

# Policy on Higher Education Provision with Others

## Annex 5: Policy for Joint PGR Awards

### 1. Introduction

This policy defines the requirements for joint postgraduate research student (PGR) awards. It should be read in conjunction with the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*, which sets out the University's requirements in relation to all students and the *Policy for Higher Education Provision with Others*. The additional consideration that must be taken into account for joint PGR programmes are presented below.

### 2. Definition of a Joint PGR Programme

A joint award is a PGR programme, usually at doctoral level, which leads to a single award from two partner institutions. A PGR student registered on a joint award must complete all of the requirements of the programme at both Bristol and the partner institution.

Students on a joint PGR programme are fully registered as University of Bristol students, whilst spending a significant proportion of their research away from the University, at another Higher Education Institution.

A joint award is different to a dual award, which leads to two separate awards for a degree programme, offered in collaboration with a partner institution.

A joint award is different to a split-site award, where the award is solely made by Bristol (or the other party).

The applicable regulations in respect of Bristol are the Code of Practice and Regulations for Research Degrees at the University of Bristol only. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Policy on Higher Education Provision with others.

### 3. Principles

A joint PGR programme may be agreed for a single student or for multiple students over a number of years (a framework agreement). This policy applies to both instances (though the approval process is different).

There should be a nominated Academic Lead at Bristol responsible for a particular joint arrangement. For individual student arrangements, this will normally be a member of the supervisory team and for institutional arrangements for multiple students, this will normally be the Global Bristol PhD Programme Manager within the Bristol Doctoral College. The Lead will be the key point of contact for the duration of the collaboration.

For joint PGR awards, a written agreement is always required with the other organisation. The University Secretary's Office are responsible for producing all joint PGR agreements. If a joint PGR programme is to be put in place for multiple students over a number of years, an Institutional Framework Agreement will be established with the partner, with Individual Doctoral Agreements (IDAs) agreed for each student participating in the scheme.

All joint award arrangements will require scrutiny and approval at University level.

#### **4. Admissions and Registration**

The decision to admit a student to the degree programme will be made jointly by the partner institutions, taking into consideration the core principles of the relevant admissions policy. Applicants will apply to Bristol via standard application routes and will therefore be subject to Bristol eligibility and academic criteria in accordance with the published admissions criteria.

Students on a joint PGR programme will hold full registration as a University of Bristol student for the duration of their studies. They will simultaneously hold full registration status for the duration of the degree at the partner institution. If a student registered on a joint PGR programme is required to withdraw from or otherwise does not continue their registration at the other institution, there is no automatic right of transfer to a standard PGR degree programme at the University of Bristol.

The agreement contract should set out where there are differences in policy and how they will be handled such as for annual leave, requests for extension, suspension and other student circumstances. The offer letter to students should include information about how the arrangement will operate, including fee and attendance requirements.

#### **5. Location of Study and Attendance**

Students studying on a joint PGR award normally split their time equally between the partner institutions. The minimum time that a student must attend the University of Bristol is 30% of their research degree. The requirement is the same for both full-time and part-time students.

#### **6. Student Fees and Costs**

The following model of fees is suggested, but should be agreed with the Faculty Finance Team for each arrangement:

- 50% of the standard fee at each institution to each partner or one partner may collect their full fee and distribute half to the other partner who will invoice the collecting party accordingly.

A financial schedule or clauses on the split of income and costs will be included in the agreement contract.

## **7. Supervision**

Supervisory arrangements for joint PGR students must meet all the requirements for supervision as set out in the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*. Students registered on a joint PGR programme will be jointly supervised for the duration of the degree. They will always have a supervisor at the University of Bristol and a supervisor at the partner, who will normally be granted honorary academic status at Bristol for the duration of the student's studies. Details of the supervisory arrangements must be set out in the agreement, with particular detail on the period that the student is away from Bristol.

