

Professional Doctorate Framework

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RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards) The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (October 2014)
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>
- QAA Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degree (September 2015)
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Doctoral-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf>

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

List here any internal policies or documents that are relevant to this policy e.g.

- Post Graduate Taught Academic framework regulations
- RP(E)L Policy

A Framework for Professional Doctorates

1. Scope of the framework document

- 1.1 This framework defines the concept and principles of the LJMU Professional Doctorate (PD) award. It outlines the baseline requirements for the design of individual awards and defines the processes for programme approval. This document should be read as a supplement to the Academic Framework Taught Postgraduate Regulations:
<https://policies.ljmu.ac.uk/UserHome/Policies/ViewPolicyStart.aspx?id=353&l=1>
- 1.2 Faculties wishing to offer one or more PDs should use this framework to underpin the design and delivery of their specific programmes. Specific and exceptional features of a PD programme at LJMU are described in this document; in general the processes for approval, operation and quality assurance of PDs will follow normal LJMU procedures as described in the Academic Framework Taught Postgraduate Regulations.
- 1.3 The Qualification Descriptor and Credit Structure for the Professional Doctorate are as follows:
 - Professional Doctorate awards will be untitled and reserved for programmes where students have made a significant contribution to the enhancement of an occupational or professional area through the application, development and testing of theoretical frameworks.
 - Professional Doctorate awards will be comprised of 540 credits, 180 credits at FHEQ level 7 and 360 credits at FHEQ level 8.

2. External Reference Points

This document is referenced against:

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards) The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (October 2014)
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>
- QAA Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degree (September 2015)
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Doctoral-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf>

3. Rationale

- 3.1 The definition of the qualification, in alignment with the FHEQ and Doctoral Degree characteristics statement will be as follows:

The Professional Doctorate is an untitled award at FHEQ level 8 reserved for programmes where students have made a significant contribution to the

enhancement of an occupational or professional area through the application, development and testing of theoretical frameworks.

- 3.2 PDs will be situated very much within professional practice, and students will be required to show evidence that, through their studies and by applying and testing existing and new theories, they have made a significant contribution to improvements or changes in their organisation or working practices, which can be applied elsewhere.

UK professional doctorates are designed to meet the needs of the various professions in which they are rooted, including: business, creative arts, education, engineering, law, nursing and psychology. They can advance professional practice or use practice as a legitimate research method¹.

- 3.3 Common to other forms of work-based or work-related learning, these awards will be defined by a partnership of the University, the student and their employer. Each partner will benefit in different ways.

- For the **University**, PDs will enable us to contribute to research in new areas and to collaborate further with employers; in so doing we shall be engaging in an exchange of knowledge and practice at the highest level. This transfer of knowledge will be used to enhance curriculum at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and help meet the identified needs of the diverse community which we seek to serve.
- The benefits to **students** will be in terms of formal recognition and accreditation of their professional development; and a raised profile within their profession both within, and perhaps beyond, their organisation as a result of the outcomes of successful project work. Their activities can also be expected to enhance their personal and professional capabilities for the future.
- In turn **employers** will have the benefit of being involved in the project planning process and the implementation of project outcomes within their organisations, together with the opportunity to collaborate with leading academics. In addition a survey of employers with experience of PDs undertaken on behalf of the UK Council for Graduate Education found that employers perceived a range of additional skills benefits among their workforce.

Consequently the input and responsibilities of each partner will vary as outlined in this document.

4. Nature of PDs

- 4.1 PDs are equivalent in level and intellectual challenge to PhDs but differ in significant ways including an assessed 'taught' element, modular content and a credit-based structure. Whilst PD students will have a certain amount of flexibility to design their own programme of study this will be done within the confines of a specific PD award, which has its own programme specification.

¹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Doctoral-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf>

PDs, like PhDs, will contain the requirement for a substantial thesis but this may be divided across several distinct, but connected, projects, and the evidence of learning may be presented for assessment in forms other than a substantial piece of writing. Like PhDs, PDs will include examination by *viva voce*. The focus of the *viva voce* will be the reflective module produced by the student in Stage 3. However, the examiner will also provide an independent assessment of the empirical work undertaken during the Investigative Project modules at Stage 2.

The projects undertaken for the PD must address stated workplace or professional needs / objectives. The outcomes of the learning must be recognisable by other organisations in the same sector or other professionals. Additionally, the evidence of FHEQ-level 8 project learning must show the impact it has had, or could have, on the occupational / professional area.

