Guidance notes on responsibilities of the Postgraduate Research Tutor

About the PGRT role

1. In accordance with the requirements of the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures\(^1\), there should be at least one Postgraduate Research Tutor in each school, department, or institute (henceforth ‘academic unit’),\(^2\) holding general responsibility for coordinating admissions, overseeing progress of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) and for liaison with Postgraduate Research and Operations (PGRO).

2. As a guide, there should be one PGRT for about every fifty PGRs. Where an academic unit has more than one PGRT, e.g. where very large and / or divided into departments or institutes, responsibilities will be shared. This may constitute a split into key areas of responsibility, e.g. admissions and progression, with a ‘lead’ PGRT identified.

3. PGRTs will be provided with appropriate workload release. As a guide, 0.2 FTE release is considered appropriate.

4. PGRTs are managed by relevant Heads of School or academic unit, with a dotted line report to the Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research Studies. They will work as a team through the Faculty Graduate School, coordinating with the Director for PGR Studies and other PGRTs to ensure strategy and policy for postgraduate research are implemented effectively.

5. The Postgraduate Research Tutor has a key strategic and operational role within the academic unit. He or she contributes to postgraduate strategy and policy, participating in annual planning exercises, and leading on recruitment and studentship matters for PGRs to support school strategic objectives for postgraduate research.

6. The PGRT is responsible for raising the profile and importance of postgraduate research as ‘senior supervisor’ in the relevant academic unit with responsibility for all PGR matters, including strategic development, PGR experience, submission and qualification rates, the efficient and effective development of arrangements and policy within the academic unit, for the management of postgraduate research degree candidatures, and for ensuring compliance with the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures. In carrying out this role, the Postgraduate Research Tutor must respond to changing Research Council, University, and Faculty policy.

7. The role is strongly aligned to that of the Faculty Director of PGR Studies, but at the level of the component academic unit. The Postgraduate Research Tutor will participate in discussions within the Faculty Graduate School Committee and submit reports as required for the Committee.

8. Graduate Board recognises that the role of Postgraduate Research Tutor involves making judgements on academic research issues and negotiating with senior academic staff.

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\(^1\) Available at [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research-formal](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research-formal)

\(^2\) The Code of Practice notes that where the Faculty or School organises its research programme into identifiable sub-areas, e.g. department, institute, or other academic unit, it may be convenient to have more than one postgraduate tutor and research committee.
There are varying levels of administrative support available to Postgraduate Research Tutors across the University. The Postgraduate Research Tutor may have responsibility for the coordination and oversight of work\(^3\) being undertaken by administrative and support staff in the Faculty/academic unit offices.

Priority should be given by the Postgraduate Research Tutor to those elements of the role which require an element of academic judgement. Tasks of an administrative nature should be delegated to administrative and support staff as far as possible. It may be necessary to agree a statement of the division of the level of responsibilities between the Postgraduate Research Tutor and relevant administrative staff.

**Key responsibilities\(^4\)**

In some areas there may be a different allocation of responsibilities between the Postgraduate Research Tutors and the Faculty Director of PGR Studies.

**University arrangements**

a) Overseeing all supervisory arrangements within the relevant academic unit
b) Ensuring the University’s regulations and arrangements for postgraduate research degree candidatures within the academic unit are communicated
c) Overseeing implementation of policy on matters relating to registration, progression, suspensions and extensions of study is communicated to postgraduate researchers and supervisors
d) Attending appropriate training events to keep up to date on the procedures and regulations for postgraduate researchers, including participation in the Postgraduate Research Tutors Forum\(^5\)
e) Maintaining liaison with Postgraduate Research and Operations (PGRO)
f) Maintaining current knowledge of all relevant University regulations and procedures, systems and processes for postgraduate research and supporting compliance within the academic unit.

