



REGULATION C9: PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES (2021 onwards)

From September 2021 onwards

1. SCOPE

1.1 This regulation covers all professional doctorates offered by the University and sets out the fundamental structure of such degree programmes and the requirements to obtain an award. Where there are programme specific deviations or exemptions from this or other University's Regulations, these will be set out in an annex to the relevant programme specification. The University considers those on professional doctorate programmes to be postgraduate researchers and, as such, you are covered by the University's [Postgraduate Research Degrees Code of Practice](#).

2. ADMISSION

2.1 To be admitted to a Professional Doctorate programme, you must provide approved identification at enrolment and provide original copies of academic transcripts or certificates if requested. You must also have one of the following:

- (a) a bachelor's degree, normally with First or Upper Second Class Honours, from a higher education institution or the equivalent if you have been educated outside the UK; and
- (b) a Masters Degree, or the equivalent if you have been educated outside the UK and hold that qualification normally in the general field you are applying within, or its equivalent in professional experience and a professionally accredited programme.

Applicants without a Masters degree will be considered on a case-by-case basis, where they can provide evidence of relevant professional experience or other experiential prior learning. If you are accepted under this sub clause you might be required to take an examination or attend an interview

2.2 By accepting a place at the University, you confirm that you will abide by the University's rules, regulations and policies which are set out in the [Keele Academic Regulations and Policies](#).

2.3 We will withdraw your registration if we find that you submitted a fraudulent application to the University.

2.4 If you require student visa route sponsorship to study in the UK you must meet the entrance criteria for the programme of study (see paragraph 2.1 above) and the requirements, rules and responsibilities of the UK Home Office for sponsorship. An offer of admittance to the degree programme does not guarantee student visa route sponsorship and any offer of sponsorship is made at our discretion.

2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning

It may be possible to be admitted to the programme based on some prior learning which may also exempt you from some of the requirements of the taught phase of your programme but not from the thesis requirements. Where you are admitted with recognition of prior learning or with advanced standing, the value and level of credits recognised by the University in relation to meeting the requirements of your programme will be determined in line with the University's [Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) Policy](#).

3. REGISTRATION

3.1 You must enrol with the University within three weeks of starting your programme. You must re-register in each academic year by a date set by Academic Registry.

3.2 If you withdraw or allow your registration to lapse before completing your programme of study you will not be allowed to re-register, unless you get permission from the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) on behalf of Senate and meet any conditions RDC sets.

4. PROGRAMMES FOR HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH

4.1 You must study your programme for the minimum supervision period (see the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees) with the guidance of a supervisory team. The supervisory team will include a Lead Supervisor and (with the exception of PhD by Publication) a minimum of one other team member. The minimum supervision period is the period from enrolment to the formal submission of a thesis, excluding all periods of Leave of Absence. Extensions granted by the Research Degrees Committee will normally be for a maximum of one calendar year

4.2 While you are at the taught stage of the programme, you may be able to change your programme of study until three weeks after the start of a semester, subject to the approval of the receiving Head(s) of School or nominee and depending on having met the pre-requisite academic requirements for your new programme.

4.3 If you are allowed to change your programme, you may have to successfully complete additional modules or thesis requirements to meet the programme requirements overall.

4.4 You cannot study additional modules outside of your programme of study during the taught stage of the programme, other than language modules offered by the Language Centre.

4.5 In exceptional circumstances, the Research Degrees Committee, on behalf of Senate, may approve early submission of a thesis. However, we reserve the right to charge the full tuition fees for the minimum registration period stated in Regulation C1.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPERVISION

5.1 The responsibilities and duties for postgraduate researchers and their supervisors, including the process to be followed for supervisory team changes are stated in the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

6. STRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROGRAMMES

6.1 Overall Structure

Professional Doctorate programmes consist of a taught stage and an independent research stage.

6.2 Taught Stage

6.2.1. To be awarded a Professional Doctorate Degree, you must successfully pass at least 180 credits in the Taught Stage. As noted in section 2.5 the credit requirement in the taught phase may differ where Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has been applied.

