

Title: Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students
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2Q: Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students

Introduction

1. Nottingham Trent University awards the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to registered students who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research at Southampton Solent University (the University).
2. Whilst the regulations have been approved by Nottingham Trent University, the responsibility for the implementation and application of the regulations resides with the University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) which reports to and is accountable to the Nottingham Trent University Research Degrees Committee (NTRDC) and the Southampton Solent University's Academic Board. The University also has the power to award PhDs by published works. These are only available to staff of the University and are subject to separate regulations.
3. These regulations have been designed to comply with the QAA UK Quality Code - Chapter B11: Research degrees and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

Principles

4. Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study, subject to the requirement that the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners. The submission may be in the form of a final thesis or by published work, artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context. All proposed research programmes will be considered for research degree registration on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
5. All the University's programmes of research (and the regulations that govern them) are underpinned by a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. In particular, all funded research opportunities must always be open to competition.
6. Following an approved programme of supervised research, an MPhil is awarded to either:
 - i. a student who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the

chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners; or

- ii. a student who, having produced published work, artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context, has presented that material and defended the commentary by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

7. Following an approved programme of supervised research, a PhD is awarded to either:

- i. a student who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
- ii. a student who, having produced published work, artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge, has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

8. In the case of the award of either an MPhil or PhD, successful students will have also met the QAA qualification descriptor as set out in its FHEQ.

9. The University encourages co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards. Such co-operation is intended to:

- i. encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
- ii. extend the student's own experience and perspectives of the work;
- iii. provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
- iv. be mutually beneficial; and
- v. enable the student to become a member of a research community (where appropriate).

10. Co-operation with one or more bodies external to the University may be formal or informal. Formal co-operation is known as collaboration and will normally require financial support for the project from the Collaborating Establishment and/or use by the student of its facilities and other resources, including supervision.

11. In such cases a formal letter from the Collaborating Establishment confirming the agreed arrangements should be submitted with the application, except where collaboration is an integral part of the project (as for instance with NERC/EPSRC CASE awards). The name(s) of the Collaborating Establishment(s) will appear on the student's thesis and degree certificate.

12. Informal co-operation need not require financial support for the project but could allow the student access to facilities and resources. In both cases, however, it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies (DoS) to ensure that prior permission is obtained for the use of necessary facilities, resources and access from the relevant persons at the chosen establishment(s) before embarking on the research project. All such agreements must be reported to the RDC as part of the application for project approval.

Applications for admission to read for a research degree

13. An individual may apply to be admitted to read for a research degree:
 - i. Master of Philosophy;
 - ii. Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy; or
 - iii. Doctor of Philosophy*.

* Direct registration to PhD will be exceptional.
14. An applicant for admission to read for a research degree should normally hold a first or second class honours degree of a UK University or a qualification which is regarded by NTRDC and RDC as equivalent to such an honours degree.
15. An applicant not meeting the 'certificated' requirement set out above may be considered on his/her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, the Hub Scrutiny Panel should look for evidence of the student's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment may be taken into consideration.
16. In addition to the requirements set out above, a Hub Scrutiny Panel may make admission dependent upon additional prior qualifications that must be published in advance.
17. The application for admission should set out the form of the student's intended submission and the proposed methods of assessment.
18. Except where permission has been given for the thesis and the oral examination to be in another language, the Hub Scrutiny Panel must satisfy itself that the student has sufficient command of the English language to complete satisfactorily the programme of work and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Any student for whom English is not a first language should, before being offered a place, have achieved an overall IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 6.5 with minimum sub-scores of 6.0 in all component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking) or an overall TOEFL score of 560 (paper-based), 220 (computer-based) or 94-95 (internet-based - IBT) with a minimum score of 22 in each of the four component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking). Students who have studied a first degree or higher degree and answered their examinations in English will be exempt. Permission to present a thesis in another language should normally be sought at the time of application for registration from the Chair of RDC. Permission to present a thesis in a language other than English will normally only be given if the subject matter of the thesis involves language and related studies.
19. Once admission has been approved, a student will be registered for one of the following:
 - i. Master of Philosophy; or
 - ii. Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy; or
 - iii. Doctor of Philosophy.