**Management structure**

a) Acting as a member of the Faculty Graduate School Committee
b) Acting as an ex officio member of the School Management Team (this role may be undertaken by the 'lead PGRT', where this individual has been identified)
c) Ensuring implementation of the method adopted by the Faculty/academic unit for report and discussion of
   - matters of policy within the academic unit\(^6\)
   - individual PGR matters\(^6\)
d) Supporting objectives and targets of the relevant academic unit for postgraduate research, working with the Head of School, Director of Research and Innovation, and Faculty Director of PGR Studies as appropriate.

**Record keeping**

a) Overseeing processes for record keeping on PGR progress through the use of GRAD (Graduate Record of Achievement and Development) and other relevant systems are in line with University protocol.

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\(^3\) Though not line management

\(^4\) Discharge of many of these responsibilities will usually involve the management of administrative support staff.

\(^5\) PGRT forum is held twice per year around February and around June, with a course introducing the role of the postgraduate research tutor to be held around September each year, all organised by SDDU.

\(^6\) as described in the relevant Faculty Protocol for the implementation of the University Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures
Recruitment, selection, admissions

a) Overseeing admissions processes so that they operate effectively, including circulation of prospective PGR applications to potential supervisors where appropriate, and approval of acceptability of the application, supervisory team and research project
b) Considering applications, with the potential supervisor as appropriate
c) Ensuring that all decisions taken on admissions are timely and in line with University and Faculty policy, and that of the relevant academic unit, in liaison with the Head and PGRO where appropriate
d) Working to enhance PGR recruitment and identify funding sources, e.g. working with the Director of Research & Innovation, where appropriate.

Postgraduate Researcher Induction

Working with Researcher Skills Training & Development staff and PGR administrators to ensure that
a) up-to-date and relevant induction materials are in place and available to new PGRs
b) appropriate induction sessions are provided for new PGRs.

Training and development

a) Overseeing and helping to shape appropriate practice for training, liaising with staff responsible for researcher training
b) Overseeing compliance with Code of Practice for PGRs who teach, in liaison with the Director of Student Education where appropriate
c) Ensuring that training needs analysis is appropriate to PGRs, and that processes to ensure completion of Training and Development Needs Analysis (TDNAs) are in place.

Research environment

a) Ensuring processes are in place for PGRs to be allocated appropriate facilities, and working with the Faculty Director of PGR Studies, Head of School or academic unit, and School Education Services Manager (SESM) to enhance these where applicable.

Supervisory Support

a) Approving recommendations for the appointment of supervisors and ensuring that the pre-requisite supervisor training has been undertaken
b) Overseeing supervision procedures to ensure these are appropriate, taking appropriate action where necessary
c) Providing support to supervisors on issues of difficulty that may arise with postgraduate researchers
d) Ensuring processes are in place to keep records of supervision meetings
e) Liaising with supervisors on situations where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study for a PGR, as appropriate
f) Ensuring processes are in place for an Adviser to be appointed in cases of sole supervisors, and for this to be recorded in GRAD.

Progress and review arrangements

a) Ensuring that processes are in place for all Provisional PhD and PGRs to undergo an assessment for transfer to a specific research degree category within agreed timescales and in accordance with University/Faculty/local practice

7 'Facilities’ include working space, IT facilities and other equipment, and technical support.
8 i.e. appointed by the Dean of the Faculty or Head of School. Graduate Board requires members of staff to attend a course on research degree supervision organised by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit (SDDU) before being recommended for appointment as a supervisor.
b) Ensuring recommendations are forwarded for transfer to a specific research degree category (or requests for permission to defer decisions)
c) Maintaining appropriate oversight of doctorates that span taught and research areas
d) Ensuring that process is in place for a change to a thesis title, and is properly followed
e) Considering matters of an exceptional nature affecting postgraduate progress (requests for suspensions/extensions of study) and sending forward such requests for consideration by the Graduate Board
f) Ensuring that cases of regular or persistent non-attendance of postgraduate researchers are properly followed up (as recorded by supervisors and monitored by PGR administration)
g) Reviewing progress reports and acting upon any unsatisfactory reports received, in liaison with the supervisor(s), PGRs, PGRO, and Head of School or academic unit to resolve any issues
h) Where needed, acting as first point of contact for postgraduate researchers with complaints, advising on University procedure for Complaints, Appeals and Disciplinary Matters as appropriate. Where progress is deemed unsatisfactory, the PGRT will ensure appropriate measures are taken
i) Sitting on panels regarding postgraduate researcher complaints, appeals or disciplinary matters, as required
j) Liaising with the Faculty Director of PGR Studies or Head of School or academic unit on forecast PGR numbers, PGR quality, and completion rates
k) Reviewing all cases of termination of study and ensuring such recommendations are sent forward to the Graduate Board.

