

**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH
PROGRAMMES:
ADMISSIONS POLICY
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Summary/Description:	
This document defines the criteria for the selection and admission of postgraduate research students.	

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POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES: ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to the following programmes:

Postgraduate Research Programmes (managed by Research Degrees Quality Committee)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Doctor of Philosophy by Works in the Public Domain (PhD by WPD)

Professional Doctorate by Contribution to Practice (Prof Doc by CP)

Professional Doctorates (managed by Faculties¹)

Doctor of Business Administration

Doctor of Creative Arts (Creative Writing)

Doctor of Creative Arts (Performing Arts)

Doctor of Theology and Practice

Doctor of Education

The University of Winchester is committed to maintaining a lively and diverse research culture, sustained by its PGR students. It adopts fair admission procedures, as defined in the Schwartz principles² and makes available accurate information on admissions processes for research degrees. Information is available on the external website so that students are able to ensure they are on a programme that is right for them.

Through the use of timely and comprehensive development opportunities, the University of Winchester shall ensure that staff responsible for admissions are aware of, and understand, legal requirements relating to the admissions process, and the need to conform to such legislation. It has monitoring arrangements for equal opportunities requirements to satisfy itself that:

- a) the programmes comply with appropriate legislation and with internal and external guidance
- b) an effective support infrastructure is in place for all research students, taking account of mode of study, subject needs and individual circumstances
- c) applicants are made aware of opportunities to apply for additional or special funding and how to apply for such funds.

¹ Professional Doctoral students who successfully complete the taught element of their programme shall then undergo a transition viva to progress to the Thesis stage of the programme. From this point the programme shall be managed by the RDQC and the RKE Centre. Please refer to the Programme Specification or Programme Leader for further details.

² The 'principles of fair admissions', first set out in *Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice* (2004) (the Schwartz report).

1.1 Responsibility

Responsibility for implementing the procedures defined within this Policy lies with Research Degrees Quality Committee in respect of MPhil/PhD, PhD by WPD and Prof Doc by CP, and with Faculty Academic Development Committees in respect of Professional Doctorates.

The University shall ensure guidance about admissions is accessible to both recruiters and applicants and shall provide training to enable those involved in the admissions process and in interviewing applicants to fulfil their role effectively and efficiently.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre and the Faculties shall provide clear, accessible, jargon-free information for potential applicants and staff involved in the admissions process, recognising diversity and different needs. Candidates who identify that they have special needs shall be made aware of how to apply for funding and support through a Learning Agreement.

2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTRY TO POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Applicants are expected to have at least **one** of the following:

- a) a masters degree from a UK university or a degree from a non-UK institution deemed to be of equal standing to a UK degree, or
- b) a first class or upper second class bachelor degree award by a UK university or a degree of a non-UK institution deemed to be of equal standing to a UK degree, or
- c) a professional qualification recognised as equivalent to a good degree, or
- d) equivalent evidence of prior professional practice or learning that meets the University's criteria and guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

and

- e) two satisfactory written reports from academic referees
- f) a student is admitted to a Professional Doctorate or Professional Masters programme on the basis of being actively engaged in a profession relevant to the award being sought
- g) for the award of PhD by WPD or the Prof Doc by CP, an appropriate number of prior publications or other outputs (this shall be determined on a case by case basis as specified in the programme outlines)

2.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is the formal recognition of prior learning gained outside the University through:

- a) formally assessed and certified programmes;
- b) other experience, which is uncertified and not previously assessed. For example, learning from unpaid work or paid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.

RPL for MPhil/PhD students shall be limited to 40 credits at Level 7 on the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Skills (PGCRS). The certificate is an integrated component of the MPhil/PhD programme.

RPL for Professional Doctorate students shall be limited to 180 credits of study at Level 7 (or 180 credits at Level 8 in the case of the DTh only).

Please refer to the University's RPL Policy for further details.

2.2 International Applications

Applications received from International prospective students shall be considered and processed consistently with Home/EU applications. Those applicants offering overseas qualifications shall be expected to have achieved the equivalent of the quoted minimum entrance requirements to enrol.

2.3 English Language Proficiency

Candidates whose first language is not English shall be required, in addition to satisfying the general entry requirements, to have achieved an average score of 6.5 IELTS with at least 7.0 for written English as a minimum. Professional Doctorate programmes may ask for the submission of additional information and evidence either before or after interview (such as a portfolio of practice or samples of academic or creative writing).

The University provides support for applicants who have demonstrated their academic abilities and English language proficiency but are admitted to research degrees on the condition that their academic English must be improved. Applicants may expect support in the form of timely opportunities to improve their language skills to a level consistent with producing a thesis (or equivalent) that meets the requirements of the higher education provider in both grammar and style, and that enables them to defend their thesis sufficiently well during the oral examination. However it is the student's responsibility to take advantage of these opportunities.

