

VIII. Master of Philosophy Progress Regulations

These regulations should be read in conjunction with the:

- *Master Of Philosophy Assessment Regulations (section IX), except where [programme specific regulations](#) have been approved by the University Education Committee (UEC).*
- *Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes approved by Senate, which is reviewed annually and made available each academic year and included in the [Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors](#):*

The basis for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to staff candidates shall be the same as the basis for the award of the degree to students.

Where these regulations refer to Academic Unit, this is an overarching term for School and Institute.

Where these regulations refer to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies or Head of Academic Unit, this role could be undertaken by an approved nominee.

A. Introduction

1. Applicants for the degree of Master of Philosophy are required to show familiarity and understanding of the chosen subject and its principal sources and authorities. A student must demonstrate the ability to deal with the chosen subject in a competent and scholarly manner displaying critical discrimination and a sense of proportion in evaluating the evidence and opinions of others. (The University [Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees](#) provides further details in the section, 'Criteria for the Master of Philosophy'.) The thesis submitted by the student should be clear, well-written and orderly in arrangement and include a bibliography in which the sources used are accurately and systematically presented.

2. Applicants, including members of staff, who are approved for admission as Master of Philosophy students will be required to pay the fees for the degree as set out in the annual [Fees Schedule](#).

B. General Entrance Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

3. An applicant may be approved for admission as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy by a minimum of two Postgraduate Admissions Selectors in accordance with the University's *Postgraduate Admissions Policy* and Faculty/Programme criteria approved by respective Deans of Postgraduate Studies where an applicant:

- a) is a graduate of this or another approved university or other approved degree awarding body or holds other qualifications approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies;
 - b) has completed an approved application, including:
 - i. evidence of the applicant's suitability to become a student in terms of academic ability and prior training and experience.
 - ii. evidence that the applicant's English language proficiency meets the published requirements for the programme of research;
 - iii. a research proposal, if required;
 - c) has supplied details of two recent referees and evidence of qualifications and experience as the Postgraduate Admissions Selectors and/or the Dean of Postgraduate Studies may require.
4. Where an applicant has previously studied for a Master of Philosophy at another institution and wishes this to be taken into account at Newcastle University, a 'Previous Study' application must be submitted and approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.
5. In considering an application for admission as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy, the Postgraduate Admissions Selectors must be satisfied of the applicant's suitability for the programme. In addition, the Postgraduate Admissions Selector must be satisfied of the availability of appropriate supervision, suitable facilities and resources once the applicant is admitted. It is the responsibility of the relevant Head of Academic Unit, directly or through the Postgraduate Admissions Selectors, to ensure that these will be available to an applicant once admitted.

C. Admission as a Staff Candidate for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

6. In addition to the requirements set out in Regulation B, a member of staff seeking approval as a staff candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy shall be required to complete and submit an application at the outset of studies in which is set out:
- a) a description of proposed research as specified by the relevant Faculty;
 - b) details of the nature of the appointment held by the member of staff and its duration;
 - c) approval from both the Head of the Academic Unit of employment and the Head of Academic Unit of study.

Notes:

(i) For the purpose of agreeing staff fee, the applicant must hold a substantive post, defined as being a contract of employment of at least 25% FTE over a full 12 months period, and covering the annual period of registration with the University. This does not include people who were initially Students and then employed part-time by the University, e.g. as demonstrators, General Duty Assistants, Laboratory Technicians.

(ii) *Retrospective registration requests from staff candidates will continue to be considered on a case by case basis, but requests of more than one year of retrospective registration would not normally be supported.*

D. Preconditions for the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy

7. Before being awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy, a student must:
 - a) satisfy the entrance requirements for the degree;
 - b) register for and make satisfactory progress throughout the relevant programme of study;
 - c) satisfy the examiners as required under the Assessment Regulations and any specific programme regulations.

E. Supervision of Students

8. A student for the degree of Master of Philosophy must engage in advanced study and research under the direction of a supervisory team in the University. The supervisory team normally consists of at least two members of University staff and the academic supervisor is appointed by the Head of Academic Unit, before a student is accepted onto the programme of study.

