FRAMEWORK OF REGULATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROGRAMMES 2015/16

1. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROGRAMMES

1.1   What is a Professional Doctorate?

The Professional Doctorate is a doctoral research programme of equivalent standing with the Doctor of Philosophy and can be awarded to a candidate who has made an independent and original research contribution to a specific professional area. At the University of Westminster, a Professional Doctorate entails the successful completion of an approved course of study incorporating a *taught component* and a *research component*, culminating in the submission of a research thesis, or portfolio, sometimes accompanied by other forms of assessable output according to the field of practice.

1.2   Distinctive Characteristics of a Professional Doctorate Award

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

• There is a considerable weighting given to a taught component (para 2.1.3), which should form an integral and key part of the programme, the assessment of which contributes directly towards the final award.

• Students will be investigating – through a programme of research – issues, problems and practices within their professional fields.

• The thesis, portfolio, artefact or other form of assessable output produced by Professional Doctorate students will make an original contribution to knowledge within the relevant discipline or areas of professional practice (Section 2.1.13).

2. REGULATIONS

2.1   Validated Programme Specific Regulations

2.1.1   Professional Doctorate programmes are research degrees. Responsibility for programme approval, monitoring and awards therefore lies with the Graduate School Board. Individual programmes will be validated by a panel approved by the Graduate School Board (or nominated sub-Committee) in conjunction with the Quality and Standards Office. The Validation Panel will encompass relevant expertise in doctoral, professional practice and taught provision, to consider all matters relating to the Professional Doctorate.

2.1.2   Title: The degree of Professional Doctorate is typically awarded in a professional practice area and can therefore include a range of disciplines. 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'[1].

2.1.3   Credit Weighting: Academic study will be valued in terms of credits with each credit equating to ten notional hours of learning[2]. The Professional Doctorate is a research degree, and will be valued at a minimum of 540 academic credits. In distinction from a PhD programme, the Professional Doctorate will include a taught component, which will be a minimum of 120 credits and not exceed 180 credits[3].

2.1.4   Level of Study: The Professional Doctorate is designated at Credit Level 8 within the QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, however, the taught component may include

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[1] Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code: Part A Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degrees, 2015 p8-9
[2] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Credit-Leaflet-Nov-09.pdf
[3] Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code: Part A Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degrees, 2015 p17

modules at Credit Level 7 (Masters). The remainder of the programme is made up of Level 8 study.

2.1.5 Mode of Study: The taught component of the Professional Doctorate awards will vary from programme to programme but will normally consist of a structured programme of taught modules, which may be delivered in blocks or through regular engagement either on campus, other locations, or online, as agreed during validation. It is expected that the principal mode of study will normally be part-time, due to the professional circumstances of the target constituencies and the applied nature of the programme. Each programme shall clearly state at validation the structure of the course, and its part-time and (where appropriate) full-time duration.

2.1.6 Awards: A Professional Doctorate may be awarded to a student who has:

a) Successfully completed the taught component of the award for which they are registered (Section 2.1.13(a));

b) Undertaken a programme of independent research that meets the requirements of the Degree Descriptors[4] and Characteristic Statement for Doctoral Degrees[5], under the guidance of academic supervisors;

c) Presented and defended by oral examination a research-thesis, portfolio, artefact or other form of assessable output to the satisfaction of the examiners; and

d) Met any other specific subject or programme requirements for the named award.

Programmes will make provision for intermediate exit awards where the structure of the programme makes this possible, specifying the awards that are available and their requirements, for example 120 credits can equate to a PGDip and 180 credits can equate to an appropriate Master's award. The available intermediate exit award is, subject to achievement by the candidate of the relevant award requirements as approved during the award's validation process. Where an academic credit cannot be attributed to a specific validated award a transcript will be provided detailing the successfully completed learning and the appropriate credit value, which may be suitable as evidence of acquired prior learning (APL) against another award. Non-research titles may be considered where the majority of study undertaken has not involved independent research, eg: Masters in Research Methods. Protected research titles, eg: Masters by Research will only be considered appropriate where the majority of the candidate's programme has involved independent research under the guidance of a supervisor[6].

2.1.7 Minimum and Maximum registration

The periods of minimum and maximum registration shall be as follows: **Minimum Period of Enrolment** (FULL TIME)	**Maximum Period of Enrolment (FULL TIME)**
3 years	4 years
Minimum Period of Enrolment	**Maximum Period of Enrolment (PART TIME)**

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[4] Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications, 2014 p30 para 4.18
[5] Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code: Part A
[6] Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code: Part B Chapter B11 p4; Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code: Part A Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree, 2015 p4 and p11 and FHEQ, 2014 p36

(PART TIME)	
4 years	8 years

The Director of Studies can make an application, via the Faculty to the Research Degrees Progression Committee for a variation in exceptional circumstances.

