

Regulations for Research Degrees

1. General Regulations

- 1.1 The University of Wolverhampton aligns the level of its awards and qualifications with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This is a common framework within the United Kingdom. All awards and qualifications of the University of Wolverhampton will meet the standards specified by the QAA.
- 1.2 Research degrees may be undertaken in prescribed fields of study and disciplines in which the University has appropriate and relevant research expertise and resources to support high-quality research degree programmes.
- 1.3 The University's research degrees are awarded to Students who have satisfied a team of specially-appointed Examiners that both the thesis (including portfolio of creative / published work) and the oral defence of that thesis demonstrate that they has achieved the learning outcomes appropriate to the award sought.
- 1.4 All Research Students are expected to be able at all times to demonstrate an awareness of research-related topics such as respecting copyright, safeguarding intellectual property rights, ethical concerns in conducting research, health and safety, etc
- 1.5 The University Research Committee will approve and monitor:
 - 1.5.1 The methodology for the allocation of Supervisors.
 - 1.5.2 Criteria for the composition of Examining Teams to support section 5 of these regulations.
 - 1.5.3 Contents of Research Handbooks to support the conduct and behavior of Research Students, Supervisors and Examiners.
 - 1.5.4 A list of staff that can act on the authority of the Dean of Research, together with the permitted powers of delegation. In these regulations the "Dean of Research" equally refers to these approved staff.
- 1.6 These Research Regulations relate to the awarding of PhDs, MPhils, Higher Doctorates and the management of the Doctoral Thesis element of the Professional / Practitioner Doctorate degrees. For Professional Doctorate Awards, these regulations must be read in conjunction the University of Wolverhampton Academic Regulations.

2. The Admission of Research Students

- 2.1 The University will ensure that procedures in place for the recruitment and admission of Students are readily accessible, fair, clear and implemented consistently and that decisions regarding admissions are made by those equipped to make the required judgment and who are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
- 2.2 The University will ensure the speedy conversion of appropriate applications into offers to suitable prospective Students by having transparent academic and non-academic entry requirements which lead to the enrolment of new entrants at appropriate levels in the University.
- 2.3 Applicants will be provided with timely information and advice needed for them to make informed choices best suited to their individual needs and circumstances and financial support and costs, together with the obligations placed upon them at the point at which an offer of a place is made.
- 2.4 The University will inform prospective Students as soon as possible of any significant changes, and will inform successful applicants of the arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction. The University will ensure that effective and appropriate arrangements are in place for providing feedback to applicants who have not been offered a place.
- 2.5 The University will ensure that procedures are in place for responding to applicants' complaints about the operation of the admissions process, and appeals about the outcome of a selection decision, and will ensure that all staff involved with admissions are familiar with the procedures.
- 2.6 This regulation and associated procedures are framed within the Institution's published Equal Opportunities Policy and operate to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants to the University and its partner colleges irrespective of colour, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or socio-economic background.
- 2.7 All applicants to the University will be required to complete the appropriate application form.
- 2.8 The University will not admit or allow the continuation of study for any person found to have made a fraudulent application.
- 2.9 Students who have previously been excluded from any course in the University for reasons of discipline, academic misconduct or fitness to practice will have no right to study at the University again.
- 2.10 An applicant for a research degree shall normally hold either:
 - a first or upper second class honours degree, or
 - a master's degree, or
 - evidence of prior practice or learning that is accepted by the Dean of Research.

An applicant for a Higher Doctorate should normally either:

- be holders, of at least seven years standing, of a first degree awarded by a UK University (or equivalent body), or of a qualification of equivalent standard; or
- be holders, of at least four years standing, of a higher degree awarded by a UK University (or equivalent body), or of a qualification of equivalent standard.

- 2.11 Where an applicant presents a research proposal as part of the application process which is accepted by the Dean of Research, the applicant may register directly onto the Research Degree programme.
- 2.12 An Applicant whose entry award was not delivered in English, or non-native speaker of English shall be required to demonstrate proficiency in English at least to the level of an IELTS score of 7.0 or its equivalent to be registered as a Research Degree Student. However, if the Candidate holds a Master's degree from a U.K. University, this requirement may be waived.
- 2.13 For an Applicant wishing to pursue a Research Degree in the areas of Chemistry, Computing and Mathematics, Computer Science, or Engineering, whose entry award was not delivered in English, or non-native speaker of English shall be required to demonstrate proficiency in English at least to the level of an IELTS score of 6.5 (Writing - 6.5 and no less than 6.0 in any other component) or its equivalent.
- 2.14 Exceptionally an applicant who does not meet the criteria set out in 2.10 - 2.13 may be admitted to a Pre-Research Degree programme, providing the Dean of Research confirms the applicant has been able to present:
- evidence of a satisfactory general education and of ability to undertake the proposed research programme,
 - the names of two academic referees,
 - Demonstrate proficiency in English to at least the level of an IELTS score of 6.0
- 2.15 The Dean of Research will approve the appropriate selection criteria for each applicant, and this will be communicated to the applicant following receipt of their application.
- 2.16 Prior to confirmation of acceptance to the applicant, the Dean of Research must confirm that suitable supervision is available.
- 2.17 Where a Student wishes to transfer from another University they will be required to present evidence of progress to date in their research programme of study and in achieving the learning outcomes for the award will be required to be verified by the current Institution. The Dean of Research may approve a reduction in the registration period, within the registration periods set out in section 3.17.

