

Professional Doctorate Regulations: Doctor of Practical Theology (DTh)

Last revision: February 2023

Introduction

1. Preamble

- 1.1. These regulations set out distinctive rules pertinent to the DTh, but should otherwise be read in conjunction with the Taught Degrees Regulations (for Stage 1) and the Research Degrees Regulations (for Stage 2).
- 1.2. The aims and learning outcomes of the programme as approved by the University are set out in the Programme Handbook and in the Programme Specification.

2. Definitions of the terms are as follows

2.1. *Programme Convener*

The Programme Convener is responsible for the day-to-day management, administration, organisation and development and teaching effectiveness of the programme and for University quality assurance procedures for the taught and research components.

2.2. *Programme*

The group of modules comprising the taught component together with the research component lead to the award of the Doctor of Practical Theology.

2.3. *Programme Board*

A Programme Board oversees the curriculum, quality and standards of the taught component of the programme, in line with the responsibilities set out in the Taught Degree Regulations §1. Its membership shall include the Programme Convener, the Head of School, or nominee, Module Conveners of the taught component, and all staff undertaking significant teaching and/or supervising on the programme and shall include at least two student representatives and the Subject Librarian. The Chair shall be the Programme Convener.

2.4. *Programme Examinations Board*

A Programme Examinations Board oversees the assessment of the taught component of the programme, in line with the responsibilities set out in the Taught Degree Regulations. Its membership shall include the Programme Convener, the taught Module Conveners and all staff undertaking significant assessment duties on the programme for Stages 1A and 1B and shall include the appointed external examiner(s). The Chair shall be the Head of School or their nominee.

2.5. **Research Student Review Board**

The Research Student Review Board has delegated authority from the Research Degrees Committee and is responsible for managing postgraduate research degrees at departmental level, including the Research component of the DTh and other professional doctorates, and has some delegated powers related to assessment for the research component only. Programme Conveners for professional doctorates are members of their department's Research Student Review Board.

2.6. **Stages 1A and 1B**

These refer to the two stages of the taught component of the programme, as detailed below.

3. **Structure**

- 3.1. In accordance with QAA guidance on credit-structured professional doctorates, the DTh is provided as a 420 credit Level 8 top up within a notionally 540 credit programme that includes 120 credits at Level 7 required on entry. The programme proper includes further taught credits (Stage 1) and a research dissertation (Stage 2), all at Level 8. The learning outcomes of the DTh award including its prerequisite elements are consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for a Doctoral level qualification.
- 3.2. Stage 1 consists of 120 credits of Level 8 taught modules orienting students to the research task.
- 3.3. Stage 2 consists in a 300-credit research dissertation.

4. **Period of Registration**

4.1. **Taught component**

The normal period of registration for Stages 1 is 24 months P/T.

4.2. **Research component¹**

- a) Stage 2 registration period normally begins at the start of the Autumn semester following successful completion of Stage 1. The minimum period of registration for Stage 2 of the DTh is 36 months P/T. The maximum period is 60 months P/T. These do not include periods of interruption.
- b) Research students who submit their doctoral thesis within 48 months P/T will be moved to 'completion status' at the end of their fourth year of P/T study. Research students under completion status will continue to receive supervision and have access to university resources but will not pay fees for a period of 12 months.
- c) Research students who have not submitted their doctoral thesis within 48 months P/T must undergo completion review as described in §16 of the Research Degree Regulations. Students submitting a completion review do not need to complete an annual progress review.

¹ The registration periods for Stage 2 are calculated on a pro-rata basis from the figures given for other research programmes in the Research Degree Regulations and, where necessary, adjusted to comply with standard Graduate School timeframes.

5. Assessment

- 5.1. The Programme Examinations Board shall confirm the marks of the taught component. If the results of Stage 1 are satisfactory, including any re-sit examinations that may have been required, a student is eligible to seek RDCom2 approval. Where practicable, the final examination board for Stage 1 and the RDCom2 process will take place near-concurrently, although they remain two separate processes.
- 5.2. The programme team shall nominate external examiner(s) as required for the taught component of the programme. The examiner(s) shall be different from those appointed by Research Degrees Committee for the final research component through the standard procedures for appointment of research degree examiners.

