

# Protocol for practice-led research degree candidatures

## Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures (2023/24)

*The following protocol for practice-led research degree candidatures was approved by Graduate Board with effect from 2010-11 and amended for the session 2023/24. The protocol is applicable to the following Schools offering practice-led research programmes:*

*School of English  
School of Media and Communication  
School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies  
School of Music  
School of Performance & Cultural Industries  
School of Design*

*This outlines specific arrangements for PhD and MPhil practice-led candidates and must be read in conjunction with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures and other regulations associated with the relevant programme of study ([Postgraduate Researcher \(PGR\) policies and procedures](#)). Candidates' attention is drawn to the Learning Outcomes in the [Programme of Study for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#).*

### 1. Admission

- 1.1 It is important to distinguish practice-led applicants from the outset to ensure that candidates (and their supervisors) are aware of the arrangements for practice-led candidatures, as set out in this document.
- 1.2 Upon application, the School is responsible for identifying and ensuring practice-led candidates are recorded under the specified codes set up in BANNER.

The Director of Postgraduate Research Studies within each School in the Faculty of AHC is responsible for ensuring that practice-led candidates are identified at the time of admission and that appropriate details are passed to the Admissions team. GRAD maintains a central record of practice-led PGRs.

### 2. Training

2.1 Individual schools, supported by the Centre for Practice Research in the Arts (CePRA), are responsible for arranging a number of training sessions for practice-led research, which will be available to practice-led Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures. These will include both introductory sessions and in-depth professionally led master-classes and workshops.

CePRA provides and publicises additional ad hoc training and funding for practice-led research events for practice-led PGRs in consultation with the Director of PGR Studies for the relevant Schools.

Training specific for practice-led research should be considered as part of the Training Plan and reviewed in the same way as other training.

### 3. Transfer assessment

#### 3.1 Confirmation of practice-led status

At transfer stage, the candidate and School are required to clarify that the research project is still defined as practice-led.

Following successful Transfer, it is not possible for PGRs to change to a practice-led research degree. However, if a candidate wishes to change from a practice-led research degree, a case may be presented to the Graduate Board (or one of its Groups). A case would usually be presented by the supervisor to the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies in the first instance.

### 3.2 Transfer assessment

A practice element should be a mandatory submission requirement at transfer assessment, which is indicative of the practice. This could be a contained performance, small installation or concept to demonstrate practice. The PGR must be required to demonstrate the ability to link practice with the research narrative.

### 3.3 Defining the final submission

It will be assumed that the candidate intends to include live performance or practice as part of the final submission and, if this will take place prior to submission of the written element, to facilitate arrangements for the early appointment of examiners (see 4.2 below). An intention stated at the transfer stage to include live practice in the final examination will not be binding. If research determines that a live element is no longer required (or dates change), this should be reported as soon as possible and will not have any adverse consequences for the PGR.

In addition to the usual requirements for Transfer, a practice-led candidate must set out what they expect to include for assessment as the final submission. This must meet the regulations for alternative submissions as set out in the Ordinances and Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees (para 4.3 below). The relevant School or the Faculty will provide guidance to the candidate regarding how this information will be stated.

### 3.4 Deferral

Procedures and regulations for Transfer outcomes are as set out for PhD in the Ordinances and Regulations and associated Programmes of Study.

## 4. **Assessment**

### 4.1 Exam Entry

Where Examiners are required to view live practice the examination entry workflow must be completed at least 3 months before the date of the first live practice. Where there is no examined live practice event, the workflow must be completed at least 3 months before the intended date of the thesis submission.

### 4.2 Assessment of Live Practice/ Early Appointment of Examiners

Where it is considered to be part of the final submission, examiners are normally expected to view live practice. However, all practice for assessment must be recorded in an appropriate format as a permanent record (see 4.4 below).

Where candidates intend for live practice to be included in the final assessment they should provide details of date, venue and time as soon as possible. As this will need to be negotiated and agreed with potential examiners, it may be necessary to identify and appoint examiners at an early stage.

