

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Framework of regulations for Professional Doctorate awards in the University.

Introduction

In 2007/08 the Academic Regulations Review Group established a Working Group to develop a framework of regulations for Professional doctorate awards in the University. The Working Group, chaired by Kevin Allison, comprised School Research Directors and other interested colleagues. Dr Barry Stierer took over as Chair of the group in July 2008.

The draft framework has been considered by the Academic Regulations Review Group in September and October 2008 and by the Research Committee on 9 October 2008.

1. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROGRAMMES

1.1 Definition of a Professional Doctorate

The Professional Doctorate can be awarded to a candidate who has made an independent and original contribution to a specific professional area and who has successfully completed an approved course of study incorporating a *taught component* and a *research component*, culminating in the submission of a thesis/theses or portfolio of work to a requisite standard.

1.2 Distinctive Characteristics of a Professional Doctorate Award

The University of Westminster Professional Doctorate is an equivalent award to the University of Westminster Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

The Professional Doctorate award is distinct from the PhD award in the following respects:

- There is a considerable weighting given to a taught component: the taught component comprises an integral and key part of the programme, and the assessment of the taught component contributes directly towards the final award.
- Students will normally be investigating issues, problems and practices within their professional fields.
- The thesis/theses or portfolio produced by Professional Doctorate students will make an original contribution to knowledge within the relevant area or areas of professional practice.

2 REGULATIONS

2.1 Validation

2.1.1 Professional Doctorate programmes will be validated in accordance with the University of Westminster's regular validation process for taught courses.

Note: Further guidance on the approval of Professional Doctorates will be provided by the Academic Services Department.

2.2 Title

2.2.1 The degree of Professional Doctorate is awarded in a professional practice area such as Health, Business Administration or Education. The title of the award will include the term Doctor and the relevant professional area and may be abbreviated. The award-holder will be entitled to use the pre-nominal title of 'Doctor' or 'Dr'.

2.3 Credit Weighting

2.3.1 Academic study is valued in terms of credits. A Professional Doctorate will normally be valued at a minimum of 540 academic credits, of which a minimum of 270 credits shall be attributed to the research component and a minimum of 180 credits shall be attributed to the taught component

2.4 Level of Study

2.4.1 The Professional doctorate is designated at Credit Level 8 within the QAA's Further and Higher Education Qualifications Framework (FHEQ) with the exception set out in 2.4.2. The level of the taught components will be approved through the validation and review process.

2.4.2 The taught component of Professional Doctorate programmes may include modules at Credit Level 7 up to a maximum of one third of the award.

2.4.3 A Professional Doctorate may be awarded to a student who has satisfied the academic credit requirements for the award for which they are registered and have:¹

- a) successfully completed the formal taught component of the award for which they are registered;
- b) presented and defended by oral examination a thesis, theses or portfolio to the satisfaction of the examiners; and
- c) met any other specific subject or programme requirements for the named award.

2.4.4 Through successful completion of the taught component and the research component, students should also have demonstrated:

¹ These Qualifications Descriptors are reproduced from the QAA's *Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (August 2008)

- a) 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;
- b) the systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- c) the 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; and
- d) a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a) make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b) continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;

and will have:

- c) the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

2.5 Mode of Study

2.5.1 The taught component of the Professional doctorate awards should consist of identifiable blocks of study.

2.5.2 It is expected that the principal mode of study for Professional Doctorate programmes will normally be part-time, in view of the professional circumstances of the target constituencies. Each programme shall clearly state at validation the structure of the course, and its standard part-time and (where appropriate) full-time duration.

2.6 Awards

2.6.1 Programmes will make provision for intermediate awards where the structure of the course makes this possible.

2.7 Admissions and Credit Transfer

2.7.1 The University will only admit those candidates who are sufficiently capable, qualified and diligent to achieve successful completion within the maximum period of registration. The scope of the thesis or portfolio shall be such that it is achievable in this time.

2.7.2 The University's minimum entry requirements for Professional Doctorate programmes will normally be as follows:

- a) a Second Class Honours degree from a UK university (or a qualification which is regarded as equivalent to such an Honours degree, including overseas qualifications) and, preferably, a Masters degree;
- b) the equivalent of two years' verifiable practical experience of working in a relevant field in a professional capacity, excluding any experience gained as part of the first degree studies²;
- c) an applicant whose first language is not English must also demonstrate evidence of appropriate English language proficiency, normally defined as minimum IELTS score of 7 (Overall Band Score) with 7 in all elements, or equivalent.

