

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2017/18

Section 4 Research Regulations

Abbreviations

APP Academic Progress Panel

DS Director of Studies

FTE Full-time equivalent

PEP Pre-approved Extension Period

QAA The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

RDC Research Degrees Committee

RGS Research Graduate School

UKVI UK Visas and Immigration

Candidate: PGR student who is in the examination stage of their studies / or member of staff who is also studying a Research Degree.

Defining phases of Research Degrees

The following table identifies the typical phases of research degrees programmes. The table in section 4.1.1, Award Framework, defines the minimum, normal and maximum periods of registration for different research degree programmes.

	Full-time	Part-time
Part 1	Year 1	Years 1 & 2
Part 2	Year 2, if applicable	Years 3 & 4, if applicable
Part 3	Year 3, if applicable	Years 5 & 6, if applicable
Pre-approved extension period	Period between end of normal period of registration and maximum period of registration. This is a maximum of one year.	
Examination period	Period between the Research Graduate School (RGS) accepting the submission of a thesis and the RDC confirming the final outcome.	

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4.1 General regulations for research degrees

4.1.1 Award Framework

- 4.1.1.1 The table overleaf summarises the University's research degree awards, the minimum, normal and maximum periods of registration, and the length of the written thesis.
- 4.1.1.2 Exceptionally, where there is evidence that a student is progressing ahead of schedule, the RDC may approve a shorter registration period.
- 4.1.1.3 Where a student is permitted to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time or vice versa, their minimum and maximum registration periods will be calculated pro rata taking into account the time already spent on study in a different mode. Changes to the mode of study cannot be approved in retrospect or in the last three months of registration.

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	Abbreviation	Minimum period of registration	Normal period of registration	Maximum period of registration	Maximum word length of thesis
Higher doctorates: Doctor of Laws Doctor of Letters Doctor of Science	LLD DLitt DSc	N/A	N/A	12 months part-time	5,000 words plus published work
Doctor of Philosophy (via transfer from Master of Philosophy, including the period of MPhil registration)	PhD	33 months full-time 45 months part-time	36 months full-time 72 months part-time	48 months full-time 84 months part-time	80,000
Doctor of Philosophy (direct registration)	PhD	24 months full-time 36 months part-time	36 months full-time 72 months part-time	48 months full-time 84 months part-time	80,000
Doctor of Philosophy (by published work)	PhD	N/A	N/A	18 months	10,000 words plus published work
Professional Doctorate: Doctor of Education Doctor of Osteopathy Doctor of Professional Practice in: Health Related Services Leadership in Children's & Young People's Services Media, Journalism, Cinema & Television Systemic Practice	EdD DOst } }DProf } }	36 months part-time	See Programme Approval Document	60 months part-time	80,000
Master of Philosophy	MPhil	18 months full-time 30 months part-time	24 months full-time 36 months part-time	36 months full-time 48 months part-time	35,000

Master of Arts by Research	MA (Res)	10 months full-time 18 months part-time	12 months full-time 24 months part-time	15 months full-time 30 months part-time	30,000 words excluding appendices
Master of Science by Research	MSc (Res)	10 months full-time 18 months part-time	12 months full-time 24 months part-time	15 months full-time 30 months part-time	20,000 words excluding appendices

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4.1.2 Credit

- 4.1.2.1 Research degrees are not credit-rated and no staged or incremental credit will be awarded.

4.1.3 General entry requirements

- 4.1.3.1 Applicants must be able to demonstrate the motivation to undertake research at the appropriate level within the proposed field of study, and the potential to fulfil all of the learning outcomes as described by in the FHEQ descriptors appropriate to the intended award (see Annex 1). This will be tested by the development of a research proposal and at interview.
- 4.1.3.2 A Masters by Research requires a minimum of a lower second class honours, while the *minimum* entry requirement for all other research degrees is a first or upper second class honours undergraduate degree, or a master's degree, awarded by a university or other institution with degree-awarding powers in the United Kingdom, or equivalent.
- 4.1.3.3 An applicant holding qualifications other than those described in 4.1.3.2, will be considered on his or her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment shall be taken into consideration. An applicant wishing to be considered under this regulation must provide the names of suitable persons from whom the University may seek an opinion about his/her academic attainment and fitness for research. In such cases the application must be considered by the RDC.
- 4.1.3.4 Applicants must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English Language to successfully support study for the research degree to which the application is made. This will be assessed through interview and possession of an approved English Language Qualification at the appropriate level(s), as described on the University web site.
- 4.1.3.5 Applicants for research degrees in certain disciplines or certain research degree programmes may be required to fulfil particular entry requirements in respect of: subject-specific knowledge, professional qualification and/or experience, English Language proficiency or participation in an admissions assessment task. The discipline specific and programme-specific entry requirements will be listed on the Research Institute web sites.
- 4.1.3.6 The proposed research study must be considered to be:
- capable of leading to a scholarly outcome contributing to the advancement of knowledge at the appropriate level,
 - capable of meeting the University's ethical requirements; and
 - feasible within resource constraints.
- 4.1.3.7 An appropriate supervision team must be available.

4.1.4 Admission

- 4.1.4.1 Applications for research degrees are reviewed by the RGS to ensure they fulfil the initial screening criteria. These include, but are not limited to: meeting or having the potential to meet the general entry requirements for research degrees and, for international students, satisfying or having the potential to satisfy UKVI requirements (screening is conducted in partnership with the International Office).
- 4.1.4.2 Applications fulfilling the initial screening criteria will be passed to the relevant Research Institute Director(s) or their designated nominees for consideration by at least two members of academic staff.
- 4.1.4.3 Each person whose application shows promise in relation to the requirements for the award for which the application is made, and for which it is thought that a supervision team could be identified, should be interviewed (in person or by video-link or similar) to:
- assess the extent to which the applicant and application fulfil the general entry requirements (Section 4.1.3) and any discipline-specific or programme-specific entry requirements,
 - assess the proposed research study in relation to its fit with the research interests and expertise of the Research Institute(s) and/or Academic Department(s) which will host the applicant's study,
 - to determine whether bench fees are required for the study to progress, and
 - inform the appointment of supervisors and, where necessary, additional advisors.
- 4.1.4.4 At least one interviewer should be a potential supervisor for the applicant's research study.
- 4.1.4.5 Approval for admission is granted by the RGS on behalf of RDC, upon the recommendation of the Director(s) of the Research Institute(s); or in the case of applicants who are members of staff of the University, following additional scrutiny by the DVC(A) with reference to the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Degree Registration at the University of Bedfordshire*.
- 4.1.4.6 Applicants for PhDs are admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy with the possibility of transfer to PhD (MPhil/PhD). Exceptionally, with approval of the RDC, direct registration for the degree of PhD may be considered.
- 4.1.4.7 An applicant whose work forms part of a larger group project may register for an MPhil/PhD. Each individually registered project must be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award sought. The application must clearly indicate each individual's contribution and its relationship to the group project.

