

A3: Regulations for higher doctorates: Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Doctor of Science (DSc)

Academic year 2026/27

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Introduction

1. The awards of Doctor of Science (DSc) and Doctor of Letters (DLitt) are at a higher level than the qualifications included in the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#), and as such are not part of that Framework nor are they covered by the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). They are awarded to individuals who have demonstrated a command over a field of study and who have made a sustained contribution to understanding within that field. They are awarded on the basis of a submission of a substantial body of research-based work.

Eligibility

2. Any person who satisfies one of the following criteria may be eligible for candidature for the degree of DSc or DLitt:
 - a current member of academic staff at the University of Surrey of not less than four years continuous standing
 - a graduate of the University of not less than 10 years standing
 - a person who has carried out research at or in association with the University of Surrey during the preceding 15 years, which has led to publications that will form a substantial component of the body of work presented in support of the application

Preliminary application

3. The applicant will send to the Secretary of the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee (APESC) the following documents:
 - (i) a cover letter of no more than 1000 words outlining:
 - the area(s) in which the applicant has been working
 - a brief description of the research undertaken
 - a statement as to when and where the research was undertaken
 - for any co-authored works a statement as to the contribution the applicant has made to the publication
 - a declaration as to whether any of the works on which the application is based have formed part of the submission for any other degree awarded to the candidate. Works submitted for another degree awarded to the candidate will not be accepted in the submission;
 - (ii) a list of **up to** 50 of the applicant's most significant published works on which the application is based. The applicant will clarify their role and the proportion of work attributable to them for any work carried out in collaboration with others;
 - (iii) a full curriculum vitae;
 - (iv) evidence to support the eligibility criteria under regulation 2 above on which the application is being made;
 - (v) a letter of support for the application from a senior researcher who knows the applicant professionally.
4. The applicant will also be required to pay the requisite application fee which is non-refundable.

The role of the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee

5. The Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee will check that the applicant is eligible to apply for candidature for the award and will check that all the required documents to support the application have been supplied.
6. Ineligible applicants will be informed if it is not possible to progress the application, outlining the reason(s) why.
7. If any documents are missing to support the application then the applicant will be informed of what is required and given 60 University working days in which to supply the outstanding documents. If documents are not received during this timeframe then the application will be rejected and the applicant informed.
8. Eligible applicants will be informed that their candidature has been approved and be asked to pay the requisite non-refundable fee for candidature. This is additional to the application fee under regulation 4 above.

Supervision

9. Upon approval of candidature, the candidate will be allocated to a Faculty and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will appoint a Principal and a Co-supervisor from the University's staff as follows:
 - the Principal Supervisor will be a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader / Associate Professor, Professor, Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, Principal Research Fellow, Professorial Research Fellow or Professor in Practice
 - the Co-supervisor will be a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader / Associate Professor, Professor, Research Officer/Research Assistant, Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, Principal Research Fellow, Professorial Research Fellow, Professor in Practice or hold an Emeritus/a position or honorary NHS appointment
10. In addition, the supervisors will:
 - be an active researcher in an area relevant to the candidate's field of research
 - have completed the relevant training as set out in the [Code of practice for research degrees](#) if new to supervision
 - have an expectation of holding the appointment with the University for the period of the candidate's registration

Submission of the portfolio of works for examination

11. Within 12 months of confirmation of candidature, a candidate is required to submit an electronic copy of the portfolio. The submission will consist of:
 - an introductory chapter of no more than 15,000 words which will: provide a literature review setting the research in context; and demonstrate how the research and resultant publications have made a sustained and distinguished contribution to advancement of the field(s)
 - copies of the published works on which the submission is based. The number of published works must not exceed 50. For any co-authored works, a statement will be included as to the contribution the applicant has made to the publications
 - a concluding chapter of no more than 5,000 words which will draw together the themes of the submission and outline themes for further research
 - appendices – submission of a full curriculum vitae

Lapsed registration

12. The registration of a candidate who fails to submit the portfolio within 12 months of confirmation of candidature will be deemed to have lapsed and will be terminated.

Nomination of examiners

13. The candidate will submit the Entry Form for Examination no later than two months before submission of the portfolio. The examiners will be nominated by the supervisory team and endorsed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty. As for all doctoral degrees, the appointment of the examination panel is subject to the approval of the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee.
14. The candidate's portfolio will be examined by three examiners, at least two of whom will be external to the University of Surrey and the candidate's place of work. Examiners must fulfil the following criteria:
 - (i) have expertise in the area relevant to the candidate's field of research and be demonstrably research active;
 - (ii) hold an academic appointment (a curriculum vitae should accompany any nomination to the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee);
 - (iii) have experience of examining at doctoral level;
 - (iv) not have, nor have previously had, a personal relationship with the candidate or member of the supervisory team;
 - (v) not have had any professional relationship with the candidate which may give rise to a conflict of interest (for example supervisory, collaborative research, co-authoring of papers);
 - (vi) not have had a significant research relationship (for example, co-authoring of numerous research outputs such as papers and conferences) with any member of the supervisory team within the last five years;
 - (vii) not hold (or have held) any appointment of the University, other than that of external examiner, during the period in which the student has been registered for the degree;
 - (viii) have the right to work in the United Kingdom.

Examiners' reports

15. The examiners will be required to complete an independent report on the quality of the work submitted for the award. In producing their report, the examiners will be required to consider the following:
 - does the work possess quality, originality and distinctiveness worthy of the award?
 - does the work make a substantial contribution to the advancement of knowledge of such a nature as to make the candidate an acknowledged expert in the field(s) covered?

Examiners' recommendations

16. The examiners will be required to make one of the following recommendations to the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE) outlining the reasons why they have come to that decision:
 - that the degree be awarded
 - that the degree be awarded subject to specified minor corrections¹ being made to the thesis or portfolio within a period not exceeding one month
 - that the degree be awarded subject to specified, minor revisions² being made to the thesis or portfolio within a period not exceeding six months
 - that the degree not be awarded
17. In the case of specified minor corrections or specified minor revisions, the examiner must produce a list of the required corrections. If more than one examiner requires corrections these will be collated and sent to the candidate. Examiners asking for minor corrections will be required to certify that the corrections have been satisfactorily completed within 30 University working days of submission.
18. The recommendation of the examiners shall be considered by the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE) and the candidate notified of the outcome. The decision of the Board will be final.

Disagreement between examiners

19. If the examiners are unable to agree on a recommendation, the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee shall appoint an additional examiner, internal or external, to review the portfolio and the original examiners' reports which will be anonymised. The Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE) shall consider the reports of all examiners before reaching a decision.

Copyright and access to dissertations

20. Dissemination of knowledge is one of the objectives of the University. Copies of portfolios accepted for research degrees are stored in an online repository and are available for anyone to consult. A candidate is therefore advised to mark the portfolio as copyright.

Appeals and complaints

21. The grounds and procedures for appeals are set out in the [Regulations for academic appeals](#) and the grounds and procedures for complaints are set out in the [Procedure for complaints](#).

¹ The phrase "specified, minor corrections" shall be taken to include the correction of minor corrections, minor errors of fact, typography, grammar, style, syntax and/or layout of graphs/tables etc., which would enhance the readers' understanding of the author's argument but which does not alter the intellectual content and reasoning of the thesis.

² "Minor revisions" are those which do not involve further supervision or any further original research. Such additions might include, for example, additional sentences, tables, paragraphs or pages but not normally additional chapters. They may additionally include specified minor corrections.