



University of
Chester

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ADMISSIONS POLICY

Author (and Department): Wayne Morris, Research & Innovation
Office

Date of Approval: July 2024

Approving Body: Quality and Standards subcommittee

Contents

1.Purpose	3
2. Selection and Admissions	3
3. Offering a Place / Rejecting an Applicant	7
4. Registration, Enrolment and Fees	8
5. Advance Standing	9
6. Induction	10

1. Purpose

1.1 Each Faculty is responsible for the selection and admission of suitably qualified students onto the University's Postgraduate Research Degree courses. The primary criterion for admission is academic capability, with considerations as to supervisory expertise and capacity and the availability of physical resources following after. Admissions decisions will also have due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. Faculties are responsible for adhering to the minimum requirements for admission.

1.2 The admission and induction of new Postgraduate Research (PGR) students is arranged between the admitting Faculty and central administrative services.

1.3 In respect of the induction arrangements, the overarching aim is to ensure that students are clearly aware of their responsibilities and entitlements from the outset, to enable them to commence productive study and research as quickly as possible.

1.4 This policy covers entry onto the following course:

- Master by Research (MRes)
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Professional Doctorate (including Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Ministry (DMin), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Public Health (DrPH), and Doctor of Medicine (MD))

2. Selection and Admissions

Initial Proposal

2.1 Initial enquiries for PGR applications must be made via the **Research Enquiry Form** which is available on the [University website](#).

2.1.1 All Applicants, including those making informal enquiries to individual members of staff, including applicants considering applying for funded PGR studentships, must be directed to complete the **Research Enquiry Form**.

2.2. A **Research Enquiry Form** will be initially reviewed by Faculties to determine whether there is evidence of a possible research project, and capacity within the University to supervise the proposed project. This will be overseen and administered by the Faculty Research and Innovation Coordinator.

2.3 The purpose of the **Research Enquiry Form** is to ensure that the University has a record of all enquiries for PGR study and how many do not proceed to admission. Additionally, the

Research Enquiry Form will be used to help expedite decisions about whether or not to proceed to full application without the need for Applicants to complete an application form or to attend an interview. In determining whether to progress research enquiries, Faculties must consider the following:

- Does the University have sufficient research expertise to supervise the project outlined;
- Is there sufficient academic capacity/resource to support the proposed research project;
- Does the student meet key entry requirements for admission to the programme outlined in 2.13 below;
- Does the proposed research area constitute a potential PGR research project worth exploring further;

Where the answer is “no” to any of the above, the enquiry will be answered providing a brief explanation why the enquiry will not be progressed.

Where the above “tests” have been met, an Applicant may be invited to develop a more substantial research proposal and submit a full application.

Additionally, Faculties can ask Applicants who meet the entry criteria to consider additional questions or to consider research projects already listed by Faculties as potential foci for students.

2.4 Normally, Applicants will receive a decision regarding whether they will be invited to make a formal application and/or develop a more substantial research proposal within 10 working days of submitting the **Research Enquiry Form**.

Formal Application

2.5 The formal application process is advertised on the [University website](#).

2.6 Professional Services Research Staff in Faculties will work with Heads of Division, Faculty PGR Tutors, and potential PGR supervisors to ensure formal applications are progressed in a timely manner.

2.7 Formal applications will normally include:

- a detailed research proposal;
- a completed application;
- one reference (if the Applicant has engaged in previous study at HE level in the past 3 years, that referee will normally provide an academic reference; if the Applicant has not participated in a HE course in the past 3 years, the reference may be provided by someone who can comment on the Applicant’s commitment and motivation e.g.

- employer, manager, volunteer coordinator etc.);
- an up-to-date CV;
- copy of English language proficiency certificate (if required);
- copies of appropriate certificates or transcript

2.7.1 An application will not normally be progressed until all of the information listed in 2.7 has been received.

2.7.2 However, an application can usually be progressed if references or certificates are not available at the time of application.

2.8 Once a formal application has been received, the Applicants must normally be interviewed within 20 working days.

Interview

2.9 In every case where the decision is to proceed with a formal application, each Applicant must be interviewed. The Interview Panel should normally be constituted as follows:

2.9.1 For MPhil/PhD Applications (a minimum of 2 members of academic staff)

- the Head of Division (or nominee) as Chair (the nominee may not be a member of the prospective supervisory team and must be named on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List),
- the prospective Principal Supervisor,
- other members of the prospective supervisory team may participate where they are available to attend.

