

Joint awards procedures for postgraduate research programmes

September 2013

**Research Degrees and Researcher Development
Directorate of Research and Business Engagement**

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1 INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF A JOINT AWARD

- 1.1** This document sets out the University of Manchester's procedures and requirements for postgraduate research joint awards. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies and guidance for postgraduate research degrees (referred to hereafter as the 'Code of practice for postgraduate research degrees') and the University's 'Policy and procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision' which are available respectively at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/>

<http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/collaborationsandpartnerships/>

- 1.2** This document aims to ensure rigorous quality mechanisms are in place to safeguard the student experience whilst recognising the different contexts within which partners operate, and the different needs and requirements that this presents. This document provides a flexible institutional framework for joint awards for doctoral programmes and outlines minimum institutional requirements. Faculties will need to consider this document in the context of specific, local arrangements and partnerships, and this may lead to more detailed requirements being developed at Faculty level, where appropriate.
- 1.3** The Manchester 2015 agenda emphasises the need to ensure that the student experience is of the highest standard. This document provides a University framework which aims to ensure that students registered for a postgraduate research joint award have a positive experience which is comparable with other UoM research students whilst also protecting the reputation and standing of the University by being clear about the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in the partnership.
- 1.4** For the purposes of this document a joint award is defined according to the QAA definition as "a collaborative arrangement under which two or more awarding institutions together provide a programme leading to a single award made by both or all participants. A single certificate (signed by the competent authorities) attests successful completion of this jointly-delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications."
- 1.5** The University will only consider entering an agreement with another higher education institution to deliver joint awards in exceptional circumstances and on a case by case basis. Such institutions must be world-leading and the proposed programme of research must be one which will be enhanced by the collaboration of two high quality research environments. The partnership must support one or more of the University's strategic goals of research, higher learning and social responsibility with the potential to generate significant financial return, taking into account full economic costing of the programme. The partnership must not risk the University's potential to maximise international student fee income.
- 1.6** It is expected that any student studying towards a joint award will be registered at each of the collaborating institutions.
- 1.7** This document does not cover 'split-site PhDs', 'validated PhDs' or any postgraduate research degree that involves students undertaking periods of field work or other specific visits away from the University, as part of their research and where the outcome is a degree awarded solely by The University of

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Manchester. For more information about these other types of degrees please contact the University's Graduate Education Team at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/theguide/index.htm?page=contact&id=RegSec->Research->Graduate>

- 1.8** All arrangements for postgraduate research joint awards require a formal agreement between the University and the partner organisation(s). The University's Contracts Team are responsible for producing all postgraduate research joint award agreements as detailed in section 3.7. As soon as a new arrangement is being considered the Contracts Team should be notified and involved in all contractual matters. Further information including contact details for this team are available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/contracts/>

- 1.9** The University's Teaching and Learning Support Office are responsible for the oversight of all taught collaborative partnerships. Further information and contact details can be found at:

<http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/>

Oversight and day-to-day management of postgraduate research joint awards is undertaken by the relevant Faculty Graduate Office.

- 1.10** Faculties should include proposals for fees arrangements within their business case for the proposal.

2 RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH JOINT AWARDS

- 2.1** Reference should be made to the University 'Policy and procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision' (as listed above) for a full list of criterion to be considered when setting up new collaborative links. Appendix A outlines the key criteria for postgraduate research joint award links.

- 2.2** The University of Manchester Strategic Vision 2020 and the University Research Strategy set out ambitious targets in the area of research degrees, research, collaboration and international links. All proposed new postgraduate research joint awards should, at an early stage in the process, be considered against the Strategic Vision 2020 and Research Strategy objectives to ensure that they have a strong rationale. The full document is available at:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/vision/>

- 2.3** Postgraduate research joint award collaborations can help the University to meet its research and collaborative agenda by:

- extending a successful, well established research collaboration;
- recruiting increased numbers of high quality international research students;
- promoting world class collaboration with leading universities, research institutes and/or commercial/industrial organisation with a significant research component and reputation.

