



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Postgraduate Research (PGR) Periodic Review

General Guidance

Version: session 2021-22

Doctoral College Programmes

University of Leeds

PGR Periodic Review

Introduction QAA Expectation

The QAA Quality Code on Research Degrees sets down the expectation that Higher Education providers should have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review their programmes.

This expectation is one that the University is required to meet. It extends to all research degree awards: PhD, Integrated PhD, Professional Doctorates, MPhil and Masters by Research.

The PGR Periodic Review is the institution's 'periodic review of the continuing validity and relevance of programmes offered' and forms part of an increasingly more systematic approach to the monitoring of the PGR experience. This process sits alongside the existing IPE and SAER (L&T)¹ review exercises.

In accordance with the QAA code, the PGR Periodic Review process will encompass:

- the PGR experience (including supervision and training)
- PGR progression and achievement (including formal monitoring arrangements for PGR cohorts and progression outcomes at Transfer and Viva for the various cohort groups)
- the research culture and environment (including the continuing availability of staff and physical resources)
- the impact of any external points of reference on the provision including University strategic developments including the Leeds Doctorate and PGR Strategy
- any changes in PGR recruitment and demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities
- the measures taken to obtain feedback from PGRs on the provision within the School and the process by which external feedback including the PRES is reviewed and acted upon
- enhancement of the provision and the PGR experience including the development of the PGR Community
- consideration of programmes delivered in collaboration with a partner institution / organisation (UK or international) (CDT/ DTPs, Split Site PhD, Joint PhD, industrial partner, and Horizon Europe)

¹ The SAER (L&T) considers any taught modules that form part of a doctoral award such as Integrated PhD and Professional Doctorate. It also looks at the contribution of postgraduate research students to any teaching in the School through their roles as postgraduate demonstrators or Teaching Assistants etc.

Unit of the PGR Periodic Review and Timing of visits

The Unit of Review for a PGR Periodic Review

The PGR Periodic Review will review Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) experience at the level of the Faculty. This will include the schools, institutes and divisions that comprise the Graduate School including Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs and DTPs). If a CDT spans across more than 1 Faculty within the University the Periodic Review will review this according to the lead Faculty for the arrangement. The Periodic Review will also consider the processes that link each school with the Graduate School, in particular those that assure and support the academic experience of the postgraduate researchers in the Faculty.

Timetable for a PGR Periodic Review and frequency visits

It is expected that this one-day review will take place every 4 years. If any substantive issues are identified as part of a one-day Periodic Review, the Review Team will agree a timetable with the Faculty when an additional visit can be arranged to address any outstanding issues.

Timetable 2019/20 – 2022/23

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
EPS	Social Science	FBS	M&H
LUBS	ENV	AHC	Overview of full cycle (reflection of the Leeds Doctorate)

Outcome of a PGR Periodic Review visit

The outcome of the visit will be a short report agreed by the Periodic Review Team and will comment on the PGR experience: the arrangements in place for the support and supervision of the postgraduate researcher; the arrangements for meeting the requirements for assuring the standards of the awards as well as adherence to the codes of practice. It will also comment on areas of enhancement and note any recommendations for action.

As part of its findings the review team may consider that one area of the Graduate School's provision necessitates additional consideration. If this is the case the findings will indicate this and a timetable for further discussion will be identified.

The following arrangements will be in place for the PGR Periodic Review process during academic session 2021-22 (v July 2021).

The Review Process

1. For session 2021-22 the scheduled PGR Periodic Reviews will include some alternative arrangements that will replicate as far as possible the key requirements of the review process. In practice this will be a blend of a desk-based review of documentation and online meetings facilitated through MS Teams. The Review will continue for the most part as a one-day event. The meeting of the review team with the PGRs from the Faculty will be held a few days in advance of the Review Day itself. Again, this will be facilitated through MS Teams.
2. The Faculty will still provide a Reflective Commentary along the lines of the template provided and this will be considered by the Review Team together with the data and additional documentation that supports the provision.
3. To address the implications of COVID-19 on delivery of the PGR experience, the Graduate School will be asked to provide within the Commentary a preface with information on the arrangements currently in place to support PGRs whilst they work remotely and / or if appropriate, with occasional access to facilities on campus.
4. Supporting documentation and data related to the Faculty's provision will be included in the Desk-based component of the Review.