Administrative Regulations

6. Application and Registration

- 6.1. The normal entry requirement to Stage 1 is a Master's Degree in a relevant subject from a British University or the equivalent level for institutions outside the UK. All applicants must satisfy the University's English language requirements.
- 6.2. Candidates presenting without a Master's Degree in a relevant subject from a British University or the equivalent level for institutions outside the UK, whose work experience shows a substantial academic, research or strategic orientation of relevance to the field, may be considered for admission to Stage 1. This will be subject to the University's policy on the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning.
- 6.3. Candidates who meet the entry requirements to Stage 1, whose project proposals show exceptional promise, may be considered to enter Stage 2 directly. This will be subject to the University's policy on the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning. The overall learning outcomes for Stage 1 will be used as a guide when making recommendations about a suitable study path. Students who are admitted directly to Stage 2 will be required to complete an admissions form that incorporates the RDCom1 requirements.
- 6.4. Applicants will be interviewed as part of the admissions process.

7. Mode and Terms of Study

- 7.1. Students study part-time (P/T). The minimum and maximum registrations periods P/T study for the taught and research components are as set out in §4 above.
- 7.2. Students must complete the various stages of the DTh within their respective periods of registration. Time limits do not include any periods of interruption or suspension. For Stage 2, in exceptional circumstances a student may apply to the Research Degrees Committee for an extension as described in the Research Degree Regulations. RDCom, on the recommendation of RSRB, will consider such applications on a case by case basis.
- 7.3. Applications for interruption will be governed by the Taught Degree Regulations for Stage 1 and by the Research Degree Regulations for Stage 2.

8. Programme Management

8.1. Taught component

The taught part of the programme will be managed by a Programme Convener and Programme Board as set out in the Taught Degree Regulations §1.

8.2. Research component

Supervision, progression, submission and assessment details will be managed by the principles set out in these regulations. Other aspects of the research component of the programme will be managed by the principles set out in the Research Degrees Regulations, as agreed by the Research Degrees Committee, including approved delegation to the departmental Research Student Review Board.

8.3. Oversight of programme integrity

The Programme Convener shall be a member of RSRB and will ensure that the taught and research components integrate with each other and so as to continue to fulfil the aims and learning outcomes of the professional doctorate as a whole.

Assessment Regulations

9. Assessment Boards for the Taught Component

Programme Examinations Board

- 9.1. The membership of the Programme Examinations Board shall be as per the stipulation of the Taught Degree Regulations §11(d), including a Chair, appointed by the Head of School, teaching staff who are responsible for the modules that are sponsored by the Board; the Head of School, or a nominee; and the external examiner(s).
- 9.2. The Programme Examinations Board shall meet as required, but at least once per year. At its meetings, the Programme Examinations Board will fulfil the duties outlined in the Taught Degree Regulations §11(b) and in addition:
 - a) approve the results of all taught module assessments, determining in respect of each candidate 'Pass'/'Fail' outcomes for level 8 modules;
 - b) be responsible for the academic standards of the taught modules;
 - c) in the case of failure, agree reassessment requirements.
- 9.3. The Programme Examinations Board may at its own discretion require an alternative or additional form of assessment for a particular module. An alternative form of assessment may only be approved where there are clearly defined mitigating circumstances preventing the normal assessment or a deferment, and where the proposed alternative assessment is capable of testing substantially the same learning outcomes as the validated assessment.
- 9.4. A student whose assessment performance has been, or is likely to be, impaired because of ill health or other reasons, must inform the Humanities Department Office in writing at the earliest opportunity, and provide supporting documentary evidence. In the case of ill health this should be a medical certificate. All applications will be considered under the University's mitigating circumstances procedure for taught programmes.

Grading and Progression of Modules in the Taught component

- 9.5. All module assessment in Stage 1 is a 'Pass'/'Fail' basis.
- 9.6. In cases where a candidate has failed or deferred a particular assessment, the Programme Examinations Board shall stipulate the nature and timing of the reassessment and/or attendance required to pass.
- 9.7. Modules in Stage 1 may not be condoned.
- 9.8. In Stage 1, all work must be submitted by the due date. If this is not possible, the student must seek an extension or a deferral in accordance with the Taught Degree Regulations (§§16-17).

