

Approved by: Senate December 2005

University Framework for Professional Doctorates

FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

Introduction

The Professional Doctorates Task Group was established by the Graduate Council 'to compare the frameworks of and regulations for existing professional doctorates in the University with a view to establishing an approved University framework and General Regulations for professional doctorates which could be used in the development of new programmes'. Its membership was drawn from those with an interest in the professional doctorates currently offered by the University, including current students on these degree courses, and/or in developing new professional doctorates. Professor Ingrid Lundt (previously of the Institute of Education, now of Oxford University) joined the group as an external member. A full list of members is attached as Appendix 1.

Members of the Task Group agreed that it was essential that the Professional Doctorates have parity of esteem and equal standing to the PhD, that they be research programmes and not taught courses and that high level research training should be a lynch pin of the programmes. In addition they agreed that the framework would have to allow for a degree of flexibility in order to accommodate the varying requirements of the professional bodies across the disciplines concerned and that it should allow for appropriate exit points

Rationale

This Framework provides a description of the Professional Doctorate and a set of criteria that Faculties are required to address in developing new awards of this kind. The Framework takes account of developments in policy for, and delivery and assessment of, doctoral programmes, including the PhD as well as Professional Doctorates. The developments include the incorporation of directed study and assessed work on research methods and philosophy in most doctoral programmes.

The Framework has not been developed for the purposes of recognition or accreditation, but is intended to be consistent with the QAA *Code of Practice: Section 1* and the ESRC's Postgraduate Training Guidelines for the recognition of Professional Doctorates and to take account of the UK Quality Assurance Agency for the Higher Education's framework for qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework.

What is the Professional Doctorate?

The Professional Doctorate is a programme equal in status and rigour to all other doctorates. It shares the same position as these qualifications in the QAA Frameworks and should be seen as such by others including the relevant Research Councils. Like other doctoral programmes, it includes both preparatory research and directed study and assessed work which is designed to support the subsequent period of independent supervised research. Its primary mode of assessment is examination of the thesis.

As with the PhD, the Professional Doctorate has an emphasis on original thought, theorisation and empirical research and the mastery of a substantial, leading edge body of knowledge. To be awarded a doctorate all students will need to demonstrate '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' (QAA Frameworks for higher education qualifications).

However, the Professional Doctorate has a dual purpose. It also recognises and explicitly embraces professional development as an integral component of the programme. Both the

professional dimension and theoretical/empirical research require critical engagement with professional practice in order to enable the participant to achieve a greater level of effectiveness as a professional practitioner.

The Professional Doctorate is concerned with researching issues which arise from the world of professional practice through the critical review and systematic application of appropriate theories and research to professional and industry based practice. It seeks not only to increase knowledge about practice, but also to inform and impact on practice, to improve professional competence and professional thinking. It needs to relate to the relevant professional context and to involve critical reflection on the development of the profession.

Target Market and Admissions Requirements

Candidates will normally be professional practitioners, well qualified in their chosen field. They will normally already have gained a good first degree or equivalent qualification recognised for these purposes by the University, and will normally have a level of professional experience appropriate to the research being undertaken.

In order to provide a setting for their research, candidates should have the ability and opportunity to carry out detailed research in an appropriate professional context. Access to and support from appropriate organisations are considered essential in terms of initial selection of candidates and the expectation is that they should be available for the duration of the programme.

Evidence of language proficiency will be expected in respect of candidates for whom English is not the first language (IELTS, TOEFL or comparable). The normal expectation will be that the thesis will be written in English. If, however, the language of study and/or assessment is other than English, the supervisory and assessment team must have the relevant language ability.

As part of the admission process, prospective candidates may be expected to develop an initial proposal for subsequent investigation, with input from the Department as appropriate. Admissions Officers should look for evidence of sufficiency of problem definition, initial research, personal capability and appropriate professional experience.

Faculties and Departments must ensure that they are able to provide the appropriate supervision in relation to the focus/research interest of specific staff prior to accepting a candidate for entry.

Structure

Programmes should be clearly structured and should provide appropriate milestones or stages. These points should be consistent with any interim or exit awards that are available prior to, or in place of, the successful completion of the doctorate. Such awards should be defined and justified within the terms of the Professional Doctorate programme.

Professional Doctorates should include directed study on research methodology and techniques and, if appropriate, on areas of specialist knowledge. Directed study on research methodology and techniques must be at doctoral level. For areas of specialist knowledge, relevant taught classes at Masters level may be included, on an individual need basis, particularly in the early stage of a programme. These classes should comply in aim, content and standard, with those undertaken by PhD students and with Research Council guidelines. However, any assessment arising from such classes would not normally be expected to form part of the final assessment for the Professional Doctorate but will determine whether or not the candidate can proceed with the doctorate.

The following is a proposed structure for Professional Doctorates within the University of Strathclyde

Professional practice/project based in industry.
It is the responsibility of individual programme directors to determine how this should be embedded into the material below.

Level 12 (SHE 6)
60 credits

Directed study on research methods at doctoral level

Level 11 and/or 12 (SHE 5/6)
60 credits

Directed study on areas of specialist knowledge

APL possible

All 180 credits in the left-hand column must be successfully completed before a candidate can start work on the thesis

Level 12 (SHE 6)
420 credits (to include the 60 credits awarded for the literature review/dissertation)

Thesis
which may consist of a series of linked papers with reflective commentary (typically 50-60,000 words)

Level 11 and/or 12
60 credits

Literature dissertation Review/mini dissertation

Viva

Exit at this point with MSc in Practitioner Research

Exit at this point with Professional Doctorate* or MPhil as appropriate

All students should have access to a Personal and Professional Development Programme involving critical reflection on practice, embedded, where appropriate, within the material detailed above, and to Generic Skills Training in line with the RCUK Statement of Skills Training Requirements and should be encouraged to maintain a Research Log/PDP portfolio.

