

# **07.3**

## **VALIDATING A TAUGHT DOCTORATE**

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## VALIDATING TAUGHT DOCTORATES

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This section sets out the structure for validating a Taught Doctorate.

### 2 Authority

- 2.1 Through its research degree awarding powers, the University has responsibility for the quality assurance of its research degree programmes.

- 2.2 If the proposed Taught Doctorate is a new qualification, then the University's approval should be sought prior to validation using the procedure located within the Academic Handbook at:

[http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH\\_1\\_14\\_02.pdf](http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH_1_14_02.pdf)

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

### 3 Structure for Taught Doctorate

- 3.1 The following rules apply regarding the conduct of the Taught Doctorate:

- .1 The School associated with a taught doctorate must have a minimum of 10 academic members of staff in the discipline area who are qualified to supervise research degrees, at least 5 of whom must be qualified to act as Directors of Study;
- .2 The associated School must be able to provide research students with the facilities set down in the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees (henceforth the Code of Practice);
- .3 The associated School will adhere to all the administrative processes set down in the Code of Practice;
- .4 The associated School will have an Associate Dean (Research) who will be responsible for overseeing the admission, supervision and administration of candidates including administration in relation to examination;
- .5 The associated School will have a Research Degrees sub-committee with terms of reference and membership as set-out in Volume 3 of the Academic Handbook.

## 4 Purpose of Validation and Regulatory Framework

- 4.1 The purpose of validation is to ascertain that the proposed programme is aligned to the University's Mission, will attain appropriate levels of quality and standards and takes cognisance of external benchmark statements as necessary.
- 4.2 The regulatory framework shall be the University's Taught Doctorate Regulations with due regard also to be paid to the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees.
- 4.3 The University's Validation Panel evaluating a proposal to validate a Taught Doctorate will also take account of external benchmarks, which will include:
  - [QAA UK Quality Code: Research Degrees](#)
  - the FHEQ qualification descriptor for a Doctoral degree
  - QAA Doctoral degree characteristics

## 5 Evaluating the Proposal

The Validation Panel will wish to assure itself of the following in respect of the proposal:

- 5.1 That the associated School will have in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree programmes;
- 5.2 That the associated School will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high-quality research is occurring;
- 5.3 That the associated School has effective and adequate management and administration, adequate and well deployed human and physical resources and appropriate systems for quality assurance;
- 5.4 That the associated School's research activity is of an appropriate quality and standard to support research at Doctorate levels. The following are examples of evidence to be presented in support of a proposal:
  - .1 That its history of research activity, evidence of research "culture" and proposals for future developments (supported by statistics) is acceptable;
  - .2 That the detailed procedures currently in force or proposed for

the registration, monitoring, supervision and assessment of doctoral students are acceptable.

These will include:

- a) admission and selection procedures that are clear, consistently applied and demonstrate equality of opportunity; and that ensure that only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants are admitted after a decision-making process involving at least two members of staff trained in the selection and admission of research degree students;
  - b) induction programme and student handbook that provide students with sufficient information to enable them to commence study with an understanding of the environment in which they will be working;
  - c) defined arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student and that these are clearly communicated;
  - d) systematic and clear supervision arrangements including the appointment of supervisors with appropriate skills and subject knowledge, a supervisory team for each student including a main supervisor as the contact point, and that supervisors are afforded sufficient time to effectively discharge their responsibilities;
  - e) progression from the taught part of the Doctorate;
  - f) assessment criteria and procedures (in accordance with the relevant University regulations)
    - i) that assessment criteria define academic standards and the achievements of graduates and are clear and readily available to research students, staff and examiners;
    - ii) that assessment procedures are clear, rigorous, fair and consistent, include input from an external examiner, are carried out to a reasonable timescale and are communicated clearly to students, supervisors and examiners;
- .3 that the systems in place or proposed to monitor, support and review student progress (including formal and explicit progress reviews at different stages) and to obtain student feedback are clearly defined and appropriate, and that such systems are made known to students and supervisors, including the need to maintain appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related

activities;

