



## **Postgraduate Research Code of Practice**

### **1 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of postgraduate research students and supervisors in a Code of Practice.
- 1.2 It also sets out the responsibilities of the Graduate School and academic Faculties in supporting postgraduate research students and providing a research environment.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the arrangements for monitoring the standard of programmes of proposed research, monitoring student progress and for student feedback.

### **2 Purpose and scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via partner 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 (Health and Social Care) (D.Prof.Prac) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil).
- 3.2 The Graduate School is the University's central hub for postgraduate research degree administration, quality assurance and researcher development. The Head of the Graduate School is the academic lead. The Postgraduate Research Manager and administrative staff provide a university-wide administration for research degrees programmes.

### **4.0 Key principles**

- 4.1 A supervisory team comprises a Director of Studies and one or more supervisors. It is expected that the supervisory team will together define the roles for each supervisor within the context of a particular research degree programme of study in such a way that their roles will be clear to each other and the student and will provide planned mutual support for all aspects of the student's supervisory needs.

### ***Responsibilities of Members of the Supervisory Team***

- 4.2 Members of the supervisory team should:
- i) provide academic guidance and advice relating to the nature of the research project and the standard expected;
  - ii) provide timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, including the draft thesis prior to submission;
  - iii) advise and monitor the progress of the research degree project in relation to the academic content and agreed timescale;
  - iv) meet with the student at least once per month if full-time and at least every six weeks if part-time ensuring accessibility to the student when s/he needs advice, by whatever means is most suitable given the student's location and mode of study;
  - v) attend annual review meetings in accordance with section 7 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students;
  - vi) provide support and guidance in relation to relevant [University policies and codes](#), e.g. Research Integrity, Research Ethics Code and Procedures, Academic Integrity and Misconduct, Health and Safety, Research Data Management, Record Management and Information Compliance;
  - vii) identify training needs of the student and support the student in seeking appropriate researcher development and career development opportunities as defined by the Framework for Postgraduate Research Training, liaising with the Graduate School and Faculty Research Leader as required;
  - viii) enable academic networking for the student and provide opportunities for the student to present their work to others;
  - ix) follow the PGR Satisfactory Progress Policy where the student is not making satisfactory progress or not engaging with the supervisory team as required in section 4.5 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students.
  - x) advise on budgetary aspects of the project;
  - xi) give appropriate advice and pastoral support including referring the student to relevant sources of support;
  - xii) ensure that their own development as a supervisor is kept up to date;

### ***Responsibilities of the Director of Studies***

- 4.3 In addition to the responsibilities of the Supervisory Team, the Director of Studies should pay particular attention to the following:
- i) ensure the supervisory team is working and communicating effectively; including when dealing with a student who is not making satisfactory progress;
  - ii) ensure the progress of the research degree project in relation to the academic content and agreed timescale;
  - iii) ensure that the University's policies are followed for all stages of research degree administration, that applications to Research Degrees Boards are complete and timely and monitor their progress;
  - iv) organise and conduct an annual review according to section 7 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students;
  - v) ensure compliance with all relevant University policies and codes, eg. Research Integrity, Research Ethics, Academic Integrity, Health and Safety, Data Management, Data Protection;
  - vi) provide leadership to the supervisory team in dealing with a student who has not met his/her responsibilities or is not making satisfactory progress;
  - vii) raise any problems or issues that may hinder the progress of the student with the appropriate body/person (e.g. student, Dean of Faculty, Chair of Research Degrees Board, etc).

### ***Role and Expectations of the External Supervisor***

- 4.4 A level of involvement that includes a minimum of four meetings per year with a student for full-time students or three times a year for part-time students is expected, as well as consideration of annual monitoring reports and comment on draft theses.
- 4.5 A fee of £400 per full time student and £300 per part time student shall be paid by the student's Faculty (or shared by Faculties in the case of students undertaking interdisciplinary study across more than one Faculty).

