

Trust Research Degrees Enhancement Report

APPROVED

1.0 Context

- 1.1 The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (“The Trust”) delivers six professional doctorates (DProfs), as well as supporting a number of PhD students, together encompass the Research Degree portfolio of around 300 enrolled students. These are: *DProf Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (M80)*; *DProf Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: Child and Adolescent (M18)*; *DProf Social Work (D60)*; *DProf Social Care (D50)*; *DProf Systemic Psychotherapy (M10)*; *DProf Consultation and the Organisation (D10D)*.
- 1.2 In the 2013-2014 academic year, significant enhancement activity has taken place in the area of Research Degrees, driven by the 2012/13 Research Degrees Student Survey, the national (HEA-led) Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, our UEL-driven Annual Report and the appointment of an Associate Dean, Academic Partnerships and Quality Assurance, who had a specific remit to oversee and enhance the quality of the Research Degrees portfolio. This follows on from significant enhancement-driven projects in the 2012-2013 academic year.
- 1.3 In 2011-2012, the Trust carried out an audit on Research Degree processes, which was closely followed by a UEL-wide audit of all ethics approval processes. These brought to light areas which needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency and prompted a large and complex project to address these areas. Although this project is ongoing, significant progress has been made and it is anticipated that all issues will be addressed by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year. (See appendix 1: Root Cause Analysis).
- 1.4 Towards the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, the *Concordat to support research integrity* (“The Concordat”) was published which aligns with the Tavistock’s own commitment to supporting and strengthening research integrity. A self-evaluation will be carried out in due course with in relation to this publication.

2.0 Summary of enhancement activity

2012-13:

- Creation of guidance web-pages for doctoral processes (www.tavistock.nhs.uk/Doctorates) encompassing Registration, Ethics, Suspension, Supervision, Annual Review, Viva Examination, Research Degrees Subcommittee, Regulations.

- Handbook project – creating a standard template which focuses on the academic course rather than extraneous information which overloads the handbooks and makes it difficult to navigate and read. Removing the regulations from the handbook and signposting students to the web page where they are housed instead. Thus keeping the most up-to-date regulations available for students.
- Creation of a 'unit' template for the thesis
- Mapping the registration process to clarify roles and responsibilities and to work out the database needs of the doctoral provision
- Development of processes and systems put in place around viva examination

2013-14:

- Research Tutor Forum, providing a forum for (primarily) DProf course leads and other key representatives from these DProf and PhD provision.
- Risk Assessment guidance
- Amendments to regulations (not yet approved)
- Review of Course Registration board (Terms of Reference submitted to October 2014 UEL RDSC for consideration/approval)
- Creation of ethics flow diagram and substantial re-write of the ethics webpage on the doctoral web pages (www.tavi-port.nhs.uk/DocEthics)
- Training and development for 14/15 (viva exam training, supervisor training)
- ICT project began
- Staff development for 14/15 academic year
- Aide Memoire created for TSRDSC readers

3.0 Sound practice in research degrees. In order to reflect on, and move forward with quality assurance and enhancement in the delivery of Research Degrees at the Trust, this report has been produced with reference to the Indicators of Sound Practice found in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part B: Assurance and enhancing academic quality Chapter B11: Research Degrees.

3.1 Indicator 1: Higher education providers that are research degree awarding bodies have regulations for research degrees that are clear and readily available to research students and staff, including examiners. Where appropriate, regulations are supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school, department, research centre or research institute.

3.1.1 Because of the devolved quality assurance arrangements in place between UEL and Trust, the Trust are able to amend the UEL's regulations to be relevant and appropriate to the Trust.

3.1.2 In academic year 2013/14, the Trust reviewed the Research Degree regulations with a view to enhancing transparency, fairness and clarity. These are yet to go to the UEL Regulations committee due to the fact that the work has undergone consultation with tutors, course leads, students and academic governance and quality assurance committee and the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee.

