Final module in a PGT programme

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Purpose	This policy relates to teaching, supervision and assessment of the final modules (normally 60 credits) of all Taught Postgraduate Masters programmes.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
3.2	Minor changes to align with new Senate Regulations and online programmes of study.		Academic Policy Officer (Digital & Student Experience), Education Policy & Quality	26 July 2023

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

POLICY ON THE FINAL MODULE IN A PGT PROGRAMME

1.   Introduction

This policy has been compiled for the guidance of all Taught Postgraduate Masters students of the University of St Andrews and those concerned with the teaching, supervision and assessment of the final module (normally 60 credits) of all Taught Postgraduate Masters programmes.

This policy will be revised regularly to take account of any changes. Enquiries concerning the policy, or suggestions of changes to be made, should be sent in writing to education@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Throughout this document references to the Head of School refer to the Head of School or his/her appointed deputy or nominee.

Satisfactory completion of the final module is an integral and significant part of most Taught Postgraduate Masters programmes. The conduct and assessment of this final module should be in accordance with this policy.

2. The Final Module in a Taught Postgraduate Masters Programme

This module normally takes the form of a period of independent supervised research or placement followed by submission of an assessment normally in the form of a dissertation or report.

Within a Taught Postgraduate Masters programme, other suitable assessment(s) aligned with the learning outcomes of the module that have equivalent academic standing, may replace the dissertation and can be approved by Curriculum Approvals Group. In any case, the assessment submitted for the final module in a Taught Postgraduate Masters degree should be no more than 15,000 words in length (excluding bibliography).

3. Supervisor Allocation

Programme Coordinators are responsible to the Head of School for ensuring that appropriate supervisory arrangements are in place well in advance of the research period, normally in the first half of the semester prior to the dissertation period.

In the absence of a supervisor for annual leave, illness or research then arrangements must either be made for continued contact between student and supervisor or an alternative supervisor should be arranged and this should be communicated to the student. Programme Coordinators are responsible to Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that adequate supervision is available during the entire research and writing up period.

If the allocated supervisor is a new member of staff or inexperienced in the supervision of Taught Postgraduate Masters dissertations, then the Programme Coordinator is

responsible to the Head of School for assigning a more experienced member of staff as a mentor.

In some cases, the supervisor may be assigned by the Head of School from outside the University, for example for students on industrial placements. In such cases, the Programme Coordinator, or other member of academic staff nominated by the Head of School, is required to ensure that this supervisor is trained on the University's requirements for the project work and any procedural matters, and to act as a first point of contact between the University and the student. In addition, an allocated point of contact should be established within the School and communicated to the student. The student is expected to maintain contact with the University through this allocated point of contact and to follow any required procedures.

4. Supervisor Responsibility

The final module is still part of the learning process; the supervisor is there to support and advise the student. In addition to academic guidance supervisors should provide support in planning, structuring and time management.

Early meetings with supervisors should focus on agreeing a research question; students will need guidance on this to make sure it is not too broad and that it is achievable in the time scale available. The supervisor will also have an awareness of whether the relevant literature is likely to be available. Supervisors should also ensure that access to adequate facilities exist for the conduct of the project or research.

5. Student Responsibility

Students are expected to pursue their projects or research according to the highest standards of their discipline, taking due account of the advice and criticism offered by their supervisors and other scholars in their field.

Students are responsible for keeping appointments punctually and are expected to be diligent in meeting deadlines for submitted work or the advancement of their project.

Periods of leave of no more than two weeks' duration will be considered acceptable. Longer periods are not advisable for the student to be away from the University. Requests for longer periods of leave will require Leave of Absence.

Students are expected to be in residence at St Andrews during the module period unless they have permission for their study location to be outside St Andrews in accordance with the Location of Studies policy, e.g. to conduct essential research, for industrial placements, or as part of programmes jointly run with another university, or if they are enrolled on an online programme. The responsibility for the presentation of the final assessment for examination lies with the student alone. Students must be aware that approval by the supervisor for submission does not guarantee success.

6. Supervisor and Student Meetings

Supervisors and students should arrange meetings as early as possible in advance of commencement to agree a plan for the project or dissertation, a schedule for the

project or submission of work, appropriate methodologies or procedures, and agreed deadlines for presentation of draft work. During the project or research period, students must meet on a regular basis with their assigned supervisor.

Students on Taught Postgraduate Masters programmes normally need closer supervision than postgraduate research students undertaking similar tasks. There must be, at the very least, one supervisory meeting per month and in many Schools, and depending on the nature of the research, such meetings will take place on a more frequent basis. The meetings would normally be face-to-face but for online students and students with permission to be located outwith St Andrews in accordance with the [Location of Studies](#) policy these meetings can be by Teams or other such agreed mechanism.

7. Supervisor and Student Interaction – where to seek help

Part of the experience of conducting a Taught Postgraduate Masters research project is the close working relationship that becomes established between the supervisor and student. Very occasionally this process of supervision or the project itself does not proceed smoothly and in rare instances a change of project is sometimes indicated. Some projects encounter difficulties due to procedural or facility problems and a change of direction is required. In the rare cases where problems are becoming difficult to resolve, time is lost due to no fault of the supervisor or student, or a significant change of direction is required, the student and/or supervisor should seek a meeting with the Programme Coordinator. The Programme Coordinator is responsible for either resolving the situation or escalating the problem to the Director of Postgraduate Studies (Taught), Director of Teaching or the Head of School.

8. Research Skills Training

Schools have an obligation to provide, normally embedded in the curriculum, training in techniques and methods of research appropriate to the academic discipline and individual needs. In some programmes that are linked to Research Councils, a considerable emphasis is placed on such training and minimum requirements for the training necessary may exist in certain subjects. The student is responsible for adhering to the training schedule, although this training may be incorporated in many cases into modules that are integral to the programme. The Programme Coordinator has responsibility to ensure that proper monitoring of such training is in place and some Research Councils require students to keep a log of research skills training that they undertake throughout their programme.

