



Postgraduate Research Code of Practice

APPENDIX 15

Policy on *Aegrotat* and Posthumous awards for Postgraduate Research Students

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Policy forms part of the University's Postgraduate Research (PGR) Code of Practice. Other University policies and procedures which are connected to this Policy are as follows:
- Appendix 2 of the PGR Code of Practice: Policy on Research Student Supervision
 - Appendix 8 of the PGR Code of Practice: Policy on Research Examinations and Examiners
- 1.2. This Policy covers the following research programmes:
- Doctor in Philosophy (PhD)
 - Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
 - Doctor of Medicine (MD)
 - Campus- based and Online Professional Doctorates
- 1.3. The policy applies either where a student's ongoing serious ill-health would preclude them from completing the examination procedures at the end of the maximum period of registration or where a student dies prior to the award of the degree for which they were registered.
- 1.4. In the case of both *aegrotat* and posthumous awards, the student must have completed a significant body of work. This is necessary to demonstrate that the student would have met the appropriate standard for the award. For this reason the awards would normally only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5. It is expected that the award of *aegrotat* or posthumous research degrees will be rare and limited to circumstances when a candidate for the postgraduate research award is writing up, undertaking the final stages of supervised study, at the point of submission or between *viva voce* examination (hereafter referred to as *viva*) and either modifications or re-submission.

2. *Aegrotat* Award

- 2.1. The PGR Examiners may recommend the award of an *aegrotat* research degree if it is considered that a student's ongoing ill-health would preclude them from making the final submission of the thesis, undertaking the *viva*, modifications to the thesis or a re-submission of the thesis, if the student has reached the maximum period of registration and would be unable to complete the degree owing to serious ill-health.
- 2.2. The option to award an *aegrotat* degree is at the sole discretion of the Examiners. An *aegrotat* degree will only be awarded on application by the candidate or their representative to the Director of the Liverpool Doctoral College. The application should be made after the Examiners have decided, on the basis of the student's performance and any accepted extenuating circumstances claims, either to allow assessment of the thesis or to offer an exit award. Any application for an *aegrotat* degree must be accompanied by appropriate medical evidence. The application must normally be made within ten working days of the notification of the Examiners' decision. Where the student indicates they are unable to provide evidence to support their application within the ten days, the student or their representative can request a further fourteen days to provide the evidence.
- 2.3. Applications for *aegrotat* degrees will be considered by the Director of the Liverpool Doctoral College and the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research (SDPR/IDPR) who will advise the Examiners. The application should be copied to the

Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research (FDPR) for information. The SDPR/IDPR will be required to consider whether the medical evidence suggests that the student was ever likely to have been able to complete the degree successfully (in cases where the Examiners have decided to make an exit award) or will be able to do so within a reasonable period (in cases where the Examiners have decided to offer an assessment opportunity) and to advise the Examiners accordingly.

- 2.4. The decision of the Examiners not to make this discretionary award does not constitute grounds for an academic appeal.
- 2.5. *Aegrotat* awards do not confer eligibility for professional registration nor exemption from meeting the conditions of professional qualifications that might otherwise be granted upon completion of the candidate's programme of study.
- 2.6. *Aegrotat* awards are not made as an alternative to application of reasonable adjustments to the *viva*.

3. Posthumous Award

- 3.1. The PGR Examiners may recommend that a posthumous award should be made to a deceased candidate who died before their examination could take place and/or before their research degree was finalised. Recommendations should normally have the support of the deceased candidate's family and should be endorsed by the relevant FDPR.
- 3.2. The decision of the Examiners not to make this discretionary award does not constitute grounds for an academic appeal.

4. Initial assessment

- 4.1. The initial assessment is to consider whether there is a sufficient quantity of material to represent the thesis (a full thesis; partially complete thesis; draft thesis chapters; any related documentation which was to have been incorporated into the thesis; any other supporting information e.g. progress reports). The Examiners must be satisfied that there is enough to permit an academic judgement to be made in accordance with the alternative examination process defined below.
- 4.2. The Primary and Second Supervisors are permitted to supply additional information e.g. examples of work undertaken or conferences and training attended.
- 4.3. The Primary and Second Supervisors should prepare the thesis material for examination. Where a thesis is partially complete, in draft form, or supported by research articles which would have been incorporated into a final thesis, the supervisory team should be asked to provide linking statements. These should demonstrate how the different aspects of the thesis were expected to fit together. Any such links should be clearly indicated as being the work of the supervisors.

