



Code of Practice For Research Degrees

2014/15

NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY

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Section One: Preface – the purpose of the Code

This code of practice has been developed by the Graduate School at Nottingham Trent University in compliance with the Quality Assurance Agency's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality - Chapter B11: Research Degrees. The code aims to ensure the continuing quality of information provided to potential and current postgraduate research students. It draws together and acts as a link to existing documents available to students and provides an introduction to the use of those central documents/guides for the student, supervisor and other stakeholders engaged in any aspect of postgraduate research.

It is intended that the Code of Practice acts as a guide to the chief documents that concern the research degree courses at Nottingham Trent University. This Code contains a summary of the chief content of these documents and in certain important cases, material from those documents, to provide a readily available reference point for students.

The key components of the regulatory and guidance nexus at the University are:

- The *Regulations for Research Degree and Higher Awards*
- The Student Handbooks:
 - MPhil/PhD Handbook
 - Course Handbooks for Professional Doctorate courses
- The Research Degree Supervisor Handbook
- The Research Training Guides
- The Procedure for Investigating Alleged Misconduct by Students
- and, other documents and guidance created and/or added to the list above from time to time

Each of these documents are regularly updated and maintained, and students and others should ensure that they continuously refer to them and ensure that they understand and act in accordance with their contents. It is not intended that this be a definitive list: it is expected that further documents will be added to it as part of the University's continuing enhancement of Quality Assurance.

Comments and suggestions regarding the contents of these documents are welcomed and can be passed on to the NTU Graduate School or at any time via the committees referred to in Section Three.

Section Two: Context

Nottingham Trent University has been awarding research degrees for over a quarter of a century, initially under the authority of the National Council for Academic Awards but since its incorporation as a university in 1992, under its own auspices. The research degree process is a partnership between the Nottingham Trent University Graduate School and the nine academic Schools in the University.

These Schools are:

- Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences
- Art and Design
- Architecture, Design and the Built Environment
- Arts and Humanities
- Education
- Nottingham Business School
- Nottingham Law School
- Science and Technology
- Social Sciences

Students undertaking research degrees are members of both the Graduate School and the academic School in which their research discipline sits.

Nottingham Trent University currently delivers the following range of research degrees:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Professional Doctorates:
 - Doctor of Architecture (DArch)
 - Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
 - Doctor of Civil Engineering (EngD)
 - Doctor of Construction (EngD)
 - Doctor of Design (DDes)
 - Doctor of Digital Media (DDM)
 - Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
 - Doctor of Fine Art (DFA)
 - Doctor of Fashion Industry (DFI)
 - Doctor of Education (EdD)
 - Doctor of Legal Practice (DLegalPrac)
 - Doctor of Real Estate (DRealEst)
 - Doctor of Social Practice (DSocPrac)
- Doctor of Philosophy by Creative or Published Works.

It also awards the following range of Higher Doctorates, which are not honorary doctorates, which can be awarded on the basis of an extensive and recognised corpus of work relevant to the appropriate field.

- Doctor of Arts (DArts)
- Doctor of Design (DDes)
- Doctor of Laws (LLD)
- Doctor of Letters (DLitt)
- Doctor of Science (DSc)