3.1.3 Subject-specific guidance is available in the form of course handbooks, supplemented by the research degrees (doctoral) guidance web-pages. These were developed and implemented in the 12/13 academic year and undergo regular maintenance and updating to ensure currency and helpfulness are optimum.

3.2 Indicator 2: Higher education providers develop, implement and keep under review codes of practice for research degrees, which are widely applicable and help enable the higher education provider meet the Expectation of this Chapter. The codes are readily available to all students and staff involved in research degrees, and written in clear language understood by all users.

3.2.1 The Code of Practice in Research is a UEL document, also used by the Trust-UEL students. However, once the Trust-specific regulations have been fully amended and approved by the UEL regulations committee the Code of Practice will be reviewed to align with the regulations and ensure they are as helpful and transparent for students as possible.

3.3 Indicator 3: Higher education providers monitor their research degree provision against internal and external indicators and targets that reflect the context in which research degrees are being offered.

3.3.1 In the 12/13 academic year, the Trust participated in the PRES for the first time. However, it was felt that because there was confusion about which students should participate and because, in the end, all enrolled DProf students were expected to participate it led to misleading results because the questions were aimed at those who were conducting research, not undertaking taught units and therefore not appropriate for students who are on the taught phase of the DProf. In addition, the fact that the uptake was poor due to clashes with the Trust internal student survey, meant that the results are neither reliable nor representative. This view was confirmed by the contrasting results of the internal student survey that took place.

However, the Trust is keen to participate in National surveys, and because the PRES is biennial and therefore the Trust can alternate between the PRES and the internal survey, it was felt that it would be more helpful to focus on one survey per year. Because the PRES is aimed at research active students, it may be advisable to continue to carry out the internal Taught student survey every year or else include the Taught students in what is currently known as the 'main student feedback exercise' which currently encompasses all other (non-doctoral) students at the Tavistock, and alternate the internal Research student survey with the PRES.

3.3.2 In addition to the PRES, the Trust is also keen to engage with the *Concordat to support research integrity*, which was introduced towards the end of the 13/14 academic year. In preparation for a more in-depth consideration of the *Concordat* we have included the question "XXXXX" in the Course Annual Review and Enhancement Process (REP) for the doctoral courses in the 2012/13 round (which is taking place in the Autumn 2014 term).

3.3.3 Other benchmarking that has been carried out against external indicators in the 12/13 academic year includes considering the timescales that students are enrolled on our doctoral programmes (including considering other University practices and the HEFCE's expectation), and looking at supervision particularly the regularity and number of supervisions provided to students compared to other equivalent institutions.

These investigations have resulted in our clarifying the length of the DPRof courses, and putting in place more rigorous controls for our research students, which includes adding to the student Annual Review process the need to consider the length of enrolment time the student has left, and creating standard letter templates to remind students when they are nearing the end of their enrolment or registration period. The Trust's Research Degrees Subcommittee are also considering much more closely the timeline for students to complete their research when students are submitting their research proposals, and if students do not have adequate time to complete their research, they are referred back and students advised to exit with an interim award.

3.4 Indicator 4: Higher education providers accept research students only into an environment that provides support for doing and learning

about research, and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community is occurring.

3.4.1 In the 12/13 academic year, it was agreed that the supervisory resource available at the Trust was at capacity. Rather than take on the PhD students who made enquiries in that academic year, they were referred to the Trust's partner University, University of East London, rather than accepting them at the Trust and being unable to provide adequate support for their research and learning.

3.5 Indicator 5: Higher education providers' admissions procedures for research degrees are clear, consistently applied and demonstrate equality of opportunity.

3.5.1 In the 2013/14 academic year, the Trust developed and published a Trust-wide admissions policy, encompassing both UEL-Validated and Essex-validated programmes at all levels. This was aimed at providing a transparent, equitable and consistent experience for applicants.

3.6 Indicator 6: Only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants are admitted to research degree programmes. Admissions decisions involve at least two members of the higher education provider's staff who have received training and guidance for the selection and admission of research degree students. The decision-making process enables the higher education provider to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made in accordance with its admissions policy.