3. The Registration of Students

- 3.1 Registration is the annual process through which Students formally agree to be a Student member of the University for either the whole or part of the academic year.
- 3.2 The University Research Committee will agree, on an annual basis, the number of registration points at which new Students may commence their study. The minimum registration points will be two per annum,
- 3.3 Students will register for their intended research award, however will need to meet the requirements of sections 3.16, and 6 to continue to study.
- 3.4 Students are responsible for ensuring that they are fully registered at the appropriate point each year. Students not fully registered may be de-registered and barred from study.
- 3.5 All new Students will be required to provide evidence of their identity and relevant qualifications when they join the University.
- 3.6 Students requiring a visa to study in the UK must ensure that they meet, both at the beginning and for the duration of the course, requirements stipulated by the UK Border Agency and conditions of their visa.
- 3.7 Students must remain registered with the University until conferment of the award. This includes any periods following the examination (including re-submission) during which the Examiners' recommendations are implemented.
- 3.8 Continuing Students who do not re-register will be assumed to have withdrawn from their course.
- 3.9 In registering Students agree to abide by the University Regulations, Bye-Laws and their liability for annual fee payments.
- 3.10 Students can apply to be considered "at writing-up stage" only once they have completed their main studies. The maximum period of time a Student can be considered to be writing-up is 12 calendar months.
- 3.11 Students must ensure that all fees and other payments due to the University are paid within the academic year such costs are incurred. Where appropriate they may agree to use any sponsorship or bursary in part payment of fees. Students owing the University money from a previous year or course, outside any agreed limit set annually by the University, will not be permitted to register. Students unable to register, because of outstanding debts, will be obliged to take a leave of absence or withdraw.

- 3.12 Any Student who is not registered, (including those on a Leave of Absence – see section 9), will not be covered by the University Insurance policy or by the University Health & Safety policy and will be excluded from their study, research, supervision and direction at the University.
- 3.13 Students must, at all times, ensure that the data the University holds for them are accurate. The registration process allows Students to check and update key personal information in their record. Changes which occur at other times in the academic year must be notified to the University. This includes notifying the University of their withdrawal, leave of absence or transfer following procedures published by the Academic Registrar.
- 3.14 The University has a statutory requirement to share data with certain other bodies. The Academic Registrar will publish annually a list of organisations which receive data from the University.
- 3.15 Students may study at a distance for all or part of their registration, with the agreement of the Dean of Research. Such Students will be required to follow a programme of study agreed by the Dean of Research.
- 3.16 Students may study on a full or part- time basis.
- Full-time Students will normally devote on average 35 hours per week over a minimum of 45 weeks per year to the programme.
 - Part-time Students will normally devote 15-18 hours per week over a minimum of 45 weeks per year to the programme.
- 3.17 Students may vary the pace at which they proceed through their course by varying the mode of study. It is the responsibility of the Student to ensure that they are fully aware of any financial consequences that the decision to vary the pace of study may have.
- 3.18 The maximum period over which an award governed by these Research Regulations may be studied will be:

| Full Time Students | Normal | Maximum |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| PhD | 3 years | 4 years |
| Professional /Practitioner Doctorate * | 3 years | 4 years |
| MPhil | 18 months | 2 years |
| Higher Masters Degree * | 1 year | 2 years |
| Pre-Research programme | 6 months | 6 months |

| Part Time Students | Normal | Maximum |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| PhD | 4 years | 8 years |
| Professional /Practitioner Doctorate | 4 years | 8 years |
| MPhil | 2 years | 4 years |
| Higher Masters Degree | 2 years | 4 years |
| Pre-Research programme | 6 months | 6 months |