### ***Responsibilities of the Research Degree Student***

- 4.6 Research degree students should:
- i) recognise ownership of the project;
  - ii) attend regular meetings with supervisors and log them in Gateway, as set out in 4.5 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students;
  - iii) attend annual review meetings as arranged by the Director of Studies as set out in section 7 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students;

- iv) prepare adequately for meetings with supervisors;
- v) carry out the research and other activities associated with the programme on time, in an ethically sound manner and with an awareness of policies as set out in section 4.6 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students, as well as other relevant policies [University policies and codes](#), e.g. Research Integrity, Research Ethics Code and Procedures, Academic Integrity and Misconduct, Health and Safety, Research Data Management, Record Management and Information Compliance;
- vi) undertake and produce work of a standard, volume and at a pace that is considered to be reasonable for successful completion of the degree within the stated timescales;
- vii) participate in postgraduate researcher development as required (generic, discipline-based, project-specific) (see Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development Training);
- viii) participate in external research and transferable skills development opportunities as agreed with supervisors
- ix) maintain research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
- x) produce written work as requested;
- xi) take responsibility for their own personal and professional development by maintaining a Personal Development Plan;
- xii) take advantage of opportunities for academic networking, including presenting work to others, e.g. research seminars, conference posters, papers etc.;
- xiii) meet deadlines agreed with supervisors;
- xiv) alert supervisors to specific needs or circumstances that may affect their work and the progress of the project;
- xv) recognise and report any problems with supervision or related matters to an appropriate body (e.g. Research Degrees Board, Postgraduate Research Manager) in a timely manner;
- xvi) comply with all Health and Safety regulations and ethical codes of practice (see [University policies, procedures and regulations](#));
- xvii) comply with all requests for reports etc concerned with research degree administration, including any reports required by funding bodies;
- xviii) be familiar with the University's regulations, policies and guidelines for postgraduate research degrees (see [University policies, procedures and regulations](#) and the [research student toolkit](#)).

### ***The role of the Graduate School***

- 4.7 The Graduate School provides the induction and generic development elements of the Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development and co-ordinates a range of university-wide development events, for example, the

Annual Postgraduate Research Conference, Annual Research Poster Competition, Graduate School Update Day and an Images of Research Exhibition.

- 4.8 The Graduate School provides support to Faculties in relation to discipline-based development and undertakes periodic monitoring of discipline-based development.
- 4.9 The Head of the Graduate School, the Development Programmes Manager and the Researcher Developer are responsible to the Dean of Research, Impact and Innovation. The Postgraduate Research Manager and administrative staff provide a university-wide administration for research degrees programmes from the point of initial enquiry to enrolment of students, progression, annual review and examination. The Graduate School are responsible for the administration of the Research Degrees Committee, Research Degrees Boards and the Research Ethics Committee. The team work closely with other specialist teams within the university to provide support for admissions, professional doctorate assessment processing, complaints and appeals, international student support and conferment, ceremonies and certification.

### ***The role of the academic Faculties***

- 4.10 Faculties are responsible for resourcing the supervision of postgraduate research students.
- 4.11 Faculties are responsible for the provision of a suitable research environment (see 4.28-4.29 below) and methodology-led development. In practice this may be provided either at Faculty-level or Subject-, Institute- or Centre- level.
- 4.12 Project-based training is typically constituted by the process of regular supervision and project-related skills development.

### ***Role of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC)***

- 4.13 The Research Degrees Committee requires evidence of satisfactory progress of an individual student at the main stages of the research degree process – Registration (Initial Project Approval) and Transfer of Registration, as set out in the Academic Regulations for Research Students. At both of these stages, the Research Degrees Board is required to confirm that the student has satisfactorily completed the appropriate assessments as required by the Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development.

- 4.14 The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate mechanisms for the approval of programmes of study (see 4.30-4.32 below) which ensure that:
- i. appropriate and experienced academic judgement is brought to bear on each project;
  - ii. the viability and academic value of each programme is fully investigated and found to be appropriate for the award sought;
  - iii. there are appropriate research facilities and environment to support the proposal in question;
  - iv. the candidate is suitable for registration;
  - v. the arrangements for supervision are sound and demonstrate appropriate experience and expertise amongst the supervisors;
  - vi. ethical approval has been sought where appropriate;
  - vii. the proposed research has been appropriately risk assessed;
  - viii. from the outset of study both supervisors and students clearly understand their responsibilities to the Research Degrees Committee and each other.

