Code of practice for the approval of new PhD and MD programmes

Academic year 2018/19

Contents

New PhD and MD programmes

1. The purpose of this *Code of practice* is to set out the requirements and procedure for the approval of a new PhD or MD programme. This procedure does not apply to structured PhD programmes or practitioner doctorates which, owing to the inclusion of a formalised and structured taught element, will undergo the same validation process as taught programmes. Please refer to the *Code of practice for programme life cycle processes* if you are seeking to set up a doctorate with a structured taught element.

2. The principal objective of the PhD/MD programme approval procedure is to ensure that any Department, Centre, or School proposing a new PhD or MD programme will be able to accept suitably qualified research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring. This is in accordance with the Expectations and Core and Common practices set out in the *QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.

Pre-validation approval

3. Once due consideration has been given to establishing a new PhD/MD programme, it is a requirement that a "pre-validation form" is completed (the template for the form with guidance text is available here). All sections of the form must be completed with sufficient information so that the approvers can make an informed decision on whether the proposal should be progressed to the approval process. At this stage the approvers are interested in the viability of the proposal; more information will be required for the approval process.

4. Staff completing the "pre-validation form" will need to include a brief outline of any potential placement or collaborative activity.

5. A business case will also need to be completed in consultation with the relevant Business Finance Manager and appended to the pre-validation pro-forma. The form can be found here.

6. A marketing checklist must also be completed as part of the pre-validation approval process, which should also be appended to the pre-validation pro-forma. The checklist can be found here.

7. The Library must also be consulted and there is a library checklist available here, which will need to be completed for the Library records. Programme proposers are required to meet with their Academic Liaison Librarians prior to Faculty approval to discuss the proposal.

8. The "pre-validation form" must be considered and signed by the members of staff listed at the end of the form.

9. Note that at any stage the proposal may be sent back to the programme proposer for revisions. If the relevant Faculty Senior Management Committee supports the proposal then it should be incorporated into the Faculty Plan.

10. Once the pro-forma is approved, the programme team, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Student Services and Administration Directorate staff, Student Recruitment, Admissions, Planning, Marketing and the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) will be informed by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards (QES).

11. Once the pre-validation form has been approved, the programme can be advertised on the condition that "(subject to approval)" is included on any promotional material. Where changes must be made prior to the approval event QES should be consulted prior to any changes being made to any public information.

12.   Please see Appendix 1 for a summary flow chart of pre-validation stage.

Approval procedures

13.   There are two associated procedures:

- for Schools, Departments or Centres with an existing PhD or MD programme wishing to introduce a PhD or MD in a new area

- for Schools, Departments or Centres with no existing PhD or MD provision

Standing external assessor

14.   A standing external assessor will be appointed for a period of four academic years. The external assessor provides an impartial, external viewpoint on the programme which is intended to enhance the quality of the doctoral programme. In order to achieve this, the external assessor will be responsible for:

- reviewing all documentation submitted for a new PhD/MD programme

- providing feedback on the documentation

- highlighting any issues that the programme team should address

- identifying any areas of good practice

15.   The external assessor does not need to be a subject expert in the area of the doctoral degree being proposed but will be required to meet the following criteria for appointment:

(i)   experience of working with and managing doctoral provision in the UK;

(ii)   familiarity with UK frameworks governing postgraduate research provision in the UK;

(iii)   not have a close professional (e.g. co-authoring of papers, research collaboration), contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student of the University;

(iv)   not have any other potential conflict of interest which may affect the term of office as external assessor;

(v)   be eligible to work in the UK;

(vi)   inform the University of any changes to circumstance during their appointed period which may affect impartiality for assessment.

Procedure 1: Schools, Departments or Centres with an existing PhD or MD programme wishing to introduce a PhD or MD in a new area

16.   This section covers the procedure for Schools, Departments or Centres with an existing PhD or MD programme wishing to introduce a PhD or MD in a new area.

17.   A member of the School, Department or Centre's research active staff proposing the new PhD or MD programme is designated the Programme Leader for the programme.

