School of Nursing and Midwifery

Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Students (Phd/MPhil) and their Supervisors

To be read in conjunction with
The University of Sheffield Research and Innovation Services

Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

2013-14
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Glossary
A number of commonly used terms occur frequently in this document. These have been abbreviated to simplify reading:

Postgraduate Research Student PGR
Director of Research DoR
Postgraduate Research Tutor PGT
Research and Innovation Services RIS
Doctoral Development Programme DDP
Training Needs Assessment TNA
Research Governance RG
1. Introduction

The School of Nursing and Midwifery is one of nine Departments within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health. The Faculty also includes: Human Communication Sciences, the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR), Clinical Dentistry, Human Metabolism, Infection and Immunity, Neuroscience and Oncology.

Being part of a research-led university of international repute, the School of Nursing and Midwifery has a solid research base and a firm commitment to encouraging research and development work of the highest quality. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, nursing at the University of Sheffield was ranked among the top ten in the UK for research that is considered world leading, with 50% of our research being considered of internationally excellent quality.

We are actively engaged in research collaborations with other schools and major research Centres within the University. These include: the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth (CSCY - http://cscy.group.shef.ac.uk/activities/); ScHARR and the Department of Sociological Studies. These symbiotic relationships are giving rise to many creative research opportunities.

For more information about research activity in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, please visit http://www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research

The School of Nursing and Midwifery provides a rich environment for the training of postgraduate research students who are registered for PhD/MPhil and welcomes the valuable contribution that research students make to the academic life of the University and the School.

The School recognises the vital importance of the supervisory relationship in ensuring the success of students’ postgraduate research studies. These guidelines have been prepared to help students and supervisors to make the best of this relationship with regard to particular features of the School of Nursing and Midwifery and to provide guidelines for progress throughout the research journey. These guidelines complement, and should be read in close conjunction with, the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes for Research Students and Supervisors for the current year, which is published by Research and Innovation Services (RIS), available at:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/pgresearch/students/publications.html
2. **Key roles**

There are a number of important roles relating to the organisation and strategic direction of the postgraduate research programme within the School. These roles complement the work of the Research and Innovations Services and the Faculty of Medicine Dentistry and Health Postgraduate Research Committee, which oversee the research degree process. Please see the RIS Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes for Research Students and Supervisors for further details.

2.1 **The Director of Research (DoR)** has overall responsibility for developing and implementing a strategic approach to research within the School of Nursing and Midwifery and for the quality of postgraduate research activities and provision.

2.2 **The Postgraduate Tutor (PGT)** acts as the first point of contact for potential research students seeking registration to read for PhD/MPhil. The PGT has responsibility for monitoring and tracking the progress of students registered for PhD/MPhil by maintaining individual records, ensuring the continuing adequacy of supervisory arrangements, providing support to students and supervisors and mediating problems that might arise in the supervisory relationship. Students or supervisors should make an appointment to see the PGT in the event of any difficulties they face in supervision that cannot be resolved through the supervisory process (Appendix 1).

2.4 **The supervisory team** has responsibility for the supervision of the student from the time of registration through to completion of his/her research degree. In most cases the supervisory team will comprise two members of suitably qualified academic staff who liaise closely with the student. One of the supervisors will be nominated as the key contact with the student (the primary supervisor) and will be responsible for liaising with the PGT in relation to the progress of the student. The second supervisor, as well as other duties, has the lead responsibility for helping and monitoring student progress within the DDP. The supervisors are provided with assistance from the PGT and other senior academics through the School’s postgraduate research supervisors’ forum and mentorship from colleagues within the School and the broader University community. Supervisors are drawn from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the wider University as well as other academic and practice institutions.

Please see the section on supervision in the RIS Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes for Research Students and Supervisors.

2.5 **The Programme Coordinator** works with the PGT to facilitate the admissions procedures, manage individual student records and other important documentation.

2.6 **The Research Administrator** provides administrative support to the PGT and is responsible for keeping central records relating to research activity undertaken by staff and postgraduate students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The Research Administrator also coordinates the School’s research ethics procedures and distributes information about research opportunities, funding and events.
3. Recruitment and admissions

3.1 Recruitment strategy

The School of Nursing and Midwifery is committed to enabling the growth of its academic community through the recruitment of a body of research students and by providing high quality supervision to facilitate students’ successful and timely completion.

We recruit students into a number of overlapping categories:

- Full time candidates
- Part time candidates
- Overseas candidates
- Home candidates
- Staff candidates
- Non staff candidates

When an application is received we scrutinise it with a view to the following issues (not in rank order):

- Quality and integrity of the research proposal
- Demonstrated academic ability
  - Students registering from PhD are normally expected to have a good honours degree and a Masters degree or equivalent. Evidence of ability to study at the required level is also necessary.
  - Other applicants may be considered on the basis of relevant qualifications.
- English language ability (where relevant).
  - The School requires overseas candidates whose first language is not English to demonstrate an IELTS score of at least 6.5 with a minimum of 6 in each category.\(^1\)
- Quality of the supporting references
- The relevance of the proposed study to the School's research themes.
- The capacity of the School to provide high quality supervision for the area of proposed study

Prospective PhD candidates are normally interviewed, either by the PGT or the prospective primary supervisor (Appendix 2). In the case of overseas applicants, any interview will be conducted over the telephone. Sometimes we are able to arrange a face to face interview in the applicants’ home country with a visiting academic, or to video-conference or Skype.