4.1.5 Registration and re-registration

- 4.1.5.1 All new research students are required to register within a period specified by the RGS. This will include signing the registration documentation, which will confer

provisional registration, as well as setting the fee anniversary and maximum registration dates. Full registration will be conferred when the student pays any fees that are due and meets all other requirements necessary.

- 4.1.5.2 Subsequent academic progression and fee liabilities are measured relative to the date of initial registration, except when periods of RDC-approved interruption of studies or RDC-approved individual extensions (section 4.1.19) defer progression points and fee anniversary dates.
- 4.1.5.3 Continuing research degree students must re-register at the beginning of each academic year and this process updates the contract between the student and the University.
- 4.1.5.4 Eligibility for re-registration is confirmed annually and is dependent upon the student making satisfactory academic progress, fulfilling UKVI requirements and being in good financial standing.

4.1.6 Collaborating establishments

- 4.1.6.1 Co-operation on a programme of research may be formalised with one or more collaborating establishments external to the University. Collaboration normally implies the applicant's use of facilities and other resources, including supervision, provided jointly by the University and the collaborating establishment.
- 4.1.6.2 The nature of the collaborating arrangement and the supervisory arrangements will be reported to the RDC and acknowledged within the student's thesis.

4.1.7 Studies not based at the University of Bedfordshire

- 4.1.7.1 For studies not to be based at a University of Bedfordshire campus, the RDC must be satisfied that:
 - The facilities, resources and support available for the research study are of an adequate standard.
 - The arrangements proposed for supervision enable frequent and substantial contact between the student and all supervisors, in line with the general regulations for supervision (section 4.1.10) and provide contact with at least one supervisor on a monthly basis (full-time students) or every 2 months (part-time students).
 - A timetable for intended study visits has been agreed and will be renewed annually.
- 4.1.7.2 Unless there is prior agreement, the student is expected to spend at least six weeks per year at the University of Bedfordshire and must attend for the progression point and final examinations.
- 4.1.7.3 Part-time Masters by Research programmes may be undertaken either at the University or as a work-based study. For applicants applying to undertake their research project in industry, commerce or another workplace, the application must be accompanied by formal, written approval by the line manager.

4.1.8 Application to submit a portfolio of research studies

- 4.1.8.1 In some subject areas it may be appropriate for applicants for the Masters by Research to conduct a series of studies rather than a single study. Such a proposal, and the consequent intention to submit a portfolio of research projects for final examination, should be clearly delineated in the description of the approved research topic at the time of admission.
- 4.1.8.2 If a registered student wishes to change from preparing a portfolio of research studies to conducting a single study as the basis for their thesis, or vice versa, section 4.1.12 'change of research topic' shall apply.

4.1.9 Staff

- 4.1.9.1 Students who are members of staff of the University of Bedfordshire, or a Partner Institution, are subject to additional regulations codified in the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Degree Registration at the University of Bedfordshire*.
- 4.1.9.2 Students in receipt of a studentship through the University payroll are categorised as staff and must familiarise themselves with the expectations and limitations of their individual bursary or studentship agreement, and the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Degree Registration at the University of Bedfordshire*.

4.1.10 Supervision and associated record-keeping

- 4.1.10.1 The Research Institute Director will appoint the supervisory team for individual students when an offer is made on the basis of the requirements set out in this section and in consultation with the Head(s) of School or line manager(s) of the staff concerned. The RDC will confirm supervisory teams and must approve any subsequent changes
- 4.1.10.2 All research degree students will have at least two supervisors who are members of the University's academic staff. A student should not normally have more than three supervisors.
- 4.1.10.3 An external supervisor with a visiting appointment only, is not a member the University's academic staff and can only be appointed in addition to the two internal supervisors. An internal supervisor must hold a fractional appointment with the University to be approved as one of the two supervisors who are members of the academic staff.
- 4.1.10.4 One supervisor will be designated as the Director of Studies. This supervisor will be the first point of contact for the student and lead the regular supervision process.
- 4.1.10.5 At least one supervisor will have experience of supervising students to the successful completion of a research degree at the level at which the student is studying.
- 4.1.10.6 Members of a supervisory team are expected to have attained a research degree at the same or a higher level than the level at which the student is being assessed.

- 4.1.10.7 The Director of Studies and/or another supervisor will have recorded meetings with the student on a regular and frequent basis, as defined by University policy determined by the RDC. In the absence of the Director of Studies, the second supervisor will ensure supervisory meetings occur on a regular and frequent basis.
- 4.1.10.8 A research student, other than a student for a PhD by published work or a student for a Higher Doctorate, whether based at the University of Bedfordshire or at another institution, is ineligible to act in any supervisory capacity for another research student.
- 4.1.10.9 All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the RDC with regard to their continued professional development.
- 4.1.10.10 Supervisors are required to undertake a training needs analysis with each student in line with University policy as determined by RDC.
- 4.1.11 Research integrity**
- 4.1.11.1 Students must conduct their research degree studies in line with the University's policy on Ethical Procedures, Good Research Practice and Research Misconduct https://www.beds.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/43951/EthicsGoodResPractandResMisconduct3.pdf
- 4.1.11.2 Ethical approval for the research study must be obtained and if the approved research study is refined or changed it must be re-screened by the Director of Studies to determine whether it requires additional scrutiny.
- 4.1.12 Research topic**
- 4.1.12.1 The approved research topic must be described at the time of admission or, for Professional Doctorate Programmes, at the point designated in the Programme Approval Document.
- 4.1.12.2 Refinement of the approved topic is a normal part of the research and supervisory process and is confirmed at assessment points. If the student wishes to change their approved research topic, s/he must apply to the RDC for approval.
- 4.1.12.3 If there is any doubt about whether proposed changes are a minor refinement or a substantial change then they should be referred to RDC's scrutiny panel for consideration.
- 4.1.13 Attendance, time commitment, leave and additional paid work**
- 4.1.13.1 Full-time students are expected to devote a minimum of 37 hours per week to their research and related activities. Part-time students are designated 0.5FTE and therefore expected to devote a minimum of 18.5 hours per week to their research and related activities.
- 4.1.13.2 Full-time students must be available to undertake their research, attend related training or other relevant events, and meet supervisors at the University throughout the normal working week; except if the supervision team (or if

appropriate, the RGS or International Office) has granted permission for the student to be elsewhere.