Using MS Teams, three dedicated meetings will continue to provide the main framework of the review as follows:

- Meeting 1 : **PGRs from Schools across the Faculty**
(held several days in advance of the Review Day):
 - Meeting 2: **Faculty Graduate School Management team**
Head of Graduate School and Directors of PGR Studies (Graduate School Committee)
 - Meeting 3 : **Supervisors**
- **Areas for Discussion** during the review
Each member of the Review team will cover a theme as their focus for the Review.

Areas are likely to include:

- Strategy
- PGR Support, Resources and Opportunities (link to Leeds Doctorate)
- Monitoring and Progression
- Assessment and Examinations
- PGR representation and feedback & Community and Research Culture

5. Indicative Timetable for MS Teams Periodic Review

10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with Senior Team
12.00 - 13.00	Meeting with Supervisors
15.00	Clarification meeting (if needed)
16.00	Feedback

Meeting with PGRs having been held a couple of days in advance of the Periodic Review Day

The One-Day PGR Periodic Review



The Leeds Doctorate

A. Which areas are covered by a PGR Periodic Review ?

There are a number of areas that are detailed below and these form the basis for a written Reflective Commentary (a template is provided) drafted by the Faculty. This document together with the data provided and discussions with PGRs will form the basis for the discussions in the various meetings. (Where the areas within the commentary have a synergy with the Leeds Doctorate it has been highlighted below.)

- Strategy for PGR provision: future developments including faculty initiatives and priorities (e.g. recruitment, scholarship opportunities, any planned international developments (**global engagement**), links with industry)
- Facilities that support the PGR experience and research environment / culture (**research community**)
- Support for PGRs at School / Faculty level such as information for PGRs, and training opportunities (**professional development**), academic support, pastoral support (**wellbeing**), employability and graduate destinations
- Managing the candidature: allocation of a supervisory team; progress monitoring; academic feedback mechanisms; preparation for key progression points such as transfer and the viva (**academic experience**)
- The use of data (progression, complaints/appeals, destination statistics, alumni) to identify trends and enhancement activity
- Any additional guidance and training provided for supervisors
- Teaching opportunities for PGRs within the School and how this is managed (**professional development**)
- Adherence to the various policies and procedures as set down by the University which have been informed by the QAA Code. (For Faculties and Schools this is subsumed within the Faculty protocol and the Code of Practice.)
- For Schools that include integrated PhDs or professional doctorates, the provision of programme reviews and external examiner reports on the overall programme are also required.
- For Schools that have programmes delivered in collaboration with another HEI whether as a research council funded CDT / DTP or as a collaborative split site, Dual or Joint award these too should be included in the narrative with information as to how these are managed and arrangements overseen by the Faculty Graduate School Committee.

B. Who is on a PGR Periodic Review Team

Chair (Dean of the Doctoral College)

External reviewer (from another university)

Faculty Head of Graduate School (from a different faculty)

Member of PGR Programmes and Quality Group

Member of Examinations Group

Director of Postgraduate Research Studies (from a cognate discipline where possible)

Postgraduate Researcher Representative

C. How many Meetings will there be and who is invited

Meeting 1: Head of Graduate School and Graduate School Committee members (including Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies and the Graduate School Office)

Meeting 2: Supervisors

Meeting 3: Postgraduate Researchers including the Faculty PGR representatives

The External Reviewer for the PGR Periodic Review Team

Higher education providers (should) ensure that individuals external to the higher education provider involved in programme monitoring or review are appropriately qualified, in terms of their expertise in relation to the programme, and are provided with clear information on the process and their role within it.

