



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES: FRAMEWORK AND REGULATIONS

Effective from 1 July 2011

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Preamble

All University formal documents relate to the policies, strategies, procedures and regulations of the University having been approved by the appropriate formally recognised and constituted body. All University employees and students are required to adhere to the formal processes and regulations of the University.

This document should not be read in isolation as other University processes/formal documents could be relevant. A full listing of all formal documents is available on the University's website.

Any interpretation of the content of this formal document will be at the discretion of the Academic Secretary.

The names of committees and titles of posts may change from time to time. This shall not invalidate the powers of the equivalent successor committees or post holders.

If required this formal document is available in an alternative format eg Braille, tape, disc, email or a larger font size. Please contact the Academic Quality Directorate.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 These regulations apply to Professional Doctorate awards only. Regulations for study leading to the awards of MPhil/PhD or PhD by Portfolio are detailed separately.
- 1.2 Buckinghamshire New University's Professional Doctorates are validated and awarded under the Research Degree Awarding Powers of Coventry University.
- 1.3 Students are enrolled with the University and registered with the validating institution with the former being responsible for supervision and support.
- 1.4 Regulations specific to the University pertaining to Professional Doctorates will be governed by and from time to time, amended or substituted by Senate on the advice of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 1.5 The Research Degrees Committee, which reports to the University's Senate, is responsible for ensuring that these regulations and those of the validating institution pertaining to the quality assurance of Professional Doctorates are complied with.
- 1.6 Each stage of the administration of the progress of a student registered for a higher degree shall be in accordance with the procedures established and notified by the Research Degrees Committee under the delegated authority of Senate.

2 General

- 2.1 The University's Professional Doctorates are aligned to Level 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. They will make equivalent demands to those of a PhD award however in relation to a professional context.
- 2.2 The programme of study must be capable of leading to scholarly research and its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners in the form of a thesis; the submission may include material in other than written form.
- 2.3 Each candidate for a higher degree must normally be required to defend the thesis at an oral examination. Disability related reasonable adjustments will be considered for the oral examination if needed.
- 2.4 The general arrangements under which a person who is registered on a programme of study leading to the award of a higher degree must facilitate adherence to the relevant codes of practice and be such as to enable that person to conduct and complete the research programme in a safe and efficient manner.
- 2.5 Each proposed programme must be considered on its academic merits and without any reference to the concerns or interests of any funding body which might be associated with the project. In particular, satisfying the terms on which a project is funded must not detract from the fulfilment of the objectives and requirements of the student's work leading to the submission of a higher degree.

3 Programme of study: structure

- 3.1 The programme of study for a Professional Doctorate is defined by the programme of specification approved under the University's quality assurance procedure; the award will bear the title of the course as approved, not of the student's research project.
- 3.2 All awards of the University must be designed to meet the expectations of the appropriate qualification descriptors as detailed in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and will take account of relevant

Subject Benchmarks. In addition they will also align to the Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England.

- 3.3 Professional doctorates will be delivered on a part-time basis.
- 3.4 An exit point will be available to students in the form of a Masters by Research. This fall-back award will be conferred only on those candidates who at point of exit can demonstrate achievement of the programme outcomes and 180 credits at Level 7 or equivalent.

4 Application and Admission

- 4.1 All applicants for a higher degree must have a sufficient command of the English language to be able to complete satisfactorily the programme of study and to prepare and defend the thesis in English. Applicants may be required to demonstrate their competence through attainment of a notified minimum IELTS score and/or attendance at a pre-sessional English course or any other requirements laid down by the University.
- 4.2 The normal requirements to enable an applicant to be considered for admission on to a University higher degrees programme of study are as follows:
- a) A Postgraduate Masters Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study; or
 - b) First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or equivalent award in an appropriate discipline; or
 - c) The applicant has appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of achievement.
- 4.3 A degree specified in 4.2 above must be awarded by a university or other institution of higher education or organisation in the United Kingdom with degree-awarding powers granted by the responsible Secretary of State, or any other qualification which is regarded by the University as being equivalent, or from an overseas institution of equivalent standing.
- 4.4 An applicant holding qualifications other than those specified in 4.2 – 4.3 above shall be considered on his or her merits. Evidence of ability and background knowledge must be provided in relation to the proposed topic and higher degree.
- 4.5 All applications will be reviewed by an admissions panel comprising a minimum of two suitably qualified and experienced research-active academic members of staff.
- 4.6 The decision of the admissions panel should be reported to the Research Degrees Committee to assure the University that a balanced and independent admissions decision has been made that supports its admissions policy and demonstrates equality of opportunity.
- 4.7 Applications shall be treated in strict confidence.
- 4.8 Any canvassing by an applicant shall automatically disqualify them from an award of the University.

