

SECTION 4: REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES 2014-15

Abbreviations

FTE	Full-time equivalent
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
RGS	Research Graduate School
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Defining phases of Research Degrees

The following table names 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 to programme	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	
Examination period	Period between RGS accepting submission of the thesis and RDC confirmation of the final outcome (award or fail)	

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, and where there is evidence that a candidate is progressing ahead of schedule, the Research Degrees Committee may approve a shorter registration period.
- 4.2.3.6 Where a candidate is permitted to change his/her mode of study from full-time to part-time or vice versa, his/her 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.

	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	N/A	N/A
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 full-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 60 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 table continues ...

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

4.1.2 Credit

- 4.1.2.1 With the exception of professional doctorates (see section 4.4.2), 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 potential and motivation to undertake research at the appropriate level within the proposed field of study, and the ability to fulfil all of the learning outcomes (see Annex 1). This will normally be tested by interview and the development of a research proposal, or similar means.
- 4.1.3.2 With the exceptions of MA(Res), MSc(Res) (see section 4.2) and Higher Doctorates (see section 4.6), the normal *minimum* entry requirement for a research degree 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 in section 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 Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.1.3.4 Applicants must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English Language to support successful study for the research degree to which the application is made. This will be assessed through interview and/or possession of an approved English Language Qualification at the appropriate level(s), as described on the University web site for research degree applicants.
- 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. Research Degrees Committee will maintain a list of discipline-specific and programme-specific entry requirements, and review this annually.
- 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, and

- feasible within resource constraints.

4.1.3.7 An appropriate supervision team must be available.

4.1.4 Admission

4.1.4.1 The following admission regulations do not apply to the PhD by Publication or Higher Doctorates (see instead Sections 4.5.2 and 4.6.3). For all other research degrees:

4.1.4.2 A formal application for admission must be submitted to the Research Graduate School. This does not preclude preliminary discussions between potential applicants and potential supervisors to refine the research degree proposal.

4.1.4.3 Applications for research degrees are reviewed by the Research Graduate School to ensure they fulfil 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 conducted in partnership with the International Office).

4.1.4.4 Applications fulfilling initial screening criteria will be passed to the relevant Research Institute(s) and/or Faculty academic lead(s) for consideration by at least two members of academic staff.

4.1.4.5 Normally, each applicant 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, by telephone or by 'Skype' 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, and
- inform the appointment of supervisors and, where necessary, additional advisors.

Normally at least one interviewer would be a potential supervisor for the applicant's research study.

4.1.4.6 Approval for admission is granted by the Director of Research Development or Deputy Director of the Research Graduate School, upon the recommendation of the Director(s) of Research Institute(s) or the Faculty Lead(s) for research degrees; or in the case of applicants who are members of staff of the University, following additional scrutiny by the DVC(A) in relation to the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Regulations*.

4.1.4.7 Further to regulation 4.1.4.6, the approved research topic will be described within the recommendation for admission. The approved research topic will be summarised within the offer letter.

4.1.4.8 A list of admissions and rejections will be presented to each meeting of the Research Degrees Committee.

4.1.5 Registration and re-registration

4.1.5.1 All new research students are required to register within a registration period specified by the Research Graduate School (RGS), following the procedure notified by the RGS. This will include signing the registration documentation, which will confer provisional registration and set the fee anniversary and maximum registration dates. Full registration will be conferred when the student pays any fees that are due and meets any other requirements necessary to be in good financial standing with the University.

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 suspension of studies or RDC-approved individual extensions (section 4.1.11) defer progression points and fee anniversary dates.

4.1.5.3 Each continuing research degree student must re-register near the beginning of each academic year, following the procedures notified by the RGS, which mirror the initial registration processes and update 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 maintaining satisfactory academic progress and on 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 name of any collaborating establishment will be reported to the Research Degrees Committee and acknowledged within the candidate's thesis.

4.1.7 Studies not based at the University of Bedfordshire

4.1.7.1 For studies not to be based at the University of Bedfordshire the following conditions must be met:

- a) The University has satisfied itself that the facilities, resources and support available for the research study are satisfactory, both in the University of Bedfordshire and in the other Institution or Research Establishment, whether in the UK or abroad;
- b) 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 4.1.8) and provide face-to-face contact with at least one supervisor.

4.1.7.2 With the exception of students registered for the professional doctorate in Osteopathy, the student should normally spend no less than six weeks per year at the University of Bedfordshire.

4.1.8 Staff candidates

4.1.8.1 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 Regulations*.

4.1.8.2 Students in receipt of a bursary or studentship through the University payroll are categorised as staff candidates and must familiarise themselves with the expectations and limitations of their individual bursary or studentship agreement, and the *Policy on Staff Postgraduate Research Regulations*.

4.1.9 Supervision and associated record-keeping

4.1.9.1 The Research Degrees Committee will confirm the supervision arrangements for individual students upon admission and when changes are required thereafter. These confirmations will be informed by the recommendations of the relevant Director(s) of Research Institute(s), Head(s) of Academic Department(s) or Faculty Lead(s) for research degrees.

4.1.9.2 All research degree students will have at least two supervisors who are members of the University's academic staff. A student would not normally have more than three supervisors.

4.1.9.3 An external supervisor with a visiting appointment only, is not a member the University's academic staff and thus would be appointed in addition to two internal supervisors. An external supervisor may hold a fractional appointment for the supervision role and in such circumstances could be appointed as one of the two supervisors who are members of the academic staff.

4.1.9.4 In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute specialised knowledge or act as a link with a collaborating establishment.

4.1.9.5 One supervisor will be designated as the Director of Studies (first supervisor). This supervisor will be the first point of contact for the student and lead the

regular supervision process. This supervisor will be an experienced researcher in the field of the investigation.

- 4.1.9.6 At least one supervisor will have experience of supervising candidates to the successful completion of a research degree at the same level at which the student is studying. If the Director of Studies does not fill this requirement, the supervisor fulfilling this requirement should mentor the Director of Studies, or else a different mentor must be appointed.
- 4.1.9.7 Members of a supervisory team would normally be expected to have attained a research degree at the same or a higher level than the level at which the candidate will be assessed for.
- 4.1.9.8 The Director of Studies and/or another supervisor will meet with the student on a regular and frequent basis.
- 4.1.9.9 Students and supervisors must keep records of supervision. Full-time students must upload at least one formal supervision meeting record per month, through University approved processes. Part-time students must upload at least one formal supervision meeting record every two months, through University approved processes.
- 4.1.9.10 A research student, other than a candidate for a PhD by published work or a candidate for a Higher Doctorate, whether at the University or at another institution, is ineligible to act in any supervisory capacity for another research student.
- 4.1.9.11 All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the Research Degrees Committee with regard to their continued professional development.
- 4.1.9.12 Supervisors are required to undertake a training needs analysis with each student each academic year. This should include the development of discipline specific and transferable skills. Where the student will require additional English language training in order to be in a position to write and defend their thesis, this must be formally noted and reported to the Research Degrees Committee.

