Section **11**

Nottingham Trent University

Quality Handbook

Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Quality

Section 11: Research degrees

Section 11

Contents

1. The postgraduate research environment

The University recognises the importance of the postgraduate community in the pursuit of research excellence and impact, and as such is committed to ensuring a high quality environment for research students.

Requirements

1.1 The University has a postgraduate research environment statement that provides details about the environment in which students do and learn about research.

1.2 The postgraduate research environment statement is readily available to both staff and students on the Doctoral School website.

1.3 The postgraduate research environment statement is reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure it remains both current and fit for purpose.

2. Course monitoring and reporting

Research degree provision is subject to ongoing monitoring. Monitoring is a continuous process by which relevant stakeholders keep under review the effective operation and currency of the provision. Annual reporting is the process by which the University is assured of the ongoing currency and health of its research degrees provision.

Requirements

2.1 Monitoring is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the standards and quality of research degrees, and begins to identify areas for improvement and enhancement.

2.2 Monitoring and reporting involves reflecting on and evaluating a range of evidence about the provision. Through this process, College Research Degrees Committees (CRDCs), professional doctorate course committees and progression boards, and the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC) evaluate the research environment, learning and assessment approaches, student progression and achievement, health and currency of provision and research training in order to ensure that standards and quality are being maintained, and outcomes met. The monitoring process leads to enhancement of provision and student learning opportunities, in the light of these evaluations.

2.3 Supervisory teams undertake monitoring across the year, the outcomes of which are monitored and reviewed by the CRDC or professional doctorate course committee.

2.4   Research degree monitoring involves all those involved in the student journey, including Postgraduate Research Tutors, professional doctorate Course Leaders, members of relevant committees, supervisors, students, external examiners, and, as appropriate, Central Services including the Doctoral School.

2.5   Students are key contributors to the process through their ongoing feedback, and representative participation in committees.

2.6   Feedback from external examiners via their annual reports, and *viva voce* reports are critical inputs into research degrees monitoring.

2.7   Data relating to student progression and achievement also inform this evaluation. Internal data and external reference points are used to monitor and benchmark research degrees provision.

2.8   An outcome of course monitoring is the development of a Course Standards and Quality Report (CSQR) (for professional doctorate courses) or a College Research Degrees Committee Annual Report (for MPhil/PhD provision). The report covers the outgoing academic year (1 August – 31 July each year) and articulates the range of reflections and evaluations that have taken place throughout the year. Its emphasis is on evaluation and quality enhancement.

2.9   The CSQR is produced by the professional doctorate Course Leader(s) with input from all relevant stakeholders. Course Leaders take responsibility for engaging all contributors to the delivery and development of their courses in evaluating the provision. They are also responsible for the oversight of the CSQR (see below) and ensure that action is taken and enhancements achieved.

2.10   The CRDC Annual Report is produced by the Chair of the CRDC. The Chair is responsible for engaging all contributors to the delivery of research training, and management of the MPhil/PhD process in evaluating the provision. They are also responsible for oversight of the report (see below) and to ensure that action is taken and enhancement is achieved.

2.11   Given that monitoring is an ongoing process, the CSQR/Annual Report is compiled and considered over the year. Reports do not need to include routine or minor issues identified by staff, students and others.

2.12   CSQRs and Annual Reports are produced using the University's templates and are submitted to the University Research Degrees Committee by September/October each year.

2.13   Reports are reviewed and signed off at CRDC or professional doctorate course committee prior to submission to URDC.

2.14   URDC receives and considers all CRDC and professional doctorate annual monitoring reports.

2.15   Reports are considered at bespoke annual monitoring meetings of URDC. Reports are allocated to readers, who consider the reports in small groups at the annual monitoring meeting.

2.16   URDC provides feedback to CRDCs and professional doctorate course committees. Feedback is developed by each group using a standard template, and considers both the quality of the provision and the quality of the report.

2.17   Consideration of reports may result in conditions which require either re-submission of the report, or that remedial action is taken to address concerns

about the quality of provision. Consideration may also result in recommendations and commendations.

