



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Version:	2.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	14 September 2022
Next review:	September 2026

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION	2
1. DEFINITION OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES.....	2
2. STRUCTURE	3
3. AUTHORITY TO AWARD	3
4. PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES.....	4
5. EXTERNALLY FUNDED STUDENTS.....	4
6. EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF STUDENTS	4

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The University of Chester is committed to excellence in research and actively welcomes applications from high calibre graduates who wish to make contributions to the advancement of knowledge through the completion of a postgraduate research degree. The University aims to provide an academically rigorous and supportive environment, within which students can learn about research and where they are given opportunities to advance their own knowledge and understanding and that of the scholarly communities to which they belong.

The purpose of this Handbook is to set out the University's requirements and expectations for the organisation, management and assessment of postgraduate research degrees. The University recognises that the journey towards the achievement of a postgraduate research degree will be unique to each student. The contents of this Handbook are intended to provide a structure within which the individual nature of each student's research is recognised and accommodated wherever possible. However, all staff and students of the University should regard the requirements set out in this handbook as minima which must be adhered to.

1. Definition of Postgraduate Research Degrees

- 1.1. The University of Chester offers a number of programmes under the broad heading of 'postgraduate research degree'. Commonly, all of the programmes given this designation are comprised of study recognised as being at Level 7 (for Masters programmes) or Level 8 (for doctoral programmes) of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and where the majority of the programme consists in the student undertaking a significant and sustained piece of independent research. Therefore, the following programmes shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook:
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
 - Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works (PhD)
 - Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf)
 - Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
 - Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
 - Doctor of Education (EdD)
 - Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)
 - Doctor of Medicine (MD)
 - Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
 - Master of Professional Studies (MProf)
- 1.2. The Master of Professional Studies award is an exit award only.
- 1.3. The Master by Research is a postgraduate research degree programme, however due to the structure of that programme it is governed by the assessment requirements set out in Handbook F.

- 1.3.1. Notwithstanding 1.3., the evaluation and review of Master by Research Programmes which will be conducted in accordance with section 12 of this Handbook.

2. Structure

- 2.1. The University may confer a postgraduate research degree upon candidates who have satisfied their examiners that they have reached the standard required following the submission of:
 - 2.1.1 A thesis embodying the results of original research; or
 - 2.1.2 A collection of published papers, together with a critical review relating to the work described in the papers; or
 - 2.1.3 A published book or books, together with a critical review relating to that research; or
 - 2.1.4 A body of artistic work, evidencing research methodology affording new insights, together with a thesis which places that work within an academic context.
- 2.2. The nature and form of the submission required for these degrees is outlined in section 6 of this Handbook.

3. Authority to Award

- 3.1. Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated, in line with the FHEQ qualification descriptor for doctoral degrees:
 - 3.1.1. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
 - 3.1.2. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
 - 3.1.3. 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;
 - 3.1.4. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry

- 3.2. Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated, in line with the FHEQ qualification descriptor for master's degrees:
- 3.2.1. A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
 - 3.2.2. A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
 - 3.2.3. Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
 - 3.2.4. Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - 3.2.4.1. To evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
 - 3.2.4.2. To evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

4. Professional Doctorates

- 4.1. Programmes leading to the award of a Professional Doctorate or Master of Professional Studies consist in credit rated modules. Each module intended for delivery on such programmes must carry the designation of either 'taught' or 'research'. For the purposes of assessment only, those modules designated as 'taught' shall be governed by the University's regulations for taught postgraduate modules (see Handbook F), whilst those designated as 'research' shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook. Arrangements for admission and supervision of students admitted to one of these programmes shall be governed by the requirements set out in this Handbook.

5. Externally Funded Students

- 5.1. Students who are in receipt of external funding (e.g. from a private business, foreign government or a member of Research Councils UK etc.) are responsible for complying with the terms set out by their funding body.

6. Expectations and Requirements of Students

- 6.1. Students registered on programmes leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree shall enjoy all of the entitlements and be subject to all of the expectations set out in section A6.9 of the Principles and Regulations.

In addition, they are required to:

- 6.1.1. Complete registration on or around one of the commencement dates recognised by the University in this Handbook and then re-register annually.
- 6.1.2. Pay the appropriate fee for the programme for which they are registered.
- 6.1.3. Attend, and keep records of, formal supervision meetings with the Principal Supervisor at least once per month if full-time and at least once per two months if part-time.
- 6.1.4. Attend, and keep records of, formal supervision meetings with their full supervisory team at least twice per year.
- 6.1.5. Complete Annual Progress Monitoring in accordance with the procedures set out in this Handbook in every year of their registration.
- 6.1.6. As far as possible, adhere to the following:
 - 6.1.6.1. Full-time students: conduct work relating to their studies for a minimum of 35 hours per week over 46 weeks of the year.
 - 6.1.6.2. Part-time students: conduct work relating to their studies for a minimum of 16 hours per week over 46 weeks of the year.
- 6.1.7. At reasonable notice, make themselves available to attend one of the campuses of the University of Chester or, if registered via a partner institution, any other recognised premises for the purposes of supervisory meetings, assessment of progress or other meetings required to enable the delivery of their programme of study. This will normally entail a student needing to make themselves available on at least 30 days per annum if full-time or at least 15 days per annum if part-time.



Quality and Standards Manual

Organisational Roles and Responsibilities Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	January 2023
Next review:	January 2027

CONTENTS

SECTION 2: ORGANISATIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	3
1. Faculties and departments	3
2. Individual Role Holders.....	4
3. Postgraduate Research Degrees Forum	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee	4
5. University's Awards Assessment Board	4

SECTION 2: ORGANISATIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The organisation and management of postgraduate research degrees is undertaken in partnership between the Faculties and their departments, and the central administrative services of the University. The Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee (on behalf of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee) has oversight of the policies and the quality assurance arrangements pertaining to the management of Postgraduate Research Degree programmes.

1. Faculties and departments

- 1.1. Each Faculty has responsibility for ensuring a viable research environment for the students it admits. Each Faculty must also ensure that its academic staff with responsibility for matters relating postgraduate research programmes are able to discharge their duties as required by this Handbook. At the discretion of the Faculty Dean, appropriate responsibilities may be devolved to individual departments. For the purposes of this section, the term 'Faculty' will be used to include those responsibilities which have been so devolved.

The University expects that each Faculty will:

- 1.1.1. Adhere to the minimum admissions requirements and processes outlined in this Handbook and, in all cases, only admit students to postgraduate research programmes in departments where it has assured itself that there exists an appropriate environment for learning about and conducting research.
- 1.1.2. Admit students to postgraduate research programmes in departments only where it has assured itself that there exists appropriate expertise and capacity to supervise students to a successful outcome.
- 1.1.3. At the point of admission, identify the members of each student's supervisory team and their individual roles and ensure that this is specifically communicated to the student.
- 1.1.4. Ensure that it has in place an induction schedule to coincide with each formal admission period covering, as a minimum:
 - 1.1.4.1. An explanation of the supervision arrangements and process by which satisfactory progress is evaluated.

- 1.1.4.2. Details of the opportunities available to engage with other research students and staff, both from within their specific research field and externally.
 - 1.1.4.3. Details of training, both formal and informal, that students may avail themselves of to develop scholarly competence and independent thought appropriate to their research field.
 - 1.1.5. Ensure an appropriate allocation of resources sufficient enough to support the facilities, resources, support and training required to supervise students to a successful outcome.
 - 1.1.6. Ensure the maintenance and promotion of a scholarly environment conducive to learning about and conducting research within the Faculty and more broadly across the University. This may be achieved by, *inter alia*, nominating members of academic staff who actively contribute to training events, workshops and conferences for students and academic staff.
 - 1.1.7. Ensure that students registered on a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree have access to mechanisms for seeking ethical approval for their research in accordance with Section 9 of this Handbook.
 - 1.1.8. Liaise with the administrative services of the University to ensure the smooth and timely operation of the procedures set out in this Handbook.
 - 1.2. Each Faculty Dean must nominate normally one, but no more than two, members of academic staff of sufficient standing to the role of Senior Faculty PGR Tutor. The responsibilities of this role are described in each section of this Handbook.
 - 1.3. Each Faculty must ensure that it is adequately represented at the committees and fora that the University establishes for the oversight and management of programmes leading to the award of postgraduate research degrees. The Senior Faculty PGR Tutor will normally represent the Faculty at:
 - 1.3.1. Meetings of the Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee
 - 1.3.2. Meetings of the University's Awards Assessment Board
 - 1.4. Where someone other than the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor is nominated to represent the Faculty at one of the meetings outlined in 1.3., the alternate so nominated must appear in the Accredited PGR Supervisor List.
 - 1.5. The Faculty must nominate members of academic staff of sufficient standing to conduct independent progress assessments for students registered on programmes leading to the

award of a postgraduate research degree, in accordance with the requirements set out in Section 5 of this Handbook. The names of these nominees must be forwarded to Registry Services for inclusion on the list of Independent Assessors.

- 1.6. The Faculty must nominate members of academic staff who will act as an independent point of contact for students registered on programmes leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree. Wherever possible, each Faculty should ensure a sufficient number of academic staff to undertake this responsibility so as to ensure that students can raise academic or pastoral concerns independent of their Supervisory Team.

2. Individual Role Holders

- 2.1. Throughout this Handbook a number of processes are described which require the active participation of the following at various stages:
 - 2.1.1. The Head of Department
 - 2.1.2. The Senior Faculty PGR Tutor
 - 2.1.3. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
- 2.2. Where these role holders are unavailable to act, either through incapacity or conflict of interest, other members of staff of equal or greater seniority may act in their place.

3. Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee

- 3.1. On behalf of Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, the Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee has oversight of policies, procedures and quality management matters pertaining to postgraduate research programmes. The Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee has a broad remit that covers research postgraduate programmes and research regulated elements of taught postgraduate programmes.

The Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee is chaired by the nominee of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

4. University's Awards Assessment Board

- 4.1. On behalf of Senate, the University's Awards Assessment Board determines the eligibility of students registered for a postgraduate research degree to continue with their programme of study and considers the recommendations of the examiners in respect of candidates who have completed their programme of study.
- 4.2. In respect of students registered on programmes leading to the award of a professional doctorate:

- 4.2.1 Where the examiners confirm that the student, has successfully completed the taught phase, their eligibility to progress to the research phase shall be formally reported to the University's Awards Assessment Board.
- 4.2.2 Where the student indicates that they do not intend to proceed to the thesis stage, their eligibility for the award of the degree of Master of Professional Studies shall be considered by the Awards Assessment Board with responsibility for taught provision.
- 4.2.3 Where the examiners indicate that the student, having submitted a thesis for examination, has not met the standard required for the award of a professional doctoral degree, the student's eligibility for a lesser award shall be considered by the Awards Assessment Board with responsibility for taught provision.
- 4.3 The University's Awards Assessment Board shall meet as often as is required to ensure the timely conduct of business and shall be constituted as follows:
- 4.3.1 Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) or Dean or Associate Dean of Faculty (Chair)
- 4.3.2 Nominee(s) of each Faculty
- 4.3.3 Head of Academic Quality and Standards
- The University's Awards Assessment Board shall be attended by:
- 4.3.4 Deputy Registrar and Head of Student Administration (or nominee)
- 4.3.5 Representative of Academic Services
- 4.4 The University's Awards Assessment Board shall be deemed quorate when the Chair and representatives of the Faculties from which the candidates under consideration for award are registered, are present.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Admissions and Induction

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	August 2023
Next review:	September 2027

CONTENTS

Contents

CONTENTS	2
SECTION 3: ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION	3
1. Selection and Admission	3
2. Registration and enrolment	6
3. Induction.....	6
<i>Faculty induction</i>	7
<i>Researcher Development Plan</i>	7

SECTION 3: ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION

Each Faculty is responsible for the selection and admission of suitably qualified students onto the University's Postgraduate Research Degree programmes. The primary criterion for admission is academic capability, with considerations as to supervisory expertise and capacity and the availability of physical resources following after. Admissions decisions will also have due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. Faculties have responsibility for adhering to the minimum requirements for admission set out in this Section.

In respect of the induction arrangements, the overarching aim is to ensure that students are clearly aware of their responsibilities and entitlements from the outset, to enable them to commence productive study and research as quickly as possible.

1. Selection and Admission

- 1.1. Students may be admitted onto one of the programmes leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree listed in Section 1 of this Handbook.
- 1.2. The full application and admissions procedure is set out in Handbook E of the Quality and Standard Manual. This Section is intended to set out the principles that must be adhered to when following the application and admissions procedure.
- 1.3. The Department of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions will make available details of the application process to be followed by prospective postgraduate research students.
- 1.4. The relevant Head of Department should normally be responsible for considering the initial application file and making a *prima facie* decision on whether the application should proceed. Such a decision may be made after consultation with appropriate members of staff.
- 1.5. Where the decision is not to proceed with the application, the Head of Department will advise the Department of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions and provide a reason.
- 1.6. In every case where the decision is to proceed with an application, each applicant must be interviewed. The Interview Panel should normally be constituted as follows:

- 1.6.1. The Head of Department (or nominee) who will serve as Chair (the nominee may not be a member of the prospective supervisory team and must be named on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List)
 - 1.6.2. The prospective Principal Supervisor
 - 1.6.3. Other members of the prospective supervisory team
- 1.7. The University sets minimum criteria which students must meet in order to be deemed eligible for admission:
- 1.7.1. Evidence of appropriate qualifications and preparedness
 - 1.7.1.1. (for all Doctoral and MPhil programmes) The applicant has obtained, or expects to obtain, at least an upper second class honours degree or a lower second class degree with a Master's degree. First and/or second degrees should be in a discipline that is congruent with their intended area of research.
 - 1.7.1.2. (in lieu of 1.7.1.1.) In some instances, evidence of substantial prior research or professional experience may be acceptable.
 - 1.7.1.3. Where the applicant's first language is not English, to provide evidence of English language proficiency at a level commensurate with study at Level 8 (a minimum of IELTS 6.5 and a minimum of 5.5 in all categories).
 - 1.7.1.4. The applicant shows evidence of appropriate engagement with the proposed area of research via a completed application form and at interview.
 - 1.7.2. Availability of appropriate supervisory expertise
 - 1.7.2.1. There exists, within the University, members of academic staff with appropriate subject knowledge, research expertise and experience of supervision who are able to form a Supervisory Team.
 - 1.7.3. Viability of research topic
 - 1.7.3.1. A detailed project proposal may be produced by the supervisor or student associated with funding applications in advance of the application.
 - 1.7.3.2. In the absence of a detailed project proposal, the student must show evidence, on the application form and/or at interview, that they have a

realistic prospect of developing a detailed project proposal within a reasonable amount of time following their registration.

1.7.4. Availability of a suitable research environment

1.7.4.1. It is reasonable to anticipate that the Faculty/department will be able to provide access to the resources that the student is likely to require in order to complete their research.

1.7.4.2. There exists, within the University, appropriate expertise for learning and research tools which the student will have access to.

1.7.4.3. There exists, within the University, opportunities to exchange and develop ideas with people, at appropriate levels, who are also engaged in doing and learning about research and to develop peer support networks.

1.8. In addition to the criteria at 1.7., each Faculty may determine its own academic criteria which applicants must meet in order to be deemed eligible for admission.

1.9. Prior to making a formal offer, the Department of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions must receive confirmation from the relevant Head of Department that the applicant, as a minimum, meets the criteria outlined at 1.7.

1.10. Where the criteria outlined at 1.7. has not been met, but the relevant Head of Department (or nominee) nevertheless wish to make an offer, an appropriate justification must be made to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) who will make the final decision.

1.11. Following admission, only the following transfers of registration will be permitted:

1.11.1. From MPhil to PhD (and vice versa), following consideration at the Independent Progress Assessment Panel.

1.11.2. From a Professional Doctorate to MProf where the candidate has indicated that they do not wish to proceed to the thesis stage after completion of the taught modules.

- 1.12. The University does not permit transfers between MRes and PhD. Notwithstanding this, applications for admittance to a PhD programme from applicants who have successfully completed an MRes are welcome.
- 1.13. When an offer of registration is made to a student, in every case, it is done so on the basis that the University will provide appropriate supervision consistent with Section 4 of this Handbook. However, the University does not guarantee the continued availability of named supervisors and the acceptance of an offer may not be contingent on such continued availability.

2. Registration and enrolment

- 2.1. The Department of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions will outline the steps that are required of applicants who wish to accept a formal offer. Details will be provided in a letter outlining the University's offer.
- 2.2. In subsequent years, following the acceptance of an offer, students admitted must re-enrol on an annual basis. Registry Services will contact students with details of how to complete the enrolment process. Students who fail to enrol as required may, with due warning, be withdrawn from their programme.
- 2.3. Students admitted to a postgraduate research programme will normally only be eligible to register for commencement of the programme on one of the following dates annually:
 - 2.3.1. 1st October
 - 2.3.2. 1st February
 - 2.3.3. 1st May
- 2.4. Calculations of time limits to the completion of Annual Progress Monitoring, submission and maximum registration period will be made relative to the start date recognised by the University in 2.3.

3. Induction

- 3.1 The induction of new students registered for a programme leading to the award of a

postgraduate research degree will be the joint responsibility of each Faculty and Academic Services.

- 3.2 Attendance at the Faculty induction will be compulsory for all newly registered students and should normally take place within one month of the commencement date recognised by the University in 2.4. Students should confirm their attendance at Faculty induction in their first Annual Progress Report.
- 3.3 Attendance at the University orientation will be optional. There will be a minimum of three University orientation sessions per year the dates of which will correspond with the commencement dates recognised by the University in 2.3.

Faculty induction

- 3.4 The Principal Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring an appropriate Faculty/departmental level induction for newly registered postgraduate research students.
- 3.5 As a minimum, the Faculty induction will include:
 - 3.5.1 A tour of the Faculty/department facilities and resources available to the student;
 - 3.5.2 A tour of the Faculty/department's home campus (if the student is unfamiliar with it);
 - 3.5.3 The allocation of office and/or laboratory space where appropriate;
 - 3.5.4 A health and safety briefing;
 - 3.5.5 Information on access to buildings and resources;
 - 3.5.6 Introductions to key staff (including the Faculty Postgraduate Tutor);
 - 3.5.7 Introductions to other postgraduate research students in the Faculty/department;
 - 3.5.8 An explanation of, and agreement on the timescale for completion of the Researcher Development Plan;
 - 3.5.9 Reference to the entitlements and responsibilities that the student has as described in this Handbook.