2.1.8 Admissions and Credit Transfer: The University will only admit those candidates who are assessed as being sufficiently capable, qualified and diligent to achieve successful completion within the maximum period of registration. The scope of the thesis, portfolio, artefact or other form of assessable output shall be such that it is achievable in this time. The University's <u>minimum</u> entry requirements for Professional Doctorate programmes will be as follows:

a) A Second Class First division Bachelor's degree with Honours or, and preferably, a Master's degree from a UK university (or a qualification which is regarded as equivalent to such an Honours degree, including overseas qualifications);

b) A minimum of two years' verifiable practical experience of working in a field relevant to their proposed area of research in a professional capacity, excluding any experience gained as part of first degree studies;

c) Applicants from outside of the UK (except where meeting the exemption defined by UK Visas and Immigration service) must demonstrate evidence of appropriate English language proficiency, defined as minimum IELTS score of 6.5 Overall Band Score and a minimum of 6.5 in all elements. The University may choose to accept alternative evidence of significant previous experience in the medium of English as confirmation of an equivalent standard of English.

Programme specific regulations may set a higher entry requirement at the time of validation or review. Any request for an exception to these entry requirements will need the prior approval of the Graduate School Board.

2.1.9 Advanced Entry: Credit may be given towards 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[7]. Where permitted APL and APEL requirements will incorporated in course documentation and awarded in accordance with the University's APL and APEL regulations, and will normally be allowed up to a maximum of 50% of any taught component. Credit towards, or exemption from, the research component is not permitted.

2.1.10 Management of the programme: Students on a Professional Doctorate programme will be admitted, enrolled and registered through the Graduate School. However with regard to the taught component, the management administration and assessment of a Professional Doctorate programme will be the responsibility of the Faculty (or Faculties) in which the programme is based. It is the responsibility of the relevant Faculty to ensure assessment information and outcomes for the taught component are communicated to the Graduate School Board. The quality assurance of any taught modules will be undertaken in accordance with the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework for taught courses. The quality assurance of the research component and of the programme as a whole will be overseen by the Graduate School Board in accordance with the quality assurance framework for doctoral programmes.

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[7] 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

2.1.11 Supervision: The University will provide an appropriate and qualified supervision team including a Director of Studies, with the relevant subject and professional expertise in accordance with the University's supervision team requirements as set out in the research degree regulations and associated Research Student Handbook. Supervisory teams are subject to the approval of the Faculty and Graduate School Board, and should be agreed before admission to the programme.

2.1.12 Approval of the Research Programme: The importance of developing a sound research proposal with a clear path to achieving the required learning outputs of a doctoral degree from the earliest possible stage cannot be overemphasised. The research proposal will need the support of the candidate's Director of Studies/supervisors and be agreed both by the Faculty, an Independent Assessor and the Graduate School Board within the timescale agreed during validation. Oversight of the approval process, progression reviews and assessments are overseen by the Graduate School Board (para 2.1.13). The research proposal shall satisfy the University's requirements with regard to Research Governance including the Codes of Research Good Practice and Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research (para 2.2.1).

2.1.13 Assessment: Students shall be subject to the University's requirements of doctoral students for satisfactory and timely progress in relation to the both the taught component (a) and the research component and the programme as a whole (b). The Graduate School Board is responsible for monitoring the progress of participants on a Professional Doctorate programme and for the oversight of the procedures for managing unsatisfactory performance (Remediation), in which it will take into account information derived from the assessment of both the taught and the research components as applicable.

(a) Assessment of the Taught Component (Modules): The University assesses taught modules and assesses credit in which the module is completed, taking account of in-module coursework and examinations (where these are used). The pass mark for each element in the taught component will be 50% and will be assessed in accordance with the principles articulated in paragraph 18.42 of the University's Framework for Postgraduate Courses.

The Assessment Board will consider the outcomes of the taught component of the course only. Assessment board outcomes in relation to the taught components will be communicated to the Graduate School Board, which will determine whether the candidate should be permitted to continue with their registration. In some programmes, the taught and research components may be integrated and proceed in parallel, however, in other programmes the successful completion of the taught component may be a prerequisite for commencing the research component. The detailed structure of each programme will be agreed as part of the validation process.
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(b) Assessment of the Overall Programme including the Research Component: A Professional Doctorate programme is a research degree under the auspices of the Graduate School Board. Research degrees are subject to formal Annual Progression Reviews for full-time participants or Biennial Progression Review with an Interim Annual Progression Review taking place on the intervening years in the case of part-time participants.

