attendance requirements, monitoring students' attendance and reporting any unauthorised absences in accordance with University policy and procedures

All staff new to the University or new to supervision are required to attend Research Supervisors' workshops organised by the Graduate School as a condition of registration of new research degree programmes.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

The responsibilities of students include:

- checking their LJMU email account on a regular and frequent basis, i.e. at least once a week
- preparing a programme of work at appropriate intervals in each academic year in consultation with supervisors and ensuring that any deviation from the programme is reported without delay to the supervisors;
- discussing with the supervisors the type of guidance and comment they find most helpful and agreeing a schedule of meetings;
- taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however basic they may seem;
- maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisors, including the presentation of written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
- informing the supervisors of impending requirements related to expenditure within the budget;
- providing a formal annual report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and other progress reports as required;

- completing a Training Needs Analysis and maintaining a Personal Development Plan using the facilities provided by the University;
- attendance at the post-graduate training modules in Research Methods offered by the Faculty or centrally provided in collaboration with the Graduate School;
- planning when they intend to submit their thesis, taking due account of the opinion of their supervisors;
- before submission, clearing any laboratory area in which they have been working, including the safe disposal of surplus chemicals and other materials;
- maintaining a repository of all primary data concerned with the research programme, either in notebooks or computer disk or machine print-outs, for retention until any publications from the thesis have completed the relevant peer review cycles;
- writing the thesis is the student's own responsibility. Students are expected to have a good command of the English language. Students are strongly advised to show drafts of their thesis to the supervisors so that the appropriate advice and comments may be given well ahead of the date for formal submission;
- complying with University attendance requirements, agreeing any authorised absences in advance with supervisors and informing supervisors of any unforeseen absences, e.g. absence through illness;
- student representation on the Faculty Research Degrees Committee is important, so postgraduate research students should be aware of School or department representatives.

It is important to keep written records of the work done, progress with related studies and outcomes from supervisory meetings. Together with the written reports to supervisors and, of course, any publications in conferences and journals, these notes are invaluable for the preparation of the transfer report and in writing the final thesis.

DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND OTHER SKILLS

The subject-specific technical training that underpins the level and rigour of original research is complemented by personal and professional training, covering research management through employability skills to oral presentations and defending the thesis. In line with LJMU's Postgraduate Research Student Skills Training and Development Framework (<https://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/rgso/training/>) opportunities for students to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to develop as a professional researcher in their subject are offered within individual faculties and through the Graduate School's programme of training events.

The University endorses the UK Vitae Researcher Development Framework as a professional development framework for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in Higher Education (Appendix 1).

It is strongly advised that individual students in consultation with their supervisory team agree at the start of the programme a training needs assessment (TNA) and personal development plan (PDP) with reference to the knowledge, behaviours and attributes described in the Researcher Development Framework.

Owing to the individual nature of a student's research programme, as well as their own career aspirations, different mechanisms are used to support the acquisition of skills including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring, departmental support, workshops, conferences, elective training courses and informal opportunities.

MONITORING OF PROGRESS

The Director of Studies is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the progress of research students. To enable students to progress satisfactorily it is important that there is regular and structured interaction between students and supervisors. Proper guidance and review of the research will entail regular formal and informal meetings between the research student and the supervisory team. The formal meetings will take place on a structured basis and will deal with a formal review of the student's progress and forward planning. Review may also take place in a more informal way, where the student and supervisory team meet to discuss general matters. Important input is also likely from informal and frequent but brief encounters of the student with at least one supervisor.

Ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained is the joint responsibility of supervisors and students. Meetings can be requested by the student and notes should be recorded about agreements. Whilst the home School or Faculty may not wish to insist on 'learning contracts' between student and Director of Studies, a formal agreed understanding about the Research programme is to be encouraged.

Meetings will also be initiated by the supervisory team who will ensure that the purpose of such meetings is agreed and clear to both the student and the supervisory team. The meetings between supervisors and students will vary according to discipline, individual style and local research culture, nevertheless the following is recommended as a minimum:

1. formal meeting with whole supervisory team - every 4-6 months;
2. formal meetings with Director of Studies - every 1-2 months
3. informal contact with Director of Studies and/or other members of the supervisory team - once a week

This frequency applies also to part-time students, except for (3) where the frequency could be once every month.

Where a student's research programme involves collaboration with an external sponsor who is actively engaged in the research programme it is recommended that formal meetings of all personnel involved in the project, including external sponsor are held at least once each year.