10. Progression

- 10.1. On Stage 1, a candidate who has failed the module assessment overall on the first attempt will normally be permitted one opportunity to resit the failed components of the module assessment, without further study, subject to availability. In cases where it is not practical for a student to resit a component of assessment without further study, the Programme Examinations Board has discretion to require a student to retake the module. The Programme Examinations Board may exercise discretion and grant a second resit opportunity where appropriate in the context of the student's overall academic progress provided the student has submitted to assessment for their first resit attempt. A student who has been granted a resit must submit all outstanding work at the next scheduled opportunity as specified by the Programme Examinations Board.
- 10.2. In Stage 1, the completion of the first year modules Advanced Questions in Practical Theology and Approaches and Research Design (1): Literature Review and Research Questions is a pre-requisite for the Year 2 modules. However, in the case of a student being required to resit one or two modules from their first year, they may start the second year modules pending the results of any resit.
- 10.3. Unlike other modules, a student will be permitted only one resit for the Research Design (2): Methodology & Research Proposal module. The decision of the Programme Examinations Board is final.
- 10.4. After Stage 1 has been successfully completed and ratified by the Programme Examinations Board, the student progresses to Stage 2, the research component, and the RSRB shall be responsible for confirming the project (RDCom2), as governed by Research Degree Regulations.
- 10.5. After a student has entered the research phase, they will be required to undergo a research progress monitoring as outlined in the Research Degree Regulations.
- 10.6. The RDCom2 will be submitted to the RSRB no later than 3 months after Stage 2 registration. In exceptional circumstances an extension of this period may be applied for to the DTh Programme Convener, who will communicate with the Research Degrees Convener (RDC) for the School of Humanities in each case.
- 10.7. DTh students on Stage 2 will be required to submit their RDCom3 progression review no later than 24 months from Stage 2 registration. In exceptional circumstances, and with the

support of the student's supervisory team, the student may apply for an extension to the RSRB.

11. The Supervisory Team

- 11.1. On the recommendation of the Dean of School, the Research Degrees Committee shall appoint at least two supervisors for each candidate, a Director of Studies and one or more Co-supervisors. To qualify as a Director of Studies, a supervisor must normally have experience of supervising at least one PhD or one professional doctorate candidate from registration to successful completion. Both the Director of Studies and Co-supervisor(s) must normally have subject expertise appropriate for supervision at doctoral level and have received relevant supervisor training. Appropriate expertise might include relevant professional practice, as well as academic research activity, with the supervisory team as a whole usually including both professional and research expertise. Exceptions to these criteria, including recommendations for the appointment of external supervisors, must be approved by the Chair of Research Degrees Committee. The Research Degrees Committee may appoint a replacement or additional supervisor at any time if it deems this to be necessary, and shall do so if no supervisor continues to be a member of the staff of the University.

12. Exit Awards

- 12.1. For a student who successfully completes 120 credits at level 8 of Stage 1, but does not successfully progress to the Research component, a further 60-credit Extended Study module is available, the successful completion of which will lead to the award of an MTh. A student who, after progressing to the Research component, does not successfully complete the RDCom3 progress evaluation milestone may be permitted to complete a 25-30,000-word dissertation for the award of an MProf.

13. Assessment of MTh and MProf dissertations submitted for exit awards

- 13.1. In order for a student to qualify for the award of MTh, the examiners must be satisfied that the work submitted for the additional 60-credit module [DPT060L006Y Extended Study Module], of approximately 15,000 words, would be of equivalent quality to a successful MA dissertation in a similar subject area, in line with module specifications.
- 13.2. In order for a student to qualify for the award of Master of Professional Studies, the examiners must be satisfied that the student's dissertation, of approximately 25-30,000 words:
- a) offers a coherent presentation of high quality professionally or creatively engaged research with the potential to stimulate or inform current debate or practice (as appropriate) and perhaps in adapted form, merit publication;
 - b) presents a focused and critical assessment of aspects of current praxis and research from the forefront of the discipline;
 - c) makes a valuable contribution to an area of practice at the level of understanding, interpretation, application or implementation;
 - d) demonstrates an appropriate grasp of techniques for research and enquiry relevant to a professional context;
 - e) represents in terms of its scope what might reasonably be achieved within an MProf project.

