University of Northampton

Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Professional Development

1 Introduction and background

1.1 A comprehensive Framework of professional development is provided for all the University's postgraduate researchers (hereafter PGRs), including those based at partner institutions. The Framework covers:

    i. induction to the institution's procedures and to the process of research;
    ii. generic skills associated with research and professional development;
    iii. methodology-led methods, skills and techniques;
    iv. project-specific development related to the PGR's own research project.

1.2 This Framework provides basic information for PGRs and supervisors about the operation and requirements of the Framework. The Framework is overseen and co-ordinated by the Researcher Development Manager to whom both PGRs and staff can turn for further guidance and information.

2 Purpose and scope

2.1 The University is a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2019). The Concordat recognises the central importance of development activities for all researchers, and recommends that researchers spend a minimum of 10 days per year on professional development activities (pro rata for fractional appointments).

2.2 There are a number of principles which underpin this Framework. These are that it:
    i. can be undertaken by all the University's PGRs, regardless of topic area or of mode of study;
    ii. reflects best practice of researcher development and supervision within The University and elsewhere;
    iii. does not burden PGRs with unnecessary additional tasks;
    iv. meets the expectations of the QAA's UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees (2018) and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2019)

2.3 These principles can be further developed into the aims for the Framework for PGR Professional Development:

i.   to provide equitable and appropriate but flexible programmes of development which can be followed by all PGRs registered for postgraduate research degrees at The University of Northampton;

ii.   to be managed and administered in such a way that PGRs and supervisors are fully aware of its requirements, their roles and expectations within the programme, including the monitoring of PGR progress and achievement through Annual Reviews;

iii.   to link the Framework with the procedures of Enrolment, Transfer and Annual Review overseen by the University's Research Degrees Committee, and to link assessment points in the development programmes with progression points in the research degrees procedures;

iv.   to be subject to robust quality assurance mechanisms which correspond to the principles of quality assurance within The University and the QAA's UK Quality Code;

v.   to provide development for PGRs in those aspects of professional development which will enable them successfully to contribute to and operate within the academy or other professional contexts, including different modes of working, the presentation and dissemination of research, and other scholarly or professional conventions;

vi.   to provide a supportive environment in which PGRs and supervisors feel part of a wider research community within the University.

2.4   On completion of their research degree programme, PGRs should have and be able to demonstrate:

- understanding of the process by which independent, postgraduate-level research is undertaken and disseminated so that they are able to manage the research process themselves and become effective researchers;
- understanding and evaluation of the context and role of research within their discipline, within the University, and in society;
- critical appreciation of debates on the philosophy of research and the way in which their own subject engages with these debates;
- critical awareness of the diversity of research styles, approaches and strategies;
- more specific and subject-based knowledge of a number of research methodologies, methods and techniques appropriate to the PGR's own discipline or subject area;
- the ability to evaluate critically current research debates in their subject beyond the specificities of their chosen thesis topic, permitting them to situate their own research within a broader context;
- appreciation appropriate at postgraduate level of the linkages between empirical and theoretical issues;
- the skills to make the process of information collection, retrieval and analysis

- a range of appropriate skills – written, graphical, oral etc - to enable efficient and effective communication and dissemination of research outcomes to a variety of audiences;
- awareness of their own skills and capabilities;
- understanding of career opportunities commensurate with their skills and capabilities.

2.5   Although this is an institution-wide Framework, only some of its components are delivered centrally. Primary responsibility for the delivery of this Framework lies with the supervisory team and its content is decided through negotiation with the PGR. The Researcher Development Manager is responsible for overseeing the operation of the Framework and the delivery of the centralised elements, but much of the assessment is handled more locally by the supervisor or the appropriate Research Degrees Board.

2.6   This Framework applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via Education With Others arrangements, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed during the approval of the arrangement.

3.0   Definitions

3.1   Postgraduate Research Degrees are Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (including Practice-based PhDs in The Arts), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Published Works, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Professional Practice in Health and Social Care (D.Prof.Prac) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

3.2   Students registered on these programmes are referred to as Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) throughout this document.

3.3   The Graduate School is the University's central hub for postgraduate research degree administration, quality assurance and PGR development. The Head of the Graduate School is the academic lead. The Postgraduate Research Manager and team are members of Student and Academic Services (SAS). The researcher development team are members of the Department of Research, Impact and Innovation.

3.4   The Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development is linked to the formal progression stages of the research degrees programmes (see the Postgraduate Research Registration and Progression Policy), particularly to Transfer and Annual Review.