5 Enrolment

- 5.1 All students must enrol on a part-time basis.
- 5.2 The University recognises the standard minimum and maximum registration periods for Professional Doctorates as follows:

Award	Minimum	Maximum
Years	4 years	7 years
Months	48 months	84 months

- 5.3 Any reduction in a period of registration from the minimum specified at registration may only be approved by the Research Degree Committee. Any request for such an exceptional shortening of the duration of registration must normally be submitted at the same time as the request for approval of the proposed examination results.
- 5.4 Any extension of duration of registration from the maximum may only be granted when reasonable grounds have been provided and a recommendation made by the supervisory team.
- 5.5 A student studying towards a Professional Doctorate award is only permitted to enrol as a writing-up student for one year (two in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Research Degrees Committee).
- 5.6 A student in the thesis writing phase of their Professional Doctorate will be expected to undergo an Annual Review of their progress under the procedure notified. Progression will be dependent on making suitable progress on the course as determined by the Annual Review panel.
- 5.7 In the case of overseas students, the duration of registration agreed at the time when a visa was sought must be adhered to and, in those exceptional circumstances where an extension to the duration of study is required, a written request for this must be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee for consideration prior to the period of extension being agreed with the student.
- 5.8 **Suspension of Registration**
Students may apply to suspend their registration, for reasons of ill-health or other circumstances, normally for a maximum total period of twelve months under the procedure notified. Retrospective suspensions are not normally permitted. A student returning from a period of suspension of registration shall be subject to the Regulations that apply at the time of re-enrolment.
- 5.9 **Withdrawal from Programme of Study**
- Students may withdraw from their programme of study with uncompleted modules at any time. In such cases it is the student's responsibility to inform the Research Unit of the withdrawal through the procedure notified. All marks attained up to the time of withdrawal shall stand, and the student may apply to re-enrol for the programme at a later date.
 - The University reserves the right to require a student to withdraw where the student has not fully engaged with the course. Examples of not fully engaging include: repeated non-attendance at teaching sessions and/or not taking part in formal or informal as assessments and/or mandatory taught modules and/or the annual progress review and/or not responding to requests sent by the University to explain such non-attendance. This list is not exhaustive.
- 5.10 **Deferral due to Extenuating Circumstances**
- Students who submit work for assessment or who attend an examination are declaring themselves fit to be assessed and no subsequent claim for extenuating circumstances shall normally be accepted.
 - Any student has the right to draw the attention of the University to personal extenuating circumstances which seriously impair his/her ability to undertake an assessment, and to request deferral of the assessment. Requests for deferral on grounds of extenuating circumstances may only be made using the procedure notified, and must be accompanied by verifiable and current third party evidence.
 - Deferred first assessments or repeat attempts shall be treated as a first attempt.

6 Supervisory arrangements

6.1 Year One

All students undertaking Level 7 taught modules will be supported by a Personal Tutor

6.2 Years Two onwards

- a) Each student must have at least two, but not normally more than three, supervisors.
- b) One of the supervisors must have successfully supervised to doctoral level.
- c) One of the supervisors must be appointed as the Director of Studies with the specific responsibility to supervise the student regularly and frequently and to ensure that the student receives proper guidance and support. Since they are responsible for overseeing the completion of any administrative matters, the Director of Studies must be located at the University.
- d) Where appropriate, students may be allocated a practice supervisor.
- e) In addition to the supervisors, if appropriate, an adviser or advisers may be identified to contribute specialist knowledge or to provide a link with an external organisation.
- f) Anyone who is registered for a doctorate (PhD traditional route), either by the University or by another institution, shall be ineligible to act as the Director of Studies for a higher degree student, but, in certain circumstances and subject to the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee, may be appointed to act as a second supervisor or as an adviser.
- g) All supervisors will be monitored by the Research Degrees Committee to ensure that they have the experience and capacity to undertake the supervision of the assigned student.
- h) An individual will not normally be expected to supervise more than six higher degree student FTEs concurrently, and to be Director of Studies for no more than three student FTEs at any one time. Where a member of staff has been specifically employed to supervise research projects and students (eg Professor, Reader, Senior Research fellow or Research Fellow) and therefore has limited traditional teaching responsibilities, this Regulation shall not apply.
- i) Members of the supervisory team should notify the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee if it is felt that the student's programme of study is being put at risk as a result of the volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors.
- j) The number of students supervised by individual supervisors will be monitored by the Research Unit and reported to the Research Degrees Committee through the Annual Review and Evaluation process.
- k) Any individual currently appointed as an Emeritus Professor or Honorary Research Fellow may undertake a supervisory role as set out in these regulations, with the exception of the role of Director of Studies.