18.   The Programme Leader will assume responsibility for completing the approval pro-forma (see Appendix 2).

19.   The approval pro-forma is used to inform a judgement as to whether the proposed PhD or MD programme is feasible and the research environment conducive to supporting research students. The following information will need to be provided on the pro-forma:

- programme title

- rationale for the introduction of the new PhD or MD

- market research, competitor analysis and target student intake

- entry requirements including IELTS

- resource implications, particularly the capacity for supervisory staff to take on additional students

- a mapping of the programme against the QAA [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ) Level 8 descriptors and the [Doctoral Characteristics](#) document including specified learning outcomes

- details of the content of the training provision available to students including an explanation as to how the training provision will enable students to develop the skills set out in [Researcher Development Framework and any other relevant external framework](#)

- how the programme will contribute to and be supported by the existing research environment

- what is in place for supporting the research student

- collaborative arrangements, if applicable

20. A copy of the student handbook will also be required as a part of the submission documentation.

21. Once completed, the Programme Leader will send the approval pro-forma to the Associate Dean (Doctoral College). The Associate Dean (Doctoral College) may provide comments and request that the content is amended. If the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) is satisfied with the proposal, it will be submitted to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee for Faculty-level approval. It will then be submitted to the Executive Dean of Faculty for the final, Faculty-level sign-off. Subsequent to the Faculty-level scrutiny, the pro-forma will be submitted to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards who will arrange for the proposal to be sent to the standing external examiner for comment. The standing external examiner will be asked to provide comments within 10 working days of documentation being dispatched.

22. On receipt of the standing external assessor's comments, the documentation and comments will be discussed at the Doctoral College Board.

23. The Doctoral College Board may approve the programme, approve the programme subject to conditions and/or recommendations, or reject the programme proposal. The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards will inform the Programme Leader of the outcome of the Board's discussion. This will also be reported to the Quality and Standards Sub-committee.

Procedure 2: Schools, Departments or Centres with no existing PhD or MD provision

24. This procedure is to be followed by Departments, Centres, or Schools with no existing PhD or MD provision.

25. A member of the School, Department or Centre's research active staff proposing the new PhD or MD programme is designated the Programme Leader.

26. The Programme Leader is required to write and submit documentation that will be scrutinised and discussed at a review meeting (see paragraphs 30 – 35 below).

27. The purpose of the documentation is to demonstrate and provide evidence of a strong and supportive research environment. This will be achieved through the submission of a pro-forma (see Appendix 2) that will cover:

- programme title

- rationale

- market research, competitor analysis and target intake

- entry requirements

- resource implications

- structure and training

- research environment

- supporting the research student

- collaborative arrangements, if applicable

28. A copy of the student handbook will also be required as a part of the submission documentation.

29. Once completed, the Programme Leader will send the approval pro-forma to the Associate Dean (Doctoral College). The Associate Dean (Doctoral College) may provide comments and may request that the content is amended. If the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) is satisfied with the proposal, it will be submitted to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee for Faculty-level approval. It will then be submitted to the Executive Dean of Faculty for the final, Faculty-level sign-off.

The review meeting

30. The administration for the review meeting will be carried out by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards.

31. Prior to the review meeting taking place, the documentation will be sent to the standing external assessor for comment. The external assessor will be asked to provide comments within 10 working days of the documentation being dispatched. The external assessor's comments will be used to inform the review meeting.

32. The Programme Leader, supported by staff who will undertake supervisory roles, are required to attend an event to discuss the documentation and any other relevant material. This is a collegial and supportive event with a focus on providing help and guidance so that the PhD or MD programme can run successfully.

33. In addition to the Programme Leader and supervisors, there will be a Panel at the meeting comprised of:

- a Chair who will be a member of the Doctoral College Board or the Quality and Standards Sub-committee

- an internal panel member from a different Faculty who will have experience of supervision and examination at doctoral level

- a student representative registered on a postgraduate research programme

- the standing external assessor or, if they cannot attend in person, their written report for inclusion at this stage

- a member of the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards

34. Following the event a short report will be written summarising any conditions that the Programme Leader must fulfil before the new PhD or MD is recommended for approval. Recommendations may also be made. The Panel may also reject a proposal for a new programme with clear reasons why the programme has been rejected.

35. Once any conditions have been fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Panel, the member of the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards will arrange for the documents to be submitted to the Doctoral College Board for approval and for the programme approval to be reported to the Quality and Standards Subcommittee.

Appendix 1 – Pre-validation approval

Start

Heads of School / Department / Centre to send Faculty Associate Dean (Doctoral College) and the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards early notification on new programme proposals

Combined Faculty Management / Faculty Strategy meets to consider new programme proposals and determines whether they progress

Marketing research undertaken by Faculty Marketing Manager

Approved to proceed?
- Yes
- No

Faculty Management /Faculty Strategy to inform the programme proposer of the outcome

Faculty Management/Faculty Strategy meets to consider market research and determine whether proposal should go forward to the pre-validation

Programme proposer to complete the pre-validation pro-forma

Programme proposer to meet with the Business Finance Manager to complete the business case

Programme proposer to meet with the Academic Liaison Librarian and complete the library checklist

Approved to proceed?
- Yes
- No

Programme proposer to submit the completed pre-validation pro-forma, business case, marketing and library checklist to the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) and Faculty Research Degrees Committee for approval (the AD / Chair of Faculty Research Degrees Committee is expected to only approve following consultation with the Student Services and Administration Directorate staff and Heads of School/Department)

Approved?
- Yes
- No

Forms to be submitted to Executive Dean for approval

Approved?
- Yes
- No

Forms to be submitted to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards and the Pre-validation Sub-group for consideration and approval

Approved?
- Yes
- No

Proposer to be informed of the reasons for not approving the proposal. Guidance on how the proposal can be amended should be provided and the proposal resubmitted for consideration (if appropriate).