Researcher Development Plan

- 3.6 The University does not specify any formal training requirements for students registered for programmes leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree. However, it does expect that students will work with their supervisors to audit their existing skills, identify any areas requiring development and put in place an appropriate action plan.

- 3.7 For this purpose, within the first three months of registration for a full-time student and within the first six months of registration for a part-time student, the University expects that they will complete a Researcher Development Plan.

- 3.8 Thereafter, the Researcher Development Plan should be updated annually and be considered during the Annual Progress Monitoring process.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

PGR Registration Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Registry Services
Contact:	S.nelson@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Registration and Submission Time Limits	3
3. Periods of Leave	4
4. Suspension of Studies	5
5. Extension of Submission and Registration Period	7
6. Transfer to Submission Pending	8
7. Transfer to Resubmission Pending	9
8. Changes to Mode of Attendance.....	9
9. Withdrawal and Termination of Studies.....	10

1. Purpose

1.1 After a postgraduate research (PGR) Student has registered for an award, they have a maximum and a minimum time to achieve that award. This policy states the registration, submission, withdrawal, and termination processes for the following degrees:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf)
- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)

For registration to PhD by Publication see **PhD by Publication Policy**.

2. Registration and Submission Time Limits

2.1 The minimum submission period, excluding periods of suspension, must be completed before the thesis can be submitted.

2.2 The maximum period of registration is the total time allowed to complete the programme and for the award to be made. It includes periods of suspension, extension, writing up (submission pending) and resubmission.

2.3 The maximum submission period, excluding periods of suspension, is the final deadline for submitting the thesis for examination.

2.4 Figure 1: Table of time limits

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Mode of attendance</i>	<i>Minimum submission period</i>	<i>Maximum submission period</i>	<i>Maximum registration period</i>
PhD	Full time	2 years	4 years	10 years
	Part time	4 years	7 years	10 years
MPhil	Full time	1 year	4 years	8 years
	Part time	2 years	6 years	8 years
Professional Doctorate	Full time	2 years	4 years	10 years
	Part time	4 years	7 years	10 years

2.5 Students admitted to professional doctorate programmes with Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning will have their maximum submission period adjusted. Adjustments will amount to whole years at the rate of 90 credits equivalent to 1 year of part-time study (or 180 credits of full-time study). The minimum submission period will also normally be adjusted to the same extent.

2.6 Postgraduate Research students who enter with Advanced Standing will have their registration and submission periods adjusted accordingly. This is stated in the offer letter.

3. Periods of Leave

3.1 Students must speak with their Principal Supervisor about any period of holiday they intend to take during their studies. Students must carefully consider the timing of such absences to reduce the impact on their studies.

3.2 Students must let their Principal Supervisor know about any period of sickness likely to impact on agreed meetings, deadlines or progress. Students experiencing prolonged or recurrent periods of absence due to ill health can speak with their Principal Supervisor to see if a suspension of studies is appropriate.

3.3 Students on a student visa must comply with the requirements of their visa and the procedures set out by the University's Legal and Compliance Service in respect of absences from their programme must be followed.

3.4 Students and Principal Supervisors must consider the requirements of individual funding bodies when considering periods of leave.

3.5 Time taken as holiday leave or sick leave will not result in an extension to the student's registration period or submission periods. Significant periods of absence due to illness can be dealt with through suspension of studies.

4. Suspension of Studies

4.1 If a student is unable to either carry out or write up their research, they can apply for suspension of studies. A suspension of studies is time away from the programme of research; the minimum and maximum submission period is lengthened by the equivalent period of the suspension.

4.2 The student completes the [Application for Suspension of Studies](#) form with supporting evidence and submits it to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

4.3 A suspension of studies is not granted if it would cause the maximum period of registration to be exceeded unless an exceptional extension (see 5.4) is granted.

4.4 A suspension of studies is granted in whole months only, normally to a maximum of one year. Requests which are approved but do not follow this convention will have the start/ end dates revised by Registry Services and this is confirmed via email to the student.

4.5 Back dated suspensions are only permitted in exceptional circumstances and for reasonable periods of time. They are unlikely to be approved unless the student

supplies evidence that shows a good reason why the suspension was not applied when the issue(s) commenced. Backdated suspensions can be rejected if funding or visa issues have not been appropriately considered.

4.6 Following approval, Registry Services confirms the start and end dates of the period of suspension to the student, plus the revised date for submission (the maximum submission period).

4.7 The evolving nature of research can mean that substantial periods of suspension can be detrimental to the long term viability of the research project and is taken into account when considering repeat requests for suspension of studies.

4.8 Student visa holders must note that the University must report the suspension of studies to the Home Office who will curtail the visa, requiring the individual to leave the UK. It is the responsibility of the student concerned to make an application for a new visa before the end of the period of suspension.

4.9 During suspension of studies, the student will not accrue fees but can continue to be liable for fees already accrued.

4.10 During suspension of studies the student must not:

- represent themselves as being a student of the University of Chester;
- collect any data for their research;
- conduct any experimental work for their research;
- seek access to resources and facilities, other than the student email account, that the University normally makes available to students;
- seek access to supervision;
- begin or continue the writing up of their thesis.

4.11 If the University finds out about a suspected breach of clause 4.10, it will report this to the Head of Department who can report this to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel.

4.12 Before the expected resumption date, Registry Services emails the student to confirm the date on which their studies will resume. Registry also confirms, via email any outstanding actions in respect of Annual Progress Monitoring. Students who fail to return from their suspension of studies can, with due warning, be withdrawn from their programme.

5. Extension of Submission and Registration Period

5.1 The Student can apply for an extension to their final date for submission of thesis (maximum submission period) if the extension does not cause the student to exceed the maximum period of registration permitted.

5.2 An application for extension of submission period must be made on the [Application for Extension of Submission Period](#) with supporting evidence and submitted to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

5.2 The [Application for Extension of Submission Period](#) must explain why the student has been unable to complete within the maximum submission period.

5.4 A student is normally allowed one extension only and for a maximum of 12 months. Extensions will be granted in whole months only. The Associate Dean for PGR Studies and the Head of Department (or nominee) must approve applications for an extension of more than 12 months, for the continuance of an extension, and for an exceptional extension, of not more than 12 months, to the maximum registration period. The Associate Dean for PGR Studies will consult with Deputy Registrar.

5.5 If an application for extension of submission period is approved, Registry Services emails the student to confirm the revised submission deadline.

5.6 The Principal Supervisor is reminded that extensions negatively affect the University's completion rates. The Principal Supervisor must try to ensure that the student can submit within the maximum submission period; applications for

extensions must be exceptional.

6. Transfer to Submission Pending

6.1 Submission Pending is a registration status which acknowledges the student has completed their data collection, investigations and experimental work and is writing up their research. The submission pending status attracts a reduced programme fee as the student requires fewer resources and facilities.

6.2 A student can apply for submission pending status when they have:

- completed their data collection, investigations and experimental work;
- are writing up their thesis;
- completed three years of study for full time students or five years or study for part time students;
- all the main chapters or sections of the thesis in satisfactory draft form with clear and realistic plans for revision for submission.

6.3 The Principal Supervisor and the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor decide whether the student can transfer to submission pending status.

6.4 Submission pending status is granted for a maximum of 1 year, irrespective of the student's original mode of study. Students who do not submit their thesis for examination within the one year period are transferred to their original mode of attendance (e.g. full time) and will thereafter be charged the fees associated with their original mode of attendance.

6.5 If the application to submission pending status is approved, students will lose:

- normally, access to departmental research resources to support the investigative stages of the research project;
- coverage under the University's insurance for activities associated with conducting research.

6.6 A student applies for submission pending status by submitting the [Change to Submission Pending](#) form to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

7. Transfer to Resubmission Pending

7.1 Students given a resubmission recommendation at their first viva examination are transferred to the registration status of 'Resubmission Pending.' The fee is the same as Submission Pending.

8. Changes to Mode of Attendance

8.1 Students are admitted on either full-time or part-time mode of attendance. Students can apply to change their mode of attendance if they can demonstrate good reasons.

8.2 Delays to the research project that could reasonably have been foreseen and mitigated against are not normally accepted as good reasons for changing the mode of attendance. It can be more appropriate for the student to apply for a suspension of studies or extension of submission or registration period.

8.3 A student applies for a change to their mode of attendance by submitting the [Change of Mode of Attendance](#) form to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

8.4 If the change of mode of attendance is approved, Registry Services will calculate a new minimum submission period and a new maximum submission period, by determining the percentage of time the student had been registered on the programme; this percentage is then applied to the new mode of attendance, thereby ensuring the student receives the equivalent amount of remaining time based on their new mode of attendance. Calculations are based on date of registration on the central student records system and are done in whole months.

9. Withdrawal and Termination of Studies

9.1 Students can withdraw from their programme, known as voluntary withdrawal, at any time by writing to or emailing Registry Services.

9.2 Students who voluntarily withdraw are entitled to a pro-rata reimbursement of tuition fees paid for the year in which their registration is withdrawn. Research support fees (bench fees) are not reimbursed.

9.3 Students who voluntarily withdraw can be allowed to resume the same programme of research following an assessment by the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, to determine the validity and currency of the programme. Students reinstated in this way are treated as though they have been on a period of suspension and do not benefit from additional time following reinstatement. If a student has exceeded, or is close to exceeding, their maximum submission period (minus the period of suspension) or maximum period of registration (including the period of suspension) they must not be reinstated. However, the student can reapply for a new programme without advanced standing. Students who are reinstated recommence their studies at the point they left the programme; any progress assessment processes ongoing at the point of withdrawal will recommence at the same point in the process. The student's status is the same as at the point they withdrew.

9.4 The University can terminate a student's studies if the student breaches any regulations or policies. A student who wants to appeal against their termination of studies must use [QSM Handbook G11 – PGR Academic Appeals procedure](#).

9.5 Students who have their studies terminated by the University are not entitled to any refund. However, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) can authorise a refund in exceptional circumstances.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Supervision for PGR and Prof Doc Theses Projects Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies & Registry Services
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	23 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Supervision Arrangements.....	3
3. Criteria for Appointment of Supervisors	5
4. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team	7
5. Entitlements and Responsibilities of the Student in relation to Supervision	8
6. Problems with Supervision.....	9

1. Purpose

1.1. Research supervision is an integral part of postgraduate research degree programmes and the success of PGR students is, in part, dependent on the development and maintenance of a constructive and supportive supervisory relationship with appropriately qualified individuals.

2. Supervision Arrangements

2.1. A Student is supervised by:

- A Principal Supervisor, AND
- At least one Secondary Supervisor

who are normally contracted members of staff of the University. Additional Secondary Supervisors employed by an external body are permitted.

2.2 If the Principal Supervisor ceases to be employed by the University, they can remain as the Principal Supervisor if the student is expected to submit their thesis imminently or is at stage 3 of a professional doctorate. This must be approved by the Deputy Registrar, who will consult with the Associate Dean for PGR Studies.

2.3 Unless specifically stated in an individual agreement with a partner institution, one member of the supervisory team must be a member of academic staff employed by the University.

2.4 The Head of Department (or nominee) is responsible for assigning the supervisory team to a PGR student. The Head of Department is also responsible for overseeing the quality of the supervision provided to students, although these responsibilities can be delegated as appropriate.

2.5 Heads of Department can appoint a senior member of staff to mentor the supervisory team.

2.6 When assigning a supervisory team, the Head of Department must take every reasonable step to avoid potential conflicts of interest; this is particularly important if the student is also a member of staff. In these cases, the Head of Department can appoint supervisors from outside of the individual department.

2.7 The [Personal Relationships Policy](#) and the [Staff Code of Conduct](#) apply to the choice of supervisory team. Normally, a student should not have more than 90% of their supervision from supervisors who are related to each other by marriage, civil partnership, blood/law or who are business partners.

2.8 All students must have a Principal Supervisor who is their main point of contact and will normally have the most appropriate expertise in the area of the individual project. Other members of the supervisory team are referred to as Secondary Supervisors.

2.9 No supervisor, Principal or Secondary, can normally undertake the supervision of any more than eight individual research students. The Head of Department is responsible for overseeing the resource allocation of academic staff to supervision and can set a lower maximum number of students supervised by one individual in their department.

2.10 If a Supervisor leaves the University or partner institution and/or is unable to continue their supervision, for whatever reason, the Head of Department (or nominee) appoints a replacement Supervisor. In appointing the replacement Supervisor, the Head of Department must put in place reasonable measures to ensure appropriate continuity of supervision and to minimise the impact of such changes. Students must be told as early as possible if their supervisory team is going to change and must be asked to identify any concerns they have about the continuity of supervision.

2.11 When appointing supervisors, departments must indicate the level of each Supervisor's respective input into the student's supervision which is recorded in the central student records system. For example, where two supervisors have an equal input, this would be recorded as a ratio of 50:50. Alternatively, where the Principal

Supervisor might contribute the majority input into the supervision, and the Secondary Supervisor might play a largely pastoral role, this is reflected in the percentage split. A Supervisor must have an input of at least ten per cent. The Principal Supervisor normally has the largest percentage of supervisory input; this must be at least forty percent. If the supervisory team consists of two Supervisors, the Principal Supervisor's input is at least fifty percent. The proportion of supervisory input by a student's Principal and Secondary Supervisor can change over time, especially if one Supervisor leaves or cannot continue to supervise for any reason.

3. Criteria for Appointment of Supervisors

3.1 The University sets minimum essential eligibility criteria that academic staff must meet in order to be considered for approval as a PGR Supervisor. Meeting this criteria does not entitle an individual to act as a supervisor.

3.2 Individual academic departments can set higher eligibility criteria, such as requiring greater experience or higher qualifications.

3.3 The criteria for appointing a Principal Supervisor are:

- normally, a qualification at Doctoral level or, alternatively, at least to Master's level where the Master's has a demonstrable piece of independent research associated with its award;
- previous supervisory experience;
- experience of supervising research projects at Level 7 (or above);
- the individual is a subject specialist and currently research active, with a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or has active involvement in on-going projects, OR;
- the individual is an expert practitioner with ten years or more of professional experience in a relevant field, holds an appropriate senior position, and is involved in on-going research projects.

3.4. The criteria for appointing a Secondary Supervisor are:

- the individual is a subject specialist and currently research active, with a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or has active involvement in on-going projects, OR;
- the individual is an expert practitioner with appropriate professional experience in a relevant field, holds an appropriate senior position, and is involved in on-going research projects.

3.5 All supervisors must take part in professional development, as appropriate in relation to best supervisory practice. All members of staff intending to supervise at the University must complete the online supervisor training before they are appointed to a supervisory team. Additionally, all appointed supervisors must complete this online training at least every three years.

3.7 Registry Services maintains the Accredited PGR Supervisor List. Staff who wish to be designated as supervisors can apply to their Head of Department by sending a copy of their full CV and the designated form. The relevant Head of Department must inform Registry Services when a new individual has been approved to act as Supervisor.

3.7.1 The Accredited PGR Supervisor List is submitted to [Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee](#) each year.

3.8 Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee is responsible for reviewing the criteria for the appointment of supervisors.

3.9 If a Supervisor persistently fails to meet the responsibilities of supervisors set out in this policy, the Head of Department can recommend that they be removed from the Accredited PGR Supervisor List. This recommendation is made to the Dean of the Faculty, who has the final decision.

4. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team

[Guidance on the Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor, Secondary Supervisor\(s\), and the Supervisory Team](#) is available. The key responsibilities are listed below.

4.1 All Supervisors are responsible for:

- establishing a professional and supportive relationship with their student(s), including encouraging students to engage in the wider national and international research community;
- setting expectations with the student (e.g. frequency of meetings, submission of drafts, feedback, etc) (the **Supervisor-Student Supervisory Arrangement** template can help with this);
- contributing to the development of the three month project plan (or six months for part time students);
- reading and keeping up to date with University regulations and policies relating to PGR supervision;
- recording any concerns they have, particularly during any formal process for evaluating a student's academic progress;
- advising on both academic and pastoral issues, including pointing students to relevant University student services;
- not engaging in any activity which could compromise the independence of the viva examination;
- advising students on the processes for requesting a change in registration, particularly in relation to a suspension of studies if the students' personal, financial or health circumstances prevent them from continuing on their programme temporarily;
- processing administrative requests (e.g. change in registration or suspension of studies) in a timely fashion and explaining the implications

4.2 The Principal Supervisor is responsible for:

- taking a lead within any supervisory team in advising students on the University's regulations and policies relating to supervision and the research process;

- providing guidance about the planning of the research project;
- ensuring that the student receives an appropriate induction;
- undertaking a skills audit with the student at the start of their programme to identify an appropriate skills training programme;
- ensuring that the student meets all ethical research requirements and making them aware of the [Research Governance Handbook](#);
- monitoring a student's progress and notifying them of any areas for improvement, or development through constructive and timely feedback;
- meeting regularly with their student and keeping a formal record of these meetings;
- participating in monitoring and review process of the student;
- ensuring that Head of Department and Senior Faculty PGR Tutors are kept informed of any significant changes to the project or of any significant problems encountered;
- taking the lead in nominating Examiners for approval;
- preparing the student for the viva examination.

4.3 Secondary Supervisors are responsible for:

- providing general support as required to the student and the Principal Supervisor. Depending on the proportion of supervision provided to the student by the Secondary Supervisor, their role may be more academic (i.e. the greater the percentage, the more supervision provided), or more pastoral.

5. Entitlements and Responsibilities of the Student in relation to Supervision

5.1 The Student is entitled to a high quality of research supervision, through the allocation of appropriately qualified staff and exposure to the wider internal and external research environment.