- 4.2 Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.² Therefore outcomes of the PD study must represent a significant new contribution to a body of applied knowledge or practice; specifically, students must demonstrate innovation in the application of knowledge to a stated occupational or professional area.
- 4.3 These awards will be managed by a Faculty / School and assessment boards will operate according to standard practices outlined in the Academic Framework Taught Postgraduate Regulations, following the moderation of all modules and as advised by the appropriate External Examiner(s). See section 9 for further details.
- 4.4 Each PD award will include the name of the discipline in the title. This demonstrates alignment with the following reference points³:
 - *“Doctoral programmes that may have a substantial taught element in addition to the research component (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or DClinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology) (4.18.3)”*.
 - *“Titles used for doctoral qualifications awarded after programmes that include a substantial taught element normally include the name of the discipline in the title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education) (6.22)”*

The precise naming of the PD award, including its abbreviation, will be agreed when the award is validated. The abbreviation may be either ##D or D##, e.g. EdD for Doctor of Education, DArch for Doctor of Architecture. PD awards are untitled, i.e. they have no specific titles qualifying the award name.

² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

4.5 PDs will be modular in structure and follow the conventions laid out in the Higher Education Credit Framework for England⁴ as follows:

Qualification	FHEQ Qualification Level	Minimum credits	Minimum credits at Level 8	Note
Postgraduate				
Professional Doctorate	Level 8	540	360	Study at Level 7 should represent no more than one-third of total credit.

4.6 LJMU PDs will be based on the QAA's qualification descriptor⁵ for qualifications at Doctoral level and Doctoral Degree characteristics statement⁶ as outlined in section 1. The requirements of FHEQ-level 7 and FHEQ-level 8 learning within the PD will be as indicated in the relevant level descriptors.

5. Structure of the Award

5.1 The LJMU PD award will be structured as outlined in the table below:

⁴ Taken from Higher education credit framework for England: Guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England (August 2008) prepared by QAA

⁵ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Doctoral-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf>

Phase	Credits Number / Level	Stages	Content
Masters	180 FHEQ 7	Depends upon Masters award.	Taught and work-based learning providing underpinning knowledge and skills development for FHEQ level 8.
		Stage 1: min. 30 credits max. 60 credits.	Introductory module(s). This stage must consist of a minimum 30-credit Planning Module for the development of a Learning Agreement / Research Proposal, detailing the project-based learning for Stage 2. In addition this stage may contain one or more modules that provide underpinning and/or 'tutor-led' support for the research projects (such as investigative methodologies, subject material). These modules may be negotiated by students according to individual needs and/or prescribed by the programme team.
		Stage 2: min. 240 credits	Investigative Project Module(s) representing an original contribution to knowledge/practice including testing of theoretical frameworks. It is expected that the optimal number of modules undertaken by candidates enrolled on specific programme routes will be defined in the relevant programme specification. In general candidates will have the option of undertaking up to four project modules, with each module being a minimum of 60 credits in size. Alternatively candidates may opt to undertake either a single substantive project module (240 credits) or 2 projects modules (120 credits each) and in exceptional circumstances a maximum of 60 credits may be attained through the completion of a discrete number of smaller modules of work such as the description / submission of individual case studies where this is in line with professional practice and contributes to the aims of the overall doctoral programme. Where smaller modules are expected to contribute to the programme a full rationale for their inclusion should be provided during the validation process.
		Stage 3: 60 credits	A Reflective module in which the outcomes from the investigative projects are synthesised and integrated; and consideration given to future actions within the professional context.

5.2 Both the Masters and Doctoral phases of the PD will be subject to maximum registration periods.

Registration periods for Masters level qualifications will be specified in the relevant programme specifications.

The maximum registration period for the Doctoral phase of the PD will be 48 months full-time and 84 months part-time. Within the doctoral phase maximum registration periods for stages 1 and 2 are detailed below:

	Stage 1 (Introductory Modules)	Stages 2 & 3 (Investigative / Reflective Modules)
Full-Time	12 months	36 months
Part-Time	24 months	60 months

- 5.3 Where a candidate is prevented, by ill health or for other personal reasons, from making progression, their registration may be suspended. Any periods of suspension must be agreed between the candidate and their school/faculty with an agreed date for re-commencement of studies. Suspension should not normally be for more than one year.
- 5.4 Progress of all candidates enrolled on a PD programme will be subject to annual monitoring within the individual school or Faculty. The outcome of the annual monitoring exercise will be reported to the FRDC and RDC. Candidates who fail to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress through the annual monitoring exercise may be withdrawn from the programme.