4.1.10 Research Integrity

- 4.1.10.1 Research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations placed upon researchers within *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity* (Universities UK, 2012), namely: honesty; rigour; care and respect; active & appropriate consideration of ethical issues; compliance with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders, and other relevant stakeholders; act in good faith with regard to allegations of research misconduct, whether in making allegations or in being required to participate in an investigation; handle potential instances of research misconduct in an appropriate manner.

4.1.10.2 All research degree studies require screening to determine whether they must gain approval from a research ethics committee (at Research Institute, Faculty or University levels; or external organisation(s), as appropriate, e.g. the National Research Ethics Service). No data should be collected prior to such screening. Data collection is defined broadly to include primary data collection and the gathering of secondary sources or other material upon which the thesis will be based: it thus includes all research degree studies.

4.1.10.3 If the approved research study is refined or changed in significant ways it should be re-screened to determine whether the refined or changed study requires ethics committee scrutiny.

4.1.11 Attendance, time commitment, leave and additional paid work

4.1.11.1 Full-time students are expected to devote a minimum of forty hours per week to their research and related activities. Part-time students are designated 0.5fte and therefore expected to devote a minimum of 20 hours per week to their research and related activities.

4.1.11.2 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; including through the application of regulations 4.1.6 and 4.1.7. Part-time students must attend all taught or other contact elements of their research degree programme, including regular (at least every two months) meetings with their Director of Studies and/or 2nd supervisor. Supervision via video link, 'Skype', or other means of communicating at a distance is at the discretion of the supervisor(s).

4.1.11.3 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.

4.1.11.4 Students are entitled to 25 days annual leave in addition to statutory Bank Holidays and University closure days. The holiday year runs from the date of initial registration; unused leave cannot be carried over. Annual leave must be agreed with the Director of Studies (or, when appropriate, the Director of Research Development or His/her Deputy), recorded on an Annual Leave form and notified to the Research Graduate School. Annual leave will not be granted if this prevents attendance at taught components or prevents participation in assessments, academic progress panels, misconduct investigations or hearings, or disciplinary hearings.

4.1.11.5 Bursary students who do not take their annual leave will not be entitled to payment in lieu.

- 4.1.11.6 Students who are on sick leave for more than 5 consecutive days must produce a medical certificate.
- 4.1.11.7 International students who are attending conferences or who are collecting data outside the University must submit an application for Authorised Absence.
- 4.1.11.8 Students may apply for maternity, paternity or adoption leave, as described in the relevant policy. Such leave is not considered to be a suspension of registration for the purpose of regulation 4.1.14.1, setting the maximum period of suspension with a research degree registration.
- 4.1.11.9 Full-time students must declare any paid work they undertake to their Director of Studies. They will not be permitted to undertake more than an average of six hours per week paid work for the University and, where appropriate, a Partner Institution.
- 4.1.11.10 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* to ensure they observe the strict limit on such hours of work.
- 4.1.11.11 Bursary students must consult their Bursary Agreement in respect of expectations of work for the University or a Partner Institution embedded within the bursary payment and limits to additional paid work for the University or a Partner Institution.

4.1.12 Progression points

- 4.1.12.1 Research degree programmes will specify the nature of any summative assessment(s) which must be passed before progression to the next phase or year of the research degree programme. The progression point summative assessments must be approved by Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.1.12.2 For each professional doctorate programme, the progression point summative assessments will be detailed in the programme approval documentation.
- 4.1.12.3 In line with the marking guidelines for taught programmes, students with Specific Learning Difficulties should be supported in advance of assessment. No additional compensation should be given during the marking process.

4.1.13 Annual monitoring

- 4.1.13.1 The University will undertake a mandatory annual monitoring process for every research student who has been registered for more than five months, except that in academic years in which a student undertakes a progression point summative assessment, additional annual monitoring will not be required if the progression point assessment fulfils the requirements of annual monitoring.
- 4.1.13.2 The annual monitoring process is approved by the Research Degrees Committee. It requires the student and the Director of Studies to submit

separate, independent reports to the Research Graduate School by the notified deadline. Requirements for the content of annual monitoring reports are detailed in the RDC-approved annual monitoring process document.

4.1.14 Suspension and extension of studies

- 4.1.14.1 Where a student is prevented from making progress with his/her research by a severe difficulty that could not reasonably have been anticipated at the commencement of the research degree study (e.g. acute ill-health, the death of a close relative, or other cause of similar seriousness) registration may, upon application to the Research Degrees Committee, be suspended for a whole number of months: minimum three months, maximum 12 months.
- 4.1.14.2 When possible, application for suspension should be made before the period of suspension begins. Otherwise the application should be submitted as soon as reasonably practicable and before return to studies.
- 4.1.14.3 Under normal circumstances, unless exceptionally agreed by the Research Degrees Committee, suspension of registration shall not exceed 12 months in total during the research degree programme.
- 4.1.14.4 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 (e.g. late-notice withdrawal of previously granted access to research participants, due to unforeseeable changes in the research study setting), the Research Degrees Committee may approve the extension of a candidate's period of registration, or extension of an assessment deadline.
- 4.1.14.5 Extensions cannot be approved in retrospect.
- 4.1.14.6 Further to regulations 4.1.14.1 & 4.1.14.3, a candidate may not normally be permitted a suspension or an extension to a deadline once they have submitted their thesis or portfolio.

4.1.15 Withdrawal

- 4.1.15.1 Students wishing to withdraw must complete the appropriate form.
- 4.1.15.2 The registration of a student can be terminated by the Research Degrees Committee where academic progress is deemed unsatisfactory or where recommended under the Universities policies relating to research misconduct, student conduct or academic offences.
- 4.1.15.3 A student will be deemed to have withdrawn if s/he fails to re-register at the beginning of each academic year.
- 4.1.15.3 A student will be deemed to have withdrawn if s/he fails to engage in annual monitoring or a progression point that stands in lieu of annual monitoring.

4.1.15.4 A candidate must submit his/her thesis/portfolio before the expiry of the maximum period of registration. Should a candidate fail to submit prior to the expiry of their registration they will be deemed to have withdrawn from their degree programme and their record will indicate a non-completion.