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- 2.4 The University recognises the Salzburg II principles and all proposed links should be considered against the relevant sections of this document. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.eua.be/cde/publications.aspx>

3 APPROVAL PROCESS

- 3.1 Full details of the approval process for all collaborative arrangements are set out in the University's '[Policy and procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision](#)'. The following points apply specifically to postgraduate research joint awards.
- 3.2 All approaches from potential partners should be filtered through the appropriate Faculty/School. International approaches should initially be considered in direct liaison with International Development to discuss the proposed collaboration in an International context.
- 3.3 The Head of School proposing the joint award (or Heads of School in cases where a proposal spans more than one school) must first discuss the proposal for the institutional collaboration with the Faculty Associate Dean for Graduate Education and any other appropriate Senior colleagues within the Faculty. Faculties may have their own Faculty-level approval process for postgraduate research joint awards and Schools should refer to this when proposing a new joint award at Faculty level.
- 3.4 If the Associate Dean supports the principles of the proposed joint award, then a full proposal for the institutional link should be submitted to the Manchester Doctoral College committee for approval and the Transnational Education group (TNE) for consultation.
- 3.5 The proposal should address the key criteria for joint awards as detailed in Appendix A and provide the following information within the postgraduate research joint award approvals form (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=11943>):
- the programme or programmes which would be the subject of the collaboration
 - the name of the prospective partner institution
 - contact details for the subject specialist at the University of Manchester who would act as the academic advisor should the partnership be approved
 - a statement setting out how the partner institution's mission, strategy, quality and ethos are compatible with those of the University of Manchester (this may include reference to ranking tables)
 - length and nature of existing links with the proposed partner organisation;
 - previous experience of the proposed partner organisation in offering research degrees
 - an indication of the number of students which might be enrolled
 - an outline of the business case for the proposal (including the costs of establishing the partnership, details of any visits made etc)
 - the rationale for the proposed partnership and joint award, including how the proposal is consistent with the University of Manchester's strategic plan and, where appropriate, the Internationalisation strategy and Transnational Education policy
- (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=9220>)

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- for overseas collaborations, an evaluation by the Director of International Development of whether it would be appropriate to undertake the proposed collaboration in view of existing collaborative arrangements and other commitments
 - Full details of how the student(s) would be managed. These should include at least details of registration, supervision, progression, skills training, thesis submission and examination. They should also include details of how the school(s) will ensure the quality of the student experience in line with all appropriate University of Manchester regulations and policies. Appendix B provides a checklist of key factors which should be considered.
 - Nature of the proposed joint award arrangement, including student fees arrangements, time to be spent at the partner organisation and the nature/degree of the partner contribution e.g. skills training, specific research training needs, resource requirements for the research project etc.
- 3.6 Any postgraduate research joint award proposals that are approved by MDC and have been considered by TNE will be presented to Senate for final approval or rejection.
- 3.7 If approved by Senate, all postgraduate research joint awards will require a formal legally binding contract. The detail of this contract will be determined on a case by case basis and staff from the Research Office contracts team will liaise with Schools/Faculties as appropriate.
- 3.8 Once the institutional link has been approved by Senate, each individual studentship should also be submitted for approval.
- 3.9 The Head of School proposing the student (or Heads of School in cases where a proposal spans more than one school) must first discuss the proposal with the Faculty Associate Dean for Graduate Education and any other appropriate Senior colleagues within the Faculty. Faculties may have their own Faculty-level approval process for postgraduate research joint awards and Schools should refer to this when proposing a new joint award student at Faculty level.
- 3.10 If the Associate Dean supports the principles of the proposed joint award, then a full proposal for the studentship should be submitted to the Manchester Doctoral College committee for consideration.
- 3.11 The proposal should include a study plan (see Appendix C) and identify how the studentship matches the business case and strategic case put forward in the institutional link application.

