Policy For Postgraduate Research Degrees involving Practice as Research

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Publication date: August 2024
Amended: -
Review date: May 2025

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1. Definition of Practice as Research (PaR)

1.1. Practice as Research is used to define praxis; when the research itself is practice and may encompass a range of practice research and written outputs including, but not limited to, a performance, an exhibition and an accompanying thesis. PaR is considered to be distinct from practice-based research, which normally includes practical elements but substantially involves writing about practice and research about practice.

1.2. The University encourages and treats with parity all types of research and the requirements for the award of each type of Postgraduate Research (PGR) award remain the same, regardless of the type of research output.

2. Course approval for PaR provision

2.1. PGR programmes which include PaR must be approved through the normal New Course Approval procedure, as they must address additional resource requirements which are not expected of standard PGR programmes.

3. Admissions considerations

3.1. In addition to the standard admission criteria for a PGR programme in the relevant department, candidates applying for a programme involving PaR will be required to demonstrate proven capacity and experience to deliver the types of research output proposed as well as preparedness for research.

3.2. An appropriate supervisory team (two or more) should be decided upon, which includes at least one supervisor who has experience of undertaking PaR or supervising PaR students.

3.3. As there is an expectation that the resource requirements for PaR provision will be greater, an indication of the resource requirements for projects should be determined at the point of admission and agreed as part of the offer of admission.

3.4.	At the point of admission a research theme should be identified, along with a clear plan to identify and agree the planned PaR outputs, training plan and progression milestones, by the point of Confirmation.

4. Progression monitoring

4.1.	It is acknowledged that each PaR project will require individual milestones to be embedded within the main PaR milestones document (attached as Annex 1): This will include developing a comprehensive plan of the practical requirements and timeline for delivery and assessment, as well as reviewing skills and training requirements and agreeing the structure of the written thesis.

4.2.	The standard PaR milestones for progression should be reviewed during the first year and the planned PaR outputs, training requirements and individual progression milestones agreed, and approved by the Research Student Progress Board, by the point of Confirmation. Once approved by the Research Student Progress Board, we would not normally expect any deviation from the approved research output and assessment timeline; any such changes would need to be approved by the Research Student Progress Board and would need to take into account feasibility and the impact of the change on the student's timely completion.

4.3.	The minimum expectation for confirmation of PhD status for all PaR PhDs is the presentation of at least 6000 words and a substantial amount of practice undertaken upon which the Research Student Progress Board can judge that the work is of PhD standard.

5. Research output

5.1.	The identified research output must be agreed by the point of Confirmation and should be articulated clearly for assessment purposes.

5.2.	In order to ensure that the research output for PaR is both accessible and meets the criteria for the award, no less than 50% of the research output for PaR degrees should be the written thesis as determined by the Research Student Progress Board when formally approving the identified research outputs and structure of the written thesis. The written thesis may be comprised of a range of written elements including, but not limited to, a critical review, a portfolio, and/or a statement on theoretical discourse or methodology.

6. Appointment of examiners and assessment

6.1.	Following Research Student Progress Board approval of the identified research outputs and structure of the written thesis, at the point of Confirmation, the nomination and appointment of examiners would be expected to commence. However, if Research Student Progress Board

approval is given ahead of confirmation, the nomination and appointment of examiners could commence earlier.

6.2.   It is expected that that the Internal and External Examiners will be involved in the examination of both the PaR and written output, such that they are appointed at a stage when they can observe and assess the PaR output in the format intended; for example, if the output is a performance or exhibition for a live audience, that the examiners are in attendance in order to assess all aspects of the PaR output. Examiners for a PaR project should be notified of all "assessment points" during the nomination and appointment process in order for the assessment process to be agreed at the time of appointment. Examiners should also be informed of the method by which PaR will be shared with them, at an early stage.

6.3.   Examiners will not provide any assessment feedback prior to the viva, nor confer with each other about their assessment or the research output, until the exchange of their independent reports and pre-viva meeting.