4.1.15.5 Withdrawals require approval from Research Degrees Committee.

4.1.16 Change of research topic

4.1.16.1 The approved research topic must be described at the time of admission (4.1.4.7), or for Professional Doctorate Programmes at the point designated in the Programme Approval Document (which may be upon admission). Refinement of the approved topic as a normal part of the research and supervision process does not require further scrutiny from Research Degrees Committee. However, if the student wishes to **change** his/her approved research topic, s/he must apply to the Research Degrees Committee for approval.

4.1.17 The thesis

4.1.17.1 A student's thesis must embody the results of the research conducted under the guidance of the supervisors appointed by the University for that purpose.

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

4.1.17.3 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.

4.1.17.4 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.

4.1.17.5 The thesis must be presented in, and the oral examination held through, the medium of the English language. The candidate must have sufficient command of the English language to satisfactorily write and defend his/her research.

4.1.18 Locating research degree studies within the wider research of the University

- 4.1.18.1 The research and/or development of professional practice undertaken by each research degree candidate in the University is regarded as an integral part of the research, scholarly and professional work of the relevant Research Institute and/or Faculty of the University.

4.1.19 Appeals

- 4.1.19.1 In line with the Policy Regarding Academic Appeals and the Procedures to be followed when submitting an Appeal a research student may appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.1.19.2 Academic appeals are not valid where they relate solely and directly to academic judgement.

4.2 Regulations specific to the Award of MA/MSc by Research

In addition to the general regulations in Section 4.1 concerning the award framework (4.1.1), credit (4.1.2), entry requirements (4.1.3), admission (4.1.4), registration and re-registration (4.1.5), collaborating establishments (4.1.6), studies not based at the University of Bedfordshire (4.1.7), staff candidates (4.1.8) supervision (4.1.9), research integrity (4.1.10), attendance, time commitment, leave and additional paid work (4.1.11), progression points (4.1.12), annual monitoring (4.1.13), suspension & extension of studies (4.1.14), withdrawal (4.1.15), change of research topic (4.1.16), the thesis (4.1.17), locating research degree studies within the wider research of the University (4.1.18) and appeals (4.1.19) the following regulations apply to the MA(Res) and MSc(Res) awards:

4.2.1 Entry requirements

- 4.2.1.1 The General Entry Requirements (Section 4.1.3) shall apply.
- 4.2.1.2 The normal entry requirements are as follows:
 - a) the possession of an Honours degree (normally at least a lower second class honours degree) from a UK university, or equivalent; or
 - b) evidence of previous advanced study, research or professional experience, which the University accepts as qualifying the applicant for entry.
- 4.2.1.3 An applicant providing evidence in line with 4.2.1.2(b) will be considered on his or her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the research proposed. The University will look for evidence of the applicant's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment will be taken into consideration. Such an applicant must include in his/her application the names of suitable persons from whom the University may seek opinions about his/her academic attainment and fitness for research. In such cases the application must be considered by the Research Degrees Committee.

4.2.2 Workplace studies

- 4.2.1.4 Part-time MA and MSc 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 and written approval by the line manager and a workplace research supervisor.

4.2.3 Application to submit a portfolio of research studies

- 4.2.3.1 In some subject areas it may be appropriate for applicants for the MSc by Research to conduct a series of studies rather than a single study. Such a

proposal, and the consequential 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 (see regulation 4.1.4.7).

- 4.2.3.2 If a registered student wishes to change from a preparing a portfolio of research studies to conducting a single study as the basis for his/her thesis, or vice versa, section 4.1.15 'Change of research topic' shall apply.

4.2.4 Progression points

- 4.2.4.1 There is no progression point summative assessment which must be passed prior to submission of the final thesis or portfolio.

4.2.5 Programme of related studies

- 4.2.5.1 A student will be required to follow a programme of related studies, as determined through the training needs analysis, for the attainment of competence in research methods and of knowledge related to the subject of the thesis or portfolio. This may be achieved by taking a Level 7 Research Methods unit, or equivalent, or taking a directed study course overseen by the Director of Studies. The Programme of related studies will have the following objectives, to provide:

- a) the student with the skills and knowledge necessary for the pursuit of the proposed research and professional practice development;
- b) a body of knowledge normally associated with a degree in the field of study;
- c) breadth of knowledge in related subjects.

In addition the following topics must be covered: Project Design, Ethics, Health and Safety, Skills in Academic Writing, Literature Searching and Data Retrieval/Handling.

- 4.2.5.2 The supervision 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.

- 4.2.5.3 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 Research Degrees Committee, the dual registration will not detract from the research and the same work is not being counted towards different awards.

- 4.2.6.3 Where the programme of related studies includes an approved programme of studies leading to another award and a student is registered for that programme and fulfils all its requirements, he or she may be recommended

for that award by the relevant Examination Board in addition to the research degree award.

4.2.6 Assessment of the thesis or portfolio and oral defence

Stages

4.2.6.1 Assessment will consist of three stages:

- a) the submission to, and preliminary assessment of, the thesis by the examiners; and
- b) an oral presentation by the candidate of thirty minutes' duration, normally within three months of submission, to an audience which must include the Postgraduate Research Examination Board (see 4.2.6.7); and
- c) the defence of the thesis by the candidate in a closed room oral examination of approximately one hour's duration.

All stages must be completed to the satisfaction of the examiners.

Examiners

4.2.6.2 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, where applicable, a Partner Institution. No more than one examiner can be internal to the University or, where applicable, a Partner Institution. Examiners are appointed by the Research Degrees Committee.

4.2.6.3 An internal examiner will be defined as an examiner who is at appointment:

- a) a member of staff of the University; or
- b) a member of staff appointed by the University from a partner institution.

4.2.6.4 It is not permitted for a candidate's supervisor to act as an examiner.

4.2.6.5 Where the candidate is a member of the substantive staff of the University or a Partner Institution, a minimum of two external examiners must be appointed and no internal examiner will be appointed.

4.2.6.6 Where the research topic is interdisciplinary, external examiners must be appointed, to represent each discipline or the interdisciplinarity.

4.2.6.7 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 thesis. For each examination the Chair and the examiners are constituted as the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

4.2.6.8 In any instance where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process to the detriment of the candidate, 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.

- 4.2.6.9 The examiners 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.
- 4.2.6.10 The external examiner(s) should normally have experience of examining research degree candidates and at least one examiner (which would normally be the external) should also have substantial experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations at this level or above, preferably in the UK).
- 4.2.6.11 A research student, other than a candidate for a PhD by published work or a candidate for a Higher Doctorate, whether at the University or at another institution, will be ineligible to act as an examiner.
- 4.2.6.12 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 their 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 Research Graduate School or the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination.

