

8C – Higher Doctorate Awards at Bournemouth University: Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure is for Bournemouth University (BU) staff, graduates, and examiners.
- 1.2 This procedure summarises the purpose and definitions of Higher Doctorates and outlines the associated roles, responsibilities and processes for making the award at Bournemouth University.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Senate** is responsible for the academic standards and quality of the University's awards.
- 2.2 **Education Committee** advises Senate on matters affecting Higher Doctorates, including the approval of new and revised procedures as necessary relating to Higher Doctorate awards.
- 2.3 **University Executive Team (UET)** engages with the assessment and ratification of Higher Doctorate awards as appropriate.
- 2.4 **Pro Vice-Chancellor** has overall responsibility for this procedure.
- 2.5 **Doctoral College** maintains this procedure on behalf of the Pro Vice-Chancellor and supports and provides guidance on its implementation.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 All documents can be accessed here: [2A - Awards of the University: Policy](#).

4. PURPOSE, DEFINITIONS AND AWARD TITLES

- 4.1 The Higher Doctorate is awarded to candidates for their original contribution to knowledge and scholarship as manifested in published works or other creative performances. As such, it enables formal recognition of established researchers and/or academics who have a reputation for excellence in their fields on the basis of their record of academic work.

- 4.2 Higher doctorates are defined by the QAA1, as follows:
“Higher doctorates (typically the Doctor of Science, DSc or ScD, and the Doctor of Letters, DLitt) are a higher level of award than the doctorates described in this Statement. They are normally awarded by research degree-awarding bodies to staff who have earned a high reputation for research in their field through their professional practice, which may or may not have been gained in an academic institution. This Statement does not therefore apply to higher doctorates.
Individual higher education providers’ regulations specify a limited range of titles for higher doctorates, which can be awarded either for a substantial body of published original research of distinction over a significant period or as an ‘honorary’ degree, to recognise an individual’s contribution to a particular field of knowledge.”
- 4.3 Higher doctorates are defined by the BU in 2A - Awards of Bournemouth University: Policy, as follows:
“The standard of the Higher Doctorate is that expected of an applicant who is a leading authority in the field of study concerned and has made an original and significant contribution to the advancement or application of knowledge or scholarship in that field. Such an applicant shall be a holder of at least four years’ standing of a higher degree (normally Doctorate).”
- 4.4 Bournemouth University awards the Higher Doctorates of:
- i. Doctor of Arts (DArt)
 - ii. Doctor of Design (DDes)
 - iii. Doctor of Education (EdD)
 - iv. Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
 - v. Doctor of Laws (LLD)
 - vi. Doctor of Letters (DLitt)
 - vii. Doctor of Music (DMus)
 - viii. Doctor of Science (DSc)
 - ix. Doctor of Technology (DTech)

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5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 5.1 The eligibility criteria for candidates to be considered for the award of a Higher Doctorate at BU are as follows:
- a) They shall be a holder of a higher degree (normally Doctorate) of any degree-awarding body who has been a member of staff of the University, normally, of not less than four years’ standing
 - b) They shall be a holder of a higher degree (normally Doctorate) of Bournemouth University, normally, of not less than four years’ standing
 - c) They shall hold an appointment as a full-time member of the academic staff (teaching or research) of the University, for not less than four consecutive years, or be a Visiting Professor of the University.

¹ [Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degree](#)

- 5.2 If a candidate meets the above criteria and wishes to be considered for a Higher Doctorate, they should have an initial discussion with the Deputy Dean (Research and Professional Practice) (or nominee), who must support their application, which takes the form of a *prima facie* case.
- 5.3 The maximum period of registration following approval of the *prima facie* stage (Section 6) will be six months.
- 5.4 Should a candidate being considered for a Higher Doctorate leave the University before the examiners have submitted their reports, they will continue to be considered but may be liable for a fee.

6. THE *PRIMA FACIE* STAGE

- 6.1 Candidates for a Higher Doctorate will be required to submit an initial *prima facie* stage prior to formal enrolment for the award. The objective of this is to enable preliminary judgement of the quality and coherence of the publications, or other creative/performance works to be considered for assessment, and consequently the likelihood that the candidate will meet the criteria for an award.
- 6.2 Candidates should make a *prima facie* case to demonstrate that there is a sound basis for proceeding to a formal consideration of the Higher Doctorate and should include:
- a) a detailed list of the publications/creative work on which the application is based
 - b) a critical summary, of approximately 1000 words, of the contribution to knowledge represented by the published or other creative/performance works establishing how the works have contributed to the field of study
 - c) the candidate's *Curriculum Vitae*.
- 6.3 The *prima facie* case should be submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee via the Doctoral College.
- 6.4 A panel will be convened to consider the *prima facie* stage comprising at least two members of the University Executive Team members, normally including the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, and Head of the Doctoral College. The panel will consider the quality and coherence and quality of the publications or other creative/performance works to be submitted for consideration for a Higher Doctorate and the likelihood that an application will meet the criteria for an award.
- 6.5 Candidates who have passed the *prima facie* stage are eligible for consideration for a Higher Doctorate and will be advised by the Doctoral College on the formal application process. Candidates must be enrolled as a PGR at BU in order to be eligible for a research degree award.
- 6.6 Candidates may be advised by the panel that they require further information and may request that the candidate resubmits the *prima facie* case. In such circumstances, the panel should make their recommendations in writing and agree an appropriate timescale for resubmission.