A key monitoring process that is formally reported to the FRDC and RDC is the Annual Monitoring Exercise, in which both student and Director of Studies are required to submit a joint report to the FRDC. This serves as a check by both parties that the milestones of the programme are being reached and enables both the student and the Director of Studies to note the academic and personal progress of the student as well as providing feedback about any areas of concern. The University Research Degrees

Committee will satisfy itself that the progress of each student has been considered individually by the FRDC and that appropriate steps are in place to ensure appropriate monitoring of progression by cohort of students in the Faculty.

International students who are enrolled on a research programme and have entered the UK on a Tier 4 visa are subject to additional monitoring of attendance and progress in line with current Home Office (UKVIS) legislation. The University's Academic Registry is responsible for implementing a formal monitoring system for international students who have entered the UK under the Tier 4 UKVIS regulations.

In rare cases where progress is judged to be unsatisfactory, this will trigger action by the FRDC with support from RDC.

The student and Director of Studies may need also to provide reports to the sponsors of the research. Generally, these may be short quarterly reports and one detailed annual report. Funding for the subsequent year(s) may depend on a satisfactory annual report.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The University operates a leave of absence policy for students registered on MPhil and PhD programmes through its Research Degree Regulations. This allows PGR students a temporary and official period of time away from their research degree programme. Students can request leave of absence for a variety of reasons, personal, financial, medical or academic.

It is recommended that all students considering leave of absence seek advice and guidance from both their Director of Studies and Student Advice & Wellbeing before making the final decision to request leave of absence.

Periods of leave of absence are usually only permitted for a period of up to one year. The start date and expected end date for the period of leave of absence should be stated on the form. Leave of absence is not an automatic right and the decision to grant a period of leave of absence will be made on an individual basis.

Leave of absence is permitted to commence at any time during the academic year and depends upon a student's individual circumstances and programme of research. Registration periods will be adjusted accordingly for the approved period of leave of absence.

Approval for retrospective leave of absence may be sought but will only be granted under very exceptional circumstances. The Graduate School will investigate to determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to allow a retrospective leave of absence to be considered. Retrospective leave of absence cannot be backdated to a previous academic year.

Once a student is on leave of absence they are not permitted to undertake research, submit work for consideration by their supervisors or sit exams/assessments. They may access support services offered by Student Advice & Wellbeing and IT services.

For shorter absences of up to 4 weeks students may request an authorised absence which will not impact on their registration period. For International students this should be requested at the appropriate International attendance monitoring census point using the attendance monitoring form for PGR International students.

Other students should put their request in writing to their Director of Studies briefly stating the reasons for it and the start and end dates of the requested absence.

International students studying on a Tier 4 visa should note that, depending on the length and reason, any periods of formal leave of absence may be reported to the UK Visas & Immigration Service by Academic Registry. International students who are reported will receive a letter from Academic Registry advising them to return home and informing them that they will have to apply for a new visa prior to returning to LJMU to resume their studies.

TRANSFER FROM MPhil TO PHD

A candidate registered initially for MPhil or MPhil/PhD who wishes to transfer to PhD shall apply on the appropriate form to the University Research Degrees Committee when he/she has made sufficient progress on the work to provide evidence of the development to PhD. In the case of full-time students application to transfer should normally be made within 12 months of initial registration and for part-time within 24 months of initial registration.

In support of the application, the candidate shall prepare for the Graduate School a full progress report on the work undertaken.

The progress report should normally be 3,000 to 4,500 words in length up to a maximum limit of 6,000 words. The progress report must include:

- a) an abstract of the work undertaken and described in the report
- b) a succinct review of the relevant literature and theoretical framework for the research
- c) a brief review and discussion of the work already undertaken
- d) a statement of intended further work, including the original contribution to knowledge which is likely to emerge (including where applicable a work plan and Gantt chart)

The assessment of all applications to transfer from MPhil to PhD will be based on both the assessment of the written transfer report and an oral assessment. The oral assessment will normally be conducted by an independent, internal reviewer in the presence of the Director of Studies. In exceptional circumstances an external reviewer may be appointed. The reviewer in consultation with the Director of Studies will complete a report and subsequently make a recommendation with regard to progression to RDC based on the content of the progress report and performance during the oral assessment. Feedback from the process will be given to the candidate via the Director of Studies.