- 4.1.13.3 Part-time students should attend all taught or other contact elements of their research degree programme, including regular meetings with their supervisors.
- 4.1.13.4 International Students must comply with visa monitoring processes in relation to attendance and engagement with their research degree studies, and visa restrictions and associated University processes in relation to leave and paid work.
- 4.1.13.5 Students who have agreed absences for data collection and conference attendance must maintain weekly contact with their supervisors.
- 4.1.13.6 Full-time and part-time students must undertake any mandatory training as determined by RDC or by their Director of Studies.
- 4.1.13.7 Full-time students must declare any paid work they undertake to their Director of Studies and must comply with the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Degree Registration at the University of Bedfordshire*.
- 4.1.13.8 Part-time students, whether or not University staff, who undertake paid work for the University or a Partner Institution must consult the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Degree Registration at the University of Bedfordshire* to ensure they observe the strict limit on hours of work.

4.1.14 Progression points

- 4.1.14.1 For Master's by Research students there will be a single progression point assessment (MiPP) at the mid-point of their studies and which must be completed successfully prior to submission of the final thesis or portfolio. Students who do not complete the MiPP successfully will have their registration withdrawn under regulation 4.1.21.
- 4.1.14.2 For MPhil, MPhil/PhD and Professional Doctorate students there will be a summative assessment (Part 1 Progression Point, 'PP1') which must be completed successfully during Part 1 of the research degree programme and confirmed by RDC. Students who do not complete PP1 successfully within Part 1 will have their registration withdrawn under regulation 4.1.21.
- 4.1.14.3 For MPhil/PhD and Professional Doctorate students there will be a summative assessment (Part 2 Progression Point, 'PP2') which must be completed successfully during Part 2 of the research degree programme and confirmed by RDC.
- 4.1.14.4 For students registered on the PhD via transfer from MPhil programme, successful completion of the PP2 is the point at which transfer to PhD registration occurs.
- 4.1.14.5 Students who do not complete PP2 successfully within Part 2 will remain on the MPhil programme. The independent Chair will prepare an agreed statement on behalf of the examiners detailing the deficiencies in the submission and the reasons for the decision. This will be forward to the RDC for consideration.

4.1.14.6 For each Professional Doctorate programme, the progression point summative assessments will be detailed in the Programme Approval Document.

4.1.14.7 The outcomes of progression point assessments are confirmed by RDC.

4.1.15 Application to transfer from PhD to MPhil registration

4.1.15.1 A student who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved research may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to the RDC for their registration to be changed to that of the degree of MPhil.

4.1.16 Application to transfer from MPhil only registration to PhD registration

4.1.16.1 Exceptionally, with the support of the supervisory team and the Director of the Research Institute, a student initially registered for the degree of MPhil only, may apply to the RDC to transfer his or her registration to PhD. For full-time students, such an application should be made no less than 12 months after the date of initial registration and no more than 18 months after the same date. For part-time students the application may be made between 18 and 27 months following the date of the initial registration. A full progress report by the supervisory team will be submitted to the RDC along with the application for transfer.

4.1.16.2 The process of approving such a transfer enables the student to progress to Part 2 of their studies.

4.1.17 Student progress monitoring

4.1.17.1 An annual monitoring process, as defined by the RDC, will be used to review the progress of each research student.

4.1.17.2 Academic Progress Panels (APPs) may be undertaken at the request of the supervisory team, the student or the RGS in line with agreed University Policy.

4.1.18 Programme of related studies

4.1.18.1 A student may be required to follow a programme of related studies, as determined through the training needs analysis, for the attainment of competence in research methods or of knowledge related to the subject of the thesis or portfolio.

4.1.18.2 The supervisory team and student must identify how the programme of related studies will be achieved and record this in the supervision record. Monitoring of progress through to completion must also be recorded in the supervision record.

4.1.18.3 The University may exceptionally permit a student to register for another course concurrently with the research degree, provided that either the research degree or the other course is by part-time mode of study and that, in the opinion of the RDC, the dual registration will not detract from the research and the same work is not being counted towards different awards.

4.1.19 Interruptions and extension of studies

- 4.1.19.1 Where a student is prevented from engaging with his/her research he/she can apply to the RDC to interrupt their studies for a period of between three months and twelve months. Students who are interrupted have email access but do not have access to other University facilities or to supervision during this period.
- 4.1.19.2 The student should make an application for interruption before the requested period of interruption begins. RDC will confirm the start date and duration of any agreed period of interruption.
- 4.1.19.3 Unless exceptionally agreed by the RDC, interruption of registration shall not exceed 12 months in total during the research degree programme.
- 4.1.19.4 Students may apply for maternity, paternity or adoption leave, as described in the relevant policy and this does not count towards their maximum period of allowed interruption.
- 4.1.19.5 Where a student's progress with his/her research continues but is unavoidably and severely slowed by a circumstance beyond the control of the student, the RDC may approve an extension to the student's period of registration, or an extension of an assessment deadline.
- 4.1.19.6 Students with an agreed extension have the right of access to supervision and University facilities. There is no maximum period of extension. In granting periods of extension, RDC will ensure that the student is maintaining adequate progress with their studies.

4.1.20 Withdrawal from studies

- 4.1.20.1 Students wishing to withdraw must do so in writing to the Research Graduate School.

4.1.21 Termination of registration

- 4.1.21.1 The registration of a student can be terminated by the RDC where:
- i. academic progress is unsatisfactory
 - ii. recommended on the basis of a student's breach of financial standing and/ or visa requirements.
 - iii. recommended under the University's policies relating to research misconduct, student misconduct or academic offences.
 - iv. a student fails to re-register at the beginning of each academic year.
 - v. a student fails to submit his/her thesis/portfolio before the maximum period of registration

4.1.22 The thesis

- 4.1.22.1 A student's thesis must embody the results of the research conducted during the approved period of registration at the University.
- 4.1.22.2 The student should ensure that the thesis conforms to the format as outlined in the University '*Style Guide, Requirements and Procedure for Thesis Submission*'.

