



Middlesex
University
London

Refreshing PGR practice-based research training essentials using the SEEC Level Descriptors

Dr Paula McIver Nottingham
PGR Lead Professional Doctorate HSCE/S&T

UKCGE Annual Conference 2025



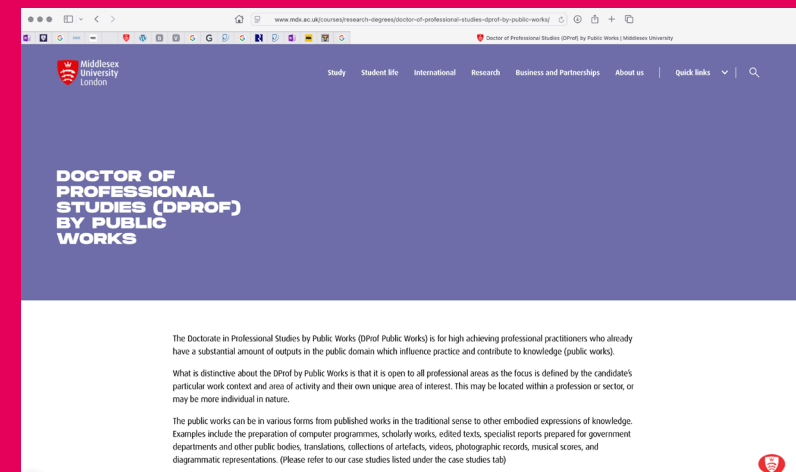
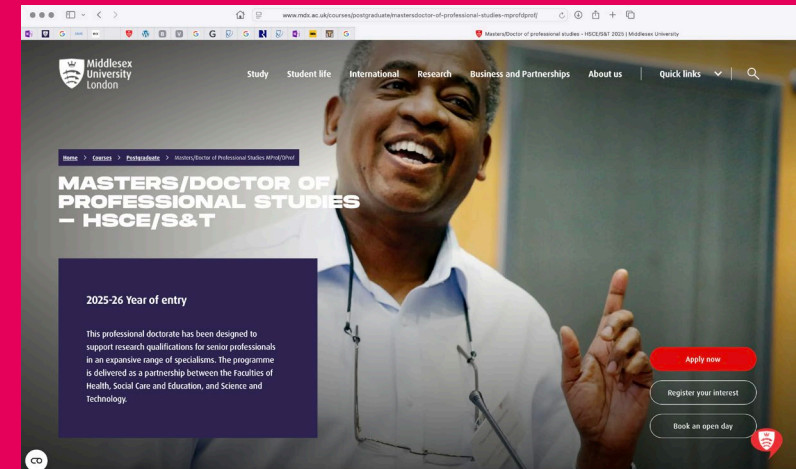
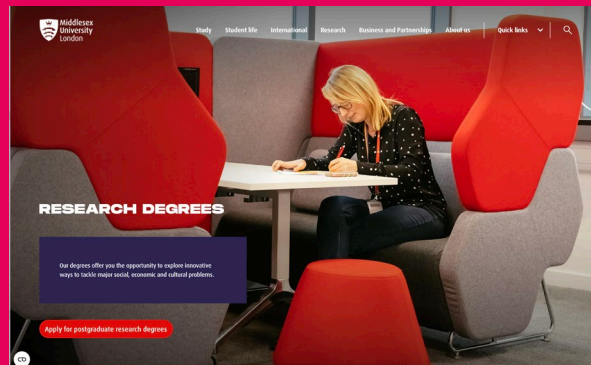
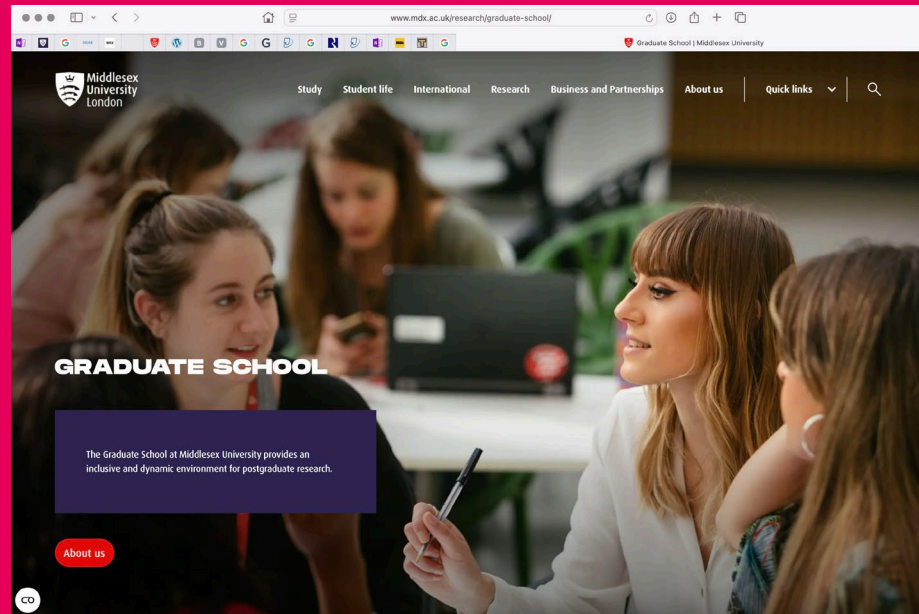
Acknowledgements