A final decision on admission for PhD is made by the Postgraduate Tutor.

We are able to accept students to read for PhD at the beginning of the first and the second

\(^1\) For information about IELTS and other English language assessments, please see: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/eltc/useful/toefl_ielts.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/eltc/useful/toefl_ielts.html)
semesters (September and February). However, we strongly encourage overseas, full time students to commence their studies at the beginning of the academic year (September) in order to access the full range of social support that is available within the University.

### 3.2 Admissions procedures

For full details of admissions procedures, please visit the website: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/apply/research.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/apply/research.html)
3.2.1 **Diagram of postgraduate research admission procedure for external candidates** (PhD)

Student decides to apply to School of Nursing and Midwifery (see [www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research](http://www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research) for details about our research interests and expertise)

Student applies via Postgraduate Admissions using on-line application form at: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/apply/index.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/apply/index.html)

You must supply an outline proposal, CV, evidence of English language proficiency (where appropriate) and suitable references with your application form.

Application considered by Postgraduate Tutor (PGT) at School of Nursing and Midwifery

PGT assesses the application on basis of:

- coherence and academic quality of research proposal
- good supporting references
- demonstrated academic ability
- the relevance of the proposed study to the School’s research clusters
- the capacity of the School to supervise the intended research

PGT and/or member of supervisory team interview suitable applicants.

PGT completes decision form for Admissions

Home/EU student receives letter from Programme Coordinator offering place and returns acceptance slip to Programme Coordinator. Process of registration follows.

International student receives letter from Admissions offering place and returns acceptance slip to Admissions. Process of registration follows.

Admissions notify Student Registrations of a new starter. **Registration** documentation sent to student.

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² Please note the procedure for staff candidates is slightly different. For help, contact the Programme Coordinator.
4. Research skills development

4.1 The Doctoral Development Programme (DDP)

Research students need support to develop the research, subject-specific, communication and other skills they require to become effective researchers, to enhance their employability and to assist their career progress after completion of their degree (QAA 2004:20).

Whilst studying for an PhD or MPhil within the School of Nursing and Midwifery all students (including part-time and remote/dual location students) are required to undertake the University of Sheffield’s Doctoral Development Programme. Comprehensive information about the DDP can be found at the Faculty Graduate School website:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/faculty/medicine-dentistry-health/graduateschool/currentpg/training

The Doctoral Development Programme (DDP) is a flexible, ongoing training plan that is an integral part of your research degree, and is tailored to your individual needs. It helps you progress through your research studies by identifying the skills you already have and providing opportunities to improve these and acquire new skills and experience. The aim of the DDP is to provide you with a range of skills and competency-based training opportunities orientated both towards your specific study and towards your future career, equipping you with transferrable skills that will make you a not only a successful researcher, but also able to easily assimilate skills that have wider utility.

The DDP is student-specific, designed to complement your individual research project and is carried out in agreement between you and your supervisory team. The training plan reflects four particular areas, enabling you to demonstrate the following:

- generic skills to become a high-level professional
- subject-specific advanced training;
- subject-specific craft skills
- broad scholarship and wider engagement within the full community of scholars (e.g. networking, dissemination of knowledge, conferences, demonstrating impact and public value of research).

More information on the DDP can be found at the DDP web portal:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/ddpportal/home

A key aspect of the DDP is the Training Needs Analysis that occurs early in your studies and continues throughout your time as a Post Graduate student in the School.

4.2 ‘Pebble pad’

Pebble pad is the University of Sheffield’s system for helping PGR students keep a record of their progress, communicate with supervisors and achieve their training needs. It is a system that all students and supervisors use right from the start of a PhD. It is an online system that records progress and also enables the student to build a record of their development throughout their PhD studies. It is also the system that is used to record supervisory
meetings. Pebble pad training is provided as part of new student induction but a helpful introduction can be found here:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/ddpportal/pphelp

4.3 Training Needs Analysis as part of the DDP

A consensus statement issued by the Research Councils specifies the skills that doctoral research students funded by the Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training. For the statement please see Appendix 3.

See also the RIS document
http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/04/14/56/Skills%20of%20Research%20Students.pdf

The skills and experience expected of a typical research student may be present on commencement, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research. It is expected that different mechanisms will be used to support learning as appropriate, including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring, departmental support, workshops, conferences, elective training courses, formally assessed courses and informal opportunities.

