



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The University of Chester is committed to excellence in research and actively welcomes applications from high calibre graduates who wish to make contributions to the advancement of knowledge through the completion of a postgraduate research degree. The University aims to provide an academically rigorous and supportive environment, within which students can learn about research and where they are given opportunities to advance their own knowledge and understanding and that of the scholarly communities to which they belong.

The purpose of this Handbook is to set out the University's requirements and expectations for the organisation, management and assessment of postgraduate research degrees. The University recognises that the journey towards the achievement of a postgraduate research degree will be unique to each student. The contents of this Handbook are intended to provide a structure within which the individual nature of each student's research is recognised and accommodated wherever possible. However, all staff and students of the University should regard the requirements set out in this handbook as minima which must be adhered to.

1. Definition of Postgraduate Research Degrees

- 1.1. The University of Chester offers a number of programmes under the broad heading of 'postgraduate research degree'. Commonly, all of the programmes given this designation are comprised of study recognised as being at Level 7 (for Masters programmes) or Level 8 (for doctoral programmes) of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and where the majority of the programme consists in the student undertaking a significant and sustained piece of independent research. Therefore, the following programmes shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook:
 - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
 - Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works (PhD)
 - Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf)
 - Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
 - Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
 - Doctor of Education (EdD)
 - Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)
 - Doctor of Medicine (MD)
 - Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
 - Master of Professional Studies (MProf)
- 1.2. The Master of Professional Studies award is an exit award only.
- 1.3. The Master by Research is a postgraduate research degree programme, however due to the structure of that programme it is governed by the assessment requirements set out in Handbook F.

- 1.3.1. Notwithstanding 1.3., the evaluation and review of Master by Research Programmes which will be conducted in accordance with section 12 of this Handbook.

2. Structure

- 2.1. The University may confer a postgraduate research degree upon candidates who have satisfied their examiners that they have reached the standard required following the submission of:
 - 2.1.1 A thesis embodying the results of original research; or
 - 2.1.2 A collection of published papers, together with a critical review relating to the work described in the papers; or
 - 2.1.3 A published book or books, together with a critical review relating to that research; or
 - 2.1.4 A body of artistic work, evidencing research methodology affording new insights, together with a thesis which places that work within an academic context.
- 2.2. The nature and form of the submission required for these degrees is outlined in section 6 of this Handbook.

3. Authority to Award

- 3.1. Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated, in line with the FHEQ qualification descriptor for doctoral degrees:
 - 3.1.1. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
 - 3.1.2. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
 - 3.1.3. The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
 - 3.1.4. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry

- 3.2. Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated, in line with the FHEQ qualification descriptor for master's degrees:
- 3.2.1. A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
 - 3.2.2. A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
 - 3.2.3. Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
 - 3.2.4. Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - 3.2.4.1. To evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
 - 3.2.4.2. To evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

4. Professional Doctorates

- 4.1. Programmes leading to the award of a Professional Doctorate or Master of Professional Studies consist in credit rated modules. Each module intended for delivery on such programmes must carry the designation of either 'taught' or 'research'. For the purposes of assessment only, those modules designated as 'taught' shall be governed by the University's regulations for taught postgraduate modules (see Handbook F), whilst those designated as 'research' shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook. Arrangements for admission and supervision of students admitted to one of these programmes shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook.

5. Externally Funded Students

- 5.1. Students who are in receipt of external funding (e.g. from a private business, foreign government or a member of Research Councils UK etc.) are responsible for complying with the terms set out by their funding body.

6. Expectations and Requirements of Students

- 6.1. Students registered on programmes leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree shall enjoy all of the entitlements and be subject to all of the expectations set out in section A6.9 of the Principles and Regulations.

In addition, they are required to:

- 6.1.1. Complete registration on or around one of the commencement dates recognised by the University in this Handbook and then re-register annually.
- 6.1.2. Pay the appropriate fee for the programme for which they are registered.
- 6.1.3. Attend, and keep records of, formal supervision meetings with the Principal Supervisor at least once per month if full-time and at least once per two months if part-time.
- 6.1.4. Attend, and keep records of, formal supervision meetings with their full supervisory team at least twice per year.
- 6.1.5. Complete Annual Progress Monitoring in accordance with the procedures set out in this Handbook in every year of their registration.
- 6.1.6. As far as possible, adhere to the following:
 - 6.1.6.1. Full-time students: conduct work relating to their studies for a minimum of 35 hours per week over 46 weeks of the year.
 - 6.1.6.2. Part-time students: conduct work relating to their studies for a minimum of 16 hours per week over 46 weeks of the year.
- 6.1.7. At reasonable notice, make themselves available to attend one of the campuses of the University of Chester or, if registered via a partner institution, any other recognised premises for the purposes of supervisory meetings, assessment of progress or other meetings required to enable the delivery of their programme of study. This will normally entail a student needing to make themselves available on at least 30 days per annum if full-time or at least 15 days per annum if part-time.