Section Three: Governance – An Overview

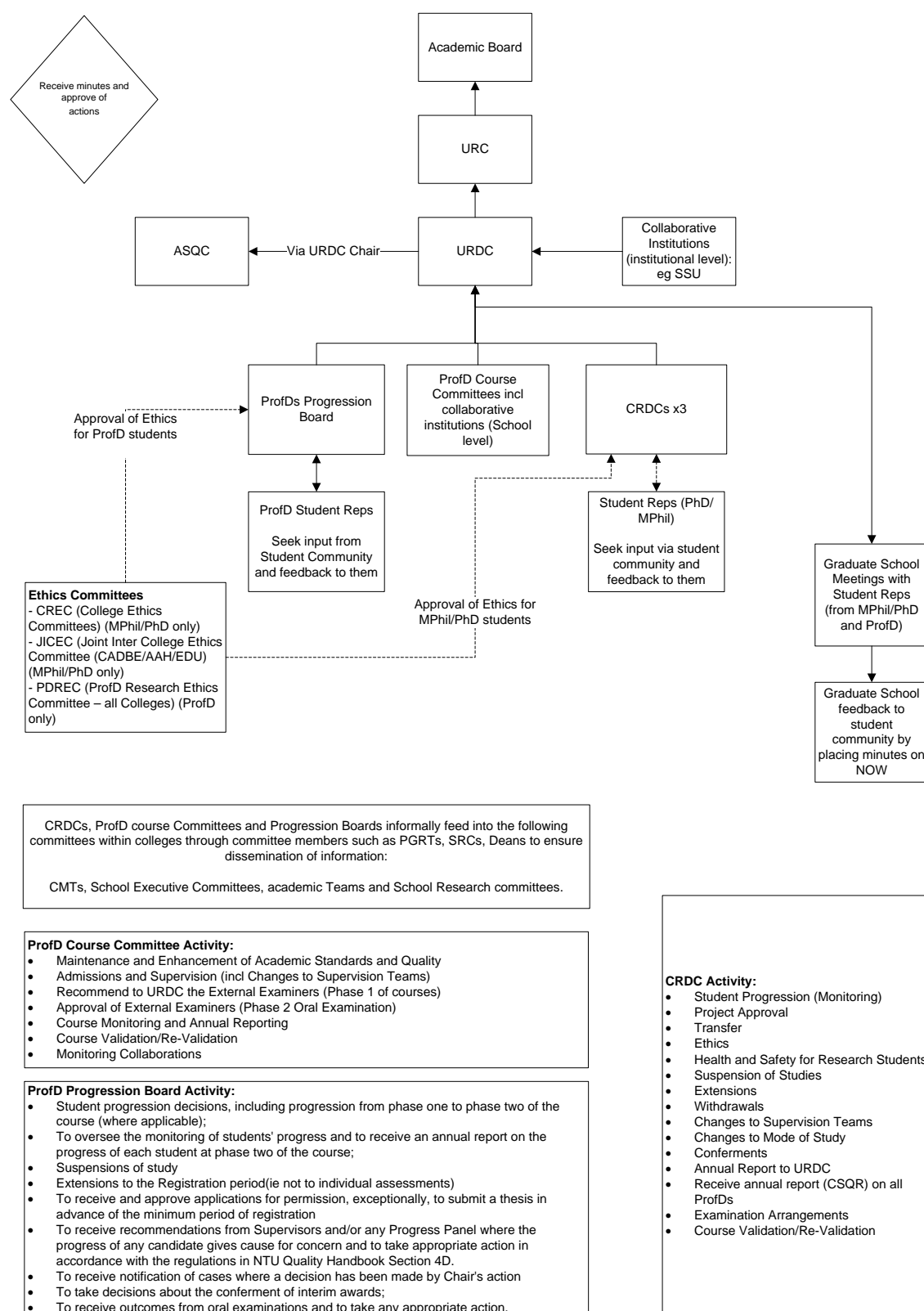
All University regulations and procedures are approved by Academic Board and this applies to the NTU Graduate School.¹ All Graduate School Quality Assurance and Enhancement procedures are referred to Academic Board for approval, through the chain of committees outlined below. The course committees for the professional doctorate courses govern professional doctorate courses and report directly to the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC). The College Research Degrees Committees (CRDCs) govern MPhil and PhD degrees and also report directly to URDC.² In turn the actions (including approval of research degrees and course committee actions) are sent to the University Research Committee (URC) for comment and support before being presented on to the Academic Board for approval.



¹ The academic board is responsible for 'all general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University, including criteria for the admission of students; the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners; policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students; the content of the curriculum; academic standards and the validation and review of courses; the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles; and the procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons. Such responsibilities shall be subject to the requirements of validating and accrediting bodies.'