4   Key principles

The Components of the Framework

4.1   The Framework is delivered in four components. Each of these components has its own aims and outcomes:
   i.   Induction
   ii.   Generic Development
   iii.   Methodology-led Development
   iv.   Project-based Development

Induction

4.2   Induction: aims
The PhD and MPhil induction component comprises a four-day, intensive introduction to The University and to the research environment. (PGRs joining professional doctorate programmes have their own induction provided by their Faculty.) The PhD and MPhil induction programme is offered on two occasions in a year; currently October and March. Wherever possible PhD and MPhil enrolment is scheduled to coincide with the delivery of the induction programme. Responsibility for organising the delivery of this component rests with the Researcher Development Manager for PhD and MPhil students, and with the relevant programme team for professional doctorate students. PGRs – mostly part-time – who are not able to complete all of its elements within one week are expected to attend these parts of the programme when offered on the next occasion or to meet the outcomes in alternative ways. In exceptional circumstances where arrangements are made with partner institutions and at the discretion of the Research Degrees Committee, it may be possible for the induction programme to be delivered without attendance at The University of Northampton. The Induction component for PhD/MPhil students aims to:

   i.   provide an open discussion about the nature and purpose of research, distinguishing the essence of PhDs and MPhils;
   ii.   explore the rights and responsibilities of PGRs, their supervisors and the University;
   iii.   provide PGRs with information about the facilities at The University of Northampton, including support services such as Library and Learning Services and Information Technology Services;
   iv.   provide information about the procedures for the administration of research budgets;
   v.   introduce PGRs to the University's research degrees procedures;
   vi.   provide PGRs with the opportunity to meet staff and peers at the outset of their research degree programmes;
   vii.   provide an introduction to issues of academic integrity, research integrity and research ethics;
   viii.   familiarise PGRs with the process of identifying their own development needs.

Professional doctorate programme teams shall ensure that the aims are met via the programme induction, through the delivery of modules and/or via an induction to the Thesis Module.

4.3   Induction: outcomes
Following completion of this component PGRs will:

- understand the University's research degree processes and other administrative procedures as they affect them;
- know where to find information about the University's support services;
- be able to articulate what constitutes a research degree and its purpose.

4.4   Induction: assessment (PhD and MPhil students only)
All PhD and MPhil students are required to complete all parts of the induction programme after their enrolment as a PGR unless an alternative programme has been approved by the Researcher Development Manager. Beyond the requirement to complete the induction programme and the requirement to deliver a short presentation on their proposed research during the induction week, PGRs are required to undertake online modules on Research Integrity and Research Ethics and pass a short test. Failure to complete all elements of the Induction programme will lead to failure of the programme and will prevent Transfer of registration to MPhil or PhD at The University of Northampton. Students on Professional Doctorate programmes undertake the same online modules during their facilitated modules (years 1 and 2). No presentation is required at induction.

Generic Development

4.5   Generic Development: aims
The Generic Development component provides a series of workshops which will raise PGRs' awareness of issues to be tackled and tasks to be undertaken when carrying out postgraduate research. This component has been informed by Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). The Generic Development component of the programme aims to:
i.   introduce a range of research skills and techniques;
ii.   develop an understanding of the broader context of the research environment;
iii.   establish good practices of research management, such as monitoring progress, managing time and dealing with supervisors, collaborators and other stakeholders;
iv.   develop and raise awareness of the skills associated with personal effectiveness;
v.   heighten communication skills, particularly the ways in which research can be presented in writing, by graphics, through oral presentation and using other media;

vi.   provide development in appropriate key (transferable) skills associated with the processes of effective career management.

4.6   Generic Development: outcomes
After engaging with the generic development component of the programme PGRs should be able to:

- see value in the benefits of integrating skills development as part of their research degree programme;
- show a broad understanding of the context in which research takes place;
- demonstrate original, independent and critical thinking;
- understand different ways of supporting their learning including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring;
- situate their research within the context of available research methodologies;
- apply effective project management through the setting of research goals;
- appreciate the need for and show commitment to continued professional development;
- demonstrate a range of appropriate skills – written, graphical, oral etc - to enable efficient and effective communication and dissemination of research outcomes to a variety of audiences;
- set realistic and achievable career goals, and identify and develop ways to improve employability.

4.7   Generic Development: delivery
Provision of the generic development component is facilitated by the Researcher Development Manager and is offered through a series of workshops, online webinars and development events. Each workshop is designated at a particular level commensurate with the research degree stage. Details of the programme are available from the Researcher Development Manager and are available to every PGR on the online postgraduate research management system, Gateway.

PhD and MPhil PGRs are expected to join the generic development programme as soon as they have completed induction and enrolled as a postgraduate student. A series of Development Days, aligned with the stages of the research degrees process or a particular theme, are held each year. This allows PGRs who are not full-time or campus-based to attend 2-4 relevant workshops in one day. In practice, much of the generic development required for Professional Doctorate students is delivered during their first two years of modules, however they are encouraged to attend additional workshops/ development opportunities as necessary from the start of their programme.