Approval of applications for admission to read for a research degree

20. Applications for admission must be approved by the appropriate Hub Scrutiny Panel.

21. The assessment of the suitability of an applicant will involve scrutiny by the Hub Scrutiny Panel for formal approval. Membership of the Hub Scrutiny Panel will be confirmed at RDC on an annual basis. All applicants are required to have a formal interview prior to any offer of a place to study. The interview panel will consist of a minimum of two members of staff; one member of the Hub Scrutiny Panel and normally the potential Director of Studies.
22. The Panel must satisfy themselves that:
 - i. the student is suitably qualified and, in the case of full-time students, has access to adequate financial support;
 - ii. appropriate resources are in place;
 - iii. the student is embarking on research in a field that will yield a viable research project and for which expert supervision is available;
 - iv. the University is able to provide appropriate facilities for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme;
 - v. an initial training needs analysis has been undertaken; and
 - vi. that there has been an appropriate preliminary allocation of DoS and other supervisors.
23. The Research Degrees Committee may under exceptional circumstances approve an application from an individual proposing to work outside the UK, provided that:
 - i. there is satisfactory evidence as to the facilities available for the research both in the University and abroad; and
 - ii. the arrangements proposed for supervision enable frequent and substantial contact between the student and the supervisor(s) based in the UK, including adequate face-to-face contact with the supervisor(s). A full-time student should normally spend not less than an average of six weeks per year at the University; a part-time student should normally spend not less than an average of three weeks per year at the University.
24. The Research Degrees Committee may under exceptional circumstances agree to supervisory arrangements that depart from the above requirement providing it is satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place for high quality remote supervision utilising technologies such as video-calls. Such arrangements must be carefully scrutinised and reviewed during each annual monitoring cycle and the student must be informed, at the point of admission, that the University reserves the right to enforce the attendance requirements where there are reasonable doubts about the efficacy of the remote arrangements.
25. An induction programme will be organised for all new research students.
26. Research students are normally required to follow a programme of related studies approved or specified by the Hub Scrutiny Panel as identified by the training needs analysis. This should be designed to ensure competence in research methods and /or knowledge related to the subject of the thesis. Hub Scrutiny Panels have the power to decline approval of projects not incorporating such a programme. Where the programme of related studies includes an approved programme of studies leading to another award e.g. PGC in Research - and a student is registered for that programme and fulfils all its requirements - he/she may be recommended for that award in addition to the degree of MPhil or PhD.

27. A research degree student may undertake an integrated programme of work which, as well as the research element, includes a programme of postgraduate study on which his/her performance is formally assessed. Such a programme of study should not occupy more than one third of the total period of registration and should complement the research.
28. A student may register on a full-time or a part-time basis. A full-time student should normally devote on average at least 35 hours per week to the research; a part-time student on average at least 17.5 hours per week. A full-time student may undertake a small amount of paid work, either in term-time or in the holidays, provided that it is compatible with the student's full-time studies and that the total demand on the student's time is no more than six hours.
29. Where a candidate or their sponsor wishes the research and thesis to remain confidential for a period after completion of work, application for approval shall normally be made at the time of admission to the Hub Scrutiny Panel.

The registration period

30. The minimum and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

MPhil	Minimum	Maximum
Full-time *	18 months	36 months
Part-time	30 months	72 months
PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration & including that period of MPhil registration)	Minimum	Maximum
Full-time *	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months
PhD (direct)	Minimum	Maximum
Full-time *	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months

* Including any writing-up period.

31. The University does not stipulate normal periods of registration for its research degrees within the minimum and maximum set out above. A student who has made unusually rapid progress with a programme of research may apply to RDC for permission, exceptionally, to submit a thesis in advance of the minimum period of registration set out. RDC will consider such requests very carefully and should only grant them in exceptional circumstances.
32. Where a student has completed up to 24 months of full-time registration, he/she may change to part-time registration, when for purposes of calculation of the minimum or maximum permitted periods, the equivalent period of part-time registration will be considered twice that of the actual full-time period of registration, and the part-time periods given in the above table.
33. Where a student transfers from part-time to full-time registration, for purposes of calculation of the minimum or maximum permitted periods, the equivalent period of full-time registration will be considered to be half that of the actual part-time period of registration, and the full-time periods shown in the above table.