² The nine Schools are organised for administrative purposes into three colleges; these are: Art, Design and the Built Environment, which comprises the Schools of Art and design and Architecture, Design and the Built Environment; Arts and Science, which comprises the Schools of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Education and Science and Technology; and Business, Law and Social Sciences which comprises Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Law School and the School of Social Sciences.

Committee Structures



Each CRDC and course committee produces an annual report which is passed to URDC for approval. In turn, URDC then compiles an annual report to be sent to the Academic Board via the URC.

The principal committee, in each of the three NTU Colleges, dealing directly with quality assurance procedures for MPhil/PhD is the College Research Degree Committee and this acts as the equivalent to a course committee and progression board. Each of the three College Research Degree Committees meet five/six times each year and the dates and times of their meetings are made known to the MPhil/PhD students and supervisors at the beginning of each academic year. Both the University Research Degrees Committee and the University Research Committee meet four times a year.

Course Committees govern the quality assurance of professional doctorate courses. Course committees and ProfD Progression Boards report directly to URDC. Course Committees meet three times per year (once per term) with progression boards meeting as often as required depending upon the volume of business.

Terms of Reference and membership structures of the CRDCs and URDC can be found in the Quality Handbook Supplement 4A and 4B respectively:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/quality_handbook/handbook_supplements/index.html

The terms of reference, membership and indicative framework for Professional Doctorate course committees are set out in Quality Handbook Supplement 4C:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/167955.pdf

The purpose and powers of a ProfD Progression Board are set out in Quality Handbook Supplement 4E:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/167957.pdf

Terms of Reference and other information for Progression Boards can be found in QH Section 15 and Quality Handbook Supplement 15B:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/138198.pdf

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/148405.pdf

Section Four: Regulations

The doctoral programmes and courses are all governed by regulations set out in the University Quality Handbook. These regulations can be found via these web pages:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/cadq/quality_assurance/standards_quality/8583gp.html

The research degree regulations are approved by the University's Academic Board and governed by the University Research Degrees Committee. (See: Section Three - Brief Guide to Governance). Research degrees regulations are kept under are updated annually. Alterations to regulations are made, if necessary, at the beginning of an academic year and students are informed of these changes. The Regulations are available on the University website at all times.

The Regulations contain details of all elements of research degrees requirements from entry requirements and admissions procedures, supervision arrangements, student progression to the final preparations for, and undertaking of, submission and examination. The Regulations also contain details of the complaints procedure and how to appeal against decisions made regarding progress and examination.

Section Five: The Student Handbook

Students are advised to use the Regulations in conjunction with the handbook (see guidance below) which provides essential information and guidance for the various quality and administrative processes which each student needs to undertake during their progress through their research degree.

All students and supervisors are provided with a relevant handbook. There is a single handbook for MPhil/PhD Students and Supervisors across all Schools in the University. Each ProfD course has its own course specific handbook. The handbooks are available to students and supervisors via the relevant course learning room in NOW at:

<https://now.ntu.ac.uk/>

The handbooks contain useful and comprehensive guidance on a range of topics, including an explanation of the research degree lifecycle (whether MPhil/PhD or ProfD), and details of a range of important contacts such as course team and Student Support Services. The handbooks deal with quality assurance, induction and the facilities and research expenses available and offered by the University for research degree studies (i.e., both MPhil/PhD and ProfD).

It is important for all students and supervisors to read the relevant handbook in conjunction with the regulations, and to familiarise themselves with the content.

Section Six: The Progress of a Doctoral Degree - General Guidance

At all times this code of practice is to be used in conjunction with the regulations relevant to the research programme being pursued and is to be read in conjunction with the detailed guidance contained in the handbooks.

Recruitment and Admission

Details of the application process are detailed on the University website:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/graduate_school/applying_fees_funding/index.html

General Information

An applicant for admission to read for a research degree should normally hold a first or second class honours degree awarded by a UK University or a qualification which is regarded by the CRDC as equivalent to such an honours degree. Some students may be considered on his/her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, the CRDC will look for evidence of the student's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment may be taken into consideration.