Assessment procedure

- 4.2.6.13 Each examiner must consider whether the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree demonstrating that the candidate has met the learning outcomes (Annex 1). Each examiner must present a preliminary report on the thesis, in confidence and independently of other parties, to the University. This must be submitted a minimum of two working days prior to the oral examination. All examiners must participate in, and a minimum of two must be physically present at, the oral examination. Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the candidate and approval of the Research Degrees Committee, one external examiner may participate in the viva voce via an accepted form of video conferencing. In such cases it is essential that two external examiners are appointed so that one may be in attendance. The candidate must be physically present at the viva voce, unless under extreme circumstances and with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee their health prevents this. The Director of Studies or another member of the supervisory team may attend the oral examination as an observer upon invitation by the candidate.
- 4.2.6.14 In line with the marking guidelines for taught programmes, students with Specific Learning Difficulties should be supported in advance of assessment. No additional compensation should be given during the marking process.
- 4.2.6.15 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered;
 - b) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within two months of the viva

- c) that the candidate is permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion (see section 4.2.6.19);
- d) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.2.6.26).

- 4.2.6.16 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board is required to present a joint report which, together with the independent preliminary reports, provides evidence about the scope and quality of the work enabling the Research Degrees Committee to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.
- 4.2.6.17 Under regulation 4.2.6.15 (b) above, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will indicate to the candidate in an agreed written statement, all of the amendments and corrections that are required. It will also identify which examiner(s) will be responsible for approving the amendments and corrections. Students who do not submit their corrections and amendments by the deadlines indicated will be required to resubmit their thesis in line with section 4.2.6.15 (c).

Re-submission and Re-examination

- 4.2.6.18 In the case of regulation 4.2.6.15 (c), the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will provide the candidate with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of six calendar months from the date of the oral examination.
- 4.2.6.19 On resubmission each Examiner will examine the thesis and submit, in confidence and independently of other parties, a report to the University. The report will contain recommendations on whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree and whether a further oral examination is required. An oral examination must be held if such a report contains a recommendation that the requirements of the degree may not have been met, or where the examiners cannot agree. If there is agreement the Research Graduate School will make arrangements to conclude the assessment process.
- 4.2.6.20 The outcomes available to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board on conclusion of the re-examination are:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (possibly subject to final correction of typographical errors within a period of one month);
 - b) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.2.6.26).
- 4.2.6.21 Where it is necessary to appoint new and/or additional examiners for the re-examination, this will follow the regulations 4.2.6.2 – 4.2.6.12

Examiners not in agreement

- 4.2.6.22 Where the examiners cannot reach agreement following an oral examination, 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 Research Degrees Committee which may:

- a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner); where there is more than one external examiner and their decisions are the same their recommendation must be accepted
- b) accept the decision of the external examiner
- c) appoint an additional external examiner recommended by the Research Degrees Committee and meeting all relevant criteria for appointment; where the research is interdisciplinary and the external examiners representing the different disciplines cannot agree an additional external examiner must be appointed

4.2.6.23 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she will prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination no more than three months after the initial oral examination. This additional examination will be considered part of that initial examination and will be chaired by the Chair of that earlier examination.

4.2.6.24 The newly appointed examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the Research Degrees Committee will reconsider the outcome as per 4.2.6.22.

Awards and Outcomes

4.2.6.25 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board reaches a unanimous decision to pass a candidate, 4.2.6.15 (a) and 4.2.6.20 (a), the Research Graduate School will forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date of the viva voce. Where the examiner(s) reach a unanimous decision to pass a candidate subject to amendments, 4.2.6.15 (b) and 4.2.6.20 (a), the Research Graduate School will, having received confirmation from the examiner(s) identified to approve the amendments and corrections (4.2.6.17) that they are satisfied with the revised thesis, forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date that the examiners approve the corrections.

4.2.6.26 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends that the degree be not awarded and no re-examination permitted (regulations 4.2.6.15 (d) and 4.2.6.20 (b)), they must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their decision, which will be forwarded to the candidate. A copy of this statement, together with all of the relevant examination documentation, will be forwarded to Research Degrees Committee for consideration of the recommendation. Where the recommendation is upheld the candidate's registration is deemed to have been terminated.

4.3 Regulations specific to the Award of MPhil, PhD via transfer from MPhil and direct entry PhD

In addition to the general regulations in Section 4.1 concerning the award framework (4.1.1), credit (4.1.2), entry requirements (4.1.3), admission (4.1.4), registration and re-registration (4.1.5), collaborating establishments (4.1.6), studies not based at the University of Bedfordshire (4.1.7), staff candidates (4.1.8) supervision (4.1.9), research integrity (4.1.10), attendance, time commitment, leave and additional paid work (4.1.11), progression points (4.1.12), annual monitoring (4.1.13), suspension & extension of studies (4.1.14), withdrawal (4.1.15), change of research topic (4.1.16), the thesis (4.1.17), locating research degree studies within the wider research of the University (4.1.18) and appeals (4.1.19) the following regulations apply to MPhil and PhD awards:

4.3.1 Admission & Registration

- 4.3.1.5 Applicants are normally admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy with the possibility of transfer to PhD (MPhil/PhD).
- 4.3.1.7 Exceptionally, direct registration for the degree of PhD may be permitted to applicants who have advanced standing at postgraduate research level at a UK university or other higher degree-awarding institution where their supervisor is transferring to the University of Bedfordshire.
- 4.3.1.8 An applicant whose work forms part of a larger group project may register for a MPhil/PhD. Each individually registered project must be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award sought. The application must indicate clearly each individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.

4.3.2 Progression points

- 4.3.2.1 There will be a summative assessment (Part 1 Progression Point, 'PP1'), approved by Research Degrees Committee, which must be completed successfully during Part 1 of the research degree programme. Students who do not complete PP1 successfully within Part 1 will have their registration withdrawn under regulation 4.1.15.2.
- 4.3.2.2 There will be a summative assessment (Part 2 Progression Point, 'PP2'), approved by Research Degrees Committee, which must be completed successfully during Part 2 of the research degree programme.
- 4.3.2.3 For students registered on the PhD via transfer from MPhil programme, PP2 is the point at which transfer to PhD registration may occur. In such cases the potential outcomes are a recommendation to Research degrees Committee that the student should:
 - a) transfer to PhD registration and submit a thesis for this award

- b) continue on MPhil registration and submit a thesis for this award
- c) have their registration withdrawn under regulation 4.1.15.2.

4.3.2.4 Students registered on the PhD (direct entry) who do not successfully complete PP2 during Part 2 of the degree programme will normally have their registration withdrawn under regulation 4.1.15.2. Exceptionally, Research Degrees Committee may permit transfer to the MPhil degree programme.