An important aspect of the DDP is student engagement with the process. A key part of the DDP is the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) that is undertaken at the start of your studies and is kept under review throughout your time at the University. The TNA is an integral part of the DDP and has a number of steps within it. This process begins as soon as your register with the University when you will receive an electronic link to the TNA form. It is expected that you will complete a preliminary draft of this TNA prior to your first supervisory meeting, where it will be used as a template to plan your development and training needs. This assessment of your training needs will then be followed by a plan of action that will involve a range of potential training and development activities – ranging from attendance at one or more of the research training modules available within the University, becoming involved in departmental activities such as teaching and leading seminars, and presenting papers at external conferences and meetings. An explanation and diagram of the steps within the TNA can be seen through this link:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/ddpportal/guidance/forms

An important part of the DDP is your record of development as you progress through your studies and your research. All students are required to maintain an e-portfolio that provides a record of their training and development. This will be required as part of any reviews of progress within the School and will also provide an excellent record of training for future employment and career progression. As with records of supervision, the e-portfolio is developed and stored in the Pebble pad system. The following link provides further information on the TNA:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/ddpportal/guidance/forms

The DDP is designed to be an ongoing process throughout your studies and adopts a cyclical approach and the development plan and e-portfolio are required to be formally reviewed
After 3 months (6 months for part-time and remote location students) and then on an annual basis by your supervisory team and the PGT. The portfolio and DDP plan are also important parts of the confirmation review process (discussed in section 6.4). The review and planning cycle for the DDP is illustrated in the following link: Link: http://www.shef.ac.uk/ddp/ddp_cycle.html
5. **Support for postgraduate research students**

Postgraduate research students registering at the University of Sheffield are given a standard induction covering arrangements relating to registration, DDP, library and computing facilities and health and safety. The School of Nursing and Midwifery also provides a short orientation to the School’s facilities and specific procedures. Please refer to Appendix 4– checklist for new postgraduate research students.

5.1 **Fees and funding**

Prospective students are responsible for ensuring that they are able to pay the fees associated with their chosen route of study. Current information about tuition fees is available on request from RIS or: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/finance/](http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/finance/)

The University of Sheffield currently makes available a number of Studentships to students wishing to undertake postgraduate studies by research in any Faculty of the University. The Studentships provide tuition fees at the UK/EU rate, an annual maintenance grant, and a Research Training Support Grant. Please see:

[http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/scholarships](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/scholarships)

Applications for studentships may be made via the School of Nursing and Midwifery, once a prospective student has accepted an unconditional offer to read for a PhD. Potential applicants should note, therefore, that this is a highly competitive process.

The final decision about the award of a studentship is made by the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health.

In addition, the School of Nursing and Midwifery may be in a position to offer home/EU research students a number of full-time and part-time fee waivers each session, subject to criteria laid down by the University’s Research and Innovation Services. These fee waivers (applicable for three years for full-time PhD students from the session in which they commence, or for as long as fees are due for part-time students) are awarded to students at the discretion of the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Fee waivers cannot be awarded after the point of initial registration.

There are other sources of funding available. The following websites are a useful starting point for finding out about funding:

[http://www.rdinfo.org.uk](http://www.rdinfo.org.uk)
[http://www.cos.com](http://www.cos.com)
[http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/researchanddevelopment/funding](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/researchanddevelopment/funding)
[http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/scholarships](http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/scholarships)

The School Research Administrator and the Programme Coordinator also send regular e-mails to School staff and students about funding opportunities.

Once UK\(^3\) students have begun their studies, they may apply for help with maintenance to the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) if they can indicate hardship. Please see [http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/finance/alf.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/finance/alf.html)

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\(^3\) The fund may also be accessed by students with Refugee Status but not by International students.
Research students who do not obtain support for attending learned society meetings from their sponsors may apply to the Learned Societies Fund within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. In addition, the School of Nursing and Midwifery also has a small discretionary fund which exists to help postgraduate research students to meet unforeseeable costs associated with work that is essential for the completion of their research degree. It is not expected that research students in the normal course of their studies should need to access this fund.

Assistance may be provided to cover the costs of travel, accommodation, conference attendance or external courses. The fund will NOT pay for the following:

- general research expenses
- computer hardware
- books or journals
- translation from the written word
- payment for personal maintenance at home

For further information please contact PGT Tutor.

For further information about other aspects of student welfare and advice, please see the relevant section (Welfare and Advice) in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

5.2 Library services and other facilities

Postgraduate research students at the School of Nursing and Midwifery have access to all University library facilities. For full details of library services, please see: http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/

Many resources (including an extensive range of e-journals and books) are available electronically through MUSE (the University of Sheffield portal for all staff and registered students). To access MUSE, students need a user name and password – please contact the School Research Administrator for more information.

Specialist subject libraries are available at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital and at Samuel Fox House on the Northern General Hospital site.

To help students check their written work for any issues, such as the inadvertent use of unattributed material, your supervisor can provide you with access to the ‘Turnitin’ system used by the University to monitor student’s written work. This system enables supervisors and students to check their work, for example, prior to supervisory meetings, to ensure that citations and quotations etc are accurately dealt with.

The Faculty Librarian is Vic Grant. Vic is the subject specialist for Medicine, Dentistry, and Nursing and Midwifery. Vic is generally located at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital library and she can be contacted for advice on finding materials or using resources in these subjects. (v.grant@sheffield.ac.uk Phone: (0114) 226-8832 (external); 8-68832 internal).

Dedicated desk space and computer facilities are available for full-time postgraduate research students in Samuel Fox House, on the Northern General Hospital site. These facilities complement those available at the North Campus Graduate Research Centre which provides work spaces for 80 students who do not have such facilities in their academic
departments. Please contact the School Research Administrator for more details.

