

**NB: This Procedure is in suspension (September 2019)**

## **09.6**

# **PROCEDURE FOR FRANCHISING RESEARCH DEGREES**

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## FRANCHISING RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES TO COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This section sets out the structure for managing and the procedure for franchising Research Degrees.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this section, the term Research Degrees includes the Professional Doctorate.

### 2 Authority

- 2.1 Cardiff Metropolitan University through its taught and research degree awarding powers has responsibility for the oversight of franchising for both taught and research programmes.
- 2.2 Research degrees may be franchised to collaborating institutions with suitable academic profiles to admit and supervise candidates for Cardiff Metropolitan University research degrees.
- 2.3 Cardiff Metropolitan University Research Degree Regulations or Professional Doctorate Regulations as appropriate and Code of Practice for Research Degrees apply to all such franchised provision.

### 3 Structure for Franchising

- 3.1 The following rules will apply to collaborating institutions wishing to conduct research degree programmes:
  - .1 The Collaborating Institution must have a minimum of 10 academic members of staff in a 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 Collaborating Institution 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 Collaborating Institution will adhere to all the administrative processes set down in the Code of Practice for the admission and supervision of research students;

- 4 The Collaborating Institution 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 The Collaborating Institution will have a Research Degrees Committee (CIRDC) which will include as moderators 2 members of the University's Research Degrees Committee, as well as academic staff from the Collaborating Institution who are involved in research degree supervision. The terms of reference of the CIRDC, which shall meet at least twice per academic year, are:
  - i. Consideration of new candidatures and recommending appointment of supervisors;
  - ii. Recommending External Examiner appointments;
  - iii. Consideration of upgrades from MPhil to PhD (within agreed timescales in the University's Research Degree Regulations);
  - iv. Consideration of Annual Report to Cardiff Metropolitan University;
  - v. Consideration of External Examiner reports from previous candidatures;
  - vi. Progress reports on existing candidates;
  - vii. Updates on examination of candidates and discussion of issues arising from examination process;
  - viii. Statistical information;
  - ix. Any other issues referred to the Committee by Cardiff Metropolitan University;
  - x. In the event of executive action being required, this can be taken by the Chair, in consultation with a Moderator.
  
- 6 The Collaborating Institution will be treated for the purposes of research degree administration as a Research Institute of Cardiff Metropolitan University. Consequently, the Collaborating Institution will be subject to the University's Research Degrees Committee oversight of its processes. It will be entitled to nominate one member of its research degrees committee (normally the Director of Research or Chair) to sit on the

University's Research Degrees Committee;

- .7 The Collaborating Institution will manage its own admissions processes using the University's admissions enquiry form. After the form is approved by the University's Dean of Graduate Studies the Collaborating Institution will issue its own offer letter;
- .8 All other administrative processes will be subject to the normal approval process by the University's Research Degrees Committee; this includes approval of research degree proposals and supervisory teams; annual monitoring reports; suspensions and extensions to enrolment periods; transfer to PhD, appeals against decisions of RDC and appointment of examining boards;
- .9 The thesis will be submitted to the University's Academic Registry which will conduct the examination process in the same way as for students in the University's Schools;
- .10 The Collaborating Institution will report annually on its activities to the University's Research Degrees Committee through the annual graduate studies review process, and will receive annual approval to continue using its devolved administrative authority subject to a satisfactory review and compliance with any conditions determined by the review.

#### **4 Criteria for Applications to Cardiff Metropolitan University to Franchise Research Degrees**

- 4.1 The approval of a Collaborating Institution as suitable for the registration, supervision and examination of students for the University's research degrees implies a commitment by the Collaborating Institution to ensure that the quality of provision gives candidates a fair and reasonable chance to gain the qualification in an acceptable timeframe.
- 4.2 Collaborating Institutions seeking to franchise research degrees programmes from the University and the University Franchise Panel assessing the suitability of a Collaborating Institution to offer a Cardiff Metropolitan University research degree programme, should take account of the section of the QAA Code of Practice relating to postgraduate research programmes, available at:

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

- 4.3 The regulations for the franchised research degree programme

shall be those governing research degrees at the University.

## **5 Evaluating the Proposal**

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

- 5.1 That the Collaborating Institution will have in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree programmes;
- 5.2 That the Collaborating Institution 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 Collaborating Institution is a financially stable institution with effective and adequate management and administration, adequate and well deployed human and physical resources and appropriate systems for quality assurance. The University will seek such information on these matters as it considers appropriate including audited accounts for the previous financial year;
- 5.4 That the Collaborating Institution's research activity is of an appropriate quality and standard to support research at MPhil and PhD levels. The following are examples of evidence to be presented in support of an application:
  - .1 That the reason(s) for wishing to enter into partnership with the University are acceptable and sound;
  - .2 That a detailed institutional profile including history of research activity, evidence of research "culture" and proposals for future developments (supported by statistics) is acceptable;
  - .3 That the detailed procedures currently in force or proposed for the registration, monitoring and supervision and assessment of students are acceptable. These will include:
    - a) admission requirements and selection procedure;
    - b) induction programme and student handbook;
    - c) arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student;

- d) probationary period and transfer from MPhil and PhD;
  - e) assessment procedures (in accordance with the relevant University regulations);
- .4 That the Collaborating Institution will establish a Research Degrees Committee (CIRDC) in accordance with the criteria set out in 3.1.5;
- .5 That the systems in place or proposed to monitor, support and review student progress and to obtain student feedback are appropriate, and that appropriate student welfare/support services are in place;
- .6 That the academic staff who will supervise and manage the franchised research degree programme are sufficient in number and quality (see also paragraph 3.1.1). 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) staff handbook.
- .7 That the resources available or proposed are adequate in extent and quality (see also paragraph 3.1.2). Attention will focus on library, information technology and research facilities.