Final examination matters

a) Contributing to the appointment of examiners in consultation with the supervisor(s), where appropriate
b) Checking the final report and recommendation of the examiners before forwarding to the Graduate Board for consideration
c) Overseeing appropriate implementation of examination procedures, in liaison with the Internal Examiner
d) Approving and countersigning Examination Entry Forms
e) Ensuring that enquiries from the Graduate Board Examinations Group are resolved, working with the examiners, on matters relating to the final examination of research degree candidates.

Postgraduate researcher support

Ensuring that pastoral support is available to postgraduate researchers as required, working with the student support officer where appropriate. This includes

a) Considering matters raised by postgraduate researchers who are dissatisfied by any aspect of their supervision or with facilities for their research
b) Acting as a point of contact for PGRs in the academic unit to further satisfaction with research, supervision, facilities, and giving returning PGRs the opportunity to meet with the PGRT annually, which may be a group meeting

Health and safety

a) Ensuring awareness of health and safety issues are raised with postgraduate researchers and supervisors
b) In some instances, addressing issues connected with external visits and fieldwork.

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9 Noting that the required minimum number of formal supervision meetings with supervisor is ten per year for full-time PGRs, and six for part-time PGRs.
Research ethics

a) Ensuring that awareness of the research ethics agenda and data management is raised with postgraduate researchers and supervisors
b) Ensuring appropriate consideration and approval of ethical review at the Transfer Stage and final examination.

Scholarships and awards

a) Overseeing processes to manage scholarship applications, and considering applications where appropriate
b) Contributing to initiatives and strategies of the Faculty and the relevant academic unit for high-quality scholarship schemes, working with the Head of School or Faculty DoPGRS, as appropriate.

Committee on Applications

- To serve as a co-opted member of the Committee on Applications when requested to do so by the Student Cases Team. Participation in the business of the Committee is a professional development opportunity which will allow PGRTs to gain insight into the manner in which the Committee resolves cases and will assist in the dissemination of experience and the development of good practice. (It is anticipated that the demand placed upon PGRTs will be attendance at one meeting every other year).

Other

- Raising any concerns about the conduct of supervisors, examiners or PGRs with the Head of School or academic unit and at an early stage.

Additional PGRT responsibilities may include:

a) Keeping oversight of the advertising of research opportunities within the School
b) Attending vivas for transfer/upgrade to doctoral status
c) Ensuring arrangements for postgraduate researcher representation on relevant committees and groups of the school or academic unit
d) Managing doctoral training accounts and audits, linking as required with the Faculty Graduate School
e) Managing a postgraduate conference and/or events budget
f) Organising a postgraduate symposium or event
g) Serving on one of the sub-groups of the Graduate Board (Examinations Group; Programmes of Study and Audit Group; Group on Scholarships, Studentships and Prizes, Researcher Development Steering Group)
h) Briefing external examiners from overseas who are acting in the UK for the first time on the relevant processes
i) Ensuring consistent and effective engagement with all aspects of GRAD and other relevant systems by both Supervisors and PGRs
j) Chairing the a School Postgraduate Research Committee or equivalent group
k) Ensuring the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)\textsuperscript{10} is administered (biennially) and that results are analysed, communicated to relevant staff, and translated into action plans.