- 3.19 The maximum registration period includes the period up to the submission of the theses. Where any delay is outside the control of the Student, the registration period will be adjusted to reflect the delay.
- 3.20 Where a Student chooses to change their mode of study the maximum period of registration will be calculated pro rata.
- 3.21 Where a Student has been granted permission to take a period of leave of absence, in accordance with section 9, the maximum period of registration will be extended by the relevant period.
- 3.22 Where a Student has been granted an extension to maximum registration, in accordance with section 10, the maximum period of registration will be extended by the relevant period.
- 3.23 To be eligible to continue to study for an award governed by these Regulations, a Student must not exceed the relevant maximum periods of registration set out in section 3.18 and must successfully complete the progression stage of the award being studied.
- 3.24 Where a research Student can demonstrate that s/he has achieved all or some of the learning outcomes through research training and personal development undertaken outside the University, the Dean of Research may recommend that the Student be accredited for such prior achievement and thus be deemed to have completed all or part of the specified programme of research training. This recommendation may also consider a reduced registration period.

4 The Management of Assessment – The Theses

- 4.1 All Research Students must present a written thesis, presented in English, in the format agreed by the University Research Committee, on the subject of their research, for examination by a team of Examiners.
- 4.2 Research Students are required to submit their thesis for examination within the registration periods set out in 3.18.

- 4.3 The thesis may contain work previously published by the candidate, and reference to such publication shall be made in the thesis. Where publications are jointly authored by the Student and others, the Student's contribution to the publication must be specified.
- 4.4 The thesis may not contain work that has been previously submitted for another award.
- 4.5 For the award of PhD by Published Work, only work that has been peer reviewed is eligible for inclusion. The publications submitted for examination must form a coherent body of knowledge rather than a series of disconnected research outputs. 80% of this work must have appeared within six years of the date of submission.
- 4.6 For the award of Higher Doctorate a portfolio of work of high distinction should be included. It should constitute an original and significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge and/or its application and should support the case that the applicant is an authority in his/her field of study. That the latter is the case will be demonstrated by evidence of a sustained and coherent contribution to scholarship over a number of years. Such evidence will largely be provided by published work submitted but may be complemented by supporting evidence of sustained contributions to higher education, especially at the postgraduate level in such activities as successful research degree supervision and examination of research degree candidates.
- 4.7 Following the award of the degree, an electronic copy of the theses (E-theses) will be lodged in the University's on-line repository unless an application for confidentiality has been approved by the Dean of Research.
- 4.8 The copies of the thesis submitted for examination and the final E-Thesis shall remain the property of the University but the copyright of the thesis shall be vested in the Student.
- 4.9 An application for confidentiality may be made to the Dean of Research on the following grounds:
- to enable a patent application to be lodged, or
 - to protect material that is sensitive commercially or personally, or due to its relation to questions of national security.

Approval must be sought and granted no later than the time at which examination arrangements are approved. The normal maximum period of confidentiality is two years. Where an application for confidentiality has been granted, the thesis will be retained by the University on restricted access and will only be made available to those directly involved with the project.

5. The management of Assessment – the examination

- 5.1 A team of Examiners will be convened to examine Students at the appropriate time. The membership of the Examination Teams will be approved by the Dean of Research and reported to the Research Awards Sub-Committee. Members of the Student's Supervisory team or scholars whose own work forms the focus of the thesis may not be appointed as an Examiner.
- 5.2 The Examining team will comprise a minimum of two Examiners. One must be external to the University and/or any linked partners. In order to ensure the integrity of the examining process, Students who are employed by the University will be examined by at least three Examiners, at least two of whom must be external to the University and/or any linked partners.
- 5.3 All oral examinations will be chaired by a representative of the University. They will be independent of the project, Student and Supervisors. Their role is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and in accordance with the University's regulations.
- 5.4 In cases of recorded disability where a candidate would be disadvantaged by an oral examination, alternative arrangements may be approved by the Dean of Research.
- 5.5 Once the examining team has been appointed, neither the Student nor the Supervisory team shall have any contact with the Examiners in relation to the thesis until the oral examination.
- 5.6 Following the oral examination, the Examiners will be asked to make one of the following recommendations:
 - 5.6.1 Pass.
 - 5.6.2 Pass, subject to minor corrections, in accordance with 5.8 (*Not relevant to Higher Doctorate degrees.*)
 - 5.6.3 Re-submit and/or be re-examined orally for the degree originally submitted, in accordance with 5.9 (*Not relevant to Higher Doctorate degrees.*)
 - 5.6.4 Re-submit and/or be re-examined orally the original PhD for the degree of MPhil, in accordance with 5.10 (*Not relevant to Professional Doctorate or Higher Doctorate degrees.*)
 - 5.6.5 Fail. The Student has no further opportunity for submission.
- 5.7 If the thesis is awarded a Pass subject to minor correction (5.6.2 or 5.11.2) of editorial or other stated deficiencies, the Student must resubmit the corrected work within 12 weeks. If the thesis is not resubmitted within 12 weeks, and in the absence of approved and recorded Leave of Absence, the University reserves the right not to confer the award.

