POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

Chapter 10 - Code of Good Practice - Professional Doctorate Postgraduate Research Programmes

Contents *(ctrl+click to take you to the section you need)*

This Code sets out the overarching requirements for the management of professional doctorate programmes at the University of Exeter. It is not an exhaustive document, but it is intended to act as a reference point sign-posting those sections of the TQA Manual which govern the teaching, learning and supervision arrangements applicable to these programmes.

Professional Doctorate programmes are research programmes, which may be defined as programmes at Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) level 8 (see the TQA CQF, Chapter 7: Academic Level), which include a number of components, which are credit-rated, and which includes the completion of a substantial research project.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the Regulations governing individual professional doctorate programmes, which may be found in the University Calendar, and with other TQA Manual Codes of Good Practice affecting postgraduate research students.

Professional Doctorate programmes sit with those responsible for Postgraduate Research programmes as a whole. Whilst this Code references a number of Codes generally applicable to taught programmes of study it does so with the understanding that for professional doctorates authority and action sits with those responsible for Postgraduate Research programmes, this includes, but is not limited to the following references:

Reference	Replacement
Dean for Taught Students	Dean of Postgraduate Research
Education Board	Postgraduate Research Board
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, or nominee	Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact (APVC-RI), or nominee (e.g., Faculty Director of PGR)
Director of Education and Student Experience	Faculty or Department Director of PGR (as appropriate)
Student-Staff Liaison Committee	PGR Liaison Forum

Theses/Dissertations are governed by the requirements set out in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research Programmes and the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 11: Presentation of theses/dissertations for Postgraduate Research degrees: statement of procedures.

Professional doctorate programmes also include some 'taught' modules (at doctoral level) and these are subject to oversight by External Examiners, as detailed in the TQA External Examining Handbook.

1.   Assessment of Pre-Thesis/Dissertation Modules

1.1   Assessment and Feedback

1.1.1   All students should have undertaken some assessment and received feedback for every module within their programme;

1.1.2   Students should always have the opportunity to receive feedback on their progress in a module before the final assessment elements of the module take place;

1.1.3   Students should be asked a specific question within module evaluation about the appropriateness of the assessment and feedback on the module.

1.2   Setting and Submission of Assessment

The following information should be available to students and all staff involved in teaching the module:

1.2.1   The setting of assessments should take place within the context of the achievement of a module's learning outcomes: it is important to ensure that all learning outcomes are capable of being assessed, even if in practice, e.g. where students have a choice of assessments, only a sample of Individual Learning Objectives (ILOs) are assessed;

1.2.2   Students should be informed of the submission date(s) of assessed work, normally within the first week of the start of the module or given at least four weeks' notice of the deadlines for submission of assessment.

1.2.3   When given assignments students must have access to the assessment and marking criteria to be used, which should normally be accessed via the Programme Handbook, and reference to these must be made in the feedback process. It is also good practice to include these in ELE when this is used by the module. Guidance for staff on using ELE can be found in the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 22: Exeter Learning Environment: Code of good practice.

1.2.4   When submitting assessments students should be aware of when and how they will receive feedback upon the module. All modules presented on the current version of the Current Module Descriptor Template (see TQA Approval and Revision of Taught Modules and Programmes Handbook, Annex 4: Academic Approval (Section 2)) will contain information indicating how feedback will be provided to students following each piece of formative and summative assessment.

1.2.5   The programme handbook should make it clear to whom and how submission must take place. This should include a mechanism for signing in or recording the submission of assessed work to provide unambiguous evidence of the date on which such work was submitted and should include a mechanism for asserting on the part of the student that the work in question is their own.

1.3   Late Submission of Coursework

1.3.1   Faculties (or delegated Schools) and partner institutions should publish the University penalties for the late submission of assessed work in the relevant programme handbook (or equivalent).

1.3.2 An indication of grounds for extension of the submission date for assessed work or reduction in the University penalties and the methods for claiming such dispensation should be contained in the relevant programme handbook. It should be made clear that individual staff members do not have the power to grant extensions.

1.3.3 External examiners should be informed where student work shown to them has failed because of late submission.

1.3.4 Methods for granting extension of the submission date for assessed work or reduction in the University penalty should ensure that all students studying modules within a Faculty (or delegated School) or partner institution are treated fairly and consistently. Consistency may be achieved by centralising the decision at a senior level through the relevant Faculty Director of PGR or nominee (or equivalent in a partner institution) with a report on decisions made to the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee.

1.4   Peer and Self-Assessment in Student Work

1.4.1 The principles contained in TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 10: Peer and Self-assessment in student work: principles and criteria (Section 1) may be useful in the context of professional doctorate programmes.

1.5   Drafts

1.5.1 The guidance published in the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 6: Feedback shall apply.

1.6   Assessment Criteria

1.6.1 Generic professional doctorate assessment criteria:

Knowledge & Understanding	1. Identification of key issues at the forefront of the area of scholarship or professional practice
	2. Awareness of complexity, contradiction and incompleteness of data in the area of scholarship
Synthesis & Application*	3. Advanced critical capacity allowing independent evaluation of the area of scholarship.

	OR	4a. Comprehensive understanding of techniques/methodologies applicable to the research area.
		4b. Level of synthesis that generates a contribution to existing knowledge in the research area.
Communication & Presentation	5. Clear and effective communication of complex information	
	6. Presentation of work (regardless of content) at peer reviewed standards/publication quality	

*Different modules will specify which variant of criterion 4 (i.e., 4a or 4b) will be assessed.

1.6.2 For each assessment criterion, one of the following evaluations will be awarded, as appropriate:

E - Indicates that there is *extensive* evidence that doctoral standard has been achieved for this criterion.

