

# University of York

## Admissions Policy

### Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Selection and Admission of Postgraduate Researchers

#### 1. Purpose and Scope of the Code of Practice

- 1.1. This Code of Practice sets out policy and outlines processes specific to the recruitment, selection and admission of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) i.e. those undertaking a PhD, MD, EngD, MPhil, Master of Arts (by research) or Master of Science (by research). This Code of Practice serves as a reference point for York Graduate Research School (YGRS), all staff involved in the recruitment, selection and admission of PGRs, and PGR applicants.
- 1.2. This Code of Practice should be read alongside the [University's Admissions Policy](#) (which sets out the high level policy and principles, within an institutional and legislative framework), the [Policy on Research Degrees](#), and [Regulation 2](#).

#### 2. Training of staff involved in PGR recruitment, selection and admission

- 2.1. All departments (including academic and professional services) should ensure that staff involved in the recruitment, selection and admission of PGRs have received training and guidance to prepare them for this role. This should include unconscious bias training.

#### 3. Admissions requirements for PGR programmes

##### Academic admissions requirements for PGR programmes

- 3.1. For MD, MPhil or PhD research programmes, applicants are expected to have a first degree, normally an upper second class (2i) honours degree (or equivalent alternative or overseas qualification) in a relevant subject, or a relevant postgraduate Masters qualification (or equivalent).
- 3.2. For admission to an MA by research or MSc by research programme, applicants should normally have at least a lower second class (2ii) honours degree (or equivalent alternative or overseas qualification)
- 3.3. Some PGR programmes require a higher academic or an additional entry requirement so applicants should always refer to the respective individual programme requirements.

##### English admissions requirements for PGR programmes

- 3.4. The University's minimum English language requirements, as set out in the main body of the Admissions Policy, apply to all PGR programmes. Many PGR programmes require a standard of English above the University minimum. Further information is [available](#).

- 3.5. PGR English language requirements are reviewed annually by the Dean of YGRS in consultation with the Faculty PGR Leads and the Heads of Faculty Marketing and Recruitment.
- 3.6. The University's policy on alternative evidence of English Language ability, as set out in the main body of the Admissions Policy and the English language code of practice, also apply to all PGR programmes.

#### **Exceptions (academic and English language waivers) for PGR programmes**

- 3.7. Exceptions to academic requirements may be made, for example for applicants with extensive relevant work experience, and may also be made for English language requirements. Such exceptions require the support of the relevant Graduate Chair (or delegate) and approval of the Dean of the York Graduate Research School (YGRS) (or delegate).

## **4. How applications to PGR programmes are assessed**

### **Applications**

- 4.1. All applications for PGR programmes are assessed individually and holistically. In assessing the ability and suitability of applicants, the following information is provided via the application form and supporting documentation:
  - achievement in awarded or partially complete qualifications
  - predicted achievement in qualifications yet to be awarded
  - personal statement / statement in support of the application / CV
  - evidence of relevant work experience (selected programmes only)
  - references (see below)
  - sample of written work, portfolio submission, or evidence of professional experience (selected programmes only)
  - research proposal
- 4.2. Applicants to PGR programmes are normally required to submit two academic references as part of their application. Further information concerning the content and format of references is [available](#).
- 4.3. PGR applicants should not use generative AI to write any aspect of their application: any such use may invalidate their application and lead to the withdrawal of an offer. Generative AI use picked up subsequent to enrolment may be treated as academic misconduct and be considered under Appendix 3 of the Policy on Research Degrees. Departments are reminded that the interview provides an opportunity to explore in detail the application with the applicant.

### **PGR applicants who have mitigating circumstances**

- 4.4. If any applicant to a PGR programme feels that any disability, long term health condition, other personal circumstance (e.g. bereavement, or other difficult home or family circumstances) or any other event may have affected their previous education, then they are encouraged to complete the mitigating circumstances form. All formal notifications for mitigating circumstances which are supported by a full declaration about the nature of the circumstances will be considered as part of the admissions process, and may be taken into account by the department when considering

whether to interview and / or offer a place. Further advice and guidance for PGR applicants with mitigating circumstances is [available](#).

#### Availability of suitable supervision and resources

- 4.5. Applications for PGR programmes will only be considered by a department where an appropriate supervisor(s) and resources are expected to be available for the duration of the normal period of study.

#### Interviewing PGR applicants

- 4.6. Before an offer of a place on a PGR programme is made, an applicant must be interviewed, either in person or, where this is not practicable, online interviews are permissible.
- 4.7. The **interview must involve at least two members of academic staff** from the relevant or cognate department (this is to ensure sufficient scrutiny of the applicant and for safeguarding on both sides), **normally including the Graduate Chair (or their delegate) and the prospective supervisor**.
- 4.8. The purpose of the interview is to allow the department to assess the suitability of the potential PGR and (where applicable) the broad viability of their proposed project (including, for example, ethical considerations, funding constraints, or UKVI restrictions).
- 4.9. The interview also provides an opportunity for the department to explore any concerns that it may have about the applicant's claimed knowledge and experience.