2.18 The outcomes of annual reporting may result in the University needing to take further action to address concerns about the standards and quality of its research degree awards. This may include the need for a full review of the provision.

Explanatory notes

- Report templates are provided in Quality Handbook Supplement (QHS) 6D and QHS 6E.

3. University level annual reporting

University monitoring of the quality and standards of the full range of research degrees provision is reflected in the annual University Research Degrees Committee Annual Report

Requirements

3.1 The URDC Annual Report is produced by the Chair of the Committee and is based on an analysis of:

    a. CSQRs/CRDC Annual Reports across the full range of provision;

    b. additional University level data and evidence;

    c. external benchmarking data;

    d. analysis of information supplied by other sources such as Academic Planning, Academic Office, Centre for Academic Development and Quality (CADQ), Centre for Professional Learning and Development (CPLD), and Libraries and Learning Resources (LLR).

3.2 The URDC Annual Report allows the University to reflect on the full range of research degree provision, and to identify strengths and areas for development. The emphasis is on evaluation and enhancement.

3.3 The Annual Report should be cognisant of the University Strategic Plan, and University and Schools' research plans and strategies.

3.4 The Annual Report is produced using the University's template (see QHS 6F) and is submitted to URDC by December each academic year.

3.5 The URDC Annual Report is considered at a designated URDC meeting. All members are required to read the report and to provide feedback on the quality of provision.

3.6 The report is considered by the University Research Committee at its meeting in December of each year.

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Explanatory notes

- All reports should be clearly structured and predominantly evaluative rather than descriptive in content and style: the focus should be on an evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement in each aspect of the report addressed.
- The best reports are written in a direct style, addressing members of research degrees teams as the prime audience.
- Whilst the production of reports is designated to one writer to organise and produce the report, to ensure consistency, coherence and clarity; the report is the product of an exercise conducted by each committee as a whole.

4. Evaluation of internal and external data

Internal and external data is used on an annual basis to support evaluation of the quality and standards of the research degrees provision.

Requirements

4.1   The following sets of data should be used to ensure that evidence about the quality and standards of research degrees is appropriately evaluated and benchmarked.

4.2   Data is analysed primarily by the designated lead identified in the table below.

4.3   The outcomes of data analysis are provided to the relevant committee or report author to ensure inclusion within the annual monitoring process.

Source	Collated by	Disseminated to (for analysis)
Internal enrolment, progression and achievement data	Head of the Doctoral School	CRDC Chairs, Professional Doctorate Course Leaders, Chair of URDC
Equality and Diversity widening participation reports	Head of the Doctoral School	CRDC Chairs, Professional Doctorate Course Leaders, Chair of URDC
PRES survey results	Doctoral School, Supported by Marketing	CRDC Chairs, Professional Doctorate Course Leaders, Chair of URDC
HEFCE rates of qualification	Head of the Doctoral School	Chair of URDC
Research Council data	Postgraduate Research (PGR) Tutors	CRDC Chairs, URDC Chair, Professional Doctorate Course Leaders
Funding bodies	PGR Tutors, assisted by Head of Doctoral School	CRDC Chairs, URDC Chair, Professional Doctorate Course Leaders
Competitors (where available)	Professional Doctorate Course Leaders, Head of Doctoral School	Chairs of CRDC
Professional doctorate Phase One external examiner Reports	Online reporting system	Professional doctorate course committees
Professional doctorate module evaluations	Professional doctorate Course Leaders	Professional doctorate course committees
NTU Doctorate*PLus* Programme	Postgraduate Research Tutors	NTU Doctorate*Plus* Course Leader
Viva and conferment outcomes	Doctoral School	PGR Tutors Professional Doctorate Course Leaders

5. Admissions

The University has criteria for admission to research degrees that are clear, and consistently applied.

Requirements for PhD/MPhil

5.1   An applicant for admission to read for a PhD/MPhil should normally hold a first or upper second class honours degree of a UK university or an equivalent qualification, or a lower second class honours degree with a master's degree at Merit level (or equivalent) of a UK university or an equivalent qualification.