As PGR Leads - we acknowledge the contributions made by our former framework leads, current academic and professional staff, and past and present PGR candidates completing their studies with the programme.

Abstract - Case study M/DProf HSCE/S&T

- Doctoral study focuses on **enabling PGRs to reflect on their programmes of study** to achieve **academic milestones**.
- Professional doctorates and practitioner PhDs that generally **focus on research problems that stem from practice**
- **SEEC level descriptors + Vitae + QAA** have been used as a part of the **strategic refresh** for several main units of study within the Health, Social Care and Education / Science and Technology M/DProf programme
- These studies present ways to **address critical thinking** to support “highly abstract and complex learning, work or practice contexts at the forefront of knowledge” (2021, p. 17).
- This case highlights the renewed importance of **aligning research aims to practical outcomes and impact - supporting the use of employability within existing practitioner roles**, including **networking and career progression**.

Middlesex University - the 'Middlesex model' disillusionment - diversification

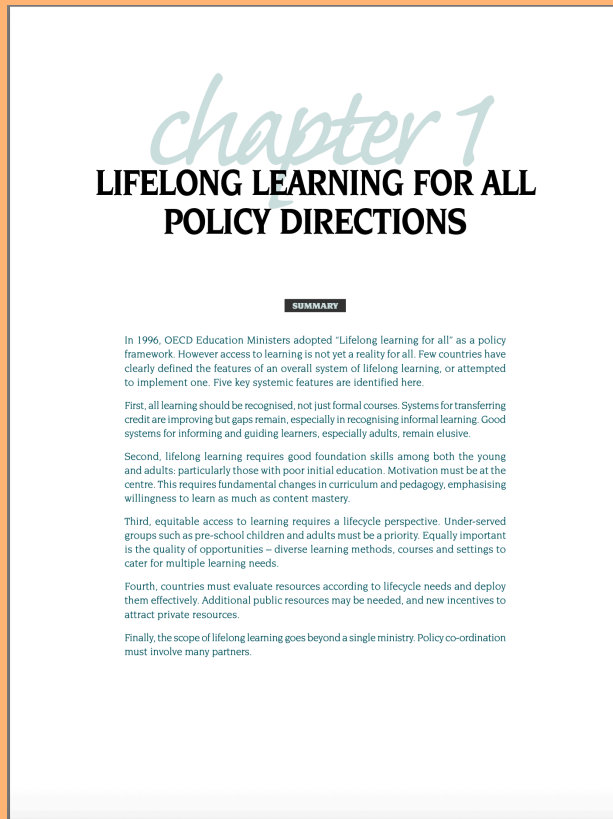


<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/mastersdoctor-of-professional-studies-mprofdprof/>
<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses/research-degrees/doctor-of-professional-studies-dprof-by-public-works/>

Today's talking points

- Déjà vu - setting the scene for today's planning
- The Risk Society (Beck) & lifelong learning principles
- Professional Doctorate and practitioner PhD
- 'Middlesex model(s)' & disillusionment – the case of refreshing the M/DProf HSCE/S&T DProf
- SEEC Level Descriptors - explanation and use for M/DProf
- Our jobs as peers - enhancing peer PGR experience and developing 'talent' – we are all here to learn

Déjà vu - setting the scene - ‘The Times They Are A-Changin’ (Dylan, 1964) – Lifelong Learning



