

07.1

VALIDATING A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

VALIDATING PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This section sets out the structure for managing and validating a Doctoral Degree which is predicated on organisational change within professional practice by assessment of taught elements and Thesis, hereinafter referred to as a Professional Doctorate.

2 Authority

- 2.1 The University has responsibility for the quality assurance of its research degree programmes.
- 2.2 If the proposed Professional Doctorate is a new qualification, then the University's approval should be sought prior to validation using the procedure located within the Section 14.2 of the Academic Handbook at:

http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH1_14_02.pdf

- 2.3 The University includes the Professional Doctorate within its definition of a research degree programme.

3 Structure for Professional Doctorate

- 3.1 The Professional Doctorate has two components:
 - .1 A taught element delivered and assessed through specific modules;
 - .2 A Thesis element assessed through preliminary reports and viva voce examination.

4 Regulatory Framework

- 4.1 The regulatory framework shall be the University's Professional Doctorate Regulations – Section 11.3 of the Academic Handbook

http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH1_11_03.pdf

- 4.2 The University's Validation Panel evaluating a proposal to validate a Professional Doctorate should also take account of:

the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Research Degrees*

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/research-degrees>;

The FHEQ qualification descriptor for a Doctoral degree;

QAA doctoral degree characteristics and QAA master's degree characteristics, especially the general description of the characteristics relevant to research master's degrees.

5 Evaluating the Proposal

Linked explicitly to the QAA Quality Code, the Validation Panel will wish to assure itself that in respect of the proposal, the University and / or School / Unit will:

- 5.1 Have regulations for research degrees that are clear and readily available to candidates, staff and examiners – and where appropriate, these are supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance;
- 5.2 Develop, implement and keep under review codes of practice for research degrees, which are widely applicable, and are readily available to all students and staff involved in research degrees, and written in clear language;
- 5.3 Monitor their research degree provision against internal and external indicators and targets that reflect the context in which research degrees are being offered;
- 5.4 Accept candidates only into an environment that provides support for conducting and learning about research, and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring;
- 5.5 Have admissions procedures for research degrees that are clear, applied consistently and demonstrate equality of opportunity;
- 5.6 Admit only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants to research degree programmes based on decisions involving at least two members of staff who have received training and guidance for the selection and admission of research degree students – hence providing assurance that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made in accordance with its admissions policy;

- 5.7 Define and communicate clearly the responsibilities and entitlements of students undertaking research degree programmes;
- 5.8 Provide candidates with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the environment in which they will be working;
- 5.9 Appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage candidates, and to monitor their progress effectively;
- 5.10 Provide for each research student a supervisory team containing a main supervisor who is the clearly identified point of contact;
- 5.11 Ensure that the responsibilities of research student supervisors are clearly communicated to supervisors and students;
- 5.12 Ensure that individual supervisors have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively;
- 5.13 Put in place clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting research student progress, including formal and explicit reviews of progress at different stages – enabling candidates, supervisors and other relevant staff to be made aware of progress monitoring mechanisms, including the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities;
- 5.14 Facilitate appropriate opportunities for candidates to develop research, personal and professional skills – including the identification of each candidate's development needs, agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree, and that these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate;
- 5.15 Put in place mechanisms to collect, review and respond as appropriate to evaluations from those concerned with research degrees, including individual candidates and groups of candidates or their representatives – and that evaluations are considered openly and constructively and the results are communicated appropriately;
- 5.16 Use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define their academic standards and the achievements of their graduates, and that the criteria used to assess research degrees are clear and readily available to candidates, staff and examiners;
- 5.17 Ensure that research degree final assessment procedures are clear, communicated to all those involved in the assessment

process, and are operated rigorously, fairly, consistently and in a timely way – including input from an external examiner;

- 5.18 Put in place and promote independent and formal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust, and applied consistently.

6 Validation Panel Membership

- 6.1 The membership of the Validation Panel will include a Chair, two representatives from the University's Research Degrees Committee, two externals, and one representative from the Research & Enterprise Services.

7 Programme for the Validation Event

7.1 The programme for the event will normally include:

- a) A private meeting of the Validation Panel;
- b) A meeting of the Validation Panel with the School / Unit Management & Planning Team to explore the location of the proposed Professional Doctorate degree programme within the School's portfolio and other contextual issues such as strategic plans, arrangements for managing the academic quality and standards of research degrees; current and proposed development of research culture, environment and facilities; and issues relating to resourcing the proposal and any initiatives of provision which might affect the Professional Doctorate degree programme;
- c) A meeting of the Validation Panel with the Professional Doctorate programme team and supervisors so that the Panel can explore issues arising from the submission document including rationale, aims, structure, content and delivery; the registration, monitoring, supervision, assessment and support of students; staffing and research facilities;
- d) An inspection of relevant facilities;
- e) A meeting with students from other programmes within the School, where applicable;
- f) A further private meeting of the Validation Panel to formulate conclusions;
- g) Feedback to appropriate staff of the School.

7.2 In considering its recommendations to the Academic Quality &

Standards Committee and the conditions and recommendations of approval, as appropriate, the Validation Panel shall take full cognisance of the School's perceived ability to deliver the Professional Doctorate degree programme to at least threshold levels of quality and to sustain academic standards equivalent to those achieved by the University's students qualifying for equivalent awards.

