

21st May 2009

University of Birmingham

Proposed Amendments to Regulations governing Professional Doctorates

Purpose of Paper

1. To propose changes for effect in 2009/10 to the Regulation governing professional doctorates, in order to ensure the Regulations reflect current practice.

Proposal

2. APRC is asked to approve the following changes for effect in 2009/10 to Regulation 6.1.3 (a) (vii) (additions underlined, deletions struck through):

Professional Doctorate (ClinPsyD, EdD, ThD, EdPsychD, SocSciD, Foren.Psy.D, HScD, HScD(Clin), DBA, DPT, App.Ed and Child Psy.D)

A programme, normally of three years' duration, which integrates taught postgraduate work and/or professional practice with research within a programme of 540 credits. Registered Students are assessed by a combination of written examinations and/or project report(s), dissertation or thesis which collectively make an original contribution to knowledge, worthy of publication. The programme comprises research related work (training and thesis or dissertation) and no more than 180 ~~120~~ credits of subject-focused taught modules ~~courses spread over the three years of the programme.~~

3. APRC is asked to approve a further change, arising from an issue arising in this paper, to Regulation 6.1.3 (a) (vi) (addition underlined, deletion struck through):

Doctor of Philosophy with Integrated Study (PhD with Integrated Study)

A programme, normally of four years' duration, which integrates research with taught postgraduate work in a range of skills and subject focused courses modules, up to a maximum of 180 ~~120~~ credits. Registered Students must produce a thesis which makes an original contribution to knowledge, worthy of publication in whole or in part in a learned journal.

Background

4. The University currently has ten programmes leading to the award of distinct professional doctorates. These are regulated under a Regulation (6.1.3 (a) (vii)) which predates 1997/8, when it was first encoded in the Research Postgraduate Regulations that came in force in that year for the whole University, under the title 'hybrid doctorate'. No changes have been made to this Regulation since, although it has been renumbered as part of the wholesale revision of Regulations undertaken in 2007/8.
5. Only one of the ten current professional doctorate comes close to fulfilling the regulatory requirements of comprising "no more than 120 credits of subject-

focused taught courses spread over the three years of the programme”, as will be seen from the following table (all information drawn from programme handbooks).

Programme	Taught Credits in		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
App. Ed. and Child PsyD School of Education	180	-	-
Clin. Psy. D School of Psychology	30	-	-
DBA School of Business <i>This is a p/t programme, but here amalgamated to f/t for purposes of comparison</i>	90	30	-
DPT School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion	120	-	-
EdD School of Education	180 credits over three years		
EdPsychD School of Education	180 credits over three years		
Foren.Psy.D School of Psychology	160	-	-
HScD School of Health Sciences <i>This programme is closed to new applicants and has only one student currently enrolled</i>	170	-	-
SocSciD School of Social Policy	180 credits over three years		
ThD School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion <i>Delivered through Queens College</i>	120		

6. The majority of professional doctorate programmes 'frontload' their taught credits in the first year of the programme, which contradicts the requirement that the credits be spread over the programme.
7. The majority of professional doctorate programmes have between 160 and 180 taught credits, which contradicts the requirement that a professional doctorate may consist of up to 120 taught credits. In some cases 60 of these credits are in the form of a dissertation, but this is assessed as a taught dissertation rather than a research thesis, i.e. it is marked and second marked internally, then moderated by a Board of Examiners, rather than being assessed by an internal and external examiner. These credits therefore have to be counted as taught.

Arguments in Support of Proposal

8. The programme directors of all the programmes leading to a professional doctorate within the University have reviewed the proposals, and offered their support for them.
9. The App.Ed. and Child Psy.D is a professional doctorate, listed as an award of the University in Ordinance 4.1, but not currently included in the list of professional doctorates in Regulation 6.1.3 (a) (vii). This omission is an oversight that needs correction.
10. The nature of professional doctorates, requiring academic and professional excellence, is such that in many cases students will need to undergo intensive education or training prior to embarking on their thesis or research project. This is in contradiction to the apparent requirement for the taught credits to be "spread over the three years of the programme". It is suggested that this requirement be removed as unduly constrictive on the format of professional doctorates.
11. It seems reasonable to amend the maximum amount of taught credits permissible on a professional doctorate programme in light of the fact that the vast majority of professional doctorate programmes in the University currently involve more than the current maximum of 120 credits of taught modules, and that 180 credits of taught modules is the sector norm, as recognised by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, 2nd edition, p. 11:

Professional doctorate programmes include some taught elements in addition to the research dissertation. Practice varies but typically professional doctorates include postgraduate study equivalent to a minimum of three full-time calendar years with level 7 study representing no more than one-third of this. (Level 7 is the equivalent to level M in Birmingham regulations; as a three-year programme, the professional doctorate contains a nominal 540 credits, of which one third is 180 credits.)

Rather than ruling most of our professional doctorate programmes outside Regulations, despite remaining within sector norms, it would be preferable to change Regulations to reflect the reality of professional doctorates within the University and the United Kingdom as a whole.

12. The PhD with Integrated Study, as defined in Regulation 6.1.3 (a) (vi), also may involve the equivalent of a year of taught modules, which, as illustrated in 11 above, should be up to 180 credits, not 120 credits.

13. Assessment of the professional doctorate, as with all research postgraduate awards, is through examination of reports, dissertations or thesis by an internal and external examiner. Written examinations may be used to assess the taught credit, but although successful completion of all taught modules is a requirement of successful completion of a postgraduate research degree, the final assessment of the degree does not take these into account.

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