The examination entry workflow in GRAD must be submitted to Doctoral College Operations **at least 3 months prior to the date of the first live practice**. Doctoral College will make the necessary arrangements for the appointment of examiners to be considered by the Graduate Board's Progression and Examinations Group. The appointment information sent to the examiners will include details of any live practice indicated by the School on the examination entry workflow which will form part of the submission.

Once examiners have been appointed, the School is responsible for ensuring examiners receive detailed information of date, venue and time of any live practice to be assessed. Please note in some instances this may include more than one event, as outlined and agreed at transfer. It is recommended that the School (and candidate) consider examiners availability when arranging live practice.

Further guidance on the recording and assessment of live practice is provided in 4.4 and 4.5 below respectively.

#### 4.3 Alternative Submission

Candidates undertaking practice-led research may be granted permission by the relevant committee to present for examination an alternative form of thesis. Details of alternative submissions are provided in the [Ordinances and Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees](#) currently under Ordinance X, Regulation 23 for PhDs and 32 for MPhils.

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#### **The degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Ordinance X Research Degrees, Regulation 23 "Candidates in certain disciplines may be granted permission by the relevant committee to present for examination an alternative form of thesis as follows:

a body of work demonstrating an original contribution to knowledge and scholarship, which comprises of a substantial body of creative practice\* produced by the candidate in pursuit of the degree, displaying critical understanding and being worthy of public presentation, together with a written submission, which provides an exploration of the research question(s) and indicates the manner in which the research is embodied in the practice, which will normally be between 15,000-50,000 words."

Note that the test of worthy of public presentation does not require that the body of work has been published or publicly presented.

#### **The degree of Master of Philosophy**

Ordinance X Research Degrees, Regulation 32. "Candidates in certain disciplines may be granted permission by the relevant committee to present for examination an alternative form of thesis as follows:

a body of work demonstrating an independent contribution to knowledge and

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\* Footnote associated with the Regulations  
Areas of creative practice are currently offered in the following Schools: School of Media and Communication, School of English, School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies, School of Music, School of Performance & Cultural Industries, and School of Design

scholarship, which comprises of a substantial body of creative practice\* produced by the candidate in pursuit of the degree, displaying critical understanding and being worthy of public presentation, together with a written submission, which provides an exploration of the research question(s) and indicates the manner in which the research is embodied in the practice, which will normally be between 10,000-30,000 words.”

Note that the test of worthy of public presentation does not require that the body of work has been published or publicly presented.

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#### 4.4 Format Regulations

All practice for assessment must be recorded in an appropriate format as a permanent record, including any live practice that has been assessed. These must comply with the University’s archiving requirements (see 4.4 ii below).

PGRs are reminded that appropriate permissions must be obtained from other people involved in the performance and recording of live practice and that they must comply with the University’s ethical procedures (see endnote 1) and legal requirements of the Data Protection Act (see endnote 2).

##### Thesis length

A minimum word limit of 10,000 for MPhil and 15,000 for PhD and maximum word limit of 30,000 for MPhil and 50,000 for PhD is applicable to all practice-led PhDs across all Schools.

It should be noted that the maximum limits are not intended to be interpreted as a requirement for the length of the thesis and that in certain disciplines the thesis may be considerably shorter.

##### Format for submission

Where the final submission comprises of practice for assessment, in addition to the written thesis, all assessed (and associated) documentation must be presented in the following format:

##### *i.* Submission of documentation prior to examination

The thesis (the written commentary and any associated practice files) should be submitted for examination to GRAD. If any of the files (outside the PDF written commentary) are very large, candidates should consider hosting it elsewhere and providing a link to the file to Doctoral College Operations using OneDrive or SharePoint. The link will be shared with the examiners. If links are embedded within the thesis itself, candidates should indicate this when submitting the thesis.