4.8   Graduate Teaching Assistant Scheme
Research degree students who undertake teaching within the university are required to undertake formal development offered by the University's department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement. Details of the development offered is introduced at induction.

4.9   Generic Development: assessment
Although there is no formal assessment of the Generic programme, there is an expectation that each PGR will attend as many of the workshops that are deemed relevant to them, as identified in discussion with the supervisory team using an initial skills audit and subsequent Annual Reviews

Methodology-led Development

4.10   Methodology-led Development: aims
The intention of the methodology-led component of this development programme is to build on information, skills and ideas introduced in the generic development component. Whereas the generic development component raises awareness of the range of possible methodologies and of techniques for information acquisition, analysis and presentation, this component aims to demonstrate how these methodologies and techniques can be utilised in the PGR's own discipline or disciplines. It is not intended that there will be uniformity in the nature of the provision of this component, and PGRs may negotiate a variety of development routes. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the methodology-led development programme meets PGR's needs and entitlements and is offered in a manner that will be regarded as consistent, robust and appropriate. For this component and for the Project-specific Development (see below) PGRs will need to discuss their development needs with their supervisors so that an appropriate programme of development can be developed in supervision meetings and at Annual Review.

The methodology-led component of the development programme aims to:

i.   provide PGRs with development in methodologies and techniques appropriate to the discipline(s) in which their research is situated;
ii.   enable PGRs to situate their own research project within the context of the methodologies and subject content of their own discipline(s);
iii.   enable PGRs further to develop some of the essential research skills such as acquiring and evaluating information, and presenting the research process and preliminary outcomes, in particular through appropriate academic writing and at a seminar;
iv.   enable PGRs to participate in research networks in areas cognate with their own.

4.11   Methodology-led Development: outcomes
After successful engagement of this component of PGRs will demonstrate:
- awareness of others working in the same topic area;
- recognition of their own specialist researcher development needs in relation to their discipline(s);
- awareness of and ability to criticise the relative appropriateness of various (competing) approaches and methodologies by including a systematic

justification of their chosen methodology for the Case for Transfer document (see the Postgraduate Research Registration and Progression Policy);

- presentation skills of various kinds, including seminars, posters, etc;
- awareness of relevant discipline-based dissemination practices.

4.12   Methodology-led Development: delivery
These guidelines should be interpreted flexibly so as to accommodate the needs of different types of research degree students, including part-time and mature students. Equally, they are not intended to be imposed upon PGRs in situations that would be entirely inappropriate.

A programme of Methodology-led development will be provided for all PGRs. Responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the programme will rest with the Faculties' and Institutes' appointed PGR leads. Although this ultimate responsibility rests with the Faculties and Institutes, responsibility for delivery may be devolved by Faculties to recognised Research Centres which will each have their own plan for PGR development. Where PGR numbers are small in an Institute or a Centre, mutually agreed joint provision is encouraged.

A meeting of Faculty PGR leads and other colleagues with responsibility for methodology-led development in Institutes and Centres will be convened at the outset of each academic year by the Researcher Development Manager to share plans and best practice. Other meetings may be convened when necessary.

4.12.1   It is recommended that minimum provision shall comprise the following:

Development in research degree methods. Each PGR shall attend modules (or parts thereof) in research methods offered as part of existing programmes within the Faculty or offered in another Faculty where relevance can be assured. Where no relevant course/modules can be identified the Faculty shall provide relevant research methods development equivalent to at least one Master's module. Needs and requirements shall be determined by a personal audit undertaken by the first supervisor, where prior learning and experience shall be recognised. In those cases where PGRs attend an existing Master's module they are exempt from that module's fees and from any form of examination, coursework and assessment associated with that module. It shall be at the discretion of the module leader whether any work submitted by PGRs in attendance is marked and returned; if work is marked these marks shall not form part of that Module's return.

Development in methodology-led research seminars. Each PGR shall attend a programme of research seminars organised by the Faculty, Institute or Centre. A minimum programme of six seminars shall be set in every academic year.

Development in methodology-led dissemination practices. Each PGR shall attend one workshop on disseminating research organised by the Faculty, Institute or Centre and should present their research at the university's Annual Poster Competition, Images of Research Exhibition, Annual Research Conference and/or Faculty research conferences, symposia and seminars as appropriate.