The nature and extent of external input to programme monitoring and review is proportionate to the scale of the process involved. For example, periodic review draws on a wider external contribution than ongoing monitoring. The QAA Code.

Nominations

It is expected that the external member will normally be of the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, Reader or Senior Lecturer and will have experience of supervision of research degrees to completion and of the PGR environment at another university. Previous experience of external review would be helpful, but not, essential. Once decided the nominees will be invited to act by Doctoral College Programmes.

Eligibility

When nominating an external review team member Graduate Schools must avoid the following:

- A current external examiner for any taught programme²
- Someone who has acted as an external examiner at Leeds (taught or research) in the last 5 years
- A former member of Leeds University staff
- A nominee from outside the University sector
- Retired member of Leeds University staff
- A nominee from the same institution as a previously approved external for an earlier Periodic Review visit.

Heads of Graduate Schools are responsible for ensuring that there are no 'reciprocal' arrangements between university schools.

Fee and Expenses

An agreed fixed fee of **£300** is paid by the Doctoral College, along-with associated travel and accommodation expenses. These are arranged / reimbursed by Doctoral College Programmes. The levels of reimbursement are the same as for University staff and are outlined on the reverse of the expenses form.

Cases of Disagreement

In the University's experience it is highly unlikely that a team will fail to reach a consensus on an issue at the final meeting of the review team. If, however, such an exceptional event should occur the University will usually seek to reconcile the impasse 'internally'.

Doctoral College Programmes, will arrange for the circumstances to be considered by a Head of Graduate School who will take into account the views of at least two other Heads of Graduate Schools in proposing the action needed to reconcile the differences of view. Should this proposed action prove unacceptable to the external reviewer and other members of the team, the issue will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation.

² If any School has an Integrated PhD or Professional Doctorate, the external examiner could have acted for these awards.

Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Involvement in the Process

There are several opportunities for PGRs to be involved in the review process:

- An opportunity to comment on the commentary through the wider consultation process led by the Graduate School
- Each periodic review team will include PGR representation. The member of the team will be a full member and from a different Faculty to that being reviewed
- PGRs may wish to provide a written submission for the review team to read. This is not a requirement of the review process but remains an option available. There is no template for the written submission but it should be a concise document, no more than 3 pages.

The following areas might be a useful starting point to gather feedback for the submission:

- Information provided for PGRs in the form of handbooks or web pages
- Do PGRs know what is expected of them in order to be successful and what is required at each progression stage
- What is the PGR experience like: the support received and access to facilities and research environment
- Do PGRs have opportunities to provide feedback to the School and is this listened to?

Meeting with PGRs – Possible areas for discussion

The published QAA document on Doctoral degree characteristics (2011) and the QAA Quality Code provides additional areas for discussion

Choosing the University

- Why choose Leeds? (Awareness of the School's reputation for research; Research Council funding)
- Awareness of selection process
- Visits to the School; interview, etc.
- Adequacy of pre-registration information

Induction process

- Information from the School before / after arrival
- Induction for new PGRs including Health and Safety
- What is the main source of information in relation to their research candidature
- Preparation for independent research. Any 'methods' training?
- Information on research activity in the School and the wider research community that they will join

Funding arrangements

- Any scholarships available? Are they advertised?
- Are sponsorship arrangements transparent?
- Funding for attendance at conferences

Guidance and supervision

- How was your supervisor (s) chosen and appointed?
- How often do you meet with your supervisors?
- Do you use GRAD? What records are kept (a) by you, (b) by the supervisor?
- What guidance do you get on your progress?
- Understanding of arrangements for formal assessment of progress at the end of year 1
- Were expectations to write your thesis in a particular time frame made clear

- Were the hours of work, holiday entitlement, etc., and expectations made clear to you
- What if you have a complaint, do you know the process in place?

