

# **FRAMEWORK FOR FLEXIBLE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROVISION**

December 2018

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<b>Document title</b>		
Framework for Flexible Postgraduate Research Provision		
<b>Document author and department</b>		
Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships, Department of Student and Academic Administration		
<b>Approving body</b>		
Quality Assurance Committee		
<b>Date of approval</b>		
11 <sup>th</sup> December 2018		
<b>Review date</b>		
Every three years		
<b>Edition no.</b>		
1		
<b>ID Code</b>		
222		
<b>Date of effect</b>		
December 2018		
<b>EITHER</b> For public access online (internet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		YES
For public access on request copy to be mailed <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		YES
<b>OR</b> For staff access only (intranet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		
Password protected <i>Tick as appropriate</i>	NO	
External queries relating to the document to be referred in the first instance to the Corporate Governance team: email <a href="mailto:corporate-governance@port.ac.uk">corporate-governance@port.ac.uk</a>		
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# Summary

## What is this document about?

This sets out the Flexible Postgraduate Research (PGR) Programme arrangements at the University of Portsmouth. The Framework outlines the institutional structure for all types of Flexible Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes and minimum institutional requirements.

## Who is this for?

This Framework will be of most interest to Associate Deans, Heads of Department, Faculty Research Degree Coordinators, Faculty and Department Research Degree Coordinators, First Supervisors and those staff involved in supporting and delivering Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes.

## How does the University check this is followed?

This Framework is followed implicitly through the meeting of the policies and carrying out of the processes it is informed by, all of which are monitored by appropriate staff and central committees. For specific detail see the relevant policy referenced.

## Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

If you have questions about this document please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships, Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA) at [asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk)

## 1. Introduction

This Framework document sets out the Flexible Postgraduate Research (PGR) Programme arrangements at the University of Portsmouth (UoP). It should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies and guidance for postgraduate research degrees such as the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees, the Collaborative Provision Policy and the Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning, which are available at:

- [Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)
- [Collaborative Provision Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning](#)

The Framework outlines the institutional structure for all types of Flexible Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes and minimum institutional requirements. By 'flexible' we mean involving other partner organisations in the delivery of the PGR student experience, or delivery through other flexible means (or similar).

The University Strategy emphasises upholding the highest academic standards for our education provision. The approval processes set out in the Collaborative Provision Policy ensure rigorous quality mechanisms are in place to safeguard the student experience and the academic standards of awards. The different contexts in which partners operate, and their different needs and requirements are considered as part of the approval process for each Flexible PGR Programme proposal. It is the University's aim to ensure that students registered for a Postgraduate Research Degree Programme under any of the flexible arrangements have a positive, distinct student experience, which is comparable with the experience of other University of Portsmouth Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS). This includes protecting the reputation and standing of the University by being clear about the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved.

## 2. Rationale for Developing Flexible Postgraduate Research Degree Provision

The University Strategy sets out the vision of creating a network of strategic global partnerships, recognising and sustaining our strengths in undergraduate education and growing our provision in the areas of postgraduate, part-time, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and flexible modes of study.

The Research and Innovation Strategy outlines a number of key strategic actions and targets including developing structures and programmes that encourage applicants to study a PGR Programme at the University of Portsmouth. This is intended to create opportunities for collaborative supervision and other engagements with key research and innovation partners nationally and internationally, to provide postgraduate researchers with the best experience possible (6.6 Research and Innovation Strategy).

It is essential to establish at the earliest stage, that new proposals for a Flexible Postgraduate Research Programme align to the University Strategy, to ensure a strong rationale for approval.

### 3. Definitions of Flexible Postgraduate Research Programmes

The following definitions explain the options for Flexible Postgraduate Research (PGR) Programmes arrangements at the University of Portsmouth. All of the options are available in full-time and part-time modes of study and may include a one-to-one arrangement with a single partner or the University partnering with multiple partners.

- Full Collaborative Partnership PGR
- Split-campus PGR
- Off-campus PGR

#### 3.1. Full Collaborative Partnership PGR

A full Collaborative Partnership PGR is usually set up for multiple or cohorts of students over an agreed period of time where the PGRS would typically spend the whole period of study at the partner. The University of

Portsmouth's formal monitoring requirements, such as Major and Annual Reviews may be delegated to the partner. Supervision is often split between the partner institution and the University of Portsmouth but can be wholly offered through the partner. In all arrangements the Viva examination is conducted under University of Portsmouth regulations and may be held at the partner campus subject to this being approved. Details of these arrangements and variations would be subject to scrutiny through the Collaborative Programme approval process. Depending on the level of delegation to the partner, consideration of student record management would be required and the arrangement may require partner specific regulations. A formal agreement between the University of Portsmouth and the partner is required to set up a Full Collaborative arrangement for details regarding the requirements for this see section 6.1 below.