The application process follows these steps:

1. Completion of an application form: these forms can be downloaded from the webpages link above
2. Production of a Research Proposal which includes the following (a shorter version of this is required for PhD/MPhil in science and ProfDs):
 - a) Provisional title
 - b) The topic or area to be investigated (the subject or field to be researched)
 - c) The problem or hypothesis to be tested (the research question(s) or problem to be addressed)
 - d) The methods and techniques to be used in the research (how to go about the research)
 - e) A provisional timetable for the project indicating anticipated activities
 - f) The relationship of the proposed research to the published literature and to current research in the field (how the project relates to other work)
 - g) An indication of the contribution to knowledge that the thesis is anticipated to make (what it is hoped to be found out)
 - h) Details of previous work in the proposed field, or relationship to prior experience or study
3. Bibliography of sources already consulted or identified as of relevance to the proposal Provision of details of two appropriate academic referees

Accredited Prior Learning (APL) and the Research Degree

This aspect of the process is covered in the Quality handbook:

Section 15:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/138198.pdf

Section 4A Regulations for PhD/MPhil:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/148646.pdf

Section 4D Regulations for Professional Doctorates:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq/document_uploads/quality_handbook/165759.pdf

Applicants wishing to make use of APL may well wish to pursue the subset known as Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL, defined as 'a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes').

Any applicant wishing to pursue this pathway needs to raise this with the University, via the relevant postgraduate research tutor (for MPhil/PhD), relevant course leader (for ProfD), the Graduate School, or with any identified potential supervisor at the earliest opportunity to ensure a thorough exploration of the opportunities.

English Language Requirements for All Research Degree Programmes

As part of the application criteria, potential students must meet following language requirements:

Overall IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 6.5 with minimum sub-scores of 6.0 in all component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking) or an overall TOEFL score of 94-95 (internet based – IBT) with a minimum score of 22 in each of the four component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking).

Applicants who do not meet the English language proficiency requirement will normally be asked to successfully complete an English language course at Nottingham Language Centre

In-session English Language support is provided for all international and non-UK EU MPhil/PhD students for whom English is a second language. This support is free to these students and is provided through the Nottingham Language Centre. This support is being developed for international ProfD students.

Post-Application

Once admission has been approved, a student will be registered and enrolled for one of the following:

1. Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
2. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
3. Professional Doctorates:
 - a. Doctor of Architecture (DArch)
 - b. Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
 - c. Doctor of Civil Engineering (EngD)
 - d. Doctor of Construction (EngD)
 - e. Doctor of Design (DDes)
 - f. Doctor of Digital Media (DDM)
 - g. Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
 - h. Doctor of Fine Art (DFA)
 - i. Doctor of Fashion Industry (DFI)
 - j. Doctor of Education (EdD)
 - k. Doctor of Legal Practice (DLegalPrac)
 - l. Doctor of Real Estate (DRealEst)
 - m. Doctor of Social Practice (DSocPrac)
4. Doctor of Philosophy by Creative or Published Works.

Progression: MPhil/PhD

The MPhil/PhD process has a number of important or key 'milestones' which relate to progression and quality assurance.

Firstly, there are two major approval stages for PhD and one for MPhil, which are both subject to approval by the relevant College Research Degrees Committees (CRDC) (see Section Three, above) and recommended by them to the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC) (see Section Three, above). These are:

a) Project Approval

Project Approval requires the student to complete a RD1PA form which includes a 2,000 written proposal. This proposal is assessed at a full tutorial (including all members of the supervisory team) with an independent assessor present at which the student gives a brief (up to 20 minutes) presentation on his/her proposal to open the session. This process is applicable to both MPhil and PhD.

b) Transfer from MPhil/PhD registration to PhD

The transfer from initial registration requires the student to complete the RD2T form along with a 6,000 word document which exhibits something of the early research findings as part of making a case to full doctoral registration. Like the approval document the transfer document is assessed at a full tutorial (including all members of the supervisory team) with an independent assessor present at which the student gives a brief (up to 20 minutes) presentation on his/her proposal to open the session. This process is applicable to those transferring from MPhil to PHD only.