7 Assessment of taught modules

- 7.1 In order to confer credit, all Level 7 modules shall be assessed by formal written examination and/or coursework, and in accordance with the University's Assessment Strategy.

- 7.2 A student shall be deemed to have passed a Level 7 module on obtaining an overall module mark of 40% or more, subject to any criteria notified as to how the mark is to be calculated (eg by specifying the relative weighting of any components).
- 7.3 The minimum pass requirement for each Level 7 module is 40%. Marks between 39.5 and 40.0% inclusive shall be regarded as 40% for these purposes.
- 7.4 Pass/fail criteria will be applied for all Level 8 modules.
- 7.5 Students who fail to submit work for assessment or attend examinations shall be deemed to have failed the assessments concerned.
- 7.6 To achieve the award, students must pass all modules and all elements of those modules. No module may be condoned under these Regulations under any circumstances.
- 7.7 Assessment/examination arrangements for Year One and the Work-based learning stage are detailed in the University regulations relating to taught programmes and are the responsibility of the designated Board of Examiners.
- 7.8 In order to be eligible to progress from Year One to the Work-based learning stage, a formally constituted Board of Examiners must have deemed the student to have successfully passed Year One.
- 7.9 In order to be eligible to progress to the thesis stage, a formally constituted Board of Examiners must have deemed the student to have successfully passed the Work-based learning stage.
- 7.10 **Referral**
- a) Referral is only permitted in Year One.
 - b) A Board of Examiners can permit referral in a maximum of one failed module at the first attempt from Year One to be re-submitted on one occasion only. Where the student is successful in the re-submitted module the Board of Examiners can permit them to progress to the Work-based learning stage.
 - c) Where more than one module from Year One has been failed at the first attempt the Board of Examiners may permit re-submission of the failed modules on one occasion only for the maximum award of a Postgraduate Certificate.
 - d) Referral work for a module should be designed to test that the student has achieved the Learning Outcome(s) for the module. This will normally involve the re-assessment of those failed assessment element(s) of the module.
 - e) Where students are referred in a module the referral work will be undertaken during the normal referral period or at a time as specified by the Board of Examiners.

8 The thesis

8.1 **Format, Content and Appearance**

- a) The thesis must normally be presented in A4 format in English and with the appearance approved by the University.
- b) There must be a title page carrying the following information, in the format prescribed by the University
- c)
 - i) the full title of the thesis
 - ii) the full name of the author
 - iii) the award for which the thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements

- iv) the name of any collaborating establishment(s)
 - v) the month and year of submission.
- d) The thesis must include:
- i) a statement of the candidates objectives
 - ii an acknowledgement of published and other sources of material consulted (including an appropriate bibliography) and of any assistance received
 - iii) an abstract of around 300 words bound into each copy which provides a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and of the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject
 - iv) where the research was undertaken as part of a collaborative group, a clear statement of the candidate's individual contribution and of the extent of the collaboration
- e) Where the final submission includes creative work, the submission must be accompanied by a permanent record of any such creative work and, where practicable, these should be bound into the thesis. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of the written thesis and set in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical or design context.
- f) Where the principal focus of the programme of study includes the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text, texts or other artefacts, the completed submission must include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefacts, appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary setting the text(s) or artefacts in the relevant historical, theoretical, critical context or design.

8.2 Length

A declaration must be made by the student and Director of Studies, at the time of submission of the thesis for the examination, that the thesis meets the requirement of 45,000 – 50,000 words excluding references and appendices.