6.2.2. The taught stage of all professional doctorate programmes is modular. The credit value for any module is a multiple of 5, and no module has a value of less than 10. One credit equals 10 learning hours.

6.2.3. All modules in your programme of study are either compulsory or optional. Modules may have prerequisites, co-requisites and barred combinations and this is set out in the Programme Specification for your programme [here](#). Modules must be taken in the order prescribed by the programme specification as appropriate.

6.2.4. Any module may be offered in semester one, semester two, over both semesters or, exceptionally, outside the approved semester dates.

6.2.5. Each module for a professional doctorate programme will be allocated to a specific level of study, which will be either at Level 7 or Level 8, with the exception of language modules.

6.3 Independent Research Stage

6.3.1 The independent research stage is non-modular. To complete the independent research stage, you must submit a doctoral thesis of the specified length, pass an oral

examination and successfully implement any changes to the thesis prescribed by the examiners where this is required.

7. TAUGHT STAGE: MODULE ASSESSMENT AND REASSESSMENT

7.1 You can find the rules describing the assessment and reassessment of taught modules in [Regulation D1](#).

7.2 Modules available at the taught stage on Professional Doctorate programmes will be marked based on the University marking criteria. Additional subject-specific marking criteria may apply.

8. TAUGHT STAGE: MODULE CONDONEMENT AND COMPENSATION

8.1 Where your programme of study allows the awarding of credit through condonement and/or compensation of modules, this is detailed in [Regulation D5](#)

9. PROGRESS REVIEW 1

9.1 To be eligible to enter the independent research phase of the programme and embark on your thesis, you will be required to pass Progress Review 1 (previously known as doctoral progression review) which will normally take place after the completion of the taught stage. The review will include a formal progression meeting with a panel approved by the School Professional Doctorate Lead from your Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee. You will not pass doctoral progression until you fulfil the relevant research training requirements as set out in the [Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees](#). For details of when progress reviews are due for different modes of attendance, see the Progress Review Handbook.

9.2 The relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee will decide that:

- (a) you are suitable for doctoral study and can progress to the independent research stage of your programme; or
- (b) you are not suitable for doctoral study, but are suitable for an interim exit award available for your programme; or
- (c) you are not yet suitable for progression and, following review, will be given a programme of work to complete over a maximum period of 4 months. After this period the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee will confirm the appropriate final outcome. Details on the resubmission process can be found in the Progress Review Handbook.

9.3 If you are dissatisfied with the decision under paragraph 9.2 above you can appeal the decision - [Regulation B6](#) Academic Appeals.

10. ACADEMIC STANDING

10.1 If you fail to maintain a satisfactory standard of work the relevant committee can withdraw you from the University at any stage in your programme of study.

10.2 The following are examples of failing to maintain a satisfactory standard of work:

- (a) failing to maintain a satisfactory standard of work or active engagement with your studies for at least four calendar weeks resulting in the implementation of the academic warning procedure;
- (b) dangerous and/or unsatisfactory professional conduct;
- (c) failing to pass or fulfil the requirements for any assessment which you must take as part of your programme of study;

10.3 The Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees and the Progress Review Handbook set out the formal procedures for academic warnings, recommendations for withdrawal, and the appeals process.

11. PGR HEALTH AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

This section of the Regulation is supported by the Leave of Absence Procedure for postgraduate researchers, as set out in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

11.1 A leave of absence is an approved absence from the University. The absence period is a minimum of one month up to a maximum of 12 months, normally. During this time you must not undertake your studies.

11.2 You can take a leave of absence only if it is agreed and authorised by the Faculty/~~PI~~ Postgraduate Research Committee.

11.3 You can request a leave of absence for the following reasons:

- (a) medical reasons;
- (b) maternity/paternity/adoption leave;
- (c) bereavement;
- (d) personal Financial Hardship;
- (e) other valid personal reasons.

Where appropriate, we will request documentary evidence to support a leave of absence request.