5.2 [Guidance on the Responsibilities of the Students in Relation to Supervision](#) is available. The key responsibilities are:

- reading and keeping up to date with University regulations and policies relating to PGR supervision;
- setting expectations with the supervisory team (e.g. frequency of meetings, submission of drafts, feedback, etc) (the **Supervisor-Student Supervisory Arrangement [link]** template can help with this);
- developing the three month project plan (or six months for part time students);
- identifying and undertaking appropriate research skills training;
- being aware of the University's academic and support services available to students;
- attend supervisory meetings and keep a written record of these;
- engaging in monitoring and review processes;
- working independently on their research and writing their thesis, including meeting objectives and deadlines.

6. Problems with Supervision

6.1 If a Student wants to raise concerns about their supervision, in the first instance they should raise the issue with the Supervisor(s) themselves. If the Student feels unable to do this, they can contact the Head of Department or the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor. If the matter is not resolved, the student can use the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). If the student is unhappy about the conduct of Supervisor(s) they can use the [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).

6.2 The Student can raise any concerns they have about supervision during the formal Annual Progress Monitoring process to ensure that their concerns are recorded.

6.3 Supervisors must address any concerns raised by students as quickly as possible.

6.4 If a Supervisor receives a complaint from a student, they must seek advice from Academic Services.



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Annual Progress Monitoring Policy

Version:	4.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	1 February 2023
Next review:	February 2027

CONTENTS

SECTION 5: ANNUAL PROGRESS MONITORING	3
1. General Principles	3
2. Meetings of Students and Supervisors	5
3. Development of the Project Plan	5
4. Schedule for Annual Progress Monitoring	6
5. Independent Assessors	8
6. Annual Progress Reports (APR)	9
7. Independent Progress Assessment Meeting (IPAM)	10
8. Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP)	12
9. Managing Unsatisfactory Academic Progress	15
<i>Identified by the IPAP following an IPAM or during an upgrade IPAP</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Identified by the supervisory team outside of the APM cycle.....</i>	<i>15</i>
10. University PGR Progress Panel.....	16
11. Changes to the Research Project.....	18
12. Appeals Procedure	18

SECTION 5: ANNUAL PROGRESS MONITORING

This section covers the progress of research degree students, engagement with their supervisors and the processes by which their academic progress is monitored and assessed. It also provides procedures for dealing with circumstances where students are not demonstrating satisfactory academic progress.

Annual Progress Monitoring (APM) is the overall system operated by the University to assess research degree students' progress. All students registered on research degrees are subject to the formal Annual Progress Monitoring process which includes independent assessment of their academic progress. The formal record for Annual Progress Monitoring is the Annual Progress Report; a template proforma completed by the student, their Principal Supervisor and the nominated Independent Assessor.

Students are more likely to succeed in their research programme if they engage fully with their supervisory team, attend development training and supervisory meetings as required and plan their work carefully to meet deadlines. Failure to engage appropriately usually results in the student not making satisfactory academic progress. Students are expected to take full ownership and responsibility for their research project and the interactions they have with their supervisors. Failure of students to engage appropriately could lead to termination of studies and, for tier 4 visa holders, this will affect their right to remain in the UK. The responsibility for monitoring student engagement falls to the student's supervisory team.

1. General Principles

- 1.1 The formal assessment of student progress must be undertaken independent of the supervisory team by suitably qualified individuals.
- 1.2 The Annual Progress Monitoring process for each student, as a guide, should not normally extend beyond two months in duration unless further stages in the process are required (such as an extraordinary Independent Progress Assessment Panel or referral to the University Progress Panel).
- 1.3 The Annual Progress Report is the formal record of the Annual Progress Monitoring process and must be completed to a high standard in line with the importance of it. Completed Annual Progress Reports will be held by Registry Services. APRs will not be accepted without handwritten signatures or electronic signature stamps.
- 1.4 The expectations and requirements of students at each stage in their programme are laid out within the relevant faculty APR Guidance Notes, available on Portal. The Guidance Notes stipulate what documents students should expect to provide Independent Assessors as part of the review process. Independent Assessors may request additional documentation at their discretion provided reasonable notice is provided to the student. Failure of a student to provide this documentation may result in an unfavourable progress outcome.
- 1.5 Registry Services will be responsible for prompting the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor, Principal Supervisor and the student that a review under these procedures is due.

- 1.6 The earliest opportunity for MPhil students to be considered for upgrade is in line with 4.3 and 4.4, there is no limit on the timeframe for upgrading but a student may not be upgraded after they have submitted their thesis. Where a student was not upgraded from MPhil to PhD following an Independent Progress Assessment Panel, but wishes to be reconsidered at a later date, they may make a request to their Head of Department and Senior Faculty PGR Tutor for an IPAM to be convened to consider the case. In such circumstances the purpose of the IPAM is to establish if there is reason to suggest the quality of work produced would be deemed in line with the FHEQ descriptors for doctoral programmes (see section 1 of this Handbook) and refer the student to be considered for upgrade by an Independent Progress Assessment Panel.
- 1.7 Registry Services will confirm in writing the outcome of all reviews to students following receipt of a compliant Annual Progress Report.
- 1.8 Students whose studies are suspended at the time an Annual Progress Monitoring activity is due are required to engage in that activity on their return from suspension.
- 1.9 Students registered for the award of PhD may request to be transferred to the target award of MPhil up until the point at which they have submitted their thesis.
- 1.10 It is the responsibility of the student and Principal Supervisor to ensure all relevant documentation is prepared and available for review prior to submitting the APR to the Independent Assessor. Supporting documentation for APM should be in line with APM Guidance Notes produced by the Faculty.
- 1.11 Students registered in a period of resubmission or who have received an extension which takes them past the schedule of APM activities laid out in 4.3 and 4.4, are required to complete an Annual Progress Report for each year they are subsequently registered. The APR will be reviewed remotely by an Independent Assessor in line with part 6.
- 1.12 These procedures relate to Professional Doctorates who have transferred to the research stage of their programme. The schedule for Professional Doctorate students, 4.3 and 4.4, relates to the date of the student's transfer to the research stage.
- 1.13 The student is required to make themselves available for the IPAM/ IPAP with reasonable notice. The default position is that the IPAM/IPAP will take place online, but the meeting may take place in-person if this is deemed appropriate, and with the agreement of the student.
- 1.14 Students who fail to adequately engage with the Annual Progress Monitoring process, including non-submission of an Annual Progress Report, or failure to reasonably agree a date for a meeting in relation to an APM activity, may, with due warning, be withdrawn from their programme.

2. Meetings of Students and Supervisors

- 2.1 All full-time research students are required to meet with their supervisors frequently and at least one supervisory meeting should be recorded each month. It is expected the minimum that part-time students would meet with their supervisors and record this meeting would be every two months, although this could be more frequent should the student and the supervisor agree that this is necessary. Meetings should be formally planned and recorded. There should also be at least one formal meeting with the whole supervisory team per term.
- 2.2 It is expected that, in most cases, students and supervisors will meet more frequently than the minimum requirements set out above and will make some informal record of their meetings. The relationship between the student and the supervisor(s) is critically important to support the student in making satisfactory progress with their research project. Students are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their supervisor(s) and supervisors are required to carry out their supervision duties in accordance with Section 4 of this Handbook.
- 2.3 Students who are required to re-submit their thesis following their initial viva examination are expected to maintain contact with their supervisory team during the period of resubmission.
- 2.4 Students studying at the University in Chester under the Tier 4 points-based immigration system are advised that under UK immigration law, the University acts as their immigration sponsor, and, as such, has a statutory responsibility to monitor their engagement with their research programme, which includes interactions with their supervisor. Should any Tier 4 student cease to engage continuously with their supervisory team and be subsequently deemed withdrawn, the University would be required to report their withdrawal to the UK Visas and Immigration department (UKVI). Under such circumstances, the student would be required to leave the UK.
- 2.5 Students who fail to attend or be in contact with the University (via their supervisory team or other staff as appropriate) as expected for a period of four weeks or more for full time students and six weeks for part time students may be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme. In such circumstances, and following due warning, they be withdrawn from their studies.

3. Development of the Project Plan

- 3.1 All students, in consultation with their supervisors, must prepare a project plan that defines the scope of the project and outlines the objectives to be achieved in the first year. This would normally be undertaken no more than three months after initial registration (or for Professional Doctorate students following transfer to research stage) but part time students may take up to six months, by agreement. This plan should be no more than two sides of A4 and should be signed and dated by the supervisors and the student as an indication that there is clarity by all parties about the project aims. The document should provide a brief description of how the supervision will be conducted such as the frequency of meetings, timing of feedback on drafts and the expectations of both the supervisors and the student. Copies of the project plan should be retained by the student and supervisors.

4. Schedule for Annual Progress Monitoring

- 4.1 The Annual Progress Monitoring process differs for each student each year depending on mode of study and what stage of their research they are at. 4.3 and 4.4 below outlines the different types of progress assessment and the stages at which they are employed. APM is tailored to each individual's student's registration date and therefore the University does not have an APM 'season' as progress assessment takes place throughout the year.
- 4.2 Annual Progress Monitoring can be divided into three distinct activities:
- Review of the Annual Progress Report (APR) undertaken remotely by an Independent Assessor
 - Meeting with an Independent Assessor at an Independent Progress Assessment Meeting (IPAM)
 - Meeting with two Independent Assessors at an Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP)
- 4.3 Figure 1: APM schedule for full-time students on a Doctor/Master of Philosophy

Full time	Annual Progress Report reviewed remotely by Independent Assessor	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Meeting	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Panel
9 months	✓	x	x
18 months (upgrade)	x	x	✓
30 months	x	✓	x
42 months	x	✓	x

Figure 2: APM schedule for full-time students on a Professional Doctorate

Full time	Annual Progress Report reviewed remotely by Independent Assessor	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Meeting	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Panel
9 months	✓	x	x
21 months	x	✓	x
33 months	✓	x	x

Figure 2 relates to the date of the student's transfer to the research stage.

4.4 Figure 3: APM schedule for part-time students on the Doctor/Master of Philosophy

Part time	Annual Progress Report reviewed remotely by Independent Assessor	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Meeting	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Panel
9 months	✓	x	x
18 months	✓	x	x
24 months (upgrade)	✓/x	x	✓/x
36 months (upgrade)	✓/x	x	✓/x
48 months	x	✓	x
60 months	✓	x	x
72 months	x	✓	x

Figure 4: APM schedule for part-time students on a Professional Doctorate

Part time	Annual Progress Report reviewed remotely by Independent Assessor	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Meeting	APR & Independent Progress Assessment Panel
9 months	✓	x	x
21 months	x	✓	x
33 months	✓	x	x
45 months	x	✓	x
57 months	✓	x	x
69 months	x	✓	x

Figure 4 relates to the date of the student's transfer to the research stage.

- 4.5 Part time students registered on the Master of Philosophy have a window for their first consideration for upgrade between 24 and 36 months. The decision for when this takes place lies with the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor who will consult with the supervisory team before making a decision. The timing of this decision is at the discretion of the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor who will report the agreed point for upgrade to Registry Services.

5. Independent Assessors

- 5.1 Under these procedures Independent Assessors review the contents of the Annual Progress Report and meet with students either singularly (as part of an IPAM) or with another Independent Assessor (as part of an IPAP).
- 5.2 To undertake the Independent Assessor role, staff must be on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List (maintained by Registry) as a Principal Supervisor, however such inclusion does not entitle an individual to act as an Independent Assessor. Approval of an individual as an Independent Assessor is granted by the Head of Department and individual academic departments may set higher eligibility criteria, such as requiring greater experience, for approval to this role. The eligibility criteria for accredited supervisor status is stated in Section 4 of Handbook G.
- 5.3 At least one Independent Assessor appointed to assess a student should have relevant subject or method expertise and be suitably qualified so that they are able to identify issues with the project.
- 5.4 Independent Assessors are allocated to individual students by their Head of Department, in consultation with the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor. The same individuals may review a student each year or they may change year on year.
- 5.5 Independent Assessors may be from the same department or faculty as the student or elsewhere in the University. When appointing Independent Assessors the Head of Department, in consultation with the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor, should take every reasonable step to avoid potential conflicts of interest between Independent Assessor, student and/or supervisor; for example, a member of staff may feel uncomfortable acting as Independent Assessor to a student supervised by their Head of Department or Dean/Associate Dean of Faculty; if this could potentially be an issue, consideration should be given, where possible, to appointing appropriate Independent Assessors from outside the home department and/or faculty.
- 5.6 IA's are responsible for:
- Ensuring they understand the policy and process.
 - Ensuring supporting documents from the student have been received in advance of an IPAM or IPAP being convened.
 - Asking the student's Principal Supervisor to forward any relevant information in advance of the review.
 - Establishing with the student in advance of an IPAM/ IPAP whether the Principal Supervisor may attend part of the meeting.
 - Completing the APR/ Extraordinary IPAP Report form in good time.

- 5.7 In line with Section 7 of Handbook G an individual may not act as Internal Examiner to a candidate if they have acted as Independent Assessor at the last APM review preceding the submission of thesis.

6. Annual Progress Reports (APR)

- 6.1 The Annual Progress Report is the formal record of Annual Progress Monitoring for each student and is divided into four sections:
- 6.1.1. *Student*- The student details their progress since their last review in their section of the form. Details of supervisory meetings, attendance at conferences or training and any issues that have impeded progress should be noted. The form is then sent to their Principal Supervisor along with any supporting or additional documents that have been stipulated by their Faculty in their 'APR Guidance Notes'.
- 6.1.2. *Principal Supervisor*- the APR is received by the Principal Supervisor; they complete their section of the report which includes an evaluation of the student's progress to date and a recommendation to the Independent Progress Assessor(s). It also provides the opportunity for supervisors to confirm any areas where the student's progress is satisfactory and provides confirmation of the areas in which the student needs to improve. On completion of their section the form is sent to the Independent Assessor.
- 6.1.3. *Independent Assessor*- the APR is received by the Independent Assessor (IA).
- 6.1.3.1. Where the APR is to be reviewed remotely without meeting the student the Independent Assessor should review the Annual Progress Report plus any supporting documentation provided- the IA may wish to request additional documentation from the student as is necessary. The IA should determine if any concerns have been raised or identified; if no concerns exist about the student or their progress they make their recommendation of satisfactory progress. If concerns do exist the IA recommends an IPAP be convened to discuss and explore the concerns.
- 6.1.3.2. Where an Independent Progress Assessment Meeting is held the IA will make a determination if the student is making satisfactory progress based on the contents of the APR and the discussion with the student. If no concerns exist about the student or their process, they make the recommendation of satisfactory progress. If concerns do exist the IA recommends an IPAP be convened to discuss and explore the concerns. The APR is completed following the meeting with the student.
- 6.1.3.3. Where an Independent Progress Assessment Panel is convened the two Independent Assessors meet the student and make an assessment of their

progress. The APR is completed following the panel meeting by the Independent Assessors with the subject or method expertise.

6.1.3.4. Once the Independent Assessor has completed their section of the report Tutor who will report the agreed point for upgrade to Registry Services the APR should be forwarded (electronically) to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

6.1.4. *Student Administration Office (Registry Services)*- the APR is received and the Student Administration Office is responsible for reviewing the APR to ensure the APM process has been adhered to. If concerns have been raised and another stage in the process is required, the Student Administration Office will ensure the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor is copied into the outcome letter so this can be followed up.

6.2 Registry Services will write to the student to confirm the outcome of the APR/ IPAM/ IPAP.

6.3 Outcomes available to an Independent Assessor reviewing an APR remotely are:

6.3.1. That the student is deemed to be making satisfactory academic progress;

6.3.2. That an IPAP should be convened because concerns exist that the student may be making unsatisfactory progress (see sub section 9)

7. Independent Progress Assessment Meeting (IPAM)

7.1 The Independent Progress Assessment Meeting takes place between the student and the nominated Independent Assessor in line with the schedule of Annual Progress Monitoring as outlined in 4.3 and 4.4.

7.2 The purpose of the Independent Progress Assessment Meeting is to provide the Independent Assessor with the relevant information to determine if the student is making satisfactory progress. The student may also use the meeting to highlight concerns or issues.

7.3 The Independent Progress Assessment Meeting should be held within a reasonable timeframe of the APR being generated so as not to delay the progress assessment of the student.

7.4 The student will be required to produce a written report the specific requirements of which will be determined by the Independent Assessor, in reference to the faculty's APR guidance notes, and communicated to the student in good time of the meeting. The report produced by the student can be an excerpt of a draft chapter of the thesis where appropriate. The student will also be expected to provide an oral account of their progress which will form part of the

assessment.

- 7.5 The Independent Assessor should ask the student's Principal Supervisor to forward any relevant information in advance of the meeting.
- 7.6 The Principal Supervisor may attend the IPAM as an observer but must not play any part in the assessment of the student.
- 7.7 The IPAM provides students with a forum for discussing issues or raising concerns about all aspects of their programme of research. For this reason, students are entitled to request that their supervisor not be present at the meeting and all IPAMs should contain one section where the supervisor is not present.
- 7.8 During the IPAM, details of the number and frequency of supervisory meetings, should be provided. A review of the student's attendance at training and conferences should also be considered.
- 7.9 The student should use the opportunity of the IPAM to highlight any personal, financial, family or health-related issues which they believe have impacted on their ability to undertake research and make good progress.

In the event that the student makes such a disclosure the IPAM should confirm with the student that they give permission for the information to be shared with relevant parties so appropriate action may be taken (the Independent Assessors should seek advice from Registry Services to ensure the information is managed appropriately). Where such permission is not granted and the information is not shared the student may not use this disclosure as grounds for appeal.

- 7.10 The Independent Assessor must complete the appropriate section of the Annual Progress Report, detailing the outcome of the overall APM process (in line with the outcomes in 6) and the reasons the outcome was selected.
- 7.11 It is recognised that the opportunity to discuss progress with an individual independent of the supervisory team is conducive to good progress. Therefore, in the years where the schedule of APM (3.3 and 3.4) states that an IPAM need not be held, the student is entitled to request such a meeting.
- 7.12 Outcomes of the Independent Progress Assessment Meeting (IPAM) are:
 - 7.12.1. That the student is deemed to be making satisfactory academic progress;
 - 7.12.2. That an IPAM should be convened because concerns exist that the student may be making unsatisfactory progress;

7.12.3. That an IPAP should be convened to consider the student for upgrade from MPhil to PhD.

7.13 Following the IPAM meeting the panel members may provide limited supplementary support to the student in the context of matters discussed at the meeting but further support will preclude them from acting as Internal Examiner for the student in line with Section 7 of this Handbook.

8. Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP)

- 8.1 The Independent Progress Assessment Panel may be held in the following circumstances:
- 8.1.1. To consider the progress of a student who is eligible for upgrade from MPhil to PhD in line with the schedule outlined in 3.3 and 3.4.
 - 8.1.2. To consider the progress of a student who has previously not been upgraded in line with the schedule outlined in 4.3 and 4.4 (or alternatively upgraded and then subsequently downgraded, except where such a downgrade was recommended by the PGR Academic Malpractice Panel) but whom an IPAM has suggested the quality of work produced may be of the required doctoral standard.
 - 8.1.3. To consider concerns about unsatisfactory progress:
 - 8.1.3.1. Identified through the remote review of the Annual Progress Report by an Independent Assessor or at an Independent Progress Assessment Meeting;
 - 8.1.3.2. Identified by the supervisors who have deemed the student to be making unsatisfactory progress at a time outwith the Annual Progress Monitoring cycle.
- 8.2 The Panel should consist of two academic members of staff both of whom should be eligible to act as Independent Assessors in line with 5.2. At least one of the panel members should have relevant subject or method expertise. The IPAP is appointed by the Head of Department in consultation with the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor.
- 8.3 During the IPAP, details of the number and frequency of supervisory meetings, should be provided. A review of the student's attendance at training and conferences should also be considered.
- 8.4 The student should use the opportunity of the IPAP to highlight any personal, financial, family

or health-related issues which they believe have impacted on their ability to undertake research and make good progress. In the event that the student makes such a disclosure the IPAP should confirm with the student that they give permission for the information to be shared with relevant parties so appropriate action may be taken (the Independent Assessor should seek advice from Registry Services to ensure the information is managed appropriately). Where such permission is not granted and the information is not shared the student may not use this disclosure as grounds for appeal.

- 8.5 The IPAP provides students with a forum for discussing issues or raising concerns about all aspects of their programme of research. For this reason, students are entitled to request that their supervisor not be present at the meeting and all IPAPs should contain one section where the supervisors are not present.
- 8.6 The IA with the subject expertise should complete the appropriate section of the Annual Progress Report, detailing the outcome of the overall APM process and the reasons the outcome was selected.
- 8.7 Where the IPAP convenes to consider whether to upgrade the student from MPhil to PhD:
 - 8.7.1. The student will be required to produce a written report, the specific requirements of which will be determined by the Independent Assessor(s), in line with faculty guidance, and communicated to the student in good time. The report produced by the student can be an excerpt of a draft chapter of the thesis where appropriate. The student will also be expected to provide an oral account of their progress which will form part of the assessment.
 - 8.7.2. At least one of the student's supervisors should be asked to forward any relevant information to the Independent Progress Assessment Panel in advance.
- 8.8 Where the IPAP convenes to consider the progress of a student who has previously not been upgraded in line with the normal timeframe or under where an IPAM has identified potentially poor progress, a further written submission by the student is not normally required and the Panel should refer to the documents made available at the Independent Progress Assessment Meeting.
- 8.9 Following the IPAP meeting the panel members may provide limited supplementary support to the student in the context of matters discussed at the meeting but further support will preclude them from acting as Internal Examiner for the student in line with Section 7 of this Handbook.
- 8.10 The possible outcomes of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel for PhD are:

- 8.10.1. That the student has made satisfactory progress;
 - 8.10.2. That the student has not made sufficient satisfactory academic progress but is permitted a further period of time under review and their academic progress will be assessed again by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel;
 - 8.10.3. That the student is deemed not to have produced work of a doctoral standard and is downgraded to MPhil;
 - 8.10.4. That the student has not made satisfactory academic progress and that he/she will be referred to the University PGR Progress Panel.
- 8.11 The possible outcomes of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel for MPhil are:
- 8.11.1. That the student has made satisfactory progress and is upgraded to PhD;
 - 8.11.2. That the student has made satisfactory progress for continued registration for MPhil [applicable to students continuing on the MPhil programme]
 - 8.11.3. That the student has not made satisfactory academic progress but is permitted a further period of time under review and their academic progress will be assessed again by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel;
 - 8.11.4. That the student has not made satisfactory academic progress and that he/she will be referred to the University PGR Progress Panel.
- 8.12 The possible outcomes of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel for Professional Doctorates:
- 8.12.1. That the student has made satisfactory progress;
 - 8.12.2. That the student has not made sufficient satisfactory academic progress but is permitted a further period of time under review and their academic progress will be assessed again by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel;
 - 8.12.3. That the student has not made satisfactory academic progress and that he/she will be referred to the University PGR Progress Panel.
- 8.13 Where an IPAP determine a student may have a further period of time under review, the period may be no less than two months for full time students and three months for part time students.
- 8.14 When considering downgrading a student from PhD to MPhil the IPAP should consider the quality of the work delivered as it relates to the FHEQ descriptor for doctoral degrees.

- 8.15 Referral to the University PGR Progress Panel will not normally take place without the student first being given a further period of time under review.

9. Managing Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

Identified by the IPAP following an IPAM or during an upgrade IPAP

- 9.1 If an IPAP deem a student to be making unsatisfactory progress but believe there to be opportunity for the student to make good their academic standing and recommend that the student be subject to a further period of time under review, the student will be written to by Registry Services advising them of the outcome of the IPAP. The student will be provided with a copy of the Annual Progress Report which will set out the reasons for concern. The APR should provide clear targets for improving performance and a realistic timescale for achieving the improvements must be set, which should not be less than two months for a full-time student and three months for a part time student. The outcome letter will confirm that the IPAP will be evaluating the student's efforts in achieving the improvements and an extraordinary meeting with the Panel will be required. The outcome letter will state that failure to respond adequately to the concerns raised by the Independent Assessors may lead to the termination of the student's studies.
- 9.2 The Independent Assessors are responsible for scheduling the extraordinary IPAP meeting within a reasonable timeframe of the end of the period given to the student to meet the targets set. The outcomes available to the IPAP at this stage are to permit the student (with or without being downgraded, if PhD) to continue or to refer the student to the University PGR Progress Panel (see part 10).

Identified by the supervisory team outside of the APM cycle

- 9.3 If the supervisory team deem a student not to be making satisfactory academic progress at any point during the academic year the student should be formally warned of the situation, in writing, by the Head of the Department. The supervisory team should not wait for the next Annual Progress Review before taking action.
- 9.4 The written warning should provide clear targets for improving performance and a realistic timescale for achieving the improvements must be set by the supervisory team, which should not be less than two months for a full-time student or three months for a part time student. It should also confirm that the IPAP will be evaluating the student's efforts in achieving the improvements and an extraordinary meeting with the Panel, outside of the ordinary Annual Progress Monitoring schedule, will take place. The student should be informed that the letter constitutes a formal warning and that the consequences of either not responding or not meeting the required targets may lead to termination of studies. The nominated Independent Assessors, are responsible for scheduling the extraordinary meeting.

- 9.5 The IPAP should be convened in line with sub section 8.
- 9.6 Following the IPAP being held, the IA's will complete the Report on Extraordinary IPAP form and forward this to Registry Services who will write to the student confirming the outcome and any consequences, such as being referred to the University Progress Panel.
- 9.7 Where a student responds and demonstrates improvement within the required timescales, the Independent Assessors will complete the Report of Extraordinary IPAP form and forward this to Registry Services who will write to the student confirming the outcome and consequences. Under these circumstances, any further concerns about a student's academic progress would be re-commenced under 9.1 or 9.3 as appropriate.

10. University PGR Progress Panel

- 10.1 Where the IPAP determine that a student has not responded to the written warning or has not satisfactorily met the targets set or otherwise gives continued cause for concern, the student will be invited to a meeting of the University PGR Progress Panel by Registry Services.
- 10.2 The membership of the University PGR Progress Panel will include the Chair of Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee (or nominee), who will act as Chair, and two other members of academic staff based within the same Faculty as the student who are not members of the student's supervisory team. The Panel should have a minimum membership of three. The student's Principal Supervisor will also be asked to attend the meeting but will not be a member of the Panel.
- 10.3 Where the University PGR Progress Panel has been convened a member of Registry Services should be appointed to act as Secretary to the Panel. The Secretary is responsible for setting up the meeting, correspondence with all parties, ensuring that all parties are provided with all relevant documentation in good time and producing minutes of the meeting.
- 10.4 The student should be provided with at least ten working days' notice of the meeting and is entitled to be accompanied by a friend/ supporter. This could be another student, a member of academic staff or a representative from the Students Union. The role of the 'friend' during the Panel is to support the student, they may not answer questions on behalf of the student, but may prompt them, and cannot appear instead of the student. Students are not permitted to bring legal representation to the Panel.
- 10.5 All relevant documentation should be made available by the Secretary to all relevant parties at least two working days prior to the meeting. Under normal circumstances, documentation presented at the meeting will not be considered. Relevant documentation would include any previous warning letters, copies of APRs and reports from previous IPAP meetings. The student should be invited to make a written statement setting out the reasons for continued unsatisfactory progress or failure to respond to the previous warning(s) and this should be sent to the Secretary at least five days before the meeting.

- 10.6 The purpose of the meeting is to explore with the student the reasons for the lack of satisfactory progress and to determine the academic standing of the student. Consideration should be given to any reason provided by the student for the lack of satisfactory progress. Students are advised that they should provide any information about circumstances which they feel may have impacted on their ability to make satisfactory academic progress or engage adequately with University procedures. Any claim to have these circumstances considered should be supported by documentary evidence such as medical certification. Students are advised that, even though their circumstances are of a sensitive, personal or family nature, or it may not be part of their culture to discuss such matters, they should be disclosed to the University PGR Progress Panel.
- 10.7 Should the student not attend the Panel, it shall convene in the student's absence.
- 10.8 The possible outcomes of the University PGR Progress Panel are:
- 10.8.1. That the student is permitted to continue on the research programme;
 - 10.8.2. That the student is permitted to continue on the research programme with a final opportunity to improve his/her performance;
 - 10.8.3. That the student should be deemed not to have made satisfactory academic progress and their studies be terminated with immediate effect.
- 10.9 Under 10.8.2. the University PGR Progress Panel, in consultation with the supervisory team, will provide a set of agreed targets and revised timescales and is responsible for monitoring the student's performance against these targets. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to the Progress Panel to confirm the decision in writing to the student and to include any warnings issued by the Panel, and warn them that the consequences of not meeting the targets set within the timescales may be termination of studies.
- 10.10 Under 10.8.3. the Secretary will write to the student to confirm the decision of the University Progress Panel and provide their right of appeal. A copy of the letter will be included on the student's file.
- 10.11 On completion of the period given to the student to demonstrate improvement (10.8.2.), the University PGR Progress Panel should convene to consider the progress made and the student shall be invited to attend. Where a student has met the targets set by the University PGR Progress Panel and satisfactory academic progress has been made this should be confirmed to the student in writing by the Secretary of the Panel within one week of the Panel convening.
- 10.12 Where a student fails to meet the targets set by the University PGR Progress Panel within the

timescales, the student's studies will be terminated with immediate effect. The Secretary to the Panel will write to the student within one week of the Panel convening, detailing the student's right to appeal.

- 10.13 If the student experiences serious and exceptional circumstances during the review period, which are affecting their ability to work on the targets set by the original panel, they should notify the Secretary to the Panel immediately. If required, a request to extend the review period (with evidence of these circumstances) should be submitted to the Chair of the University Progress Panel, who will decide, normally within seven calendar days of receipt of the request, whether to adjust the review period. The Chair may ask for further evidence to be provided, which will re-set the time permitted for a decision to be made.

11. Changes to the Research Project

- 11.1 The research project shall be that which was agreed at the point of admission however it is recognised that the nature of research can sometimes result in research projects evolving to have a different focus or approach than what was originally intended. Changes to research projects, and the causes of such change, will be taken into consideration as part of the evaluation of satisfactory progress of the student during the Annual Progress Monitoring process.
- 11.2 The University will support students appropriately where unforeseen, external or exceptional demands require a substantial or significant change to the project that may necessitate a change in supervisory team. In these circumstances, where the change to the project is considered to be outside of the capabilities of the student, the University will seek to provide an alternative project.
- 11.3 Where a research project changes, and ethical approval was previously granted, the Principal Supervisor should advise the student of the need to resubmit an ethical approval application. In the event the original project was such that no ethical approval was required, the Principal Supervisor should advise the student whether the changes have necessitated ethical approval being sought.
- 11.4 Substantial or significant changes to the research project at the request of the student will not normally be supported without good cause.

12. Appeals Procedure

- 12.1 Students have a right to appeal against the following decisions made by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or the University PGR Progress Panel:

- 12.1.1. To downgrade their registration from PhD to MPhil;
 - 12.1.2. To deny upgrade of registration from MPhil to PhD;
 - 12.1.3. To terminate studies on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic performance.
- 12.2 In such cases, the appeal procedure laid out in Section 11 of this Handbook should be followed.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Thesis Submission Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Registry Services
Contact:	S.Nelson@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Submission of Thesis	3
3. Copyright.....	3
4. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).....	4
5. Confidentiality	5
6. Requirements for Modifications following First Examination of the Submitted Thesis	5
7. Requirements for Full Resubmission following First Examination of the Submitted Thesis	5
8. Submission of the Successfully Examined Thesis to ChesterRep	5

1. Purpose

1.1 The Postgraduate Research thesis must be submitted in the correct format and with appropriate consideration of copyright, intellectual property rights, and open access.

2. Submission of Thesis

2.1 The Candidate must complete the following in order:

2.1.1 Upload an electronic copy of their thesis to Turnitin with the main body of the text as a single file. The Candidate must adhere to the Turnitin 40MB limit and ensure the integrity of the electronic version. This is the official submission and no amendments or additions can be made to it.

2.1.2 Email the Student Administration Office at pgr@chester.ac.uk to confirm that the thesis has been submitted to Turnitin.

2.2 The Student Administration Office arranges for the thesis to be sent to the Examiners and Independent Chair.

2.3 If the maximum submission date is on a non-working day, the candidate must submit their thesis on the next working day.

2.4 The Candidate can take a soft-bound copy into the viva examination.

3. Copyright

3.1 Copyright in the thesis belongs to the candidate, unless ownership of copyright is transferred.

3.2 The thesis can be embargoed, if required by third-party funding terms or if the University is pursuing evaluation, exploitation or protection of intellectual property.

3.3 In accordance with normal academic custom, the results of the PGR project can be published by the University and the supervisor(s). The Candidate can present and publish the methods and results of the project, provided that they give the University advance notice of any disclosure. The University can delay the proposed publication or presentation if, in its reasonable opinion, such delay is necessary to secure protection of intellectual property rights.

3.4 The Research and Innovation Office can deal with queries about the copyright of the thesis and rights to publish such material: researchoffice@chester.ac.uk

4. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

4.1 IPR arising from the research belongs to the Candidate unless:

- a person other than the University owns or is entitled to the IPR;
- the Candidate has worked in collaboration with others and this led to joint creation of IPR or interdependent IPR. If so, the Candidate can be required to assign IPR to the University or place the results in the public domain without restriction;
- the Candidate is a member of staff of the University, in which case the University is entitled to the IPR (unless a specific agreement states otherwise);
- the IPR resides in databases, computer software, firmware, courseware and related material which can reasonably be considered to possess commercial potential.

4.2 The University has a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual licence to use material which falls within clause 4.1 for teaching, research and other academic purposes.

4.3. The University is the proprietor of the registered trademark of its name and logo (armorial bearings) and has goodwill and reputation to protect. The Candidate must not publish, post or commercially exploit in any form or medium any matter in which

they are entitled to the IPR under 4.1 in any form which mentions the name or logo of the University or any member of staff, without the University's consent to the form and context. The Candidate must make their request in advance.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 The full thesis must be submitted for examination. If the Candidate or their sponsor believes that parts of the thesis are particularly confidential, the Candidate must inform the Student Administration Office prior to submission of the thesis. The Student Administration Office informs the Examiners of the confidential section. The Examiners must treat the thesis as privileged and confidential information.

5.2 Following a successful defence at the viva examination, if a student or their sponsor believes that elements of the thesis are confidential, they can request restrictions on the thesis deposited in ChesterRep.

6. Requirements for Modifications following First Examination of the Submitted Thesis

6.1 The Candidate submits the modified version to Turnitin, following the guidance in section 2.

7. Requirements for Full Resubmission following First Examination of the Submitted Thesis

7.1 The resubmitted thesis follows the requirements in section 2.

8. Submission of the Successfully Examined Thesis to ChesterRep

8.1 Candidates must e-mail an electronic version of their final thesis, in a non-editable pdf format, to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services along with a signed copy of the **Thesis Deposit Form** (available from the Student

Administration Office) within four weeks of receiving notification of their success in their examination or successful completion of modifications.

8.2 The Candidate is not awarded their degree until the Student Administration Office has received a copy of the final thesis and the award is confirmed by the University Awards Assessment Board.

8.3 The Student Administration Office arranges for the thesis to be deposited in [ChesterRep](#) (the institutional research repository) and in [EThOS](#) (the British Library's Electronic Theses Online Service).

8.4 Candidates whose final work is of a non-standard format, such as those arising from the arts and media disciplines, must seek advice from Registry Services regarding what elements may or may not be deposited.

8.5 A hardbound copy of the thesis is not required.

8.6 The Candidate can request that access to their thesis be restricted access by completing the relevant section of the Thesis Deposit Form. The Principal Supervisor and Senior Faculty PGR Tutor must support any restrictions on access. To support the open access agenda on research outputs, the University only allows the Candidate to restrict access to their electronic thesis if:

- future publication of the thesis or part of the thesis is planned;
- the release of the thesis would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person including the author, the University, or an external company;
- the thesis includes material that was obtained under a promise of confidentiality;
- the thesis contains details of procedures and methods which may affect the competitiveness of a line of research if made available online;
- the thesis contains material whose copyright belongs to a third party and the gaining of approval to publish the material electronically would be onerous or expensive; and the removal of the copyright material would compromise the

thesis;

- the thesis contains information which might endanger the physical or mental health or the personal safety of an individual or group;
- the thesis contains sensitive or confidential information that may contravene an individual's right to privacy or the General Data Protection Regulations (2018).