8.3 Artefacts and Creative Work

- a) Where it is not practical to replicate creative work, it must be displayed appropriately, catalogued and labelled for the examiners to review prior to the oral examination.
- b) Small artefacts which cannot be bound should be presented in an appropriate manner with a label clearly indicating the reference number.
- c) Large artefacts which cannot be moved should be photographed and the photograph should have a reference number and location of the original artefact firmly attached.
- d) Performances or other dynamically creative works should be captured in audio and video on CD, DVD, appropriate video tape format or other similar appropriate medium.
- e) Artefacts which are created by a group should be accompanied by the following:
 - i) A brief summary from the student of the work and the nature of his/her involvement;
 - ii) A clear statement from the other members of the group about the student's contribution to the work presented on the letterhead of the group's host institution.
- f) A summary sheet listing all artefacts in reference number order should be included in the thesis.

8.4 **Submission of the Thesis**

- a) The Director of Studies is responsible for advising the candidate on the procedure to be followed for the submission of the thesis, including the number of copies to be submitted for examination and any condition(s) to be satisfied before the candidate may be considered eligible for examination.
- b) It shall be the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that the thesis is submitted for examination, in the form prescribed by the University, before the expiry of the period of registration, taking account of any extension(s) or suspensions of registration that have been approved.
- c) While a candidate would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisors, the submission of the thesis for examination is at the sole discretion of the candidate.
- d) A candidate must not assume that the supervisors' agreement to the thesis being submitted, or any decision relating to progression made by an Assessment Board, guarantees a successful outcome of the examination or the recommendation for the award of the degree being sought.

8.5 **Copies**

- a) The student is required to submit one copy per examiner appointed and one copy for the Chair.
- b) The student is required to submit an identical electronic copy of the thesis and associated documentation to the Research Unit for possible submission to the University's plagiarism detection service.
- c) It is the student's responsibility to ensure the reprographic accuracy of each copy of the documentation and any artefacts submitted.

8.6 **Copyright, Publication and Confidentiality**

- a) The copyright of a thesis and artefacts are vested in the author.
- b) The author is free to publish material in advance of the thesis, but reference to any such published material must be made in the thesis. Moreover, a copy of any published material must either be bound into the thesis or be placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis.
- c) Subject to the limitations described in 8.6e), a successful student must deposit in the University's library and repository one hard bound copy and an identical electronic copy (normally in PDF format, but other electronic forms of submission may be appropriate for non-narrative submissions (eg films) of the thesis and associated documentation or artefacts respectively). A further hard bound and electronic copy must be deposited in the library and repository of Coventry University. The student must also complete keywords, metadata and abstracts fields in the repository, as defined by the submission guidelines, to aid cataloguing and searching of the repository.
- d) The respective copies of the thesis referred to in 8.6c) must be lodged with the University prior to an award being recommended.
- e) The thesis must normally be made available to the public. Exceptionally, the subject of a thesis may be classified as confidential for a specified period, in which case access must not be given until the expiry of that period. Approval for any such restriction must, whenever possible, be sought and given at the time of registration. The period of confidentiality shall not normally exceed five years beyond the completion of the programme of study and the submission of the thesis.

9 Thesis examination arrangements

- 9.1 The Director of Studies will notify the Research Unit of the proposed examination arrangement details three months in advance of the proposed examination date.
- 9.2 The Chair of the Research Degrees Committee will be required to approve the examination arrangements before the Research Unit co-ordinates the examination according to the procedures notified at the time.
- 9.3 **Appointment of an Independent Chair**
- a) The appointment of an Independent Chair must be made for all oral examinations.
 - b) The Independent Chair must be wholly independent of the student and will be nominated by the Research Unit in the Academic Quality Directorate.
 - c) The Independent Chair must normally have supervised or examined at least one candidate at doctoral level.
- 9.4 **Roles and Responsibilities of the Independent Chair**
- a) The Independent Chair is not required to read the thesis or complete a preliminary report form and should be seen as totally independent throughout the process.
 - b) Prior to the oral examination the Independent Chair is expected to brief the examiners on the University's procedures and facilitate the development of an agenda if requested by the examiners.
 - c) During the oral examination of the candidate, the Independent Chair ensures that the examination process takes place in a fair and transparent manner, guides the examiners and candidate through the oral examination and acts as an arbitrator throughout.
 - d) Following the oral examination of the candidate, the Independent Chair assists in the completion of documents confirming the outcome of the examination (if no internal examiner is present).
- 9.5 **Appointment of Examiners**
- a) A candidate for a higher degree must be assessed by an Examination Panel including at least two independent examiners, of whom at least one must be an External Examiner.
 - b) When the candidate is a current member of the University's staff (or has been a member of staff in the 12 months prior to the oral examination) two External Examiners must be appointed.
 - c) Examiners are not permitted to discuss the thesis with the supervisory team between receipt of the examiner's preliminary reports within the University and the commencement of the oral examination.
 - d) Any supervisor may be allowed, subject to the consent of the candidate, to attend the oral examination. Participation in the discussion is at the discretion of the Examination Panel and may be to clarify points of fact only. The supervisor is required to withdraw prior to the deliberation of the Examination Panel on the outcome of the examination.
 - e) Except as provided for under 9.5h) any External Examiner must be wholly independent of the student, the University, and any collaborating establishment. The same person must not be appointed as an External Examiner so frequently that familiarity with the University might prejudice the giving of independent judgement.
 - f) Each examiner must be experienced in research in the general subject area of a particular candidate's thesis, and where practicable, have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined.