## **8. Student Support**

Students registered on a joint PGR programme must have access to academic and pastoral online support when not at Bristol. Students must receive formal induction from Bristol at the start of their degree irrespective of their location at the time.

## **9. Student Representation**

Schools must ensure that students studying for joint PGR programmes have opportunities to engage with Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). It may not be possible for joint PGR students to attend SSLCs in person when they are based at the partner institution.

## **10. Training and Resources**

A student studying for a joint PGR programme must have access to appropriate research skills training, which is normally provided by schools and faculties, and to the University's Personal and Professional Development Programme. The partner institution will be expected to provide research skills training when the student is located there. As for all research degrees, supervisors and students must regularly review training needs.

## **11. Research Community**

Participating in the research community, including through opportunities to network with their peers, is an important aspect of study for all research students, including those studying a joint PGR programme. The partner organisation will provide opportunities for the student to engage with the research community whilst based away from Bristol, within online provision and connections to the school's research community being provided by Bristol.

## **12. Progress and review arrangements**

Progress monitoring arrangements for joint programmes are jointly agreed at the outset. Bristol will require the annual progress review to be equivalent to the normal process followed for research students based for the duration of their research at the University. Annual progress review for students studying for a joint PGR programme may be conducted through electronic means if the student is physically located at the partner when a review becomes due.

## **13. Assessment and Award**

The assessment process, including the submission of the dissertation and the subsequent oral examination, is set out in the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*. A single thesis is prepared that is submitted to both institutions for examination. Each university's examination process is fully complied with, and each partner will make its own decision about the award of the degree. Both partners will agree on an award and there will be communication between the respective examination boards to instruct the partner named in the agreement to produce the degree certificate on behalf of both parties. A decision made by one institution not to award will require discussion and resolution, most likely between the Chairs of the Exam Boards, so that an award can be made. The contract agreement should further set out specific roles and mechanisms for resolving different award outcomes from each partners' examination boards.

Students completing a joint degree will graduate with a single degree award on behalf of both partner institutions and will receive a single degree certificate with the insignia of each university.

The agreement will usually specify which graduation ceremony the student can attend if they are successful.

## **14. Contract Types and Approval**

The type of contract required for establishing new joint PGR Programme arrangements is different depending upon the nature of the collaboration and the partner organisation. The following section distinguishes between the two types of arrangement:

- a formal relationship between the University and a partner organisation that involves a number of students undertaking a PGR Programme on a joint basis every year. This type of arrangement will require an institutional level Framework Agreement to be put in place with the partner organisation, normally to cover a 5-year period. Each individual student will require an Individual Doctoral Agreement (IDA) to be put in place. A template IDA that can be signed off by Faculty will be included for use within the main Framework Agreement.

- an individual student undertaking a joint PGR Programme on a one-off basis. This type of arrangement will require an individual joint PGR agreement to be put in place for a single student.

Both of these arrangements will require strategic approval [Alignment with UoB strategy, reputation, ethical and moral considerations, rationale for partnership, proposed partnership activities, operational and financial considerations] and quality assurance approval [Quality of provision at HEI, alignment with regulations, student support arrangements, other due diligence checks]. Strategic approval will normally come from the University Research Committee (URC) for institutional agreements, while the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) will normally provide strategic approval for single student agreements.

In all cases, arrangements must be designed to ensure an experience comparable to that of a student based entirely in Bristol. To ensure this, the approval process will be completed in consultation with Schools and Faculties, relevant Professional Services teams (including but not limited to the Academic Quality and Policy Office, Finance Services and the Visa Compliance Team), and the Academic and Quality Standards Committee.

## **15. Reviewing provision**

Joint PGR arrangements governed by an Institutional Framework Agreement should be reviewed regularly, at least every five years.

Any changes to an individual student joint PGR agreement must be approved by the Dean of Faculty or Faculty PGR Director as their nominee. A variation to the contract agreement will likely be needed so contact must be made with the Academic Quality and Policy Office as part of the approval request.