- .4 that independent and formal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals are in place, which are fair, clear, robust and consistently applied, and that acceptable grounds for complaints and appeals are clearly defined;
- .5 that appropriate student welfare/support services are in place;
- .6 that there are appropriate opportunities for research students to develop their research, personal and professional skills, such development needs identified at the start of the degree and regularly reviewed thereafter;
- .7 that the academic staff who will supervise and manage the taught doctorate are sufficient in number and quality. Detailed information will be required in the following areas:
  - a) List of all staff (academic and administrative);
  - b) CVs of potential supervisors including experience of research supervision;
  - c) research degrees held by staff;
  - d) staff development policy and examples of current activities;
  - e) experience of staff in research supervision;
  - f) students currently registered or completed;
  - g) student withdrawals/failure to complete;
  - h) research degrees staff handbook.
- .8 that the resources available or proposed are adequate in extent and quality. Attention will focus on library, information technology and research facilities;
- .9 that a mechanism is in place to collect, review and respond appropriately to evaluations from those concerned with the taught doctorate;
- .10 that the associated School's Research Degrees Sub- Committee proposed terms of reference accord with the requirements of the Academic Handbook.

## **6 Validation Panel Membership**

- 6.1 The membership of the Validation Panel will include a Chair (not from research area), two representatives from the University's Research Degrees Committee, one external who is a subject specialist and one representative of the University's Research & Enterprise Unit. Should there be a last minute resignation of an internal member who is not readily replaceable, it will be the Chair's decision (in consultation with the Quality Operations Manager and the Chair of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee) as to whether or not to proceed, but the Chair should try to do so if at all possible. However, the event will not normally proceed without the external being present.
- 6.2 The Chair will normally have experience as a panel member of validation/review event panels both within and outside the University.
- 6.3 Close association with the Taught Doctorate programme will be a bar to membership of the Validation Panel.

## **7 Programme for the Validation Event**

- 7.1 The programme for the event will normally include:
  - a) an initial private meeting of the Validation Panel to review the documentation provided and discuss issues to be explored; the Panel will identify issues it wishes to raise with the School in regard to programme content, procedures, quality enhancement, standards, etc.
  - b) a meeting of the Validation Panel with the School Management & Planning Team to explore the location of the proposed Taught 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 Taught Doctorate degree programme;
  - c) a meeting of the Validation Panel with the Taught 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, both general (e.g. library and IT) and those specific to the programme;
  - e) a meeting with students from other doctoral programmes within the School, where applicable e.g. other taught or professional

doctorate programmes;

- f) a further private meeting of the Validation Panel to formulate conclusions;
- g) feedback by the Chair of the Panel to appropriate staff summarising the Panel's conclusions including any conditions of approval and the timescales for their fulfilment, recommendations and commendations.

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 Taught Doctorate degree programme to at least threshold levels of quality – as adjudged from the staffing expertise and adequacy, the learning resource levels and the student support available – and to sustain academic standards equivalent to those achieved by the University's students qualifying for equivalent awards.

## **8 Documentation for Taught 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 Taught Doctorate 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, as these documents will be the basis for critical discussion between the Panel and the School. 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. Diagrams and charts may be used with benefit.
- .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.
- 4 The associated School is responsible for producing the validation

submission documents. The Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED) must receive the documents for dispatch to the Panel at least 20 working days before the review event; failure to do this will normally result in the cancellation of the review event.

- 5 Before submitting the programme documentation to the QED, measures must be taken by the associated School to ensure that:
  - a) the form, content and quality of the documentation complies with requirements, including those on the 'DD/AD Submission Checklist';
  - b) there is ownership of the documentation by the Management Team and the Programme Team, which will defend it at validation;
  - c) the resources needed to deliver the programme will be available;
  - d) if appropriate, any servicing required by Schools other than the proposing School is properly organised and will be available for the lifespan of the programme;
  - e) the design of the programme complies with the relevant structural framework;
  - f) the programme incorporates Cardiff Metropolitan University statutory requirements in regard to assessment regulations, etc.;
  - g) 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;
  - h) the programme incorporates the University's desired policy direction as outlined in current Cardiff Metropolitan University Strategic Plan and strategies associated with learning, teaching, assessment and research;
  - i) the School has fully considered the pedagogic and resource implications of e-learning;
  - j) the programme endorses and demonstrates means for developing employability skills through its learning and teaching strategies;
  - k) the programme enables students to understand, learn and

benefit from research-based enquiry, particularly that which is relevant to their discipline; undertake such research; and acquire and apply research skills appropriate to their level and discipline.