4.3.3 Application to transfer from PhD to MPhil registration

4.3.3.1 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 Research Degrees Committee for his/her registration to be changed to that of the degree of MPhil.

4.3.4 Application to transfer from MPhil only registration to PhD registration

4.3.4.1 Exceptionally, with the support of the supervisory team and the Director of the Research Institute or Faculty Lead for Research Degrees, a student initially registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to the Research Degrees Committee 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 will be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee along with the application for transfer, together with clear evidence to support the proposed transfer.

4.3.4.2 If the student receives RDC approval for transfer to the PhD programme, s/he will be deemed to have passed Progression Point 2.

4.3.4 Programme of related studies

4.3.4.1 A student will be required to follow a programme of related studies, as determined through the training needs analysis, for the attainment of competence in research methods and of knowledge related to the subject of the thesis. It will have the following objectives:

- a) to provide the student with the skills and knowledge necessary for the pursuit of the proposed research and professional practice development;
- b) to provide a body of knowledge normally associated with a degree in the field of study;
- c) to provide breadth of knowledge in related subjects.

4.3.4.2 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 Research Degrees Committee, the dual registration will not detract from the research and the same work is not being counted towards different awards.

- 4.3.4.3 Where the programme of related studies includes an approved programme of studies leading to another award and a student is registered for that programme and fulfils all its requirements, he or she may be recommended for that award by the relevant Examination Board in addition to the research degree award.

4.3.5 Assessment of the thesis

Stages

- 4.3.5.1 The assessment of both MPhil and PhD theses must have two stages:
- a) the submission to, and preliminary assessment of, the thesis by the examiners; and
 - b) the defence of the thesis by the candidate by oral examination, normally within three months of submission.

Examiners

- 4.3.5.2 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, where applicable, a Partner Institution. No more than one examiner will be internal to the University of Bedfordshire or, where applicable, a Partner Institution. Examiners are appointed by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.3.5.3 An internal examiner will be defined as an examiner who is at appointment:
- a) a member of staff of the University; or
 - b) a member of staff appointed by the University from a partner institution.
- 4.3.5.4 It is not permitted for a candidate's supervisor to act as an examiner.
- 4.3.5.5 Where the candidate is a member of the substantive staff of the University or a Partner Institution, a minimum of two external examiners must be appointed and no internal examiner will be appointed.
- 4.3.5.6 Where the research topic is interdisciplinary, external examiners must be appointed, to represent each discipline or the interdisciplinarity.
- 4.3.5.7 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 thesis. For each examination the Chair and the examiners are constituted as a Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

- 4.3.5.8 In any instance where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process to the detriment of the candidate, 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.
- 4.3.5.9 The examiners 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.
- 4.3.5.10 The external examiner(s) should normally have experience of examining research degree candidates and at least one examiner (which would normally be the external) should also have substantial experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations at this level or above, preferably in the UK). For examination for a Doctoral award, at least one examiner must have substantial experience of examining at that level.
- 4.3.5.11 A research student, other than a candidate for a PhD through published work or a Higher Doctorate, whether at the University or at another institution, will be ineligible to act as an examiner.
- 4.3.5.12 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 their 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 Research Graduate School or Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

Assessment procedure

- 4.3.5.13 Each examiner must consider whether the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree demonstrating that the candidate has met the learning outcomes (Annex 1). Each examiner must present a preliminary report on the thesis to the University, in confidence and independently of other parties. This must be submitted a minimum of two working days prior to the oral examination. All examiners must participate in, and a minimum of two must be physically present at, the oral examination. Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the candidate and approval of the Research Degrees Committee, one external examiner may participate in the viva voce examination via an accepted form of video conferencing. In such cases it is essential that two external examiners are appointed so that one may be in attendance. The candidate must be physically present at the viva voce examination, unless under extreme circumstances and with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee, their health prevents this. The Director of Studies or another member of the supervisory team may attend the oral examination as an observer upon invitation by the candidate.
- 4.3.5.14 In line with the marking guidelines for taught programmes, students with Specific Learning Difficulties should be supported in advance of assessment. No additional compensation should be given during the marking process.

- 4.3.5.15 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered;
 - b) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within three months of the viva
 - c) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within six months of the viva;
 - d) that the candidate is permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion (see section 4.3.5.19);
 - e) in the case of a PhD examination, that the candidate is awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.
 - f) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.3.5.26).
- 4.3.5.16 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board is required to present a joint report which, together with the independent preliminary reports, provides evidence about the scope and quality of the work enabling the Research Degrees Committee to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.
- 4.3.5.17 Under regulation 4.3.5.15 (b & c) above, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will indicate to the candidate in an agreed written statement, all of the amendments and corrections that are required. It will also identify which examiner(s) will be responsible for approving the amendments and corrections. Students who do not submit their corrections and amendments by the deadlines indicated will be required to resubmit their thesis in line with section 4.3.5.15 (d).

Re-submission and Re-examination

- 4.3.5.18 In the case of regulation 4.3.5.15 (d), the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will provide the candidate with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of one calendar year from the date of the oral examination.
- 4.3.5.19 On resubmission each Examiner will examine the thesis and submit in confidence and independently of other parties, a report to the University. The report will contain recommendations on whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree and whether a further oral examination is required. An oral examination must be held if such a report contains a recommendation that the requirements of the degree may not have been met, or where the examiners cannot agree. If there is agreement the Research Graduate School will make arrangements to conclude the assessment process.

- 4.3.5.20 The outcomes available to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board on conclusion of the re-examination are:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (possibly subject to final correction of typographical errors within a period of one month);
 - b) in the case of a PhD 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;
 - c) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.3.5.26).
- 4.3.5.21 Where it is necessary to appoint new and/or additional examiners for the re-examination, this will follow the regulations 4.3.5.2 – 4.3.5.12.

Examiners not in agreement

- 4.3.5.22 Where the examiners cannot reach agreement following an oral examination, 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 Research Degrees Committee who may:
- a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner); where there is more than one external examiner and their decisions are the same their recommendation must be accepted
 - b) accept the decision of the external examiner
 - c) appoint an additional external examiner recommended by the Research Degrees Committee and meeting all relevant criteria for appointment; where the research is interdisciplinary and the external examiners representing the different disciplines cannot agree an additional external examiner must be appointed
- 4.3.5.23 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she will prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination no more than three months after the initial oral examination. This additional examination will be considered part of that initial examination and will be chaired by the Chair of that earlier examination.
- 4.3.5.24 The newly appointed examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the Research Degrees Committee will reconsider the outcome as per 4.3.5.22.