3.6.1 All interviews are carried out by members of the relevant Professional Doctorate course team. This ensures that the interviewers are conversant with the requirements of the programme, and have the relevant subject expertise.

3.6.2 In the 13/14 academic year, an interview template document was devised to ensure a consistent approach to all admissions interviews, including doctoral level.

3.7 Indicator 7: Higher education providers define and communicate clearly the responsibilities and entitlements of students undertaking research degree programmes.

3.7.1 In the 13/14 academic year, a student charter was drafted, in consultation from academic and management staff, and most importantly, students. This was published on the web-site:

<http://www.tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/training/studying-tavistock-and-portman/our-philosophy>

- 3.7.2 Information relating to the professional accreditation on the DProf Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (Association of Child Psychotherapists - ACP) is included in the handbook. This includes professional misconduct investigation information and the requirements of the ACP when students are in a clinical setting.
- 3.7.3 In the 2013/14 academic year, a fitness to practice policy was developed and approved in liaison with both UEL and Essex. This policy is in place for all courses where the students are working towards professional qualifications.
- 3.7.4 The student misconduct policy already in place at the Tavistock is also applied where necessary. This policy is signposted in the course handbooks and located on the website: www.tavi-port.nhs.uk/governanceandquality
- 3.7.5 In the 2012-2013 academic year, an enhancement project was carried out on the student course handbooks. This project was driven by feedback from students and course tutors suggested that the old handbooks were lengthy, cumbersome and not user-friendly.
 - 3.7.5.1 In response to this, the Trust reviewed all handbooks with reference from handbooks from other Universities, and a new template was devised. This ensured that all course handbooks are standard at the Trust.
 - 3.7.5.2 In tandem with the handbook project, the VLE *Moodle*, was reviewed and enhanced. This enabled more dynamic information to be moved from the course handbooks to the Moodle site to allow course leads and course administrators to update dynamic information more frequently and as needed.
 - 3.7.5.3 In line with many other HEIs, the Trust removed the regulations from the handbooks and published them online instead. This way the handbook provided vital day-to-day information, while the regulations were housed online to enable greater uniformity and control over updating of the regulations, to ensure the students and staff had

access to the most current regulations when needed.

3.7.5.4 Another area which has been developed over the 12/13 academic year are Doctoral student web-based guidance pages, which can be found at www.tavi-port.nhs.uk/Doctorates. These pages encompass the various doctoral processes such as registration, annual review and viva examination.

4.0 In the 13/14 academic year, the Trust carried out significant work to clarify and share clear and user-friendly information on ethical processes and procedures. To that end, a meeting was set up between UEL's Research Ethics Committee, NOCLOR and Doctoral Course Leads. The outcome of that meeting enabled a flow-diagram to be created (appendix 2) to map out the process of gaining ethical approval. In tandem with this, the web-page dedicated to ethical approval was significantly re-written to guide students and supervisors through the process, and to clarify roles and responsibilities.

4.1 Indicator 8: Research students are provided with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the environment in which they will be working.

4.1.1 Interview, programme specs, handbooks. Leaflets advertising the new web-pages, the web-pages, unit specification for research phase.

4.2 Indicator 9: Higher education providers appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage research students, and to monitor their progress effectively.

4.2.1 Each supervisor is nominated and the nomination application is considered alongside the student's research proposal registration application. This ensures that the supervisors have the necessary knowledge and expertise to ensure that they are adequately equipped to support the student during their time on the course.

4.3 Indicator 10: Each research student has a supervisory team containing a main supervisor who is the clearly identified point of contact.

4.3.1 At the point of registering their research proposal with the Trust and the UEL, a supervisory team is nominated with a clearly defined Director of Studies (1st Supervisor). This Director of Studies role is clearly articulated and clear

guidance available in the Research Degrees regulations and the Code of Practice.

4.3.2 In order to ensure clarity, staff development is available for all new supervisors every year at the Trust. In the 13/14 academic year, we have also provided more guidance and information on regulations and ethics.