Guidance on these procedures can be found in the Quality Handbook Section 4A.

Progression: Professional Doctorate

The details of progression through the various taught and research stages of professional doctorate courses are explained in their respective handbooks. It is important that these sections are read by students and supervisors on these courses to understand the relationship between the coursework documents, and particularly how these relate to the creation and development of the thesis.

Section Seven: Guidance and Support

In addition to the guidance provided by the University regulations for doctoral degrees and the handbook, all students are also advised to seek guidance from a range of other sources during their degree programme. These include:

- Their supervisory team;
- The academic school postgraduate tutor (MPhil/PhD students only) (names and contact details can be obtained from the NTU Graduate School);
- The ProfD Course Leader (ProfD students only);
- Their student representative (whose name can be obtained from the NTU Graduate School and is also displayed on NOW);
- The NTU Graduate School offices, which are situated on the City (Chaucer Building room 4711) and Clifton (CELS Building, room 203) campuses.

Opening times

Day	City Opening Hours	Clifton Opening Hours	Notes
Monday	08:30-09:15 10:15-16:30	09:30-16:30	City office closed between 09:15-10.15 for weekly team meeting
Tuesday	09:30-16:30	08:30-09:00 10:00-16:30	Clifton office closed between 09:00-10.00 for weekly team meeting
Wednesday	09:30-16:30	09:30-16:30	
Thursday	09:30-16:30	09:30-16:30	
Friday	09:30-15:30	09:30-15:30	

Brackenhurst: There is a monthly office opening time and students are provided with a calendar of these dates via NOW.

Online Support

Students are also encouraged to use these online sites:

NTU Sites:

NOW <https://now.ntu.ac.uk/>

The intranet site for all NTU researchers

<https://www.ntu.ac.uk/intranet/research>

Centre for Professional Learning and Development

CPLDenquiries@ntu.ac.uk

Training and support on resources and tools to support all areas of research can be found at: http://www.ntu.ac.uk/library/research_support/training-support/index.html

External sources include:

VITAE - the UK organization championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

Section Eight: Ethics

MPhil/PhD

Full details of ethics procedures and policy can be found in the Handbook, section 11. Each discipline area has a series of specific policies and guidelines which can be found on the University website at:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/ethics_governance/

It is important to note the following:

Students must discuss possible ethical issues with their Director of Studies in the run-up to the project approval stage (See Section Four and Section Six) and if necessary seek approval from the appropriate Ethics Committee: confirmation of this review process is required on form RD1PA. Most importantly:

- No experimental or field work should be carried out without considering ethical issues that might arise

For further guidance on seeking the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee students can always contact the Graduate School Office.

Professional Doctorates

Full details of ethics procedures and policy can be found in the relevant course handbook. Each discipline area has a series of specific policies and guidelines which can be found on the University website at:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/ethics_governance/

Ethical concerns are at the forefront of ALL research projects conducted within the Professional Doctorate programmes, and will continue through to the write-up and dissemination stages.

The Professional Doctorate Research Ethics Committee is responsible for overseeing matters relating to ethics on all professional doctorate courses. It is a cross-College committee which reports to College Research Ethics Committees and College Research Committees.

It is important to note the following:

Ethical approval **MUST** be obtained before any kind of primary research is undertaken. Documents without ethical approval will not be marked.

Section Nine: Intellectual Property

Information on Intellectual Property Rights is included in the Quality Handbook Section 4A.

The University's Intellectual Property Policy for Students is located here:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/resources/policies_procedures/index.html

All researchers in the University work within the regulations governing intellectual property rights and the provisions in the research degree regulations relating to IP. These regulations lay down that intellectual property rights deriving from research accrue to the University, except in the case of collaborative projects where different arrangements have been explicitly negotiated, agreed and recorded. Publications are specifically exempted from this provision, and copyright of all books, articles, conference papers and other published material is vested in their authors. The Library can provide advice to authors on the assignment of copyright to publishers.