Awards and Outcomes

- 4.3.5.25 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board reaches a unanimous decision to pass a candidate 4.3.5.15 (a) and 4.3.5.20 (a), the Research Graduate School will forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date of the viva voce. Where the examiners reach a unanimous decision to pass a candidate subject to

amendments (4.3.5.15 (b and c) and 4.3.5.20 (a and b)) the Chair will, having received confirmation from the examiner(s) identified to approve the amendments and corrections (4.3.5.17) that they are satisfied with the revised thesis, forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date that the examiner(s) approve the corrections.

- 4.3.5.26 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends that the degree be not awarded and no re-examination permitted (regulations 4.3.5.15 (f) and 4.3.5.20 (d)), they must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their decision, which will be forwarded to the candidate. A copy of this statement, together with all of the relevant examination documentation, will be forwarded to Research Degrees Committee for consideration of the recommendation. Where the recommendation is upheld the candidate's registration is deemed to have been terminated.
- 4.3.5.27 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends a lower degree be awarded (regulations 4.3.5.15(e) or 4.3.5.20(b)), they must prepare an agreed statement outlining the reasons for their decision, which will be forwarded to the candidate. A copy of this statement, together with all of the relevant examination documentation, will be forwarded to Research Degrees Committee for consideration of the recommendation. Where the recommendation is upheld the candidate will be asked to amend the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners.

4.4 Regulations specific to the Award of Professional Doctorates

In addition to the general regulations in Section 4.1 concerning the award framework (4.1.1), credit (4.1.2), entry requirements (4.1.3), admission (4.1.4), registration and re-registration (4.1.5), collaborating establishments (4.1.6), studies not based at the University of Bedfordshire (4.1.7), staff candidates (4.1.8) supervision (4.1.9), research integrity (4.1.10), attendance, time commitment, leave and additional paid work (4.1.11), progression points (4.1.12), annual monitoring (4.1.13), suspension & extension of studies (4.1.14), withdrawal (4.1.15), change of research topic (4.1.16), the thesis (4.1.17), locating research degree studies within the wider research of the University (4.1.18) and appeals (4.1.19) the following regulations apply to Professional Doctorates:

4.4.1 Awards

- 4.4.1.1 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.
- 4.4.1.2 The University shall award professional doctorates to registered candidates who successfully complete approved programmes comprising:
- Directed Studies, which shall not exceed one third of the total work undertaken for the award, and
 - Research embedded in professional practice.
- 4.4.1.3 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 Research Degrees Committee and Academic Board.
- 4.4.1.3 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.

4.4.2 Credit

- 4.4.2.1 The credit value of a professional doctorate is 540, of which at least 360 credits must be at Level 8.

4.4.3 Directed studies and research study

- 4.4.3.1 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 scheme of directed studies for each professional doctorate programme will be detailed in the programme approval document.

4.4.3.2 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).

4.4.3.3 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.

4.4.2 Entry requirements

4.4.2.1 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.

4.4.2.2 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.

4.4.3 Supervision

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

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

4.4.4 Progression points

4.4.4.1 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).

4.4.4.2 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. Research Degrees Committee must approve the Progression Point Assessments.

4.4.5 Assessment

- 4.4.5.1 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.
- 4.4.5.2 A doctorate shall be awarded to a candidate 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).

If a professional doctorate has a Programme of Directed Studies in the form of a taught stage

- 4.4.5.3 Units for a professional doctorate are graded on a pass/fail basis only, and as approved through Academic Board. A record of such units is maintained by the Research Graduate School.
- 4.4.5.4 Submission of work will be governed by the following:
- a) 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.
 - c) Students studying on professional doctorates will be permitted an attempt at a referral or re-sit for non-submission of an assignment during the taught stage, only where there has been satisfactory engagement with the course.
 - d) Students must satisfy the Professional Doctorate Examination Board that they have met the intended learning outcomes of each element of assessment.
 - e) 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 under regulation 4.1.15.2. The student may nevertheless complete the unit under the taught programmes regulations and gain academic credit for that Unit and any other credit-bearing Units that have been completed prior to the student's withdrawal from the professional doctorate.
- 4.4.5.5 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 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.

Professional Doctorate Examination Boards

- 4.4.5.6 The Professional Doctorate Examination Board is the board responsible for overseeing and making recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee on the progress of professional doctorate students during the taught stage of their degree. The Professional Doctorate Examination Board comprises the Director of Research Development, who will act as Chair, the course leader, an external examiner and a member of the Registry staff who will clerk the meeting.
- 4.4.5.7 External Examiners for taught courses are appointed by the External Examiners Committee. Internal examiners for taught courses are nominated by the Course Leaders and approved by the Director of Research Institute.
- 4.4.5.8 Recommendations regarding the assessment of students are made to the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.4.5.9 Professional Doctorate Examinations Boards will consider clear evidence of the impact of mitigating circumstances for students as reported by the Student Engagement and Mitigation team. Professional Doctorate Examinations Boards do not have the authority to agree decisions for mitigating circumstances claims. Such claims must be referred to the Research Degrees Committee.

Assessment of the thesis

Stages

- 4.4.5.10 The assessment of Professional Doctorate theses must have two stages:
- a) the submission to, and preliminary assessment of, the thesis by the examiners; and
 - b) the defence of the thesis by the candidate by oral examination, normally within three months of submission.

Examiners

- 4.4.5.11 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 and, where appropriate, a Partner Institution. No more than one examiner can be internal to the University or, where appropriate, a Partner Institution.
- 4.4.5.12 An internal examiner will be defined as an examiner who is at appointment:
- a) a member of staff of the University; or
 - b) a member of staff appointed by the University from a partner institution.
- 4.4.5.13 It is not permitted for a candidate's supervisor to act as an examiner.
- 4.4.5.14 Where the candidate is a member of the substantive staff of the University or a Partner Institution, a minimum of two external examiners must be appointed and no internal examiner will be appointed.
- 4.4.5.15 Where the research topic is interdisciplinary, external examiners must be appointed, to represent each discipline or the interdisciplinarity.
- 4.4.5.16 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 thesis. For each examination the Chair and the examiners are constituted as a Postgraduate Research Examination Board.

- 4.4.5.17 In any instance where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process to the detriment of the candidate, 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.
- 4.4.5.18 The examiners 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.
- 4.4.5.19 The external examiner(s) should normally have experience of examining research degree candidates and at least one examiner (which would normally be the external) should also have substantial experience (i.e. normally three or more previous Doctoral examinations, preferably in the UK).
- 4.4.5.20 A research student, other than a candidate for a PhD through published work or a candidate for a Higher Doctorate, whether at the University or at another institution, will be ineligible to act as an examiner.
- 4.4.5.21 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 their 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 Chair of the Postgraduate Research Examination Board or a named Research Officer from the Research Graduate School.