2.9.2. For Professional Doctorate Applications (a minimum of 2 members of academic staff)

- the Head of Division (or nominee) as Chair (in most instances the nominee is likely to be the Course Leader),
- one other member of the Programme Team;
- at least one member of the interview panel should be named on the Accredited PGR Supervisor list

2.9.3 For MRes Applications (a minimum of 2 members of academic staff)

- the MRes Course Leader (or nominee),
- one other member of academic staff.

Note: See the **Supervision for PGR and Professional Doctorate Theses policy** for information on the requirements of the Supervisory team, if the Applicant is offered a place.

2.10 At least one member of the Interview Panel must have completed the University's PGR Interview Training.

2.11 The format of the interview will be as set out on the PGR Interview forms supplied by Postgraduate Admissions.

2.12 Decisions on applications must be communicated to Applicants within 30 working days of making a formal application:

- 20 working days between the formal application and the interview, AND
- 10 working days for the Interview Panel to provide a decision to Postgraduate Admissions and for that decision to be communicated to the Applicant.

Criteria for Admission

2.13 The University sets minimum criteria which Applicants must meet in order to be deemed eligible for admission.

2.13.1 Evidence of appropriate qualifications and preparedness must be provided.

2.13.1.1 For all Doctoral and MPhil courses:

- the Applicant has obtained, or expects to obtain, at least an upper second class honours degree or a lower second class degree with a Master's degree.
- first and/or second degrees should be in a discipline that is congruent with their intended area of research.
- in some instances, evidence of substantial prior research or professional experience may be acceptable.
- where the Applicant's first language is not English, the Applicant must provide evidence of English language proficiency at a level commensurate with study at Level 8 (a minimum of IELTS 6.5 and a minimum of 5.5 in all categories). A conditional offer can be made without evidence of English language proficiency but the place will not be confirmed until such evidence is received.
- the Applicant must show evidence of appropriate engagement with the proposed area of research via a completed application form and at interview.

2.13.1.2 Minimum qualifications for MRes students are set out in Course Specifications.

2.13.2 There must be appropriate supervisory expertise available.

2.13.2.1 There must exist, within the University, members of academic staff with appropriate subject knowledge, research expertise and experience of supervision who are able to form a Supervisory Team.

2.13.2.2 Due consideration must also be given to ensuring that the Applicant's research proposal could be supervised by other members of academic staff should a member of the initial Supervisory Team no longer be a member of University staff.

2.13.2.3 Consideration should further be given to ensuring faculties have sufficient resource to support the student through Annual Progress Reviews and to provide an external examiner.

2.13.2.4 While it is recognised that it is not always possible to predict future staffing, it is important that there is sufficient staff resource available to ensure a student can complete their studies.

2.13.3 The research topic must be viable.

2.13.3.1 A detailed project proposal may be produced by the supervisor or Applicant associated with funding applications in advance of the application. This will normally be no more than 2 sides of A4 of 1000 words, whichever is greater.

2.13.4 A suitable research environment must be available.

2.13.4.1 It is reasonable to anticipate that the Faculty/School/Division will be able to provide access to the resources that the Applicant is likely to require in order to complete their research.

2.13.4.2 There exists, within the University appropriate expertise for learning and research tools which the Applicant can access.

2.13.4.3 There exists, within the University, opportunities to exchange and develop ideas with people, at appropriate levels, who are also engaged in doing and learning about research and to develop peer support networks.

2.14 Applicants who have a query or complaint regarding the admissions process or wish to appeal an admissions decision, can use the University's [Complaints and Appeals procedure](#).

3. Offering a Place / Rejecting an Applicant

3.1 When the decision is not to progress an application, the Interview Panel must make clear the rationale for the decision.

3.2 Interview Panels, in discussion with their Head of Division, must also determine whether or not a bench fee should be charged as a part of the student's fees.

3.2.1. Where the proposed research project is likely to incur costs for essential equipment, travel or fieldwork, bench fees must be applied. These will then be made available to the student to support their studies.

3.2.2. While students must pay a bench fee to ensure essential equipment is available to them during their studies, charging a bench fee for travel or fieldwork is optional. In such instances, students must understand that they will be liable for their own costs for travel and fieldwork in advance of starting their research.

3.3 Prior to making a formal offer, Postgraduate Admissions must receive confirmation from the Interview Panel that the Applicant, as a minimum, meets the criteria outlined at 2.13.

