

3B.1 ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ADMISSION

- i) A person wishing to begin a course of research for a higher degree by thesis shall apply as indicated on the website or send to the Admissions Officer an application on the prescribed form.
- ii) The application must be scrutinised and agreed by at least two members of academic staff in the area of study, one of whom may be the Research Officer. They should draw on the full range of information supplied by the prospective student, and may if necessary require the student to attend for interview or ask for further information from the student, or from referees, so as to ensure that only a student appropriately qualified and prepared commences work on a higher degree. In some areas of study, it is normal to require a research proposal from the prospective student, which will allow the academic staff to determine if appropriate supervision can be offered. Any special needs or disabilities should ideally be declared prior to commencement, but must be dealt with as they emerge between the Admissions Tutor and Student Welfare.
- iii) In the process of admission particular care must be taken with English language level. Entry level should normally be in the range IELTS 6.0–6.5, though Admissions Tutors retain discretion in this regard. Where there is any doubt or concern about an applicant's language level, the Admissions Tutor should seek more information (via interview, sample essays, telephone/web interview) to assess more precisely the applicant's level in relation to the demands of the particular degree. If an applicant has potentially borderline language level and is registered on a programme of study, it must be with the proviso that s/he takes pre-sessional courses to improve his or her language level before formally commencing the degree or alternatively takes language-support courses to run in parallel with the degree.
- iv) A 'Checklist for Registration of a Research Student' (see appendix) must be completed for each registering student. Departments may vary the Checklist to their particular needs but the main heads should remain. A copy of the Checklist should be sent for approval to the Research Officer and copied to the Admissions Officer. Admission is subject to approval by the Research Officer. Only the Admissions Office may make an offer of admission on behalf of the University.
- v) The Offer Letter to the prospective student constitutes a contract between the student and the institution. Departments may vary the standard template letter, but must retain the main sets of information, including the approximate total fees, the expected period of study, the arrangements for enrolment and registration, and the references to this *Handbook* and to other relevant website material.

RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISATION

- vi) The policy for the admission of research students is a matter for each Research Officer. The organisation for consideration of postgraduate applications is a matter for agreement between each Department and the Research Officer.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS

- vii) An individual contemplating application as a postgraduate research student of the University may wish to have informal discussions with the Department in advance. This may involve the preliminary identification of a possible supervisor and discussion between the potential supervisor and the applicant concerning the topic and scope of the potential research, before formal application is made. There is no formal procedure for recording these preliminary discussions.
- viii) All enquiries which are not addressed to a named member of staff should be referred to the Research Officer. All initial enquiries received by the Admissions Office or other University Office should be referred to the Research Officer who appears most appropriate.
- ix) The Research Officer is responsible for ensuring that informal enquiries referred to him or her are properly dealt with, that any information necessary to deal with an enquiry is obtained, and that any decisions are made promptly and communicated to the enquirer. Research Officers should maintain a record of all such decisions.

APPLICATION

- x) Applications for admission for registration as a research student should be made as directed on the University website, or via hard copy of forms downloaded or available from the Admissions Office. Before making a decision and completing the Department's checklist (included as an Appendix to this section) the Research Officer or potential supervisors may wish to interview the applicant or to take up references.
- xi) The appropriate Sub-Dean or Head of Department and the Research Officer must countersign the checklist to confirm the approval of the arrangements for tuition and resources (including payment of an external supervisor or supervisor). Where a bursary award is being made, the appropriate authorisation must be given (see Fees, below).
- xii) It is important to ensure that applications for registration are made at the earliest stage possible since prior to registration applicants are not entitled to the benefits of student membership of the University, and no period of study prior to registration will count towards the period of supervised study required for the award of a degree.

OFFER LETTER

- xiii) Where the Research Officer has indicated that an application should be rejected following receipt of a formal application, the decision will be communicated to the applicant by the Admissions Office. Where the Research Officer has indicated that an application should be accepted, an offer letter is sent to the applicant by the Admissions Office, together with a financial

questionnaire (where one has not already been completed by the applicant). A copy of any offer of admission should be sent by the Admissions Office to the Registry Officer.

- xiv) The Admissions Office is responsible for ensuring that for each applicant a financial questionnaire has been completed and for forwarding this to the Finance Office. The Finance Office will inform the applicant directly whether and for what period financial clearance has been given. A copy of any financial clearance letter should be sent by the Finance Officer to the Registry Officer.

REGISTRATION

- xv) Once an applicant has received both an offer of admission from the Admissions Office and financial clearance from the Finance Officer, the applicant may register as a student of the University with the Registry office with effect from the beginning of any University term. Registration will date from the first day of the University term, provided that the student registers within four weeks of the beginning of that term. No retrospective registration will be allowed.
- xvi) The research proposal or plan will be defined by the student with the assistance of the supervisor(s). The research proposal or plan should be completed within the time-frames specified in the General Regulations for Higher Degrees. The prescribed period of study for each degree is specified in the regulations.
- xvii) Students are registered initially for the degree of PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), although their status is probationary until the first Annual Review has taken place normally between 12 and 18 months from first registration. Procedures for Annual Reviews and Upgrades outline when probationary status ends.
- xviii) Accreditation of prior learning is not generally applicable to postgraduate research awards; however, admission with exemption from the probationary period is possible where the applicant can demonstrate that previous work is of sufficient standing to justify this.