4.12.2 Methodology-led Development: Annual reporting

At the last Research Degrees Committee (RDC) meeting of each academic year each Faculty and Institute will provide a report on Methodology-led programmes during that year and plans for the coming year. These reports may refer to the reports of Centres where appropriate. In their report to RDC Faculties and Institutes should be able to confirm:

- Masters-level research methods modules or alternative equivalent provision attended by PGRs;
- Seminar programmes which PGRs have attended and in which they PGRs presented their work, in some cases as partial requirement for Transfer;
- Development activities on methodology-led dissemination, particularly academic writing;
- Other activities which could include: workshops, reading groups, cafes scientifiques, conference or workshop organisation.

Project-specific Development

4.13   Project-specific development: aims
The project-specific development component of the programme should be seen as the day-to-day business of supervision. It is development entirely (or largely) directed by the PGR's supervisory team. However, there is some overlap in the aims, objectives and delivery of this component with the methodology-led development component, and some of the outcomes are tested in the same way. The project-specific component of the development programme aims to:
i.   provide PGRs with development and support appropriate to their own development needs in relation to their particular research project.

4.14   Project-specific Development: outcomes
By engaging with this component PGRs should be able to:
- identify their own specialist researcher development needs in relation to their discipline(s), and articulate their researcher development needs;
- demonstrate a critical awareness of the academic context for their research project in relation to current and past scholarship in their subject;
- demonstrate the ability to write at a level and in a style appropriate for postgraduate research.

4.15   Project-specific Development: delivery
This component of the programme is devised in negotiation between the PGR

and their supervisory team. Fulfilling development needs may require the PGR, for example, to: acquire information from library, archive or other sources; attend internal or external courses, conferences, workshops or seminars; visit researchers at other institutions or establishments; spend time developing expertise in a particular skill or technique. This component may therefore be delivered from a wide variety of sources.

4.16   Project-specific Development: assessment
There is no formal assessment, but it is incumbent upon each supervisory team to monitor the involvement of a PGR with respect to the intended aims and outcomes of this part of the development programme. This involvement is also captured within PGR student annual review processes.

5.0   Key responsibilities

5.1   PGRs are responsible for their own participation in postgraduate researcher development as required (generic, methodology-led, project-specific) (see Postgraduate Research Code of Practice).

5.2   Directors of Study are responsible for ensuring that a PGR undertakes research development as defined by this Framework (see Postgraduate Research Code of Practice).

5.3   Members of supervisory teams are responsible for supporting the PGR in seeking appropriate researcher development and career development opportunities (see Postgraduate Research Code of Practice).

5.4   The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for overseeing the provision of the induction, generic and methodology-led components. The Committee is also responsible for ensuring that PGRs have completed those elements of the programmes that are required at the Transfer stage. The information required by the Research Degrees Committee at this stage is collated and initially scrutinised by Research Degree Boards.

5.5   The Researcher Development Manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the development programme. They will devise and manage the delivery of the Induction and Generic Development components and will act as an information point for staff responsible for delivering the Methodology-led and Project-specific components of the Programme.

5.6   It is the responsibility of Deans of Faculties and Heads of Institutes, through their nominated PGR Leads, to ensure that opportunities for methodology-led development and project-based development are available to their Faculty's or Institute's PGRs. Research Degrees Committee is responsible for receiving annual reports that confirm that appropriate development opportunities are being provided by Faculties, Institutes and Centres.

6.0   Links to related UN Policies/Guidance/Regulations

Regulations
6.1   Academic regulations
Policies
6.2   Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy
6.3   Postgraduate Research Code of Practice
6.5   Postgraduate Research Student Satisfactory Progress Policy
6.6   Postgraduate Research Thesis and Examination Policy
6.7   Research Ethics Code and Procedures
6.7   Complaints Policy
6.8   Postgraduate Research Appeals Policy
6.9   Academic Misconduct Policy
6.10   Research Misconduct Policy
6.11   Intellectual Property policy
Guidance
6.11   Guidance on registration
6.12   Guidance on transfer of registration

7.0   Links to related external documents (e.g. QAA)

7.1   UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees (2018)

Summary Sheet:

Policy Title:
Postgraduate Researcher Development Framework
Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):
To meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees (2018). This policy applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via Education With Others arrangements, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed during the approval of the arrangement.
Owner and Department:
Prof Matthew McCormack, Chair of Research Degrees Committee, The Graduate School. Mrs Laura Pereira, Postgraduate Research Manager, Student and Academic Services
Principal contact:
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Dissemination and implementation plan:	
Via RDC and RDBs Via web	
Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	Research Degrees Committee – June 2015
Date of Senate approval:	July 2015
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	For immediate implementation to all existing and future cohorts
Proposed date of annual update:	May 2023
Date of last annual update:	June 2021
Proposed date of full review:	May 2027
Date of last full review:	May 2022
Version number and date:	V7. May 2022