An index of all the files that make up the thesis submission must be included according to the instructions provided. At the time of writing the link to the instructions is:

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<https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10125/research-degree-assessment/1751/multi-part-thesis>

If anything needs to be submitted in physical format, candidates should contact Doctoral College Operations at the point of examination entry to discuss arrangements. Depending on the nature and format of the intended submission, advice may also need to be sought from the Library to support the eventual archive of the final thesis.

*ii.*      Submission of final documentation after successful examination

The University requires a permanent record of the complete thesis on which the award will be made; this means that in addition to the written commentary in PDF, all examined practice material will also need to be deposited to White Rose eTheses Online (WREO) as separate files in an appropriate format (eg pdf, jpeg, mp3, etc). It will not be possible at the final eThesis stage to deposit links/URLs that lead to practice material, as content hosted externally (eg via youTube, Vimeo, websites, etc) cannot be relied upon for long-term preservation. Candidates will have the option of setting an embargo for each individual file uploaded to WREO, if necessary and supported by the supervisor. At the time of writing the link to the instructions is: [https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1406/researcher\\_support/71/submit\\_your\\_ethesis](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1406/researcher_support/71/submit_your_ethesis)

Exceptionally, links to University-managed systems which use permanent identifiers may be considered. This requires agreement from the Doctoral College and Library. The Library team will be happy to provide advice and support to help in planning. Candidates should contact the Library as early as possible in advance of making their submission.

Consideration should be given to the accessibility of the thesis to a wider audience. Open formats should be used where possible. If files require proprietary software, an additional open format version should be supplied where feasible e.g. .xlsx could also be .csv. Files in a non-proprietary format increase chances of long-term access and preservation. PGRs will be placed on the pass list only once it has been confirmed that suitable files for both the written commentary and the examined practice have been successfully deposited to WREO.

An index of all the files that make up the thesis submission must be included according to the instructions provided.

Non-digital storage media may be used in cases where it is demonstrable as crucial to the objectives of the research. If some of the material the candidate wishes to include in their thesis cannot be stored digitally they should discuss the options with their supervisor at an early stage. The supervisor will consult with the School's Director of Postgraduate Research Studies.

Where a requirement for non-digital storage is needed, the School will make a case via Doctoral College Operations for consideration by the relevant committee (currently Progress and Examinations Group of Graduate Board) in consultation with the University Library. The request will normally be approved if no suitable alternative can be identified. There will normally be a requirement to provide a digital version of non-digital modes of capture as an appendix to the submission to maintain a permanent record.

#### 4.5 Advice for examiners

Practice must be integral within the methodology and dissemination of a practice-led research degree and the final assessment should consider the submission as a whole (practice and written element). In reaching a decision upon the quality of a practice-led submission it is important that examiners do not assess practice and written elements

separately.

*Assessment of live practice*

There must be no formative feedback by examiners prior to the viva; feedback should be given after the final *viva-voce* examination. Any notes taken at a live practice/performance must not be disclosed and must be retained by the examiner until included in the preliminary report, immediately prior to the final *viva-voce* examination.

*Guidance for preliminary report*

As noted above, examiners should consider the submission as a whole. Where live practice is held on the same day as the viva, examiners may wish to add notes to the end of the preliminary report prior to the viva.

*Guidance for referral*

Current regulations allow examiners at either examination or at a resubmission to ask candidates to pass any tests which they prescribe to demonstrate knowledge. Therefore, for instance, examiners are permitted to ask a candidate to reproduce live performance or a similar task to demonstrate any aspect of practice.

Please note: The above guidance is set out in the Instructions to Examiners.

## **5. Award**

Successful candidates will be awarded the degree of PhD or MPhil. Reference to the practice-led nature of the research programme is included in the Diploma Supplement and Statement which is issued to each successful candidate as an accompaniment to the degree certificate.

### **Endnotes**

1. Guidance on ethical procedures and obtaining consent is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/>
2. See the University's Code of Practice on Data Protection [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/data\\_protection\\_code\\_of\\_practice.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/data_protection_code_of_practice.html)