

Periodic Review Report Template

Department Postgraduate Research Programmes – Graduate School

Date of Review 26 and 27 January 2015

Review Panel
(approved by Programme Approvals & Review Sub-committee)

Internal Membership
Professor George Marston, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)
Dr Mark Moss, Head of Department - Psychology, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Professor Jackie Harvey, Professor of Financial Management and Director of Business Research, Faculty of Business and Law
Natalie-Dawn Hodgson, President Students' Union
Maggie New, Academic Registrar

External Membership
Professor Paul Holmes, Associate Dean Research and Knowledge Exchange, and Head of Graduate School, Manchester Metropolitan University
Dr Brian Ellis, Deputy Director & Director of Programmes (Professional Doctorate Framework), Graduate School, Glasgow Caledonian University

Method of Review This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook available from <http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/>

- Notes:**
- Review reports are expected to be short and succinct, typically 3 to 4 sides of A4
 - Sections highlighted in blue below, together with the header above, make up the published summary of this review. This will be published on the University's Teaching Quality Information web pages (<http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/tqinf/>)

Section 1 Department Context

Postgraduate Research (PGR) links clearly to the University Corporate Strategy outcome of growing high quality research. Northumbria University can award the following research degrees via Research Degrees Committee (RDC): Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Professional Doctorate; Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Higher Doctorates (staff and alumni only); PhD by Published Work (staff and alumni only). The student body is varied, and includes self-funded students, students in receipt of a Northumbria University or Research Council studentship, students on collaborative programmes with industry (including KTPs), employer-sponsored students, staff members and Graduate Tutors.

All PGR students are based in one of four University Faculties (specifically, the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences (ADSS), Faculty of Engineering and Environment (EE), Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (HLS), and Faculty of Business and Law (BL)). The Graduate School is a centrally managed entity within a service department (Research and Business Services).

The current Graduate School structure came into effect on 1 November 2014 following a review and restructure of PGR administration across the University. A part-time head has responsibility for Academic leadership of the Graduate School and overall line management of staff is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Research) who reports to the Director of Research and Business Services. In addition to the new Graduate School Manager for Researcher Development, there are two established Graduate School Managers; one with responsibility for Academic Quality (this post also line manages the Faculty-based staff) and the other for Planning and Information. Two further Graduate School posts have responsibility for Examination and Regulations.

The Graduate School is at the heart of the University's support network for research students, supporting students, and their supervisors, from application to final award. It works closely with academic staff, Academic Registry, International Development, Marketing, Human Resources, University Library, Student Support and Wellbeing, and the Students' Union, in order to provide support to students throughout their studies. Working in consultation with all stakeholders both within and outside the University there is collective responsibility for ensuring that a doctoral student at Northumbria receives a professional researcher development and training programme (in accordance with national guidelines) as well as a supervisory team expert in their field of research. The Graduate School also administers funding schemes to support research activities, and is responsible for research degree examinations and awards.

Key staff

The University Senior Management has a Pro-Vice Chancellor responsible for Research and Innovation (PVC (R&I)). This post includes within its scope the Graduate School and its activities. Each Faculty is led by an Executive Dean, and the Faculty Management Team includes an Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) (ADR&I) who is responsible for the management and development of PGR activity in the Faculty, working closely with an academic PGR Director. The PGR Director is specifically responsible for the following areas:

- PGR recruitment and promotion in conjunction with the Graduate School.
- Appropriate research governance and management of PGR activities across the Faculty.
- Completion of annual PGR reports to the Graduate School to facilitate governance and review.
- Membership of relevant University committees on behalf of the Faculty in relation to PGR assurance and development.
- Assurance of PGR procedures across the Faculty and within the Departments.
- Chairing the Faculty Research Degrees Sub-Committee (FRDSC).
- Leading and developing, as appropriate, joint venture PGR collaborations with partner institutions.
- Membership of the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC).

There are a number of PGR support models at department level across the University (e.g. research leads, PGR leads), but the PGR Director works closely with the specified role in each Department to ensure that the PGR programme is being delivered to required standards and that students are supported. The Department lead/contacts are members of the FRDSC. Each PGR Director also works with the Faculty Research Ethics Director to ensure appropriate ethics governance takes place with respect to all research undertaken by PGR students.

For 2013/14 (the last full year for which data is available), the University had 334.50 FTE full-time (including full time "writing up") and 135.20 FTE part-time (including part time "writing up") students studying on research degree programmes. Of the 469.70 FTE PGR students, 3.91 FTE were registered on MPhil programmes, 414.18 FTE on PhD programmes, and 51.61 FTE on Professional Doctorate programmes. Of the full-time students, 140.5 FTE are international (i.e. 42%).

Section 2	Judgement Criteria	
Focus of judgements	Judgements	Outcome
The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meets UK and NU expectations, 	√ Subject to actions in Section 6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	
The quality of students' learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commended, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meets UK and NU expectations, 	√
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	

Information about higher education provision	• commended,	
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	√
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
The enhancement of students' learning opportunities	• commended,	√
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	

Section 3	Standards and Quality
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of independent chairs in oral examinations; • The systematic monitoring of examiners' reports; • The robust mechanisms for the selection of the supervisory team; • Investment in systems to enable quality monitoring of the student journey; • Comprehensive training for a variety of academic roles; • A clear research workload allocation system. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish processes for evaluating the effectiveness of new systems (July 2015); • Establish a more robust system of monitoring and follow up of non-attendance at supervisory updating and related training sessions (July 2015). 	