6. Programme Design and Construction

- 6.1 The general nature and design of specific PD programmes will be subject to the normal programme validation process and will subsequently be subject to programme review processes. Where appropriate, it may be possible to consider more than one PD proposal at the same validation event to simplify the process for the development of individual PDs.
- 6.2 Each PD will be defined within a **programme specification** which will include aims, learning outcomes and the specific modular structure. In certain cases these descriptors will be determined by the existence of a professional body with an interest in influencing the parameters of such an award.
- 6.3 The PD consists of two major elements, the Masters Phase and the Doctoral Phase. In some instances entry may be granted directly to the doctoral phase as outlined in section 7 below.
- 6.4 All elements of the Doctoral Phase, including the investigative projects within Stage 2, will be constructed as modules with a specific credit volume at FHEQ level 8.

- 6.5 Within the Doctoral Phase of each PD there are several possible models for achieving the learning outcomes of the programme specification:
- (a) In one model there is a pre-determined content in terms of modules designed and approved by members of the programme team, although there may be some optional choice from a prescribed list. The project stage will contain learning that is specific to a student working in a specific occupational or professional environment, and will inevitably require negotiation with the tutor (see 6.6 and 8.5).
 - (b) In another model, the specific curricular methodology is entirely negotiated by the candidate working in partnership with the University tutor and the employer. Thus in this model two learners on the same PD award might negotiate an entirely different modular structure for achieving the same objectives (see 6.6 and 8.6).
 - (c) A model consisting of a hybrid of types (a) and (b).
- 6.6 The nature of the Doctoral Phase of PDs, with strong links to the workplace and emphasis on project work, make it necessary to use a mechanism that will record the individual programme of study for each student. This mechanism is the **learning agreement** or **research proposal**, through which the learner and her/his tutor will record the nature of learning within each module, its learning outcomes, its assessment methodology and a timescale within which the learning is expected to be demonstrated. The learning agreement / research protocol is devised and approved as part of the Planning Module in Stage 1 of the Doctoral Phase (see 9.5.1).

Learning agreements require individual formal approval by the supervisor but may be changed throughout the period in which the Doctoral Phase is being undertaken, provided the change is formally agreed by the supervisor.

7. Entry Requirements

- 7.1 Within LJMU candidates wishing to enrol on the Doctoral Phase of a validated PD programme must hold a cognate qualification representing the 180 credits required at FHEQ level 7, such as MSc, MA, MRes or MPhil. By cognate, it is meant that the Masters curriculum is relevant to and underpins the planned doctoral study, although further FHEQ-level 8 learning about investigative methodologies may still be required. The FHEQ level 7 qualification must also have contained a significant research element. PD validation documents should specify a list of appropriate Masters titles that fulfil the Masters Phase of the PD. Candidates will need to complete a further 360 credits at FHEQ level 8, but there may be occasions where further FHEQ level 7 learning is required to underpin the Doctoral Phase, for example where the Masters learning did not contain a significant research element.
- 7.2 Where a student wishes to make a claim for accreditation of either prior and/or experiential learning (RP(E)L), including recognition of a Masters not listed on

the PD validation document, consideration of any such claim must be undertaken in line with the University's Academic Framework regulations.

Exceptionally, learning achieved under supervision elsewhere may be transferred into the projects within Stage 2 of the Doctoral Phase of the LJMU PD and the outcomes of such prior learning presented as part of the evidence for assessment. The amount of such 'learning transfer' is at the discretion of the Home School, and must not be of such volume as to mask the focus on achieving FHEQ-level 8 learning at LJMU. Credit from any type of prior learning cannot contribute towards the Stage 3 reflective module of the Doctoral Phase of the PD.

8. Programme Management

- 8.1 It is for Faculties to decide whether a specific PD will be operated at either the Faculty or School level. The choice will usually be made as part of the local strategy for postgraduate provision. Where a Faculty decides to operate a Faculty-wide postgraduate programme it may decide to incorporate the PD within this structure. Other Faculties with a more diverse mix of academic areas may decide to operate postgraduate programmes at the School level; in this situation it is more likely that the PD will be owned by a specific School.
- 8.2 Approval of the award name, abbreviation (e.g. EdD) and description should be gained from the University's Academic Planning Panel (APP).
- 8.3 Validation of the PD programme will be undertaken via the usual processes and will consider the:
 - PD programme specification.
 - curricular design in relationship to the programme specification.
 - requirements for Graduate Entry and Masters Entry.
 - methods of delivery.
 - experience of programme team staff.
 - roles and responsibilities of all internal and external staff involved in supporting and supervising PD students.
 - where appropriate, the system in place for the support of work based mentors
 - general assessment strategy for the PD stages.
 - general arrangements for the External Examiner(s) involvement in the Doctoral phase of the PD.