- 4.1.22.3 The student may submit a thesis for examination only after the minimum registration period has passed and before their maximum registration (see section 4.1). The decision to submit a thesis rests with the student alone.
- 4.1.22.4 The research may include creative work forming, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. The written thesis may be supplemented by material other than in written form. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of a written thesis and set in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical or design context. The final submission must be accompanied by some permanent record of the creative work, where practicable, bound with the thesis. It is the thesis which provides the basis for the examination.
- 4.1.22.5 If the main focus of the research is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, musical or choreographic work or other original artefacts, the completed submission will include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations and a substantial introduction and critical commentary which sets the text(s) in the relevant historical, theoretical or critical context.
- 4.1.22.6 The thesis must be presented in, and the oral examination held through, the medium of the English language.
- 4.1.22.7 The thesis must comply with the maximum word length as specified in section 4.1. Students, with the support of their Director of Studies, may make a case to the Research Institute Director for approval of an extended word length on the basis of the nature of the research undertaken. This should be agreed at least six months prior to submission.

4.1.23 Stages of assessment of the thesis or portfolio and oral defence

- 4.1.23.1 Assessment will consist of two stages:
- a) assessment of the thesis and any supplementary material as described in 4.1.22, by the examiners; and
 - b) the defence of the thesis by the student in an oral examination.
- 4.1.23.2 Both stages of assessment must be completed to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 4.1.23.3 The oral examination may be preceded by an oral presentation by the candidate to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board, lasting no more than twenty minutes, if:
- the candidate requests the inclusion of such a presentation at the time the thesis is submitted; or
 - at least one of the examiners requests such a presentation at least ten working days before the date of the oral examination.

4.1.24 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board

- 4.1.24.1 A candidate will be examined by at least two and normally not more than three examiners. At least one examiner must be external to the University of

Bedfordshire and any Partner Institution. No more than one examiner can be internal to the University or, where applicable, a Partner Institution. Examiners are appointed by the RDC.

- 4.1.24.2 An internal examiner will be defined as an examiner who is at appointment:
- a member of staff of the University on a full or part time contract; or
 - a member of staff appointed by the University from a partner institution.
- 4.1.24.3 It is not permitted for a member of the candidate's current or previous supervisory team to act as an examiner.
- 4.1.24.4 Where the candidate is a member of substantive staff at the University or a Partner Institution, a minimum of two external examiners must be appointed and no internal examiner will be appointed.
- 4.1.24.5 An independent Chair will be appointed by the RGS to oversee examinations. The role of the Chair is to ensure that the examination process is conducted fairly and in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures. The Chair attends the private meetings of the examiners, but is not an examiner and does not receive a copy of the thesis. For each examination the Chair and the examiners are constituted as the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.
- 4.1.24.6 In any instance where the RDC is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners. All involved parties must be informed of the circumstances and, where appropriate, be provided with the opportunity to respond.
- 4.1.24.7 The examining team must be experienced in research in the general area of the candidate's thesis and the external examiner(s) must have specialist experience in the topic(s) to be examined.
- 4.1.24.8 At least one examiner should have experience of examining research degree candidates. Between them the examination panel should have experience of at least three examinations at that level or above preferably at a UK-based Institution.
- 4.1.24.9 A research student, other than a student for a PhD by published work or a student for a Higher Doctorate, whether at the University or at another institution, is ineligible to act as an examiner.
- 4.1.24.10 Once the examiners have been appointed there must not, for the duration of the examination process, be any direct contact between the examiners and the candidate or the supervisory team on matters relating to the thesis or the examination. Any questions relating to the thesis or the examination must be addressed through the RGS or the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

4.1.25 The assessment procedure

- 4.1.25.1 Assessment is on the basis of the submitted thesis and the oral examination. Any presentation does not constitute a formal part of the assessment.

- 4.1.25.2 Each examiner must consider whether the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree by demonstrating that the candidate has met the learning outcomes (Annex 1). Each examiner must present a preliminary report on the thesis, independently of other parties, to the University. This should be submitted a minimum of five working days prior to the oral examination.
- 4.1.25.3 Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the candidate and approval by the RDC, one examiner may participate in the viva voce via an accepted form of video conferencing.
- 4.1.25.4 The candidate must be physically present at the viva voce, unless there are exceptional circumstances approved by RDC.
- 4.1.25.5 The Director of Studies or another member of the supervisory team may attend the oral examination as an observer upon invitation, in accordance with policies agreed by RDC
- 4.1.25.6 Candidates with recognised disabilities will be supported throughout the period of their studies. A mechanism may be agreed in advance of the viva voce examination which specifies how a candidate's specific requirements will be met so that they can defend their thesis and demonstrate the required outcomes for the award. No additional compensation must be made during the examination process.
- 4.1.25.7 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the candidate is recommended for the award of the degree for which he or she was registered. The thesis may contain minor errors deemed by the examiners to have no academic impact which need to be addressed before ratification.
 - b) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within three months of the RGS confirmation of the examination outcome (two months for a Research masters at NQF level7)
 - c) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within six months of the RGS confirmation of the examination outcome (four months for an Research masters at NQF level 7);
 - d) that the candidate is permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion within one year (see sections 4.1.26);
 - e) that the oral examination is reconvened at a later date
 - f) that the candidate is awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners within 3 months. The examiners may determine whether a further viva is required. This does not apply to MPhil or Masters by Research students.
 - g) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.1.27).
- 4.1.25.8 Where the recommendation is to award, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board is required to submit a report to the RDC which, together with the

independent preliminary reports, provides evidence that the scope and quality of the work satisfies the criteria for the award of the degree.

- 4.1.25.9 Where minor or substantive amendments and corrections are required, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will indicate these to the candidate in an agreed written statement via the RGS within ten working days of the viva. This will also identify which examiner(s) will be responsible for approving the amendments and corrections.
- 4.1.25.10 Once corrections and amendments have been completed to the satisfaction of the examining team then a recommendation to award will be made to the RDC.
- 4.1.25.11 Candidates who do not submit their corrections and amendments by the deadline will have the examiners decide the outcome on the basis of the original thesis submission and viva.
- 4.1.25.12 Where corrections are not completed to the complete satisfaction of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board, the student may be given one month to make further amendments in response to written feedback from the examiners, required to undergo re-submission and re-examination or recommended for a lower award in line with 4.1.25.7.