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Appointment of Examiners and Conduct of Viva Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Registry Services
Contact:	S.nelson@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Components of the Examination	3
3. Appointment of Internal and External Examiners	3
4. Role and Responsibilities of Both Internal and External Examiners	5
5. Role and Specific Responsibilities of the Internal Examiner	7
6. Role and Specific Responsibilities of the External Examiner.....	8
7. Role and Responsibilities of Supervisory Team	9
8. Role and Responsibilities of the Independent Chair	9
9. Role and Responsibilities of the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor	11
10. Role and Responsibilities of the Candidate	12
11. Conduct of the Viva	13
12. Outcome of the Examination	14
13. Submission of Examiner Reports	14
14. Resubmission of a Thesis	15
15. Submission of the Final Thesis to ChesterRep.....	16
16. Review of External Examiner Reports.....	16

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the requirements for examinations for PGR programmes and ensuring that they are carried out by appropriately qualified and appointed Examiners.

2. Components of the Examination

2.1 The Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy examination consists of the following components:

- (a) scrutiny of the submitted work by Internal and External Examiners independently;
- (b) a viva examination conducted by the examining panel, composed of Internal and External Examiners and an independent Chair during which the candidate must respond to any questions from the Examiners about the thesis or other submitted work;
- (c) where the submission involves a body of artistic work, an assessment of any relevant performances or exhibitions and/or an archive of such performances or exhibitions.

2.2 The Professional Doctorate examination consists of the components in (a) to (c) above but these must only be undertaken after the taught phase of the programme has been successfully completed.

3. Appointment of Internal and External Examiners

3.1 The University cannot appoint Examiners until the Student Administration Office in Registry Services has received the [Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Thesis](#) form from the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor.

3.2 The University appoints one Internal Examiner and one External Examiner, who are approved by the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor.

3.3 The Internal Examiner is a suitably qualified member of staff of the University at the time that the thesis was submitted. Where a suitably qualified Internal Examiner cannot be found, two External Examiners can be appointed, subject to the approval of the Deputy

Registrar and the Associate Dean for PGR Studies. The academic department may have to pay the fee for the additional External Examiner.

3.4 If the candidate is a current member of the staff of the University, two External Examiners are appointed in addition to the Internal Examiner.

3.4.1 The following are defined as members of University staff: - academics, professional services, technical and support staff (including those holding honorary appointments); it does not include individuals who are primarily PGR students. The Deputy Registrar makes the final decision as to whether a candidate is a member of University staff. The candidate must submit the [Additional External Examiner Form](#) with the [Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Thesis](#).

3.4.2 If the appointment of an Internal Examiner has the potential to cause a conflict of interest, the Supervisory Team can request that no Internal Examiner is appointed. This requires the written approval of the Deputy Registrar and the Associate Dean of PGR Studies.

3.5 The External Examiner must not hold a contract of employment with the University.

3.6 An individual formerly employed by the University can be appointed as an External Examiner, if at least five years have passed since they left the University's employment.

3.7 The minimum criteria for an Examiner is:

- a qualification at doctoral level or, exceptionally, at least at Master's level where the Master's has a demonstrable piece of independent research associated with it, awarded by an appropriate Higher Education Institution, AND;
- be a subject specialist and currently research active, with a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or active involvement in on-going projects; OR be an Expert practitioner, with ten years or more of professional experience in a relevant field that includes holding an appropriate senior position, and being involved in on-going research projects (for appropriate research degrees and in appropriate subjects).

3.7.1 At least one External Examiner must have a doctorate.

3.8 Collectively the Examiners must have examined at least two doctoral theses.

3.9 Academic departments can set higher eligibility criteria, such as requiring greater experience or higher qualifications.

3.10 All Internal Examiners must have completed the mandatory online training before they are formally appointed and before they take part in a viva examination. Refresher training must be completed every 36 months.

3.11 The Student Administration Office contacts the Examiners and provides information on the conditions of appointment and their responsibilities. Examiner appointments are confirmed by Registry Services.

3.12 The Candidate must not be told the names of the Examiners until the University has formally appointed the Examiners. Once the Examiners have been appointed, the Principal Supervisor must inform the candidate of the names of the appointed Examiners.

3.13 The supervisors and candidate must not contact the appointed Examiners prior to the viva to discuss any matter connected to the examination, except for logistical arrangements.

4. Role and Responsibilities of Both Internal and External Examiners

4.1 Before the viva, the Examiners must:

- notify the Student Administration Office immediately if they can no longer act as Examiner and want to withdraw from the appointment;
- read the thesis and complete the **Independent Initial Report** (available from the Student Administration Office) in advance of the examination, identifying any concerns and giving an initial view. The **Independent Initial Report** must be submitted to the Student Administration Office and the Independent Chair at least five working days

before the viva date. The **Independent Initial Report** must not be disclosed to or discussed with the candidate or supervisors before the viva.

4.2 On the day of the viva, the Examiners must:

- meet with the other Examiner and Independent Chair on the day of the examination before the candidate is examined to:
 - agree an outline of how the examination will proceed.

4.3 During the viva, the Examiners must:

- take part in the viva examination;
- agree an outcome, with the other Examiner, using his/her knowledge and experience in order to ensure that there is consistency of standards across the University and with external benchmarks;
- act in a fair and reasonable manner and give the candidate every opportunity to explain and defend their work;
- ensure that informal feedback on the thesis and examination is given to the candidate on the day of the examination in a supportive and constructive manner.

4.4 After the viva, the Examiners must:

- Complete the **Joint Final Report** (available from the Student Administration Office) and the **Required Modifications** (if required). The Internal Examiner sends both of these to the Student Administration Office, normally within ten working days of the viva date;
- agree who will be responsible for approving any modifications required to the thesis. Whichever Examiner(s) is responsible for approving any modifications must ensure that:
 - modifications are normally reviewed and approved within twenty working days;
 - sign the **Confirmation of Completion of Modifications form** (available from the Student Administration Office) and return it to the Student Administration Office;

- treat the thesis as privileged and confidential information.

5. Role and Specific Responsibilities of the Internal Examiner

5.1 Before the viva, the Internal Examiner must:

- arrange the date and location of the viva examination, in consultation with the External Examiner(s), the Independent Chair and the candidate, and ensure that all parties are formally notified of the date, which must normally be no later than three months after submission of the thesis.

5.2 On the day of the viva, the Internal Examiner must:

- meet with the External Examiner and Independent Chair on the day of the examination before the candidate is examined to:
 - confirm the possible outcomes of the viva permitted in accordance with the Principles and Regulations governing the degree award;
 - ensure that the research degree examination, including the viva, is conducted in accordance with UoC's Principles and Regulations. If any concerns arise during the viva regarding academic integrity these shall be handled in accordance with [QSM Handbook G10: Academic and Research Integrity](#).

5.3 After the viva, the Internal Examiner must:

- ensure that an agreed **Joint Final Report** and the **Required Modifications** (if required) are produced and signed by all Examiners (except where they fail to agree);
- send the **Joint Final Report** and the **Required Modifications** (if required) to the Student Administration Office, normally within ten working days of the viva date;
- let the Student Administration Office know if they are unable to submit the **Joint Final Report** and the **Required Modifications** (if required) to it within ten working days of the viva date;
- ensure that any modifications required to a thesis or recommendations for a re-submission are sent directly to the candidate in writing, normally no later than ten

working days after the viva examination;

- ensure that recommendations regarding re-submission provide appropriate detail;
- if a re-submission is required, make themselves available to the candidate and Principal Supervisor soon after the first viva in order to clarify the recommendations made. However, the Candidate or Supervisors must not ask the Internal Examiner to review the revised work in progress, i.e. before it is re-submitted for examination;
- if modifications to the thesis are required, ensure that whichever Examiner(s) were responsible for approving the modifications have seen and approved the modifications and completed the **Confirmation of Completion of Modifications form** (available from the Student Administration Office) and sent it to the Student Administration Office. The modifications must be completed by the candidate within the timeframe specified by the Examiners (either three or six months) from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva by the Student Administration Office.
- if a re-submission is required, arrange a second viva examination;
- if the Examiners cannot agree on a recommendation, prepare an independent final report and forward this to the Student Administration Office;
- engage in appropriate professional development to support their examining work.

6. Role and Specific Responsibilities of the External Examiner

6.1 The External Examiner must be rigorous in ensuring that the thesis and the candidate have been examined in accordance with the University's Principles and Regulations and any other policies and procedures.

6.2 After the viva, the External Examiner must:

- complete the **External Examiner Feedback** form (available from the Student Administration Office);
- notify the Internal Examiner about general issues about the examination. Issues can also be raised directly with the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.
- if the Examiners cannot agree on a recommendation, prepare an independent final report and forward this to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

7. Role and Responsibilities of Supervisory Team

7.1 The Principal Supervisor nominates the Internal and External Examiner by completing the [Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Degree Thesis](#) form.

7.2 The Supervisory Team must not attend the viva examination but can be present at the end of the viva when the Examiners inform the candidate of their recommendation and any modifications that they require, with the agreement of the Candidate and the Examiners.

8. Role and Responsibilities of the Independent Chair

8.1 The Independent Chair is responsible for ensuring that the viva examination is conducted in accordance with University regulations, policies, and procedures.

8.2 The Independent Chair is a member of University academic staff and can be a member of the same Faculty, but not of the same Department as the Internal Examiner and in which the candidate is registered.

8.3 The Senior Faculty PGR Tutor appoints the Independent Chair.

8.4 The Independent Chair must not have participated in the Annual Progress Monitoring of the student at any stage.

8.5 All appointed Independent Chairs must have completed the appropriate University training or other workshops which have been approved by the University before they take part in a viva examination.

8.6 Once appointed, the Student Administration Office in Registry Services must send the Independent Chair:

- the previous thesis, where appropriate;
- a **Viva Conduct** form (available from the Student Administration Office) for completion after the viva.

8.7 If an Internal Examiner has not been appointed, the Independent Chair and/or the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor carry out the administrative duties of the Internal Examiner.

8.8 The Independent Chair does not exercise academic judgment in the viva examination, i.e. does not participate in discussion of the thesis or the candidate or acts as academic arbiter between the Examiners.

8.8.1 The Independent Chair must not ask substantive questions of the candidate regarding defence of their thesis during the viva.

8.9 Before the viva, the Independent Chair must:

- send the completed **Independent Initial Reports** to the Internal and External Examiners as soon as they have received them.
- meet with the Examiners on the day of the examination before the candidate is examined to:
 - agree an outline of how the examination will proceed;
 - confirm the identity of the Candidate.

8.10 During the viva, the Independent Chair must:

- explain to the Examiners and Candidate the role of the Independent Chair (explaining that the role of the Chair is not that of a further examiner) and advise on the conduct of the viva;
- advise the Examiners on the possible outcomes of the viva using his/her knowledge and experience of examining research degrees in order to ensure that the process is fair and consistent;
- consider the welfare of the Candidate during the viva;
- should challenging circumstances arise during the viva, the Independent Chair must take appropriate action, which may include suspending or adjourning the viva. The Independent Chair can suspend or adjourn the viva examination at any point if a breach of the **PGR Academic Research Integrity** policy is suspected, or if they have concerns, either about the welfare of the candidate or that there are procedural

irregularities with the conduct of the assessment. The Independent Chair can adjourn the examination to further assess the situation and discuss the matter with the relevant parties. The Independent Chair can decide whether to either continue with or suspend the viva assessment. If the Independent Chair decides to continue with the viva, but later decides that concerns still exist as outlined above, they can opt to suspend the viva.

- if the Examiners cannot agree on a recommendation, the Independent Chair must advise the Examiners to prepare independent final reports and to forward these to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

8.11 After the viva, the Independent Chair must:

- report any significant procedural issues which occur in the viva examination to the Head of Academic Services immediately following the viva. If a viva is suspended, the Independent Chair must report the reasons as to why the viva has been suspended, including the nature of any concerns relating to student welfare or procedural irregularities in the conduct of the examination to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards (AQS). The Head of AQS decides on how to proceed with the examination;
- complete the **Viva Conduct Form** (available from the Student Administration Office) and submit it to the Student Administration Office within ten working days of the viva date. The report includes any significant problems which occurred in the viva examination (e.g. significant disagreement between the Examiners), or any general issues arising from it. This report will not normally be provided to the candidate as part of the examination process but will be made available on request in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018);
- treat the thesis as privileged and confidential information.

9. Role and Responsibilities of the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor

9.1 The Senior Faculty PGR Tutor signs the [Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Degree Thesis](#) form to indicate Faculty approval of the Examiners.

9.2 The Senior Faculty PGR Tutor appoints the Independent Chair.

9.3 If there is no Internal Examiner, the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor carries out their administrative duties, together with the Independent Chair.

10. Role and Responsibilities of the Candidate

10.1 The Candidate is entitled to a fair, timely and properly conducted examination and for the Examiners to be appropriately qualified.

10.2. The Candidate is responsible for their preparation for the viva.

10.3. The Candidate is examined on the material that has been submitted and the context within which the research has been conducted. The Candidate cannot submit further material after initial submission of the thesis.

10.4. The Candidate must maintain a professional and courteous relationship with the Examiners and should be prepared to receive critical feedback on their work and the viva.

10.5. The Candidate must inform their Principal Supervisor and the Student Administration Office before the viva of any exceptional or medical circumstances that may affect their ability to attend the viva examination.

10.5.1. The Candidate must notify their Principal Supervisor and the Student Administration Office of any reasonable adjustments by completing the relevant section of the [Notice of Intention to Submit a Research Thesis](#) form. More information on reasonable adjustments and the support the University can provide is available from [Student Support and Wellbeing](#).

10.6. The full thesis must be submitted to the Examiners for examination. If the candidate or their sponsor considers that elements of the thesis are particularly confidential, the candidate must inform the Student Administration Office prior to submission of the thesis, in order for the Examiners to be informed of the sensitive nature of the material.

10.7. If the candidate wants to raise concerns about the conduct of the viva examination, firstly they can raise the issue with the Independent Chair, who will advise them about the University's requirements in relation to the conduct of vivas.

10.8. If the candidate wants to appeal against the decisions of the Examiners appointed to examine the thesis, they can use the Research Degree Appeals Policy, or, if the concern does not relate to the outcome of the viva, the University's Student Complaints Procedure.

10.9 Under the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) the candidate can view all Examiner reports arising from their viva examination(s). Candidates who are recommended for their target award (subject to modifications or not) are not given copies of the Examiner reports but can request them from the Student Administration Office. Candidates who are given the opportunity to resubmit or, recommended for the award of a lower degree, will be given copies of the Examiners reports with the formal notification of the outcome of the viva.

10.10 No candidate will be provided with the Examiners' initial reports after the viva.

11. Conduct of the Viva

11.1 The default position is that vivas will take place online. However, if a student requests an in-person viva, this request should be considered by the Internal Examiner, and facilitated wherever possible.

11.2 The viva cannot be recorded.

11.3 Disability and Inclusion has produced guidance on reasonable adjustments to the conduct of the viva, which is available from [Student Support and Wellbeing](#).

11.4 The Independent Chair can begin the viva by explaining the process and the format of the viva, including formal introductions, and a brief explanation of the roles of the Independent Chair and the Examiners.

12. Outcome of the Examination

12.1 See **Outcomes of a Postgraduate Research Examination Policy**.

12.2 Although the Candidate is informed of the outcome on the day of the viva, the Student Administration Office is responsible for the formal notification, which is via email within five working days of receipt of the fully completed Examiner and Independent Chair reports and Required Modifications (if required).

12.3 If the Examiners cannot agree on an outcome of the examination, each Examiner must prepare an independent final report and submit it to the Student Administration Office.

12.4 If the Examiners have been unable to agree on an outcome, the Chair of Postgraduate Research Degrees subCommittee reviews the **Independent Initial Examination Reports** and the **Viva Conduct Form** from the Independent Chair. Consequently, and having asked advice from Academic Services, the Chair of Postgraduate Degrees subcommittee can:

- appoint an additional External Examiner to review the thesis; OR
- Require new Examiners to be appointed and the viva examination re-held.

13. Submission of Examiner Reports

13.1 After the viva, the Examiners produce a **Joint Final Report** and **Required Modifications** (if required). The Internal Examiner is responsible for submitting these to the Student Administration Office normally within ten working days of the viva date. The Independent Chair submits the **Viva Conduct Report** normally within ten working days of the viva date.

13.2 The Student Administration Office will check that the **Joint Final Report**, **Required Modifications** (if required), and **Viva Conduct Report** have been completed in full. If not, these will be returned to the Examiners and / or the Independent Chair for further work.

13.3 Electronic signatures on reports are acceptable.

13.4 If the **Joint Final Report, Required Modifications** (if required) and **Viva Conduct Report** have been completed in full, the Student Administration Office will formally notify the Candidate of the viva outcome normally within five working days.

13.5 The Student Administration Office sends the **Joint Final Report** and the **Required Modifications** (if required) to the Candidate.

13.6 Providing that it has been informed by the Internal Examiner that they cannot submit the **Joint Final Report, Required Modifications** (if required), and **Viva Conduct Report** within ten working days of the viva date, the Student Administration Office notifies the Candidate of the delay.

13.6 The Candidate can request a copy of the **Independent Initial Examination Reports** from the Student Administration Office.

14. Resubmission of a Thesis

14.1 In the case of resubmissions, a second viva will be held to allow the candidate the opportunity to defend their thesis. The only circumstances in which a second viva will not be required is if all Examiners, in their Independent Initial Exam Reports, recommend that the thesis is a straight pass; no modifications of any description can be requested in this scenario. In these circumstances the Examiners are still entitled to insist upon a second viva if they wish

14.2 After reading a modified thesis following a viva, if the Examiners decide the required modifications have not been made to their satisfaction, they can require the candidate to undertake additional work, provided that the modifications being requested are not additional to those required immediately following the viva.

14.2.1 The Examiners have the discretion to decide how many times a candidate is entitled to submit the modified thesis, whilst considering the progress made.

14.2.2 The Deputy Registrar must be consulted in all such cases.

14.2.3. The Candidate's studies will not be terminated on the first occasion they unsuccessfully submit the modified thesis following the viva examination, nor will the Candidate's studies terminated unless they have been informed that the next submission of the modified thesis will be their final attempt. In all cases where a thesis is being returned, the candidate must be given a reasonable amount of time in which to submit.