5.2   An applicant not meeting the certificated requirement may be considered on merit and in relation to the nature and scope of the proposed programme of study. Applicants are considered against evidence of ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment are taken into consideration.

5.3   Admission may be dependent upon additional prior qualifications that must be published in advance.

5.4   The application sets out the form of the intended submission and the proposed methods of assessment.

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

   a. Master of Philosophy; or

   b. Master of Philosophy with intention of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy; or

   c. Doctor of Philosophy.

5.6   All admission decisions rest with the Head of Doctoral School.

Explanatory note

■   English language requirements for admission are available on the NTU website and further information is included in QHS 13B.

Requirements for professional doctorates

5.7   Applicants will be well-qualified in their chosen field and will normally have already gained a related master's degree or equivalent qualification, together with sufficient professional experience in the relevant field. Typically, an applicant will have a minimum of 5-7 years relevant professional experience.

5.8   Exceptionally, an applicant may be accepted with a good honours degree in their field or a master's degree in an unrelated field. Such applicants must have sufficient professional experience in the field appropriate to the course being undertaken.

5.9   In order to meet the learning outcomes of their professional doctorate course, it is anticipated that candidates may need to carry out detailed learning activities with one or more participating organisations. In such circumstances, access to and support from the appropriate organisation(s) is considered essential in terms of the initial selection of candidates.

5.10 During the admission process, prospective candidates are expected to develop an initial short proposal for subsequent research or equivalent enquiry. Evidence of sufficiency of problem definition, initial research, personal capability and appropriate professional experience are factors to be looked for.

5.11 Prospective candidates will be invited to interview prior to admission.

5.12 Specific entry criteria are set out in the course documentation.

5.13 All admission decisions rest with the Head of Doctoral School.

Explanatory note

- English language requirements for admission are available on the NTU website and further information is included in QHS 13B.

Requirements for Higher Doctorates

5.14 Applicants for a Higher Doctorate award will normally be one of the following:

a. a holder of at least seven years' standing of a first or upper second class honours degree of a UK university or an equivalent qualification, or a lower second class honours degree with a master's degree at Merit level of a UK university or an equivalent qualification;

b. a holder of at least four years' standing of a higher degree awarded by a university in the United Kingdom.

5.15 In addition, applicants are required to further satisfy one of the following criteria:

a. a graduate of Nottingham Trent University;

b. a member of the academic staff at Nottingham Trent University;

c. a person who although not a member of the University academic staff can demonstrate their research is clearly and demonstrably focused within the University and/or through a collaborative partnership with the University.

5.16 The application process involves an initial application, which if accepted will lead to a period of 12 months in which a full submission of works for consideration is permitted.

5.17 To support the application process, the applicant submits the following:

a. a completed application form, including a list of the published works on which the application is based;

b. a curriculum vitae;

c. a statement of between 1000 and 2000 words setting out the applicant's view of the nature and significance of the work submitted and explaining the relevance of the works to the advancement of knowledge in the field or fields concerned;

d. a statement specifying whether any of the supporting works have been submitted for any other degree awarded to the applicant;

e. a full statement of the extent of the applicant's contribution to work submitted, involving joint authorship or other types of collaboration. This should indicate the nature of any collaboration, the role and position of the collaborator at the time the work was prepared;

f. the appropriate application fee.

5.18 All admission decisions rest with the Head of Doctoral School.

Requirements for PhD by Published Work

5.19 The PhD by Published Work is open to candidates who are, either:

a. full-time and part-time members of staff on a 0.2 contract or above of Nottingham Trent University; its collaborative centres; or members of an institution which has a strong research base and who have collaborated in research with staff members of Nottingham Trent University for at least three years, on the conditions that:

(i) the applicant has been a member of staff of the University or a collaborative partner / research partner institution for at least three years;

(ii) study and research carried out during the period of appointment forms a significant contribution to the published work;

(iii) the applicant meets the entry requirements for PhD (i.e. as specified in paragraph 5.1 of this document);

(iv) the applicant has published papers/works in their area of research prior to applying for this degree;

(v) the applicant was awarded their first degree not less than five years before the date of application;

or,

b. graduates who hold a 2:1 honours degree from a university in the UK, of at least seven years standing, and have already obtained a master's degree (or equivalent as evidenced by the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)) from a university in the UK, provided that they have a strong academic career as evidenced by publication, and the work submitted must principally be the candidate's own work.