3.4 If the criteria outlined at 2.13 has not been met, but Interview Panel nevertheless wishes to make an offer, an appropriate justification must be made to the Associate Dean: PGR Studies who will make the final decision. In such instances, this will normally be evaluated using the Admissions Equivalence Form.

3.5 Postgraduate Admissions sends out an offer letter. The offer letter outlines the steps that the Applicant must take to accept the formal offer.

4. Registration, Enrolment and Fees

4.1 When an offer of registration is made to a Applicant, in every case, it is done so on the basis that the University will provide appropriate supervision consistent with the [Supervision for PGR and Professional Doctorates Theses Projects policy](#). However, the University does not guarantee the continued availability of named supervisors and the acceptance of an offer may not be contingent on such continued availability. Faculties are, however, responsible for ensuring that students have a full supervisory team throughout their studies.

4.2 After accepting an offer, PGR Students must re-enrol each year. Registry Services will contact students with details of how to complete the enrolment process. Students who fail to enrol as required may, with due warning, be withdrawn from their course.

4.3 Students admitted to a postgraduate research course will normally only be eligible to register for commencement of the first working day of

- October;
- February;
- May.

4.4. Intermediate registration dates are allowed if there is a good reason e.g. for international students when registration must begin within a specified period of the granting of a visa.

4.5 Backdating of registration is not allowed.

4.6 Calculations of time limits to the completion of Annual Progress Monitoring, submission and maximum registration period will be made relative to the start date recognised by the University in 4.3 and are made by Registry.

4.7 Students are liable for ensuring their own fees are paid.

4.7.1 Where a sponsor will pay fees for student, the University will require clear confirmation of who the sponsor is and how those fees can be collected.

4.7.2 Fee waiver for any PGR student, including members of University staff registering for a PGR programme, can only be agreed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and will only be effective if the waiver is confirmed in advance of registration.

4.8 The [International Centre](#) (IC) informs Postgraduate Admissions copies when applicants from outside the UK / Republic of Ireland / Isle of Man / Channel Islands have paid their deposit. Postgraduate Admissions then passes their file to the IC, so that IC can issue the CAS.

5. Advance Standing

5.1 Applicants who have completed part of an equivalent programme at another institution can, upon production of evidence of their registration and good progress, apply for advance standing.

5.2. Postgraduate Admissions passes the evidence onto the School PGR Tutor for approval.

5.3 The maximum period of elapsed time from first registration refers to the date of first registration at the other institution. Any training undertaken at the other institution can also be taken into account in determining which parts of the University training programme have been completed.

4.4 Postgraduate Admissions will take into account the period of completed study when calculating the earliest and latest possible submission deadlines.

5.5 Students on Professional Doctorates or Masters by Research courses are subject to regulations regarding Accredited Prior Learning as set out in [Accreditation of Prior Learning policy](#).

6. Induction

6.1 Each Faculty is responsible for the induction of new PGR Students. The University does, however, offer an annual induction for all PGR Students, usually taking place in early October each year. Additional online induction resources are also available to support students through their studies.

6.2 Attendance at the University induction is compulsory for all newly registered students. The relevant Faculty must ensure that students receive local induction and orientation to their School/Division and this must normally take place within one month of the commencement date recognised by the University in 4.3. Students must confirm their attendance at Faculty induction in their first Annual Progress Report.

Faculty Induction

6.3 The Principal Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring an appropriate Faculty/Division level induction for newly registered PGR Students.

6.4 As a minimum, the Faculty induction will include:

- a tour of the Faculty/School/Division facilities and resources available to the student;
- a tour of the Faculty/School/Division's home campus (if the student is unfamiliar with it);
- the allocation of office and/or laboratory space where appropriate;
- a health and safety briefing;
- information on access to buildings and resources;
- introductions to key staff (including the School PGR Tutor);
- introductions to other PGR Students in the Faculty/School/Division;
- an explanation of, and agreement on the timescale for completion of the Researcher Development Plan;
- reference to the entitlements and responsibilities that the student has as described in relevant [policies](#).

Researcher Development Plan

6.5 The University does not specify any formal training requirements for students registered for courses leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree. However, it does expect that students will work with their supervisors to audit their existing skills, identify any areas requiring development and put in place an appropriate action plan.

6.6 For this purpose, within the first three months of registration for a full-time student and within the first six months of registration for a part-time student, the University expects that they will complete a **Researcher Development Plan**.

6.7 Thereafter, the **Researcher Development Plan** must be updated annually and be considered during the [Annual Progress Monitoring](#) process.