9. Feedback and Assessment

Supervisors of dissertations or projects should give written as well as oral feedback on any submitted draft work within a reasonable period of time after submission. This written feedback should contain constructive criticism so that students are aware of potential problems.

Schools must give students and supervisors clear guidance as to the School-based rules for feedback and the deadlines for submission to receive such guidance. For example, some Schools specify that a first draft of the project write-up or dissertation,

or one chapter, might be discussed with the supervisor(s) before final submission. Schools are responsible for ensuring that all students receive the predefined level of feedback if they submit the work for formative feedback by the stated time.

In the case of MSc students on industrial placements, or other students in a similar situation, this discussion may be with an external, formally approved, supervisor. Feedback given at the final stage is intended to improve the submission but does not guarantee success. Students have ultimate responsibility for the form and content of the assessment that they submit. In line with University policy, all dissertations or projects must be double-marked.

10. Deadlines

Supervisors, (or for students on industrial placements, Programme Coordinators), should ensure that all students are aware of the final date of submission for their assignment. Submission date would have impact on which graduation students can attend.

Some specific programmes, (distance learning/online programmes for example), have different start or end dates. In these cases, the submission deadlines should be set within the School to enable the reporting of grades by the reporting deadline for the next graduation and the School should ensure that examiners are aware of the expectation that the examination of these dissertations is to be completed by the required deadline.

11. Extensions and Deferrals

If the final assessment for the dissertation/project module cannot be submitted and marked by the reporting deadline, a deferral may be requested in accordance with the Deferred Assessment policy. The School can grant extensions within the reporting deadline.

For overseas students, there may be visa implications if deferral of submission has been granted. Students should take advice on their particular situation in sufficient time for their visa to be reviewed, see:
http://www.standrews.ac.uk/international/information/visas/

Students who wish to take up full-time employment whilst engaged in a full-time Taught Postgraduate Masters programme are strongly advised to apply to change status to part-time study. However, students on Student Visas will need to ensure that they meet with the conditions of their visa.

12. Risk Assessment

In cases where a postgraduate student is pursuing study or fieldwork out with the University of St Andrews, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment is undertaken, as appropriate, and that the student is fully aware of the risks and precautions that apply to the conduct of such work. The student is then responsible for exercising due caution in his/her work. Students are responsible for

adhering to health, safety and security guidelines operative within their place of study or research.

13. Ethical Approval

All research in all Schools of the University that involves data collection from certain types of questionnaires, interviews, interactive investigation, experimentation upon or demonstrations involving living human subjects, human tissues and/or other human samples requires formal approval from the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC).

It is University policy that the UTREC Child Panel should review any research involving children under 18 and that the researcher should hold a Disclosure Scotland (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) certificate.

Where required, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student has received the appropriate mandatory ethical clearance from UTREC and the Child Panel prior to research commencing.

It is a requirement that any Taught Postgraduate Masters dissertation that requires ethical approval from UTREC has the letter or email of ethical approval bound into an appendix before submission.

Supervisors should also note that all researchers receiving funding from an external organisation must complete a Funding Approval Application Form, (in addition to an Ethical Application Form), unless the intended funder appears on the Automatically Approved Funders List published on the UTREC website.

Researchers should also be aware that some bodies providing funding for projects may stipulate their own Ethical and Legal considerations. The researcher should be fully aware of any obligations specified by the body providing funding and the implications this may or may not have for their research including methods of research, confidentiality and retention.

14. Good Academic Practice

The University has a policy on Good Academic Practice which covers all matters relating academic misconduct for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

15. Copyright Ownership

The copyright of a dissertation normally belongs to the author. Students and supervisors should therefore think carefully about copyright from the outset of the dissertation period. The Library and GRADskills can also offer further support and training if required: https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/help/copyright/

16. The Expected Presentation of the Final Assessment

The following information is provided for the benefit of candidates on Taught Postgraduate Masters programmes:

a) All assessment must be written in English unless the Assistant Vice-Principal (Provost) has given special permission for another language to be used.

b) The dissertation or project report shall normally not exceed 15,000 words (excluding bibliography). This includes footnotes and edited original documents and texts.

c) Where required by the School, students may submit supplementary data in the format specified by their School.

d) Students may present graphic data in coloured form (for example, graphs, photographs, chemical structures etc).

e) The dissertation or project should be presented for examination in electronic copy only, except where confidentiality agreements with external providers prohibit electronic copies.

f) The relevant School will indicate to whom the dissertation should be submitted.

g) The beginning of the dissertation should include:

A title page with the title of the dissertation/project, the ID of the candidate, the name of the degree and the date of submission.

h) The following declaration:

I hereby certify that this dissertation, which is approximately …... words in length, has been composed by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. This project was conducted by me at [the University of St Andrews/another location] from [month/year] to [month/year] towards fulfilment of the requirements of the University of St Andrews for the degree of [insert name] under the supervision of [insert signature]
date …… signature of candidate ………

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
01	Amendment to section 16. Submission of dissertation.	Updated	Nicola Milton	10/07/2020

02	Changes to titles/contact details to reflect decanal restructuring	Updated	-	February 2021
03	Updating contact information; updated policy to reflect move to e-only submission; removed reference to Tier 4 visa	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Taught Degrees), Proctor's Office	June 2022
3.1	Minor typographical updates, extended review date.		Emmy Feamster, Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	24 April 2023
3.2	Minor changes to align with new Senate Regulations and online programmes of study.		Academic Policy Officer (Digital & Student Experience), Education Policy & Quality	26 July 2023