As a general principle, but subject to important exceptions, the University recognises that the student is the owner of any intellectual property (IP) that he/she creates in the course of his/her studies at the University. These exceptions include:

- i. IP that arises from projects in which students undertake specified work at the direction of University staff as part of an organised project
- ii. students with sponsorship from the University
- iii. students with external sponsorship
- iv. collaborative work.

IP, with possible commercial potential, should normally be disclosed to the Director of Studies or Lead Supervisor.

(https://www.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/document_uploads/87315.pdf)

Academic staff and students do not have authority to sign collaboration, non-disclosure or intellectual property agreements. These must be arranged via the relevant College Business Manager.

Section Ten: Facilities

The provision of facilities for research students is the responsibility of several organisations within the University working as a partnership. These include: the Graduate School; the nine academic Schools; Information Technology Services, Libraries and Learning Resources, and Estates Management.

In addition to the essential software packages and scientific equipment (for which a student may be charged 'bench-fees' specific to the research project and other requirements particular to a research project) all students can expect to have reasonable access to:

- IT facilities, including access to the internet and telecommunications
- Flexible-use desk space (including 'hot desking')
- Reprographic facilities
- Libraries and Learning Resources

Details of the availability and use of such resources is explained at induction and in the handbooks. Students are able and encouraged to raise issues regarding such facilities with the Graduate School team and through the student representatives on College Research Degree Committees (for MPhil/PhD) or on Course Committees (for ProfDs).

Section Eleven: Appeals and Complaints

Appeals

The University's Quality Handbook Section 4 explains the process and grounds for making an appeal: A candidate may make a formal appeal to the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC) – via the University Head of Academic Office - to request reconsideration of two principal actions: either an examination outcome, or the decision by a College Research Degrees Committee (CRDC) (for MPhil/PhD) or ProfD Progression Board to terminate their registration on a research programme or, in the case of PHD students, require them to re-register for MPhil. There are clearly defined grounds upon which an appeal can be made and these are defined in the regulations.

During the progress of a research degree there are numerous points at which issues, including the quality or effectiveness of supervision can be discussed or raised. These include tutorials, but especially the major progression points.

Complaints

Students are able to make complaints during their degree programme using the University's complaints procedure. This can be found at:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/resources/student_handbook/complaints_summary/index.html

However, the general advice offered to all students is to try to seek a local resolution. As indicated above under Appeals, students have the opportunity to raise issues at any time with either the Graduate School, PGR tutor (for MPhil/PhD), ProfD Course Leader (for ProfDs) or supervision team as well as at all supervision meetings, but especially at the major progression points (document submission, project approval, transfer depending on the course of study).

A student wishing to raise issues regarding supervision or any other issues also has recourse to a Postgraduate Research Tutor (for MPhil/PhD) or ProfD Course Leader (for ProfDs). Key contacts are listed on NOW. If in doubt about the names of these contacts, then the Graduate School will be able to help. Some of the issues may also be resolved by using the channels available to students through the University Research Degrees Committee (URDCs), College Research Degrees Committees (CRDCs) and Professional Doctorate course committees through the student representatives. The Graduate School is able to provide the names of these representatives, in case of doubt.

Section Twelve: Further Information

The code of practice is not considered to be an exhaustive guide to the information available on every aspect of postgraduate student life and the Graduate School works in conjunction with a series of other policies and services of the University. The sites below will therefore be of value and use to individual students at various times during their research degree career at Nottingham Trent University.

Diversity and Equality

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/equality_diversity/index.html

Careers & Employability

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/careers/students_graduates/index.html

Libraries and Learning Resources

<http://www.ntu.ac.uk/llr/index.html>

Continuing Professional Learning and Development

<http://www.ntu.ac.uk/cpld/index.html>

Student Services

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/student_services/index.html

Health and Well being

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/current_students/while_here/health_well_being/index.html