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CODE OF PRACTICE

[MPhil and PhD]

Code of Practice
Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

CODE OF PRACTICE

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPhil) AND DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code of Practice sets out the overall responsibilities and expectations of all those engaged in research degree programmes at Cardiff Metropolitan University (hereinafter referred to as the University) and in particular the awards of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). It does however recognise that there will be some variation in the operational practice in the delivery of services to students across the various academic Schools, Research Centres and disciplines of the University.
- 1.2 The document sets out the guiding principles and standards of good practice which underpin the University's commitment to its postgraduate research community. It is not however intended to provide comprehensive details of the day to day processes associated with postgraduate research study at the University and should therefore be read in conjunction with the Research Degree Regulations and the PGR Student Handbook.
- 1.3 The Code aims to ensure that the highest standards of integrity and professionalism are observed in the conduct of research and that appropriate standards and quality are consistently maintained for all research degree programme awards offered by the institution.
- 1.4 The Code is reviewed regularly and informed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code, external research sector guidance and University strategy, policy and regulatory sources.

2. Institutional principles for research

- 2.1 As stated in the institutional Research Governance Framework, the University recognises its obligation to ensure that all those involved in research at the institution are engaged in the deepening and broadening of knowledge and understanding by expert, responsible and professional means.
- 2.2 As an integral part of the research community, students and staff engaged in postgraduate research should incorporate the principles and practices set out in the Research Governance Framework into their work and maintain exemplary standards of academic practice and honesty in all aspects of their research including:
 - The maintenance of open and honest professional standards in their research by ensuring that research methods and results are open to scrutiny, discussion and debate.
 - The employment of rigorous research methods incorporating careful and reflective processes of discovery and interpretation.
 - Compliance with the University Ethics Framework and all processes related to ethics approval of research.
 - A responsibility to maintain awareness of the legal and policy requirements which regulate their field of study.
 - Early consideration of how data arising from their research will be stored and managed.
 - A familiarity with the institution's sustainability policy and policies related to it.

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3. Quality assurance processes for research degrees

3.1 The University operates a robust system of academic committees which ensure the academic standards and quality provision of research degree programmes offered by the institution. Information flow, both vertically and horizontally is facilitated via the following committees:

Academic Board: is the most senior executive decision-making body for matters relating to the academic provision of the University. It is responsible for major decisions relating to the strategic development of programmes of study and for the quality and standards of learning, teaching and research. It is also responsible for the on-going enhancement of the student experience, student engagement and graduate employability.

Research & Innovation Committee (RIC): has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of institutional research, innovation and research degree registration and administration. It receives reports from Research Degree Committee on its activities and endorses (or otherwise) changes proposed by that committee regarding the management of research degree programmes.

Research Degrees Committee (RDC): reports directly to Research & Innovation Committee and is responsible for acting as an independent assessor of research degree registration proposals, monitoring reports and examining arrangements. As such it is the primary institutional body involved with the day to day progress and monitoring of research degree activity.

School Research Degree Committees: Each School and Research Unit has a School RDC which is responsible for the first stage consideration and approval of all research degree related matters. Decisions made at School RDCs are fed directly to the institutional RDC.

Academic & Quality Standards Committee (AQSC): has the responsibility for the maintenance of standards and assurance of quality within the University's taught and research degree programmes. A link with RDC is maintained via the Chair of that committee who is also a member of AQSC.

3.2 Key areas related to research degree provision at the University which are monitored via the academic committee structure outlined above are:

- The provision of an appropriate research environment.
- The selection, admission and induction of PGR students.
- The provision of appropriate and adequate supervision.
- The monitoring and review of PGR student progress.
- The development of PGR students' research and other skills.
- The provision of appropriate assessment procedures.
- The reviewing and monitoring of the quality of provision using internal and external feedback including student representation and feedback.
- The provision of appropriate processes for dealing equitably and efficiently with problems, allegations of research misconduct, complaints, appeals and reviews.