It is expected that all new students will have two supervisors at the point of registration on their programme. Review of the supervisory arrangements will be carried out at Project Approval stage and approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

9. To be eligible to supervise students for the degree of Master of Philosophy, a member of staff must hold a research degree or have equivalent research expertise. The appropriateness of the research degree or equivalent expertise should be determined by the relevant Head of Academic Unit in consultation with the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

10. The Academic Supervisor will be a Newcastle University staff member and will normally have had previous experience of at least one successful supervision. The Academic Supervisor will have primary responsibility for supporting the student throughout the period of study.

Any reference to the Supervisor in these regulations or in the *Code of Practice for Research Degree programmes* or in other documents shall be deemed to be a reference to the supervisory team.

11. In any case where a student is studying outside the University at another institution, arrangements may also be made for local supervision and support to be provided to the candidate by staff at that institution (see Regulation 16). Such arrangements will supplement the role of the Academic Supervisor detailed in Regulation 10 above. Where External Advisors are added to the supervisory team, the [Principles for the Appointment of External Advisor](#) should be consulted.

Notes:

(i) Where the members of the supervisory team are permanently changed a student should normally be consulted in advance. The outcome of the consultation informs decisions made regarding the supervisory team.

(ii) On rare occasions supervisory relations may break down. In such circumstances, in the first instance a student should consult with another member of the supervisory team. If it is not possible to resolve the problems in this manner, then the student and/or a member of the supervisory team should report difficulties, in writing, to the Head of Academic Unit, who may refer the matter, if necessary, to the Graduate School or Dean of Postgraduate Studies for advice.

(iii) All supervisory changes must be notified to the Graduate School and be agreed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

(iv) The [Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#) provides further details on changes to supervisory teams and on appropriate supervisory support for a research student.

F. Candidature Categories, Period of Study and Registration Requirements

12. An applicant may be approved as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy in any of the following candidature categories:

- a) Full-time – as a student whose minimum period of candidature shall normally be not less than 12 months of full-time study; or
- b) Part-time – as a student whose minimum period of candidature shall normally be not less than 24 months of part-time study.

13. In all cases of candidature approved under Regulation 12, a student shall be required to register continuously from commencement of their candidature until completion. During this time, a student must abide by the requirements of the University's *General Regulations*. A student's period of study is calculated from the date of first registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Notes:

(i) Staff candidates shall normally be registered as part-time students (Regulation 12b). However, if the Dean of Postgraduate Studies is satisfied that the greater part of the candidate's time is devoted to supervised research, the staff candidate can be registered as a full-time student (Regulation 12a).

(ii) The normal expectation is that a student will study at the Newcastle University, London, or approved overseas campuses. If study will be carried out away from these approved campuses and this is known at the admissions stage, then 'Outside Study' approval should be sought from the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, in advance of registration on the programme.

14. Any student who wishes to transfer from one of the categories of candidature to another, as specified in Regulation 12. may do so only with the

approval of the appropriate Dean of Postgraduate Studies and subject to the recommendation of the relevant Supervisory Team and Head of Academic Unit.

15. In all cases of candidature approved under Regulation 12, a student shall be required to register continuously from commencement of their candidature until completion. During this time a student must abide by the requirements of the University's *General Regulations*.

G. Study Undertaken Outside the University

16. Any student may be permitted by a Dean of Postgraduate Studies, on the recommendation of the relevant Supervisory Team and Head of Academic Unit, to study outside the University (or an approved campus) for more than one month. Approval should normally be sought three months in advance of the start of the period of outside study, where possible, and the Dean of Postgraduate Studies should be satisfied before the beginning of that period of study that:

- a) the student will have access to adequate facilities, resources and appropriate research training;
- b) the student will have sufficient time available for study and research;
- c) appropriate arrangements have been made for the student's supervision and progress monitoring during the period of study outside the University, including arrangements for the supervisory team to maintain contact with and to meet with the student in accordance with requirements stated in the Code of Practice for Research Degree programmes and as often as is necessary;
- d) appropriate arrangements have been made in any case where the student is attached to or working at an institution outside the University and is offered local supervision and support by staff at that institution.
- e) any relevant health and safety issues have been considered and approved by the Head of Academic Unit in line with University guidelines and University Insurance policies.

All study visits, of any duration, to a high-risk location must also be signed off by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, or Faculty PVC under certain circumstances. (More information is available in the [Travel and Outside Study \(off-campus and abroad\) Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students](#)).

