Standards and Criteria for Research Degrees

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[Quality and Standards | University of Hull](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality)

* The University has adopted the principles of Designing for Diverse Learners, and all policy documents should be written with reference to these principles. Further information is available at the [Designing for diverse learners website](https://designingfordiverselearners.info/).
* An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) must be considered for all new and amended policies. Further information is available from the [EIA section of SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/EDI/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments-(EIAs).aspx).
* This document is available in alternative formats from [**policy@hull.ac.uk**](mailto:policy@hull.ac.uk).
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Standards and Criteria for Research Degrees

# Introduction

* 1. The University of Hull is responsible for the standards and criteria of the research degrees awarded in its name. These standards and criteria are set out in definitions below, based on the QAA’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education, [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies 2nd edition Updated February 2024](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/the-frameworks-for-higher-education-qualifications-of-uk-degree-awarding-bodies-2024.pdf?sfvrsn=3562b281_11).
  2. In all instances, candidates must undergo a Mid-Year Monitoring and an Annual Monitoring and Progression meeting, to assess whether they are working at the appropriate level and to allow the candidate to progress to the following year. Where this has not been demonstrated, supervisors can invoke termination of candidature procedures as per the Code of Practice: Research Degree Termination of Candidature, available on the [Quality Handbook webpage](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality).
  3. For full-time Masters by Thesis candidates, the AMP may not be necessary as there is no progression to a subsequent year. In such cases, the supervisory meetings and MYM meetings are of particular importance to document progress.

# Doctoral Degrees: PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)

The descriptor provided for this level of the Frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full.

a) Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.

b) Holders of doctoral degrees are able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

c) Doctoral courses that may have a substantial taught element in addition to the research component (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or DClinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.

d) The title PhD will be awarded on the basis of original research.

e) Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.

f) Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically, a portfolio of work that has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment. Most degree-awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or their own academic staff of several years' standing. The University of Hull has separate regulations governing Higher Doctorates, which can be found in the [Quality Handbook](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality).

**Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

• the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication

• a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice

• the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems

• a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

• make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences

• continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

**And holders will have:**

• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

g) In addition to the doctoral level description, the candidate shall present the results of their research in a thesis of not more than 100,000 words, presented in a viva voce and defended to the satisfaction of the examiners.

# EdD (*Doctor of Education*)

* 1. In addition to the doctoral level description established in Regulation 2, the candidate shall present the results of their research in a thesis of not more than 50,000 words, presented in a viva voce and defended to the satisfaction of the examiners, as well passing coursework assignments for each of the taught modules.

# PsyD (*Doctor in Psychology*)

* 1. In addition to the doctoral level description established in Regulation 2, the candidate shall present the results of their research in a thesis of not more than 50,000 words, presented in a viva voce and defended to the satisfaction of the examiners, as well passing assessment of any additional studies prescribed by the candidate’s Faculty.

# PhD (*Doctor of Philosophy*) by Publication

* 1. The PhD by Publication shall be awarded to a candidate whose published work represents an original contribution to knowledge showing evidence of originality and clarity of thought, independent critical power, application of research methods appropriate to the particular field of study and an appreciation of the general field of knowledge to which the subject relates. The treatment of the topic or topics in the field of study should be substantial and should normally relate in a coherent way. The candidate must be able to demonstrate the creation and interpretation of new knowledge.
  2. The candidate is required to provide an introductory commentary demonstrating the coherence of the subject matter of the published work submitted.
  3. The published work shall be defended in a viva voce to the satisfaction of the examiners.

# ClinPsyD (*Doctor of Clinical Psychology*)

* 1. In addition to the doctoral level description established in Regulation 2, the candidate shall demonstrate their original contribution to the advancement of knowledge and professional practice, involving a critical appreciation of the field of study and background relevant to the work.
  2. The summative assessment for the programme comprises a short answer assignment at the end of the first year of study, a written assignment consisting of two papers in the second year, and:

1. A report of a small scale clinical research study carried out on placement of not more than 3,500 words and one clinical literature review,
2. One clinical case study and one psychometric case study from clinical placements,
3. A doctoral portfolio thesis consisting of:
4. One paper in publishable format comprising a review of an area of clinical psychology relating to the candidate’s research project,
5. One paper based on the candidate’s research project in a format ready for submission to one of the major journals of clinical or health psychology,
6. An oral examination,
7. An annual Clinical Practice Evaluation assessment at the end of the first and second years;
8. End of placement assessments.
   1. Irrespective of academic and research performance, the candidate must perform sufficiently well in their clinical work on each placement to pass the placement, as evaluated by the clinical supervisor and Course staff.

# Higher Doctorates by Research

* 1. The Higher Doctorate by Research shall be awarded to a candidate who has produced a work of distinction which constitutes a substantial, sustained and original contribution to the advancement of knowledge and which has established the candidate’s authoritative standing in the chosen field of study. It is expected that the major part of the work shall have been published.

# Masters Degrees

* 1. Masters degrees are awarded to students who:
     1. have completed the relevant number of credits in the PG Certificate in Research Training,
     2. have demonstrated a systematic understanding of knowledge and critical awareness of current problems in their field of study,
     3. have shown a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research,
     4. have demonstrated originality in the application of knowledge,
     5. and who are able to evaluate current scholarship and methodologies.

# Masters Degrees by Thesis (*MA, MPhil, MSc*)

* 1. In addition to the Masters Degree description established in Regulation 8, the candidate shall present their research in a thesis of not more than 70,000 words for the MPhil and not more than 50,000 words for the MSc, MA and MEd theses which, at the discretion of the examiners, is defended in a viva voce to their satisfaction.

# MRes Degrees by Research

* 1. In addition to the Masters Degree description established in Regulation 9, the candidate shall undertake a combined programme of independent research presented in a thesis of not more than 30,000 words, and a number of research training modules as specified in the programme-level regulations.

# Version Control

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| **Version** | **Author** | **Date approved** | **Relevant sections** |
| 1.10 | Kirstie Skelton Clarke | October 23 | New version |
| 1.11 | Kirstie Skelton Clarke | May 2024 | Migrated to New template.  1.1 QAA link added.  2. Expansion of entire section to provide greater detail on PhDs. |
| 1.12 | Elaine Brookes | Housekeeping August 2025 | 8.1 Postgraduate Training Scheme replaced by PG Certificate in Research Training |