#### ***Research Degree Boards (RDBs)***

- 4.15 At the point of admitting a student, the Dean, Research Leader or Postgraduate Research Student Admissions co-ordinator of the Faculty indicates which Research Degrees Board (RDB) the student should be allocated to.
- 4.16 Formal monitoring and reporting on students' progress is conducted through the relevant Research Degrees Board (currently Arts & Humanities (AHRDB), Business and Education (BERDB), Science (SRDB) and Social Science (SSRDB). The Research Degrees Boards have devolved responsibility from the Research Degrees Committee. Following each RDB meeting, RDB Chairs may report matters arising or matters of note at the next RDC meeting.

#### ***Pastoral Support for Postgraduate Research Students***

- 4.17 In addition to the support given by supervisors and peers, it is important that research students have access to pastoral support from an independent member of staff. Research Degrees Board members can be approached for support with any issues that a student does not wish to discuss with their supervisors for any reason. RDB members will depend upon their ability to develop and retain the confidence of students and to deal appropriately with any sources of difficulty or conflict.

RDB members are considered to be appropriate to provide pastoral support because

- i) they are fully engaged with the research degrees process
- ii) they have an overview of student progress within their RDB
- iii) students can approach a member close to or removed from their own Faculty or subject area
- iv) there is a sufficient number of members to ensure, as far as possible, that support can be given at any time.

RDB members are invited to meet new students at induction to build relationships with their cohort.

The amount and level of detail given in any reports to RDBs will depend upon the nature of the issue. RDB members are sensitive to the confidentiality of students and other RDB members in their reports. The guiding principles should thus be that those who need to know are properly informed, and that students agree to any information which is passed on.

- 4.18 Where a student's concerns have not been resolved to their satisfaction via these means, the Head of The Graduate School or Postgraduate Research Manager should be notified.

#### ***Annual leave for Postgraduate Research Students***

- 4.19 Along with official University closed days students are entitled to up to 30 days annual leave per each year of study. One year is calculated from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July. Annual leave should be negotiated with the supervisory team and requests shall not be unreasonably withheld. Information about the process for requesting annual leave shall be made available on the Postgraduate Research pages of the Student Hub.
- 4.20 Overseas Postgraduate Researchers on a Student Route or Tier 4 visa shall observe the approval process set out in 4.9 of the [Authorised Absence Policy \(Student Route\)](#).

#### ***Facilities for Postgraduate Research Students***

- 4.21 All PGR students will have 24-hour access to a secure workspace dedicated to PGRs. The facilities provided within the PGR space will include desks, desktop computers and laptop docking stations. Access to these facilities will be on a 'hotdesking' basis. Printing and scanning facilities will be available close to the PGR space and around the University campus.
- 4.22 All PGR students will have access to secure online storage for research data.

### ***Student representation***

- 4.23 All research degree-related Committees include student representation and at each meeting there are opportunities for representatives to raise issues. The Student Union Postgraduate Research Officer shall be one of the representatives on the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.24 A Research Student Committee, convened by research students meets termly to discuss issues raised by students either directly or via the student representatives. The Chair of the Research Student Committee represents students at the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.25 The main mechanism for surveying postgraduate research students is via the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The survey takes place annually as part of Advance HE's national PRES survey. The online survey is completed independently, and the contents are confidential. The survey is administered and evaluated by the Graduate School. The benchmarked results are reported to the RDC and other university committees.

### ***Teaching or demonstrating work***

- 4.26 PGRs often wish to get experience of teaching while they study, particularly if they plan to have an academic career. The University encourages this and has a policy entitled 'Opportunities for PGR Students to Contribute to Learning and Teaching at the University of Northampton', which commits to providing teaching experience for PGRs who want it.
- 4.27 Full time PGRs should not take on more than 6 hours per week of teaching or demonstrating work while they are studying, in order to ensure that they have sufficient time to devote to full time study. There is no stipulated limit for part time PGRs, who typically work during their studies, but they should ensure that they have sufficient time to devote to part time study.