6.7 Candidates who do not pass the *prima facie* stage will have the right of appeal and should do so, in writing to the Vice-Chancellor within four weeks of receiving this decision.

7. NATURE AND QUANTITY OF PUBLICATIONS OR CREATIVE WORKS

7.1 Any submission for a Higher Doctorate will involve examples of publications or other creative/performance work, as appropriate. These publications should not normally have been used in the submission for another research degree.

7.2 For this award, the publications will normally be in the form of written text - articles in peer-refereed journals, books (or chapters therein) or conference papers. Other forms of creative work may be submitted where they are considered equivalent to peer-refereed articles. These may include original works of art; productions; exhibitions or designs appropriate to the candidate's discipline or medium, presented as a durable, visual record.

7.3 Whatever form the published work takes, it is necessary that it should have been accessible within the public domain and have undergone a refereed or substantive peer review process. It will also be possible to include some publications which are in press, or which have been accepted for publication. Publications of any form should normally have been published within the 10 years prior to the date of submission, although the critical appraisal can be used to explain the choice of additional publications.

7.4 It is not possible to quantify the number of publications or define the amount of creative/performance works necessary to be eligible for consideration of the Higher Doctorate. This is specific to each candidate, their area of research interest and the types of publications submitted. The candidate must justify their choice of publications in the accompanying critical appraisal.

8. SUBMISSION AND SUPPORTING STATEMENT

8.1 The submission for a Higher Doctorate will include:

- a) a critical appraisal of no more than 10,000 words describing the candidate's research record and achievements (as outlined in Section 7), with an explanation of how the selected publications meet the assessment criteria for the award
- b) copies of the selected publications, and
- c) the candidate's *Curriculum Vitae*.

8.2 The critical appraisal should contain a review of the current state of knowledge and research in the candidate's field and indicate how their work has contributed to that field. The critical appraisal should also explain whether the work has been used for other awards, and the extent of the applicant's contribution to any work submitted which involves joint authorship or other types of collaboration. Where a candidate includes jointly authored publications in their application, they should declare the extent to which the publication is their work, and this should normally be certified by all authors concerned.

8.3 The body of work listed needs to include sufficient evidence to help the examiners establish why the publications or creative works meet the requirements for a Higher Doctorate.

9. ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES OF THE EXAMINATION

9.1 The examination team will comprise three external examiners, who will normally be internationally renowned established experts in the field. The examiners will be formally nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, with advice from members of the Professoriate, for approval by UET. The examination team will have an independent, academic Chair who will be a member of the University Executive Team, normally the Vice-Chancellor or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, or senior member of the professoriate.

9.2 The examiners' main tasks are to:

- assess the candidates standing in the field of study
- assess the original and significant contribution to the advancement or application of knowledge represented by the publications and made apparent in the critical appraisal
- appraise the candidate's reputation for research in their field through their professional practice, this may or may not have been gained in an academic institution
- evaluate the quality of the candidate's cited peer-refereed and published work
- establish the candidate's ownership of the published work and appreciation of the state of knowledge within the candidate's research area
- assess the candidate's contribution to the research embodied in joint or multi-authored works
- evaluate the candidate's contribution to the field of study through their *Curriculum Vitae*.

9.3 The examiners will provide individual and independent reports recommending whether to approve the award, or otherwise, which will be collated by the Chair, prior to the *viva voce*. These should be sent to the Doctoral College.

9.4 Following the *viva voce* examination, the examiners may recommend that:

- a) the award of Higher Doctorate be made
- b) the award of Higher Doctorate be made subject to minor corrections and amendments being made as requested by the Examiners, which must be completed and submitted within four months of the *viva voce* examination
- c) the award of Higher Doctorate is not made.

9.5 The recommendations of the examination team will be passed to the University Executive Team to be considered for the formal award of a Higher Doctorate.

9.6 The award will be ratified by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate when all documentation has been received and the examiners' decision reviewed. The formal award letter, signed by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate, confirming the date the award was ratified will then be sent to the candidate.

- 9.7 Successful candidates will be invited to attend the next Graduation Ceremony where they will be presented with their High Doctorate award.

General

10. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 10.1 [Higher Doctorates in the UK](#) (UK Council for Graduate Education, 2013).
- 10.2 [Doctoral Degree Characteristics](#) (QAA, 2020). This document includes a sector definition to help differentiate Higher Doctorates from other forms of doctoral awards. However, Higher Doctorates are not within the scope of this document.
- 10.3 This procedure was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) in March 2025.