

## **X. Doctor of Philosophy Degree Progress Regulations**

*Postgraduate research students are responsible for familiarising themselves with the 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: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm>*

*These regulations should be read in conjunction with the Examination Conventions for Doctor of Philosophy (section XI) for all doctoral programmes, except where programme specific regulations have been approved by the University Education Committee (UEC).*

*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.*

### **A. Introduction**

1. Applicants for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy are required to show ability to conduct original investigations, to explore critically, evaluate and test their ideas, and those of others, and to relate them to a wider body of knowledge. (The University Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/Publications.htm> provides further details in the section, 'Criteria for the Doctorate'.) A doctoral thesis should be a body of work which a capable, well-qualified and diligent student, who is properly supported and supervised, can produce in three years of full-time study (or equivalent for part-time study). It should exhibit substantial evidence of original scholarship and contain material worthy of publication.

2. Applicants, including members of staff, who are approved for admission as students for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under these regulations, will be required to pay the fees for the degree as set out in the annual *Fees Schedule* <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/fees/>.

3. Where the University has approved that research students may be registered and managed by a research institute, the director of the institute has the same authority and responsibility as a head of school. In these situations, references to school and head of school include *institute* and *director of institute*.

### **B. Admission as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

4. An applicant may be approved for admission as a student for the degree of Doctor 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 (or nominees), where an applicant:

- a) is a graduate of this or another approved university or other approved degree-awarding body or who holds other qualifications approved by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee);
- 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 prior qualifications and experience as the postgraduate admissions selectors and/or the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) may require.

5. Where an applicant has previously studied for a Doctor of Philosophy at another institution and wishes this to be taken into account at Newcastle University, the application must be approved by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

6. In considering an application for admission as a student for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the postgraduate admissions selectors must be satisfied not only as to the suitability of the applicant, but also as to the availability to the applicant of appropriate supervision and suitable facilities and resources once the applicant is admitted. It is the responsibility of the relevant head of school, directly or through the postgraduate admissions selectors, to ensure that appropriate supervision, suitable facilities and resources will be available to an applicant once admitted.

### **C. Admission as a Staff Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

7. In addition to the requirements set out in Regulation B, a member of staff seeking approval as a staff candidate for the degree of Doctor 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 school of employment and the head of school 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, etc.*

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

## **D. Doctoral Candidature Status**

8. A student commences the programme with doctoral candidature status. It is the annual review of progress and progress panel recommendation which determines whether doctoral candidature status should continue. (See Regulation 21)

## **E. General Preconditions to the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

9. Before being awarded the degree of Doctor 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 in the assessments specified.

## **F. Supervision of Students**

10. A student for the degree of Doctor 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 school, or nominee, before a student is accepted onto the programme of study.

11. To be eligible to supervise students for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, a member of staff must hold the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or an equivalent research degree or have equivalent research expertise. The appropriateness of an equivalent research degree or expertise should be determined by the relevant head of school in consultation with the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

12. The academic supervisor will be a member of staff of Newcastle University 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.

13. 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 student by staff at that institution (see Regulation 17d). Such arrangements will supplement the role of the supervisor detailed in Regulation 12 above. Where External Advisors are added to the supervisory team, the Principles for the appointment of an External Advisor should be consulted:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/FormsPolicies.htm>

*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 school (or nominee), who may refer the matter, if necessary, to the relevant graduate school administrator or dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) for advice.*
- (iii) *All supervisory changes must be notified to the relevant graduate school administrator and be agreed by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).*
- (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.*

## **G. Type of Candidature, Period of Study and Registration Requirements**

14. An applicant may be approved by the postgraduate admissions selectors as a student for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in any of the following categories:

- a) as a student whose minimum period of advanced study and research in the University shall normally be not less than three years of full-time study;
- b) as a student whose minimum period of advanced study and research shall be not less than four years, of which normally not less than one year shall be spent in full-time study in the University, in periods of at least three months duration;
- c) as a student whose minimum period of advanced study and research shall be not less than six years of part-time study.

*Notes:*

- (i) *A student will normally only be registered under Regulation 14(b) if this is specified in their offer of admission. A student will not normally be transferred on to Regulation 14(b), if they have previously been registered under Regulation 14(a) or 14(c).*
- (ii) *Staff candidates shall be deemed to be registered as part-time students during their period of candidature and therefore, this shall normally be six years in length as outlined in Regulation 14(c). However, if the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) is satisfied that the greater part of the candidate's time is devoted to supervised research the candidature can be deemed to be 3 years of full-time study as outlined in Regulation 14(a).*

(iii) *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 (or nominee), in advance of registration on the programme.*

15. Any student who wishes to transfer from one of the categories of candidature specified in Regulation 14 to another such category may do so only with the approval of the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) and subject to the recommendation of the supervisory team and head of school, or nominee.

16. In all cases of candidature approved under Regulation 14, approved students 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 shall be reckoned from the date of first registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy.