Full details of individual Faculty and School requirements for transfer from MPhil to PhD will be included in relevant Faculty / School handbooks for postgraduate research students and available on the Graduate School website.

SUBMISSION OF THESES

It is the joint responsibility of student and supervisors to harmonise the natural development of the research topic with the timescale required by the research degree framework. The University, the Research Councils and other sponsors normally expect a full-time research student to submit a thesis for a PhD degree within three years. The fourth year allowed by the Regulations is a safety margin. The failure of candidates to submit theses within four years may compromise the Faculty's resources as there is no funding from HEFCE even for a fourth year. Extension of registration beyond four years is at the discretion of the RDC. The pro-rata equivalent applies here to part-time students.

The request for approval of examination arrangements must be done in good time before the thesis is submitted. The time permitted and length of notice for all parties (including the external examiner and internal examiners) are specified in the Regulations which are available to and should be known by students.

Theses which are submitted for formal assessment must be written by the candidates themselves and in their own words, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources, which shall be clearly indicated and acknowledged as such. The incorporation of material from other works or a paraphrase of such material without acknowledgement will be treated as plagiarism. The source of any photograph, map or other illustration shall also be indicated as shall the source, published or unpublished, of any material not resulting from the candidate's own experimentation or observation. Students should keep any raw data collected to verify their authenticity in exceptional cases where this may be brought into question.

Where the Examiners suspect a candidate of reproducing, in a dissertation or thesis, work of another person or persons without acknowledgement, they shall report the matter to the Graduate School. Any such allegation will be dealt with under the procedures laid down in the Research Degree Regulations and will afford the candidate an opportunity to make any representation he or she may wish to make. The candidate has the right to a representative from the Liverpool Students' Union.

Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis shall indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration. The candidate shall be free to publish material in advance of the thesis

but reference shall be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of published material should either be bound in with the thesis or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis.

The text of the thesis should not normally exceed the following length (excluding ancillary data and other appendices):

for a PhD in Science/Engineering	40,000 words
for an MPhil in Science/Engineering	20,000 words
for a PhD in Humanities and Social Sciences	80,000 words
for an MPhil in Humanities and Social Sciences	40,000 words

The word lengths for Humanities and Social Sciences apply to a broad band of subjects, including Law, Language, Business and so on. Students should pay attention to the upper limits for length of thesis, since examiners may object to over-lengthy submissions.

The text relevant to practice-based programmes in the Regulations is:-

"Where the thesis is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the written thesis should normally be within the range:

For a PhD	30,000 - 40,000 words
For an MPhil	15,000 - 20,000 words

These limits may only be exceeded under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Chair of the University Research Degrees Committee.

A candidate engaged in academic research in the creative arts will normally submit all three of the following:

- (a) a substantial body of creative work which has been documented and recorded by means appropriate for the purposes of examination and eventual deposit in the University e-Theses Collection;
- (b) an accompanying thesis comprising a critical commentary on the research, of no more than 40,000 words showing clear evidence of academic competence, an awareness of the current critical context in which the creative work has been produced and an original contribution to research into the relationship between history and/or theory and practice;
- (c) a selection of work, referred to under (a) suitable for exhibition.

EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The research student is examined on the basis of an appropriate body of work and an oral examination. There will normally be a minimum of two appropriately qualified examiners for a research thesis, one external and one internal. In some circumstances (e.g. where the candidate is a member of staff, or if no appropriate internal examiner can be found, or at the discretion of Research Degrees Committee), a third examiner will be appointed. Internal and external examiners should not normally have had a

substantial direct involvement in the student's work or be appointed if their own work is the focus of the research project.

Examiners are appointed and examinations are conducted in accordance with the University's Research Degree Regulations and procedures. Internal examiners must have relevant qualifications and experience of at least one other MPhil or PhD examination and a clear understanding of the task, including University Regulations. External examiners must have experience of at least three other MPhil or PhD examinations. In cases where an examiner is a qualified subject specialist but an inexperienced examiner, a third examiner will normally be appointed with the requisite experience of MPhil or PhD examination. Supervisors should ensure that recommendations for the nomination of Examiners are submitted to FRDC, in accordance with their procedures and practices, and at such time as to avoid unnecessary delay in the arrangement of the examination.