4.4 Indicator 11: Higher education providers ensure that the responsibilities of research student supervisors are readily available and clearly communicated to supervisors and students.

4.4.1 As above, clear information and guidance is available on the web (www.tavi-port.nhs.uk/Doctorates) and on those web-pages the research degree regulations and the code of practice are readily available and frequently referred to throughout the website.

4.5 Indicator 12: Higher education providers ensure that individual supervisors have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

4.5.1 The Trust is currently carrying out a significant audit of figures to assess the current workload levels. The Trust is aware that there may be more work to carry out in this area.

4.6 Indicator 13: Higher education providers put in place clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting research student progress, including formal and explicit reviews of progress at different stages. Research students, supervisors and other relevant staff are made aware of progress monitoring mechanisms, including the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

4.6.1 Annual review of student progress takes place once a year in the summer. Students are not able to re-enrol until they have undertaken an annual review.

4.6.2 Supervisions generally occur either face-to-face or via skype or phone call about one hour per month during term-time which equates to about three per term.

4.7 Indicator 14: Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree; these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

4.7.1 The professional doctorates have a lengthy taught element and within that taught element, the students are given research skills development. In addition, in the 14/15 academic year, a Research Week was developed for all doctoral students to attend with useful information to support their development as researchers.

4.8 Indicator 15: Higher education providers put in place mechanisms to collect, review and respond as appropriate to evaluations from those concerned with research degrees, including individual research students and groups of research students or their representatives. Evaluations are considered openly and constructively and the results are communicated appropriately.

4.8.1 Course Committees, PRES and Research Degrees Student Survey.

4.9 Indicator 16: Higher education providers that are research degree awarding bodies use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define their academic standards and the achievement of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees are clear and readily available to research students, staff and examiners.

4.9.1 All professional doctorate programmes undertake a rigorous validation process which involves the creation of a handbook. The Course Handbook provides information on the assessment of each unit. In the academic year 2012-13, a review of all Unit Descriptors within the handbooks was conducted with a view to creating more helpful and transparent assessment criteria which align more clearly with the Learning Outcomes of each Unit

4.10 Indicator 17: Research degree final assessment procedures are clear and are operated rigorously, fairly and consistently. They include input from external examiner and are carried out to a reasonable timescale. Assessment procedures are communicated clearly to research students, supervisors and examiners.

4.10.1 For the viva examination, clear guidance is available on the website www.tavi-port.nhs.uk/DocViva, including a 'unit descriptor' was created in 2012/13 which clearly shows what criterion are used by the examiners. A clear process is also strictly adhered to by the quality office who administer the process. Although the process and regulations could be reviewed with a view to streamlining and refining, they are operated rigorously, fairly and consistently and ensure a fair

and consistent treatment of all students undertaking viva examination.

4.11 Indicator 18: Higher education providers put in place and promote independent and formal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust and applied consistently. The acceptable grounds for complaints and appeals are clearly defined.

3.18.1 Complaints procedure is signposted in the handbooks and available on the website, as is the appeals process.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 It is clear from evaluating the Trust's provision against these indicators, that the Trust's provision can be compared favourably. However, it is understood that the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA's) Indicators of Sound Practice are not a checklist. It is therefore important to recognise that Chapter B11 must not be viewed in isolation but rather part of a bigger picture, encompassing other reference points within the Chapters of the Quality Code, the Concordat to support research integrity, the Higher Education Academy, Research Councils UK and so on.

5.2 In order to ensure an excellent student experience in research, it is important to ensure that enhancement activity is built upon strong foundations of good practice and robust quality assurance processes. For this reason, it is advisable to focus on the completion of the project to address all areas needing remedial work, as well as addressing areas that will need to be improved to ensure fully consistent compliance with the regulations, as well as rolling out and embedding all enhancement work that has been introduced in 2012/13 and 2013/14 academic years before embarking on further areas of enhancement.