Lifelong Learning

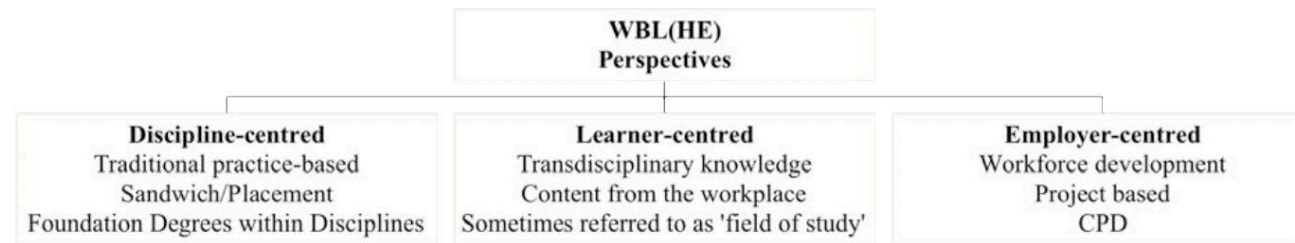
John Field, University of Stirling (2010, p. 1)

“Lifelong learning has become a dominant theme of education and training policies across the advanced industrial nations. Besides a wide range of national governments, it is endorsed by a wide range of intergovernmental policy actors, including the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, the **European Commission (EC)**, the **United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, the **World Bank** and the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** (Schemmann, 2007). For governments, lifelong learning is an overarching policy framework which offers solutions to a number of common economic and social challenges; globalization and competitiveness often dominate the policy discourse, but promoting lifelong learning is also seen as relevant to social cohesion, demographic change, active citizenship, migrant assimilation, and public health.”

Déjà vu – network acronym fest – LL, WBL, RLTH and SEEC AP(E)L +

25 years of redefining perspectives within lifelong learning / higher education studies in order to create (understand) new models

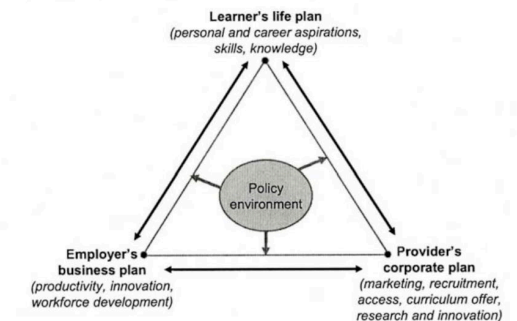
Figure 6: Typology Based on My Constructed WBL(HE) Perspectives



PhD studies about staff who facilitated learners in the workplace. Included PGT but not research degrees.

Figure 1: Workplace Learning Interrelationships

Figure 1 – Workplace learning interrelationships



Penn, Nixon & Shewell (2005)

The tripartite – inter-relationships – sources for developing Level 8

The Risk Society

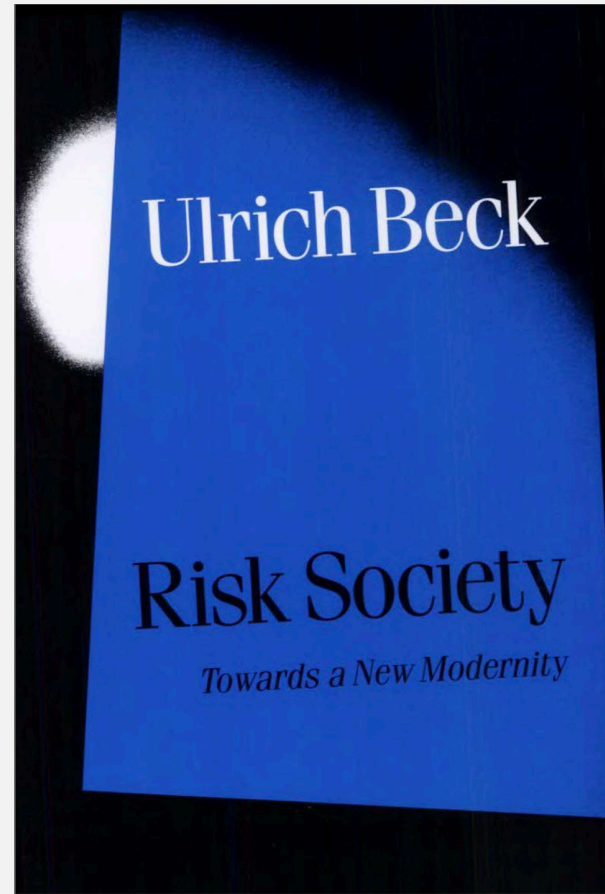
RISK SOCIETY

Towards a New Modernity

ULRICH BECK (1992)

translated by Mark Ritter

*Light bulb moment –
we all needed to keep
learning because there were
not certainties anymore -
social changes meant that
'reflexivity' was an essential
aspect of living in the world
and new technologies were
changing our experience of
the risks that needed to be
examined and explored.*



1

ON THE LOGIC OF WEALTH DISTRIBUTION AND RISK DISTRIBUTION

In advanced modernity the social production of *wealth* is systematically accompanied by the social production of *risks*. Accordingly, the problems and conflicts relating to distribution in a society of scarcity overlap with the problems and conflicts that arise from the production, definition and distribution of techno-scientifically produced risks.