The examination of the thesis will be conducted in reference to the criteria for awards (see below). Prior to the oral examination taking place, examiners submit separate, independent written reports with a preliminary recommendation. On conclusion of the oral examination, at which Supervisors may be present with the explicit consent of the student, the examiners will agree a recommendation and write a joint report which will include details of any required revisions to the thesis. Should the examiners be unable to reach agreement on the outcome of the examination, which is very rarely the case, the Research Degrees Regulations make provision for further action by RDC.

The results of the examination are communicated informally to the student at the end of the oral assessment, including any possible need for re-submission or awarding a qualification different from the one for which the student has been examined, along with immediate guidance where revisions of the thesis are required.

The expectation is that the whole examination process, from date of submission of thesis to receiving the joint recommendation from the examiners should take no longer than three months.

In all cases where revisions of the thesis are required for resubmission or to complete the requirements for the award, specific time-scales are set in the Research Degrees Regulations and completion of the revisions is signed off by the appropriate examiner(s) nominated in the examiner's recommendations. When substantial revisions are required, RDC will take the additional step of ensuring that appropriate supervisory arrangements are in place to support the student during revision of the thesis.

When the assessment process is completed, the examiners' recommendations are formally ratified by the University Research Degrees Committee which recommends to the University's Academic Board that the award be granted.

CRITERIA FOR AWARDS

The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) provides descriptors for the higher education qualifications at doctoral (level 8) and masters level (level 7). These descriptors form the academic standards for the relevant awards and are provided in Appendix 2.

The examiners preliminary report (RD10a) details the criteria for awards with reference to University Regulations. The examiners will be asked to respond to the following questions.

For the degree of MPhil:

- 1** Does the thesis show evidence of sustained independent effort by the candidate?
- 2** Does the thesis demonstrate:
 - (i) competence in the investigation of the chosen topic(s) or
 - (ii) competence in undertaking a critical study of the chosen topic(s)?
- 3** Is the thesis satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness?
- 4** Is the abstract of the thesis submitted acceptable?
- 5** In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, does the thesis indicate clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration?

For the degree of PhD:

- 1** Does the thesis represent a significant contribution to knowledge of the subject by:
 - (i) the discovery of new facts and/or
 - (ii) the exercise of independent critical powers?
- 2** Does the thesis provide evidence of originality?
- 3** Is the thesis satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness?
- 4** Is the abstract of the thesis submitted acceptable?
- 5** In the case of a candidate who has completed a programme of formally assessed course work under regulation G8.2 is it manifest in the thesis that the candidate has benefited from the course of postgraduate study?
- 6** In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, does the thesis indicate clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration?

Masters degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline.

Doctoral awards require, in addition, evidence of originality extending the forefront of the academic discipline. The original contribution to knowledge is typically at a level to satisfy peer review for publication in the academic literature. In the case of Professional Doctorates, the focus is on original and publishable contributions to professional practice.

In both the MPhil and PhD, a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry is required.

Clarity and succinctness of expression is also essential. Students are subject to a system of penalties for plagiarism, and will need to sign their work at the point of submission declaring that the material being presented for examination is their own work.

The oral examination is an integral part of the assessment process, and its aim is to evaluate whether the candidate has met the standards for the award. It has the following specific objectives:

- To establish that the material submitted for assessment is the candidate's own work or, in the case of collaborative research, to clarify the specific contribution made by the candidate;
- To verify the rigour and scholarship of the work;
- In the case of a PhD, to establish the originality of the work.

It serves to confirm or revise the examiner's initial views about the standard of the candidate's research, based on the thesis, and to identify and discuss any amendments to the thesis which may be required to meet the standard for the award.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO ORAL ASSESSMENT EVENTS

There is a formal procedure for declaration of extenuating circumstances relating to oral assessment events for postgraduate research students.

The procedure relates to the following oral assessment events:

- (a) MPhil/PhD transfer assessment events and re-assessment events;
- (b) oral examination events for students submitting a thesis for the degree MPhil or PhD;
- (c) oral re-examination events for students resubmitting a revised thesis for the degree MPhil or PhD.

The University acknowledges that there may be occasions when a student's performance in assessment may be severely affected by unforeseen or unexpected circumstances. Such events include sudden acute illness or close personal bereavement.

It does not include circumstances that arise from minor ailments such as a cold, or circumstances that arise as a result of foreseeable circumstances, such as booking a holiday on the assessment date.