Facilities

- IT - provision, access, equipment, software/hardware adequacy, etc.
- Library - access, adequacy of texts, staff support, specialist journals
- Laboratory space, equipment, maintenance
- Research Environment and Research Culture of the school/faculty
- Study accommodation
- Social facilities
- Opportunities to meet with PGRs from other faculties
- Views of general University facilities

Training courses

- Were you encouraged to seek out training opportunities?
- Was the relevant information given to you?
- Was it easy to register on the course you wanted?
- Were the courses useful?

Opportunities for teaching?

- How are opportunities advertised?
- What training is available?
- What support are you offered?
- Are you involved in assessing student work?
- What courses do you attend to support you with assessments?
- Do you get any feedback on the teaching you have undertaken?

PGR feedback

- How does the School obtain feedback from PGRs?
- Is there research representation on the Staff-PGR Forum?
- How do PGRs find out how issues raised have been dealt with?

Summary of the requirements of the Reflective Commentary

- A short commentary using template provided
- Organisational structure for the Graduate School
- SWOT analysis

Annex 1 will be completed by Doctoral College Programmes, with additional sections to be completed by the Graduate School at least 4 weeks before the visit.

Doctoral College Programmes will complete the relevant sections and then forward the Annex to the School for any remaining data to be provided.

Graduate Schools should draw on the data provided by Doctoral College Programmes when drafting the commentary.

Suggested areas for the Commentary as presented in the Template on page 11:

- **Preface**
To address how COVID-19 has impacted on delivery, the Faculty will be asked to provide at the start of the Commentary a preface with information on the arrangements in place to support PGRs whilst they work remotely and/ or if appropriate with occasional access to facilities on campus. This should include faculty specific arrangements rather than general university arrangements for PGRs noting any particular areas of concern and any successful innovations in promoting community and well being that can be shared with other Faculty Graduate Schools.
- A short overview of research activity
- Strategy for PGR provision: future developments including faculty initiatives and priorities (e.g. Recruitment, scholarships)
- Brief outline of facilities for PGRs (including social space)
- The PGR experience including research environment / culture
- PGR support and academic guidance (i.e. Information, academic support, pastoral support)
- Research training for PGRs including current and future developments
- Managing the candidature: allocation of a supervisory team; supervision; progress monitoring; academic feedback mechanisms; preparation for key progression points such as transfer and the viva
- Support mechanisms and how best practice is shared across the various Schools in the Faculty.
- Enhancing the provision for PGRs
- Working in partnerships with PGRs –representation; feedback; actions resulting from the PRES action plans
- Availability and transparency of teaching opportunities for PGRs
- PGR Opportunities: global engagement, placement and internships, (graduate outcomes data with respect to employability)
- The use of data (progression, submission / qualification rates, complaints/appeals, destination statistics) to identify trends and enhancement activity
- Any additional guidance and training provided for supervisors

PGR Periodic Review Reflective Commentary (Template for use by Graduate Schools)

A short commentary (plus a PGR organisational chart) and SWOT will be submitted by the Faculty. Graduate Schools should draw on the data provided by Doctoral College Programmes when drafting the commentary using the following Template.

Preface To address the current COVID-19 situation, the Faculty will be asked to provide at the start of the Commentary a preface with information on the arrangements in place to support PGRs whilst they work remotely and/ or if appropriate with occasional access to facilities on campus. This should include faculty specific arrangements rather than general university arrangements for PGRs noting any particular areas of concern and any successful innovations in promoting community and well being that can be shared with other Faculty Graduate Schools.

1. Overview of research activity and the strategy for PGR provision for the next 5 years and how this impacts on the research culture that is articulated to the PGR body

(Strategy for PGR provision: supervisor allocation, future developments including faculty initiatives and priorities e.g. recruitment strategy, including external funding opportunities including Research Council and university scholarships. Collaborations in the delivery of PhDs, Split Site, Joint Awards, Horizon 2020/ Horizon Europe)

2. Brief outline of facilities for PGR (including social space) and development of a research culture

(Policy on desk space allocation etc. Include here how a research community and research environment is developed such as through induction events, seminars etc. This can include the specific COVID-19 arrangements in place to support PGRs.)