Approval of the programmes of study to be undertaken by individual PD students will be a separate process, see section 9.

External advisors appointed as part of the validation process should be suitably experienced in the management, operation and validation of PDs

- 8.4 Each PD student will belong to a Home School, which provides general academic and administrative support for the whole award. Where a module is taken in another School, it is the responsibility of the supplying School to ensure that the learner is appropriately supported during the study of that module.
- 8.5 When learning is undertaken in the workplace, the students may have a work-based mentor who has been provided with appropriate support by the University. Support for mentors will be provided by LJMU staff with appropriate experience of FHEQ-level 8 learning.
- 8.6 Proposals for a PD should emphasise the importance of communication between tutors and the work-based PD student and, where appropriate, between different PD students. Details should be provided about how ICT systems (such as Blackboard) will be used to facilitate such communication.
- 8.7 The individualised nature of learning within the Doctoral Phase of PDs makes it imperative that each learning agreement/research proposal is formally assessed by experienced peers. In this way the learning objectives, learning methodology, project supervision arrangements, assessment requirements and timescales for each individualised module will be subject to specific approval processes.

9. Assessment

- 9.1 Assessment will follow the regulations and practices of the ***Academic Framework Taught Postgraduate Regulations*** subject to the points below.

The FHEQ-level 8 Elements of the PD: the Doctoral Phase

- 9.2 During the doctoral phase of the PD students will be supported through the appointment of a minimum of one supervisor who will have experience of successful supervision at FHEQ level 8 and relevant subject / professional experience. Where appropriate students may be supervised by a team of no more than three supervisors one of whom may be based in the student's workplace. Where students are supervised within a team, one supervisor will be designated the main point of contact for the student. Due to the flexible structure of the PD award, particularly with reference to the design of a range of investigative modules, it may be appropriate for a student's supervisor to change through the duration of the PD programme to enable appropriate supervisory expertise throughout the PD programme.
- 9.3 Assessment of the doctoral phase of the PD programme will be at both the individual level and the programme level as follows:
 - 9.3.1 When a candidate has completed Stage 1 (Introductory module (s) – see section 9.5.1) and the required number of modules have been completed and recorded as an un-moderated Pass by the relevant assessment board for Stages 2 and 3 (Investigative module(s) and the Reflective module- see section

9.5.2) the student will submit their findings in the form of a thesis or portfolio of evidence.

9.3.2 The PD will have two types of external examiner. The appointment of external programme examiners will be carried out within the usual procedures for the appointment of external examiners to modular programmes. The appointment of individual student external examiners will be undertaken in consultation with the Chair of the University's Research Degrees Committee to ensure that suitable examination experience and relevant subject expertise is contained within the examination team.

9.3.3 The individual student external examiner will be appointed to assess the Doctoral Phase of an individual student's PD programme and will, in partnership with an appropriate internal examiner, conduct a *viva voce* examination of the candidate. In the event that the candidate is an existing member of LJMU staff an additional external examiner will be appointed. The examiner (s) must have expertise in the individual student's specific subject area and appropriate experience of examination at doctoral level.

The examiners judgement will not be made solely on the work presented in the investigative module (s), but also on evidence of the following criteria embodied within the reflective modules and demonstrated during the *viva voce*:

- coherence between the investigative module (s) and their contribution to practice
- rigorous analysis and contextualisation of the investigative module (s)
- rigorous and appropriate methodology
- the candidate's appreciation of the relationship of their research to practice

9.3.4 An External Programme Examiner will be appointed for each PD programme and will, on an annual basis, provide a report on the quality of all completed PD programmes, including the suitability of the taught elements and the progression of the all the students enrolled on the programme. Such examiners must have experience that is relevant to the overarching PD subject discipline and to PD level work, and have empathy with the aspirations of the PD qualification.

If deemed appropriate the external programme examiner may provide support and assistance to the supervisor in assessing work submitted for stages 1 or 2 of the PD programme. At the request of the student the programme external examiner **or** the student's supervisor may be present during the *viva voce* conducted at the end of the Doctoral Phase as an observer. The supervisor or programme external examiner may only participate in the discussion at the discretion of the examiners.

9.4 For modules within each of the FHEQ-level 8 stages of the PD, the nature of materials acceptable for assessment, and any minimum textual requirements, must be specified in outline terms within the validation documentation for that PD (see 8.3), and in detail within the approved learning agreements / research proposals. It is anticipated that the final portfolio of assessments should not exceed the following length.