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- 3.3 Both the Research Degrees Committee and the Research & Innovation Board include representation from the PGR student body whilst Academic Board includes representation from the wider student body.

4. Research environment

- 4.1 The University Research & Innovation Strategy sets out the institution's vision for the direction of research.
- 4.2 The University aims to foster a research environment in which PGR students are fully supported in carrying out their research activities, in acquiring appropriate skills related to both their personal and professional development and in forming meaningful professional relationships with other researchers both within and outside the institution.
- 4.3 Before an applicant is offered a place to study at the University, every effort will be taken to ensure that there is adequate expertise available to provide supervisory support for the research topic and sufficient availability of technical and administrative support. This being the case, an offer to study will only be made to prospective students who meet the University's eligibility criteria and whose project relates to an area of proven research activity at the institution.
- 4.4 The University will ensure that, once enrolled, PGR students are provided with sufficient resources to complete their studies within the appropriate maximum period of candidature. The Research Student Handbook provides details of the minimum resource expectations for PGR students in relation to access to workspace, support services and training.

5. Application, admission and induction

- 5.1 The application process is designed to ensure that individuals offered a place at the University are suitably qualified and prepared to complete their research project successfully and within the appropriate maximum period of candidature. Information regarding awards offered by the University is available on the [Cardiff Met website](#).
- 5.2 The admissions process is clear and consistently applied. Full details of entrance requirements are included in the Research Degree Regulations and information regarding all aspects of the admissions process is fully accessible via the [Cardiff Met website](#).
- 5.3 The University requires that all applications are evaluated by at least two academic members of staff, normally including the School's Graduate Studies Coordinator and a member of the potential supervisory team. If the applicant is considered suitable and the proposed area of research can be supported within available supervisory capacity, the applicant will be invited to attend an interview. The interview will be conducted by at least two academics, both of whom have received appropriate training in selection and admissions procedures.
- 5.4 If the interview panel agrees that the applicant should be offered a place to study at Cardiff Met, this decision will be forwarded to the Dean of School for approval. The School will make a decision based on consideration of the suitability of the applicant, the capacity and "subject

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fit” of the proposed supervisory team and the availability of sufficient funding and resources to support the applicant. Once approved at School level, details of the application will be forwarded to the University Director of Research (DoR) for final approval.

- 5.5 The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the interview process as soon as possible and normally within four weeks. Once offered a place to study, the applicant will be informed when they are eligible to enrol and will be required to do so via the online enrolment process. Full details of the enrolment process are provided on the [Cardiff Met website](#).
- 5.6 The University offers three official enrolment points each academic year, normally in September, January and April. Should a student enrol at another point in the year, their official start date will be backdated to the most recent official enrolment point.
- 5.7 Newly enrolled research degree students will automatically receive an invitation to a PGR induction day. The induction day is organised three times a year to coincide with the three enrolment points and students will be invited to the next available event. The purpose of the event is to provide an introduction to PGR study at the University and to familiarise students with relevant policies and procedures. In addition to the university induction day, PGR students will also attend a School based induction event the purpose of which is to provide a more localised introduction to the requirements of the specific subject field or discipline area.
- 5.8 At induction, students will be provided with access to this Code of Practice as well as the regulations pertaining to the award for which they are enrolled and the PGR Student Handbook.
- 5.9 Induction is supplemented over the course of the research award by the annual Skills Week and other researcher development activities organised at both institutional and School level. More detail is provided in Section 9 of this document and the PGR Student Handbook.