6.4.   All research output that is submitted for examination should be both accessible and 'archivable'. All PaR outputs should be available to the examiners in an appropriate format for examination purposes and should be submitted in a format which can be archived appropriately post-examination. It is the responsibility of the student and supervisors to determine the most appropriate method of recording and archiving of research output and to work with the relevant University services at an early stage to ensure that the research output is accessible and archivable. It may be the original output is returned to the student and an electronic record of the output accompanies the written thesis that is uploaded to the thesis repository (See Policy on thesis submission, deposit and retention).

6.5.   The standard criteria for the relevant award of research degrees are applied to PaR degrees (Annex 2).

Document Control Panel

Field	Description
Title	Policy For Postgraduate Research Degrees involving Practice as Research
Policy Classification	Policy
Security Classification	Open
Security Rationale	N/A
Policy Manager Role	Senior Postgraduate Research Education Manager
Nominated Contact	pgresearch@essex.ac.uk
Responsible UoE Section	Academic Section
Approval Body	Senate
Signed Off Date	N/A
Publication Status	Published
Published Date	August 2024
Last Review Date	May 2024
Minimum Review Frequency	Yearly
Review Date	May 2025
UoE Identifier	0086

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Annex 1

Practice as Research Milestones Template (2024-25)

Year 1 (Full time), Year 1 and 2 (Part time)

Ahead of the first Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M1.1	■ Assess training needs and knowledge required to undertake research project and complete the thesis by completing the Training Needs Analysis. ■ Submit a pertinent for the chosen research subject Annotated Bibliography (no more than 150 words per annotation) on 6-10 primary sources. The sources can include a combination of theoretical literature (i.e. articles, books and book chapters) and relevant practice (i.e. directing/actor-training methodologies, performances).	1	1

Ahead of the second Supervisory Panel (Confirmation Board)

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M1.2	Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate.	2	4
M1.3	Choose research topic and demonstrate significance/impact of research with a Research Project Proposal, including (dependent on subject area):	2	5

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
	■ identify central research problem/questions to be answered ■ develop PaR methodology to address research topic ■ feasibility report – identifying sources, access and ethical considerations ■ create project plan, outlining objectives for each stage		
M1.4	Demonstrate understanding of chosen topic within the context of the field with; ■ a critical literature review ■ a critical review of relevant practice	3	5
M1.5	Demonstrate the ability to produce work of the quality and quantity in order to complete within the three year standard PhD period (six years for part-time students), in the following ways; ■ evidence that academic writing is of standard and ability expected at PhD level, including adequate referencing and language skills. Submit 6,000 words in good draft. ■ demonstrate that practice is of artistic and methodological sophistication as appropriate to PhD level and that candidate has requisite capacity to produce planned practice. This may involve undertaking scoping workshops, presenting a 'work-in- progress showing', or undertaking a proportion of the overall PaR output (eg. presented the first of a three-part output.	3	6

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M1.6	Demonstrate effective project management through the setting of research goals and prioritisation of activities, in the following ways; ■ create a detailed, realistic plan of work/ timetable for Year 2 ■ produce supervisory board report written in a clear and self-reflective style	3	6

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will make a recommendation to the Research Students' Progress Board, ahead of the next academic year. Further information regarding Supervisory Panels and Research Students' Progress Boards can be found here: https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/postgraduate- research/pgr-progress.

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M2.1	Review training needs and knowledge required to continue by reviewing the Training Needs Analysis. A revisited written submission of up to 5,000 words based on the feedback offered during the Confirmation Board Panel and subsequent Supervisory Meetings.	4	7-9

Year 2 (Full time), Year 3 and 4 (Part time) Ahead of the third Supervisory Panel

Ahead of the fourth Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M2.2	Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate.	5	10
M2.3	Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected at the end of Year 2, in the following ways; ■ produce another 6,000 words in good draft Report on research undertaken to date demonstrating that practice-as- research is at least 50% complete.	5	11
M2.4	Review significance and impact of research and articulate output. For example: ■ deliver workshop ■ present research to students and staff at seminars, conference or festival Write journal article.	6	12
M2.5	Demonstrate effective project management through the setting of research goals and prioritisation of activities, in the following ways; ■ create a detailed, realistic plan of work/ timetable for Year 3, which demonstrates the ability to submit within the three-year standard PhD period (six years for part-time students).	6	12

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
	■ produce supervisory board report written in a clear and self- reflective style		

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will make a recommendation to the Research Students' Progress Board, ahead of the next academic year. Further information regarding Supervisory Panels and Research Students' Progress Boards can be found here: https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/postgraduate- research/pgr-progress.