5.20 In exceptional circumstances, a candidate may be admitted with the approval of the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC).

6. Recognition of prior learning

The University may recognise prior learning in order to admit a student onto a research degree or to admit a student with advanced standing beyond the beginning of the research degree.

Requirements for PhD/MPhil

6.1 A student who can demonstrate that they have achieved part of the learning outcomes of a PhD/MPhil course at another institution can be admitted to an appropriate point in the course of study; applicants who have already entered the completion year phase will not be admitted.

6.2 Where a student is requesting a transfer from another institution a letter of release is required along with evidence of progression.

6.3 All prospective transfer students are interviewed by the receiving School.

6.4 All transfer students, regardless of entry point, will need to go through project approval.

6.5 Where a student is admitted with Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), the registration period is adjusted accordingly to take into account the prior learning.

Requirements for professional doctorates

6.6 An applicant who can demonstrate that they have achieved part of the learning outcomes of a professional doctorate course by other means can be admitted with credit to an appropriate point in the course; applicants who have already entered phase 2 of the course will not be admitted.

6.7 Admission with credit will not exceed 180 credits at level 7 and an additional 180 credits at level 8 (360 credits in total).

7. Formal notification of successful application

All research degree students receive an offer letter that is specific to the individual applicant.

Requirements

7.1 The offer letter constitutes a contract between the student and the University and is binding to both parties.

7.2 The offer letter contains the following information for the applicant:

    a. details of the programme of study

    b. duration of study

    c. details of the supervisory team, with a note that if there will be an unavoidable change in the supervisory team due to exceptional circumstances the student will be informed at the earliest possible time

    d. conditions of entry including visa requirements, sponsor letters

    e. fee status and tuition fees

    f. details of research training or taught workshops

     g. registration requirements

     h. project approval requirements (PhD/MPhil only)

     i. original qualification documentation requirements

7.3   Applicants are required to accept the offer in writing and supply the relevant documentation.

8. Information for students

The University undertakes to provide research degree students with clear information about its expectations and about the policies and procedures that relate to research degree study.

Requirements

8.1   All research degree students receive an induction which provides relevant information about their course of study.

8.2   Induction is arranged as early in the student's registration period as possible.

8.3   Induction for PhD/MPhil students is delivered both at Doctoral School and School level.

8.4   Induction for professional doctorate students is delivered as part of the taught workshops.

8.5   Alternative arrangements are made for students who are unable to attend induction.

Requirements for PhD/MPhil

8.6   All PhD/MPhil students are provided with a handbook that sets out information about their responsibilities in relation to the following:

     a. supervision

     b. research training

     c. project approval

     d. transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD

     e. annual monitoring

     f. publishing and dissemination

     g. submission and examination

8.7   The handbook also contains information about the policies and procedures by which PhD/MPhil students are affected as follows:

     a. suspension of study

b. extensions to the registration period

c. changes to supervisory teams

d. appeals and complaints

e. research misconduct

f. teaching

Requirements for professional doctorates

8.8 All professional doctorate students are provided with a handbook that sets out information about their responsibilities in relation to the following:

a. supervision

b. attendance at taught workshops

c. assessment at phase one of the course

d. annual monitoring at phase two of the course

e. publishing and dissemination

f. submission and examination at phase two of the course

8.9 The handbook also contains information about the policies and procedures by which Professional doctorate students are affected as follows:

a. suspension of study

b. extensions to the registration period

c. changes to supervisory teams

d. appeals and complaints

e. alleged research misconduct

9. Supervision

The University ensures that all research degree students have an appropriately qualified supervisory team. These teams are in place before an offer of doctoral study is made. Throughout the period of supervision the University supports the supervisory team by ensuring that they have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively, they are aware of their responsibilities and by offering appropriate continuing professional development opportunities.