4 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF JOINT AWARDS

The University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees applies to all postgraduate research joint awards. In addition to the Code of Practice, the following principles set out the University's minimum requirements for all postgraduate research joint awards. Reference should be made to the principles below when compiling a proposal for any new arrangements and when operating existing links, in order to ensure that standards are in place to safeguard the experience of the student and the reputation and standing of the University. Faculties should provide further local requirements and guidance as appropriate, within the minimum requirements of this document.

4.1 Online support and communication technologies

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The University places a high strategic importance on the appropriate development and use of online technologies to help staff and students communicate and work together to support student learning and research. The use of online technologies can be particularly beneficial when students spend periods of time away from the University as they can ensure regular contact between staff and students, reduce response times for feedback on work, prevent students feeling isolated by helping them meet other students and provide a range of online resources to support students with their research project.

All postgraduate research joint award links should take advantage of the technologies available but also ensure that this is not used as a replacement for appropriate one-to-one contact and attendance at the University, where required. The approval and review processes for joint award links should consider the online mechanisms in place to support the arrangement and ensure they are effective for all involved.

The following areas of online provision should be considered when setting up a postgraduate research joint award arrangement, to supplement any face-to-face activity:

- Establishing a virtual student community providing student profiles to help students get to know each other and facilitating online discussions and presentations, where appropriate e.g. blogs, discussion boards and wikis
- Providing an online resource facility for students with useful documents, articles and links to help with their research and the possibility of some lecture/seminar material being provided on podcasts for students to access online;
- Providing students with the opportunity to access skills training and other taught courses online;
- Providing opportunities to share documents e.g. through Clearspace or Livelink to enable students and supervisors to exchange documents and share feedback
- The use of webcams or other audio visual means to conduct regular supervisory meetings.

Further information and guidance on online learning and support is available at:

<http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/e-learning/>

4.2 Taught units

Postgraduate research joint award degrees that involve a significant taught element must adhere to the taught quality assurance and review processes for this element of the degree. Reference should be made to the University's 'Policy and procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision' and the University's 'Manual of Academic Procedures' which applies to all taught provision and is available at:

<http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/>

4.3 Application process

Information about opportunities to study for a joint award should be provided in any publicity or other information available to students. Attendance and fees requirements should be clearly specified. The offer letter to students should

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include information about how the arrangement will operate, including fee and attendance requirements.

4.4 Registration of students

Students who are admitted on to a postgraduate research joint award must be registered as a University of Manchester student. Students will be required to register for each year of the degree in the same way as all other research degree students and this can be achieved online via the University's online registration process.

4.5 Attendance requirements and mode of study

The total period of attendance at the UoM will normally be a minimum of twelve months over the course of the research degree. The precise attendance requirements will be determined by the Faculty PGR committees and will be confirmed in writing to the candidate(s) at the time of acceptance for the degree and included in the agreement.

In deciding on these requirements, Faculty PGR committees will have regard to the University's responsibilities for the supervision, support and training of the candidate as set out in the *Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees*. Faculty PGR Committees will have discretion in deciding how best to carry out these responsibilities, which will include by attendance at UoM, by electronic or digital means, by attendance at some other location agreed with the candidate or by visits by School staff to the candidate's place of residence.

Students will normally be required to make an initial visit of a minimum of four weeks during registration in order to attend induction, meet their supervisory team, undertake a skills audit and attend subject specific skills training. Plans for this should be addressed within the joint award application which the School submits. The timing and length of other periods of attendance will be decided by the Faculty PGR committee in consultation with the collaborative organisation and will be set out in the student's study plan (Appendix C). Any subsequent changes to the schedule of attendance must be agreed with the candidate and recorded in an amended plan.