This change from the logic of wealth distribution in a society of scarcity to the logic of risk distribution in late modernity is connected historically to (at least) two conditions. First, it occurs – as is recognizable today – where and to the extent that *genuine material need* can be objectively reduced and socially isolated through the development of human and technological productivity, as well as through legal and welfare-state protections and regulations. Second, this categorical change is likewise dependent upon the fact that in the course of the exponentially growing productive forces in the modernization process, hazards and potential threats have been unleashed to an extent previously unknown.¹

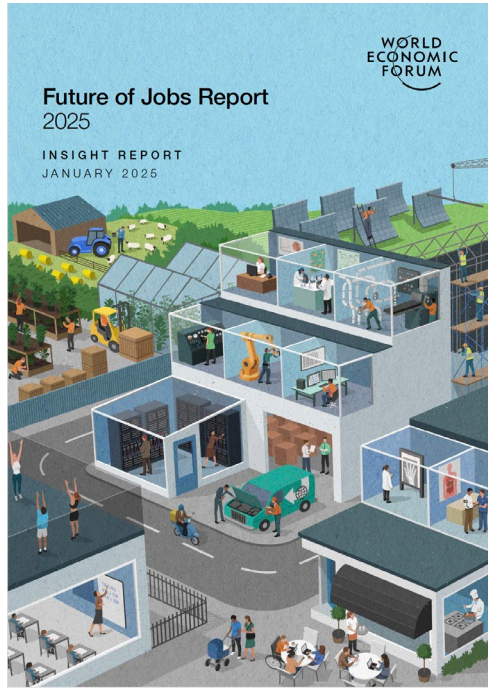
To the extent that these conditions occur, one historical type of thinking and acting is relativized or overridden by another. The concepts of 'industrial' or 'class society', in the broadest sense of Marx or Weber, revolved around the issue of how socially produced wealth could be distributed in a socially unequal and *also* 'legitimate' way. This overlaps with the new *paradigm of risk society* which is based on the solution of a similar and yet quite different problem. How can the risks and hazards systematically produced as part of modernization be prevented, minimized, dramatized, or channeled? Where they do finally see the light of day in the shape of 'latent side effects', how can they be limited and distributed away so that they neither hamper the modernization process nor exceed the limits of that which is 'tolerable' – ecologically, medically, psychologically and socially?

We are therefore concerned no longer exclusively with making nature useful, or with releasing mankind from traditional constraints, but also and essentially with problems resulting from techno-economic development itself. Modernization is becoming *reflexive*; it is becoming its own theme. Questions of the development and employment of technologies (in the realms of nature, society and the personality) are being eclipsed by questions of the political and economic 'management' of the risks of actually or potentially utilized technologies – discovering, administering,

The Risk Society – problem and solutions



Déjà vu – lifelong learning – today's context



Technological change, geoeconomic fragmentation, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts and the green transition – individually and in combination – are among the major drivers expected to shape and transform the global labour market by 2030. The Future of Jobs Report 2025 brings together the perspective of over 1,000 leading global employers—collectively representing more than 14 million workers across 22 industry clusters and 55 economies from around the world—to examine how these macrotrends impact jobs and skills, and the workforce transformation strategies employers plan to embark on in response, across the 2025 to 2030 timeframe.