14.3 The University's Awards Assessment Board can terminate the studies of candidates who do not submit their thesis within the maximum period of submission.

14.4 The University can terminate the studies of candidates who do not engage with the modifications or resubmission process from their programme.

15. Submission of the Final Thesis to [ChesterRep](#)

15.1 Candidates must submit the final, approved version of their thesis to the University's online research repository, [ChesterRep](#).

16. Review of External Examiner Reports

16.1 The University reviews all External Examiner reports to identify themes and trends and ensure that high academic standards are being maintained.

16.2 Registry Services reviews all External Examiner reports and submits an annual summary report of feedback to Postgraduate Research Programmes subCommittee.



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Outcomes of a Postgraduate Research Examination

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Registry Services
Contact:	S.nelson@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Outcomes available to Examiners.....	3
3. Additional Outcomes for a Doctor of Philosophy Examination	4
4. Failure to Agree an Outcome	4
5. Re-submission	4

1. Purpose

The Examiners use their academic judgement to determine the outcome of PGR examinations.

2. Outcomes available to Examiners

2.1 To award the degree applied for.

2.2. To award the degree applied for; subject to the Candidate making minor modifications to the thesis within three months of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva examination by the University.

2.2.1 The outcome of minor modifications is appropriate when the modifications:

- do not change the substance of the thesis in any significant or fundamental manner;
- correct minor errors, omissions of substance, typographical errors, occasional stylistic or grammatical flaws, corrections to references, addition/modification to a limited number of figures and minor changes to layout;
- may lead to limited further analysis;
- do not need new data collection.

2.3. To award the degree applied for; subject to the Candidate making major modifications to the thesis within six months of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva examination by the University.

2.3.1 The outcome of major modifications is appropriate when:

- the thesis needs a large amount of minor modifications;
- the chapters need to be re-ordered (without substantive change to the central argument of the thesis).

2.4. To permit the Candidate to resubmit their thesis with a further viva examination. The deadline for the resubmission is one calendar year from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva examination by the University. This outcome cannot be used where the viva examination is for a resubmitted thesis as a student is only allowed to resubmit on one occasion.

2.4.1 The outcome of resubmission is appropriate when the thesis needs:

- a substantial rewrite;
- additional data collection;
- a substantially altered conclusion.

2.4.2 A Candidate cannot ask to make a resubmission. The Examiners decide whether a candidate should be allowed to resubmit.

3. Additional Outcomes for a Doctor of Philosophy Examination

3.1 To award the degree of Master of Philosophy. The Examiner can ask the candidate to make minor or major modifications to the thesis. If so, the deadline for submitting the modifications is either three or six months (as applicable) of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva examination by the University.

3.2 To allow the candidate to resubmit their thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy with a further viva examination. The deadline for the application is one calendar year from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of their viva examination by the University. This outcome cannot be used where the viva examination is for a resubmitted thesis as a student is only allowed to resubmit on one occasion.

3.3. A student offered a resubmission is only allowed to resubmit on one occasion in total, regardless of whether this is for the Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy.

4. Failure to Agree an Outcome

If the Examiners cannot agree on a decision, see the **Policy on Appointment of Examiners and Conduct of Viva**

5. Re-submission

For information on re-submission, See the **Policy on Appointment of Examiners and Conduct of Viva**.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Arrangements for Wrexham University Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Postgraduate Research Studies
Contact:	L.Taylor@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2027

Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Roles and responsibilities	3
3. Admissions.....	3
4. Supervisors	3
5. Annual Progress Monitoring.....	4
6. Staff training.....	4
7. Examiners	4
8. Independent Chair	5
9. Monitoring and Review.....	5
10. Student Complaints and Discipline	5
11. Awards	5
12. Appeals	5
13. Academic and Research Integrity	6

1. Purpose

1.1 Since September 2015 the University of Chester (UoC) has acted as the validating body for Wrexham University's (WU) (formerly known as Glyndŵr University) research degree provision for new entrants. The UoC's principles and regulations, and policies and procedures apply to WU students taking UoC research degrees. This policy outlines deviations from those procedures, including how they are managed.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 At WU:

- Head of Department will normally be taken to mean Head of Research Centre or Head of School as appropriate;
- the WU Research Degrees Committee will normally act as the Faculty;
- the Senior PGR Tutor for WU will normally provide the final sign off for most issues.

3. Admissions

3.1 WU applies UoC's admissions criteria. WU are responsible for the administration of applications. On conclusion of the WU application process, completed applications are reviewed by the UoC Senior PGR Tutor for WU for a final decision.

3.2 WU are responsible for all Tier 4 visa issues.

4. Supervisors

4.1 WU staff must meet the eligibility criteria in the **Supervision Policy** to be appointed as a Supervisor.

4.2 Students are normally supervised by WU staff but UoC staff can contribute to supervisory teams.

5. Annual Progress Monitoring

5.1 Annual Progress Monitoring outcomes are reported at WU's Research Degree Committee and UoC's PGR Awards Assessment Board.

5.2 If a University Progress Panel is required, it is held at WU or online. The Panel consists of:

- the chair of UoC Postgraduate Research Degrees subcommittee (or Deputy Chair) (as Chair);
- one academic from UoC;
- one academic from WU.

The Deputy Registrar from UoC and the WU Director of Student Planning and Administration (or nominees) attend. The WU Director of Student Planning and Administration (or nominee) services the Panel.

6. Staff training

6.1 WU delivers training to WU staff members on supervisor best practice, equality and diversity and internal examining.

7. Examiners

7.1 UoC formally appoints the Internal and External Examiners and the letter from WU Student Administration sets out the responsibilities of the External Examiner

7.2 WU confirms that the External Examiner has the right to work in the UK.

7.3 WU issues a contract to examiners and the letter must state that the examiners must "take instruction from UoC". WU is responsible for payment of fees and expenses. WU sets fees in agreement with UoC.

7.4 The Internal Examiner is normally a WU staff member but can be a UoC staff member.

7.5 WU arranges for vivas to be carried out in Welsh when this is requested.

8. Independent Chair

8.1. The Independent Chair is either:

- a Principal Supervisor at WU who has completed the Independent Chair training OR
- the Senior PGR Tutor for WU.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 The monitoring and review of WU's research programmes follows the procedures set out by UoC.

10. Student Complaints and Discipline

10.1 WU's complaints and discipline procedures must be followed and WU must inform UoC about complaints or discipline matters which reach the formal stage of the procedure. UoC can have a representative on panels convened under the formal stages of either procedure.

11. Awards

11.1 Students eligible for awards are reported at WU's Research Degrees Committee.

11.2 UoC's Awards Assessment Board makes the award.

12. Appeals

12.1 Appeals are dealt with under UoC's processes.

12.2 The PGR Academic Appeal Board relates to a WU student, it must include a WU representative.

13. Academic and Research Integrity

13.1 Suspected breaches of academic and/or research integrity are dealt with under UoC's processes, as amended by the operational agreement.

13.2 UoC and WU jointly conduct investigations into suspected breaches of academic and/or research integrity.

13.3 If required, the PGR Academic and Research Integrity Review Panel must include a WU representative.



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Ethical Approval for PGR Thesis Projects

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Quality & Standards Subcommittee
Owner:	Research Ethics Advisory Board
Contact:	W.Morris@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	28 June 2023
Next review:	June 2024

1. Purpose

A Student must obtain any required ethical approval for their research project, including any approval required from relevant external organisations. Further information is available in the [Research Governance Handbook](#).

2. Ethical Approval

2.1 Before starting the research project, the student and their supervisors must carry out an Analysis of Ethical Considerations.

2.2 If the Analysis of Ethical Considerations identifies that ethical approval for the project is required, the student must follow the procedures in the [Research Governance Handbook](#) and the [Research Integrity](#) information on Portal.

3. Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

3.1 Each Faculty has a research ethics committee (FREC) (or similar) which examines and approves project proposals from students. The Faculty can delegate this responsibility to academic departments.

3.2 Each FREC sets its own application procedures. These are available on each Faculty's Portal page:

- [Arts, Humanities and Social Science](#)
- [Health, Medicine and Society](#)
- [Science, Business and Enterprise](#)

3.3 The role and membership of a FREC is covered in the [Research Governance Handbook](#)

3.4 After considering the application, the FREC informs the student and the Principal Supervisor in writing:

- if ethical approval for the project has been granted;
- any conditions or limitations placed on the project;
- if approval is not granted, whether a modified proposal can be resubmitted;

- if further information or clarification is needed before a decision is made.

3.5 The FREC must meet as often as practicable to ensure that students are not unduly delayed.

3.6 The FREC's decision to approve or deny ethical approval is an academic judgement and is final. The student has no right of appeal. The student can submit a revised project proposal.

4. Approval by an External Organisation

4.1 See [Research Governance Handbook](#)

5. Research Conducted outside England

5.1 See [Research Governance Handbook](#)

6. Failure to Follow the Research Ethics Process for PGR Theses / Projects

6.1 If the student:

- does not follow the processes for obtaining ethical approval for the project;
- conducts research that needs ethical approval before approval has been given;
- breaches the approval terms

they may have broken University research regulations (see **Policy on Academic and Research Integrity**).



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

Academic and Research Integrity Policy

Version:	2.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Academic Services
Contact:	aq@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	14 September 2022
Next review:	September 2026

CONTENTS

SECTION 10: ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY	2
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PGR ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY PROCEDURE.....	2
2. MAINTAINING ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY	3
3. ALLEGATIONS OF BREACHES OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY.....	4
4. ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES	5
5. PGR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY REVIEW PANEL	6
6. CONDUCT OF THE HEARING.....	7
7. DECISIONS OF THE PGR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY REVIEW PANEL.....	8
<i>Allegations that are not proven</i>	8
<i>Allegations that are proven</i>	9
<i>Disciplinary matters</i>	11
8. APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE PGR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY REVIEW PANEL	12

SECTION 10: ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The University of Chester requires that students undertaking a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree create work that is substantially a product of their own original research and writing. It further requires that any research undertaken by students of the University is conducted ethically and with due regard to all applicable policies and procedures. Failure to adhere to these principles may constitute a breach of academic and research integrity. Where there is any suspicion that a student may be in breach of the PGR academic and research integrity policy, at any point during their period of registration or following the conferment of a postgraduate research degree, the procedure outlined below will be followed.

1. Introduction to the PGR Academic and Research Integrity Procedure

- 1.1. This procedure relates to students registered on the programmes listed in section 1 of this handbook.
- 1.2. Where a breach of academic and research integrity is alleged in work submitted for assessment in a module designated as 'taught' (for example, those relating to programmes leading to the award of a professional doctoral degree or a Master by Research degree), the procedure outlined in Handbook F, Section 6 shall apply.
- 1.3. In the event of a dispute about the designation of a module or whether the student is at either the taught or research stage of a programme, and therefore which procedure shall apply, the Registrar shall make a determination. That decision shall be final.
- 1.4. Throughout this procedure, the term 'work' refers to any documents, artefacts, presentations, performances, publications or other material that a student registered on a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree might produce during the course of their registration which is purported to be a product of their research and/or preparation for examination.
- 1.5. Any investigations that may be carried out to gather evidence of violations of academic and research integrity under this procedure will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the *Procedure of the Investigation of Research Misconduct*, published by the UK Research Integrity Office.
- 1.6. For the purposes of this procedure, a student will be regarded as being in breach of the PGR Academic and Research Integrity Policy if they act or behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the definitions of Academic and Research Integrity given in 2.1.
- 1.7. Throughout these procedures, where reference is made to specific post-holders, the line manager of that post-holder may nominate another person to act instead.

- 1.8. Throughout these procedures, indicative timescales are given in calendar days. However, where a deadline (either for the appellant or for the University) falls on a Saturday, Sunday, English Bank Holiday or any other day that the University is closed, the deadline is extended to 2pm the next weekday (i.e. Monday – Friday).

2. Maintaining Academic and Research Integrity

- 2.1. In order to adhere to the University's definition of academic and research integrity, students are expected to abide by the following conventions when completing work during their period of registration:
 - 2.1.1. Acknowledge all sources of information, knowledge and ideas used when completing work for submission by consistently and correctly using an acceptable referencing system;
 - 2.1.2. Produce work that is the product of their own, individual efforts. An exception to this is where a piece of work is the result of a joint or combined research effort (such as, for example, a jointly authored research paper), whereby all contributing parties should be appropriately acknowledged;
 - 2.1.3. Declare whether they have used work before in a previous research output or submission (whether successful or not) using an acceptable referencing system;
 - 2.1.4. Present accurate information and data that has been obtained appropriately and which is a fair representation of their own endeavours, knowledge and understanding;
 - 2.1.5. Adhere and comply with all applicable regulatory, legal and professional obligations and ethical requirements therein.
- 2.2. The University will make information on how to maintain academic and research integrity available to students in ways that are appropriate and accessible. However, at all times, it is the sole responsibility of the student to act in a way that is consistent with the principles set out in 2.1. and to seek advice and guidance if they are unclear.
- 2.3. The University draws no distinction between those who knowingly engaged in a practice constituting a breach of academic and research integrity and those who may have done so inadvertently by means of careless scholarship.

3. Allegations of Breaches of Academic and Research Integrity

- 3.1. Allegations of a student registered for a programme leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree being in breach of the academic and research integrity may be submitted by any member of the University, Examiner, research sponsor, research participant, member of the public or organisation.
- 3.2. Allegations should normally be made in writing to the relevant Head of Department as soon as possible after suspicion arises. Any delays in reporting should be explained. If the complainant is unable to ascertain who the relevant Head of Department is, the allegation should be sent directly to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards who shall forward the complaint.
- 3.3. Allegations should contain as much evidence as is available to the complainant.
- 3.4. The identity of the complainant will, as far as possible, remain confidential throughout the initial stages of investigation.
- 3.5. Allegations of breaches of academic and research integrity may arise from the conduct of the student and/or in relation to work created by the student. For example, this might include:
 - 3.5.1. Material created by the student for dissemination either internally or externally, where the student identifies that work as being produced as a result of research or scholarly activity being undertaken as part of their programme of study.
 - 3.5.2. Work submitted as part of the annual progress monitoring cycle.
 - 3.5.3. Thesis/dissertation/performance/exhibition presented for examination.
- 3.6. The University reserves the right to initiate an investigation, even if there is no specific complainant, but where there exists good cause to suspect that a breach of academic and research integrity might have occurred.
- 3.7. At any stage during a student's period of registration, the relevant Head of Department or the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) may require an electronic copy of any written work be submitted for checking via the University's plagiarism detection software.
- 3.8. Where a student is required to submit an electronic copy of their written work, failure to do so in a format that can be accepted by the University's plagiarism detection software for the purposes of checking, may constitute a disciplinary matter.

- 3.9. Where the allegation arises during the course of the examination process, the examination shall be suspended and the matter reported to the Head of Department. The point at which this occurs shall be determined by the Examiners alone:
- 3.9.1. In the event that a breach of academic and research integrity is suspected prior to the conduct of the *viva voce*, the Examiners may either suspend the examination at that point, or may continue with the *viva voce* if they are of the opinion that the candidate may be able to explain the aspects of their work which are thought to be problematic.
- 3.9.2. In the event that a breach of academic and research integrity is suspected during the conduct of the *viva voce*, the Examiners shall determine an appropriate point at which to conclude proceedings and suspend the examination.
- 3.9.3. Irrespective of the point at which the examination is suspended, the Examiners shall refrain from making any recommendation as to the outcome of the examination.

4. Academic Department Procedures

- 4.1. The Head of Department will consider any allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity and give preliminary consideration as to whether there is sufficient concern to warrant further investigation.
- 4.2. The Head of Department may, if they wish, require the student to submit an electronic copy of any written work for the purposes of checking via the University's plagiarism detection software (see 3.7. and 3.8.). Such a request will be without prejudice to the decision on whether to undertake further investigation.
- 4.3. The Head of Department will determine whether there is, *prima facie*, evidence of a breach of academic and research integrity in the work. They may take advice from any member of the University to make such a determination. Where the Head of Department believes that such evidence does exist, the student will be invited to discuss the matter.
- 4.4. Following the meeting with the student, the Head of Department will decide whether or not to refer the matter to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel. Where the matter is referred, the Head of Department will:
- 4.4.1. Write to the Student Casework Manager and request the convening of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel;

- 4.4.2. Provide a written report for the attention of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel outlining the nature of the allegation and the actions taken in respect of it; and
- 4.4.3. Supply a copy of any evidence used to substantiate the allegation.
- 4.5. In cases of plagiarism, where identical or very similar source material can be found in more than one location, an example source shall be regarded as evidence.
- 4.6. Where the allegation has arisen during the course of the examination process, the Head of department shall, in every case, refer the matter to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel following the procedure outlined at 4.4.

5. PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

- 5.1. Cases referred to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel (the Panel) will normally be scheduled for hearing within **28 days** of the request for the convening of a meeting.
- 5.2. The student shall be informed of the date of the hearing as soon as reasonably practical and, in all cases, will be given no less than **7 days'** notice.
- 5.3. The student shall be informed of their right to appear before the Panel and/or submit a written statement to be circulated to members of the Panel in advance of the hearing.
- 5.4. No less than **7 days** prior to the hearing, the student will be provided with a copy of the report of the Head of Department and any other documents submitted to the Panel. At the same time, the student shall also be notified of the names of any individuals invited to attend the hearing (see 5.13.)
- 5.5. If further evidence of a breach of academic and research integrity comes to light before or during the hearing, but after the initial disclosure of evidence to the student, the University reserves the right to take this additional evidence into account. Where this happens, the student must be provided with a copy of the additional evidence against them and be given an appropriate amount of time to prepare a defence should they wish to do so.
- 5.6. Other than through the presentation of their defence via the means explained in this procedure, students against whom an allegation has been made, or any other individual, must not seek to influence the Chair or members of the Panel or in any other way seek to sway the operation of the procedure described here. Any attempt to do so may constitute a disciplinary matter.
- 5.7. Neither the University nor the student may be legally represented at meetings of the Panel.