## **H. Study Undertaken Outside the University**

17. A student may be permitted by a dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), on the recommendation of the relevant supervisory team and head of school, 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 and the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) should be satisfied before the beginning of that period of outside study that:

- a) the student will have access to adequate facilities, resources and appropriate research training;
- b) sufficient time for study and research will be available to the student;
- 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 school/nominee in line with University guidelines and University Insurance policies.

All study visits, of any duration, by a student to a high-risk location must also be signed off by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), 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:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/changecircs/StudyOutside.htm>

Notes:

- (i) *that periods of study outside the University of less than one month should be agreed within the student's school and the 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.*
- (iii) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to have their attendance monitored on the programme, including time registered as a pending or extended submission student.*
- (iv) *that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to adhere to their deadline for submission, unless an extension or interruption of studies has been agreed as part of the outside study approval.*

Notes for Tier 4 Visa Holders:

- (v) *that students are required to inform the University if they are away from Newcastle (or approved campus) as a condition of their visa sponsorship.*
- (vi) *that students under candidature who are undertaking primary research outside the UK will only normally be permitted to do this for 12 months without curtailment of the Tier 4 visa.*
- (vii) *that students who are leaving the UK to write-up in their home country, or elsewhere will normally have their Tier 4 visa curtailed.*

## **J. Attendance and Progress**

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

- a) Within one month of registering for the research programme, the student and the University shall have signed an approved learning agreement to cover the period of candidature;
- b) A student should submit a project proposal within the guidelines identified by the relevant graduate school committee, up to a maximum of three months (six months for part-time students) from registering for the research programme. The student's project proposal must be approved by an independent school panel and head of school/nominee, before being submitted for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee). 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 approval before being submitted for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

Progression on the programme will be dependent upon acceptance of the project proposal. If the school 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 school panel does not approve the arrangements for the project it will be the annual progress panel that will be required to make a recommendation regarding the outcome for a student (see Regulation 21);

- c) A student should attend the University as frequently and at such intervals as the supervisory team shall require, bearing in mind whether the student is registered as full-time or part-time 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 supervisory team at least three times a year, normally once per term while they are in candidature (structured interactions for part-time students should be pro-rata). The University requires that a student records and confirms the outcomes of supervisory meetings, via ePortfolio.
- d) In addition to c) 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.
- e) A student should maintain a record of their personal development throughout their period of registration and submit this as evidence of development on an annual basis to their progress panel;
- f) A student should submit reports and evidence of achievement as specified by the school or faculty graduate school 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 school. This material, along with reports from the supervisory team, will be considered as part of an annual submission to the progress panel for each student.

19. The school will appoint a progress panel for each student. The progress of each student will be reviewed annually via ePortfolio until submission of the thesis for examination.

20. The supervisory team shall submit an annual report via ePortfolio concerning the progress of a student's research for review by the appointed progress panel until submission of the thesis for examination.

21. The progress panel will make a report to the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) via ePortfolio and further progress on the programme of study is subject to approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee). In addition to detailed feedback that the progress panel may wish to provide to the student and the supervisory team, the progress panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- i. that the student's performance is satisfactory and that the student can proceed to the next stage.

- ii. that notwithstanding some concerns, which the student and supervisory team should note, the student's overall performance is satisfactory and that the student can proceed to the next stage
- iii. that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a further progress review should be held normally within two months (four months for part-time students) to determine whether progress on the programme will be recommended;
- iv. that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a submission for a Master of Philosophy examination is recommended instead of a submission for a Doctor of Philosophy examination;
- v. that the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy examination is recommended, and that the candidature is terminated.

22. In exceptional cases where the progress 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 school, to make a recommendation to the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) for the replacement of all or part of the supervisory team.

23. The annual progression review procedure will be deemed equivalent to a board of examiners and therefore the University's procedure for assessment irregularities shall apply to any reported or suspected cheating or plagiarism. The procedures are available at:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/assessment.htm>

24. A student whose progress is not deemed sufficient to continue studying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy may nonetheless be deemed by the progress panel to have made satisfactory progress as a student for the degree of Master of Philosophy. In such a case the student shall be permitted to submit a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy. The normal expectation in such cases, is that a student will be in a position to either: submit immediately for the Master of Philosophy; or submit for the Master of Philosophy following a period of pending submission, which should be up to one year following the date of the decision to downgrade. A student will not normally receive an additional period of candidature.

25. Where the progress panel recommends submission for a Master of Philosophy, instead of a Doctor of Philosophy, there will be no expectation of an upgrade back on to the Doctor of Philosophy at a later stage.

26. Exceptionally, the student may be permitted to continue studying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for a further period and be reconsidered for confirmation of their candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Such cases should be reconsidered no later than two months after the initial decision (four months for part-time students).

27. A student registered for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory at Master of Philosophy level shall not be permitted to continue as a registered student for either degree and registration will be terminated.