6. PhD Manager

- 6.1 The progression of PGR students is managed and monitored via the online platform, [PhD Manager](#). Access to PhD Manager is linked to the PGR student email account, details of which will be provided to the student following enrolment. All communication with PGR students related to their programme of study, including alerts issued via PhD Manager, will be via their student email account. PGR students should therefore ensure that they check this email account on a regular basis, or make arrangements for all communication received via this account to be forwarded to an alternative address.
- 6.2 Processes completed within PhD Manager are:
 - Production and approval of the Research Degree Proposal
 - Production and approval of Annual Monitoring Reports
 - Transfer from MPhil/PhD to PhD
 - Requests to make changes to a supervisory team
 - Requests to make changes to the mode of study
 - Requests to suspend or resume studies
 - Requests to exceptionally extend the maximum candidature period

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- Requests to withdraw from the programme
- Production and approval of an Examination Panel
- Submission of thesis and subsequent examination processes

In addition, PGR students and their supervisors are encouraged to use PhD Manager to produce a Research Training Review and record details of supervisory meetings.

- 6.3 Each process is linked to a workflow and most require input from the PGR student, their supervisory team, the School RDC and the University RDC in order to reach their conclusion.

7. Supervision

- 7.1 The University views supervision as a partnership between the PGR student and the members of their supervisory team with all having rights and responsibilities as laid out in the PGR Student Handbook.
- 7.2 All PGR students will have at least two supervisors and normally no more than three. At least one member of the supervisory team will be a member of the University's academic staff with a contract equivalent to at least 0.4 of a full time position. One of the supervisors will be appointed as Director of Studies and will have overall responsibility for the work of the supervisory team.
- 7.3 A supervisory team will be proposed as part of the application process and will be considered by the University's Director of Research before a recommendation to offer a place to study is approved. In order for the supervisory team to be approved, its members must collectively have at least two successful PGR completions at the level of the award on which the student will be enrolled (or above). The team will also have knowledge of the proposed area of study and its theoretical background.
- 7.4 In order to ensure that PGR students are afforded sufficient supervisory time, Approved Supervisors and Directors of Study are permitted to supervise a maximum number of students at any one time and the current supervisory load of members of the proposed team are considered before the team is approved. Currently, members of staff are permitted to supervise a total of ten PGR FTEs with a maximum of six FTEs as a Director of Studies¹.
- 7.5 Both the role of Supervisor and the role of Director of Studies carry with them minimum requirements in terms of research activity and experience and the University Research Degrees Committee (RDC) keeps a record of all those individuals who have been approved to carry out each role. All applications to be added to the List of Approved Supervisors or the List of Approved Directors of Study will be considered and approved, or otherwise, by RDC.
- 7.6 Normally, an Approved Supervisor will possess a doctoral award with a significant research component. An Approved Director of Studies must meet this criteria and also be an established research practitioner through, for example, publications, grant capture or research degree completions.
- 7.7 Regular contact between the PGR student and the supervisory team is essential to ensure timely progression and completion of studies. As a guideline, full time PGR students should

¹ FTE is Full Time Equivalent. A full time student would equal 1 FTE and a part time student normally 0.5 FTE

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meet with at least one member of their team at least fortnightly. This is especially important in the early stages of the project leading up to the formal submission of a Research Degree Proposal.

- 7.8 Formal meetings between the student and their supervisors should be held at least every three months in the case of full time students and at least every six months in the case of part time students. The purpose of the meetings will be to review achievements and progress and to establish objectives for the next phase of the research. Meetings should be formally recorded using PhD Manager.
- 7.9 The university provides regular training events for research supervisors. All staff who are approved as supervisors are required to attend a training event within a year of becoming an approved supervisor. All supervisors are expected to keep abreast of developments related to PGR supervision and to attend a training event at least every three years.
- 7.10 In teams including a less experienced supervisor, other members of the team will act as mentor to their less experienced colleague.
- 7.11 In instances where the Director of Studies is absent for a period of up to three months, another member of the team will normally assume their responsibilities. In instances where the Director of Studies will be absent for a longer period of time, the School's Graduate Studies Coordinator (GSC) or Associate Dean of Research (ADR) will intervene to ensure that sufficient levels of supervision are maintained. Depending on the circumstances, this could be via a formal request to Research Degree Committee to change the membership of the team.
- 7.12 Where the PGR student is unhappy with any aspect of the supervision they are receiving, in the first instance they should inform the School's Graduate Studies Coordinator. Where this is difficult or inappropriate, they should approach the School's ADR or the University Director of Research.