If Research programmes with taught elements – Forms to be submitted to the Vice Provost (Education) AND Vice Provost (Research and Innovation) for final sign off

If traditional PhD or MD - Forms to be submitted to the Vice Provost (Research and Innovation) for final sign off

Approved?
- Yes
- No

Academic Quality Officer to inform the programme proposer of final sign off and arrange a planning meeting to discuss the next stage of the process (validation)

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Academic Quality Officer to inform the programme proposer of the outcome.

End

Appendix 2 – New PhD or MD programme approval form

New PhD or MD Programme Approval Form

Programme title

Rationale
In this section please provide a rationale for the introduction of the PhD or MD programme

Market research, competitor analysis and target intake
In this section, please describe the outcomes of any market research undertaken and provide a competitor analysis. Please also provide the target number of students you will be aspiring to take on for the next four academic years.

Entry requirements
Please provide the entry requirements students will need to satisfy to register for the programme. In the case of an MD, has agreement been made with the medical deanery or specialist trainer to take time out to complete an MD programme?   Please specify the IELTS requirements which will need to conform at least to the University minimum.   Indicate any particular implications of this programme for disabled students, including any restrictions through competency standards, i.e. accessibility, demonstrating abilities, specialist equipment and any arrangements to minimise their impact.

Resource implications
In this section, please provide an analysis of any implication on resources, physical (e.g. specialist equipment, library materials etc) and human, the introduction of the new PhD or MD may have. In particular, you are asked to ensure that there is sufficient supervisory capacity for the programme to run effectively. Please also cover how the introduction of this programme might impact on existing PhD or MD provision elsewhere in the University

External mapping
Please provide in this section a mapping of the programme against the FHEQ Level 8 descriptors and the Doctoral Characteristics document

Learning Outcomes
Please use this section to specify the learning outcomes of research students on this programme

Structure and training

Set out how the programme will be structured to ensure it meets the requirements of Section A2 of the *Regulations* and *Code of practice for research degrees*. You should focus on reviews of students (every six months), regular meetings with supervisors, and the confirmation.

Please also set-out how the discipline-specific research training and generic skills training will enable students to develop the skills set out in the Researcher Development Framework. You should refer to the activities of the Researcher Development Programme to ensure these are fully integrated into the programme.

Please also cover any discipline-specific training that may need to be developed and reference any Research Council, or other funder requirements, where necessary. Please provide details of the content of the training that will be offered to students including how different types of students (full-time and part-time) will be able to access this.

Research environment

In this section please cover the following:

- A critical exposition of the research achievements made in the Centre/Department/Division. This may include peer reviewed publications, successful acquisition of research funding, knowledge exchange and impacts. Research Excellence Framework results should also be included in this section
- Describe the opportunities students will be given to work with researchers at the highest level, and exchange ideas with people and organisations
- Outline the mechanisms in place for students to have access to academic staff for support and guidance
- Whether there will be a critical mass of students to enable the sharing of ideas and peer support networks
- Access to adequate learning tools such as IT equipment, literature, specialist equipment, working space
- What opportunities will be available for students to attend seminars and present their work?

Supporting the research student

For each member of staff who may potentially take on a research student provide details of supervisory experience, experience of examining at doctoral level, any relevant training, and current student loading (if applicable). In the case of an MD, is there an appropriate clinical supervisor to assist the university supervisor (this might be a student's clinical director or departmental clinical supervisor)?

Detail any scholarships that may be available to the student such as Research Council funding and institutional scholarships.

In addition to the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), explain the mechanisms that will be used to ensure student feedback can be captured and responded to, such as a Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Forum.

Collaborative arrangements if applicable

List any organisations (commercial, research, or educational) with which students will be working in order to conduct their research. Ensure that agreements will be in place in accordance with the *Code of practice for collaborative provision* to safeguard the student and the interests of the University. Explain the quality assurance mechanisms that will be used to ensure the quality of supervision and experience whilst the student is conducting research with the other organisation.

Signed by:

PhD/MD Programme Leader

Name …………………………………………….

Signed …………………………………………

Date …………………………………………

Chair of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee

Name …………………………………………..

Signed …………………………………………

Date …………………………………………

Faculty Executive Dean

Name …………………………………………….

Signed …………………………………………

Date …………………………………………