- 5.8 If the thesis is not considered to be of sufficiently high standard to recommend the award submitted, but there is evidence of the potential of a successful submission, then the Examiners may recommend that the Student re-submit the thesis. Such re-submission will take place within 12 calendar months of the date of the oral examination and Students must remain registered at the University during this time. The Examiners have the discretion to request a further oral examination following re-submission of the thesis. The maximum registration period will be extended to accommodate this requirement
- 5.9 If the thesis for a PhD award is not considered to be of sufficiently high standard to recommend the full award and the Examiners do not believe there is evidence of potential to reach the appropriate standard within 12 months, they may recommend that the Student re-submit the thesis for an MPhil award. Such re-submission will take place within 6 calendar months of the date of the oral examination. The Examiners have the discretion to request a further oral examination following re-submission of the thesis.
- 5.10 A Student whose thesis has been recommended for re- submission may exercise the option of re- submitting a revised thesis for consideration for the award of MPhil. Such re-submission will take place within 6 calendar months of the date of the oral examination. In such cases, the thesis will be considered a re-submission and bound by regulation 5.12 below.
- 5.11 Where the thesis is re-submitted, the Examiners will only consider the issues that were previously referred. They will be asked to make one of the following recommendations:
- 5.11.1 Pass
 - 5.11.2 Pass, subject to minor corrections to be completed within 4 weeks
 - 5.11.3 Fail. There is no further opportunity for submission.
- 5.12 Where Examiners are unable to reach an agreed recommendation, the Dean of Research may:
- 5.12.1 accept a majority recommendation;
 - 5.12.2 accept the recommendation of the external Examiner; or
 - 5.12.3 require the appointment of an additional Examiner.
- 5.13 In the case of 5.12.3 above, or where there has been a substantial procedural error, an additional Examiner shall prepare an independent report on the thesis and may request an additional oral examination. The only outcomes available to the additional Examiner are either Pass or Fail. S/he shall neither seek nor be informed of the individual recommendations of the other Examiners.

- 5.14 Where the Examiners believe that the thesis is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose could be served by conducting an oral examination, they may decide that the thesis be referred for further work prior to conducting an oral examination. In such cases, when the thesis is re-submitted for examination it will be examined under regulation 5.11 above.
- 5.15 All Examiners' recommendations are subject to confirmation by the Research Awards Sub-Committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.

6. Continuation Regulations

- 6.1 Student progress will be considered by the Supervisory team as part of the regular Supervisory process, following criteria agreed by the University Research Committee and published in the Research Handbooks.
- 6.2 The University Research Committee will convene a Research Awards Sub-committee, which will meet at least six times each year, to consider:
 - 6.2.1 The performance of Students currently subject to the 'Proceed with Caution' process,
 - 6.2.2 The annual progress review of all Students,
 - 6.2.3 The performance of Students at the "progression" stage
 - 6.2.4 The confirmation of awards of Students completing their studies
- 6.3 All Research Students must meet their Supervisor on at least 9 occasions each year (part time Students on at least 5 occasions), using the agreed methods depending upon the location of the Student.
- 6.4 If the Supervisor judges that a Student's ability to progress is endangered, they will declare that Student to be subject to the 'Proceed with Caution' process. A Student may be subject to the 'Proceed with Caution' process under the following circumstances:
 - 6.4.1 They have not met the requirements to satisfy the Supervisor that they should proceed, as outlined in the Research Handbooks;
 - 6.4.2 They have repeatedly failed to meet deadlines or quality thresholds as specified as part of the informal Supervisory review of progress.
- 6.5 When a Student meets the criteria of the 'Proceed with Caution' process the Dean of Research will be advised, and an action plan agreed. Where a Student continues to meet the 'Proceed with Caution' criteria for two or more months, the issue will be reported to the University Research Awards Sub-committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.
- 6.6 Where the 'Proceed with Caution' procedure does not result in an improvement in the Student's ability to progress, the Dean of Research may recommend to the Research Awards Sub-committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board, that the withdrawal procedure be initiated.