Due to the particular challenges and extended period of registration for part-time PhD study joint award arrangements should normally only be set up for full-time students. Requests for part-time study will need to be considered by the Faculty PGR committee and Manchester Doctoral College Committee on a case by case basis.

4.6 Support and information for students

All postgraduate research joint award students must have a formal induction at the start of their degree. The induction should address specific issues in relation to joint award study. All students should also be introduced to the University online progression tool eProg as part of their induction process. eProg is available via the student's My Manchester page or via <https://app.manchester.ac.uk/eprog>

Research students have specific needs and requirements and it is important that students registered on joint awards are provided with appropriate levels of

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support and information through their research. Support needs may be particularly challenging if students are registered on a joint award basis and particular care needs to be taken when setting up new links to ensure rigorous mechanisms are in place.

Points to consider for approval, monitoring and review

- ensuring there are robust structures in place to support students who encounter any problems which can include relevant virtual forms of support. This would normally be via the Advisor/Tutor role but should also include the provision of clear information to students about support services available to them;
- ensuring that there is specialist support in place for students with special needs or English language requirements;
- ensuring that eProg is set up and all students and staff have access to the system particularly when they are away from the University.

4.7 Skills Training and Personal Development Planning

All students registered on a postgraduate research joint award must complete a formal training needs analysis, in order to identify their skills and training needs. This may be provided by the School or the partner organisation, as appropriate, but must meet University requirements, as defined by the University's Policy on Postgraduate Research Skills Training which is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/skillstraining/>

This must be followed by an agreement between the supervisor and the student of a skills training programme which should be supported by a personal development plan (PDP).

For joint award attendance the initial period at the University will normally be focussed upon preparing the student for the research project and ensuring that skills training needs have been identified and are being progressed. Where skills training provision is not delivered by the University of Manchester it must be subject to rigorous monitoring and review mechanisms to ensure that the provision is appropriate, of a high standard and comparable with skills training delivered to students based at the University.

Points to consider for approval, monitoring and review

- will the student undertake their skills audit and training at the University of Manchester?
- if so, what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the student has full access to the audit and subsequent training opportunities?
- if the joint award proposal involves the student undertaking some or all of their skills training away from the University, an assessment will need to be made of the appropriateness of this provision and its comparability with provision at the University of Manchester;
- what measures have been put in place to ensure student can access the eProg skills training catalogue whilst they are away from the University?

4.8 Supervision

Supervisory practice for joint award PhDs must meet all the requirements on supervision as set out in the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees which is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/>

Supervision arrangements will need to be agreed for each new link on a case by case basis, but students registered on a postgraduate research joint award must have a designated supervisor at both the University of Manchester and the partner organisation. The Main Supervisor and the student should meet at least once a month. This can include virtual meetings via webcam, email or other online technologies in addition to meetings in person. The progression of students registered on postgraduate research joint awards must be logged and monitored on the University's online progression system, eProg in the same way as it is for all other PhD students.

The contractual agreement between the University and the partner organisation will include detailed information about the supervision arrangements. Detailed information about supervision arrangements will also be outlined in the study plan (Appendix C).

Points to consider for approval, monitoring and review

- how often the student and the Main Supervisor will meet and how this will be organised when the student is away from the University of Manchester;
- the relationship between the student, the Main Supervisor and the Co-supervisor;
- the process for selecting/approving the supervisor at the collaborating institution, to ensure that they meet University criteria, as stated in the University's Code of Practice;
- how information and support will be provided for supervisors who are based at the partner organisation, where appropriate, to ensure they are aware of the requirements of their role and University procedures;
- how staff from the partner organisation will receive support and supervisor training. Will this be provided at the University of Manchester or will this be organised separately by the partner organisation? Details of any opportunities for staff at the partner organisation to access support and supervisor training courses online;
- what measures have been put in place to ensure all members of the supervisory team have access to and are trained in the use of the University's online progression tool, eProg.