11.4 You must submit any request for a leave of absence through the University's established procedures. These are outlined in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees and accompanying guidance on changes in your registration status.

11.5 You will normally receive communications from the University about re-registration a minimum of one month before your leave of absence is due to end. Before re-enrolment is approved, fitness to study evidence may be required. You must respond to these communications.

11.6 Applications for a leave of absence lasting longer than one academic year will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. You must apply for the leave of absence to the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee. The Committee will seek specialist advice where necessary and will decide if permission will be granted. The committee can also set conditions.

11.7 If you experience difficulties but do not want to take a leave of absence you should speak with your Postgraduate Research Director to discuss submitting an extension request. Further guidance about extensions can be found in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

11.8 We may decide that it is in your interest to take a leave of absence, due to the state of your health, even if you have not applied for one. This is because you must be healthy enough to enable you to conduct your studies. We can, on the basis of professional advice, require you to:

- (a) take a compulsory leave of absence until we are satisfied that you may resume your studies; or
- (b) in exceptional circumstances, be withdrawn from the University.

11.9 You can appeal against the decision of the University to require a compulsory leave of absence or withdrawal based on your state of health.

11.10 You can appeal on one or both of the following grounds:

- (a) Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the case;
- (b) There is new evidence that can be proven, including exceptional circumstances, which was not known at the time, and may have affected the outcome had the Faculty Research Committee (and the Research Degrees Committee) known. There must be a valid reason for not making it known at the time.

11.11 You must submit your appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar within 10 working days of the date of the letter sent informing you of the decision.

11.12 The Academic Registrar will chair a Support to Study Appeals Panel, which will decide whether a case exists and advise you of the outcome within 10 working days.

11.13 In the event of a conflict of interest, the Academic Registrar will nominate an appropriate member of staff to deal with your appeal on their behalf. If this is the case, you will be notified of the name of the nominated person in writing.

11.14 You can submit a grievance to the University Council under the terms provided by Statute 17 (22) if you are dissatisfied with the appeal. Grievances must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the letter informing you of the outcome of the appeal and must be made in writing to the Secretary to Council. Grievances can be made only on one or both of the following grounds:

(a) Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the case;

(b) There is new evidence that can be proven, including exceptional circumstances, which was not known at the time of the review, and may have affected the outcome had the Committee known. There must be a valid reason for not making it known at the time.

12. EXAMINATION

12.1 To be eligible for the professional doctorate award, you are required to submit a thesis. The expected length of the thesis will vary by programme and this will be defined in the programme specification. For professional doctorate programmes the thesis has to be in the range of 60,000-75,000 words depending on the programme.

13. THESIS

13.1 Your thesis must be written in English, except in language subjects where the supervisor and Research Degrees Committee has agreed it can be in another language. Elements of the thesis may be presented in an *additional* language with the approval of Research Degrees Committee.

13.2 The thesis must be your own account of your research and must be accompanied by a declaration stating this. A breach of this regulation can result in an allegation of academic misconduct (see [Regulation D4](#)).

13.3 Every copy of a thesis submitted must include an abstract of a maximum of 300 words.

13.4 The majority of the work that contributes to the thesis must have been undertaken since registering onto the current programme of study. Any work or any thesis previously submitted to a higher education institution, including Keele, cannot normally be re-submitted, except as part of re-examination unless it has been agreed with the supervisor

and clearly indicated in the thesis and on the declaration form. Please refer to the Code of Practice for minimum work contributions required for transfers into Keele.

13.5 Before the degree is awarded you must deposit an electronic copy of your thesis with the University Library. This copy will be the property of the University.

14. ORAL EXAMINATION AND AWARD

14.1 You must attend an oral examination.

14.2 Once it receives your approved title and an examinational panel nomination from Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee, the Research Degrees Committee will appoint a minimum of two examiners and an independent chair for your oral examination. One of the examiners must be external.

