

Introduction and Welcome

Deciding to undertake a research degree is a pretty huge decision. Perhaps you're arriving straight from a taught degree, or maybe you're coming from a work environment. Wherever your recent experiences, and whatever field you're in, a research degree is different. It will be up to you to work out what research questions you want to address, how you're going to answer them, and how you'll present your new ideas. Research degrees are demanding. But that's surely why you've decided to sign up! You'll be testing yourself, developing your skills, expanding your knowledge. More than that, you'll be finding new data or pioneering new kinds of practice, you'll be pushing back the boundaries of our knowledge, and coming up with new answers to tough problems. That's why a research degree is such an exciting time. You'll be at the cutting edge of research in your field, and you'll be challenging yourself. So, the first thing we'd like to say is congratulations on taking this next step. It's going to be a really simulating time for you, and we're really pleased to be part of it.

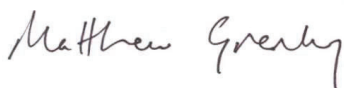
The second thing we'd like to say is that we've got your back. We wouldn't have offered you a place on your degree if we didn't think you have what it takes to succeed. But we can assure you that we have a carefully designed and very comprehensive package of support for you as you proceed through your degree. You'll find support in your School or Institute, from individual academics, most obviously your supervisors; from Professional Service colleagues whose job it is to help you navigate the degree; and of course, from other students in your community. Then there's the support in our three Faculties, each of which has a Dean of Postgraduate Studies, and a Graduate School team led by a Graduate School Manager who'll be responsible for assuring your progress throughout your degree. We also have a dedicated team based in the Doctoral College to support Doctoral and MPhil students across the University. The Doctoral College can support you to gain the skills you need to advance your goals and enhance your career prospects through the Research Enhancement Fund which provides bursaries and awards to support your development through enterprise, PGR led engagement, participation in global events and conferences, as well as the opportunity to gain additional research experience. You should also know that Newcastle University Students' Union has a dedicated Postgrad Officer, who can help you engage with the research student community and its activities and will be pleased to hear from you.

This Handbook is here to support you and here you'll find our policies and procedures, various guidelines, and our codes of practice. Some of these might not seem relevant as you start your degree but will be useful as you reach new stages of your work. Some sections are crucial reading now though, and we urge you to take a look as you begin your studies. There is advice here on choosing your topic for example and establishing good relationships with your supervisors. In fact, we hope that supervisors as well as students will read the handbook: there's great advice for everyone, including a whole section on 'Guidelines for Research Students and Supervisors'. Maybe that's the last thing to emphasise. Your experience here will be shaped by your relationship with your supervisory team, with other academics, with our postgraduate support teams, and with other students. As a research student at Newcastle, you're part of a community. It's something that will support you, but also something that you can help to shape.

So, again, welcome. We hope you have a wonderful, exciting, and enriching time here during your degree, and we wish you every success.

Professor Matthew Grenby

Prof-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation



Postgraduate Officer, Newcastle University Students' Union