Requirements

9.1 A research degree student has at least two, and normally not more than three, supervisors.

9.2 For PhD/MPhil students, one supervisor is designated as the Director of Studies.

9.3 For professional doctorate students, one supervisor is designated as the Lead Supervisor.

9.4 In both cases, the Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the supervisory team and student adhere to the University Code of Practice and documents regarding the progress of doctoral study.

9.5 The Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor is the main point of contact for the student. Students are made aware of the alternative contact if the main point of contact is unavailable.

9.6 For PhD by Published Work, the Director of Studies will provide guidance to the candidate on the selection and presentation of the published or creative work, the crafting of the linking document (the "Introductory Chapter/Critical Study") and also support the candidate in preparation for the oral examination.

9.7 The supervisory team is nominated by the relevant University School.

9.8 Supervisory teams for research degree students have experience of supervising at least one student to the successful completion of a UK research degree or equivalent international qualification, and where required have suitable professional knowledge and experience.

9.9 In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.

9.10 The process of appointment for professional doctorate supervisory teams is as follows:

    a. Proposed supervisory teams for each new cohort of students are approved by the Course Leader(s) and ratified by the relevant course committee.

    b. Supervisory teams must be in place prior to commencement of the first taught workshop (where applicable).

9.11 The process of appointment for PhD/MPhil supervisory teams is as follows:

    a. The supervisory team shall be named in full on the project approval form.

    b. The proposed supervisory team will be approved by the relevant College Research Degrees Committee meeting at which the project approval form is presented.

9.12 The following restrictions on appointment apply:

    a. No supervisor should have any conflict of interest with the research degree student.

    b. Staff members may not act as a Director of Studies or Lead Supervisor if they are currently registered for an MPhil or a doctoral degree at NTU or anywhere else (this does not apply to staff members registered for a doctorate by creative or published work). Upon being awarded an MPhil or Doctoral degree, staff members will become eligible to hold the role of Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor. In exceptional cases, staff who are registered for a research degree at NTU or any other institution may be nominated as Director of Studies, or Lead Supervisor with the approval of the relevant Head of Department and the appropriate CRDC/course committee.

c. If a member of staff is currently a Director of Studies or Lead Supervisor and decides to read for an MPhil or doctoral degree at NTU or anywhere else, they are required to cease undertaking this role immediately upon commencement of registration and for the duration of their studies. With the consent of his/her Head of Department, the member of staff may remain on the supervisory team.

d. Staff members may not act in the role of Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor if they have, at any point in the past, registered to read for a research degree and have subsequently failed the degree on academic grounds.

e. The Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor is a member of NTU staff. However, in exceptional circumstances, a person who is not a member of NTU academic staff may take this role. In such cases, the CRDC/course committee must be satisfied that the proposed Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor has significant experience of successful research student supervision and receives suitable training for the role, and in the regulations and procedures of the University.

9.13 A proposal for a change in supervision arrangements must be made to the CRDC or course committee.

9.14 Any member of a supervisory team who has not previously supervised a research degree to completion at the University must attend the appropriate staff development course within 12 months of commencing supervision.

9.15 CRDCs and course committees should ensure that all supervisors, whatever their level of experience, receive regular opportunities for continuing professional development. It is expected that supervisors will avail themselves of these opportunities.

9.16 Minimum expectations for the frequency of supervisory meetings are determined by each CRDC/course committee, and are included in student handbooks.

9.17 For PhD/MPhil, an annual agreement on the supervision schedule and student's writing obligations is agreed between the student and the supervisory team.

9.18 A written record of each supervisory meeting must be kept. The record is agreed between the student and the Director of Studies/Lead Supervisor.

