

# **07.4**

## **PROCEDURE FOR THE CYCLICAL EVALUATION OF PHD/MPHIL**

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## PROCEDURE GOVERNING THE CYCLICAL EVALUATION OF PhD/MPhil RESEARCH DEGREES

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This section sets out the procedure for the evaluation of the research degrees of Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy by research (PhD/MPhil).
- 1.2 Evaluation will normally be conducted on a five-year cycle.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this procedure, the term 'School' encompasses the University's academic Schools, The National Centre for Product Design and Development Research and any collaborative partner which has been approved to deliver research degrees which lead to an award of the University. In such cases, in addition to this procedure, the University's procedures for the selection, approval, monitoring and review of the collaborating partner also apply and are benchmarked against the QAA Code of Practice Advice and Guidance: Partnerships:  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/partnerships>
- 1.4 A template for a Self-Evaluation Document comprises Appendix 1 and a series of Guidance Notes for Chair, Panellists, Submitting Team and Students comprises Appendix 2.

### 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 The University includes its PhD/MPhil programmes along with the Professional Doctorate and Taught Doctorate programmes within its definition of research degree programmes.

### 3 Structure for PhD/MPhil

- 3.1 The following rules apply regarding the conduct of the PhD/MPhil:
  - .1 Each School must have a sufficient number of suitably experienced academic members of staff who are qualified to supervise research degrees, at least half of whom must be qualified to act as Directors of Study;
  - .2 Each School must be able to provide its research students with the facilities set down in the University's Code of Practice for

Research Degrees (henceforth the University Code of Practice);

- .3 Each School will adhere to all the administrative processes set down in the University Code of Practice;
- .4 Each School will have a Director of Research who is responsible for overseeing the admission, supervision and administration of candidates including administration in relation to examination;
- .5 Each School will have a Research Degrees Committee sub-committee with terms of reference and membership as set-out in Volume 3 of the Academic Handbook.

#### **4 Purpose of Evaluation, Regulatory Framework and External Benchmarks**

4.1 The evaluation, taking cognisance of any proposed incorporated modifications, will seek to ensure that:

- a) standards have been maintained, that quality enhancement by virtue of taking action on issues raised has taken place, that appropriate up-dates have occurred and via the correct mechanisms;
- b) the PhD/MPhil programmes are aligned to the University's Mission and attain appropriate levels of quality and standards;
- c) due cognisance has been taken of QAA and other external benchmark statements as necessary;
- d) the submission documentation is acceptable.

4.2 The regulatory framework shall be the University's PhD/MPhil Regulations (Section 11.1) available at:

[http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Pages/Ah1\\_11.aspx](http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Pages/Ah1_11.aspx)

Due regard will also to be paid to the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and the Research Studies Manual available at:

<https://tsr.cardiffmet.ac.uk/units/RES/Pages/Code-of-Practice.aspx>

4.3 The Panel will also take due account of external benchmarks which will include the expectation that:

Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support

they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

The Panel will therefore take cognisance of the following:

QAA Advice and Guidance on 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.

- 4.4 The Panel may make recommendations about the University's regulatory framework identified in paragraph 4.2 if in its judgement the framework needs realignment with external benchmarks including those identified in paragraph 4.3.

## **5 Evaluating the Submission**

The Panel will wish to assure itself of the following:

- 5.1 That each School has in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of the PhD/MPhil research degree programmes including monitoring these programmes against internal and external indicators that reflect the context in which they are being offered;
- 5.2 That each School will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring;
- 5.3 That each 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 each School's research activity is of an appropriate quality and standard to support research at Doctorate level. The following are examples of supporting evidence to be presented for evaluation:
  - .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 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 to support and encourage research students, a supervisory team for each student including a main supervisor who is the clearly identified contact point, and that supervisors are afforded sufficient time to effectively discharge their responsibilities;
  - e) probationary period and progression from the MPhil to the PhD;
  - 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 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 and are promoted, and these 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 and updated thereafter;
- .7 that the academic staff who will supervise and manage the PhD/MPhil 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 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 PhD/MPhil, including individual research students and groups of research students and their representatives, such evaluations considered openly and constructively and the results appropriately communicated;

- .10 that each of the Schools' Research Degrees Sub- Committees is operating in accordance its terms of reference as set out in the Academic Handbook;
- .11 that the University Research Degrees Committee is operating in accordance with its terms of reference and that those terms of reference remain appropriate.

## **6 Review Panel Membership**

- 6.1 A suitably qualified and experienced Evaluation Panel Chair will be appointed by the Director of Learning Enhancement. The remainder of the membership will normally comprise the Director of Learning Enhancement, two representatives from the University Professoriate, at least one suitably qualified and experienced external panellist appointed by the Director of Learning Enhancement 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 external panellist presence. A student panellist (not studying on the PhD/MPhil) will be appointed by the Director of Learning Enhancement and will have experience of doctoral-level study.
- 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 PhD/MPhil programme will be a bar to membership of the Panel.