34. These rules apply on the same pro-rata basis to MPhil registration.
35. RDC may, because of circumstances beyond a student's control, exceptionally extend a student's period of registration beyond the permitted maximum, normally for not more than one year. A student seeking such an extension should apply at least 6 months prior to the end of the registration period.
36. Where the student is prevented, by ill-health or other cause, from making progress with the research, the registration may be suspended by the RDC for a period of not less than a month and not more than a year at a time. Appropriate medical evidence will normally be required to support requests for suspension on health grounds. Retrospective suspension of registration will not normally be granted for more than three months.
37. Where a student has discontinued their programme of research, the withdrawal of registration must be notified to RDC.
38. A student must register as a student of the University, and continue to re-register on an annual basis (normally at the start of the academic year), until submission of the thesis has taken place. At the time of registration, a student must pay such fees as may be determined from time to time by the University. The fee structure will include a 'writing-up' category.
39. All students must have their projects approved by RDC, normally within six months of registration for a full-time student and twelve months for part-time students. In all cases, students seeking project approval should complete and return form RD1PA.
40. The Hub Scrutiny Panel will review all proposals prior to submission to RDC and form a judgement as to whether it is of an appropriate standard, taking appropriate action.
41. In approving a project, RDC must be satisfied with the following:
 - i. the appropriateness and viability of the proposed programme of work;
 - ii. the suitability and qualification of the supervisory team; and
 - iii. the relevance and appropriateness of a programme of related studies, normally to include: transferable and generic skills, subject specific training, and attendance at and participation in staff/postgraduate seminars.
42. In cases where a student's work forms part of a larger group project, each individual project must in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award. The application should indicate clearly each individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.
43. Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, RDC must establish to its satisfaction that the terms on which the research is funded do not detract from the fulfilment of the objectives and requirements of the student's research degree.
44. Where a project proposal is not approved, the student will normally be given an opportunity to seek approval for a revised project. If, after the student has been given an opportunity to remedy defects, the proposal remains unsatisfactory, RDC will normally terminate registration.
45. A student seeking a change to an approved registered research degree programme or to request the research and thesis remain confidential must apply in writing to the Hub

Scrutiny Panel for approval either as part of the project approval or, if the requirement emerges later, as a separate application.

Supervision

46. A research degree student should have at least two and normally not more than three supervisors. There should always be one supervisor who is a member of the University's academic staff. Exceptionally, where the University supervisor leaves the University at a point where the candidate is near to completion and /or it would disadvantage the student, the supervisor may be asked to continue. No supervisor should have any conflict of interest with the research degree student. Supervisory teams should have experience of supervising at least two students to the successful completion of a UK doctoral level degree or equivalent international qualification. Supervisors should be on a supervisory team for at least two years prior to thesis submission before claiming a completion.
47. Members of staff may not act as Directors of Study if they are currently registered for a research degree (this does not apply to staff members registered for a doctorate by creative or published works). Upon being awarded their research degree, staff members will become eligible to hold the role of Director of Studies. With the approval of the Director of School and the Research Degrees Committee, staff may be co-supervisors on a supervisory team if registered for a research degree.
48. If a member of staff is currently a Director of Studies and decides to read for a research degree, they must cease undertaking this role immediately for the duration of their studies. With the consent of the Director of School and Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, the member of staff may remain on the supervisory team as co-supervisor.
49. Members of staff may not act in the role of Director of Studies if they have, at any point been registered to read for a PhD/DBA degree and have subsequently failed the degree on academic grounds.
50. All new supervisors (i.e. those without successful completions) must attend a University approved staff development event within 12 months of starting to supervise.
51. RDC will ensure that all supervisors, whatever their level of experience, receive regular opportunities for updating and CPD. It is expected that supervisors will avail themselves of these opportunities and failure to do so may constitute grounds for Hub Scrutiny Panels to decline to approve supervisory teams.
52. One supervisor will be designated as the DoS (first supervisor) with the responsibility to supervise the student on a regular and frequent basis.
53. In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.
54. A proposal for a change in supervision arrangements must be made to the Hub Scrutiny Panel and subsequently confirmed by the Chair of RDC on behalf of the Committee.
55. The supervisory team will have responsibility for considering and advising the student on both the health and safety and the ethical aspects of any research proposal, including any parts that may be carried out away from the University.

Supervisory meetings

56. The DoS is expected to hold supervisory meetings (face to face or by other means) with each of their students normally fortnightly for full-time students or monthly for part-time students during term time and to make suitable arrangements to cover the summer period or any other period of extended absence from the University.
57. For each individual project, it is important that there should be explicit agreement between students and supervisors on the actual frequency of supervisory meetings.
58. A written record of each supervisory meeting must be kept. This record must be agreed between the student and the supervisors present at the meeting and must include the date, duration of the meeting, subjects discussed, recommendations and actions.
59. All copies of the supervisory meeting records within the current academic session must be attached to the independent review form and progression form. These must be subsequently submitted to the Research and Innovation Office at the relevant monitoring point.
60. The supervisory meeting record will be included as part of the process of reviewing postgraduate research student progress as part of the annual monitoring process.
61. The supervisory meeting record will be referred to in the event of an appeal or complaint.