2.4 Applicants with Criminal Convictions

An applicant who has a relevant criminal conviction that is not spent is required to state this on their application. 'Relevant' is defined as offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, or offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) are not considered to be relevant. Certain courses, for example, teaching, health, social work, or courses involving work with children or vulnerable adults, do not come under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

A criminal conviction not yet spent shall not normally be a bar to entry to a course unless:

- a) the programme provides entry to employment in an occupation covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order 1975;
- b) in the view of the University, the applicant might pose a threat to staff and other students;
- c) specified by an accrediting Professional Body.

Where the applicant indicates a criminal conviction on the application form:

- d) the RKE Centre shall contact the applicant and request information about the date of the conviction, the nature of the offence and the sentence;
- e) the application and response to it shall be handled in line with the University Policy on Criminal Conviction Procedures for Student Applicants;
- f) applicants who declare criminal convictions and are subsequently withdrawn from the admissions process for not responding to request(s) for information, or rejected on the basis of their conviction after being considered by the Panel shall have an opportunity, should they so wish, to appeal against that decision to an Appeal Panel in accordance with the Policy and Procedures: Applicants with Criminal Conviction.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 New Applicants

MPhil/PhD, PhD by WPD and Prof Doc by CP

Applicants are required to submit the following to RKEC:

- a) the completed application form (that includes a substantial project proposal in written form);
- b) appropriately completed ethics documents;
- c) references and documentary evidence as described above.

Applicants who wish to enrol in October shall submit their application by the last working day of May (for Home/EU applicants) or the last working day of April (for International applicants).

Applicants who wish to enrol in April shall submit their application by the last working day of December (for Home/EU applicants) or the last working day of November (for International applicants).

DBA, DCA, DTh and EdD

Applicants are required to submit the following to the Admissions Office:

- a) the direct entry application form;
- b) references and evidence of qualifications;
- c) supplementary material as requested by the programme.

Deadlines for submissions of applications are set by each programme. Please contact the Programme Leader listed in the current edition of the Postgraduate Prospectus.

3.2 Applicants Wishing to Transfer from Another Institution

All applicants for transfer shall be interviewed (as described in the Selection Process below) to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities under Winchester regulations and policies as well as to ascertain the suitability for continued candidacy.

DBA, DCA, DTh and EdD

Applicants wishing to transfer to the University of Winchester shall submit an application in accordance with the above including certified evidence of previous study for consideration for RPL. Please note that the maximum RPL that may be approved is 180 credits at Level 7 (or 180 credits at Level 8 in the case of the DTh).

MPhil/PhD

Applicants wishing to transfer to the University of Winchester with their supervisor from another institution are subject to the satisfactory provision of the following from their previous institution:

- a) an official release, together with details of the duration of the applicant's previous research study;
- b) a progress report approved by an appropriate supervisor or committee at the previous institution;
- c) confirmation as to whether the candidate has upgraded from MPhil to PhD or not and details of that process if it has taken place;
- d) confirmation of any Level 7 research training undertaken.

Please note that the minimum period of registration at the University must be at least 12 months full time or 24 months part time.

Applicants wishing to transfer to Winchester independently of their previous supervisor and institution are subject to the satisfactory provision of the information described above, and also:

- e) copies of regular progress reports (preferably annual reports) from the previous institution as far as possible;
- f) a clear recommendation from the chair of the interview panel explaining why the candidate wants to transfer institution, and why it is felt that prospects for successful completion shall be better at the University of Winchester.

4. SELECTION PROCESS

Initial decisions about whether to take an application forward to interview shall:

- a) involve at least two members of staff. For MPhil/PhD programmes and the Prof Doc by Contribution to Practice they shall include a Faculty Head of Research or the Director of PGR students and a potential Director of Studies. For Professional Doctorate programmes managed by Faculties, the scrutiny shall be conducted by the Programme Leader and a suitably qualified potential supervisor;
- b) be based on the availability of a suitable supervisory team in an area permitted (by Senate Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee) to take research students and the viability of the project.

MPhil/PhD and Prof Doc by Contribution to Practice applications are:

- a) administered by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre;
- b) subject to confirmation by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre that satisfactory arrangements for supervision have been approved, and that the Faculty is satisfied as to the arrangements for financial support for the student and facilities for the project;
- c) approved by the Research Degrees Quality Committee.

Professional Doctorate applications are:

- a) administered by appropriate Faculty;
- b) approved by the Programme Leader;
- c) monitored by Student Recruitment & Admissions.

5. INTERVIEWS

Interviews are used as part of the admission process, but may take place using skype or other video links (**not** phone or email) if the applicant is based overseas or has access issues. Entry requirements are detailed in Postgraduate Prospectus as well as the Programme Specification or the Programme Outline for the intended award, all of which are available on the external website of the University.