8 Documentation for Professional Doctorate Validation Events

8.1 Overview

- .1 The submission document will enable the School to demonstrate what it proposes to achieve and/or has achieved and how it expects to do so and/or has done so. Concise, explicit documentation should enable the reader readily to understand the proposed Professional Doctorate and its progress and identify relevant issues. It is the responsibility of the School to ensure that the submission documentation is compliant with University requirements and is appropriate in quality.
- 2 The quality of the documentation is an important element in a successful validation. To that end, the nature of the language used and the presentation adopted are important. The writing should be clear and precise, the language simple and jargon-free and excessive verbosity should be avoided.
- .3 The submission document should be organised in such a way as to make for ease of access, referencing and reading. The various areas encompassed should be differentiated either as subsections of a larger document or as separate documents. The overall product should be manageable and usable.

8.2 Information to be included in the Submission Documentation

- .1 The following information should be included in the submission document for Professional Doctorate proposal:

- a) A brief historical background with particular reference to recent developments and the context for the proposal;
- b) Reference to any external and internal reports on the quality of existing provision, and a self-appraisal with regard to these;
- c) Academic and management structure;
- d) Technician and administrative support services;
- e) Proposed intake, admission requirements and selection procedure;
- f) Evidence that the programme incorporates and is aligned with the requirements of any relevant external benchmark statements, including the FHEQ Level-8 qualification descriptors and QAA Doctoral degree characteristics, and the benchmarks of relevant PSRBs;
- g) Induction programme and the proposed Student Handbook;
- h) Arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student;
- i) Assessment procedures (in accordance with University Professional Doctorate regulations);
- j) Systems in place or proposed to monitor, support and review student progress and to obtain student feedback are appropriate, and for student welfare and support.
- k) Detailed information on the academic staff who will supervise and manage the proposed Professional Doctorate including:
 - (i) List of all staff (academic and administrative);
 - (ii) CVs of potential supervisors;
 - (iii) Staff development policy and examples of current activities;
 - (iv) Experience of staff in research supervision;
 - (v) Students currently registered or completed;
 - (vi) Student withdrawals/failure to complete;

- (vii) Staff handbook.
- l) The resources available, or proposed, in particular:
 - (i) Library

Details of the current stock, including journals and electronic access, opening hours, annual budget, acquisition policy, lending rights at local and other Universities and Institutions;
 - (ii) Information Technology

Information technology provision, budget and access;
 - (iii) Research Facilities & Environment

Listing of accommodation available for research and study, tutorial and seminar facilities.
- m) Programme specification;
- n) Module descriptors;
- o) Any other relevant documents/reports.

9 Formulation of Validation Panel Decisions

9.1 Validation Panels may make the following decisions: -

- (i) that the Professional Doctorate be approved;
- (ii) that the Professional Doctorate be approved subject to the fulfilment of conditions in the stated timescale, and the full and evidenced (through subsequent School RDC records) consideration of recommendations. Resource issues, including staffing, may result in a requirement for an action plan, to be monitored through the Academic Quality & Standards Committee;
- (iii) that the Professional Doctorate be not approved but the proposal be resubmitted after a process of further development and/or re-design. In the case of resubmission, the report of the Validation Panel will identify those issues which need to be addressed before a further event may take place;

- (iv) that the Professional Doctorate be rejected, on the grounds that neither the application of conditions nor further development would result in a research programme of appropriate quality or standard.

10 Approval

- 10.1 Approval of the Professional Doctorate should not be recommended to the Academic Quality & Standards Committee if the Validation Panel retains major reservations about the aims, academic standard, structure, content, assessment regulations, resources etc., after the dialogue with the School is completed.
- 10.2 Decisions of the Validation Panel should be made on the basis of the event and pressures resulting from the timing of an event should not influence the academic decision.
- 10.3 The situation which causes most difficulty arises where the document is deficient but where the reservations of the Validation Panel have been satisfied in discussion. In such cases the Validation Panel must be satisfied that the issues have been or can be resolved and that the documentation will be amended accordingly (through imposing conditions).

11 Conditions/Recommendations for Approval

- 11.1 Conditions of approval should be used for requirements which **MUST** be fulfilled in order to ensure that the Professional Doctorate degree programme meets the required quality and standard threshold. Conditions must be expressed precisely, be agreed by the Validation Panel and must be accompanied by a timescale for completion – normally before students are admitted to the programme. Documentation, usually in the form of a revised (definitive) programme document, must be submitted to the Quality Enhancement Directorate for consideration by the Validation Panel Chair.
- 11.2 Changes which are desirable in order to enhance the quality of the Professional Doctorate degree programme and/or student experience, but which do not affect the threshold standard, should be expressed as recommendations. Recommendations are advisory as opposed to compulsory, but the University quality monitoring system would wish to see reference to where such issues have been considered and implemented or rejected. This might include an action plan of issues to be addressed. Responses to the recommendation should be recorded in the minutes of the School RDC and the annual report on research activity submitted

to the Research Degrees Committee. Recommendations cannot be used as a means of quality or standards enhancement where the Validation Panel judges one or both of these to be below the acceptable threshold level.