S - Indicates that there is *sufficient* evidence that doctoral standard has been achieved for this criterion.

I - Indicates that there is *insufficient* evidence that doctoral standard has been achieved for this criterion.

1.6.3 To achieve a 'Pass' grade, for the module, doctoral standard must be achieved for **all** assessed criteria (i.e., achievement of an **E** or **S** for all assessed criteria).

1.6.4 All Faculties (or delegated Schools) should publish the assessment criteria in the student handbooks for their professional doctorate programmes, which should be consistently applied in the assessment processes for all modules within a programme.

1.6.5 These may be supplemented by more detailed assessment criteria for individual modules, where appropriate.

1.6.6 External Examiners should be made aware of the assessment criteria.

1.7   Assessment Process

1.7.1 Modules in the pre-thesis/dissertation stage of professional doctorate programmes are assessed through written work reflecting advanced and original scholarship of a quality to satisfy peer review within your research area/community. Numerical marks are not

given for work at level 8, instead as is customary for doctoral work, there is a reasonable expectation of revision following feedback, to bring the work up to standard.

1.7.2   As such all assessed work will receive one of three initial outcomes:

a.   **PASS (P)**

b.   **MINOR AMENDMENTS (M1**) Minor, easily managed revisions are required to bring the work up to doctoral standard. Revisions to be completed within up to 4 weeks.

c.   **MAJOR AMENDMENTS (M2)** The revisions required are substantive, involving major reorganisation to bring the work up to doctoral standard. Revisions to be completed within up to 8 weeks.

1.7.3   Students who receive major or minor amendments for the initial submission of their assignments will be required to make the necessary amendments and resubmit the revised assignment to a deadline, which shall be specified in the programme handbook, and which will be no longer than the time-frames specified in 1.7.2 above.

1.7.4   Following major or minor amendments a FAIL (F) may be awarded if:

a.   the required major/minor amendments are not submitted within the specified time OR

b.   if the re-submitted assignment shows insufficient evidence of improvement.

1.7.5   The number of resubmissions for any single assignment is limited to a maximum of two.

1.7.6   A Flowchart of professional doctorate assessment process is also available, see TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 10: Code of Good Practice - Professional Doctorate Postgraduate Research Programmes, Annex 1: 'Flowchart of professional doctorate assessment process'.

1.8   Marking Strategy

1.8.1   The following minimum requirements shall apply to the assessment approach of the professional doctorate programmes:

a.   Where it is possible to mark anonymously, assessment may be marked anonymously and must be moderated;

b.   Where anonymous marking is not possible or appropriate all summative assessment shall be double marked;

c.   All failures will be subject to moderation by an external examiner.

1.8.2   The definitions adopted in the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 5: Marking shall apply.

1.9 **Mitigation**

1.9.1 Each Faculty (or delegated School) should establish a Mitigation Committee. These can be established for Subject/Discipline areas, for the Department, or for the entire Faculty (or delegated School).

1.9.2 Membership of Mitigation Committees should be appropriately representative, qualified and experienced, and gender-inclusive as far as possible.

1.9.3 In the interests of confidentiality, the number of members of Mitigation Committees should be kept to a minimum. Four people are considered sufficient.

1.9.4 Where Mitigation Committees are established at Faculty (or delegated School) level it is appropriate to include a representative with experience of the teaching and assessment from each Discipline/Department.

1.9.5 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty should not sit on Mitigation Committees in order that they may consider any appeals arising.

1.9.6 Meetings of the Mitigation Committee should be scheduled periodically as appropriate but may also be convened on an ad-hoc basis to consider any urgent issues in a timely fashion. The procedure and or scheduling of Mitigation Committees should also allow for the consideration of extensions for submission of assessment in advance of submission deadlines, either through scheduling ad-hoc meetings or through the delegation of such decisions, for further information see TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 10: Mitigation: Deadline extensions and deferrals.

1.9.7 It should be noted that as numeric marks are not awarded mitigation committees may have limited options available to them, but this may for example involve setting aside a 'major amendments' result from counting towards programme failure.

1.9.8 The requirements in the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 12: Student Absence, and the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 10: Mitigation: Deadline extensions and deferrals shall apply, although reference to arrangements with regard to examination is not applicable in this context.

1.10 Feedback and Disclosure of Marks

1.10.1 The guidance in the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 6: Feedback, on the disclosure of marks is applicable to professional doctorate programmes, except it should be noted in the context of professional doctorates that numeric marks are not awarded.

1.11   Appointment of External Examiners

1.11.1 The appointment of Boards of Examiners for the dissertation/thesis elements of professional doctorate programmes must take place on an individual basis in accordance with the requirements in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes.

1.11.2 The appointment of Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees for the pre-dissertation/thesis elements of professional doctorate programmes must take place in accordance with the requirements in the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 7: Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees.

1.12   Conduct of Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees

1.12.1 The requirements in TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 7: Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees shall apply other than to the dissertation/thesis elements of the programme which shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research Programmes. It should be noted however that as professional doctorate programmes award on a pass/fail basis and do not offer referrals, these options need not be a standard part of the default agenda.

1.13   External Examiner Reports

1.13.1 The requirements in the TQA External Examining Handbook shall apply.

2.   Programme Approval Arrangements

2.1   Programme approval information can be found in the PGR Prof Doc [Programme Approval guidance](#).

2.2   Also see the TQA Approval and Revision of Taught Modules and Programmes Handbook, Chapter 1: Introduction, Section 1.4: Professional Doctorates.

3.   Programme Accessibility

3.1   Information on assessing students with disabilities can be found in the TQA APA Handbook, Chapter 4: Assessing students with disabilities.

4.   Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

4.1   APL Guidance can be found in the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 16 Accreditation of Prior Learning.