7. Appeals

- 7.1 The University has an appeals procedure that is available for all research Students.
- 7.2 Prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, a Student may appeal against any recommendation not to progress to examination stage.
- 7.3 Grounds for appeal against a recommendation not to progress may include:
- Procedural irregularity in arriving at the recommendation;
 - Evidence of unfair or improper assessment by either one or more members of the Supervisory team or of the designated authority;
 - Evidence of unsatisfactory or insufficient supervision, inadequate access to basic support facilities, or lack of provision of agreed specialist or other facilities, that can be demonstrated to have had a negative impact on the Student's ability to progress.
- 7.4 A Student may appeal against the recommendation of the Examiners following examination or re-examination. Grounds for appeal against an Examiners' recommendation may include:
- Evidence that there were circumstances of which the Chair and the Examiners were not aware that affected the Student's performance at the oral examination;
 - Evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt on the reliability of the recommendation;
 - Evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the Examiners.
- 7.5 Grounds for appeal against an Examiner's recommendation shall not include:
- The academic judgment of the Examiners;
 - Allegations of unsatisfactory or insufficient supervision.

8. Academic misconduct

- 8.1 The University has a formal procedure for investigating allegations of academic misconduct for research Students outlined in the Research Handbooks.

9. Leave of absence

- 9.1 A Research Student may apply for a leave of absence, where they declare that they are not undertaking any research activities for a period of time (i.e. a temporary withdrawal from studies).
- 9.2 No single period of Leave of Absence will be granted for a period in excess of 12 months. The total period of Leave of Absence allowable is 24 months. Students cannot take consecutive periods of Leave of Absence for longer than 12 months and must re-engage with their research studies for a minimum of 3 months after taking the maximum 12 months allowable. Any request for leave of absence shall be referred to the Dean of Research or nominee and reported to the University Research Awards Subcommittee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.
- 9.3 Periods of leave undertaken due to statutory childcare (including maternity leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave and adoptive leave) will not be counted towards the maximum total period of 24 months, although the maximum registration period will be amended accordingly.
- 9.4 Periods of leave undertaken due to statutory jury service will not be counted towards the maximum total period of 24 months, although the maximum registration period will be amended accordingly.
- 9.5 Whilst on a leave of absence, a Student will have restricted access to University services and facilities, including their Supervisor in respect of their research work, but will be encouraged to keep in touch with their Supervisor for pastoral support
- 9.6 A leave of absence will be granted in month-long blocks, and then added to the registration period.
- 9.7 Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively.
- 9.8 Students on a Tier 4 visa taking Leave of absence will be required to return to their home country.
- 9.9 Students in receipt of a studentship are not entitled to any bursary payments whilst on Leave of Absence.
- 9.10 In very exceptional circumstances, a Director of Studies may ask for a student's maximum registration period to be extended in accordance with section 10.

10. Exceptional Extension to Registration Period

- 10.1 A Director of Studies, on behalf of a research student, may apply for an extension to the maximum registration period only in very exceptional circumstances (e.g. because of a setback for which the University takes full responsibility). Extensions will not be granted for 'unexceptional' circumstances such as everyday life events, work pressure, financial difficulties, academic failure, and poor project/time management.
- 10.2 Any request for an extension shall be referred to the Dean of Research and Academic Registrar (or nominees) and reported to the University Research Awards Subcommittee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.
- 10.3 An extension will be granted in month-long blocks. A new maximum registration date will be calculated that takes account of the period granted by the Dean of Research.
- 10.4 The total period of extension allowable will not normally exceed 12 months.
- 10.5 Research Students may be liable for fees for any extended period of registration.
- 10.6 An extension shall not be granted retrospectively.

11. Posthumous and Aegrotat awards

- 11.1 The University may award consider an Aegrotat or Posthumous award, on the recommendation of the Dean of Research. In reaching the decision the Dean of Research will normally convene an Examination Panel in accordance with section 5.
- 11.2 In addition to PhD and MPhil, the Examiners may recommend the award of Postgraduate Diploma (by research), if they believe the work is close to but not sufficient for an MPhil. *(Not relevant to Professional Doctorate degrees.)*
- 11.3 In considering whether to accept such a thesis, the relevant committee will assure itself that the work available is of sufficient quality to demonstrate to Examiners that the candidate had achieved the objectives of the research programme.
- 11.4 In considering the request for an Aegrotat award, the University Research Awards subcommittee will assure itself that appropriate efforts have been made to support the Student and to retrieve the programme of study, and that the Student is unlikely to be able to complete the programme in the foreseeable future.
- 11.5 Research submitted for consideration for a Postgraduate Diploma (by Research) cannot subsequently be employed by the candidate towards an MPhil or PhD.