4.9 Research environment and resources

Research students must have ready access to an active research environment and appropriate resources to undertake their research effectively. For students who are spending periods of their research time outside the University of Manchester, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that they feel part of a research environment.

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A key focus of the approval and ongoing monitoring processes for research degrees must be to ensure that the student's environment whilst they are away from the University is appropriate. The Faculty will need to make an assessment of the appropriateness of the research environment on a case-by-case basis depending upon the nature of the proposed link and the intended research. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Code of Practice for Research Degrees provides a useful guide on different aspects of the research environment, which can be accessed at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B11.aspx>

The University's 'code of practice for postgraduate research degrees' also provides guidance on the requirements of the research environment for its research students which is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/>

Points to consider for approval, monitoring and review

Ensuring students have:

- access to appropriate resources and an appropriate physical environment in order to carry out their research effectively e.g. library facilities, IT facilities, adequate work space, other specialist equipment, as necessary;
- opportunities to interact and share ideas with experienced researchers and academic staff;
- opportunities to attend and present at seminars/conferences;
- opportunities to find out about and get involved in current research.

4.10 Monitoring student progress

The requirements of the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees must be met for monitoring the progress of students registered on a joint award basis. The 'Policy for the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students' is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/progressandreview/>

Consideration should be given to monitoring the student's progress whilst they are away from the University of Manchester and in particular if the programme envisages periods of fieldwork or other absences from the collaborating institutions. Details of the arrangements to manage the communication with, and support for, the student should be clearly laid out in the formal contract and student study plan. All students must be registered on the University's online progression tool, eProg.

Any enquiries about eProg should be directed to:

mdc@manchester.ac.uk

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All students registered on a joint award are subject to the University's guidance note, 'Leave of Absence, Interruptions, Extensions and Withdrawal / Termination of Registration for Postgraduate Research Degrees' which is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/changestodegrees/>

4.11 Examination processes

All postgraduate research students registered on a joint award are subject to the requirements as set out in the University's submission and examination policy which are available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/submissionandexamination/>

The oral examination (viva) will normally be conducted at the University of Manchester. Exceptional requests for the oral examination to be conducted away from the University will need to be approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and may be possible via video link.

4.12 Annual monitoring and review of the provision of PhD degrees

All research degree provision at the University of Manchester is subject to ongoing annual monitoring and review processes. Postgraduate research joint awards must be included in this exercise and faculties should include specific consideration of issues and evidence relating to joint award arrangements within their annual monitoring processes. The University's process for annual monitoring of the provision of research degree degrees is available at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/qualityassurance/>

In addition, any institutional level arrangements will be formally reviewed every five years. For institutional arrangements the contract and memorandum of agreement for the partnership should only be renewed following a successful review exercise.

Any changes to the arrangements set out in the contract and study plan will need to be approved by the Faculty Research Degree Committee or equivalent.

4.13 Fee payment arrangements

Information about the fees for Joint award PhDs is available from the Student Services Centre in the [Crucial Guide](#) or at: tuitionfees@manchester.ac.uk

The minimum requirement for Joint award fee payments to the University of Manchester is 70% of the full tuition fee for the period of the programme. Any requirements for fee payments to the collaborating institution(s) should be determined by the collaborating institution.

APPENDIX A: Criteria for approval of postgraduate research joint awards

The University must be satisfied:

- a) with the overall academic standing and reputation of the prospective partner institution;
- b) with the robustness of its overall quality control and assurance procedures at the institutional level;
- c) with the soundness of its quality management at all levels;
- d) with the adequacy of its overall administrative support for quality assurance at the institutional level;
- e) with the adequacy of its overall provision for academic and pastoral support and guidance;
- f) with the adequacy of the overall learning support and infrastructure in relation to the ability to meet requirements for awards;
- g) with the adequacy of overall staffing in relation to the ability to meet requirements for awards;
- h) that it has experience of delivering comparable programmes at a similar level, or is capable to delivering programmes at that level;
- i) that, where appropriate, it has an acceptable record of partnership with other institutions;
- j) that the prospective partner institution is financially stable;
- k) that the prospective partner institution can contract legally with it.