Milestone	Requirement	Full time term	Part time term
M3.1	Demonstrate the ability to reflect on skills and knowledge development and its application to the research project by reviewing the Training Needs Analysis. Produce another 4-6,000 words according to feedback from Supervisory Panel 5 and Subsequent Supervisory Meetings	7	13-15

Year 3 (Full time), Year 5 and 6 (Part time) ahead of the fifth Supervisory Panel

Ahead of the sixth Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirements	Full time term	Part time term
M3.2	Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected when nearing submission, in the following ways; ■ PaR completed and evaluation undertaken Produce main body of the thesis in draft form.	8	16
M3.3	Complete subject-specific milestones, for example; Produce an effective CV presenting one's skills, personal attributes and achievements.	9	17
M3.4	Demonstrate clear evidence of progress towards submission with the following; ■ Completed final draft of thesis for supervisor(s)/ supervisory board comment ■ Completed documentation of PaR output/s for supervisor(s)/ supervisory board comment	9	18

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will either confirm to the Research Student Progress Board that the student is ready to submit their thesis, or recommend that a period of completion is required (see below).

Completion Period

If, at the 6th supervisory Panel, a student isn't on track to submit their thesis by the end of year 3 (year 6 for Part time students), a recommendation for a period of completion can be requested from the RSPB, for approval by the Faculty Dean (Postgraduate)

Milestone	Requirement	Term to undertake work (to be used as a guide only)
C1.1	Clear plan to submission, including; ■ timeline of work needing to take place before submission, including full details of work yet to be undertaken ■ submission date agreed	Timeline agreed by Supervisory Panel.

Annex 2

Current requirements for PGR awards at Essex

PhD

'A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to conduct and present original investigations that make a significant contribution to knowledge, to test ideas, whether the candidate's own or those of others, to understand the relationship of the theme of the investigations to a wider field of knowledge and to express themselves clearly and concisely. In the case of a thesis involving original creative output, the thesis must embody the results of research carried out and/or output created during the approved period of study. The thesis must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. Within the thesis and oral examination the student must show evidence of the originality of the work, demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of the theme of the thesis to a wider field of knowledge, make a significant contribution to knowledge/the genre, and must express themselves clearly and concisely.'

MPhil

'A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy must embody the results of research carried out during the approved period of study and should make a contribution to knowledge. In the thesis and the oral examination the candidate is required to present the results of research that either forms original work or is an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge. The thesis should set out the relationship between the candidate's work and the wider field of knowledge, and should be expressed clearly and concisely. In the case of a thesis involving original creative output, the thesis must embody the results of research carried out and/or output created during the approved period of study. The thesis must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. Within the thesis the student must show evidence of the originality of the work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge/the genre. The thesis should demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the candidate's work and the wider field of knowledge/the genre, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.'

Masters by Dissertation

'A dissertation for the degree of Masters by Dissertation is required to present the results of research carried out during the approved period of study and should demonstrate advanced understanding of the area of study. In the dissertation and the oral examination the candidate is required to present the results of research that either forms original work or is an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge. The dissertation should set out the relationship between the candidate's work and the wider field of knowledge, and should be expressed clearly and concisely. In the case of a dissertation involving original creative output, the dissertation must embody the results of research carried out/or output created during the approved period of study and should demonstrate advanced understanding of the area of study. The dissertation must contain a commentary that addresses the originality and artistic relevance of the work. The dissertation should set out the relationship between the candidate's work and the wider field of knowledge/the genre, and should be expressed clearly and concisely.'