5. Examination

- 5.1. The examination process should be conducted in accordance with Appendix 8 of the PGR Code of Practice: Policy on Research Degree Examinations and Examiners i.e. it should involve two examiners, one internal and one external, and an independent chair. They should be briefed on the specific nature of the *aegrotat* or posthumous award. The

Examiners should consider the merits of the work as presented but also extrapolate what it could have become.

- 5.2. In place of the *viva* the Examiners will be permitted to request additional information and/or ask questions of the supervisory team, before making a recommendation on the submitted work.
- 5.3. If the thesis has been submitted but not yet been examined (or re-examined where death or serious illness occurred whilst the candidate was making corrections) then the thesis should be examined according to the conventions outlined in Appendix 8 of the PGR Code of Practice with the exception that the *viva*, the normal corrections and revisions will not be required.
 - 5.3.1. The Examiners may make one of the following recommendations:
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* award of the doctoral degree
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* award of MPhil
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* exit award of e.g. MPhil, MRes, MA
 - No award

If the thesis has not been submitted but the candidate has completed the minimum candidature for their programme of study

- 5.4. If the Doctoral or Master of Philosophy thesis has not been submitted but the candidate has completed the minimum candidature for their programme of study, paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8 will apply.
- 5.5. If the student has completed the minimum candidature for the award but has not submitted the thesis at the time of death or serious illness, then the Primary Supervisor should collate material produced by the candidate, which demonstrates their performance at the level appropriate for the degree. This material will normally include thesis chapters, progress reports, conference papers, work prepared for publications, and publications. The Primary Supervisor's statement will need to explain the nature of the submission, outlining where the material produced by the deceased or seriously ill candidate fits into the planned programme of work, and how any omissions would have been filled.
- 5.6. On receipt of the Primary Supervisor's statement and the supporting portfolio of evidence, the FDPR will appoint an 'Independent Reviewer' who is a specialist in the subject area of the research to determine whether the submission should be sent to examiners for consideration.
- 5.7. If the decision is to proceed to examination, internal and external examiners will be appointed. The examiners will be made aware of the circumstances surrounding the submission. The examiners will consider the portfolio of work submitted, along with the supporting statement from the Primary Supervisor.
- 5.8. The Examiners may make one of the following recommendations. The normal corrections and revisions will not be required.
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* award of the doctoral degree
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* award of MPhil
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* exit award of e.g. MPhil, MRes, MA
 - No award

If the thesis has not been submitted and the candidate has **not** completed the minimum candidature for their programme of study

- 5.9. If the Doctoral thesis has not been submitted and the candidate has not completed minimum candidature for the Doctoral award paragraphs 5.10 – 5.13 will apply.
- 5.10. If a doctoral candidate has not completed the minimum candidature and has not submitted the Doctoral thesis at the time of death or serious illness, the award of an MPhil or MRes degree will be considered. The Primary Supervisor should collate material produced by the candidate, which demonstrates their performance at the level appropriate for the MPhil or MRes degree. This material will normally include thesis chapters, if any, progress reports, conference papers, work prepared for publications, and publications. The Primary Supervisor's statement will need to explain the nature of the submission, outlining where the material produced by the deceased or seriously ill candidate fits into the planned programme of work, and how any omissions would have been filled.
- 5.11. On receipt of the Primary Supervisor's statement and the supporting portfolio of evidence, the FDPR will appoint an 'Independent Reviewer' who is a specialist in the subject area of the research to determine whether the submission should be sent to examiners for consideration.
- 5.12. If the decision is to proceed to examination, internal and external examiners will be appointed. The examiners will be made aware of the circumstances surrounding the submission. The examiners will consider the portfolio of work submitted, along with the supporting statement from the Primary Supervisor.
- 5.13. The examiners may make one of the following recommendations. The normal corrections and revisions will not be required.
- Posthumous or *aegrotat* award of MPhil or MRes
 - Posthumous or *aegrotat* exit award of a lower qualification
 - No award
- 5.14. An electronic copy of the thesis will not be required upon submission of the hard-bound thesis for *aegrotat* or posthumous awards.

6. Certification

- 6.1. Where a posthumous or *aegrotat* award is made, it will be made clear on all documentation that the degree has been awarded posthumously or as an *aegrotat* award.
- 6.2. Where a posthumous or *aegrotat* Doctoral or MPhil award has been made, an explanatory note will be added to the thesis specifying that the nature of the award means that, as a result, some errors might exist in the thesis.

7. Sources of further information

- [The PGR Code of Practice](#)
- [Disability Advice & Guidance](#)