8. Progress and review arrangements

- 8.1 It is important that satisfactory progress is made throughout the enrolment period and that this is sufficient to maintain the likelihood of completion of the award within the applicable maximum candidature period. Supervisory teams play a crucial role in ensuring that PGR students are enabled to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to make good progress on their programme of research. However, students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the research plan are kept under review and adjusted in light of any developments.
- 8.2 Progress is monitored primarily via formal and informal meetings between the student and their supervisory team. A proposed schedule of meetings should be agreed by all parties at the start of the programme and should be in line with Cardiff Met's requirements regarding the frequency of meetings (see previous section). It is the joint responsibility of all members of the supervisory team and the PGR student to ensure that the appropriate number of meetings occur.
- 8.3 All PGR students are required to reenrol annually, on the anniversary of their initial enrolment, and in order to do so, students must complete an Annual Monitoring Report

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(AMR). A student will not be able to progress onto the next year of study if a satisfactory AMR is not submitted.

- 8.4 The AMR will be completed electronically via PhD Manager. The AMR is completed jointly by the student and their supervisors and will give details of progress against planned objectives, set objectives for the coming year and highlight any set-backs which may delay progress and ultimately, submission of the thesis.
- 8.5 Students will have an opportunity to submit a confidential section of the AMR in which they can comment on the facilities and resources available and raise any issues they feel unable to direct to their supervisory team. This section will be sent directly to the Chair of RDC.
- 8.6 In order for a candidate to progress to the next year of enrolment, the AMR must be approved by the Research Degrees Committee (or its representative). It is therefore important that the AMR is completed and submitted in a timely fashion allowing sufficient time for its consideration by RDC before the current enrolment period expires. A full indicative timetable for completion of the AMR is provided in the PGR Student Handbook.
- 8.7 Should a PGR student fail to reenrol within 120 days of the date their enrolment is due, their student email account will be suspended and they will no longer be able to access PhD Manager. It is therefore essential that the annual monitoring process is started well in advance of the reenrolment date to allow time for its completion before the current enrolment period expires and access to university IT systems is revoked.
- 8.8 In instances where a PGR student has been enrolled on an MPhil/PhD basis, they are required to undergo a formal review process in order to establish if they have reached the level required to progress to PhD study. All students enrolled on this basis must undergo this process within 12 months of enrolment (24 months for part time students) and should therefore start the process within their first year of study (or within the first two years for part time students). Full details of the requirements of the transfer process are included in the PGR Student Handbook.

9. Skills Development

- 9.1 The University is committed to the provision of training, development and support for all PGR students to ensure that they develop the intellectual, research and transferable skills they need to enhance their employability and underpin their career development.
- 9.2 An initial task for students and their supervisors will be to undertake a Research Training Review in PhD Manager to identify any areas where a gap in skills could impede progress. Effective skills development should however be an ongoing and iterative process undertaken throughout the period of enrolment. The University provides access to the [Vitae RDF Planner](#) and students are encouraged to use it to assist in the development and maintenance of a structured programme of skills assessment and training needs analysis.
- 9.3 The University organises an annual Skills Week which is open to all PGR students and includes sessions on many aspects of skills development. Students are welcome to attend the event in any or all years of their enrolment and are able to select which sessions they will attend each year.

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9.4 The Academic Associate Committee organises an annual poster symposium which provides PGR students with an opportunity to showcase and “defend” their work at different stages of its development, and to receive feedback from active researchers and fellow students. The event also includes keynote sessions addressing aspects of researcher roles and professional development.