2.7.3 Advanced Entry

- a) Credit may be given for up to a maximum of 50% of the taught component on an Advanced Standing basis with a prior qualification (through APL) and/or prior experience (APEL), provided applicants can be shown to satisfy the programme's learning outcomes at the required level.³
- b) Credit towards, or exemption from, the research component is not permitted.

2.8 Management of the programme

2.8.1 The management, administration and quality assurance of a Professional Doctorate programme will be the responsibility of the School (or Schools) in which the programme is based (in relation to the taught component) and of the Research Committee (in relation to the research component).

2.8.2 Students will apply to, and be accepted/enrolled on to the programme by, the School(s) in which the programme is based.

2.8.3 The Assessment Board in the relevant School shall have responsibility for confirming the outcomes of assessments throughout both the taught and research components, and for all matters relating to progression, exclusion, referral and conferment.

² This is a minimum University requirement. Individual programme teams may wish to set an entry requirement based on a higher threshold definition of 'experienced practitioner'.

³ On Professional Doctorate programmes which make use of Level 7 modules from existing postgraduate courses/programmes, teams may wish to restrict the number of such modules that may be included in APL claims. However, there is no University requirement for such restriction.

2.8.4 The research component arrangements shall be overseen by the Research Committee, in accordance with established procedure for the management of research degree students.

2.9 Assessment

Assessment of Modules/Taught Component

2.9.1 The University assesses taught modules and assesses credit at the end of the academic year in which the module is completed, taking account of in-module coursework and examinations (where these are used).

2.9.2 The pass mark for each element in the taught component will be 50%.

2.9.3 Each element within this component will be assessed in accordance with the principles articulated in paragraphs 18.55 to 18.86 of the University's Framework for Postgraduate Courses.

2.9.4 Decisions relating to successful completion of the taught component and, where specified as necessary in the programme specification, eligibility to⁴ progress to the research component, will be made by the relevant Assessment Board.

Assessment of the Research Component

2.9.5 Approval of the research or portfolio project proposal is the ultimate responsibility of the Research Committee, and shall take place prior to the commencement of the research component, taking into consideration the relevant Research Good Practice and Research Ethics policies.

2.9.6 The maximum total word length for the assessed thesis, theses or portfolio should not normally exceed 50,000 words or equivalent (excluding appendices).

2.9.7 The research component will be carried out and examined according to the University's criteria and regulations for PhD degrees.

2.9.8 The form of the research submission and the method of examination will be specified at the mid-point review and approved by the Research Committee when the examiners are appointed.

2.9.9 Any change or extension of a registered research project, or any change from full-time to part-time registration or vice versa, requires the formal approval of the Research Committee.

⁴ Where the enquiry conducted in fulfilment of the research component is partially or wholly funded by a third party, the Supervisor must be satisfied that the terms on which the research is funded do not compromise the objectives and requirements of the students' research programme, in accordance with the University's Research Good Practice and Ethics Policies.

2.9.10 Approval of the Research Programme

Each programme shall make clear the point at which a research proposal should be completed.

2.9.11 Supervision

The University will provide an appropriate and qualified supervision team with the relevant subject and professional expertise. Supervisors are approved by the Research Committee, normally at the start of the research component, in accordance with standard research degree criteria. Any University regulations relating to the amount and kind of supervision experience required for PhD supervision teams shall also apply to Professional Doctorate supervision teams.

2.9.12 Examination

The University's normal regulations for the examination of research degree students shall apply. The External Examiners' report and recommendations for the taught component will be addressed to the School Assessment Board. Where specific course regulations demand variation from, or amendment to, these regulations, this shall be clearly stated in the course documentation, and approved through validation.

2.10 Minimum and Maximum registration

The periods of minimum and maximum registration shall be as follows:

Minimum Period of Registration (FULL TIME)	Maximum Period of Registration (FULL TIME)
2 years	6 years
Minimum Period of Registration (PART TIME)	Maximum Period of Registration (PART TIME)
3 years	8 years

2.11 Assessment Boards

2.11.1 Course documentation should state the rules for progression through the course, and where certain elements of the course need to be passed before progressing.

2.11.2 The Assessment Board will consider the outcomes of the taught element of the course only and will forward those outcomes to the Research Committee, which has oversight of the research element to enable to Research Committee to confer the final award.

2.11.3 The Conferment Board may consider excluding a student from the course if they cannot satisfy specific or scheme requirements for the named award.

2.11.4 If the Conferment Board decides to exclude a student, their decision will overrule any decision of a Subject Board in relation to individual module outcomes

2.11.5 If the Board allows a student to remain on the course, the student should be given advice and support if the Board believes they are not likely to achieve the named award for which they are registered.

2.12 Appeals , Complaints and Mitigating Circumstances

The standard University regulations apply.