- Broadening digital access is expected to be the most transformative trend – both across technology-related trends and overall – with **60%** of employers expecting it to transform their business by 2030.
- Increasing cost of living ranks as the second most transformative trend overall
- Older population

Lifelong Learning

<https://uall.ac.uk/network-work-and-learning/>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LIFELONG EDUCATION
2024, VOL. 43, NO. 1, 24–38
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2023.2279047>



OPEN ACCESS

Higher education transformation towards lifelong learning in a digital era – a scoping literature review

Marcia Håkansson Lindqvist^a, Peter Mozelius^b, Jimmy Jaldemark^a and Martha Cleveland Innes^b

^aDepartment of Education, Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden; ^bDepartment of Computer and System Sciences, Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Östersund, Sweden

ABSTRACT

In the ongoing shift to a knowledge society, the idea of a technology-enabled lifelong learning has frequently been discussed. The shift also requires a transformation of higher education with new forms for teaching and learning deployment. This ongoing transformation was formulated in a research question that has guided this study: 1) Which key themes of lifelong learning emerge from higher education literature? This study was carried out as a scoping literature review to map literature in the field. Findings from a thematic analysis pointed out seven main themes or perspectives: The Policy perspective, The Value perspective, The Employability perspective, The Reform perspective, The Collaborative perspective, The Student perspective and The Workplace learning and Professional development perspectives. Five publications of the 26 selected publications from the literature search will be further used and analysed as part of a Delphi study. This Delphi study will involve a group of leading researchers in the field of lifelong learning as an expert panel to further explore and expand the key themes of lifelong learning in higher education and digital trends in higher education reforms.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 July 2022
Accepted 30 October 2023

KEYWORDS

Lifelong learning; higher education reform; technology enhanced learning



About

News

Events & Conferences

Networks

Members

SCUTREA

Resources

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SEEC

Work and Learning

Lifelong Learning & Place

Work and Learning

The Work and Learning Network promotes learning in, through and for work (paid or unpaid).

We network and share with members and wider communities that support a range of professional practice. The network provides seminars, workshops, conferences and other events and engages with for example, work-related learning, degree apprenticeships, placements, internships, practitioner research and professional doctorates.

Our vision is to be a vibrant practitioner led network, recognised for its excellence, that advocates Higher Education (HE) in the workplace and empowers learners through encouraging lifelong learning goals.

Our mission is to:

- provide inspiration and leadership through the development and sharing of work and learning professional practice as an important and integral part of academic awards.
- encourage and promote values, research, scholarly activity and professional practice that encourages the development of work and learning as a critical pedagogy.
- promote networking and events for members and work with national lobbies to influence the direction of work and learning in HE.

Network goals:

- To disseminate good practice in relation to the development, facilitation and assessment of work and learning practice within HE through learning in, for and through a wide range of work-based learning, work- integrated and apprenticeship (higher, degree and graduate) programmes including undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels.
- To provide events and network opportunities for HE colleagues to support staff development
- To promote and disseminate research in the field of work and learning
- To promote the status of the use of work and learning practice in HE, with employers, policy makers, professional groups and other stakeholders through UALL.

Dr Paula Nottingham (UALL Convenor)

Dr Elda Nikolou-Walker (UALL Convenor)

For more information:

- [Visit the work and learning network website](#)
- [Visit the Work and Learning Research Centre](#)