4.1.26 Re-submission and re-examination

- 4.1.26.1 Where revision and resubmission is required, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will provide the candidate with written guidance on the aspects of the first submission that require improvement to meet the learning outcomes. The candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of six months (for Masters by Research/MPhil) or one calendar year (for all other postgraduate research degrees) from the date of the oral examination.
- 4.1.26.2 Re-examination follows the same procedure as for the initial examination. The Postgraduate Research Examination Board will determine whether there is a requirement for a further viva examination either at the initial assessment or when considering the corrected thesis.
- 4.1.26.3 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board for a re-examination will agree on one of the following recommendations for consideration by RDC:
 - a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered possibly subject to the minor correction of typographical or other errors within a period of three months (one month for NQF level 7 Research degrees, and PhD by Publication).
 - b) in the case of a PhD or Professional Doctorate examination only, that the candidate is awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners within three months.
 - c) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.1.27).
- 4.1.26.4 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board for a re-examination will normally have the same composition as the original Board. Where it is necessary to appoint new and/or additional examiners for the re-examination, this will follow the

regulations for the appointment of examiners. Any newly appointed examiners will be provided with details of the outcome of the initial assessment.

4.1.27 Failure at examination

4.1.27.1 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends that the degree not be awarded and no re-examination permitted, or where the candidate is recommended the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners, then the Board must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their decision which will be forwarded to the student and to RDC.

4.1.27.2 RDC will consider the statement, together with all of the relevant examination documentation. Where the recommendation is upheld, the student's registration for their original award is deemed to have been terminated. Where the recommendation for a lower award is upheld the student's registration will be amended accordingly.

4.1.28 Examiners not in agreement

4.1.28.1 Where the examiners cannot reach agreement following an oral examination or after amendments, the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will submit his/her report, the examiners' separate (preliminary and post oral examination) reports and recommendations, to a meeting of the RDC which may:

- accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation concurs with at least one external examiner)
- accept the decision of the external examiner (where there is only one on the examination team)
- appoint an additional external examiner who meets all relevant criteria for appointment.

4.1.28.2 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they will prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and may decide to conduct a further oral examination. This additional examination will be considered part of the initial examination and should be chaired by the same Chair where possible.

4.1.28.3 The newly appointed examiner may be informed that there has been a disagreement between the initial examiners but should not be informed of the specific recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the RDC will reconsider the outcome as per 4.1.25.8.

4.1.29 Awards and outcomes

4.1.29.1 The date of award is the date of approval by the RDC.

4.1.29.2 In the case of proven cases of academic misconduct, the RDC may determine an appropriate penalty in accordance with the procedures for investigating Research Misconduct.

4.1.30 Appeals

- 4.1.30.1 A research student may appeal against the decision of the RDC in accordance with the University's policy regarding academic appeals.

4.2 Regulations specific to the award of Professional Doctorates

4.2.1 Definition of award

- 4.2.1.1 A professional doctorate is a research degree located in a field of professional practice *and* an academic discipline. It provides a route to a doctorate that is distinct from a PhD in the same field/discipline.
- 4.2.1.2 The title of a professional doctorate award will normally reflect the field of professional practice. The titles of awards from professional doctorate programmes are approved by RDC and Academic Board.
- 4.2.1.3 In addition to the general regulations the following regulations apply to Professional Doctorates.

4.2.2 Directed studies and research study

- 4.2.2.1 Directed studies provide preparation for the research study and/or complement the research study. Directed studies may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following: taught modules, a series of participative workshops or similar, specified research-informed professional practice in the field of the doctorate, a publishable systematic literature review, a pilot study or similar preparatory work. The programme of directed studies for each professional doctorate programme will be detailed in the Programme Approval Document.
- 4.2.2.2 The research study will relate to an area of professional practice pertinent to the field of the professional doctorate programme and will meet the UK requirements for a doctoral award (see Annex 1, Level 8 outcomes).
- 4.2.2.3 The Programme Approval Document will specify whether successful completion of all or part of the directed studies is a prerequisite for commencing the research study.
- 4.2.2.4 If a professional doctorate programme offers the possibility of an exit award at a lower level, the requirements for this award shall be detailed in the Programme Approval Document.

4.2.3 Entry requirements

- 4.2.3.1 Applicants may be admitted to an approved professional doctorate programme if:
- a) the applicant meets the general University entry requirements for doctoral degrees (section 4.1.3),
 - b) the applicant meets any programme-specific entry requirements (detailed in the programme approval documents),
 - c) an appropriate supervision team is available, and
 - d) the minimum cohort size for the professional doctorate programme is reached.

4.2.3.2 An applicant will normally be in relevant employment and may be required to hold a specified professional qualification and/or to have completed a specified period of professional practice in the field of the award.

4.2.4 Supervision

4.2.4.1 One of the supervisors shall normally be an appropriately qualified or experienced individual in the area of practice of the professional doctorate.

4.2.4.2 The supervisory team and student must identify the approved research topic at the point designated in the Programme Approval Document and record this in the supervision record.

4.2.5 Progression points

4.2.5.1 Successful completion of the Programme of Directed Studies is required before submission of the thesis and at any earlier date set in the Programme Approval Document (e.g. the successful completion of directed studies may be a prerequisite for commencing the research study).

4.2.5.2 The Programme Approval Document will specify at least two Progression Points; normally a summative assessment (or group of summative assessments) in Part 1 that must be successfully completed to allow progression to Part 2, and a summative assessment (or group of summative assessments) in Part 2 that must be successfully completed to allow progression to Part 3. The outcomes of the Progression Points must be confirmed by RDC.

4.2.6 Assessment of Directed Study

4.2.6.1 Assessment of assignments will be governed by the following:

- a) Where feasible, assessments should be submitted and marked anonymously.
- b) The assessment of a piece of work involves the following stages: initial grading as pass/fail by the principal internal examiner; the second marking of a sample by a second internal examiner; the moderation of a sample by the external examiner; and a decision by a Professional Doctorate Examination Board.
- c) If written assignments exceed the stipulated number of words they will not be accepted. If work is not submitted in the specified format, the work should be forwarded to the Professional Doctorate Examination Board who will consider whether the work should be accepted.