#### 3.2. Split-Campus PGR Arrangements

A Split-campus PGR arrangement is also through a partnership arrangement with another institution or organisation, but is typically established for an individual or small number of PGRS. PGRS in a split-campus arrangement are fully registered as a University of Portsmouth student but will spend part of their time at the University of Portsmouth and part of their time at the partner. The total period of attendance at the University of Portsmouth would normally be a minimum of 6 months over the course of the research degree, of which a minimum of 3 months would need to be continuous, however individual subject areas may stipulate longer periods of attendance if required. Details of attendance requirements on campus at the University of Portsmouth will be included within the Split-campus proposal submitted as part of the approval process and confirmed in writing to the applicant(s) as part of the admissions decision. PGRS would normally be required to make an initial visit to the University of Portsmouth for an appropriate amount of time in order to attend Induction, meet their supervisory team, undertake a skills audit and attend the University's Graduate School Development Programme (GSDP) and subject specific skills training. Typically, students are expected to attend the University of Portsmouth for Induction, Major & Annual Reviews and the Viva examination(s).

All split-campus PGR arrangements require the First Supervisor to be a University of Portsmouth member of staff, whereas, normally, the second Supervisor would be an approved member of staff from the partner institution.

See Partner Associate Supervisor Scheme in section 8 for further details. A formal agreement between the University of Portsmouth and the partner is required to set up a Split-campus PGR arrangement for details regarding the requirements for this see section 6.3 below.

If overseas students are recruited onto these programmes, the University is obliged to meet the requirements of current UK Tier 4 visa policy to ensure the safeguarding of the University's Tier 4 licence and duty of care to the student. For the latest Tier 4 regulations please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships in the Department of Student & Academic Administration (DSAA) at [asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk).

### 3.3. Off-campus PGR

An Off-campus PGR degree allows students to study for most of their degree as a distance learning (DL) student and be partly supported by the use of online resources. Such PGR students must be registered as 'Off-campus' at the point of admission. Although the majority of their study will not be based at the University of Portsmouth, such students are still expected to attend the University of Portsmouth for Induction, Major and Annual Reviews and Viva examination(s). PGRS would normally be required to make an initial visit of an appropriate amount of time during registration in order to attend Induction, meet their supervisory team, undertake a skills audit and attend subject specific skills training. Unlike Full Collaborative and Split-Campus PGR degrees, there is no formal academic partner involved in supporting the PGR, and normally no off-campus supervisor.

For PGRS undertaking research off-campus for the duration of their PGR Programme, the admissions process must confirm that the PGRS would have appropriate access to suitable resources to support their research activities. Departments are responsible for assessing the applicant's suitability for studying off campus: this includes assessing the applicant's motives for study and how they plan to manage their studies while not attending the University. Applicants will need to meet the expectations of the University of Portsmouth in

relation to their responsibilities and institutional principles for research degrees. Off-campus PGRS may access the University's Graduate School Development Programme (GSDP) and other resources available online.

If overseas students are recruited onto these programmes, the University is obliged to meet the requirements of current UK Tier 4 visa policy to ensure the safeguarding of the University's Tier 4 licence and duty of care to the student. For the latest Tier 4 regulations please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships in the Department of Student & Academic Administration (DSAA) at [asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk).

## 4. Change to Location of Study

### 4.1. Work-Based and Placement Learning

For completeness, and given its relevance to the PGRS experience, Work-Based and Placement Learning is referenced in this Framework; however, it is not a formal component of the Framework for Flexible Postgraduate Research Provision. For PGRS already registered at the University of Portsmouth, opportunities may arise during a PGR Programme that require the PGRS to be at an alternative location for a specified period. This would follow arrangements detailed in the Work-based and Placement Learning (WBPL) Code of Practice, relevant to the type of activity undertaken. The WBPL Code of Practice is applicable for PGRS who change their location of study during their registration. Normally, the majority of Professional Doctorate students would fall into the WBPL category, as they are usually reflecting on their professional practice through their employer as part of the PGR Programme. Further information and the forms that require completion are available from the [Department of Student & Academic Administration \(DSAA\), Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships staff web pages](#).

### 4.2. Fieldwork or Data Collection

Field trips, educational visits and short periods of data collection outside the University for research purposes, including external research training, are not included within the scope of the Framework for Flexible Postgraduate Research Programmes. Appropriate arrangements for these activities, including a risk evaluation, must be agreed and will need to be approved on an individual basis. For further information regarding these types of activities, please see the taxonomy grid in the Work-based and Placement Learning Code of Practice for further guidance.