**Notes:**

- (i) *That the progress panel should not normally recommend that a student's registration is terminated (Regulation 21(v)), without having previously provided a further progress review/re-assessment opportunity to the student (Regulation 21(iii)).*
- (ii) *That any further progress review/ re- assessment opportunity should be recorded via ePortfolio.*
- (iii) *In each Annual Progress Review, a student should only normally have one further progress review/re-assessment opportunity.*

## **K. Mid-Year Procedure for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Progress**

28. A student whose progress is considered unsatisfactory by the supervisory team at times other than the normal annual assessment 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 school or nominee and submit a report for review by the progress panel; *or*
- b) the supervisory team shall notify the head of school or nominee and submit a report for review by the progress panel without undertaking a period of monitoring.

In either case, where a report is made to the progress panel for review of the student's progress, the student shall also be given the opportunity to submit a report to the progress panel. The progress panel will make a report and recommendation to the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) (in accordance with Regulation 21). This review should be carried out via ePortfolio.

## **L. Procedure for Review of Penalties for Unsatisfactory Progress**

29. A student applying for review of the decision of the progress panel may only do so in writing, using the University Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/appeals.htm>

specifying one or more of the following grounds:

- a) the progress 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 s/he was previously unaware, or which for a good cause, s/he was unable to disclose to the progress panel, or unable to provide evidence at the time);

- b) procedural irregularity on the part of the progress panel;
- c) bias or prejudice on the part of the progress 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**

30. The University normally expects a student to complete their 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.

31. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies will give sympathetic consideration to requests for periods of interruption, subject to the student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the supervisory team. However, candidature should not normally be held in abeyance for more than twelve months.

32. Absences of more than one month will normally be classed as an interruption of study.

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

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

35. Retrospective (backdated) interruptions are not permitted for a student who is a Tier 4 visa holder.

36. In exceptional cases, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will consider requests for an extension of time for submission, subject to the student providing a strong justification and evidence, supported by the supervisory team.

37. A request for an extension of time for submission must be submitted by the student, via ePortfolio, before the current deadline for submission.

38. A student granted an extension of time for submission will be required to register as an 'extended submission' student and pay tuition fees as stipulated in the University's fee schedule.

### *Notes:*

- (i) A formal interruption of study will adjust a student's latest submission deadline, in line with the period of interruption.*
- (ii) 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.*
- (iii) A student who is still actively researching during an 'extended submission' period must continue full registration and will pay the full tuition fee for the period of their continued candidature.*

- (iv) *It is expected that a student who is registered as 'extended submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with members of the supervisory team and full access to Library and computing facilities will be available.*
- (v) *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.*

## **N. Teaching Duties**

39. A student for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy may undertake paid duties in the University 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 and/or any visa restrictions. 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*:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/FormsPolicies.htm>

## **P. Submission for Examination by Thesis**

40. The results of a student's advanced study and research must be embodied in a thesis in the approved form in accordance with Section XIV *Rules for the Submission of Work for Higher Degrees* and Section XV *Rules for the Form of Theses*. The length of a thesis shall be determined, bearing in mind the requirements laid down, or guidance issued, if any, by the student's graduate school committee. The thesis must be submitted electronically, together with the completed and signed examination entry form and other relevant material, to the graduate school administrator.

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 <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/assessment.htm>

41. The exact title of a student's thesis must be submitted on ePortfolio for approval by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) 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 administrator and be agreed by the dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee).

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

- a) within four years in the case of students proceeding under the provisions of Regulation 14(a);
- b) within five years in the case of students proceeding under the provisions of Regulation 14(b);
- c) within seven years in the case of students proceeding under the provisions of Regulation 14(c).

43. Except with the permission of the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee), 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 appropriate permission, shall nevertheless still be required to pay tuition fees (full-time or part-time as appropriate, depending on the type of candidature) for the whole of the minimum prescribed period of study.

44. Where a student has an outstanding tuition fee debt, a thesis can be submitted by the submission deadline, however, examination of the thesis will be on-hold until receipt of the outstanding tuition fees.

## **R. Pending Submission for Students Completing their Minimum Period of Candidature**

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

*Notes:*

- (i) A student who has completed their minimum candidature and who still requires more time to work on their research and thesis must continue full registration with the University.*
- (ii) The fact that a student has completed their minimum candidature does not of itself constitute grounds for transferring to 'pending submission' registration. A student who is still actively researching must continue full registration and will pay the full tuition fee for the period of their continued candidature.*
- (iii) 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 school to do so for teaching or demonstrating purposes).*
- (iv) It is expected that a student who is registered as 'pending submission' will continue to receive regular structured interactions with members of the supervisory team and full access to Library and computing facilities will be available.*

## **S. Language of Submission**

46. A student's thesis must be written in English. In exceptional cases, subject to the student justifying such a concession, the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies (or nominee) may allow the student to submit a thesis written in a modern language other than English. 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. Approval for submission in a language other than English must be sought at the time of application to study for the degree. 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**

46. Details of the required arrangements for the examination are provided in the *XI Doctor of Philosophy Examination Conventions*.

*Note: The University cannot undertake to arrange the examination of a thesis immediately after its submission. Students are warned 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. Candidates shall be kept informed of the progress of the examination at monthly intervals by the Graduate School Administrator, should the examination process extend beyond the normal ten week period.*