5.3 Support for international students

The School is mindful of the special situation of international students who may be studying far from home and family. We encourage overseas students to contact the international student community via the Student Services (email: International.students@shef.ac.uk). Student Services arrange a full programme of events and activities and can be contacted via Student Activities Co-ordinator or International Students Advisor (Ms Jo Holliday j.c.holliday@sheffield.ac.uk Tel. 0114 222 8666)

5.4 Support for students with disabilities

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities and is committed to taking all practical steps to support them. Please see section on Welfare, Support and Advice in the RIS Guidebook for Research Students and Supervisors for further details. http://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.309647!/file/CodeOfPractice_2013.pdf

5.5 Communication and information

The School of Nursing and Midwifery complements information provided to research students by the Research and Innovation Services through:

- Correspondence from the PGT highlighting forthcoming events and School issues
- Seminars for students and supervisors

5.6 Staff/Student Committee

This committee, which meets four times a year, is one of the key governance meetings in the school. It acts as a process for the exchange of ideas and views between PGR students and staff. The School appoints a PGR student representative for this committee from expressions of interest from all PGR students. Students normally serve for 3 years. Further information on this role can be obtained from the PGT.

5.7 PGR Seminars

The School runs a series of PGR seminars which are excellent opportunities for students to present their work to other students and staff in the School. These informal presentations can be about early research ideas, theoretical presentations or presentation of research findings. They are also a good way to meet other PGR students and academic staff. All PGR students are encouraged to present at a seminar at least once during their time in the School. Further details on this can be obtained from the PGT who will be happy to arrange a presentation slot for you.

The dates for PGR seminars for 2013/14 are:

November 7th 2013
May 15th 2014
September 4th 2014
December 4th 2014
6. Academic procedures

The School of Nursing and Midwifery adheres to the guidance in the Research and Innovation Services Code of Practice with regard to all academic procedures. Please see: http://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.309647!/file/CodeOfPractice_2013.pdf for information about good practice in

- Supervision
- Annual reporting
- Confirmation to PhD
- Appointment of examiners
- Preparation for viva

However, the School has developed additional guidance with respect to some aspects of academic procedure:

6.1 Studying for a postgraduate research degree in the School of Nursing and Midwifery

Studying for a postgraduate degree is a demanding process which requires significant commitment over time. These notes have been prepared to provide guidance for students who may not have been active in an academic environment for some time, or who are new to studying in the United Kingdom. They may find it useful to discuss the expectations outlined below with members of the supervisory team so that any differences in understandings or expectations can be made clear and, as a team, ways of optimising support during a student’s research studies can be explored.

The notes that follow are derived from Hofstede G (1986) Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning, International Journal of Intercultural Relations 10: 301-317:

- Students are expected to learn how to learn
- Individuals will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher
- Individuals will speak up in groups
- Confrontation in learning situations can be salutary: conflicts can be brought into the open
- Concern about ‘losing face’ is not strong
- Teachers are expected to be strictly impartial and do not give preferential treatment
- Stress is placed on impersonal truth which can, in principle, be obtained from any competent person
- Teachers respect the independence of students
- Student-centred education places a premium on initiative
- Teachers expect students to initiate communication
- Students may speak up spontaneously in class
- Students are allowed, and indeed encouraged, to contradict or criticise teachers
- Effectiveness of learning is related to the amount of two-way communication in class
- Outside class, teachers are treated as equals
- Teachers are allowed to say ‘I don’t know’
- A good teacher uses plain language
- Teachers interpret intellectual disagreements as a stimulating exercise
6.2 Working with supervisors

As a new research student, one of the first things that a PGR will do is establish a working relationship with their supervisors. A minimum of two supervisors will normally be assigned but more people may be involved at stages throughout a student’s project in advising on specific aspects. Initially a student may only have one supervisor who will be nominated as the primary supervisor: they will be the main point of contact between the student and the University. As early as possible, however, a student should work with their primary supervisor to find a second supervisor and this may be someone from within the school or from elsewhere in The University or even from outside The University. The first supervisor may be selected on the basis of subject expertise or methodological expertise and, in nursing, on the basis of clinical expertise. However, it is rare for one supervisor to be expert in all three of the above. Therefore, along with the primary supervisor, complementary expertise will be sought in a second supervisor or in others who may advise occasionally on aspects of the research project.

All students are at liberty to seek expertise from wherever they can find it but it is a common courtesy to check this with their supervisors first and if they have any doubts about the advice they have been given by their supervisor then this should be raised at the time; it is not a good idea for a student to seek alternative advice without telling their supervisor. It is worth noting that the ultimate responsibility for what is written in a thesis rests with the student; conflicting advice is not uncommon and alternative views on one phenomenon are common in the literature – every PGR has to decide which views to take and how to present ideas in their own thesis.

6.2.1 What do supervisors do?

The main responsibility of the primary supervisor is to steer the student through the process of their research degree and all matters related to that process should be raised with supervisors in the first instance.

Supervisors are required to negotiate with their students about the appropriate pattern of supervisory meetings and to ensure that students attend these. They are also responsible for ensuring that records of supervisory meetings are kept, reporting on progress and finding suitable examiners for each thesis.