Approval of the project proposal is the responsibility of the Graduate School Board and programmes will ensure that this is incorporated within programme design. It is recognised that the development of the project proposal may typically be undertaken by the candidate in the context of the taught component, however, due to variations

in programme design this will need to be agreed as part of the Programme Validation process.

Programmes will incorporate an Annual Progression Review process that is consistent with the process used to monitor progression for other Research Degrees. Exact milestones for each review will need to be agreed as part of the Validation process. The process must include at approximately half way through the research component a more formal assessment involving assessors independent to the programme of research. This review, which will include an oral examination (viva), will enable a view to be taken on whether the research is on track to achieve a Level 8 doctoral outcome. The purpose of the Annual Progression Review process is to enable the Faculty and the Graduate School Board to satisfy themselves in respect of each individual candidate that the project is valid and viable in terms of a timely and successful completion at doctoral level, the form of the research outputs to be permitted and that the method of examination being considered are appropriate.

Where there are concerns about a participant's ability to successfully complete their research to the required standard, whether inside or outside of the Annual Progression Review process, a programme of Remediation will be initiated, as detailed in Section 5 of the Research Degree Regulations. The purpose of the Remediation process is to support a participant to improve their performance so that they can achieve the intended programme outcome. Where a participant's performance remains unsatisfactory the University reserves the right to withdraw a participant's enrolment and registration (exclusion) in line with Sections 5 and 7 of the Research Degree Regulations

The thesis or other form of assessable output should be of the same quality and rigour required of a normal PhD in a relevant field, normally be a minimum of 40,000 words for a STEMM[8] subject area and 60,000 words for a non-STEMM subject area. Where an artefact, portfolio, other media or other form of public output constitutes a component part of the assessable submission, these shall be accompanied by a thesis which shall not normally exceed 50% of the volume of a normal PhD thesis in a relevant field.

Other than in the case of an intermediate exit award that is not a research degree, the research component will normally be examined accordance with the University's regulations and requirements for a PhD degree (Section 8 of the Research Degree Regulations). Any intermediate exit award will only be available if agreed in the programme's Validation process.

Any change to a registered research project, including requests for suspension or extension of registration, change from full-time to part-time registration or vice versa, and change of supervisors requires the formal approval of the Graduate School Board. Changes to projects which impact or compromise previously granted ethics approval require the approval of an appropriate Research Ethics Committee, as determined by the University's ethics codes and policies currently in force.

2.1.14 Examination: The University's regulations for the examination of doctoral candidates shall apply and will normally involve an internal and external examiner. Where the validated programme permits a member of University staff to participate in the programme or they have a current or recent link to the University, eg they provide a service for the University or have left the University's employment in the last five years, two external examiners will be

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[8] Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics

required. The examiners' reports and recommendations for the research component will be addressed to the Graduate School Board.

2.1.15   Conferment: The conferment process will follow the process as set out for other research degrees in the Regulations for MPhil/PhD programmes.

2.2   Other Research Regulations

2.2.1   A Professional Doctorate is a research degree and as such participants need to comply with the University's wider framework of research regulations. Participants are responsible, under the guidance of their Director of Studies and wider supervisory team, for compliance with the matrix of regulations and other mandatory requirements, which can be complex and vary from project to project; but include the following:

a) **Research Degree Regulations:**

(http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/379192/Regulations-for-the-Award-of-Doctoral-Degrees-2015-16.pdf)

b) **Research Degrees Handbook:**

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/388593/Research-Degree-Handbook.pdf

c) **Framework for Research Governance at the University of Westminster:**

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/385622/Framework-for-Research-Governance.pdf

d) **Code of Research Good Practice**:

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/43450/Code-of-Research-Good-Practice-2015-16.pdf

e) **Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research:**

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/384624/Ethics-Code-of-Practice-2015-16.pdf

f) **Procedure for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct:**

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/research-framework/managing-allegations-of-research-misconduct

In addition to the above, participants and the supervisory team must comply with the University requirements relating to Health and Safety, Data Management/Information Security and Insurance as well as any external research governance requirements from sponsors or collaborators, eg: funders, NHS, etc.

2.2.2   Supervisors in particular should be aware of the University's responsibilities under the Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code. Of particular relevance is Part A (which includes the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications degree descriptors and Characteristics Statements for Doctoral and Masters Degrees); Chapter B10 (Managing Higher Education Provision with Others); and Chapter B11 (Research Degrees):

a) **Part A**

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a

b) **Part B:**

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b