Assessment procedure

- 4.4.5.22 Each examiner must consider whether the thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree demonstrating that the candidate has met the learning outcomes (Annex 1). Each examiner must present a preliminary report, in confidence and independently of other parties, on the thesis to the University. This must be submitted a minimum of two working days prior to the oral examination. All examiners must participate in, and a minimum of two must be physically present at, the oral examination. Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the candidate and approval of the Research Degrees Committee, one external examiner may participate in the viva voce via an accepted form of video conferencing. In such cases it is essential that two external examiners are appointed so that one may be in attendance. The candidate must be physically present at the viva voce, unless under extreme circumstances and with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee their health prevents this. The Director of Studies or another member of the supervisory team may attend the oral examination as an observer upon invitation by the candidate.
- 4.4.5.23 In line with the marking guidelines for taught programmes, students with Specific Learning Difficulties should be supported in advance of assessment. No additional compensation should be given during the marking process.

- 4.4.5.24 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered;
 - b) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within three months of the viva
 - c) that the candidate is awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments and corrections being made to the thesis within six months of the viva;
 - d) that the candidate is permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion (see sections 4.4.5.27-4.4.5.30);
 - e) that the candidate is awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.
 - f) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.4.5.35).
- 4.4.5.25 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board is required to present a joint report which, together with the independent preliminary reports, provides evidence about the scope and quality of the work enabling the Research Degrees Committee to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.
- 4.4.5.26 Under regulation 4.4.5.24 (b & c) above, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will indicate to the candidate in an agreed written statement, all of the amendments and corrections that are required. It will also identify which examiner(s) will be responsible for approving the amendments and corrections. Students who do not submit their corrections and amendments by the deadlines indicated will be required to resubmit their thesis in line with section 4.4.5.24(d).

Re-submission and Re-examination

- 4.4.5.27 In the case of regulation 4.4.5.24(d), the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will provide the candidate with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of one calendar year from the date of the oral examination.
- 4.4.5.28 On resubmission each Examiner will examine the thesis and submit, in confidence and independently of other parties, a report to the University. The report will contain recommendations on whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree and whether a further oral examination is required. An oral examination must be held if such a report contains a recommendation that the requirements of the degree may not have been met, or where the examiners cannot agree. If there is agreement the Research Graduate School will make arrangements to conclude the assessment process.
- 4.4.5.29 The outcomes available to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board on conclusion of the re-examination are:
- a) that the candidate is awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (possibly subject to final correction of typographical errors within a period of one month);
 - b) that an exit award permitted by programme approval document be awarded, if necessary subject to the presentation of the thesis being

amended to the satisfaction of the examiners in relation to the requirements for the exit award.

- c) that the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.4.5.35).

4.4.5.30 Where it is necessary to appoint new and/or additional examiners for the re-examination, this will follow the regulations 4.4.5.11 – 4.4.5.21.

Examiners not in agreement

4.4.5.31 Where the examiners cannot reach agreement following an oral examination, 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 Research Degrees Committee which may:

- a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner); where there is more than one external examiner and their decisions are the same their recommendation must be accepted
- b) accept the decision of the external examiner
- c) appoint an additional external examiner recommended by the Research Degrees Committee and meeting all relevant criteria for appointment; where the research is interdisciplinary and the external examiners representing the different disciplines cannot agree an additional external examiner must be appointed

4.4.5.32 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she will prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination no more than three months after the initial oral examination. This additional examination will be considered part of that initial examination and will be chaired by the Chair of that earlier examination.

4.4.5.33 The newly appointed examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the Research Degrees Committee will reconsider the outcome as per 4.4.5.31.

Awards and Outcomes

4.4.5.34 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board reaches a unanimous decision to pass a candidate 4.4.5.24(a) and 4.4.5.29(a), the Research Graduate School will forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date of the viva voce. Where the examiners reach a unanimous decision to pass a candidate subject to amendments (4.4.5.24 (b and c) and 4.4.5.29 (a and b)) the Research Graduate School will, having received confirmation from the examiner(s) identified to approve the amendments and corrections (4.4.5.26) that they are satisfied with the revised thesis, forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date that the examiner(s) approve the corrections.

4.4.5.34 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends that the degree be not awarded and no re-examination permitted (regulations 4.4.5.24 (f) and 4.4.5.29 (c)) they must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their decision, which will be forwarded to the candidate. A copy of this will be forwarded to the Research

Degrees Committee together with all of the relevant examination documentation who will then consider the recommendation. Where the recommendation is upheld the candidate's registration is deemed to have been terminated.

4.5 Regulations specific to the Award of PhD by published work

In addition to the general regulations in Section 4.1 concerning the award framework (4.1.1), credit (4.1.2), registration and re-registration (4.1.5), research integrity (4.1.10.1), annual monitoring (4.1.13), suspension & extension of studies (4.1.14), withdrawal (4.1.15), locating research degree studies within the wider research of the University (4.1.18) and appeals (4.1.19), the following regulations apply to the Doctor of Philosophy based on Published Work:

4.5.1 Eligibility

- 4.5.1.1 The University will normally only consider applications from current members of staff of the University, or partner institutions, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy based on published work.
- 4.5.1.2 Candidates must remain members of staff throughout the period of registration.

4.5.2 Admission

- 4.5.2.1 A formal application for admission must be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee, 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.
- 4.5.2.1 The formal application will comprise:
- Evidence of eligibility (section 4.5.1)
 - 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.
- 4.5.2.2 The Research Graduate School will screen the application for eligibility.
- 4.5.2.3 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) or the Faculty Lead(s) for research degrees. The applicant may be interviewed. The recommendation shall be 'admit' or 'reject' and based upon both the quality of the application and the availability of a Director of Studies.
- 4.5.2.4 A list of recommended admissions and rejections will be presented to each meeting of the Research Degrees Committee.

4.5.3 Supervision

4.5.3.1 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.

4.5.4 The portfolio

4.5.4.1 The portfolio shall comprise:

- a) The publications and any other artefacts upon which the candidature is based.
- c) A declaration of the candidate's contribution to each of the jointly authored or jointly produced artefacts upon which the candidature is based.
- b) A substantial introduction and critical commentary 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.

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

4.5.4.3 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.

4.5.4.4 The portfolio must be presented in the English language.

4.5.5 Appointment of examiners

4.5.5.1 A candidate 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 interdisciplinarity.

4.5.5.2 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.

4.5.5.3 In any instance where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with the procedures of the examination process to the detriment of the candidate, 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.