\textsuperscript{10} \url{http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/pres}
C. Criteria for the Appointment of Postgraduate Research Tutors

Graduate Board has delegated responsibility for the appointment of Postgraduate Research Tutors to Faculty Graduate School Committees. Heads of Schools and academic units are asked to send forward recommendations for appointment to the Faculty Director of PGR Studies who will, in turn, advise PGRO of new appointments.

Appointments should be made in accordance with the following criteria which have been approved by the Graduate Board:

Postgraduate Research Tutors should normally meet the following three criteria:

• be members of staff holding at least a Grade 8 appointment on an academic career pathway;

• have previous experience of research supervision at Leeds or elsewhere (which includes supervising at least one doctoral candidate from commencement of study through to successful completion);

• have previous experience of research degree examination at Leeds or elsewhere in the UK.

Where appointees have limited research degree supervision experience at Leeds or are new to the University, the Graduate Board will require the appointee to attend a course on research degree supervision organised by SDDU if they have not already done so.

It is essential that the Faculty Graduate School Committee (or Faculty Director of PGR Studies acting on its behalf) is satisfied that the Postgraduate Research Tutor is able to meet the needs of the relevant academic unit and its PGRs and supervisors and is sufficiently available to fulfil this role. In some cases, where there are a large number of research degree candidates within the registration unit or the Postgraduate Research Tutor has other commitments which prevent them from individually fulfilling this role, more than one Postgraduate Research Tutor may be appointed.

Enquiries about eligibility criteria:
Please direct any queries to Sarah Throp, Postgraduate Research and Operations
Telephone: +44 (0) 113 343 5778
Email: s.throp@adm.leeds.ac.uk

(Approved by Graduate Board on 10/06/2013. Updated 27/03/2017)
Terminology and references

- **Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures**\(^{11}\) – the University Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures is a framework of shared responsibilities between the University, supervisors and candidates with the aim of delivering successful research degree programmes. There are Faculty Protocols for the Implementation of the University Code of Practice
- **Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies** – a University role since September 2011 to focus on the interests and experiences of current and future postgraduate researchers
- **Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research Studies** (DoPGRS) - academic staff member responsible for the faculty graduate school and postgraduate research matters at the faculty level
- **Faculty Graduate School Committee** (FGSC)- the senior committee in the Faculty with responsibility for research degree matters, including the Dean for Research and Innovation and PGRTs as members, chaired by the Faculty DoPGRS; these report to Graduate Board
- **Graduate Board** – the University’s main governing committee for postgraduate research matters, chaired by the Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and supported administratively by RSA
- **GRAD** – (Graduate Record of Achievement and Development) is a University-wide system which allows PGRs and their supervisors to organise and report on supervision meetings, to create a training plan, to organise and record all regular progress monitoring meetings (first formal progress review, transfer, and annual progress reviews), and to manage ‘change requests’ including annual leave, authorised absence and change of location.
- **PRES** – the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, overseen every two years between March and May by the Higher Education Academy, allows HE institutions to collect feedback on the experiences of their research postgraduate students
- **Postgraduate researcher** - those candidates that are enrolled to study for a research degree
- **Postgraduate Research Tutors** - academic members of staff who have responsibility for postgraduate research matters within a School, on behalf of the Head of School
- **Postgraduate Research and Operations** (PGRO) - the central administrative unit, located within the Student Services Centre, which is responsible for all administrative matters handled centrally that relate to postgraduate researchers
- **SDDU (Staff and Departmental Development Unit)** – the University’s in-house unit for providing training, development, education and consultancy support to meet the needs of all University staff and PGRs
- **Schools** - administrative and academic divisions within the University, also Institute
- **Supervisors** - academic staff members who guide the postgraduate researchers’ work.

\(^{11}\) [http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research](http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22172/research_degrees/1030/regulations_codes_policies_and_procedures_for_postgraduate_research)