### ***The research environment***

- 4.28 A programme of research for a research degree may be proposed in any topic provided that it can be demonstrated that the programme is in a subject area for which the University:
- i. has sufficient numbers of full-time academic staff capable of scholarly research with a record of research achievement in the subject area;
  - ii. can provide an environment which will encourage high quality research and support research degree students through appropriate discipline-based development;



- iii. has staff experienced in research degree supervision and the capacity to supervise the project in accordance with University guidelines;
  - iv. can provide an appropriate internal examiner.
- 4.29 Such a learning environment will enable students to make judgements requiring creativity and critical independent thought, accepting that uncertainty is a feature of the conduct of research programmes. This environment should enable students to grapple with challenges that develop intellectual maturity and encourage a high level of reflection on the student's own learning about research as well as on research outcomes.

### ***Programmes of Study***

- 4.30 A programme of study may be proposed in any discipline provided that the programme is:
- capable of leading to scholarly research;
  - able to be presented for assessment by the appropriate examiners;
  - located within an environment that encourages high quality research and provides support for undertaking and learning about research.
- 4.31 Normally such a programme would predominantly comprise either individual research conducted by the candidate or a programme of research in which the candidate's own creative or practical work forms a significant part of the intellectual enquiry, together with other supporting studies.
- 4.32 In the context of this policy 'thesis' is understood to denote the totality of the submission which may comprise a practical component (e.g. fine art exhibition, design, creative writing, musical composition, film, dance and performance) accompanied by an analytical commentary that sets the work in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical and design context. In this context the analytical commentary shall conform to the usual scholarly requirements and be of an appropriate length.

## **5.0 Key responsibilities**

- 5.1 Key responsibilities of stakeholders in Postgraduate Research Degrees are set out in this policy.

## **6.0 Links to related [UON Policies/Guidance/Regulations](#)**

### ***Regulations***

- 6.1 Academic regulations for Research Students

### ***Policies***

- 6.2 Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy
- 6.3 Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development
- 6.4 Postgraduate Research Code of Practice
- 6.5 Postgraduate Research Satisfactory Progress Policy
- 6.6 Postgraduate Research Thesis and Examination Policy
- 6.7 Research Ethics Code and Procedures
- 6.8 Complaints Policy
- 6.9 Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy
- 6.10 Research Misconduct Policy
- 6.11 Research Integrity Policy
- 6.12 Intellectual Property policy
- 6.13 Authorised Absence Policy (Student Route)

### **Guidance**

- 6.14 Transfer Guidance
- 6.15 Research Ethics Committee guidance

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

- 7.1 UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees

### **8.0 Appendices**

## Summary Sheet:

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| <b>Policy Title:</b>   |   |
| Postgraduate Research Code of Practice   |   |
| <b>Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):</b>  |   |
| To meet the requirements of the QAA UK Quality Code for HE, Chapter B11: Postgraduate Research Degrees. This policy applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via partner arrangements, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed during the approval of the arrangement. |   |
| <b>Owner and Department:</b>   |   |
| Prof Matthew McCormack, Chair of Research Degrees Committee, The Graduate School.<br>Ms Laura Pereira, Postgraduate Research Manager, The Graduate School  |   |
| <b>Principal contact:</b>  |   |
| Ms Laura Pereira, Postgraduate Research Manager, The Graduate School<br><a href="mailto:graduateschool@northampton.ac.uk">graduateschool@northampton.ac.uk</a>   |   |
| <b>Dissemination and implementation plan:</b>  |   |
| Via RDC and RDBs<br>Via web  |   |
| <b>Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):</b>  | Research Degrees Committee – June 2015    |
| <b>Date of Senate approval:</b>  | July 2015                                 |
| <b>Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:</b>  | Immediate implementation for all cohorts. |
| <b>Proposed date of annual update:</b>   | May 2024                                  |
| <b>Date of last annual update:</b>   | May 2023                                  |
| <b>Proposed date of full review:</b>   |   |
| <b>Date of last full review:</b>   |   |
| <b>Version number and date:</b>  | V8 July 2023                              |