## **6 Franchise Panel Membership**

- 6.1 The membership of the Franchise Panel will include a Chair (not from research area), two representatives from the University's Research Degrees Committee, two externals (one from outside Wales), one representative of the University Academic Registry and one representative of the University Research & Enterprise

Unit.

## **7 Programme for the Franchise Event**

7.1 The programme for the event will normally include:

- a) a private meeting of the Franchise Panel;
- b) a meeting of the Franchise Panel with senior members of the Collaborating Institution to explore the location of the proposed research degree programme within the Collaborating Institution'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 franchised research degree programme; (Note that if there are issues relating to a previous HE partner withdrawing from a relationship with the Collaborating Institution that remain outstanding, such issues will be explored at this meeting);
- c) a meeting of the Franchise Panel with the franchise research degree programme team and supervisors so that the Franchise 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 Collaborating Institution, where applicable;
- f) a further private meeting of the Franchise Panel to formulate conclusions;
- g) feedback to appropriate staff of the Collaborating Institution.

7.2 In considering its recommendations to the University Academic Quality & Standards Board and the conditions and recommendations of approval, as appropriate, the Franchise Panel shall take full cognisance of the Collaborating Institution's perceived ability to deliver the franchised research 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 Cardiff Metropolitan University students qualifying for equivalent awards.

## **8 Documentation for Research Degree Franchise Events**

### **8.1 Overview**

- .1 The submission document will enable the Collaborating Institution 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 research degree programme and its progress and identify relevant issues. It is the responsibility of the associated University School and/or Collaborating Institution to ensure that the submission documentation is compliant with the University's requirements and is appropriate in quality.
- 2 The quality of the documentation is an important element in a successful franchise. 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.

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

- .1 The documentation to be submitted for consideration by the Franchise Panel may vary depending on whether the proposal is to franchise a PhD or Professional Doctorate.
- 2 The following information for inclusion in the submission document will be common to both PhD and Professional Doctorate proposals:
  - a) a brief historical background with particular reference to recent developments and the context for the proposed franchise;
  - 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) induction programme and the proposed Student Handbook; (note that the University will supply a Student Handbook Supplement to cover its regulatory issues and these should not be duplicated or contravened in the Collaborating Institution's Student Handbook);
- g) arrangements for supervision, rights and responsibilities of supervisor and student;
- h) probationary period and transfer from MPhil and PhD;
- i) assessment; procedures (in accordance with the University's Research Degrees Regulations or Professional Doctorate regulations as appropriate)
- j) Arrangements in place or proposed to establish a Research Degree Committee at the Collaborating Institution in accordance with 3.1.5;
- k) 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;
- l) Detailed information on the academic staff who will supervise and manage the proposed franchised research degree 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) staff handbook.

- m) 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.
- n) a statement, with justification, of what changes may have been made compared to the University programme, especially in relation to a Professional Doctorate franchise;
- o) Other Documentation
  - (i) a completed programme specification proforma;
  - (ii) draft advertising material;
  - (iii) any other relevant documents/reports.

### **8.3 Documentation Required for Franchise of Professional Doctorate**

- .1 the proposed franchise programme document, which should include the items listed in 8.2.2 and follow the general format of the University definitive Professional Doctorate programme document making only necessary changes - for example, institutional description, school structure, CVs etc. - and exceptionally changes to programme content which are appropriate in the context of the Collaborating Institution such as for regional or cultural reasons but note that the franchise programme may only include minimal new material.
- .2 The University's module descriptors must be used for existing modules, but with the module tutor name changed as appropriate.

## **9 Formulation of Franchise Panel Decisions**

9.1 Franchise Panels may make the following decisions: -

- (i) that the franchise of the research degree programme be approved;
- (ii) that the franchise of the research degree programme be approved subject to the fulfilment of conditions in the stated timescale, and the full and evidenced (through subsequent CIRDC records) consideration of recommendations. Resource issues, including staffing, may result in a requirement for an action plan, to be monitored through the University's Academic Quality & Standards Board;
- (iii) that the franchise of the research degree programme 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 Franchise Panel will identify those issues which need to be addressed before a further event may take place;
- (iv) that the franchise of the research degree programme be rejected, on the grounds that neither the application of conditions nor further development would result in a franchised research programme of appropriate quality or standard.

## **10 Approval**

- 10.1 Approval of the franchise of a research degree should not be recommended to the University's Academic Quality & Standards Board if the Franchise Panel retains major reservations about the aims, academic standard, structure, content, assessment regulations, resources etc., after the dialogue with the Collaborating Institution is completed.
- 10.2 Decisions of the Franchise Panel should be made on the basis of the franchise 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 Franchise Panel have been satisfied in discussion. In such cases the Franchise 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 franchised research degree programme meets the required quality and standard threshold. Conditions must be expressed precisely, be agreed by the Franchise Panel and must be accompanied by a timescale for completion – normally before students are admitted to the franchised programme. Documentation, usually in the form of a revised (definitive) franchised research programme document, must be submitted to the Academic Standards and Quality Unit for consideration by the Franchise Panel Chair.
- 11.2 Changes which are desirable in order to enhance the quality of the franchised research 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 minutes of the CIRDC and the annual report on research activity submitted to University's Research Degrees Committee. Recommendations cannot be used as a means of quality or standards enhancement where the Franchise Panel judges one or both of these to be below the acceptable threshold level.