Supervisors are also required to work with students to undertake and review the Training Needs Analysis as part of the Doctoral Development Programme.

6.2.2 What do supervisors not do?

Many research students form a very good working relationship with their supervisors and these relationships can be long lasting and lead to fruitful collaborations long after their research project is complete. On the other hand, things do not always work out this well. Students should note that, while their supervisors are there to guide them and oversee their academic development throughout the project, while friendly, they are not there as students’ friends nor as counselors. Supervisors should know of any circumstances that may affect a student’s progress and students may choose to share relevant details, but there is expert guidance available elsewhere in the University to help with personal, financial and health related problems. Supervisors will help a student to find the right advice and, of

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4 For advice on counseling and support services provided at the University of Sheffield please see the
particular importance, will know what procedures to initiate if a student needs to ‘stop the clock’ on their studies for any period and take a Leave of Absence.

6.3 Records of supervision

Records of supervision are generated from within Pebble pad. The University encourages students to draft reports of supervision soon after the meeting and send to their supervisor for comment and agreement. This enables accurate recording of the content of each supervisory session. It is not a requirement that the Postgraduate Tutor has a copy of the form, but in the event of any problems in the supervisory process, the PGT may need to examine any records so kept.

6.4 Confirmation Review

The Confirmation Review is intended to confirm whether or not the student and his/her research project have the potential for successful research at doctoral level. The Confirmation Review is also intended to ensure that the student has made satisfactory progress on the DDP, in line with the student's needs identified via the Training Needs Analysis.

The point of confirmation to PhD (normally 12 months for full-time students, 18-30 months for part-time students) is an important landmark in the pursuit of higher degree study. The review is the point at which students are permitted to continue in their progress towards PhD. Students within the School of Nursing and Midwifery who are advised by their supervisors that they are ready for their confirmation review are expected, working closely with their supervisors, to complete a transfer report and to present a summary of this at a confirmation seminar. These are scheduled, as required, to meet students' needs and the dates are circulated in advance.

The report should be submitted to the Postgraduate Tutor via the Programme Coordinator (j.l.gray@sheffield.ac.uk) by email, 10 days before the confirmation review. The report will then be circulated to panel members: the panel normally comprises the PGT (Chair) and two academic members of the School.

Students presenting at a confirmation review may invite colleagues to attend the seminar if they feel that this would be supportive, however, panels should be considered to be closed events. One member of the student's supervisory team will normally be invited to be present for observation only.

Students will have 25 minutes for presentation. Following the presentation, panel members will be able to ask questions/comment on the outline for up to 20 minutes. This allows the student the opportunity to engage in constructively critical debate about their ideas/plans. It is stressed that this is a facilitative rather than an adversarial process, with the aim of allowing the student the opportunity to defend their ideas, justify their proposal and gain value from the contributions made by their colleagues. The student’s presentation skills are not assessed.

relevant section of the Code of Practice: 
The panel convenes in private at the close of the seminar to consider the report and make recommendations to the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health. Panel members will focus their discussion around the report, taking into consideration the student’s ability to respond to questions posed by panel members during the seminar. The supervisor will be invited to observe in order to optimise feedback to the student and the panel may, in exceptional circumstances, ask for clarification where this is necessary to inform the panel’s decision.

The panel will, usually, make a series of suggestions to help the student and supervisors and will make one of the following overarching recommendations:

- **Pass** - Confirmation of doctoral status
- **Deferral** - Deferral of a result pending a second attempt to take place no later than 18 months following the start of the student’s study

**Fail** – Student is transferred to an MPhil programme (normally only available following a second attempt)

The panel’s decision will be communicated, in writing, to the student and their supervisors within one week of the date of the confirmation review.

### 6.4.1 The Confirmation Review report

The report should normally include:

- Evidence of detailed knowledge of the background literature and of the development of a theoretical framework.
- An exposition of the research questions/ aims and objectives addressed in the research.
- An overview, with appropriate justification, of the methodological basis for the study.
- A consideration of ethical issues, and progress with seeking ethical and research governance approval.
- A plan for data collection, including sample consideration and a time frame. Progress on data collection if appropriate.
- A plan for data analysis/progress on analysis
- What the study will add conceptually and methodologically and to practice/ education.
- A summary of work completed so far.
- A discussion of any of any problems encountered and actions taken to address these.
- A programme of further study with milestones towards PhD and an expected completion date.

The report should be of a sufficient length (normally between 8-10,000 words) to encompass all of these issues, and be clearly written and structured. It is recognised that some students may be at a point further along in their studies and may wish to present additional evidence in support of the confirmation process, for example, the results of early data collection and analysis. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that they liaise closely with their supervisory team in deciding the exact content of the report.

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5 Please note that this is an advisory guide only, not an exhaustive list or a suggested proforma: students and supervisors should work together to prepare a paper which best presents the work completed to date and evidences the potential of the study for Doctoral work.
As part of the process students should be made aware that the submitted CR report will be analysed using Turnitin similarity software. A copy of the similarity report will be forwarded to the Chair of the panel for consideration at the CR seminar.