- 4.5.5.4 The external examiners must have specialist experience in research in the topic(s) of the candidate's portfolio.
- 4.5.5.5 The external examiners should normally have experience of examining research degree candidates and at least one examiner should also have substantial experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations at Doctoral level, preferably in the UK).
- 4.5.5.6 A research student, whether at the University or at another institution, will be ineligible to act as an examiner.
- 4.5.5.7 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 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.

4.5.6 Assessment

Stages

- 4.5.6.1 The assessment must have two stages:
 - a) the submission to, and preliminary assessment of, the portfolio by the examiners; and
 - b) the defence of the portfolio by the candidate by oral examination, normally within three months of submission.
- 4.5.6.2 In examining the candidate, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board must determine whether the:
 - a) works submitted demonstrate that the candidate 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 candidate has personally made a systematic study (in a single field or closely related fields);
 - c) candidate has shown originality by the exercise of independent critical power and has made a distinct contribution to knowledge; and
 - d) candidate meets the same learning outcomes as those for a standard PhD (Annex 1).
- 4.5.6.3 In line with the marking guidelines for taught programmes, students with Specific Learning Difficulties should be supported in advance of assessment. No additional compensation should be given during the marking process.

Assessment procedure

- 4.5.6.4 Each examiner must consider whether the portfolio satisfies the requirements for the degree (4.5.6.2) demonstrating that the candidate has met the learning outcomes. Each examiner must present a preliminary report on the portfolio to the University, in confidence and independently of other parties. This must be submitted a minimum of two working days prior to the oral examination. All examiners must participate in, and a minimum of two must be physically present at, the oral examination. Under exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the candidate and approval of the Research Degrees Committee, one additional examiner may participate in the viva voce via an accepted form of video conferencing. The candidate must be physically present at the viva voce, unless under extreme circumstances and

with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee their health prevents this. The Director of Studies or another member of the supervisory team may attend the oral examination as an observer upon invitation by the candidate.

- 4.5.6.5 Following the oral examination, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will agree on one of the following outcomes:
- a) that the candidate be awarded the degree for which he or she was registered;
 - b) that the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments and corrections being made to the portfolio within three months of the viva
 - c) that the candidate be awarded the degree subject to substantive amendments and corrections being made to the portfolio within six months of the viva;
 - d) that the candidate be permitted to revise and re-submit for the degree and be re-examined on one further occasion (see section 4.5.6.9);
 - e) that the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.5.6.16).
- 4.5.6.6 The Postgraduate Research Examination Board is required to present a joint report which, together with the independent preliminary reports, provides evidence about the scope and quality of the work enabling the Research Degrees Committee to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the degree have been met.
- 4.5.6.7 Under regulation 4.5.6.5 b & c above, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will indicate to the candidate in an agreed written statement, all of the amendments and corrections that are required. They will also identify which examiner(s) will be responsible for approving the amendments and corrections. Students who do not submit their corrections and amendments by the deadlines indicated will be required to resubmit their portfolio in line with section 4.5.6.5d.

Re-submission and Re-examination

- 4.5.6.8 In the case of regulation 4.5.6.5d, the Postgraduate Research Examination Board will provide the candidate with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission. The candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of one calendar year from the date of the oral examination.
- 4.5.6.9 On resubmission each Examiner will examine the portfolio and submit in confidence and independently of other parties, a report on it to the University. The report will contain recommendations on whether the portfolio satisfies the requirements of the degree and whether a further oral examination is required. An oral examination must be held if such a report contains a recommendation that the requirements of the degree may not have been met, or where the examiners cannot agree. If there is agreement the Research Graduate School will make arrangements to conclude the assessment process.
- 4.5.6.10 The outcomes available to the Postgraduate Research Examination Board on conclusion of the re-examination are:
- a) that the candidate be awarded the degree for which he or she was registered (possibly subject to final correction of typographical errors within a period of one month);

- b) that the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be re-examined (see section 4.5.6.16).

4.5.6.11 Where it is necessary to appoint new and/or additional examiners for the re-examination, this will follow the regulations 4.5.5.1 – 4.5.5.7

Examiners not in agreement

4.5.6.12 Where the examiners cannot reach agreement following an oral examination, 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 Research Degrees Committee who may:

- a) accept a majority recommendation
- b) appoint an additional external examiner recommended by the Research Degrees Committee and meeting all relevant criteria for appointment; where the research is interdisciplinary and the external examiners representing the different disciplines cannot agree an additional external examiner must be appointed

4.5.6.13 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, he/she will prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the portfolio and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination no more than three months after the initial oral examination. This additional examination will be considered part of that initial examination and will be chaired by the Chair of that earlier examination.

4.5.6.14 The newly appointed examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner the Research Degrees Committee will reconsider the outcome as per 4.5.6.12.

Awards and Outcomes

4.5.6.15 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board reaches a unanimous decision to pass a candidate 4.5.6.5 (a) and 4.5.6.10 (a), the Research Graduate School will forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date of the viva voce. Where the examiners reach a unanimous decision to pass a candidate subject to amendments (4.5.6.5 (b and c) and 4.5.6.10 (a)) the Research Graduate School will, having received confirmation from the examiner(s) identified to approve the amendments and corrections (4.5.6.7) that they are satisfied with the revised portfolio, forward the recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee. The date of award will be the date that the examiners approve the corrections.

4.5.6.16 Where the Postgraduate Research Examination Board recommends that the degree be not awarded and no re-examination permitted (regulations 4.5.6.5 (e) and 4.5.6.10 (b)) they must prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the portfolio and the reason for their decision, which will be forwarded to the candidate. A copy of this will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Committee together with all of the relevant examination documentation who will then consider the recommendation. Where the recommendation is upheld the candidate's registration is deemed to have been terminated.

Annex 1: Doctoral and Research Master's qualification descriptors

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) (second edition, revised August 2008)

Research master's degrees: Characteristics of graduates

Source: *Master's Degree Characteristics* (QAA, 2010, pp.12 & 16)

Graduates of research master's degrees typically have:

- i) subject-specific attributes
 - a. an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the discipline informed by current scholarship and research, including a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject
 - b. the ability to study independently in the subject
 - c. the ability to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the subject.

- ii) generic attributes (including skills relevant to an employment-setting)

A range of generic abilities and skills that include the ability to:

 - a. use initiative and take responsibility
 - b. solve problems in creative and innovative ways
 - c. make decisions in challenging situations
 - d. continue to learn independently and to develop professionally, including the ability to pursue further research where appropriate
 - e. communicate effectively, with colleagues and a wider audience, in a variety of media.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7: master's degree (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

(The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2008.)

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.

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

Source: *Doctoral Degree Characteristics* (QAA, 2011, pp.32-33)

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

Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.

Holders of doctoral degrees will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees will have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.