3. Supervision, progress monitoring and assessment including any additional commentary on submission and qualification rates for the School / Faculty

(How academic feedback is provided to PGRs at the various milestones during the candidature). The attached data will present opportunity to consider how this section might be addressed. Consideration can also be given to the data indicating the number of PGRs who submit by the end of their period of study and those after this period. Does the annual analysis of progression and completion data identify any implications for support mechanisms at school, faculty or University level? Schools may wish to draw on information provided as part of the IPE for this aspect of the Commentary.

4. PGR Academic Experience: enabling PGR development and achievement (including how the School /Faculty ensures that there is a clear and effective method for reporting and discussion of issues and matters of policy³).

To include: academic guidance, research training, any reference points that impact on this such as the Researcher Development Framework (what is done at school/faculty/ODPL levels and how this is coordinated); induction; role of supervisor, DPGRS and support staff; any specific support provided to PGRs in preparation for the key progression points during the candidature (mocks /

³ This is a requirement of the University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Degree Candidatures

training sessions); current developments and any future plans currently under discussion by the Graduate School and Schools' PGR Committees. Please provide information on PGR achievement such as prizes awarded to PGRs, including research excellence awards, conference presentations and posters as well as publications that have been recognised for the quality of the submission.

- 5. PGR support and how best practice is shared across the various Schools in the Faculty**
(Links with the various central support services including careers, ODPL, Library etc. and faculty enhancement strategies to identify best practice.)
- 6. PGR Engagement: to include how feedback is obtained from PGRs on their experience; where feedback including results from the last PRES has been discussed and how this partnership has contributed to enhancement of the PGR experience.**
- 7. Availability and transparency of teaching opportunities for PGRs and how PGRs are involved in the review of that aspect of the curriculum**
- 8. Availability of PGR Opportunities for placements, internships and global engagement**
- 9. SWOT analysis**

Annex 1

The following data is completed by Doctoral College Programmes and the Graduate School as part of the review

	Provided by
1. Narrative in response to the data. To include: (a) Commentary (b) Faculty organisational structure (including Divisions, research groups and PGR Committee structures)	Faculty
2. Faculty Graduate School Committee minutes (October 2018– October 2019)	Faculty
3. Faculty-specific PGR guidance and information (can include induction, PGR Handbook(s), Supervisor Handbook etc.)	Faculty
4. Total number of PGRs (academic year 2018/19): a. By programme b. By year of study c. By fee rate d. By method of study	DCP
5. New Starters by Academic Session (2015/16 – 2018/19)	DCP
6. New Starters by Academic Session (2015/16 – 2018/19) (Integrated PhD and master and Professional Doctorate)	DCP
7. Scholarships – applications received per award	DCP
8. Submission rate data for full-time PGRs	DCP
9. Examination Outcomes (PhD and Masters by Research)	DCP
10. Number of extensions & suspensions granted in session 2018/19	DCP
11. Anonymised summary of any formal appeals or complaints lodged since 2000	DCP
12. Supervisors supervising 10 or more PGRs	DCP
13. Numbers of PGRs undertaking teaching duties (Demonstrating and Tutorial Assistance)	DCP
14. Graduate Outcomes Data	DCP
15. PRES – data and action plans (2019)	DCP
16. Faculty Protocols for the Implementation of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures	DCP
17. GRAD Compliance	DCP
18. Previous PGR Review Report	DCP
19. Programme specifications and external examiners reports– integrated PhD and Professional Doctorate	DCP
20. List of current collaborative arrangements for schools in the Faculty (eg. Joint Awards and CDT arrangements)	DCP