6.4.2 DDP e-portfolio and confirmation

It is a requirement of the University that students must demonstrate active engagement with the Doctoral Development Programme as part of the upgrade process. Along with the transfer report students are required to submit evidence of an ongoing Training Needs Analysis and e-portfolio. Copies of this and evidence that the supervisory team are satisfied with student progress in this area must be provided to the confirmation panel. Students will not be permitted to upgrade without satisfactory evidence of their participation in the DDP.

6.4.3 Amendments following confirmation

Occasionally, students wish, or are required, to change aspects of their study after the confirmation review. Where any proposed amendments exceed those recommended by the confirmation panel, notification of relevant changes should be notified to the Postgraduate Tutor, with a recommendation from the supervisory team about their appropriateness.

The PGT will, in liaison with the Director of Research, review the modifications and recommendations prior to the student’s submission for scientific and ethical review with a view to confirming the appropriateness of the decision taken at the confirmation review. In exceptional circumstances, when there is an irreconcilable difference in opinion about the potential for confirmation between the PGT and/or DoR and/or supervisors, a further panel will be convened at the earliest opportunity.

Amendments to research proposals that are made after ethical approval has been secured will follow those procedures set out by the approving body to notify such changes.

6.5 Monitoring progress

Ongoing monitoring of progress is important in order to help students to complete within their time limit and to identify and address any potential problems of lack, of progress. Monitoring is achieved by:

- Setting clear objectives with timescales when a student registers for their PhD. The School has developed a timeline to help with this (see Section 6.9)
- Setting clear objectives, with timescales, at each supervisory meeting
- The provision, by supervisors, of timely feedback on any written work that a student submits
- Regular progress updates within the department: every 6 months supervisor/s will formally discuss each student’s progress with them and notify this to the PGT
- The PGT will monitor unsatisfactory progress (including lack of contact) on an ongoing basis (see Appendix 5)
- Annual progress reports will be submitted to the Faculty in the summer of each year.

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6 Including any notification of modifications to governance organisations, and/or the University of Sheffield in the event of, for example, non-negligent insurance cover.
The progress form must be signed by the student, as well as the primary supervisor and the PGT before being forwarded to RIS.

6.6 Monitoring attendance

As a student, it is most important that you attend regularly all the supervision, tutorials and training sessions which are communicated to you as the semester proceeds. It is only by attending all of the scheduled sessions you will be able to learn effectively, and it is for this reason that the Student Charter notes that students are expected “to attend throughout each semester, including the full examination period. This means turning up on time to all designated training sessions, tutorials, laboratory sessions and all assessment”.

To help ensure that you make full use of the learning opportunities that are available, the department will be monitoring the attendance of students at twelve or more sessions throughout the year (six sessions for part-time students). The monitoring will be carried out using systems that have been developed by the University specifically to help departments support students during their study programme.

Within the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the monitoring will be carried out by the supervisory team using an online attendance monitoring system linked to the student record. This information may be used as part of assessing satisfactory progress or meeting the requirements of statutory/funding bodies.

6.7 Expected timetable for completion

The usual expectation for completion of a full-time MPhil is 2 years and 3 years for a PhD (4 years for a part-time MPhil and 6 years for a part-time PhD). The School of Nursing and Midwifery has developed guidance on the milestones to completion of doctoral research which should form the basis of discussions between students and members of their supervisory team. However, it is important to note that these are guidelines only, rather than hard-and-fast rules:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/01/72/32/Visio-timeline%20final.pdf

6.8 Preparing for the viva

As well as the information contained in the Code of Practice, the School provides guidance on what a student might expect from their Viva Voce examination, some ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ and some ideas about the sort of questions that might be asked. Please see:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research/guidance-on-preparing-for-your-viva.html

In preparation for Viva your supervisor can also arrange a ‘mock Viva’ event. This will either be conducted by your supervisors or other colleagues from within the School. This can be a useful way to prepare yourself for the Viva situation and answering questions about your thesis.
7. **Research governance and ethics approval**

Research governance is concerned with standards of scientific, ethical and financial integrity and probity. Research is essential to the successful promotion and protection of public health and well-being. At the same time poor research practice can have a direct impact on public confidence in research, the health of the public, and the safety and well-being of research participants. The University is committed to maintaining the integrity and probity of academic research and regards it as fundamental that the conduct of research is ethical and that the dissemination of the results of research is truthful and fair. The University’s good research practice guidelines can be found at:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/20/99/GRPcollated.pdf

An exhaustive framework of approval and review is now in place to stop unethical research at a very early stage. As a result of this framework, researchers must follow bureaucratic procedures that are complex and very time-consuming. It is therefore essential for postgraduate research students and their supervisors to allow enough time in proposed study plans for ethical approval and scientific review.

