

Postgraduate Research Degree Admissions Policy

Head of Doctoral School
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UNIVERSITY OF
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Summary: This document defines the criteria for the selection and admission of postgraduate research students.	

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This list summaries the changes since 2021/2022 with the date that the changes were implemented.

September 2023	Delete all reference to PhD by Publication within the policy Update the committee's name to PGR Education Committee throughout the policy Add Preparation to Research Programme to the policy 1.2 Change department to Units of Assessment 3.1 Addition of Preparation for Research and update the deadlines for submission and start dates 4 a) Addition of Head of Research Environment and Impact to list 5. Add in that Preparation for Research Students do not need to attend an interview. 5 a) Addition of Head of Research Environment and Impact to list of interview panel 8. Update the appeals process to include the information from the previous Admissions appeals process.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to the following programmes:

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Doctor of Business Administration

Doctor of Education

Preparation for Research

Plus, any other that may be validated within the duration of this policy

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 UUK/GuildHE principles, and makes available accurate information on admissions processes for research degrees. Information is available on the external website so that students can 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.

1.1 Responsibility

Responsibility for implementing the procedures defined within this Policy lies with Postgraduate Research Education Committee.

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

1.2 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 & Innovation Committee maintains a list of Unit of Assessments able to supervise research students and oversees a process for gaining approval by 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.

2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTRY TO POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Entry requirements are detailed in website (<https://www.winchester.ac.uk/study/research-degrees/>) 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.

Applicants for all doctoral programmes 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) actively engagement in a profession relevant to the award being sought if applying to a Professional Doctorate programme.

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 Programmes should be discussed with the Programme Leader before application.

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 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

Applicants 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.

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 are referred to the University Criminal Conviction Policy.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 New applicants

For MPhil and PhD degrees and Preparation for Research applicants are required to submit the following to the Doctoral School:

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

Applicants who wish to enrol in September shall submit their application before midnight on 30 April.

Applicants who wish to enrol in January shall submit their application before midnight on 31 August.

For Professional Doctorate Programmes (EdD and DBA) applicants apply via the University's direct entry system. If the application meets programme entry requirements an interview will be offered.

Applicants who wish to enrol in September shall submit their application by the last working day of July.

Applicants who wish to enrol in January shall submit their application by the last working day of November.

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.

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 applicant 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 prior to the submission of thesis for final viva.

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 applicant 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 they shall include a Faculty Postgraduate Research Student Lead (FPGRSL), the Head of Doctoral School and the Head of Research Environment and Impact 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 & Innovations Committee) to take research students and the viability of the project.

MPhil/PhD:

- a) administered by the Doctoral School;
- b) subject to confirmation by the Doctoral School 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 Postgraduate Research Education Committee.

5. INTERVIEWS

Interviews are used as part of the admission process in accordance with the University Interviewing Policy but may take place in person on campus or online using MS Teams. Preparation for Research students do not attend an interview.

Interview panels for MPhil/PhD programmes shall consist of:

- a) FPGRSL and/or either the Head of Doctoral School, or the Head of Research Environment and Impact (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.

All members of the selection panel will have received staff development in selection and admission of postgraduate research degree students.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the motivation and potential to complete a sustained piece of research and to produce a thesis.

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.

Interview panels will ensure that applicants with disabilities are not disadvantaged or debarred by the criteria and procedures used for selecting students and that appropriate support is offered and available at interview. Where further guidance is required, academic staff may refer to Student Services.

Interview panels will ensure that their admissions processes demonstrate equality of opportunity for all applicants.

6. ACCEPTING AN APPLICANT

Before recommending the acceptance of an applicant, applicants must be made aware of the costs of the programme, including specific research costs (where known), and the financial support available. The University gives clear guidance to applicants on the external website about fees; prior to an offer being made applicants should be made

aware of their financial responsibilities and the consequences of being unable to meet their commitments during the duration of their studies.

Additionally, applicants will be made aware of the requirement to complete the programme within the period stipulated in the University's regulations, the requirements for successful annual progression and the procedures for monitoring of progress.

The interview panel for all doctorates shall satisfy itself that the research project:

- a) is within the applicant's capabilities
- b) 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.

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 students this letter shall be sent by the Doctoral School.

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

- a) the expected fees for the first year 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) the expectations from the University regarding attendance and engagement from the students and its consequences if they do not abide by them
- d) arrangements for enrolment and registration including any requirement to attend induction;
- e) 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) UKVI requirements for Student Visa, where appropriate;

Additionally for MPhil/PhD students

- g) 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 Doctoral School shall monitor arrangements that show compliance with legal requirements, particularly in relation to Disability, Equal Opportunities Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8. APPEALS

In some circumstances applicants that are unsuccessful based on information provided in an application (i.e., not through attendance at an interview), that have additional information which was not included originally, such as qualifications or prior learning/knowledge, 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 that were unsuccessful based on performance during an audition or interview are unable to appeal against the academic or professional judgement that has been made 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

To request a reconsideration, applicants are required to email doctoralschool@winchester.ac.uk within two weeks of the unsuccessful decision being communicated and to include the additional supporting information.

The applicant should provide details of the circumstances which give rise to the appeal to doctoralschool@winchester.ac.uk. Applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to support their appeal, including dates of actions or events where appropriate. In addition, applicants should outline what form of redress they are seeking.

Appeals will normally be considered by the Director of Research and Innovation.

9. 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.