Notes:

- (i) *that periods of study outside the University of less than one month should be agreed within a student's Academic Unit and a student should complete a Student Notice of Absence form.*
- (ii) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to:*
 - *pay the standard fees whilst within their candidature unless alternative arrangements were approved as part of the admission process.*

- *have their attendance monitored on the programme, including time registered as a pending or extended submission student.*
- *to adhere to their thesis submission deadline, unless an extension or interruption of studies has been agreed as part of the outside study approval.*

Notes for Tier 4 Visa Holders

(iii) that students are required to inform the University if they are away from Newcastle (or approved campus) as a condition of their visa sponsorship.

(iv) that students under candidature who are undertaking primary research outside the UK will normally only be permitted to do this for 12 months without curtailment of the Tier 4 visa.

(v) that students who are leaving the UK to write-up in their home country or elsewhere will normally have their Tier 4 visa curtailed.

H. Attendance and Progress

17. A student registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy shall comply with the University's requirements for progression, as follows:

- a) Within one month of registering for the research programme, a student and the Supervisor (on behalf of the University) shall have signed an approved Learning Agreement, via ePortfolio, to cover the period of candidature;
- b) A student should submit a project proposal within the guidelines identified by the relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee, up to a maximum of three months (up to six months for part-time students) of registering on the programme.
- c) A student's project proposal must be considered by an independent panel and Head of Academic Unit, before being submitted for approval to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. Where a student's project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review, a project plan and supervisory team list should still be submitted to the panel for consideration before being submitted for approval to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

Progression on the programme will be dependent upon acceptance of the project proposal. If the independent panel is unable to support the initial project proposal, a student will be permitted an opportunity for re-assessment, normally within three months (six months for part-time students).

If, even after a re-assessment opportunity, the independent Project Approval panel does not approve the arrangements for the project, an 'Extraordinary' Annual Progress Review will be arranged and the Annual Progress Review Panel will be required to make a recommendation regarding a student's continued progression on the programme (see Regulation 20);

- d) A student should attend the University as regularly as required by the Supervisory Team, bearing in mind their candidature category and allowing for any period of study undertaken outside the University. As a minimum, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, a full-time student, should have regular contact with their Academic Supervisor at least ten times a year, approximately once per month, and should have formal contact with their full Supervisory Team at least three times a year, normally once per term, while they are in candidature and until submission of the thesis .

Part-time students should have regular contact with their supervisory team and should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with their supervisor as part of their Learning Agreement, ensuring there is no more than a 10-week gap between meetings.

The University requires that a student records and confirms the outcomes of supervisory meetings, via ePortfolio.

- e) In addition to d) above, a student who is a Tier 4 visa holder should continue to record and confirm the outcomes of their regular supervisory meetings via ePortfolio while under examination through to completion of their studies, as a condition of their visa sponsorship.
- f) A student should maintain a record of their personal development throughout their studies and submit this annually to their Annual Progress Review panel as evidence of development;
- g) A student should submit an Annual Progress Review report and evidence of achievement as specified by the Academic Unit or Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee on an annual basis. A student may also be required to make a project presentation or submit a piece of work or to attend a viva as prescribed by the Academic Unit. This material, along with reports from the supervisory team, will be considered as part of an annual submission to the Annual Progress Review panel for each student.

18. The Academic Unit will appoint an independent Annual Progress Review panel for each student and review their progress annually, via ePortfolio, until submission of their thesis for examination, although this requirement may be stayed at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee) if a student is ready to submit a thesis within the 12 month registration period.19. The Supervisory Team shall submit an annual report, via ePortfolio, concerning the progress of a student's research for review by the appointed Annual Progress Review panel, until submission of the thesis for examination.

20. The Annual Progress Review panel will make a report to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies via ePortfolio. In addition to the report and any detailed feedback that the panel may wish to provide to the student and the supervisory team in this, the Annual Progress Review panel is also required to make a progress recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies in relation to a student's continued progress on their programme. The following progress recommendations are available:

- a) Proceed - that the student's performance is satisfactory and they can continue;

- b) Proceed with Concerns – the Annual Progress Review has some concerns which the student and supervisory team should note, however, the student's overall performance is satisfactory and they can continue;
- c) Re-Assessment - that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a further assessment should be held normally within two months (four months for part-time students) to determine whether progress on the programme will be recommended;
- d) Termination - that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Master of Philosophy examination is recommended, and that a student's registration is terminated.