4.2.6.2 Any grades assigned to the Programme of Directed Studies stage do not contribute to the final assessment of the award, which is based on submission of the thesis and oral examination.

4.2.6.3 If a professional doctorate has a Programme of Directed Studies in the form of a taught stage units these are graded on a pass/fail basis only. A record of such units is maintained by the RGS.

4.2.6.4 Students must submit their assignments as specified in the assignment brief. Failure to submit by the published deadline will be classed as a non-submission.

4.2.6.5 Students who submit all elements of assessment but do not successfully complete the unit have a further opportunity to pass the unit by undertaking a referral of any failed element of assessment at the next opportunity. Students who do not pass the unit at this point will be withdrawn from the professional doctorate programme.

4.2.7 Final Assessment

4.2.7.1 A doctorate shall be awarded to a student who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to professional practice and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination, to the satisfaction of the examiners and in line with national expectations for doctoral awards (Annex 1, Level 8 outcomes).

4.2.7.2 The arrangements for examination and, where necessary, re-examination, of the final thesis follow those for the assessment of other doctorates as set out elsewhere in these regulations.

4.3 Regulations specific to the award of PhD by published work

Unless specified in this section, the regulations for the Doctor of Philosophy based on Published Work follow the same regulations as those governing a PhD.

4.3.1 Eligibility

4.3.1.1 The University will normally only consider applications from current members of staff of the University, or of a formally recognised collaborative partner institution, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy based on published work.

4.3.1.2 Students must remain members of staff of the University or of the partner institution throughout the period of registration.

4.3.2 Admission

4.3.2.1 A formal application for admission must be submitted to the RDC, via the Research Graduate School. This does not preclude preliminary discussions between a potential applicant and a potential Director of Studies to refine the candidature proposal.

4.3.2.2 The formal application will comprise:

- Evidence of eligibility
- A list of works upon which the candidature is to be based.
- Details of where and when the research upon which the listed works were based was undertaken.
- An outline discussion (of not less than 3,000 words) of the contribution of the published works to the advancement of the field of study.

4.3.2.3 The Research Graduate School will screen the application for eligibility and circulate to the relevant Director(s) of Research Institute(s).

4.3.2.4 Eligible applications should be reviewed by at least two members of academic staff from the relevant research institute(s) or academic department(s), who will make a recommendation to the Director(s) of Research Institute(s). The applicant may be interviewed. The recommendation shall be 'admit' or 'reject' based upon both the quality of the application and the availability of a Director of Studies.

4.3.2.5 Recommended admissions and reasons for rejections will be presented by the Research Institute Director to the RDC.

4.3.3 Supervision

4.3.3.1 During the period of registration, a member of staff of the University of Bedfordshire will be appointed as Director of Studies to supervise the compilation of the final submission (portfolio) and to ensure that procedures relating to the appointment of examiners and examination arrangements are completed.

4.3.4 The portfolio

4.3.4.1 The portfolio shall comprise:

- a) The publications and any other artefacts upon which the candidature is based.
- b) A declaration of the student's contribution to each of any jointly authored or jointly produced artefacts upon which the candidature is based.
- c) A substantial introduction and critical commentary, typically between 5,000 and 10,000 words, which sets the publications and any non-textual artefacts in the relevant historical, theoretical, critical or design context and demonstrates that the assessment criteria have been met.

4.3.4.2 The portfolio must conform to the format as outlined in the University '*Style Guide, Requirements and Procedure for Thesis Submission*'.

4.3.4.3 The research may include creative work forming, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of the commentary. The portfolio must include some permanent record of the creative work, where practicable, bound with the commentary.

4.3.4.4 The portfolio must be presented in the English language.

4.3.5 Appointment of examiners

4.3.5.1 A student will be examined by a minimum of two external examiners. Where the research topic is interdisciplinary, external examiners must be appointed, to represent each discipline or the interdisciplinary nature of the work.

4.3.5.2 An independent Chair will be appointed by the Research Graduate School to conduct all examinations. The role of the Chair is to ensure that the examination process is conducted fairly and in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures. The Chair attends the private meetings of the examiners, but is not an examiner and does not receive a copy of the portfolio. For each examination the Chair and the examiners are constituted as a Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

- 4.3.5.3 In any instance where the RDC is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process to the detriment of the student, it may at a full meeting of the committee declare the examination null and void, and may appoint new examiners. All involved parties must be informed of the circumstances and where appropriate be provided with the opportunity to respond.
- 4.3.5.4 The external examiners must have specialist experience in research in the topic(s) of the student's portfolio.
- 4.3.5.5 The external examiners should normally have experience of examining research degree students and at least one examiner should also have substantial experience (normally three or more previous examinations at Doctoral level, preferably at UK-based Institutions).
- 4.3.5.6 Once the examiners have been appointed there must not, for the duration of the examination process, be any direct contact between the examiners and the student or the Director of Studies on matters relating to the portfolio or the examination. Any questions relating to the portfolio or the examination must be addressed through the Research Graduate School or the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

4.3.6 Stages of assessment of the portfolio and oral defence

- 4.3.6.1 Assessment will consist of two stages:
- a) the submission to, and assessment of, the portfolio by the examiners; and
 - b) the defence of the portfolio by the student by oral examination.
- 4.3.6.2 In examining the student, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board must determine whether the
- a) work submitted demonstrates that the student has completed research at least comparable in scope and depth to that required to prepare a PhD thesis in the field concerned;
 - b) portfolio demonstrates that the student has personally made a systematic study (in a single field or closely related fields);
 - c) student has shown originality by the exercise of independent critical power and has made a distinct contribution to knowledge; and
 - d) student meets the same learning outcomes as those for a standard PhD (Annex 1, Level 8 outcomes).

4.3.7 Assessment outcomes

- 4.3.7.1 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the student be awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (the thesis may contain minor errors deemed by the examiners to have no academic impact which need to be addressed before ratification);
 - b) that the student be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the portfolio within three months of the viva
 - c) that the student be awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments and corrections being made to the portfolio within six months of the viva;

- d) that the student be permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion (see section 4.3.8);
- e) that the student be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**).

4.3.8 Re-submission and re-examination

4.3.8.1 The outcomes available to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board on conclusion of a re-examination are:

- a) that the student be awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (possibly subject to minor corrections to be completed within a period of one month);
- b) that the student be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined.