Section 4	Student Experience
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong supervisor support/relationship; • Comprehensive induction processes (Graduate School, Faculty and Department); • Resources, studentships and equipment; • Management of the student journey, including transitions and mock viva; • Continued improvement in support for the student journey; • Investment in MYPGR; • Strong and informed student voice, at institution and Faculty level. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine MYPGR systems in response to user feedback (July 2015); • Annual progression and timely provision of feedback (July 2015); • Progress plans for online researcher development programme (July 2015); • Strategic review of space for PGR given the growth in PGR numbers (July 2015); • Strategic review of staff supervisory capacity for PGR given the growth in PGR numbers (July 2015); • Clarity of the minimum offer in terms of IT provision, research space and conference support (July 2015). 	

Section 5	Enhancement Strategies
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student research outputs as part of their PGR journey – commendation from employers; • Opportunities for contribution to PGR conferences at University, Faculty and Departmental level; • Support for attending national and international conferences; 	

- PGR Directors sharing good practice across Faculties;
- Research culture supported by the University's research strategy and investment in studentships and staff;
- Workload hours for supervision and staff research which enhances opportunities for student engagement;
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable supervisory teams.

The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:

- None identified.

Section 6	Management Information Trends
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development: Despite some implicit knowledge within the Graduate School there is a need for a clear strategy for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data collection and presentation for all points of the student journey and benchmarked performance, particularly with regard to funding, progression, submission, completion and achievement rates and trends (end of April 2015); • to inform the management and monitoring of Graduate School activities, for example academic staff attendance at training sessions (end of April 2015). 	

Section 7	Further Quality Assurance Monitoring	
Affirmations ¹	Please list any affirmations identified and accompanying actions (<i>add extra rows as needed</i>)	
	Issue	Action
	PGRs and teaching	To address through the HEA Associate Fellow membership via structured mentor sessions in 2015-16.
	Space/accommodation	Graduate School and Faculties to work with PGR students and Campus Services to understand student needs and expectations, and consider space and resource issues in the light of intended PGR growth.
	Supervisor Community of Practice	Graduate School Committee (GSC), through the PGR Contact Group, to oversee establishment of Community of Practice, including setting success measures.
	Information Sources	Monitor roll-out of MyPGR, as established source for information.
	Admissions – Recruitment and Selection training	GSC to work with Faculties and Human Resources to ensure that those making PGR admissions decisions have received appropriate training.
	Admissions processes	GSC to oversee the establishment of the central PGR admissions team (in International Office), to ensure that service standards are agreed and monitored.
Joint Degrees	Pending the formation of overseas partnerships, the Graduate School to develop regulations for PGR Joint Degrees.	

¹ examples of developments, planned or in train which seek to address issues previously identified

Audit Trails	No panel comments
Compliance Checks	No panel comments

Section 8	Department Response to Report
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Short summary response by Department on follow up action for inclusion in published report:

Standards and Quality

- The key elements of the online system (e-vision) for Postgraduate Research (PGR) supervision, progression and training for use by students and supervisors (supervision meetings, Project Approval, Annual Progression, Professional Development and Research Training) were all fully implemented. The systems were reviewed during the implementation with input from students and academic staff to identify further enhancements or amendments arising from changes to exam processes. Reports to monitor supervisor training attendance in relation to supervising staff have been in place since September 2015.

Student Experience

- The online PGR system has been refined in response to initial feedback from staff and students at review sessions. The online process for Annual Progression was implemented in August 2015.
- The implementation of the online compulsory training for supervisors and staff now fits more closely with Researcher Development, within Research and Business Services.
- Management information reports are available to support Faculties in strategic review / planning of space and supervisory capacity.

Management Information Trends

- Student application and enrolment numbers, supervision, training, progression, submission and award rates have been available via a suite of operational SQL reports since September 2015. These will be further enhanced to improve the usability of these reports for Faculty PGR Directors / Departmental PGR Leads.
- The key relevant data has now also been incorporated into monthly management information reporting. Initially this has been circulated in a draft format, seeking feedback from relevant committees. Funding data, and explanatory notes to all reports will be added, circulated on a monthly basis.

Further Quality Assurance Monitoring

- The PGR Teaching / HEA Associate Fellowship scheme will take effect from 2016/17. During the second semester of 2015/16 the implementation plan will be completed and communicated to staff and students.
- Management information reports are available to support Faculties in strategic review / planning of space. Requires further follow up with Campus Services and Faculties to ensure any proposed growth in PGR numbers is supported by consideration of accommodation and supervisory requirements in planning processes.
- The development of a Community of Practice will be discussed with PGR Directors.
- Further enhancements to the PGR e-vision system, will be based on the outcome of a review.
- The procedure and guidance pack for recruitment and selection of students has been developed, and implemented. The effectiveness of procedures for PGR admissions will be reviewed.
- Regulations were updated and published to allow joint awards in September 2015.