21. In exceptional cases where the Annual Progress Review panel is not satisfied that the supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate, but considers that the student would otherwise be able to achieve the standards of the award, the panel may seek the approval of the Head of Academic Unit, to make a recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the replacement of all or part of the Supervisory Team.

22. The Annual Progress Review procedure will be deemed equivalent to a Board of Examiners and therefore the University's [Assessment Irregularities procedure](#) shall apply to any reported or suspected cheating or plagiarism.

Notes:

(i) That the progress panel should not normally recommend that a student's registration is terminated (Regulation 20(d)), without having previously provided a further assessment opportunity to the student (Regulation 20(c)).

(ii) That any further assessment opportunity should be recorded via ePortfolio.

(iii) In each Annual Progress Review, a student should normally only have one further assessment opportunity.

J. Progress of Students Intending to Transfer to Registration for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

23. Students who are accepted as candidates for the degree of Master of Philosophy intending subsequently to transfer to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, must normally have received the recommendation of the progress panel and approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies (or nominee) to transfer not later than 12 months after commencing their studies (if studying full-time) and not later than 24 months (if studying part-time). Transfer from registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy to registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall not normally be permitted unless the student has been registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy for at least nine months. Any student shall, for all purposes under the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, be deemed to have registered for that degree at the date of initial registration as a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

K. Mid-Year Procedure for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Progress

24. A student whose progress is considered unsatisfactory by the supervisory team at times other than the normal annual review of progress shall be notified in writing of the reasons for this opinion and shall be given the opportunity of an interview with the Supervisory Team. Following this notice and any interview, and taking account of all known circumstances, the supervisory team may, either

- a) monitor the student's attendance, progress and performance for a specified period; this may require the undertaking of additional pieces of work. If the student's performance has not improved within the period specified in the written notice, the supervisory team shall notify the Head of Academic Unit and submit a report for review by the Annual Progress Review panel; *or*
- b) the Supervisory Team shall notify the Head of School and submit a report for review by the Annual Progress Review panel without undertaking a period of monitoring.

In either case, where a report is made to the Annual Progress Review panel for review of the student's progress, the student shall also be given the opportunity to submit a report to the Annual Progress Review panel. The Annual Progress Review panel will make a report to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, in accordance with Regulation 20. The review should be recorded in ePortfolio.

L. Procedure for Review of Annual Progress Review Outcomes

25. A student applying for a review of an Annual Progress Review outcome may only do so in writing, using the [University's Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#) specifying one or more of the following grounds:

- a) that the Annual Progress Review panel were not aware of circumstances affecting the student's performance. (That is: the student was adversely affected by illness or other factors of which they were previously unaware, or which for a good cause, they were unable to disclose to the progress panel);
- b) procedural irregularity on the part of the Annual Progress Review panel;
- c) bias or prejudice on the part of the Annual Progress Review panel ;
- d) that the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.

M. Change of Circumstances

Interruption of Studies

26. The University normally expects a student to complete candidature in a single continuous period (i.e. to be continuously registered until completion) and to submit within the maximum candidature for the programme. However, it recognises that this may not always be possible.

27. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies will give sympathetic consideration to requests for periods of interruptions, subject to the student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the supervisory team.

28. A request for a period of interruption should be submitted by a student (via ePortfolio) prior to the time of occurrence, where possible, or as soon as possible thereafter.

29. Candidature should not normally be held interrupted for more than twelve months.

30. Retrospective (backdated) interruptions will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.

31. Retrospective (backdated) interruptions are not permitted for students who are Tier 4 visa holders.

32. Absences of more than one month will normally be classed as an interruption of study. Absences of less than one month should be recorded via the Student Notice of Absence form but do not constitute a formal interruption of study and as such the latest submission deadline is not adjusted.

33. A formal interruption of study will adjust a student's latest submission deadline in line with the period of interruption.

Extension to Thesis Submission Deadline

34. In exceptional cases, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will consider an extension of time to a thesis submission deadline, subject to a student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the Supervisory Team.

35. Requests to extend a thesis submission deadline must be submitted, via ePortfolio, in advance of a student's current thesis submission deadline.

36. A student granted an extension to their thesis submission deadline will be required to register as an 'extended submission' student and pay tuition fees as stipulated in the University's fee schedule.