- 5.8. The student may be accompanied by a member of the University of Chester, who should normally be either a fellow student or an officer of Chester Students' Union. The name and status of any person accompanying the student must be notified to the Student Casework Manager no less than **2 days** prior to the hearing.
- 5.9. The student shall respond to the allegation personally and cannot delegate the response to a third party, nor shall a third party be permitted to attend the hearing on behalf of a student without their presence. No discussions will be entered into with a third party about the matter. Notwithstanding this, where the student is accompanied at the hearing in accordance with 5.8., the Chair of the Panel has discretion to permit that person to make a statement on behalf of the student.
- 5.10. The PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel will be composed as follows:
- 5.10.1. A Chair, who will normally be a Dean or an Associate Dean; and
 - 5.10.2. Two members of academic staff, at least one of whom shall appear on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List and neither of whom shall be from the department(s) in which the student's supervisors are based.
- 5.11. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards (or nominee) shall appoint a procedural advisor who shall also take a formal record of proceedings, but who shall not be a member of the Panel.
- 5.12. The Panel shall be deemed quorate when 100% of the membership is present.
- 5.13. Prior to the hearing, the Chair of the Panel shall normally request the attendance of the Head of Department and, where appropriate:
- 5.13.1. The internal examiner;
 - 5.13.2. Witnesses to any alleged breach of academic and research integrity;
 - 5.13.3. The complainant.

6. Conduct of the Hearing

- 6.1. The student may request a postponement of the hearing on one occasion only and for good cause. Such a request must be submitted to the Chair of the Panel via the Student Casework Manager no less than **24 hours** prior to the meeting.

- 6.2. Where the student fails to notify of their intention to attend by a deadline stipulated, or having given notice of their intention to attend, fails to do so, the hearing will normally go ahead in their absence.
- 6.3. The student may request that the hearing goes ahead in their absence.
- 6.4. In the event that a hearing has been conducted in the student's absence, where the student is later able to demonstrate good cause for their absence and failure to notify the Student Casework Manager in advance of the meeting, the Chair of the Panel has discretion to void any decisions made and convene a fresh meeting.
- 6.5. Where a student is able to demonstrate good cause for being unable to attend the University, at the discretion of the Chair, the hearing may be conducted via video link.
- 6.6. The hearing will normally be conducted in two parts:
 - 6.6.1. The first part shall be devoted to the presentation of the case, the hearing of the defence and questioning of relevant individuals. An audio recording of the first part shall normally be made.
 - 6.6.2. The second part shall be devoted to the deliberation of the Panel. The second part shall be conducted in private with only the Panel members and procedural advisor present. Only a written record shall normally be made.
- 6.7. If further evidence has come to light before or during the hearing which the student has not been provided with previously or has had insufficient time to consider it, the Chair of the Panel shall normally adjourn the hearing to a later date.

7. Decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

- 7.1. In respect of each allegation, the Panel shall determine either that it has been proven or not proven.

Allegations that are not proven

- 7.2. If an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found not proven, no penalty shall apply and the student must be returned to the position they were in before the allegation was made. The mechanism for doing this may vary depending on the stage that the student was at when the complaint was received.
- 7.3. Where the complaint did not originate from the annual progress monitoring procedures, nor the examiners, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the

decision. The Panel shall normally invite the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) to consider whether it would be appropriate to permit an extension to the student's registration at least equivalent in length to the period of time between the submission of the complaint and the decision of the Panel.

- 7.4. Where the complaint originated from the annual progress monitoring procedures, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision. Where appropriate, the student shall be given the opportunity to submit a new annual progress report for scrutiny. The Panel shall normally invite the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) to consider whether it would be appropriate to permit an extension to the student's registration at least equivalent in length to the period of time between the submission of the complaint and the decision of the Panel.
- 7.5. Where the complaint originated from the examiners, the student shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision and the examination shall recommence. The Panel shall also normally recommend to the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor that new examiners should be nominated in accordance with the procedure set out in this handbook.
- 7.6. Where the complaint was made following the conferment of a degree, the graduate shall receive a letter from the Chair of the Panel confirming the decision.

Allegations that are proven

- 7.7. If an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found proven, the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel shall determine an appropriate penalty. Such a penalty shall normally be determined by the stage that the student was at when the complaint was received.
- 7.8. In each case, where an allegation is found proven, on the advice of the Panel, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) shall issue a final written warning which may include any or all of the following (this shall not apply if the Panel recommends that the student's registration be terminated):
 - 7.8.1. A requirement to undertake some specified training;
 - 7.8.2. A requirement to comply with additional supervision requirements as specified by the Panel;
 - 7.8.3. A requirement to undertake actions specified by the Panel to compensate for harm;
 - 7.8.4. A requirement to use their best endeavours to retract their publications.
- 7.9. Where the complaint did not originate from the examiners, the Panel may:

- 7.9.1. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, not be permitted to upgrade their registration to a programme leading to the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; or
 - 7.9.2. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, have their registration downgraded to a programme leading to the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy and not be permitted to reapply for an upgrade at a later date; or
 - 7.9.3. (in addition to the final writing warning at 7.8.) recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student, registered on a programme leading to the award of a professional doctoral degree, not be permitted to progress to, or continue with, the research phase and be limited to the award of the degree of Master of Professional Studies, should they obtain sufficient credits within the maximum registration period permitted; or
 - 7.9.4. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board that the student's registration be terminated.
- 7.10. In addition to the provisions of 7.9., where the complaint originated from the annual progress monitoring process or the confirmation of target award process, if the Panel does not recommend the termination of the student's registration, it shall normally instruct the student to withdraw the piece of work in question and refer the matter back to the Independent Progress Assessment Panel.
- 7.11. Where the complaint originated from the examiners, the Panel may:
- 7.11.1. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the candidate be permitted to make alterations to the thesis and re-present it for examination. This outcome may only apply if, in the opinion of the Panel, the evidence presented makes it reasonable to assume that the allegation has arisen because of minor oversight and/or poor academic practice on the part of the candidate which can be easily rectified, normally within no more than one month;
 - 7.11.2. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the outcome of the examination should be to permit the candidate to undertake substantial revisions to the work and to make an application for the award on one occasion only, provided that the application is made no later than one calendar year from the date of the formal notification of the outcome;

- 7.11.3. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the outcome of the examination should be to permit the candidate to undertake substantial revisions to the work and to make an application for the degree of Master of Philosophy with a further viva examination, on one occasion only, provided that the application is made no later than one calendar year from the date of the formal notification of the outcome; or
- 7.11.4. recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the student's registration be terminated. In the case of a student registered for a professional doctoral degree, the Panel may determine their entitlement to the degree of Master of Professional Studies in the event that the candidate has already obtained sufficient credits.
- 7.12. In all cases where the Panel determines an outcome described in 7.11 the normal expectation is that the original Examination Panel will be invited to re-examine the candidate. However, at its discretion and providing sufficient justification, the Panel may recommend to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board that the original Examination Panel be dissolved and new examiners appointed in accordance with the procedure outlined in this handbook. Where this occurs, the Panel shall normally also recommend that the new Examination Panel only be informed that it is examining a resubmission, but not the reasons for that resubmission.
- 7.13. Where the complaint was made following the conferment of a degree, a report shall be made to Senate which may have recourse to the power to revoke the degree in accordance with the *Principles and Regulations*.

Disciplinary matters

- 7.14. Irrespective of whether or not the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel finds an allegation proven, where it considers that the student's actions or inactions may have brought the University into disrepute, it may refer the matter to the University Proctor for consideration under disciplinary procedures.
- 7.15. In instances where an allegation of a breach of academic and research integrity is found to have been proven, the decision to refer the matter to the University Proctor may be in addition to or in place of an academic penalty.

8. Appeals Against Decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel

- 8.1. The decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel are ones of academic judgement. A student or graduate may not therefore appeal against the decision on the ground of disagreement with the Panel's decision.
- 8.2. The grounds for appeal and the procedure to be followed is outlined in section 11 of this handbook.



University of
Chester

Quality and Standards Manual

PGR Academic Appeals Procedure

Version:	2.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Academic Services
Contact:	aqs@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	14 September 2022
Next review:	September 2026

CONTENTS

SECTION 11: POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE.....	2
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PGR ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE	2
2. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	3
3. GROUNDS FOR APPEAL.....	5
4. EXCLUSIONS FROM APPEAL	6
5. SUBMISSION OF AN ACADEMIC APPEAL	6
6. PRELIMINARY STAGE	8
7. REVIEW OF THE PRELIMINARY STAGE	10
8. INVESTIGATORY STAGE.....	10
9. HEARINGS OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD.....	12
10. OUTCOMES OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD	13
11. POWERS OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD	14
12. REVIEW OF THE DECISION OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD	15
13. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION	16
14. ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.....	16

SECTION 11: POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

The Postgraduate Research (PGR) Academic Appeals Procedure is intended to allow students of the University of Chester to raise concerns about their academic progress, where there is evidence to suggest that it is reasonable to do so. The procedure is designed to ensure that these concerns are fully considered and that, where appropriate, action is taken to deal with them.

The University strives to ensure that the academic experience of each of its students is positive and productive. However, where students do have concerns, it is important that these are directed appropriately. The PGR Academic Appeals Procedure is designed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve outcomes that are appropriate to their ability. However, recognising that there may be times when a student is dissatisfied with their experience which has not had a direct impact on their academic achievement, the University operates a comprehensive complaints policy.

1. Introduction to the PGR Academic Appeals Procedure

- 1.1. This procedure relates to students registered on the programmes listed in Section 1 of this Handbook.
- 1.2. Students registered for modules designated as 'taught' as part of their programme of study (e.g. those registered for programmes leading to the award of a professional doctoral degree) who wish to appeal an outcome relating to such a module are not covered by this procedure. Instead, they must follow the procedure outlined in Handbook F, Section 10. This also applies to students registered on the Master by Research.
- 1.3. In the event of a dispute about the designation of a module or whether the student is at either the taught or research stage of a programme, and therefore which procedure shall apply, the Registrar shall make a determination. That decision shall be final.
- 1.4. It is in the student's interest to raise concerns with either their Principal Supervisor, or their Senior Faculty Postgraduate Tutor prior to submitting an appeal. This is especially true in cases where the student believes that there is clear evidence of an administrative error which could be corrected without the need to submit a formal appeal.
- 1.5. This procedure is designed to enable students to raise concerns relating to:
 - 1.5.1. Decisions of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel;
 - 1.5.2. Decisions of the University PGR Progress Panel;

- 1.5.3. Decisions of the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards and Progression Board;
- 1.5.4. Decisions of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel; and
- 1.6. When a student or former student of the University submits an appeal, they are referred to as 'the appellant'.
- 1.7. The PGR academic appeals procedure is primarily evidence based. It is the appellant's responsibility alone to provide sufficient independent documentary evidence to substantiate the contents of their appeal. An appeal is highly unlikely to succeed if no suitable evidence is provided. The University will publish separate guidance on the type of evidence that appellants may wish to consider submitting.
- 1.8. Throughout these procedures, where reference is made to specific post-holders, the line manager of that post-holder may nominate another person to act instead.
- 1.9. Throughout these procedures, indicative timescales are given in calendar days. However, where a deadline (either for the appellant or for the University) falls on a Saturday, Sunday, English Bank Holiday or any other day that the University is closed, the deadline is extended to 2pm the next weekday (i.e. Monday – Friday).

2. Rights and Responsibilities

- 2.1. Any decision that is the subject of an academic appeal remains in force while the appeal is being considered and the appellant must abide by that decision until the PGR academic appeals procedure has been completed. Where an award has been conferred upon an appellant, they must not attend any award ceremony until the PGR academic appeal is completed. Attendance at a ceremony will invalidate the appeal and all decisions will stand.
- 2.2. The University undertakes that any student who submits an appeal under this procedure will not be academically disadvantaged for having done so. Any student who believes that they have been disadvantaged by submitting an academic appeal at any point should contact the Head of Academic Quality and Standards immediately.
- 2.3. The University accepts that any student who submits an PGR academic appeal under this procedure will do so in good faith and that any statements made in writing or verbally are truthful. However, it reserves the right to investigate the authenticity of any documents submitted in support of an academic appeal. Any student found to have deliberately attempted to deceive, manipulate or in any way interfere with the operation of this procedure will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 2.4. All members of staff who have been involved in the investigation, management or administration of an academic appeal will observe the requirements for confidentiality. The

appellant has the right to restrict the extent to which any part of their appeal submission is disclosed outside of Academic Services and to the Academic Appeals Board. However, appellants exercising this right must be aware that doing so may impair the full investigation of the case.

- 2.5. As long as the appellant has not had their studies at the University terminated or has otherwise completed their programme of study, they will retain the same rights of access to the resources and support of the University as any other student. Following submission of an appeal, communication which directly relates to the substance of that appeal must be channelled through the Student Casework team in Academic Services.
- 2.6. The University will use its best endeavours to ensure that academic appeals are dealt with in a timely way. If the appellant meets all of the deadlines outlined in these procedures, a decision by the Academic Appeals Board should normally be made within 90 days of the date of submission. Where any delay is caused by the University, the appellant will be kept informed and reasons provided.
- 2.7. To facilitate the swift handling of appeals, communication will be to the appellant's University of Chester email address and will be copied to one other alternate email address specified by the appellant. It is the appellant's responsibility to check their email regularly during the appeals process. The University will regard any email sent to an appellant by 4pm (Monday-Friday) as having been received on the same day. The appellant may indicate that they would like to receive letters by post in addition.
- 2.8. If at any point in the conduct of an appeal under these procedures it appears that other students who may or may not have appealed have been affected by an identified irregularity, this will be reported to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards and the Deputy Registrar who shall be empowered to instruct that appeals are considered on behalf of all students believed to have been affected.
- 2.9. Appellants may be referred to an alternative procedure (e.g. complaints, professional suitability, disciplinary etc.) where their appeal submission, supporting evidence or outcome of any investigation into the appeal, suggests that it would be prudent to do so. Such a decision may be made by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards at any point during the preliminary or investigatory stages or by the Academic Appeals Board if the case is sent to it for consideration.
- 2.10. The University will not be liable for any expenses an appellant might incur arising out of an academic appeal, irrespective of whether the appeal is successful or not.
- 2.11. The appellant is permitted to withdraw their appeal at any point until 5pm on the day prior to its hearing by the Academic Appeals Board. After this time, an appeal may not be

withdrawn. In the event of the appeal being upheld, the appellant must abide by the decision of the Examiners which shall be determined by the Assessment Review Board.

3. Grounds for Appeal

- 3.1. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Independent Progress Assessment Panel** to decline to upgrade their registration to PhD or to downgrade their registration from PhD to MPhil or of the **University PGR Progress Panel** to terminate studies (only once that decision has been reported to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board):
 - 3.1.1. That there were procedural or administrative irregularities in the conduct of the Annual Progress Monitoring process generally or the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or University PGR Progress Panel specifically;
 - 3.1.2. That there is evidence of bias or unlawful discrimination on the part of one or more of the members of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or University PGR Progress Panel;
 - 3.1.3. That there is some **new** evidence of satisfactory progress which, for compelling reasons, could not have been made available to the Independent Progress Review panel at an earlier stage.
 - 3.1.4. That there were factors which materially affected the appellant's performance, provided that these circumstances were not known to the Independent Progress Review Panel **and** there are compelling reasons why the appellant failed to notify the Independent Progress Review Panel or University PGR Progress Panel in advance.
- 3.2. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board** on the following grounds only:
 - 3.2.1. That there is evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity in the conduct of the examination process;
 - 3.2.2. That there is evidence of bias or unlawful discrimination on the part of one or more of the Examiners;
 - 3.2.3. That there were factors which materially affected the appellant's performance, provided that these circumstances were not known to the Examiners **and** there are compelling reasons why the appellant failed to notify the Examiners in advance.

- 3.3. A student may appeal against a decision of the **PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel** on the following grounds only:
- 3.3.1. That there is evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity in the conduct of the published PGR academic and research integrity procedures;
 - 3.3.2. That the appellant, for compelling reasons that can be substantiated, was unable to mount a defence of the allegation of a breach of academic or research integrity.

4. Exclusions from Appeal

- 4.1. Students may not appeal on the basis of unsatisfactory or poor quality supervision unless there is clear and compelling independent evidence which suggests that the negligence of one or more members of the supervisory team may have had a material impact on the student's performance. In the normal course of events, the University expects that students will raise concerns about supervision at the point that these arise using one of the confidential mechanisms for doing so.
- 4.2. Students may not appeal a decision of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel to require a further review within a specified period of time. Such a decision is regarded solely as an academic judgement.
- 4.3. Students may not appeal on the basis of circumstances which they might reasonably have foreseen and taken steps to avoid. For example, the University will not normally consider an appeal where the student encountered IT problems.

5. Submission of an Academic Appeal

- 5.1. A student may only submit an appeal after formal notification of the decision they are appealing against.
- 5.2. In all cases, appeal submissions must be received by the University no later than **10 days** after the date of such notification.
- 5.3. Academic Appeals may be submitted as email attachments to academicappeals@chester.ac.uk. Where an appellant chooses to submit an appeal by email, it must meet the following requirements:
 - 5.3.1. Where hardcopy documentary evidence is provided in support of an appeal (e.g. medical certificates, letters etc.), they must be attached as **full colour scans**.

- 5.3.2. It is the appellant's responsibility to be able to produce the original documents submitted in support of an academic appeal if requested to do so by the University. Failure to produce such original documents will invalidate the appeal.
- 5.4. Academic Appeals may be submitted in hardcopy to one of the following authorised receiving departments:
 - 5.4.1. Academic Services (by post only)
 - 5.4.2. Chester Students' Union (in person only)
 - 5.4.3. Disability and Inclusion (located in Student Services)
- 5.5. Irrespective of the method chosen to submit, it is the appellant's responsibility to ensure safe receipt of an appeal submission.
 - 5.5.1. If emailed or submitted to the University in person, the appellant should expect to receive an acknowledgement from Academic Services within 7 days.
 - 5.5.2. Where the appellant chooses to post their appeal submission, they are strongly advised to use a suitable tracking service.
 - 5.5.3. Appellant's submitting appeals from outside the UK are likely to find it more convenient to make their submission via email. However, if this is not possible, the appellant is advised to notify Academic Services to ensure that the submission is not inadvertently considered late.
- 5.6. Where it is not possible to provide all of the supporting documentation with the appeal submission, the appellant must clearly indicate this and undertake to provide it separately, normally within no more than 10 days.
- 5.7. The Student Casework Manager will receive appeal submissions.
- 5.8. Where an appeal is submitted late it will be considered only if the Student Casework Manager determines that not doing so would be unreasonable in the circumstances. An appellant who submits a late appeal must clearly explain why it was not possible to adhere to the relevant deadline.
- 5.9. The appellant may give consent for their appeal to be discussed with a nominated third party by indicating this on the Academic Appeal Form.
- 5.10. Where the appellant supplies supporting evidence that is not in English, it is their responsibility to arrange for translation by a qualified, certified translator with copies appropriately marked.