4.4 Regulations specific to the award of Higher Doctorates

4.4.1 Accountability

4.4.1.1 University regulations and procedures for Higher Doctorates recognise that there is the potential for a conflict of interest between applicants and the Research Institutes in which they are likely to be active. Whilst the application process is overseen by the RDC, the final decision is the responsibility of the University's Professorial Promotions Panel involving the Vice-Chancellor and senior colleagues.

4.4.2 Awards

4.4.2.1 The University may confer an award of Doctor of Laws (LLD), Doctor of Letters (DLitt) or Doctor of Science (DSc) upon a candidate who is adjudged to have distinguished him/herself through published contributions to a field of study. A student must demonstrate:

- a) Contributions of originality and merit in the field;
- b) Sustained and substantial contributions to the advancement of knowledge, over a number of years;
- c) Seminal publications which have led to extensions or the development of knowledge by others; and
- d) Authoritative standing in the field of study.

4.4.3 Eligibility

4.4.3.1 Applicants should be either:

- a) a graduate of the University of not less than six years standing; or
- b) a member of the academic staff who has completed a minimum of three years' full or part-time service; or
- c) a member of staff of a recognised collaborative partner for taught or research provision where the partnership has been in operation for five years and the applicant has at least three years' full or part-time service.

4.4.3.2 Normally, applicants must have a minimum of ten years research experience at post-doctoral level.

4.4.4 Admission

- 4.4.4.1 A written application for admission must be submitted to the RDC, via the Research Graduate School.
- 4.4.4.2 An applicant is required to establish a *prima facie* case that s/he possesses an appropriate body of work and sufficient standing in the field of study in relation to the criteria for awards (section 4.4.2.1).
- 4.4.4.3 The application must include the following, in English:
- a) Evidence of eligibility (section 4.4.3);
 - b) Proposed title;
 - c) Identification of the intended award (LLD, DLitt or DSc);
 - d) A *curriculum vitae*;
 - e) A numbered publications list, indicating which of the listed publications the applicant plans to submit for the Higher Doctorate assessment (see section 4.4.6.1 for the minimum and maximum number of publications to be examined);
 - f) Details of where and when the research was undertaken, upon which the listed publications were based;
 - g) A statement as to whether or not the work or any part thereof has been submitted, successfully or unsuccessfully, for a degree of this type, at this or any other University;
 - h) A statement describing any previous submission of a listed publication for a degree at this or any other university;
 - i) For publications that the applicant intends to submit for the Higher Doctorate assessment (see point e above) a statement of the applicant's contribution to the research upon which these publications were based, and in the case of jointly authored publications, a declaration of the applicant's contribution to authorship. Note: the University reserves the right to consult with any of the co-authors or collaborators in respect of this declaration;
 - j) An outline description (approximately 2,000 words), with reference to specific publications and items on the *curriculum vitae*, indicating how the applicant's body of work and professional standing fulfils the requirements for the award (section).
 - k) A sample of published works from the list the applicant plans to submit for the Higher Doctorate assessment (see point e above). The sample should include at least four and no more than ten key publications that are highlighted in the outline description. An electronic copy of each sample publication is preferred, but two paper copies may be provided instead.
 - l) Declaration of any conflict of interest which may impinge upon the selection of reviewers for the application, or examiners for the final submission.
- 4.4.4.4 Eligible applications will be reviewed by two members of academic staff, at the level of professor or reader, from the relevant research institute(s) or academic department(s) and one from another research institute. Each reviewer must prepare a short report and make a recommendation to the RDC on whether the application should proceed.
- 4.4.4.5 The RDC will decide whether to accept the application, based upon the recommendations of the internal reviewers.
- 4.4.4.6 If an application is unsuccessful, no further application for a higher doctorate will be considered until at least two years has elapsed from the date of the original application.

4.4.5 Supervision

- 4.4.5.1 Given the evident standing of the applicant, the appointment of a Director of Studies is not appropriate. However, at the request of the student, the University may appoint an experienced academic to act as a critical friend in the preparation of the Portfolio.

4.4.6 The portfolio

- 4.4.6.1 The portfolio (three paper copies and one electronic copy) shall comprise:
- Title page including: title for the submission, the degree for which it is submitted, the student's full name, prior degrees with awarding universities and dates of awards.
 - An abstract, not normally exceeding 300 words, summarising the contribution to knowledge represented by the published works.
 - A list of the publications submitted for assessment - at least four and no more than 50 publications, at least 75% of which should meet the criteria for submission to the UK's Research Excellence Framework.
 - A statement of the authorship (including contributions to joint authorship) of the submitted publications, and the extent of the student's contribution to the work underpinning the submitted publications.
 - A statement describing where and when the underpinning work was undertaken.
 - A statement describing any previous submission of the publications for a degree at this or any other university.
 - A *curriculum vitae* demonstrating the student's standing in the field.
 - A detailed critical appraisal (5000 words maximum) that through reference to selected publications and other achievements clearly demonstrates how the student meets the criteria for the award (section **Error! Reference source not found.**).
 - The publications listed in c) above
- 4.4.6.2 The portfolio must conform to the format as outlined in the University '*Style Guide, Requirements and Procedure for Thesis Submission*'.
- 4.4.6.3 The portfolio may include creative work forming, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of the commentary. The portfolio must include some permanent record of the creative work, where practicable, bound with the commentary.
- 4.4.6.4 The portfolio must be presented in the English language.

4.4.7 Appointment of assessors

- 4.4.7.1 The portfolio will be assessed by a minimum of three assessors, at least two of whom will be external to the University and at least one of whom will be based outside the UK unless the RDC is satisfied that no suitable external student with the necessary expertise and/or independence can be appointed.
- 4.4.7.2 The assessors must have a significant knowledge of research in the field of the student's portfolio, as a researcher, commissioner of research or policy-maker. Only people of seniority and experience, who are able to command authority within the field of research, will be appointed as assessors.