14. Requirements of the final submission of the Stage 2 DTh dissertation

- 14.1. The final submission for the degree of Doctor of Theology shall include a dissertation not exceeding 60,000 word (or equivalent for creative projects, including artefacts plus critical commentary), with a full bibliography and references and with a satisfactory standard of literary presentation. The word count includes references in the text, footnotes and endnotes, but excludes the bibliography and any appendices, which should only include material which the examiners are not required to read in order adequately to examine the submission, but to which they may refer if they wish.
- 14.2. A student may include in the final submission creative work which has been generated as an integral part of the research process and that together with the piece of scholarly writing substantiates the argument(s) of the research project. The form that the final submission takes will be determined at the point of RDCom2, so that the piece of scholarly writing is at least 20,000 words in length and the scope of the submission as a whole meets the requirements for the award of Doctor of Theology.
- 14.3. The submission will consist of the student's own work which s/he has undertaken while registered for the degree of Doctor of Theology, subject to the provisions of Section 6. Any work included in the submission which has been done jointly by the student with other researchers, or which has been assessed previously for a professional doctorate, research degree or comparable award and that cannot therefore be considered again, shall be clearly indicated by the student and certified by the Director of Studies. All allegations of academic misconduct with regard to the final examination, including allegations of plagiarism, duplication, falsification, collusion and cheating, shall be investigated under the provisions of the Student Disciplinary Regulations.
- 14.4. Three hard copies of the submission must be presented in formats set out in University guidelines along with an electronic copy of the thesis. All work which is to be considered by the examiners must be included in the submission in a retainable form. Where work cannot be presented adequately in written form, it will be presented in an alternative, retainable format which has been determined at the point of project confirmation.
- 14.5. The final submission must be presented after the minimum period of study for the degree of Doctor of Theology and before the individual student's period of study has expired.

15. Assessment of the Stage 2 DTh dissertation

- 15.1. In order for a student to qualify for the award of Doctor of Theology, the examiners must be satisfied that the student's final submission and performance in the oral examination, when considered together:
 - a) comprise an integrated and coherent body of professionally or creatively engaged scholarly work of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication, strategic implementation, performance, screening or display (as appropriate) in complete or abridged form;
 - b) present a systematic and critical assessment of current praxis and research from the forefront of the professional or creative context and its cognate disciplines;
 - c) make a distinct and original contribution to an area of practice through the creation, interpretation, application or implementation of new knowledge, insights or approaches;
 - d) demonstrate a detailed understanding of techniques for research and advanced enquiry relevant to a professional context;

- e) represent in terms of its scope what might reasonably be achieved within the time frame of Stage 2 of the programme.

15.2. Except for the provisions below, the examiners shall submit to the Research Degrees Committee a joint report on the outcome of the final examination containing one of the following recommendations.

- a) The degree of Doctor of Theology should be awarded.
- b) The degree of Doctor of Theology should be awarded subject to corrections being made to the submission within three months. The corrections shall be of a level which does not require re-assessment, but one or more of the examiners shall be asked to verify that the corrections have been made before the degree is awarded.
- c) The degree of Doctor of Theology should be awarded, subject to corrections of substance being made to the submission within six months. The corrections shall be of a level which does not require re-assessment, but one or more of the examiners shall be asked to verify that the corrections have been made before the degree is awarded.
- d) The degree of Doctor of Theology should not be awarded, but the student may resubmit work for assessment within 18 months, with or without a further oral examination. The student will be required to re-enrol with the University during that time and will be entitled to supervision in accordance with University guidelines. The resubmission will be examined where possible by the same examiners who assessed the first submission. A student shall be given only one opportunity to resubmit.
- e) The degree of Doctor of Theology should not be awarded, but the degree of Master of Professional Studies (MProf) should be awarded, possibly subject to corrections being made to the submission within three months. The corrections shall be of a level which does not require re-assessment, but one or more of the examiners shall be asked to verify that the corrections have been made before the degree is awarded.
- f) The student should fail the examination without an opportunity to resubmit and the student's registration should be terminated.

15.3. If the examiners are unable to reach agreement on the outcome, they shall each submit separate reports to the Research Degrees Committee.

16. Copyright and Access to the Research Project

16.1. Copyright and Access related to research projects is subject to the University's policy.

17. Appeal Regulations

17.1. Students have the right to appeal against the decision of the Programme Examinations Board or the Research Degrees Committee.

17.2. For appeals against decisions made by the Programme Examinations Board, the appeals procedure for taught programmes will be applied. For appeals against the decisions of the Research Degrees Committee students should follow the research degrees academic appeals procedure.