10. Examination

10.1 Detailed information regarding the procedures for preparation and submission of a thesis and of the examination process are provided in the PGR Student Handbook.

10.2 All PGR students are examined on the basis of their work via an independent review of their thesis by two examiners, followed by a *viva voce* examination. The viva will normally take place within six working weeks of the date on which the examiners received the thesis and will not normally be deferred for a period exceeding twelve months from the date of submission of the thesis.

10.3 A proposed Examination Panel should be submitted at least six months before expected submission of the thesis via PhD Manager to the Research Degrees Committee which has the responsibility to approve it, or otherwise.

10.4 The Examination Panel will consist of an independent Chair and two examiners. In most cases one examiner will be an employee of Cardiff Met and one will be external to Cardiff Met, however, in cases where the student holds an employment contract with the University, including an HPL contract for more than six hours per week (averaged across the academic year), both examiners will be external to the institution. The Chair shall be a member of staff at Cardiff Met, normally from the same school (or equivalent) as the student, but cannot be a member of the supervisory team. The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted appropriately, in line with Cardiff Met procedures.

10.5 Prior to the *viva voce*, each of the examiners will submit an independent report on the thesis to the Academic Registry. Examiners will not have sight of each other’s reports until both have been submitted.

10.6 The student may elect to have one of their supervisors present at the *viva voce* as an observer.

10.7 Following the *viva voce* the examiners will complete a joint report confirming the outcome and including an explanation of the reasoning which led to the decision. The report will make clear any required amendments and will include details of the timeframe within which any amendments must be submitted to Academic Registry. Cardiff Met provides examiners with a set of outcomes from which they must select the most appropriate option. Details of the outcomes available to examiners are included in the Research Degree Regulations for MPhil and PhD awards.

10.8 The student will normally be informed verbally of the decision of the examination panel on the same day as the viva takes place. Written confirmation of the panel’s recommendation will be provided in the following days. Examination outcomes will however remain unofficial

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until they have been endorsed by the Research Degree Committee. Students and supervisors will be informed in writing once RDC has endorsed (or otherwise) the decision of the panel.

11. Student representation and feedback mechanisms

- 11.1 Whilst PGR students are considered to be students for the purposes of their studies, they have long been considered as academic colleagues by other academics. Cardiff Met therefore strives to recognise the professional status of PGR students and afford them similar access to resources as provided to staff.
- 11.2 Cardiff Met values the contribution of its PGR community to the research environment at the university and is committed to working in partnership with PGR students to improve and enhance their experience whilst at the university.
- 11.3 PGR students are encouraged to engage with the Academic Associate Committee which organises academic and social events and acts as a conduit via which individuals can interact with senior research managers at the University.
- 11.4 Both the Research Degrees Committee and Research & Innovation Board include representatives from the PGR community, as does the University Ethics Committee. Skills Week includes a question and answer session normally attended by the University Director of Research along with other senior research staff of the University.
- 11.5 Cardiff Met participates in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), an annual HE sector wide survey of the views and experiences of the PGR community. Feedback received via PRES is reviewed by the institution and used to enhance the student learning experience.
- 11.6 As previously documented, PGR students are given the opportunity to comment on their experience at Cardiff Met as part of the annual monitoring process. Comments are directed to the University Director of Research who will follow up on any reported difficulties or issues.
- 11.7 Feedback is sought from External Examiners on the assessment and examination process. Any comments received are considered by the Research Degrees Committee which will take action accordingly.

12. Complaints and Appeals

- 12.1 Cardiff Met is committed to investigating any complaints received thoroughly and in confidence.
- 12.2 PGR students are encouraged to discuss any issues with their supervisors in the first instance but if this is not feasible they should contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator or Associate Dean of Research in their School. In instances where the student would like to discuss an issue outside the school in which they are based they should contact the University Director of Research.
- 12.3 The institution has documented procedures for formal complaints and appeals which are detailed in the [Academic Handbook](#).