and, in the case of proposed overseas partnerships:

- l) that the prospective partner institution has an understanding of the current practices of UK HE, e.g. in connection with external examining, assessment arrangements, and quality assurance arrangements;
- m) that it has the capacity to address differences in cultures and expectations between HE systems in such a way as to ensure that the requirements of the arrangement can be met;
- n) that, if instruction and assessment is to be in a language other than English, it has the capacity to provide translation facilities to an appropriate standard.

APPENDIX B: Checklist for the management of students on joint awards

- a) Language of delivery
- b) Staffing arrangements (details of supervisors and expertise in field of research and supervisory process)
- c) Programme administration including:
 - roles, responsibilities and procedures for recruitment and admissions, registration, fee payments, supervision, progression, skills training, examination, graduation, production of transcripts and degree certificates
 - lead institution for the purposes of administration
 - policies and regulations – how are differences in institutional policies and regulations being managed
 - how will the academic requirements of both institutions be met?
- d) Arrangements for the provision of academic and pastoral support and guidance
- e) Availability of appropriate research environment and online support. This should include access to resources such as eProg
- f) Arrangements for periods of residence at both institutions (as appropriate)
- g) Arrangements for the appointment of external examiners
- h) Arrangements for considering student appeals and complaints
- i) Arrangements for student representation and feedback
- j) Responsibility for annual monitoring
- k) Arrangements for dealing with any potential differences in cultures and expectations between UK and overseas Higher Education systems
- l) Ownership of any teaching materials (where relevant)

APPENDIX C: Study plan

The study plan should include:

- a.** Name of the partner organisation (background details on the organisation may be required by the Faculty depending upon the nature of the link)
- b.** Full name of the student (further details about the academic background of the student may be requested by the Faculty)
- c.** Name and contact details of the University of Manchester Main Supervisor
- d.** Name of Partner Organisation Co-Supervisor (details on the academic credentials of the supervisor may be required by the Faculty depending upon the nature of the link)
- e.** Name of the Adviser/Tutor for the student
- f.** Proposed area of research
- g.** An estimated period for the literature survey and the design of the project
- h.** Information about the student's skills training needs and how this will be taken forward to ensure the student has access to and attends appropriate skills training opportunities
- i.** Information about how the personal development planning process will operate for the student, particularly when they are away from the University
- j.** Arrangements for managing supervision including the frequency and approximate timing of visits by the University's Main Supervisor to the student whilst they are away from the University, and the role of the Co-supervisor
- k.** The frequency of visits by the student to the University over the full period of the degree and the nature of the work carried out during these visits
- l.** Confirmation that the University of Manchester Main Supervisor and the student will meet at least once a month
- m.** The nature of the work that will be carried out whilst the student is away from the University
- n.** Arrangements for the submission and assessment of annual progress reports and confirmation that the student will be examined at least annually by two members of University Manchester staff.
- o.** Arrangements for ensuring that the progress and review of the student is managed effectively throughout the entire period of the degree and particularly when the student is away from the University with confirmation that staff and students have been given full access and training on eProg.
- p.** Arrangements for the writing, submission and examination of the final thesis.
- q.** Confirmation that the viva will be held at Manchester.

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Document Control Box	
Policy / procedure title	Joint awards procedures for postgraduate research programmes
Date approved	September 2013
Approving body	MDC
Implementation date	September 2013
Version	2
Supersedes	July 2011
Previous review dates	N/A
Next review date	September 2018
Equality impact outcome	
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/ordinancesandregulations/
Related Policies:	http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/rbess/graduate/code/collaboration/
Related Procedures and Guidance:	
Policy owner:	Helen Baker (Research Office)
Lead contact:	Helen Baker (Research Office)