## **7 Programme for the Evaluation Event**

- 7.1 The programme for the event will normally include:
  - a) an initial private meeting of the Panel to review the documentation provided and discuss issues to be explored; the Panel will identify issues it wishes to raise in regard to programme content, procedures, quality enhancement, standards, regulations, etc.
  - b) a meeting of the Panel with University and School staff responsible for the management and planning of the PhD/MPhil (the Management Team) to explore the location of the PhD/MPhil degrees within the University's portfolio and other contextual issues such as strategic plans, arrangements for managing and

regulating the academic quality and standards of research degrees; current and proposed development of research culture, environment and facilities; and issues relating to resourcing and any initiatives of provision which might affect the PhD/MPhil degree programmes;

- c) a meeting of the Panel with staff from each School responsible for the delivery of the PhD/MPhil programmes including the School Graduate Studies Co-coordinators, and representative supervisory teams (Directors of Studies and Second Supervisors) drawn from each School including representatives of any franchise partners 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 PhD/MPhil programmes;
- e) a meeting with current students and graduates;
- f) a further private meeting of the Panel to formulate conclusions;
- g) feedback by the Chair of the Panel to appropriate staff summarising the Panel's conclusions including any recommendations and commendations.

7.2 In considering its recommendations to the Academic Quality & Standards Committee the Panel shall take full cognisance of the perceived ability to deliver the PhD/MPhil degree programmes 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.

7.3 Recommendations may include those intended to address any realignment of University's regulatory framework (identified in paragraph 4.2) with external benchmarks (including those identified in paragraph 4.3).

## **8 Documentation for PhD/MPhil Evaluation Events**

### **8.1 Overview**

- .1 The submission document will enable the demonstration of what has been achieved and, if appropriate, what is proposed to be achieved. Concise, explicit documentation should enable the reader readily to understand the submission and identify relevant

issues. It is the responsibility of the submission coordinator and the submitting team 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 evaluation, as these documents will be the basis for critical discussion. 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 submission coordinator and the submitting team are responsible for producing the submission documents. The Quality Enhancement Directorate must receive the documents for dispatch to the Panel at least 20 working days before the evaluation event; failure to do this will normally result in the cancellation of the evaluation event.
- 5 Before submitting the programme documentation to the Quality Enhancement Directorate, measures must be taken by the submission coordinator to ensure that:
  - a) the form, content and quality of the documentation complies with requirements;
  - b) there is ownership of the documentation by the Management Team and Schools which will defend it at review;
  - c) the resources needed to deliver the PhD/MPhil are and will continue to be available;
  - d) the design of the PhD/MPhil programmes complies with the relevant structural framework;
  - e) the PhD/MPhil programmes incorporate the University's statutory requirements in regard to assessment regulations, etc.;
  - f) the PhD/MPhil programmes, their delivery and management incorporate and are aligned with the requirements of any relevant external benchmark statements including QAA

Advice and Guidance relating to Research Degrees, the FHEQ Level-8 qualification descriptors (and FHEQ Level-7 qualification descriptors for the MPhil) and QAA doctoral degree characteristics (and QAA research master's degree characteristics for the MPhil) and the benchmarks of any relevant PSRBs;

- g) the programme incorporates the University's desired policy direction as outlined in the current Cardiff Metropolitan University Strategic Plan and strategies associated with learning, teaching, assessment and research;
  - h) the pedagogic and resource implications of e-learning have been fully considered;
  - i) the programmes endorse and demonstrate means for developing employability skills through their learning and teaching strategies;
  - j) the programmes enable 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 evaluation event, the Quality Enhancement Directorate 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 submission coordinator and submitting team 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:

1. a Self-Evaluation Document
2. the Programme Document, which should include:
  - a) a brief historical background to the programme with particular reference to its development;

- b) history of each 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) intake, admission requirements and selection procedure;
- g) induction programme;
- h) arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student;
- i) probationary period and progression from MPhil;
- j) assessment criteria and procedures (in accordance with relevant University regulations);
- k) arrangements in place for University and School Research Degrees Committees;
- 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 supervise and manage the PhD/MPhil including:
- a) list of all staff (academic and administrative);
  - b) CVs of supervisors;
  - 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;
  - i) induction programme and Student Programme Handbook;
3. annual graduate studies report for last two years
4. minutes of University and School Research Degrees Committees for the last two years
5. University Code of Practice for Research Degrees
6. Research Studies Manual;
7. Any other relevant documents/reports.

In addition to the above, a sample of Annual Student Reports and student work such as posters and theses should be made available to the Panel at the event itself.

## 9 Formulation of Evaluation Panel Recommendations

### 9.1 The Panel will make recommendations to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and these may include matters at the programme

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level (the aims, academic standard, structure, content, assessment regulations, resources etc.) and at the regulatory level.

- 9.2 Decisions of the Panel should be made on the basis of the evaluation event and pressures resulting from the timing of the event should not influence the academic decision.
- 9.3 The situation which causes most difficulty arises where the document is deficient but where the reservations of the Panel have been satisfied in discussion. In such cases the Panel must be satisfied that the issues have been or can be resolved and that the documentation will be amended accordingly.
- 9.4 Recommendations must be expressed precisely, be agreed by the Panel and be accompanied by a recommended timescale for completion.
- 9.5 In the light of recommendations from the Panel, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee may require an action plan to be monitored via the submission of regular progress reports from the submission coordinator/submitting team to Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee will decide when and whether the action plan has been fulfilled.

## **10 Evaluation Event Report**

- 10.1 The draft written report shall be produced normally within 30 working days after the evaluation event and the confirmed report produced normally 20 working days thereafter. The final report confirmed by the Panel Chair will be circulated by the Quality Enhancement Directorate to the submitting team/submission coordinator and to the Academic Quality & Standards Committee, which will subsequently make appropriate recommendations for the approval of Academic Board.