	Written PD
Arts, Built Environment, Business Studies, Social Sciences, Education and Law	80,000
Science, Engineering, Art and Design	40,000

Where the project portfolio contains material other than written form (subject to approval by the supervisors), the written portion should normally be within the range of 30,000 to 40,000 words.

- 9.5 Assessment of specific modules within the Doctoral Phase will be undertaken in line with the relevant Academic Framework Taught Postgraduate Regulations requirements and are summarised as follows:

9.5.1 Stage 1:

Before proceeding to stage 2 the work submitted for stage 1 must be assessed and the credit awarded in accordance with the Academic Framework.

Assessment of the 30-60 credit Planning Module will include a short report which seeks to justify the rationale for the project activities planned within Stage 2 of the Doctoral Phase, indicates how each project is to be undertaken, describes the significant milestones to be achieved and includes the completed learning agreement/research proposal for the whole Doctoral Phase. All aspects of the planning module must be approved by the supervisory team before progression to Stage 2.

9.5.2 Stages 2 and 3:

The investigative project modules (Stage 2) and reflective module (Stage 3) will be approved as suitable for submission for *viva voce* examination by the supervisory team. Where appropriate, candidates may submit evidence of learning in non-textual form along with a written project report.

Where stage 2 of the individual PD programme is undertaken as a series of smaller credit bearing modules as detailed in section 5 the student's supervisor will report completion of each module to the relevant assessment board and the associated Pass grade will be recorded as un-moderated until such time as the student's *viva voce* has been conducted.

Upon completion of the Stage 3 module, the student's approved examination team will conduct a *viva voce* examination to determine if the student can demonstrate achievement of the outcomes detailed in the programme specification and Appendix A. Their decision will be based on their joint assessment of the submitted work together with the performance of the student during the examination.

In the event that the examiners are unable to recommend a Pass grade for any Stage 2 or 3 modules, the standard AF regulations⁷ concerning referral after failure of an FHEQ-level 8 module apply, namely that “all students have the right to one referral opportunity in any failed modules ...”. It would normally be expected that a referral from a failed investigative/reflective module would constitute amendments to the thesis submission at either a minor, moderate or substantive level.

Amendments at minor, moderate or substantive level are defined as follows:

Minor – minor omissions of substance, minor typographical errors, occasional stylistic or grammatical flaws, corrections to references, addition or modification of 1 or 2 figures, minor changes to layout. Candidates would not be expected to carry out any further empirical research.

Moderate – moderate omissions of substance, moderate typographical errors, limited further analysis but such that it will not affect the originality of the central thesis; limited revision of material which is specified in detail by the examiners. Candidates would not be expected to carry out any further empirical research.

Substantive – more than 10% of the thesis to be amended, typographical/grammatical errors so numerous as to suggest carelessness or so intrusive as to distract the reader’s attention from the argument; significant new empirical research required.

The role of the internal and external examiners in confirming approval of amendments made following referral at the *viva voce* will be at the discretion of the examination team however where substantive amendments are required the external examiner must be involved in the approval process.

Students should be provided with clear guidelines on expectations for the completion of required amendments to enable timely completion. It would normally be expected that minor amendments be made within a period of no more than 1 month; moderate amendments in a period of no more than 3 months and substantive amendments in a period of no more than 12 months.

Following the *viva voce* and, where necessary, the completion of any amendments to the student’s thesis submission, the examination outcome will be reported to the assessment board. Pass grades can now be finalised, following advice from the examination team and the credit awarded.

9.5.3 Making the PD award

Decisions about making a PD award will be the responsibility of the Assessment Board for the PD. A Professional Doctorate will be awarded to candidates who have achieved 180 credits at FHEQ level 7 and 360 credits at FHEQ level 8 from an approved programme of study.

⁷ Academic Framework regulation PG.C.7.5

PD awards will not be classified; that is, there will not be a Merit or Distinction grade awarded.

- 9.6 Assessment of all modular elements within the PD prior to the *viva voce* must be subject to a double marking procedure.
- 9.7 Assessment of modules where all or much of the learning is carried out in the workplace may involve input from a workplace assessor who will not normally be the workplace mentor (see 8.5). Appropriate support must be provided for such workplace assessors. Details of arrangements for the assessment of work-based learning must be provided within the PD validation documents.
- 9.8 The AF compensation regulations will not apply to any modules undertaken during the Doctoral Phase of the PD programme.

Appendices

Appendix A – QAA Qualification Descriptors