

Policies and Programmes Sub-Committee

Guidance note on cross-departmental interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary PhD programmes

This guidance note applies to departments and/or interdisciplinary centres that want to **collaborate within the University of York** (see note below for programmes involving other universities) in order to establish a **bespoke named cross-departmental interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary PhD programme**. In this scenario, students are affiliated to one of a number of collaborating departments (normally on the basis of the location of their main supervisor) but are enrolled on a *single* cross-departmental interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary PhD programme, with a name that reflects its interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary focus. Such programmes may be established in response to a call from an external funding body, or a University initiative (e.g. associated with an interdisciplinary centre).

Policies and Programmes Sub-Committee (PPSC) expects that such programmes will be set up to ensure that the students have a genuinely inter-disciplinary/multi-disciplinary experience. It also expects that priority will normally be given to ensuring, as far as possible, equity for students *within* the named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programme (as opposed to equity between students on the programme who are affiliated to a particular department and students who are on said department's standard single discipline PhD programme).

Note that this guidance should not be interpreted as a set of rigid rules and it is recognised that in some cases the guidance may not be academically appropriate. Where a proposal for a named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programme differs significantly from these guidelines, departments/centres should provide an explanation for PPSC.

The guidance does not apply where students are enrolled on a standard single discipline PhD programme but are required to attend an interdisciplinary training programme (e.g. the ESRC White Rose DTP where students are enrolled on, for example, a PhD in Economics or Management but attend a broader social sciences training programme).

Guidance on the design and delivery of a named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary PhD programme

When PPSC is looking at a proposal for a new named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary PhD programme it expects that such a programme will normally:

Governance and leadership

- have a clear structure for the academic governance of the programme (i.e. the provision of academic oversight of the programme and its students, including the monitoring and review of the programme). In some circumstances (e.g. where the development of the programme is associated with other programmes at UG and PGT level), there may be a dedicated Board of Studies (e.g. Centre for Medieval Studies), involving staff and students from the relevant departments. In other circumstances, the academic governance should normally be undertaken by the Board of Studies (BoS)/Graduate School Board (GSB) in the lead department
- have a programme director who provides visible leadership for students and supervisors involved in the programme, and has a personal responsibility for oversight of the programme including with respect to admission, progression, training, outcomes etc., working within the agreed academic governance structure for the programme (i.e. alongside the relevant BoS/GSB Chair(s))
- provide clarity in terms of student representation e.g. on which BoS/GSB and/or management group of the centre/DTP/CDT

Programme structure

- be the same length (i.e. all students enrolled on the programme will be on either a three year or a four year PhD with equal right of access to a continuation period)
- have exit awards, e.g. MPhil and MA/MSc by research, that mirror the name of the PhD programme
- have a single set of admissions criteria (including for English language) and one admissions process, with the programme director having oversight of, and ideally involvement in, all admissions decisions
- where feasible, have a single process for TAPs and formal reviews of progress (with all students on the programme following the TAP and progression model of one of the collaborating departments, or a bespoke TAP and progression model being set up for the programme), which involves the programme director to ensure consistency in decision-making

Supervision

- have an agreed approach to supervision applied consistently across the programme
- where academically appropriate, have a requirement for a co-supervisor from one or more of the other collaborating departments and/or cross-departmental TAP membership

Student training and support

- have a bespoke induction involving both students and their supervisors
- provide a package of specialist training and support for students that takes into account the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature of the programme (some of this training may be designated as programme milestones and/or feed into formal reviews of progress)
- provide a package of regular networking opportunities for students to ensure that they feel part of a cohort and can benefit from different disciplinary perspectives (some networking events may be designated as programme milestones and/or feed into formal reviews of progress)
- offer all students the same access to internal funding for conferences etc.
- have its own handbook/website or similar
- as far as reasonably possible, offer similar opportunity of access to desk space/IT etc.

Examination

- have a single format for thesis submission, although this may need to be broadly worded to accommodate different disciplinary approaches with the programme
- have a process for managing the appointment of examiners that includes consultation with the programme director and ensures that examiners are aware that the student they are examining has been undertaking research of an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary nature
- have students graduating in one degree ceremony (rather than in the ceremonies for the supervising departments).

Division of fee income

The fee split between collaborating departments/centres should be agreed when approval is sought for planning purposes. One possible model (assuming there is no interdisciplinary centre or the interdisciplinary centre has no/limited administrative infrastructure) is 20% to the lead department (if this is bearing the majority of the programme level responsibilities), with the remainder being split between the departments providing the main and co-supervisor(s) on the basis of the division of supervisory responsibilities.

Applicability to named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary PhD programmes involving other universities (e.g. inter-university CDT/DTPs)

This guidance note relates to named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary PhD programmes offered *within* the University. As far as possible, the guidance should apply to *York component* of new named cross-departmental interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary PhD programmes that involve another university (e.g. where two or more York departments are involved in an inter-university CDT/DTP). Much of the guidance will also apply in a broad sense to inter-university DTPs, but recognising that differences in institutional rules and regulations mean that it will, in all likelihood, be hard to achieve equity between CDT/DTP students across the different universities, particularly in certain areas (e.g. progression procedures).