- 4.4.7.3 Each assessor must have experience of examining doctoral degree students; normally three or more previous examinations at Doctoral level. At least one assessor should have experience of evaluating post-doctoral research (e.g. as a Research Effectiveness Framework reviewer or equivalent, a member of a research funding award panel, or prior experience of assessing a higher doctorate).
- 4.4.7.4 The RDC will consider recommendations for assessors from the Research Institute or senior faculty staff and ensure their independence from the student .
- 4.4.7.5 An independent Chair will be appointed by the Research Graduate School to assist the assessors and ensure that the assessment process is conducted fairly and in accordance with the University's regulations and procedures. The Chair is not an assessor and does not receive a copy of the portfolio. The Chair and the assessors are constituted as a Postgraduate Research Examination Board.
- 4.4.7.6 Once the assessors have been appointed there must not, for the duration of the assessment process, be any direct contact between the examiners and the student on matters relating to the portfolio or the assessment. Any questions relating to the portfolio or the assessment must be addressed through the Research Graduate School or the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.
- 4.4.7.7 In any instance where the RDC is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the assessment process to the detriment of the student, it may, at a full meeting of the committee, declare the assessment null and void and may appoint new assessors. All involved parties must be informed of the circumstances and where appropriate be provided with the opportunity to respond.

4.4.8 Assessment

- 4.4.8.1 Each assessor must consider whether the portfolio satisfies the requirements for the degree (section **Error! Reference source not found.**) and submit an independent recommendation and brief report to the Chair, via the Research Graduate School. The recommendation will be either:
- a) The Higher Doctorate be awarded for the portfolio submitted; or
 - b) No degree be awarded.
- 4.4.8.2 The Chair will review the independent recommendations and reports and verify compliance with University regulations and processes.
- 4.4.8.3 If the assessors' recommendations are unanimous, the Chair will make the appropriate recommendation to the University's Professorial Promotions Panel with a brief supporting statement.
- 4.4.8.4 If the assessors' recommendations are not unanimous, each will be furnished with the recommendations and brief reports of the others and the Chair will lead a discussion that aims to achieve a consensus recommendation.
- 4.4.8.5 If after discussion, facilitated by the Chair, a consensus is not reached, the Chair will make a report and recommendation to the Professorial Promotions Panel. The Chair may recommend that the decision of the majority of assessors is accepted or that the case for the award is not unequivocally made.

- 4.4.8.6 Where the decision is that no degree be awarded, the student may reapply to be accepted as a higher doctorate student on one further occasion, after a minimum of three years has elapsed since the submission for assessment of the first portfolio.
- 4.4.8.7 The outcomes will be reported to Academic Board in the same manner as professorial appointments.

APPROVED

Annex 1: Doctoral and Research Master's qualification descriptors and Characteristics

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

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards
PART A The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding
Bodies, QAA October 2014. www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2843#.VnkY_raLSUK

4.17 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS: master's degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any master's degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 7/ SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS, including postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

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:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
 - 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.

Research master's degrees: Characteristics of graduates

Characteristics Statement, UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, Master's Degree, QAA September 2015 available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Masters-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf>

The Qualifications Frameworks level descriptor for the master's degree includes generic information about what all holders of the master's qualification are able to do, and the qualities and skills that they have (see the Qualifications Frameworks for details).

Beyond these core attributes, master's graduates are diverse, with wide-ranging strengths and abilities. This is a reflection of the diversity of master's programmes available as well as students' different aspirations, motivations, learning needs and personal circumstances.

Nonetheless, all master's degree graduates have in-depth and advanced knowledge and understanding of their subject and/or profession, informed by current practice, scholarship and research. This will include a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject and/or profession; critical skills; knowledge of professional responsibility, integrity and ethics; and the ability to reflect on their own progress as a learner.

Graduates of research master's are likely to be further characterised by their ability to study independently in the subject, and to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the subject. Graduates of specialist or advanced study master's are likely to be characterised in particular by their ability to complete a research project in the subject, which in some subjects includes a critical review of existing literature or other scholarly outputs. Meanwhile, graduates of professional or practice master's are able to apply research and critical perspectives to professional situations, both practical and theoretical, and to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to their professional activities.

Graduates of all types of master's degrees are equipped to enter a variety of types of employment (either subject-specific or generalist) or to continue academic study at a higher level, for example a doctorate (provided that they meet the necessary entry requirements). Graduates of professional/practice master's programmes in particular possess the skills and experience necessary for some professions or areas of practice.

The following characteristics are often associated with research master's programmes.

- The student conducts a research project through independent study.
- They include research methods training, which may be provided through 'taught' content modules.
- Assessment is specific to the individual and usually requires a dissertation or thesis, or other output, such as an artefact, performance or musical composition. The thesis is commonly defended in an oral examination. Where students must successfully complete 'taught' modules are part of a research master's degree, the assessment of those components may be separate from the overall assessment.

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

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards
PART A The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding
Bodies, QAA October 2014. www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2843#.VnkY_raLSUk

4.18 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS: doctoral degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other level 8/level 12 qualifications.

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.

Characteristics of Doctoral Graduates

Characteristics Statement, Doctoral Degree, QAA, September 2015.

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

The Qualifications Frameworks level descriptor for the doctoral degree includes generic information about what all holders of the doctorate will be able to do, and the qualities and skills that they will have (see the Qualifications Frameworks for details).

Beyond these core attributes, doctoral researchers will have had diverse life experiences and varying opportunities during their doctoral studies, thus each graduate with a unique range of attributes. However, all doctoral graduates should be able to:

- search for, discover, access, retrieve, sift, interpret, analyse, evaluate, manage, conserve and communicate an ever-increasing volume of knowledge from a range of sources
- think critically about problems to produce innovative solutions and create new knowledge
- plan, manage and deliver projects, selecting and justifying appropriate methodological processes while recognising, evaluating and minimising the risks involved and impact on the environment
- exercise professional standards in research and research integrity, and engage in professional practice, including ethical, legal, and health and safety aspects, bringing enthusiasm, perseverance and integrity to bear on their work activities
- support, collaborate with and lead colleagues, using a range of teaching, communication and networking skills to influence practice and policy in diverse environments
- appreciate the need to engage in research with impact and to be able to communicate it to diverse audiences, including the public
- build relationships with peers, senior colleagues, students and stakeholders with sensitivity to equality, diversity and cultural issues.

Furthermore, doctoral researchers are increasingly being encouraged to develop their foreign language and enterprise skills, and to cultivate business acumen.

All doctoral graduates will have developed during the course of their research additional specialist knowledge within their discipline, while those who have studied a professional doctorate are likely to have been required to have particular professional experience that informs the topic of their research studies. They may well also have been required to engage in further study related to that professional field as part of their doctorate.

Finally, doctoral graduates are able to prepare, plan and manage their own career development while knowing when and where to draw on support.