Interview Panels for MPhil/PhD programmes and the Prof Doc by Contribution to Practice shall consist of:

- a) Faculty Head of RKE or Director of PGR Students (Chair);
- b) Proposed Director of Studies;
- c) Other members of the proposed supervisory team shall be included as appropriate.

Interview Panels for Professional Doctorate programmes managed by Faculties shall consist of:

- a) Programme Leader (Chair);
- b) An appropriately qualified member of the teaching/supervisory team.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the motivation and potential to complete a sustained piece of research and to produce a thesis. The University gives clear guidance to applicants on the external website about fees, and in discussion at interview about their financial responsibilities and the consequences of being unable to meet their commitments during the duration of their studies.

The Chair of the interview panel shall moderate the interview panel's decision and assure the University that the applicant's qualifications and preparedness are appropriate against the criteria on the Interview Form. This includes discussing RPL processes, and any prior publications or practice for PhD by WPD or Prof Doc by CP.

6. ACCEPTING AN APPLICANT

Before recommending the acceptance of an applicant, Faculties and applicants must be made aware of the costs of the programme, including specific research costs (where known), and the financial support available. The University shall satisfy itself that the research project for MPhil/PhD, PhD by WPD and Prof Doc by CP:

- a) is within the applicant's capabilities;
- b) is capable of sustaining research at this level and being completed within the period of registration defined in the Academic Regulations ;
- c) can be supported by a suitable supervisory team and adequate facilities within an appropriate research environment.

The University shall satisfy itself that the Prof Doc programme:

- a) is within the applicant's capabilities;
- b) is likely to be completed within the period of registration;
- c) can be supported and resourced within the Department and Faculty.

6.1 Formal Offer Letter

The formal offer letter, which forms the basis of the contract between the applicant and the University, shall define and communicate clearly the terms and conditions relating to the offer and its acceptance. For MPhil/PhD/ PhD by WPD and Prof Doc by CP students this letter shall be sent by the RKE Centre. For all other Prof Doc students, the letter shall be sent by Student Recruitment & Admissions.

The letter shall normally refer to or enclose other information such as:

- a) the expected fees, and any other expenditure on practical items relevant to the individual student;
- b) the expected period of study for which the student is to be enrolled;
- c) arrangements for enrolment and registration including any requirement to attend induction;
- d) references to appropriate regulations, policies, procedures, handbooks and financial support on the University's website;
- e) the requirements and conditions of any sponsor or funder, where appropriate;
- f) Home Office requirements for Tier 4 students, where appropriate;
- g) reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information.

Additionally for MPhil/PhD students

- h) the requirement to successfully complete the PGCRS;

Where applicants are unsuccessful, feedback shall be provided on the application and interview, as appropriate.

7. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Faculties and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre shall monitor arrangements that show compliance with legal requirements, particularly in relation to Disability, Equal Opportunities and Ethics.

8. RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The University accepts research students only into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring.

Senate Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee maintains a list of departments able to supervise research students and oversees a process for gaining approval by new subject areas (see the Subject Areas Able to Recruit PGR Students: Policy for the Approval of New Subject Areas).

An environment suitable for doing and learning about research and for encouraging research achievement is one that enables research students to make judgements requiring creativity and critical independent thought while accepting that uncertainty is a feature of the conduct of research programmes. Such an environment enables students to grapple with challenges that develop intellectual maturity and encourage a high level of reflection on the student's own learning about research as well as on research outcomes. Research students are encouraged to contribute actively to their research environment, whether in a research team where their own research forms part of a larger research programme, or working independently on a self-contained project.

9. APPEALS

In some circumstances applicants may wish to appeal against the outcome of their application. An appeal is defined as a request for the reconsideration of a decision on an application. The outcome of a successful appeal would be to reconsider the candidate's application with a view to changing or upholding the original decision. Applicants may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making the decision on an application, and the University cannot give a detailed explanation of why an application may not have been successful.

Applicants may appeal if they are dissatisfied with the processing of their application where:

- a) there was some procedural irregularity in the way in which an application was handled by the University
- b) there is new material information which may have affected a decision on the application (with reasons why it was not made available at the time of application)
- c) there is evidence of bias or prejudice

Appeals must be made in writing (including by email) within twenty working days of the notification of the decision. Further details may be found in the University's Policy: Appeals by Student Applicants, available on the website.

10. COMPLAINTS

The University is committed to delivering a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service for all applicants and encourages applicants to contact staff where there is cause for concern and a case for improvement. Complaints may be made regarding the services or facilities offered by the University or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff during the selection process. The outcome of a complaint that is upheld could include an apology or an undertaking to revise procedures. It shall not usually result in reconsideration of the candidate's application, unless an investigation reveals that the University's own procedures were not followed correctly. Formal Complaints must be made in writing (not email) to the University Ombudsman and further details are available on the website. Complainants are encouraged to raise any issues informally with the University in the first instance.