Operational notes

- Supervisor responsibilities are set out in the Supervisors Handbook for Research Degrees.
- The School Research Committee maintains oversight of the number of research students allocated to a specific supervisor, and ensures that supervisors are not overburdened, in line with the University's Management of Academic Workload Framework.
- Allocated hours for supervision are determined by the School Research Committee, in line with the University's Management of Academic Workload Framework. The Committee ensures that

supervisory hours are allocated fairly and consistently across supervisory teams.

10. Student monitoring

The progress of research degree students is monitored at least once in each year of registration (during phase two for professional doctorate courses).

Requirements

10.1 The form of monitoring may vary to suit the specific needs of the course.

10.2 Where monitoring indicates serious concerns about progression of the student, the CRDC/professional doctorate Progression Board can apply a three month period of probation.

10.3 The student's progress will be reconsidered immediately after the probationary period. Where there is no improvement in progression, the CRDC/Progression Board may terminate the student's registration.

Explantory note

- Details about termination of registration are set out in the research degree regulations, QH Sections 16D and 16E.

11. Researcher development

All research students are expected to participate in a rolling programme of professional development for research.

Requirements

11.1 Students have the opportunity to attend a range of workshops and developmental activities mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

11.2 A range of core activities support the student journey from enrolment, through to final submission, and these activities are complemented by a series of electives that the student will choose depending upon their developmental needs.

11.3 The Researcher Development Programme empowers students to create an individualised package of activities to support their career development as a researcher.

11.4 Engagement of the student in the programme forms the basis of discussions with supervisory teams at key checkpoints in each student's journey, including

supervision meetings, annual monitoring and project approval and transfer (where applicable).

12. Assessment

Research degrees are assessed against a set of assessment criteria or course learning outcomes to ensure that the appropriate standards are achieved.

Requirements for PhD

12.1 Achievement of a PhD, including PhD by Published Work, is assessed by the examination of the candidate's thesis and performance under oral examination.

12.2 A PhD/MPhil is assessed in English, except where permission has been given for the thesis and oral examination to be in another language.

12.3 Permission to present a thesis in a language other than English is only given if the subject matter of the thesis involves language and related studies.

12.4 In judging the merit of a thesis submitted for PhD, the Examiners shall bear in mind the standard and scope of work which it is reasonable to expect a capable and diligent student to present after the period of registered full-time or part-time study.

12.5 Assessment is based on the candidate successfully demonstrating achievement of an appropriate combination of the following criteria, which are aligned to the descriptors for Level 8 qualifications in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ):

   a. the creation and interpretation of new knowledge and/or the invention and generation of ideas, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication;

   b. the systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;

   c. the ability to relate the results of such study to the general body of knowledge in the discipline;

   d. the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;

   e. a detailed understanding of applicable methods and techniques for research and advanced academic inquiry;

   f. the ability to evaluate and criticise received opinion;

g. the ability to make reasoned and well-informed judgements on complex issues within the specialism whilst understanding the limitations on judgements made in the absence of complete data; and

h. the ability to communicate the results of the programme of research as demonstrated in the style and overall presentation of the thesis;

i. the ability to defend the thesis orally to the satisfaction of the examiners.

Requirements for MPhil

12.6 Achievement of an MPhil is assessed by the examination of the candidate's thesis and performance under oral examination.

12.7 In judging the merit of a thesis submitted for an MPhil, the examiners shall bear in mind the standard and scope of work which it is reasonable to expect a capable and diligent student to present after the period of registered full-time or part-time study.

12.8 Assessment is based on the candidate successfully demonstrating achievement of an appropriate combination of the following criteria which are aligned to the descriptors for level 7 qualifications in the FHEQ:

a. a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;

b. a comprehensive understanding of methods and techniques applicable to the research or advanced scholarship;

c. originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;

d. conceptual understanding that enables the critical evaluation of current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and the evaluation of methodologies, the development of critiques of them and, where appropriate, the proposal of new hypotheses;

e. the ability to evaluate and criticise received opinion;

f. the ability to make reasoned judgements whilst understanding the limitations on judgements made in the absence of complete data;

g. the ability to communicate the results of the programme of research as demonstrated in the style and overall presentation of the thesis;

h. the ability to defend the thesis orally to the satisfaction of the examiners.