Monitoring

62. The progress of students should be formally reviewed twice a year.
63. A progress review should be undertaken by the DoS, where the student's previous year's progress is reviewed and the next year's work schedule agreed.
64. If there are serious concerns about the progress of the student, and particularly where it is the view of the DoS that there is a serious chance of the student failing the degree, the DoS must determine an action plan and this plan together with the DoS report must be presented to the Hub Scrutiny Panel for approval, prior to submission to RDC.
65. If RDC agrees that progress has been unsatisfactory, the student will be subject to a three month period of probation. If there is no improvement in the student's performance at the end of this period, RDC will normally terminate the student's registration or require that they re-register for an MPhil.
66. Where RDC is minded to terminate a student's registration or to require re-registration for an MPhil, the student has the right to make written representations and/or appear in person before the Committee (or a sub-group constituted for the purpose and chaired by the Chair of RDC [unless s/he is a member of the supervisory team]). A student appearing before the Committee in this way has the right to be accompanied by a friend or advisor. Where the student is not satisfied with the outcome, there is a right of appeal to NTRDC.
67. In addition to the progress review meeting, there should be an independent review meeting undertaken by an experienced supervisor (who is not part of the supervisory team). These meetings should produce a joint report agreed by the student and supervisors on the student's progress and these reports will be scrutinised by the Hub Scrutiny Panel. However, where the progress of a student is giving cause for concern, such progress

must be reviewed by RDC (or by a sub-committee or nominated person on its behalf). It is permissible for the supervisors, the student or RDC (or its nominees or representatives) to seek independent intervention where that is deemed necessary. In such cases, an independent person will be appointed by RDC.

68. Wherever possible, key decision points in a student's career, such as project approval and transfer/upgrade from MPhil to PhD, should normally be incorporated into the annual monitoring cycle.

Transfer of enrolment from MPhil to PhD

69. A candidate registered initially for MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD, who wishes to transfer to PhD, shall apply to RDC when he/she has made sufficient progress on the work to provide evidence of the development to PhD. Transfer will normally take place between 12-18 months of full-time study or 24-36 months of part-time study.
70. In support of the application, the candidate shall prepare a full transfer report of 10,000 words for RDC, and attend a transfer viva voce at which they must successfully demonstrate their research against the assessment criteria set out in section 4R of the Academic Handbook. While the specific requirements may vary from discipline to discipline the following documents should be produced as a minimum:
- i. A chapter-by-chapter outline of the thesis, detailing the research question to be addressed, the materials to be examined, the methods to be employed and the work undertaken to date;
 - ii. A literature review;
 - iii. A draft chapter or evidence of substantive critical writing (such as an introduction to the research problem or a discussion of methodology);
 - iv. A timetable of completion of the thesis between 3-4-years full-time or 6-8 years part-time from the date of initial registration; and
 - v. A progress report by the supervisor.
71. The Hub PGR co-ordinator shall arrange a transfer viva voce and convene a Transfer Panel which should involve a minimum of two assessors from the University's research supervisors standing pool and the Director of Studies. The assessors will normally be internal to the University. An external assessor may be appointed, if approved by RDC.
72. The Chair of the Transfer Panel will submit a report to RDC with the recommendation of the Panel. The options available to the Panel are:
- a) Transfer to PhD is recommended.
 - b) Transfer to PhD is not recommended. The transfer report is referred back for amendment and resubmission.
 - c) Transfer to PhD is not recommended. Registration to remain as MPhil.
73. Before approving transfer from MPhil to PhD, RDC shall satisfy itself that the candidate has made sufficient progress against the assessment criteria set out in section 4R of the Academic Handbook: Assessment Criteria for Research Degrees, and that the assessors have determined that the proposed programme provides a suitable basis for work at PhD standard which the candidate is capable of pursuing to completion.
74. A candidate registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to transfer the registration to PhD. In such cases the candidate must comply with the transfer regulations.

75. A candidate who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to RDC for the registration to revert to that for MPhil, provided that the maximum permitted period for MPhil registration is not exceeded. Exceptionally, a student who has passed the MPhil/PhD transfer stage and is within their maximum period of PhD registration may request in writing - at the time of submitting their PhD thesis - that the thesis be considered for an MPhil.

Complaints procedure

76. A student may follow the University Complaints Procedure in respect of a complaint against the University. Normally these procedures will only apply to a complaint based on the activity of a member of University staff engaged in University activities, health and safety, shortcomings in the quality of supervision and/or resources and instance of maladministration.
77. Once the SSU procedures are exhausted the student has the right of appeal to Nottingham Trent University.
78. Notification of the complaints procedure will form part of the induction process for all candidates at the time of initial registration.