37. A student should not assume that an interruption or extension request will be approved and should continue with their studies, where possible, until the formal decision is received.

Notes:

(i) A student who is still actively researching during an 'extended submission' period must continue with full registration and will pay the full tuition fee for the period of their continued candidature.

(ii) It is expected that a student who is registered as 'extended submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with their Supervisory Team and full access to Library and IT facilities will be available.

N. Teaching Duties

38. A Master of Philosophy student may undertake paid duties in the University during term in any period of full-time study, provided that they consult their academic supervisor about the time that may be devoted to such duties and provided that they do not contravene the terms of any studentship that they

might hold. Ordinarily, this will mean that teaching duties are additional to the normal commitments of a sponsored full-time student. All teaching *must be conducted in accordance with the University's [Postgraduates Who Teach Policy](#)*.

P. Submission

39. The results of a student's advanced study and research must be embodied in a submitted thesis in an approved format in accordance with the *Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees* and the *Rules for the Form of Theses* (see sections XIV and XV. The length of a thesis shall be determined, by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee. The thesis must be submitted electronically, together with the completed and signed Examination Entry form, to the Graduate School.

All submitted theses will be scrutinised by the University using plagiarism identification software. If any incidences of plagiarism are detected then the University's [Procedure for Assessment Irregularities](#) will apply.

40. The exact title of a student's thesis should be submitted on ePortfolio for approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies normally three months before the thesis is submitted. Any change to the approved title of thesis following the initial approval must be notified to the relevant Graduate School and be agreed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

41. The thesis must be submitted for examination within the period specified below from the date appointed as the beginning of the period of study:

- a) within two years in the case of a student registered full time;
- b) within three years in the case of a student registered part time.

42. Except with the permission of a Dean of Postgraduate Studies, a student may not submit a thesis earlier than the beginning of the last term of the prescribed period of study. Any student who submits a thesis earlier than the minimum period of advanced study and research with the appropriate permission, shall nevertheless still be required to pay tuition fees (full-time or part-time as appropriate, depending on the candidature category) for the whole of the minimum prescribed period of study.

43. Where a student has an outstanding tuition fee debt upon submission of their thesis, the Graduate School can accept and record the thesis submission, however, examination of the thesis will be on hold until receipt of the outstanding tuition fees.

R. Pending Submission for Candidates Completing their Minimum Period of Candidature

Minimum Candidature is the period during which a student is expected to conduct and complete their primary research (e.g. a full time Master of Philosophy student has a 1-year period of minimum candidature, a part time Master of Philosophy student has a 2-year period of minimum candidature.

44. The fact that a student has completed their minimum candidature does not of itself constitute grounds for transferring to 'pending submission' registration.

45. A student who has completed the minimum candidature and has not submitted their thesis, but has completed their primary research, may be permitted on the recommendation of their Supervisory Team to proceed to 'pending submission' student status for one further year. All 'pending submission' students are required to register with the University.

46. A student registering under the 'pending submission' category will not be permitted to work in laboratories or studios or to take part in field trips (unless they have the authority of the appropriate head of academic unit to do so for teaching or demonstrating purposes).

47. It is expected that a student who is registered as 'pending submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with their Supervisory Team and full access to Library and IT facilities will be available.

48. A student who has completed their minimum candidature but is still actively researching, must continue with full registration and pay the full tuition fee.

S. Language of Submission

49. A normal expectation is that a student's thesis must be written in English. In exceptional cases, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies may consider submission in a modern language other than English, subject to the student justifying such a concession at the time of application to study for the degree. Such a concession shall be granted only where a student can demonstrate that the language of submission is integral to the research project, for example where the object of study is an aspect of the literary or linguistic culture of the language of submission and/or a significant proportion of the secondary literature on the object of study is written in the language of submission. Where approval is granted, the abstract of the thesis must be written in English and any oral examination must be conducted in English.

T. Examination

50. Details of the required arrangements for the examination are provided in the VII *Master of Philosophy Assessment Regulations*.

Note: The University cannot undertake to arrange the examination of a thesis immediately after its submission. A student is advised that several weeks may elapse between the submission of a thesis and the completion of the examination. The normal period between submission of a thesis and an examination is ten weeks, although circumstances may necessitate a longer time frame. The Graduate School will keep a student informed of the progress of the examination at monthly intervals, should the examination process extend beyond the normal ten-week period.