Requirements for professional doctorates

12.9 Achievement of professional doctorate awards is assessed examination of the candidate's phase two assessment and performance under oral examination.

12.10 Professional doctorate courses are assessed in English, except where permission has been given for the phase two assessment and oral examination to be in another language.

12.11 Permission to present assessment in a language other than English is only given if the subject matter of the assessment involves language and related studies.

12.12 Professional doctorate awards are assessed against the learning outcomes set out in the approved course specification, which are aligned to the descriptors for level 8 awards in the FHEQ.

12.13 Copies of the phase one assessment will be sent to the examiners for reference purposes only. Examiners should not re-assess phase one assessment.

Explanatory note

- Requirements for thesis submission, including format of the thesis, are set out in QHS 11A.

13. Complaints and appeals

There are independent and formal procedures in place for dealing with research degree complaints and appeals.

Requirements

13.1 A student may make a representation about decisions made in relation to their progress or an examination decision in accordance with the research degrees appeals procedure as set out in QH Section 17F.

13.2 Research degrees complaints are managed via the University's Complaints Procedure for Students as set out in QH Section 17E.

13.3 Where, on receipt and investigation of an appeal, it appears that the matter can, in the interests of the student, be better dealt with via the University's Complaints Procedure for Students, it will be transferred to that procedure and the student will be informed of the transfer.

13.4 Where only part of the matters raised within an appeal are transferred to the complaints procedure, the appeal will be put on hold pending the outcome of the complaint investigation. The student will be informed and made aware of the change in time limits for dealing with the appeal.

13.5 Complaints and appeals from students at collaborative partners are managed in accordance with the processes set out in QH Section 10.

14. Student engagement

A range of formal and informal opportunities are defined and promoted, by which any student can engage in educational enhancement and quality assurance activities. In this way, students and staff at the University work together to assure and enhance the quality of the student academic experience on research degrees.

Requirements

14.1 Research degree students are represented in discussions, at all levels of the University, regarding the strategic development of any aspect of the student experience.

14.2 Research degree governance committees provide for student membership, including:

   a. University Research Degrees Committee;

   b. College Research Degrees Committees;

   c. Professional doctorate course committees.

14.3 The Doctoral School operates a School Forum termly throughout the academic year. Terms of reference are provided in QHS 8C.

14.4 All dates, times and locations of Doctoral School Forums, for the coming year, are published on the NTU Online Workspace (NOW) at the start of the academic year.

14.5 Minutes of Doctoral School Forums are circulated to all research degree students, to CRDCs, course committees and to URDC.

14.6 Research degrees students are actively engaged in quality assurance in the following ways:

   a. representatives on relevant committee meetings;

   b. Development and Approval Groups for professional doctorate courses;

   c. Periodic Research Degrees Review.

14.7 The University considers research degree student evaluation to be central to its student engagement and quality enhancement agenda.

14.8 Biennially, research degree students participate in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The results of PRES are shared with students, and are used in course monitoring and reporting to inform enhancement activity.

14.9 Additionally, for professional doctorate courses, student evaluation of modules is conducted, the results of which are used to enhance the student experience.

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Explanatory notes

- The University's policy for student engagement is set out in QH Section 8.

Policy owner

CADQ

Change history			
Version:	*Approval date:*	*Implementation date:*	*Nature of significant revisions:*
Sept 2016	13.07.16 (URDC)	01.10.16	Admissions criteria for PhD/MPhil – added a requirement of a master's degree at Merit level for applicants with a lower second class honours degree. The PhD by Published Work is now open to candidates who are not employed by the University. Professional Doctorates are no longer subject to the NEC procedure, academic appeals and academic irregularities policy.

Equality Impact Assessment		
Version:	*EIA date:*	*Completed by:*
Sept 2015	26.10.2015	CADQ