- 6 On receiving the draft programme documentation normally eight weeks prior to the validation event, the QED and the Panel Chair will undertake an initial scrutiny of the draft submission to ascertain that the documentation is compliant with regulations (structural, regulatory, etc.) and, where necessary, will inform the Deputy/Associate Dean and Programme Director of issues arising.
- 7 In instances where the documentation is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the Chair of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee will require the event to be postponed or cancelled.

## **8.2 Information to be included in the Submission Documentation**

The following information should be included in the submission document for a Taught Doctorate proposal:

1. Rationale including:
  - a) a brief background to the programme with particular reference to its development and the context for the proposal;
  - b) history of the School's research activity, evidence of its 'research culture' and proposals for future development;
  - c) reference to any external and internal reports on the quality of existing provision, and a self-appraisal with regard to these;
  - d) academic and management structure;
  - e) technician and administrative support services;
  - f) proposed intake, admission requirements and selection procedure;
  - g) induction programme;
  - h) arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student;
  - i) progression from taught part of the Doctorate;
  - j) assessment criteria and procedures (in accordance with

relevant University regulations);

- k) Arrangements in place for a Research Degrees sub-committee;
- l) Systems in place or proposed to monitor, support and review student progress and to obtain student feedback,
- m) Services for student welfare and support;
- n) Procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals;
- o) Opportunities for students to develop research, personal and professional skills;
- p) 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.
- q) Mechanism for collecting, reviewing and responding to evaluation.

2. Detailed information on the academic staff who will supervise and manage the proposed Taught Doctorate, including:

- i) list of all staff (academic and administrative);
- ii) CVs of potential supervisors;
- iii) research degrees held by staff;
- iv) staff development policy and examples of current activities;
- v) experience of staff in research supervision;

- vi) students currently registered or completed;
  - vii) student withdrawals/failure to complete;
  - viii) research degrees staff handbook.
3. Programme Specification;
  4. Module Descriptors;
  5. Proposed Student Handbook;
  6. Any other relevant documents/reports.

## **9 Formulation of Validation Panel Decisions**

9.1 Validation Panels may make the following decisions: -

- i) that the Taught Doctorate be approved; that the Taught 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;
- (i) that the Taught 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;
- (ii) that the Taught 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 Taught 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 Taught 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 QED for consideration by the Validation Panel Chair.
- 11.2 Changes which are desirable in order to enhance the quality of the Taught 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.
- 11.3 Conditions and recommendations may refer to any aspect of the Taught Doctorate programme including content, resources, staffing, assessment, etc., but should be phrased in such a way as to allow the perceived problem to be solved by the programme team rather than prescribing a solution.
- 11.4 The associated School's response to any conditions of approval should be submitted to the QED for consideration by the Panel Chair and/or nominated panellists for approval. It is the responsibility of the Panel Chair to approve any resulting changes to the programme documentation - which then becomes the definitive programme document – and, through the QED and the associated School, to follow-up any further action required by the conditions imposed. The Panel Chair will be responsible through the QED and the associated School for ensuring that all the conclusions of the Panel are addressed.
- 11.5 Once the review report (see below) has been approved through the

University committee structure, the associated School is required to send to the QED an electronic version of the definitive programme document, which will be held as the source of information about the reviewed programme.

## **12 Validation Report**

- 12.1 The report of the validation event shall conform to the normal format and standard applied to all Cardiff Metropolitan University review reports.
- 12.2 The draft written report shall be produced normally within 20 working days after the validation event and the confirmed report produced normally 10 working days thereafter. The final report confirmed by the Panel Chair will be circulated by the QED to the Taught Doctorate Management Team and Programme Team and to the Academic Quality & Standards Committee, which will subsequently make appropriate recommendations for the approval of Academic Board.