UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES

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Responsible Role and Department and author (if different)	Head of the Doctoral School, Doctoral School Author: Doctoral School Manager
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Applies to: (Strikethrough text, only if appropriate)	University of Winchester University of Winchester Services Limited Note. This policy applies to all the organisations listed above, collectively known as the "University" or the "University of Winchester" for the purpose of this policy.
Indicate whether the document is for public access or internal access only Indicate whether the document applies to collaborative provision? (Strikethrough text, as appropriate)	Public Access ~~Internal Access Only~~ Applies to Collaborative Provision
Summary/Description:	
This document defines the criteria and the process for the selection and admissions for all Postgraduate Research Degree programmes validated by the University of Winchester. Note. this policy is underpinned by our commitment to promoting a university wide approach to health, safety and wellbeing and is supported by the principles of the University Mental Health Charter. Care has been taken to ensure that the policy is written compassionately, with consideration of the potential impact on staff and students.	

Equality Impact Assessment	
Summary of process undertaken to determine equality impacts:	To ensure that inclusivity and accessibility are effective. Demonstrating that the Admissions Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees, specially at interviews, does not offer any unfair advantage to anyone that is perceived to have a protected characteristic and to offer any reasonable adjustments as defined by the Equalities Act 2010.
University Committee (name/ date) where equality impacts discussed (may be Committee of approval, or another):	Senate Research and Innovation Committee
Has this policy been screened to ensure compliance with the University's Free Speech expectations?	Yes
Identified equality impact(s) on colleagues and students (i.e. any specific impacts related to this policy that may cause disadvantage for people due to one or more particular protective characteristic)	
Protected Characteristic	Impact(s) identified and any action(s)/mitigation(s) to address these impact(s), as necessary.
Age	No impacts identified.
Disability	No impacts identified.
Gender Identity	No impacts identified.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	No impacts identified.
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impacts identified.
Race (incl. nationality)	No impacts identified.
Religion and Belief	No impacts identified.
Sex	No impacts identified.
Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

This policy applies to the following postgraduate research degree programmes:

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Masters of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Plus, any other research degree programme, except for Masters in Research (MRes), that may be validated within the duration of this policy

The University of Winchester is committed to maintaining a lively and diverse research culture, much of it sustained by its PGR students. Therefore, the university adopts fair admission procedures, as defined in the UUK/GuildHE principles and the Equality in Doctoral Education through Parnership and Innovation (EDEPI) Competency Framework, 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 the 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 Directorate 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. Postgraduate Research Education Committee maintains a list of departments and Units of Assessment able to supervise research students and oversees a process for gaining approval by new subject areas and new supervisors.

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

2.1 Entry requirements

Entry requirements are detailed on the external website of the University.

Applicants for MPhil programmes are expected to have at least one of the following

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

Applicants for doctoral programmes are expected to have at least one of the following:

a) a masters degree from a UK university or a degree from an international institution deemed to be of equal standing to a UK degree, or
b) a first class or upper second class bachelor degree awarded by a UK university or from an international 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 for all programmes:

e) two satisfactory written reports from academic referees

2.2 Applications from international students

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. However, an offer to international students will only be issued, if applicable, after the relevant International Recruitment and Partnerships Team is satisfied with the expedition of a visa to study at our University.

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 overall score of 6.5, including 7.0 in writing, and a minimum of 5.5 in all other components in the IELTS (Academic).

2.4 Applicants with Criminal Convictions

If an applicant declares a conviction, please follow the guidance and process on applicants with criminal convictions on the Admissions Policy of the University.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 New applicants

For MPhil and PhD degrees, 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.

3.2 Applicants wishing to transfer from another institution and recognition of prior learning (RPL)

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.

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. On transfer of registration, the registration for the original degree shall lapse.

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

a) copies of regular progress reports (preferably annual reports) from the previous institution as far as possible;
b) 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 can be secured 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), and the Head of Doctoral School the potential Director of Studies.

b) be based on the availability of a suitable supervisory team to take research students in subject area/Unit of Assessment and the viability of the project.

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 competency criteria on the Interview Form.

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 Support and Success. Additionally, interview panels will ensure that their admissions processes demonstrate equality of opportunity for all applicants.

The Selection process is administered by the Doctoral School with support from the Faculties. 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 .

5. 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 for Postgraduate Research Degrees;
c) can be supported by a suitable supervisory team and adequate facilities within an appropriate research environment.

Faculties will confirm to the Doctoral School that a candidate is accepted.

5.1 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. 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;
f) the requirements and conditions of any sponsor or funder, where appropriate;
g) requirements for Student Visa, where appropriate; which may include the payment of a tuition fee deposit.
h) the requirement to successfully complete the PGCRS
i) a link to the Student Terms and Conditions

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

6. 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 may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making the decision on an application based on performance during an audition or interview, 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. 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 (DRI), or nominee for those cases where the DRI has been involved in an admissions decision.

Applicants have the right to challenge the outcome when an appeal is rejected. The appelant shall submit within 10 working days an academic appeal review form, available from the Doctoral School, stating the reasons for challenging the decision to reject the appeal. The Doctoral School will appoint a reviewer who shall see the original appeal and supporting documentation.

7. 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. Applicants who wish to raise a complaint should refer to the

University's Public Complaints Policy, which covers complaints from applicants and their supporters, and which can be found at: www.winchester.ac.uk/termsandconditions.The contact email is:
complain@winchester.ac.uk.

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.