7.1 **General principles**

The University’s Ethics Policy is generic and applies to:

- **i. All University researchers (members of the University – i.e. staff, registered students) who are conducting or contributing to research activities involving human participants, data and tissues which take place within or outside of University premises and facilities.**

- **ii. All individuals who are not members of the University but who are conducting or contributing to research activities involving human participants, data and tissue which take place within University premises and facilities.**

(please see: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/08/64/47/FINALvs.pdf](http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/08/64/47/FINALvs.pdf))

All research involving NHS patients, staff or premises has to be approved by an appropriate NHS research ethics committee (REC) through the National Research Ethics Service – NRES, and registered with each applicable Trust’s research governance system. There is now also a national Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC) which is governed by NRES. For further information on Ethics Review Procedures, please see: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics)

All research undertaken by staff or students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery has to be registered with the School’s Ethics Review Panel (ERP). The type of approval required for postgraduate research depends on the nature of the research. Full explanations of approval and review procedures can be found on the School’s research web pages:

[http://www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research/research_governance](http://www.shef.ac.uk/snm/research/research_governance)

It is important that the student, supervisors and anyone else concerned with a research project comply with ethical and research governance requirements. There are serious consequences if they do not: the thesis cannot be accepted for a higher degree without demonstration of compliance; reputable journals will not publish papers on empirical work without such assurance.

Researchers in nursing and midwifery should also be aware of the codes of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines issued by the government and the professional bodies associated
with their research discipline e.g. the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, and where relevant, the British Psychological Society or the British Sociological Association.

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that documentation evidencing ethical approval is copied to the Programme Coordinator in order that ethical review can be notified to the University’s Research and Innovation Services and a permanent record of ethical approval can be held within their student file.

### 7.2 Notes on research involving the NHS

**Scientific review:** the proposed research must have a protocol that has been independently peer reviewed for scientific quality. Funding bodies undertake this routinely as part of their appraisal but if your research is not funded and has not been reviewed elsewhere it must be submitted to the School of Nursing and Midwifery Ethics Review Panel (ERP).

**Ethical review:** all projects involving NHS patients require ethical approval from an NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC). The REC must satisfy itself that student researchers have appropriate supervision from an experienced researcher. The supervisor is therefore expected to sign the application for ethical approval and may be invited, along with the student, to attend the meeting of the REC at which the proposal is considered. It is therefore important that all students are aware that they must not proceed with seeking ethical approval without first having received support from their supervisor in completing the documentation required by the REC.

**Research governance registration:** if a student is seeking access to NHS patients, staff or premises for research purposes, the appropriate research governance procedures must be complied with through the relevant Trust’s research office before the project commences, and local management must agree to grant access.

**Insurance for health care research projects:** If a student is applying for ethical approval for their study through NRes, they may be asked to ensure that appropriate insurance is in place. The University provides detailed guidance on this at the following URL:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/governance/insurance

### 7.3 Prevention of research misconduct

Research misconduct is taken to include:

- **Piracy,** defined as the deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without proper acknowledgement;

- **Plagiarism,** defined as the copying or misappropriation of ideas, text, software or data (or some combination thereof) without permission and due acknowledgement; (see RIS Guidebook for Research Students and Supervisors for further details)

- **Misrepresentation,** defined as a deliberate attempt to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others, whether or not for personal gain or enhancement;

- **Fraud,** defined as deliberate deception (which may include the invention or fabrication of data).

The University is committed to ensuring that all allegations of misconduct in academic
research are investigated fully, fairly and quickly. If any member of the University has good reason to suspect any misconduct in research then they should report this to the appropriate authorities, which may be the Dean of School or the Dean of Faculty who will inform the Registrar and Secretary. The University policy on investigation of alleged research misconduct is to be found at:
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/policies/eamp/research.html
APPENDICES
Appendix 1

The University of Sheffield
School Nursing and Midwifery

Procedures for dealing with problems in the student-supervisor relationship

Where difficulties develop in the student-supervisor relationship these should initially be raised within the supervisory team and subjected to informal mediation. If matters cannot be resolved within the team, a report will be made to the PGT. In some instances, initial discussion within the team will not be considered appropriate and the difficulty may then be referred directly to the PGT who will meet with each party with a view to developing a mutually agreed action plan. If there is no resolution at this stage, the issue will be taken to the Director of Research. In some circumstances where the PGT is also the supervisor and issues cannot be resolved in the supervisory team students should discuss their concerns with the Director of Research. Where issues still remain unresolved a new supervisor/supervisory team may be assigned. Problems that cannot be resolved within the SNM will be referred to the Faculty.

Other difficulties

Students experiencing other difficulties of a pastoral nature should also seek help from within the supervisory team – but students can also contact the PGT for help with any personal difficulties or concerns they may have. If PGT support is not appropriate then students can also seek pastoral support from the DoR or the Dean of the School.
Appendix 2

The University of Sheffield
School Nursing and Midwifery
Interview Record for PhD applicants

Candidate: 
Interviewer: 
Date: 

Academic experience: 

Motivation: 

Communication skills: 

Awareness of level of work required: 

Experience of part time/distance learning study (where relevant): 

Level of management and/or financial support agreed: (if relevant) 

Availability of supervisor: 

Informed of: 
Fee: level & payment methods 
Mode of attendance & attendance requirements (if applicable) 
Anticipated timescale for completion 
DDP requirements 
Certificates confirmed 

Any other comments: 

Signed:
Appendix 3

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH COUNCILS’ SKILLS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS

Introduction

The Research Councils play an important role in setting standards and identifying best practice in research training. This document sets out a joint statement of the skills that doctoral research students funded by the Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training.