- g) The collective experience of the examining team should include a minimum of three candidates examined at a Doctoral level, normally in the UK.
- h) Each examiner must not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor or advisor. The Research Degrees Committee may approve as Internal or External Examiner a person who has acted as one of the external experts who reviewed the application documentation or who has taken part in an Annual Review.
- i) Any person appointed as External Examiner must not have been employed by the University during the previous three years.
- j) No person who is registered for a higher degree, whether of the University or of any other university or institution of high education, may be appointed to act as an examiner.
- k) Any individual currently appointed as an Emeritus Professor or Honorary Research fellow may undertake an internal examining and/or Independent Chair role under these Regulations.

9.6 **Roles and Responsibilities of Examiners**

- a) Each examiner is required to read and assess the thesis and to submit an independent preliminary report to the University before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. As part of that assessment, each examiner must consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the University's requirements for the degree concerned, and, where possible, make an appropriate provisional decision, subject to the outcome of the oral examination.
- b) Following the oral examination of the candidate, the Examination Panel must, when all examiners are in agreement, present a joint report and decision to the University relating to the award of the higher degree being sought. The preliminary reports and joint decision of the examiners must together provide enough detailed observation on the scope and quality of the work undertaken to enable the University to be satisfied that the criteria for the award of the higher degree have been met. When the examiners are not in agreement, they must submit separate reports and recommendations to the University.
- c) The Examination Panel shall only be permitted to recommend to the University the following:
 - i) that the candidate be awarded the degree for which registered;
 - ii) that the candidate be awarded the degree for which registered, subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis;
 - iii) that the candidate be permitted to resubmit for the degree concerned and to be reassessed, with or without an oral examination;
 - iv) that the candidate be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be reassessed;
 - v) that the candidate be awarded the Degree of Masters by Research subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- d) When the examiners' decisions and recommendations are not unanimous, the University may:
 - i) accept a majority recommendation provided that the majority recommendation has been supported by at least one External Examiner;
 - ii) accept the recommendation of the External Examiner(s);
 - iii) require the appointment of an additional External Examiner in accordance with the procedures approved for the appointment of examiners.
 - iv) The Examination Panel may require that a particular candidate be subject to a further assessment in addition to the oral examination. Where such an additional assessment is arranged following an oral examination, it must normally be held within two calendar months of the oral examination and it must be deemed to be part of the candidate's first assessment.

- v) When it is decided, on the recommendation of the Examination Panel, that the degree be not awarded and that no reassessment be permitted, the examiners must be required to prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and give the reasons for their decision to be forwarded to the candidate by the University.

9.7 Responsibilities of Candidates

A candidate must take no part in the arrangement of the examination and have no formal contact with the External Examiner(s) between the time of their being appointed and the holding of the oral examination, or between that and any subsequent oral examination in the case of there being a reassessment of the thesis.

9.8 Procedure Compliance

Any failure to comply with any of the procedures established by the University for the examination process may lead to a particular assessment being declared null and void and to the appointment of new examiners by the University.

10 Academic misdemeanour

A higher degree student shall be subject to the same Regulations as other students of the University in the eventuality of any cheating or plagiarism in the preparation of the thesis or other academic misdemeanour in connection with an assessment or examination.

11 Appeals

Appeals against decisions of a Board of Examiners shall only be permitted in accordance with the regulations as laid out in the formal document – Academic Appeals Procedure: Research Degrees.

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