



University of Essex

Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees involving Practice as Research

University of Essex, Postgraduate Research
Education

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Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees involving Practice as Research

1. Definition of Practice as Research (PaR)

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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](#)).

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

Annex 1

Practice-as-Research Milestones Template (2019-20)

Milestones	Criteria for progress	Deliverables	Deadline
M1: Confirmation and Progress to Year 2 (or equivalent for part-time students)	A: Assess training needs and knowledge required to undertake research project and complete the thesis.	<p>Training Needs Analysis to be completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate. 	<p>First Supervisory Panel (Term 1 for FT students; Term 2 for PT students).</p> <p>By Confirmation Board (end of Term 3 for FT students; Term 6 for PT students)</p>
	B: Choose research topic and demonstrate significance/impact of research.	<p>Research Project Proposal, including (dependent on subject area):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. 	By Confirmation Board
	C: Demonstrate understanding of chosen topic within the context of the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical Literature Review ▪ Critical Review of Relevant Practice 	By Confirmation Board

	D: 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).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence that academic writing is of standard and ability expected at PhD level, including adequate referencing and language skills. Submit 10,000 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. 	By Confirmation Board
	E: Demonstration of effective project management through the setting of research goals and prioritisation of activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a detailed, realistic plan of work/ timetable for Year 2. ▪ Produce supervisory board report written in a clear and self-reflective style ▪ Agree progression milestone expectations for subsequent years of study. 	By Confirmation Board
M2: Progress from Year 2 to Year 3 (or equivalent for part-time students)	A: Review training needs and knowledge required to continue with research project and complete the thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training Needs Analysis to be reviewed. ▪ Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Third Supervisory Panel ▪ Fourth Supervisory Panel (end of Term 6 for FT students; Term 12 for PT students)
	B: Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected at the end of Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce another 6,000 words in good draft. ▪ Report on research undertaken to date demonstrating that practice-as-research is at least 50% complete. 	Fourth Supervisory Panel

	C: Review significance and impact of research and articulate output.	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver workshop ▪ Present research to students and staff at seminars, conference or festival. ▪ Write journal article 	Fourth Supervisory Panel
	D: Demonstration of effective project management through the setting of research goals and prioritisation of activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a detailed, realistic plan of work/ timetable for Year 3, which demonstrates the ability to complete within the three year standard PhD period (six years for part-time students). ▪ Produce supervisory board report written in a clear and self-reflective style 	Fourth Supervisory Panel
M3: Year 3 (or equivalent for part-time students)	A: Ability to reflect on skills and knowledge development and its application to the research project	Training Needs Analysis reviewed	Fifth Supervisory Panel (Term 7 full-time students; Term 14 for part-time students)
	B: Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected when nearing submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PaR completed and evaluation undertaken. ▪ Produce main body of the thesis in draft form. 	Sixth Supervisory panel (End of Term 8; Term 16 for Part-Time Students)
	C: Clear evidence of progress towards submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed final draft of thesis for supervisor(s)/ supervisory board comment ▪ Completed documentation of PaR output/s for supervisor(s)/ supervisory board comment. 	Submitted to Supervisors Term 9 (Term 18 Part-Time)
	D: Subject-specific milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce an effective CV presenting one's skills, personal attributes and achievements. 	Sixth Supervisory panel

If required: M4: Request to enter Completion period	A: Clear plan to submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timeline of work needing to take place before submission ▪ Submission date agreed 	Timeline agreed by Supervisory Panel.
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List of Supervisory Panels

First Supervisory Panel: End of Term 1 (Term 2 Part-Time)
 Confirmation Board: End of Term 3 (Term 6 Part-Time)
 Third Supervisory Panel: End of Term 4 (Term 8 Part-Time)
 Fourth Supervisory Panel: End of Term 6 (Term 12 Part-Time)
 Fifth Supervisory Panel: End of Term 7 (Term 14 Part-Time)
 Sixth Supervisory Panel: End of Term 8 (Term 16 Part-Time)

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.'

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	Postgraduate Research Education Team
Stakeholder role	Not applicable
If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact Laura Ruddick	