Full details of the procedure can be found on the Graduate School intranet site.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, COPYRIGHT AND DEPOSIT OF THESIS IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) refer to ownership of the research being registered and includes the content of the thesis. Whenever potential commercial value arises during the conduct, or as results of, a postgraduate research programme, both the supervisor and student have the responsibility to consult with the Business Development Centre for advice on the management of IPR.

In the case of external contracts to fund research at LJMU, the matter of IPR must be considered from the very beginning of negotiations with the sponsoring company and the precepts for its management will in general be written into the contract. In the case of students supported by public funded bodies, including charities and the Research Councils, specific provisions relating to intellectual property are normally embodied in the conditions of the support.

Otherwise, except as agreed in writing, the University claims ownership of intellectual property arising from their research at the University, to be managed by the University in accordance with its normal custom and practice. The University has a policy of sharing any profits arising from the exploitation of the results of research with the staff and research students concerned.

A copy of the thesis submitted by a candidate and approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of a postgraduate research degree in the University will be retained by the University and deposited in the University's e-Theses Collection. Any copyright that may be vested in the candidate will not be affected thereby. Access to theses deposited in the e-Theses Collection will normally be available on open access, but authors will be permitted to impose restrictions on access if the University Research Degrees Committee endorses the author's request for such a restriction.

No candidate may be prevented, by the terms of a contract from an outside sponsor or any other means, from including in a thesis submitted for a higher degree all material relevant to the research project and from being examined upon it. If material of a confidential nature is included in a thesis, obligations of confidentiality may be imposed upon the Examiners and the author may restrict access to the thesis deposited in the e-Theses Collection as provided for above.

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Postgraduate research students are provided with several opportunities to make an input into the review and enhancement of their programme, and to comment on their learning experiences. In many cases, this feedback comes directly to the supervisory team. This is supplemented by student representation on FRDCs as a vehicle to provide input into the management of postgraduate degree programmes.

Feedback is also received annually through the annual monitoring exercise which is reported initially to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and, from there, to the

University Research Degrees Committee. Further anonymous feedback is solicited in detailed surveys of postgraduate researchers conducted either through the University's Quality Support Unit or via external agencies such as the Higher Education Academy. Postgraduate students are also given the opportunity to complete an exit questionnaire on completion of their studies

After graduation, Alumni are encouraged to participate in first destination and subsequent surveys, which inform on the effectiveness of the University's degree programmes in preparing researchers for future employment.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

There are times when the supervisory relationship comes under stress and risks breaking down. When the student feels that the research process is at risk, it is incumbent upon him or her to raise these issues in a proper manner. Clearly talking to the supervisory team is the obvious first step in ironing out potential difficulties for the future. However, where this is not successful, there is a support available from Student Services where specialist and experienced staff will provide advice and guidance to resolve issues as quickly as possible. The Graduate School is also available to offer advice when requested to do so.

Formally, a complaints procedure is outlined in the University Student Handbook. This is the same procedure for postgraduate as for all other students, starting with an attempt to resolve problems locally and informally, with the possibility of escalating the grievance to a formal stage requiring a formal hearing chaired by a third party. There is no magic in the resolution of difficult issues, so dialogue, involving support from University services such as welfare/pastoral support or Liverpool Students Union where required, is often the best route to smoothing out a troubled working relationship.

It is important to distinguish between the notions of complaint and appeal. The former is about poor quality of supervision, or other significant shortcoming in the level of student support and service provided by the University.

Formal complaints cannot be initiated after the oral examination has taken place. At this point, if there are serious misgivings about the examination process or outcome, there is provision for an appeal against a decision by the University Research Degrees Committee to ratify examiner's recommendations. The detailed process and eligibility criteria are strict and they are listed in the Research Degrees Regulations. There is no appeal against academic judgement, but it is possible to appeal on the grounds of material administrative error or irregularity or if an oral assessment has not been conducted in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations. Successful appeals are rare, the procedure being available as last resort.