Faculties should seek to ensure that candidates for the Professional Doctorate are engaged fully within a lively and vital research community and should ensure that opportunities are created within the programme for significant interaction between these students, other research students and active researchers.

Programmes should be structured to demonstrate, particularly for full-time participants, how the appropriate access to and linkage with supporting organisations can be effected.

* At present the Professional Doctorates approved by Senate are: DBA, DEd, DEdPsy, and EngD While the Task Group acknowledges the need for subject specific degrees in some areas where these are already in general use nationally and internationally, in order to avoid a proliferation of

titles the Group recommends that the generic title DProf (subject) be adopted. Faculties wishing to adopt a specific title for their programme will have to argue the case for their preferred option.

Duration

The *Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* states that Professional Doctorates 'require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study, and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study'.

Given the Professional Doctorate's orientation towards the practitioner as researcher, the Group recognises that many candidates will be undertaking their studies while working full-time. However, it is acknowledged that research on a full-time basis will be appropriate in some instances. The normal duration of a Professional Doctorate is expected to be comparable with that for other similarly structured doctorates and to comply with Ordinance 4.2, which states that:

'to be admitted to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy a student must have pursued a course of full-time study for not less than two years, or of part-time study for not less than three years, under conditions prescribed by the Senate'.

Accreditation of Prior Learning

It may be possible for participants to gain accreditation of prior learning in the field of specialist knowledge and/or research methods, up to a maximum of 60 credits. However, the onus will normally be on the applicant to demonstrate that they understand how their prior knowledge fits into the new context of the Professional Doctorate.

Supervision and Support for the Learning Process

There should be clear and shared expectations, by all involved, as to the amount and nature of supervision provided for Professional Doctorate candidates.

Candidates must have supervisors who collectively have experience of supervising doctorates to completion, specialist subject knowledge and a practitioner orientation. The latter may obtain through the involvement of well qualified external practitioners.

Given the practitioner/professional orientation of the Professional Doctorate, significant learning will be expected to occur through interaction with participating organisations. The appointment of a work-based professional as a mentor may also be appropriate.

Arrangements for supervision should take account of the particular requirements and expectations of part-time research students, in line with the University's Policy and Code of Practice for Research Students and relevant external frameworks such as the *QAA Code of Practice: Section 1*, and Faculties must make appropriate provision for supervision at a distance. The support infrastructure during the research phase should be specified, robust and effective.

Faculties and Departments offering, or intending to offer, the Professional Doctorate should make provision for the training and development of supervisors to enable them to guide candidates' research effectively in terms of both relevant theory and practice.

Assessment

The QAA Framework for Scotland states that at least 420 of the total 540 credits must be at doctoral level.

Directed Study

The assessment scheme should have detailed criteria and clarify the range and relative values of assessment methods used and the level and weight of each part of the programme should be shown. The scheme should specify how directed study and the assessment of personal and professional development are incorporated in the overall examination of candidates. Standards should be comparable with those for other relevant doctoral programmes.

Criteria for the assessment of interim or exit awards should be made clear in the assessment scheme and should comply with the QAA Framework for postgraduate awards. Awards related to the directed study phase should comply with the criteria for taught Master's degrees.

The scheme should define the role of the examiners (including practitioner and external examiners) at each stage.

Thesis

The central element of assessed work will be a substantial thesis, which may consist of a series of linked papers with reflective commentary. Typically, the thesis should be of between 50,000 and 60,000 words. The thesis will be examined by internal and external examiners with relevant subject knowledge. Candidates will have to defend their work in a viva voce examination. The possible outcomes will be the same as for the PhD. The degree of MPhil should be awarded only on the recommendation of the examiners where the thesis does not meet the criteria for the award of the doctorate but does meet the criteria for the award of the MPhil.

The Institutional Context

Responsibility for the overall quality of the Professional Doctorate within the University will reside with Senate. Professional Doctorates must have a specific set of university regulations and the Professional Doctorate must be subject to appropriate QA processes. Regulations should include reference to protocols for treating ethical issues in research, including those involving researchers working within the organisation that employs them and/or having access to privileged information, and intellectual property. Full account should also be taken of University policy and procedures and of relevant legislation (Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Disability, Freedom of Information, Data Protection etc).

References

The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Scotland

Improving Standards in Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes, joint consultation process by the four UK higher education funding bodies, Autumn 2003

Code of Practice, Section 1: Postgraduate Research Programmes, QAA, revised version September 2004

UKCGE report on professional doctorates (2002)

UKCGE Professional Doctorate Awards in the UK (2005)

ESRC Postgraduate Training Guidelines appendix 2: Recognition of professional doctorates

Table showing the key features of the professional doctorates currently offered by the University of Strathclyde

Guidelines for the Doctor of Business Administration, the Association of Business Schools

Information on the Professional Doctorate in the Built Environment and the DBA and the programme specification for the EdD at the University of the West of England

Regulations for the EngD from Loughborough University

Information for internal students proceeding to the DEdPsy from the Institute of Education

Regulations for Professional Doctorate Degrees from the University of Dundee

Information on the EngD from the Institute for System Level Integration