These skills may be present on commencement, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research. It is expected that different mechanisms will be used to support learning as appropriate, including self-direction, supervisor support and mentoring, departmental support, workshops, conferences, elective training courses, formally assessed courses and informal opportunities.

The Research Councils would also want to re-emphasise their belief that training in research skills and techniques is the key element in the development of a research student, and that PhD students are expected to make a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in their area, normally leading to published work. The development of wider employment-related skills should not detract from that core objective.

The purpose of this statement is to give a common view of the skills and experience of a typical research student thereby providing universities with a clear and consistent message aimed at helping them to ensure that all research training was of the highest standard, across all disciplines. It is not the intention of this document to provide assessment criteria for research training.

It is expected that each Council will have additional requirements specific to their field of interest and will continue to have their own measures for the evaluation of research training within institutions.
## Joint Research Councils’ Skills Training Requirements

### (A) Research Skills and Techniques - to be able to demonstrate:
1. the ability to recognise and validate problems
2. original, independent and critical thinking, and the ability to develop theoretical concepts
3. a knowledge of recent advances within one’s field and in related areas
4. an understanding of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application within one’s research field
5. the ability to critically analyse and evaluate one’s findings and those of others
6. an ability to summarise, document, report and reflect on progress

### (B) Research Environment - to be able to:
1. show a broad understanding of the context, at the national and international level, in which research takes place
2. demonstrate awareness of issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research, e.g. confidentiality, ethical issues, attribution, copyright, malpractice, ownership of data and the requirements of the Data Protection Act
3. demonstrate appreciation of standards of good research practice in their institution and/or discipline
4. understand relevant health and safety issues and demonstrate responsible working practices
5. understand the processes for funding and evaluation of research
6. justify the principles and experimental techniques used in one’s own research

### (C) Research Management - to be able to:
1. apply effective project management through the setting of research goals, intermediate milestones and prioritisation of activities
2. design and execute systems for the acquisition and collation of information through the effective use of appropriate resources and equipment
3. identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information
4. use information technology appropriately for database management, recording and presenting information

### (D) Personal Effectiveness - to be able to:
1. demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge
2. be creative, innovative and original in one’s approach to research
3. demonstrate flexibility and open-mindedness
4. demonstrate self-awareness and the ability to identify own training needs
5. demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and thoroughness
6. recognise boundaries and draw upon/use sources of support as appropriate
7. show initiative, work independently and be self-reliant

### (E) Communication Skills - to be able to:
1. write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose, e.g. progress reports, published documents, thesis
2. construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally through a variety of techniques
3. constructively defend research outcomes at seminars and viva examination
4. contribute to promoting the public understanding of one’s research field
5. effectively support the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring or demonstrating activities
(F) Networking and Teamworking - to be able to:
1. develop and maintain co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues and peers, within the institution and the wider research community
2. understand one’s behaviours and impact on others when working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams
3. listen, give and receive feedback and respond perceptively to others

(G) Career Management - to be able to:
1. appreciate the need for and show commitment to continued professional development
2. take ownership for and manage one’s career progression, set realistic and achievable career goals, and identify and develop ways to improve employability
3. demonstrate an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia
4. present one’s skills, personal attributes and experiences through effective CVs, applications and interviews
# Orientation Checklist for New Postgraduate Research Students

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<td>Research Student</td>
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<td>Supervisor/s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Administrator</td>
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<td>Research Theme Lead</td>
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<td>Title of Project</td>
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<td><strong>Orientation to the University and School of Nursing and Midwifery (using University of Sheffield RIS Induction checklist)</strong></td>
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**Information pack containing:**
- The University of Sheffield Good Research Practice Principles and Guidelines
- Reference to the University of Sheffield Ethics Policy
- School of Nursing and Midwifery Guidelines for PGR students and supervisors
- School of Nursing and Midwifery PhD progress timeline
- School of Nursing and Midwifery PGR Events calendar and information about PGR community (website, listserves, MUSE)
- Information about facilities/resources for PGR students in the School of Nursing
- READ newsletter
- Reference to Health and Safety Code
- DDP and TNA
Appendix 5

SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY
Guidelines for action
In the event of unsatisfactory progress

Unsatisfactory student progress will invoke the following action:

- Development of a detailed action plan in liaison with the student, detailing short and longer term objectives with explicit timescales. (Copies to be sent to the PGT and, in the case of staff candidates, to the Dean or designate.)
- If the student is not able to meet the objectives set in this way, the PGT will convene and Chair a meeting between the supervisor/s and student (and, in the case of staff candidates, the Dean or designate) to discuss progress and action planning.
- If the situation is not amenable to resolution in this way, dependant upon the circumstances, the student will either be advised to request a leave of absence or referred to the Faculty for action:
  - When unsatisfactory progress is notified to the Faculty, Faculty may take the following action:
    - Faculty Action:
      - RIS writes on behalf of the Faculty. Student is asked whether they wish to continue or withdraw.
      - If the student continues, they are required to contact the supervisor to submit a progress update and agree a new timetable of work.
      - Faculty Officer may request a meeting with the student, particularly if the student has had more than one unsatisfactory report.
    - Invoke Progress of Students Regulations:
      - Process is set out at:
        - [http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid)
Contacts

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