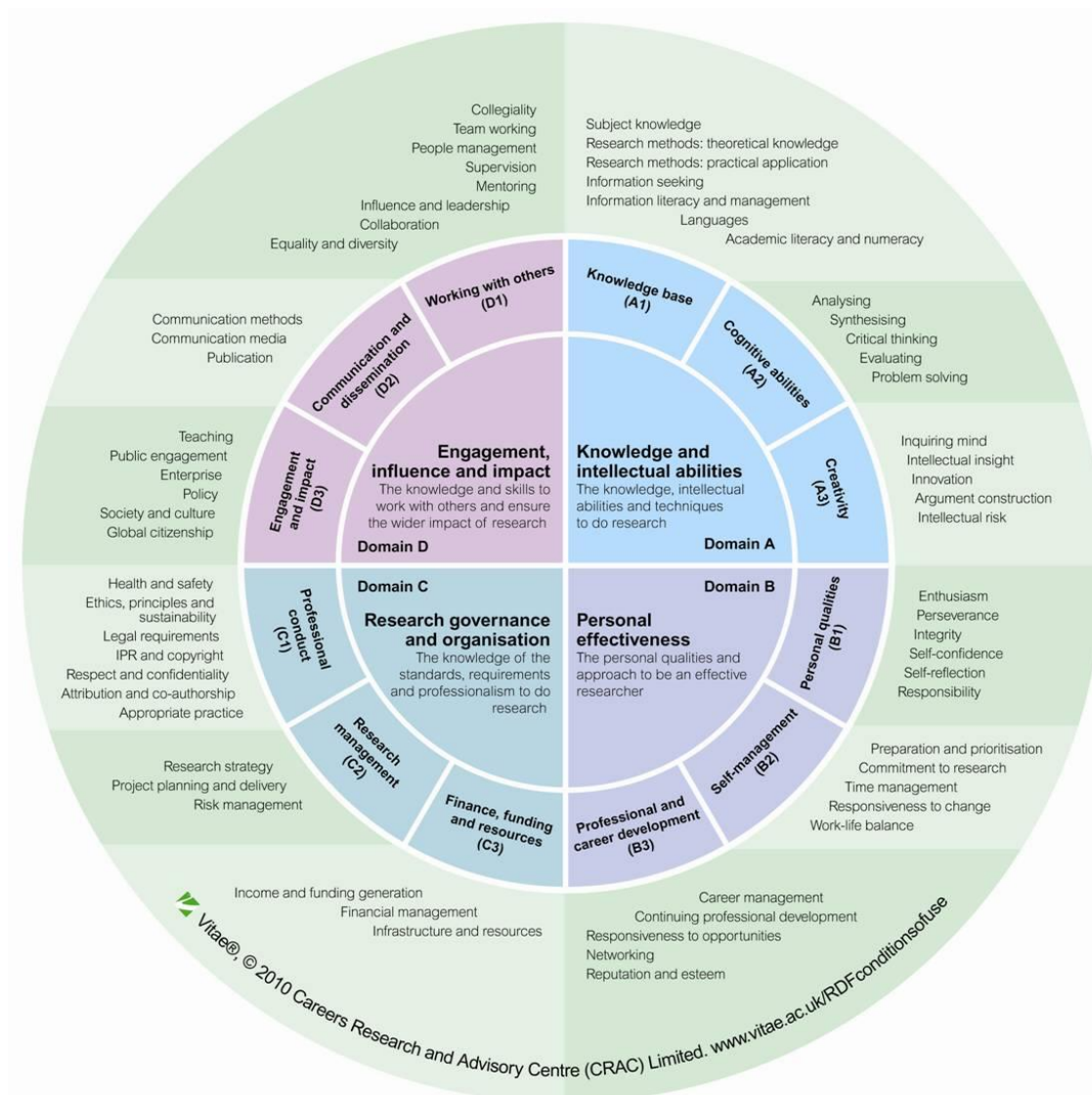
Complaints and appeals are avoided by meeting the regulatory and procedural requirements set-out in the Research Degrees Regulations and ancillary formal Procedures. These requirements are made clear in mandatory training events for students and supervisors along with the need, on all sides, for professionalism in the conduct of research supervision, to which this Code of Practice offers guidance.

Appendix 1: The Researcher Development Framework

The Researcher Development Framework is a professional development framework for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in Higher Education. It articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to realise their potential.

The Framework is designed for both researchers to evaluate and plan their professional development and managers and supervisors of researchers in their role supporting the development of researchers.

To access further information regarding the Researcher Development Framework including an RDF Professional Development Planning Tool visit <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234301/Researcher-Development-Framework.html>



Appendix 2: QAA Qualification Descriptors

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7: Master's degree

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

- 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
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- 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
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - a. to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
 - b. to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- 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
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

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

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8: Doctoral degree

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- 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
- 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
- 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
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- 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
- 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 holders will have:

- 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.