## 5. Awards of the University

It may be the case that Full Collaborative Partnership and Split-campus PhD arrangements involve an additional awarding body, with the aim that students may be awarded a joint (the institutions agree to provide a single, joint, award) or a dual (both institutions award a separate degree for the same work) degree.

[The Characteristic Statement for Qualifications](#) defined by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) involving more than one degree-awarding body outlines 2 types of qualification:

**Co-dependent, mutually contingent qualifications** – for the purpose of the Framework the term Joint Award is used for this type of award.

**Integrated but independent qualifications** – for the purpose of the Framework the term Dual/Double Award is used for this type of award.

The PGR Programmes under the Framework for Flexible Postgraduate Research Programmes can include the following award types:

- Single University of Portsmouth Award
- Joint Award – (1 award recognised by both University of Portsmouth and partner institution)
- Dual/Double Award – (2 awards - University of Portsmouth and partner institution)



Full Collaborative PGR Partnerships and Split Campus PGR arrangements may involve a Dual/Double or Joint award, subject to initial strategic approval.

For PGRS, who complete their research award as part of a collaborative Dual/Double, Joint or Split-campus arrangement, appropriate wording will be included on their parchment to reflect the nature of the award.

## 6. Approval Processes for Full Collaborative and Split Site

Full Collaborative and Split-campus PGRS arrangements require a formal process to approve the partner institution. The type of approval may vary depending on the proposed arrangements, type of award, level of delegation and complexity and whether the partner institution has already undergone a partnership approval process with the University for the delivery of other academic provision.

As part of the approval process, as defined in the Collaborative Partnership Policy, the following points are considered:

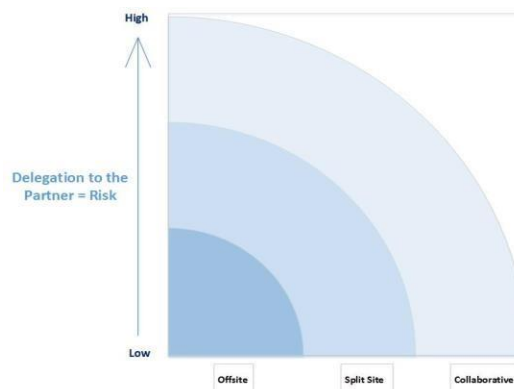
- duration and nature of existing links with the proposed partner;
- standing and reputation of the proposed partner;
- previous experience of the proposed partner in offering research degrees; and the research being undertaken at the partner;
- nature of the proposed Flexible PGR provision arrangement, including time to be spent at the partner and the nature/degree of the partner's contribution, e.g. skills training, specific research training needs, resource requirements for the research project, etc.

Also taken into consideration are due diligence, site visit, risk evaluation, financial arrangements and contractual agreements.

The level of delegation and complexity increases for any arrangement which includes more than one delivery or support provider (figure 1 refers). Proposals for Split-campus PGRS, that include Dual/Double or Joint Awards must follow the Full Collaborative PGR approval process to ensure that formal approval of the arrangements is in place prior to any students being registered, at any of the partners involved, for such awards.

Full details of the approval process for all collaborative arrangements are set out in the University's Collaborative Provision Policy.

**Figure 1. PGR Provision Delegation vs Risk**



In line with the Collaborative Provision Policy, all collaborations between the University and a partner is subject to a formal signed fixed-term contractual agreement, which sets out the responsibilities of each partner and provides assurance that the partner understands and agrees to fulfil their responsibilities.

The form of formal agreement, managed through Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships (ASQP), will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the partnership and may vary according to the level of delegation and complexity. All contractual agreements contain required standard clauses, with partner institutions invited to comment prior to review by senior staff at the University, with the final contract signed by the relevant parties.

Relevant approval must be sought and undertaken prior to any PGRS being offered a place on a Flexible PGR Programme provision arrangement, and all arrangements should be discussed and agreed with the relevant PGRS during the application process and prior to any offer being made.

The University has a well-embedded organisational structure in place for the management and support of PGR provision and collaborative partnerships, which includes formal committees, academic departments and professional services. The formal committees, which have oversight of approval and review of collaborative partnerships, are detailed in the Collaborative Provision Policy.

### 6.1. Off-Campus PGR

The approval process for Off-campus PGR follows the standard University of Portsmouth admissions process with additional consideration of the applicant's justification as to why they are suitable to undertake their research as an Off-campus PGRS and the support available to them. Applicants must confirm that they are aware of the expectations of undertaking a Portsmouth PGR Programme set out within the University of Portsmouth Code of Practice for Research Degrees, the Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research and the Research Degrees Operational Handbook while preparing their written justification for their application as an Off-campus PGRS.