#### Post-interview decisions for PGR programmes

- 4.10. The **decision (post-interview) to offer a place on a PGR programme must involve at least two members of academic staff** from the relevant department, normally including the Graduate Chair (or their delegate) and the prospective supervisor.
- 4.11. Successful applicants will receive an offer letter from the University which sets out the key details of the PGR programme, any conditions attached, and which draws attention to the regulations, policies and guidance applicable to PGRs. The offer letter forms a binding contract with the University and, upon acceptance, on the applicant.
- 4.12. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the decision and given feedback. Applicants wishing to request additional feedback should contact the PG Admissions team.

### 5. PGRs wishing to transfer to a PGR programme at York from a PGR programme at another University

- 5.1. Transfer requests should not be accepted without a clear rationale, such as the PGR's supervisor accepting a post at the University of York.
- 5.2. Transfer requests should not normally be accepted if the PGR is in the final stage of their programme (i.e. year 3 for a full-time PhD researcher), when the expectation would be that they would complete their enrolment and examination at their original institution.
- 5.3. If a PGR wishes to transfer from another university to York, they must apply through the usual postgraduate admissions process for PGRs.

- 5.4. Potential incoming PGRs should include their current PGR programme within the education section, and should also note their aim to transfer within the personal statement section of the PGR application form.
- 5.5. The Department should identify applicants who wish to transfer during their assessment of the application, and notify the PG Admissions team when recording their recommended offer. The PG Admissions team will seek further information from the applicant on their individual transfer circumstances.
- 5.6. The application should be considered by the Graduate Chair for academic approval and by PGRA to ensure that the application aligns with policy.
- 5.7. The incoming PGR will be informed of the basis on which they are being accepted. This should include: (i) the length of enrolment (including any entitlement to a writing up period), (ii) any variation to standard progress and review arrangements, and (iii) any accreditation of prior learning to recognise courses and modules already undertaken etc. The incoming PGR will be issued with a tailored offer letter by the PG Admissions team.
- 5.8. It is the responsibility of the *incoming PGR* (or the PGR's supervisor if they are also transferring to York and their PGR's funding is allocated directly to them) to check that any funding they receive for their programme (fees and/or studentship) can continue if they transfer to York.
- 5.9. A shorter than usual enrolment period will normally be approved to take account of the time already spent by the incoming PGR on their research at the institution they are transferring from.
- 5.10. The department will need to ensure that the research to date, where applicable, is subject to a light touch ethical review in accordance with the University's Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance.
- 5.11. The Policy on Research Degrees ([section 7](#)) includes additional information on policy applicable to PGRs who transfer to York.

## **6. Applicants who have previously started but not completed a PGR programme at the University of York or another institution**

- 6.1. An application from an individual whose enrolment on a PGR programme at the University of York or another institution has been terminated as academically unsatisfactory (including failure to progress or failure of the programme or misconduct of any kind) must provide the department with an explanation for the termination that provides reassurance that they are a suitable case for (re)admission. If the application is supported by the relevant Graduate Chair, it must be submitted for approval by the Dean of YGRS (or delegate) to ensure that (re)admission is in the best interests of all parties. This applies regardless of whether the applicant is seeking to study in the same or an alternative disciplinary area.
- 6.2. An application from an individual who has withdrawn from a PGR programme at the University of York or another university must provide the department with an explanation for the withdrawal that provides reassurance that they are a suitable case for (re)admission. This applies regardless of whether the applicant is seeking to study in the same or an alternative disciplinary area. Individuals must apply as new PGRs, they are not permitted to transfer. Any cases where a department

wants a second opinion may be referred to the Dean of YGRS (or delegate).

- 6.3. Permission for (re)admission should only be granted if there is evidence that the applicant will have a realistic chance of successful on-time completion and - in the case of applicants who have previously had their registration terminated as academically unsatisfactory - that the issues that led to their registration being terminated are not likely to occur again. Conditions may be imposed on (re)admission, for example around the choice of research topic and/or supervisors and/or the provision of a support plan or specific training for the applicant.
- 6.4. If an individual who has previously been enrolled on a PGR programme at York is readmitted they will do so as a new PGR i.e leave of absence and other time-limits are reset.

## **7. Responsibility for the Code of Practice**

- 7.1. This Code of Practice is the responsibility of the Head of Admissions and Applicant Experience. It is reviewed and updated annually or whenever legislation or the Admissions Policy is amended, in consultation with YGRS.
- 7.2. Responsibility for reviewing individual cases against the Code of Practice is the responsibility of the Dean of the York Graduate Research School.
- 7.3. Responsibility for detailed processes arising from this Code of Practice rests with the York Graduate Research School. Processes are reviewed annually or, sooner if legislation, the Admissions Policy or this Code of Practice is amended.

Version 2.0 September 2023