6. Preliminary Stage

- 6.1. The preliminary stage will be conducted by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards.
- 6.2. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards will review the submission and may make some limited investigations, only to the extent of verifying information contained in the appeal.
- 6.3. Following review of the submission, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards will determine that either:
 - 6.3.1. There are sufficient reasons to accept the submission for further investigation; or
 - 6.3.2. The appeal should be rejected.
- 6.4. A decision to reject the appeal at this stage may be based on any of the following:
 - 6.4.1. The appeal has been submitted outside of the stipulated deadline, the appellant has not given a sufficient explanation for the delay and nothing in the submission gives cause to suspect that it would be unreasonable to declare it ineligible;
 - 6.4.2. The appeal is based wholly on disagreement with academic judgement;
 - 6.4.3. The appeal is not accompanied by appropriate or relevant independent documentary evidence, the appellant has not indicated that this is to follow and/or the appellant has failed to provide documentary evidence requested by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards by the stipulated deadline;
 - 6.4.4. The appeal is based wholly on factors which were outside of the University's control and which the appellant might reasonably have been expected to foresee and/or take reasonable steps to avoid.
- 6.5. If the appellant has indicated that further documentary evidence is to follow, it will normally be expected within **10 days** of the appeal submission deadline. Where the appellant cannot meet this deadline, it is their responsibility to notify the Student Casework Manager and suggest a reasonable deadline.
- 6.6. The appellant alone is responsible for the content of their appeal submission and any accompanying documentary evidence. However, where it is reasonable to do so based on the full submission received, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards may delay the decision and invite the appellant to provide further documentary evidence. Where this happens the appellant will normally be invited to supply evidence within **10 days**, as set out in 6.5.

- 6.7. The decision of the Head of Academic Quality and Standards will be communicated to the appellant normally within **7 days** of the deadline for the appeal submission. If the appeal had been submitted late, or if the appellant was asked to provide further evidence, the decision will be communicated within **14 days** of the date of the submission or receipt of evidence.
- 6.8. If the decision is to **reject** the appeal at this stage, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards (or nominee) will:
- 6.8.1. Write to the appellant giving reasons for the decision to reject the appeal;
 - 6.8.2. Explain any additional information that was requested of the department/service which was the subject of the appeal at the preliminary stage;
 - 6.8.3. Explain whether there might be a different procedure that the appellant can use to pursue the case (for example, the Complaints Procedure);
 - 6.8.4. Explain the review procedure and the grounds upon which an appellant whose appeal has been rejected at the preliminary stage can request a review of that decision;
 - 6.8.5. Explain the procedure for requesting a Completion of Procedures Statement if the appellant does not believe that they have grounds to request a review; and
 - 6.8.6. Offer the opportunity of a telephone conversation or, in some circumstances, a meeting with the appellant within **28 days**. Any such conversation or meeting will be to clarify the reasons why the appeal was rejected and is not an opportunity to have the decision reviewed or overturned.
- 6.9. If the decision is to **accept the appeal for further investigation**, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards (or nominee) will:
- 6.9.1. Write to the appellant to explain that the appeal is to be investigated further and, wherever possible, give an estimated date when the case might be heard by the Academic Appeals Board;
 - 6.9.2. Explain the possible outcomes if the Academic Appeals Board was to uphold the appeal, where it seems that the appellant's expectations go beyond what the Academic Appeals Board might reasonably be expected to do.

7. Review of the Preliminary Stage

- 7.1. Following the rejection of an appeal at the preliminary stage, the appellant may request a review of that decision by a Faculty Dean, who shall be entirely independent of the appellant.
- 7.2. A request for a review of the decision at the preliminary stage may only be made on the following grounds:
 - 7.2.1. That the preliminary stage was not conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in section 6; and/or
 - 7.2.2. That new evidence has come to light which could not have been disclosed in time to be considered at the preliminary stage.
- 7.3. An appellant wishing to request a review of the decision at the preliminary stage must do so in writing to the Student Casework Manager within **10 days** of receiving the letter outlining the reasons why the appeal was rejected.
- 7.4. The Faculty Dean will consider the request and determine either:
 - 7.4.1. The decision to reject the appeal at the preliminary stage should stand and that a Completion of Procedures Statement should be issued; or
 - 7.4.2. The decision to reject the appeal at the preliminary stage should be overturned and that the case should be accepted for further investigation.
- 7.5. The decision of the Faculty Dean will be communicated to the appellant, normally within **21 days** of the date that the request was received.

8. Investigatory Stage

- 8.1. The investigation will normally be carried out by the Student Casework Manager.
- 8.2. Where necessary, the Investigating Officer will contact the appellant to clarify any aspect of the appeal submission at any point during the investigatory stage.
- 8.3. The nature of the investigation will depend on the contents of the appeal submission. However, the following may be regarded as indicative of what might be requested (this list is not exhaustive):

- 8.3.1. Copies of letters outlining the decision of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board;
 - 8.3.2. Copies of reports compiled by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or the Examiners;
 - 8.3.3. Statements from the Chair of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or Examination Panel;
 - 8.3.4. Evidence of correspondence between the appellant and their supervisors;
 - 8.3.5. Evidence of supervisory meetings;
 - 8.3.6. Copies of reports produced during the annual progress monitoring cycle;
 - 8.3.7. Reports from the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel.
- 8.4. Where appropriate, and subject to the provisions of 2.4, the appeal submission may be forwarded to the relevant Head of Department for a general response. However, where the appellant has indicated that some part of their appeal or supporting evidence should not be disclosed, they may opt to provide a summary instead. The Student Casework Manager may consult with the appellant to determine what may be disclosed.
- 8.5. Departments or individuals asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission will be asked to do so within a reasonable amount of time which shall not normally exceed **30 days**. Where additional time is requested, reasons for this will be communicated to the appellant.
- 8.6. If a department or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission fails to do so within a reasonable amount of time, the Academic Appeals Board will be notified. The Academic Appeals Board may draw whatever conclusions it wishes from a failure to respond or it may compel members of the University to respond under powers delegated to it by Senate.
- 8.7. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Student Casework Manager will compile a full case file, including the appeal submission and evidence gathered during the investigation and forward it to the appellant. The appellant will also be advised of the date that the Academic Appeals Board will hear the case.

9. Hearings of the Academic Appeals Board

- 9.1. The Academic Appeals Board operates with the full delegated authority of Senate. This means that it has the power to require staff and students of the University to make written submissions, give evidence and answer any questions.
- 9.2. The Academic Appeals Board will meet as frequently as necessary to deal with cases referred to it in a timely way.
- 9.3. The members of the Academic Appeals Board will be appointed by Senate for a two year term. Retiring members may be re-nominated.
- 9.4. Each Academic Appeals Board will be composed as follows:
 - 9.4.1. A Chair, who will normally be a Dean or an Associate Dean;
 - 9.4.2. Normally two members of academic staff, at least one of whom shall appear on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List.
- 9.5. The Board shall be deemed quorate when 75% of the membership (including the Chair) is present.
- 9.6. Wherever possible no member of the Academic Appeals Board should work in the same department as the appellant's Principal Supervisor. Members of the Board will be asked to declare any perceived interest which could give rise to conflict at the beginning of the meeting and this will be recorded. If deemed appropriate by the Chair, the member will absent themselves from any relevant areas of discussion.
- 9.7. The Student Casework Manager or nominee will attend the Academic Appeals Board to give regulatory advice and take a record of the meeting, but will not be a member of the Board.
- 9.8. Other than through the presentation of their case via the means explained in this procedure, appellants must not seek to influence the Chair or members of the Academic Appeals Board or in any other way seek to sway the operation of the Academic Appeals Procedure. Any attempt to do so may invalidate the appeal and constitute a disciplinary matter.
- 9.9. Neither the University nor the appellant may be legally represented at meetings of the Academic Appeals Board. However, the Academic Appeals Board may take advice from a member (or members) of staff of the University with appropriate clinical expertise or from

others with such expertise relating solely to the interpretation of medical or other evidence supplied in support of an academic appeal. Any such advice is to be requested and received in writing and made available to the appellant.

- 9.10. The Academic Appeals Board will consider each case individually and on its own merits.
- 9.11. The Academic Appeals Board will not be bound by legal rules of evidence nor by previous decisions and in all cases will have due regard to whether a decision that is the subject of an appeal was reasonable in all the circumstances.
- 9.12. The appellant is permitted to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a student of the University or by an Officer of the Chester Students' Union only.
- 9.13. The appellant will be permitted a reasonable amount of time, not normally exceeding 30 minutes, in which to present their case to the Academic Appeals Board.
- 9.14. The members of the Academic Appeals Board may ask whatever questions of the appellant as they deem relevant to determine the facts of the case.
- 9.15. At the end of questioning by members of the Academic Appeals Board, the appellant will be permitted a reasonable amount of time, not normally exceeding 10 minutes, in which to sum up their case and will then withdraw.
- 9.16. Where possible, the Academic Appeals Board may give an indication of their findings to the appellant in person following its deliberations.

10. Outcomes of the Academic Appeals Board

- 10.1. For each case, the Academic Appeals Board will decide either:
 - 10.1.1. The appeal should be upheld in part or in full or;
 - 10.1.2. The appeal should be dismissed and the original decision should stand.
- 10.2. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides in accordance with 10.1.1. it will determine a remedy using the procedure at section 11. The appellant will receive a letter from the Student Casework Manager within **14 days** of the decision containing the following:
 - 10.2.1. Where necessary, the reasons for the decision in relation to each part of the appeal submission; and
 - 10.2.2. Details of the remedy decided upon by the Academic Appeals Board.

- 10.3. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides in accordance with 10.1.2. it will give full reasons for the decision. The appellant will receive a letter from the Student Casework Manager within **14 days** of the decision containing the following:
- 10.3.1. The reasons for the decision in relation to each part of the appeal submission;
 - 10.3.2. Advice on whether there might be a different procedure that the appellant can use to pursue the case (for example, the Complaints Procedure);
 - 10.3.3. An explanation of the review procedure and the grounds upon which an appellant whose appeal has been dismissed can request a review of that decision;
 - 10.3.4. An explanation of the procedure for requesting a Completion of Procedures Statement if the appellant does not believe that they have grounds to request a review; and
 - 10.3.5. An offer of a telephone conversation or, in some circumstances, a meeting with the appellant within **28 days**. Any such conversation or meeting will be to clarify the reasons why the appeal was rejected and is not an opportunity to have the decision reviewed or overturned.

11. Powers of the Academic Appeals Board

- 11.1. The Academic Appeals Board operates with the full delegated authority of Senate. Therefore, when it decides to uphold an appeal, it can impose whatever remedy it deems is reasonable to resolve the matter, **except it can never** interfere with the academic judgement of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel, the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board (representing the judgement of the Examiners) or the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel.
- 11.2. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against a decision of the **Independent Progress Review Panel, University PGR Progress Panel** or the **Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board**, it will determine an appropriate remedy to be overseen by the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor and the Deputy Registrar (or nominees).
- 11.3. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against a decision of the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel, it will determine whether the original Panel should be reconvened to review its decision or whether a new Panel should hear the case afresh.

12. Review of the decision of the Academic Appeals Board

- 12.1. Following notification of the decision of the Academic Appeals Board, where the decision was to dismiss the appeal, the appellant may request a review of that decision. In the event that the appeal was upheld in part, a review may be requested only of those parts which were not upheld.
- 12.2. In order to request a review of the academic appeal, the appellant must be able to demonstrate one or both of the following:
 - 12.2.1. There is evidence of some procedural or administrative irregularity in the operation of the PGR Academic Appeals Procedure;
 - 12.2.2. New evidence has come to light which could not have been disclosed in time to be considered by the Academic Appeals Board.
- 12.3. An appellant wishing to request a review of an academic appeal must do so in writing to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards within **10 days** of receiving the full outcome of the Academic Appeals Board.
- 12.4. If, on receipt of the request for review, if the Head of Academic Quality and Standards identifies any potential conflict of interest, a Dean of an Academic Faculty will be asked to undertake the review.
- 12.5. On receipt of the request for a review of an academic appeal, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards will review only the conduct of the PGR Academic Appeals Procedure and/or the evidence submitted. The review is not an opportunity for the case to be re-heard and consequently the circumstances which lead to the decision that was subject to appeal will not normally be considered.
- 12.6. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards will consider the request and determine either:
 - 12.6.1. The decision of the Academic Appeals Board to dismiss the appeal should stand and that a Completion of Procedures Statement should be issued; or
 - 12.6.2. The case shall be reconsidered by the Academic Appeals Board.

- 12.7. The decision of the Head of Academic Quality and Standards will be communicated to the appellant, normally within **21 days** of the date that the request was received.
- 12.8. Where the Head of Academic Quality and Standards decides in accordance with 12.6.2., the case will normally be heard by a new Academic Appeals Board.

13. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

- 13.1. If an appellant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review their case. In order to do this, the appellant must normally have been issued with a Completion of Procedures Statement.
- 13.2. The University will automatically issue a Completion of Procedures Statement when an appellant has exhausted all of the University's internal procedures. Normally, this will only be following a review either of the preliminary stage or following the Academic Appeals Board.
- 13.3. An appellant is entitled to request a Completion of Procedures Statement at an earlier point provided that they confirm their understanding that they do not have grounds to request a review according to these procedures.
- 13.4. Further and specific details about the OIA can be obtained from its website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

14. Enhancement Opportunities

- 14.1. The University will use information gathered throughout the conduct of appeals to determine areas of its practice that might be enhanced.
- 14.2. Where the need arises, the Academic Appeals Board will write to the Head of Academic Quality and Standards and, where appropriate, other office holders to draw attention to any specific matters that may require attention or to general issues of policy that the University may wish to reflect on.
- 14.3. Academic Services (Student Casework) will record details of each appeal received, its nature and the outcome. Statistical data will be compiled on an annual basis in order to provide reports to Senate. Such reports will not include any personally identifiable information.



Quality and Standards Manual

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

Version:	2.0
Approved by:	
Owner:	Academic Services
Contact:	aqs@chester.ac.uk
Effective from:	14 September 2022
Next review:	September 2026

CONTENTS

SECTION 12: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	2
1. EVALUATION AND REVIEW.....	2
2. PARTNERSHIPS.....	2
<i>Partnership approval process</i>	<i>3</i>

SECTION 12: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

The University is committed to ensuring that its postgraduate research programmes remain rigorous and relevant in acknowledgement of their unique status as the highest academic qualifications that it is able to bestow. The quality assurance framework underpinning these programmes is necessarily rigorous, yet proportionate. This section sets out the University's approach to assuring itself of the quality of the programmes it offers.

1. Evaluation and review

- 1.1. The University requires that each of the programmes it offers is subject to regular evaluation and review. Formally, this is done on an annual basis via reports to Boards of Studies.
- 1.2. In the case of the taught phase of professional doctoral, Handbook D.ii.b sets out the procedure and timescale to be followed.
- 1.3. In the case of the Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy programmes and the research phase of professional doctoral programmes and the Master by Research, it is acknowledged that the programme of study is significantly tailored towards the needs of each individual student. Nevertheless, it is important that each Faculty is able to assure itself as to the state of the research environment to which it admits postgraduate research students.
- 1.4. The procedure for conducting annual monitoring of postgraduate research degree programmes is set out in Handbook D.ii.c. Briefly, it requires academic departments and faculties to reflect on the following:
 - 1.4.1. Recruitment
 - 1.4.2. Progress and submissions
 - 1.4.3. Resources and environment
- 1.5. Reports will be required at departmental level and then synthesised into a Faculty overview report to be scrutinised by each Board of Studies. Once approved by the Board of Studies, reports will be submitted to the Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee.

2. Partnerships

- 2.1. The University values the richness of the experience that its partners can offer to students who wish to pursue a postgraduate research degree. There are presently two models of engagement with partner institutions in the delivery of postgraduate research programmes:
 - 2.1.1. Academic partnership: where the University assures itself of the suitability of the research environment at the premises of its partner and permits staff employed by its partner to undertake the full range of supervision and management responsibilities outlined in this handbook.

- 2.1.2. Agency partnership: where by the University assures the research environment at the premises of its partner, but where the University retains operational responsibility for the supervision of students at the partner institution. This does not preclude employees of the partner institution from being nominated to a supervisory team; however in this arrangement, the Principal Supervisor must always be an employee of the University.

Partnership approval process

- 2.2. The University's full process for partner approvals is set out in Handbook C.ii.
- 2.3. Where an existing partner wishes to offer postgraduate research degree programmes it must, in the first instance, provide the relevant Faculty Management Group with a report outlining its research environment. This is likely to include details of:
 - 2.3.1. Research seminars offered
 - 2.3.2. Support for staff/students to attend relevant conferences
 - 2.3.3. Discipline specific resources for the conduct of research
 - 2.3.4. Availability of training opportunities
 - 2.3.5. Opportunities for research support for students
 - 2.3.6. Existing research collaborations with other organisations
 - 2.3.7. (if proposing an academic partnership) qualifications of staff in relation to the criteria for Principal and Secondary supervisors outlined in section 4 of this Handbook.
 - 2.3.8. (if proposing an academic partnership) how the partner institution will manage postgraduate research in adherence with the provisions of this handbook
- 2.4. If, following consideration of this report, the Faculty Management Group wishes to proceed with the proposal, advice should be taken from the External & Professional Programmes Manager to determine what further steps are required.