14.3 There will be two external examiners in the following circumstances:

- (a) If the PGR is also a member of Keele academic staff;
- (b) If no appropriate internal examiner can be found;
- (c) Any other circumstances that the Research Degrees Committee considers it necessary to have a second external examiner.

14.4 Following the oral examination, the examiners will recommend to the Research Degrees Committee that:

- (a) you be awarded the degree for which you have submitted your thesis; or
- (b) you be awarded the degree for which you have submitted your thesis once satisfactory revisions have been made to the thesis; or
- (c) you have not met the required standard for the award, but your submission is of sufficient merit to permit you to re-present your thesis within one calendar year from the date of the decision at the relevant meeting of the Research Degrees Committee and to attend a further oral examination should the examiners require it. A second oral examination will be required, unless both examiners agree that the quality of the resubmitted work meets the criteria for award of a thesis (paragraph 13.4.a or 13.4.b above). The procedures for an oral examination following resubmission will be the same as those for an initial oral examination, and examiners are required to agree a joint recommendation; or
- (d) instead of a Level 8 award, you should be approved for a Level 7 exit award, subject to any required minor amendments;
- (e) instead of a Level 8 award, you should be permitted to re-present the thesis for a Level 7 award, and, where required by the examiners, to attend a further oral

examination within one calendar year from the date of the decision at the relevant meeting of the Research Degrees Committee;

In some cases, it may also be possible to submit a dissertation or shorter thesis for a Level 7 exit award. Where Level 7 exit awards are based on taught modules, they will be classified in accordance with [Regulation C7](#). The exit awards available and the requirements for these awards will be set out in the programme specification for your programme here.

(f) you should not be awarded any degree nor be permitted to re-present the thesis, nor submit to any further examination.

(g) where the examiners are unable to come to a joint recommendation, an additional examiner or examiners should be appointed to resolve the matter.

14.5 You can appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Committee following [Regulation B6](#).

14.6 Posthumous

(a) A postgraduate research degree can be conferred posthumously if a PGR dies before they were able to complete the requirements of their award. A posthumous award can be accepted on the PGR's behalf by a parent, spouse or other appropriate individual. If the PGR had submitted their thesis for examination but had not yet been examined, examiners will be appointed in the usual way and will submit reports to the Research Degrees Committee for consideration.

(b) If a PGR dies before they were able to submit their thesis for examination, the Research Degrees Committee will consider available evidence of the PGR's ability. A sufficient amount of the research must have been completed in order to determine if the required standard has been achieved. The supervisor will submit a written statement to support the recommendation.

14.7 Aegrotat

(a) An aegrotat award for incomplete study may be conferred in exceptional circumstances, such as a PGR being unable to complete their award due to severe illness. All research awards are available as aegrotat awards, except degree programmes that are subject to fitness to practise requirements.

(b) An aegrotat award is a final exit award; therefore it must be the end of the PGR's programme of study. Before a recommendation for an aegrotat award is submitted,

the PGR must indicate that they are willing to accept the award and that they understand they are waiving their right to be reassessed.

(c) If the PGR had submitted their thesis for examination but had not yet been examined, examiners will be appointed in the usual way and will submit reports to the Research Degrees Committee for consideration.

(d) If the PGR has not submitted their thesis for examination, the Research Degrees Committee will consider available evidence of the PGR's ability. A sufficient amount of the research must have been completed in order to determine if the required standard has been achieved. The supervisor will submit a written statement to support the recommendation.

15. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

15.1 We, Keele University, own any Intellectual Property that arises from your studies for a research degree at the University. You must comply with the arrangements for ownership and management of intellectual property rights as set out in the Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees

16. AWARD RULES

16.1 Professional Doctorate awards are not classified. The full award title and abbreviation will be set out in the relevant programme specification.

17. TERMINATION OF STUDIES

17.1 The PGR Code of Practice and [Regulation B8](#) describe the circumstances where your studies at the University could be terminated.

18. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

18.1 Any allegation of academic misconduct shall be dealt with in accordance with [Regulation D4](#) Student Academic Misconduct and the University's [Student Academic Misconduct Code of Practice](#).