The Department is responsible for ensuring that a risk evaluation is completed and that the supervisory team, research environment resources and specialist equipment are confirmed as standard practice when the Research Student Registration Form (RSR) is considered and approved. The Department is also responsible for ensuring that a remote infrastructure is in place to communicate with and support the Off-campus PGRS as they undertake their research.

As the Off-Campus PGRS is not located at an institution or organisation other than the University of Portsmouth, no formal agreement is put in place.

The approval process takes into consideration the following key factors:

- Applicants must meet the criteria for PGR admission at the University of Portsmouth
- Applicants' must provide appropriate justification for undertaking research as an Off-campus PGRS
- Appropriate resources and support must be in place to enable off-campus study
- Risk Evaluation has been carried out by the Department.

## 6.2. External Funding Bids

It is recognised that valuable opportunities arise for University of Portsmouth PGR awards linked to external funding bids. These can take different forms, many of which are outside of the remit of this Framework.

However, for Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) colleagues in Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships (ASQP), Central Finance (Research Finance via [research-finance@port.ac.uk](mailto:research-finance@port.ac.uk)) and Research & Innovation Services (RIS) work together with academic staff in Departments, to ensure that the proposed arrangements are viable, approved appropriately and that a contract is agreed in line with the University of Portsmouth policies and regulations. For details please see the ASQP website for further information and the taxonomy.

## 7. Fees and Financial Arrangements

Full Collaborative Partnership PGR will require a Full Business Case in line with the [Tuition Fee Policy and relevant Schedule](#).

The Split Campus University of Portsmouth PGR fee will be 50% of the relevant International Fee (Band 1-3) (or Home/EU fee where applicable) plus any relevant bench fees required and agreed by the Faculty.

Where Split Campus arrangements include a Dual/Joint Award a full business case may be required and fees and financial arrangements agreed on a case by case basis.

Off-campus PGR fees will be in-line with the Tuition Fee Policy and relevant schedule.

The University is obliged to meet the requirements of current the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) return to ensure all PGRS are reported appropriately, either through the main return or the Off-shore Aggregate Return. Returning those PGRS who are eligible to be included in the main return enables the university to receive appropriate research degree programme funding which is linked to the quality profile for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

For the latest HESA return requirements please contact the Department of Student & Academic Administration (DSAA).

## 8. Partner Associate Supervisor Scheme (PASS)

The University offers the opportunity for approved Partner Associate Supervisors to join the Partner Associate Supervisor Scheme (PASS). This Scheme allows partner staff to attend learning and teaching staff development events hosted by the Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE), participation in Graduate School Supervisor Workshops, and access to online library resources where licences permit.

Partner staff wishing to apply for the Scheme must be part of the approved supervisory team for a PGRS registered for one of the Flexible PGR Programmes outlined within the Framework. To apply for the Scheme the Partner Associate Supervisor will submit their CV as part of the Research Student Registration (RSR) form and pack to the Chair of Faculty Research Degree Committee (FRDC) to consider, and if approved will receive a letter of confirmation by the Chair of FRDC. Approval of partner staff under this Scheme does not constitute any form of financial or legally binding contract of employment between the named partner staff and the University.

Those approved under PASS with will have access to the appropriate training in University of Portsmouth supervision processes and responsibilities via the Graduate School Supervisory Workshops.

## 9. Features of a Successful Flexible PGR Arrangement

When considering approval of a Flexible PGR partnership arrangement, the following expectations should be met:

- The arrangements for PGRS adhere to the Regulation for Higher Degree by Research and the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees.
- The student experience for PGRS registered under any of these flexible arrangements is comparable and monitored in the same way as for University of Portsmouth PGRS undertaking their research degree at Portsmouth.
- The academic standard of the award is maintained and monitored.
- Eligibility for Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) reporting and Research Excellence Framework (REF) is clear. For latest criteria for HESA please contact DSAA, External Returns and Data Standards [erds@port.ac.uk](mailto:erds@port.ac.uk)
- Where the PGRS is self-funding and will be seeking support via the Postgraduate Doctoral Loan Scheme, the arrangement allow them to meet the criteria.

The following points are useful when considering management of the Flexible PGR Programme:

- Research and transferable skills training
- Admissions
- Research environment and resources
- Student networking and wellbeing and inclusion in research culture
- Registration and Induction
- Supervision arrangements
- Access to support structures
- Monitoring student progress and formal reviews
- Examination and viva arrangements
- International students – visa status
- Faculty/Department ownership
- Training for external Supervisors and partner staff
- University of Portsmouth Partner Contact
- Tuition fee arrangements
- Student Records and reporting (HESA & REF)