The University and higher education in an eco-world

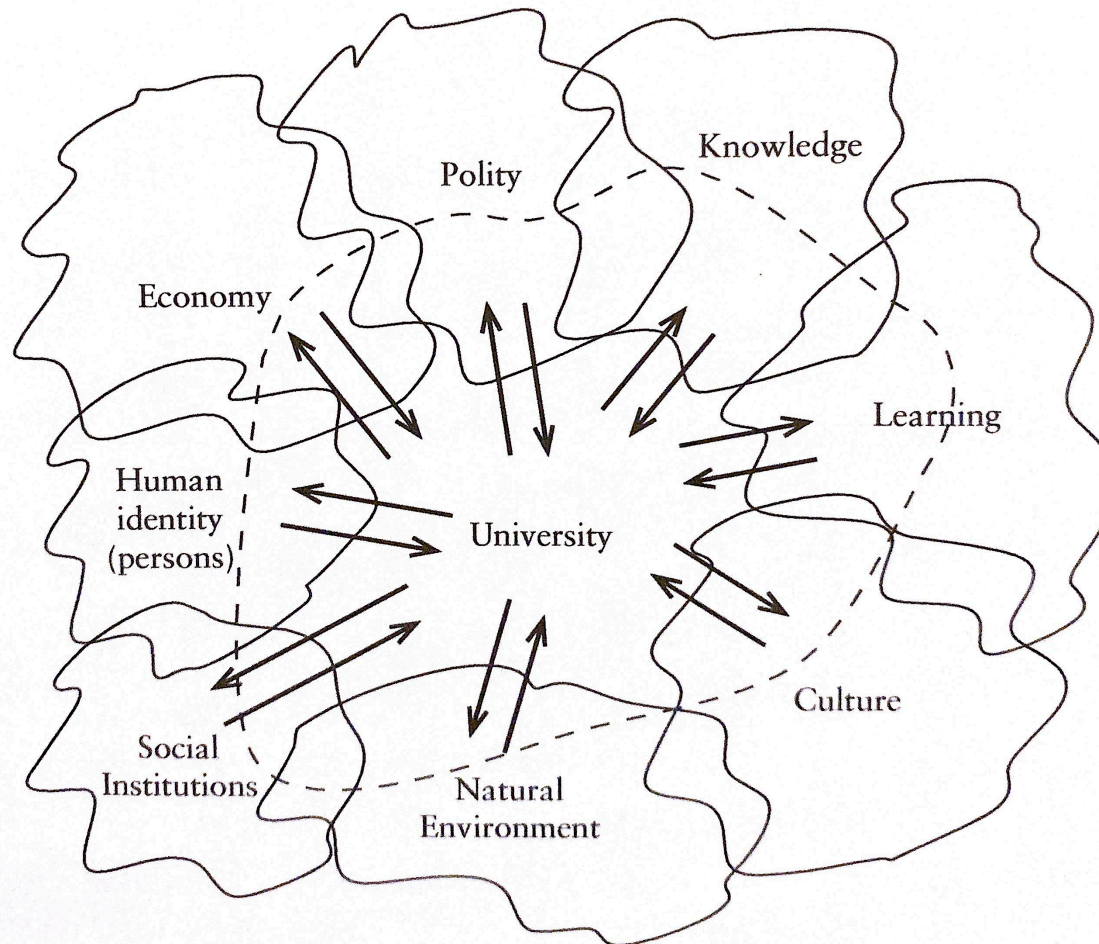


Figure 20.1 The ecological university, entangled with eight ecosystems.

“I suggest that there are no less than eight ecosystems that should especially come into view here, those of *knowledge, persons, social institutions, the economy, the polity, culture, learning and the natural environment*” (Barnett, 2022).

In the *Philosophy of Higher Education A Critical Introduction* by Ronald Barnett

CASE STUDY – SEEC (to be published as collective with other SEEC examples)

Working with an ongoing tradition for professional doctorates

The emergence of the professional doctorates in the UK have been seen as a way to engage with higher professional development at the same time as answering a national call to diversify doctoral education within universities (Scott *et al.*, 2004). The professional doctorate degree conceptualises undertaking research projects as a means through which the practitioner-researcher (Jarvis, 1999) can explore and investigate complex research problems in professional contexts. Doctorates have grown in popularity in the UK and internationally as they diversify to meet the demand for professional competitiveness and career planning for those taking higher level awards (Sarrico, 2022). Middlesex University has played a major sector role in the dissemination of professional doctorate pedagogy. It has been important to showcase practitioner research that represented how professional doctorates sought to innovate curriculum design while demonstrating equivalent standards to other Level 8 qualifications (Costley and Boud, 2022); historically the professional doctorate has many contextual sources of reference within Middlesex University that include the use of SEEC level descriptors. Professor Bravenboer, Chair of the SEEC network for the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL), has been instrumental in adapting the SEEC level descriptors for the May 2021 edition and has championed their continued use for educational research and development.

Déjà vu 2015

Ideas for communication/connectivity

- *Information given to core DProf staff but needs to be sent to Advisers – so difficult to signpost for Candidates – still going out by email only? **Staff could communicate more about what new practice is going on** – ... has suggested in team meetings*
- *Use of Google handout or Adobe Connect for separate online discussion sessions for each of 4 seminars? Continue separate online Induction as alternative for those who cannot come in person – this means 2 sessions but was taken up by candidates*
- *MyLearning discussions – mentioned in handbooks but not going on? Group sessions planned – similar to IWBL provision – Stage 1 only*
- *Group work – start with MyLearning – could do more with discussions then use system like Linked in group (s) – **Do a needs analysis for this with candidates – online Survey Monkey.** ... could form a trial for this (?), could be or 'stewarded' by module leaders and academic champions (?) in a team approach – important thing is continuity of provision – needs to be aligned with academic administration (Stephen) and advisers*
- *Calendars on MyLearning? Are they being updated?*
- *Sharing list for candidate emails Stage 1 and Stage 2 – permissions given?*
- *other institutions present speaker programmes with proper streaming facilities and twitter set up for questions e.g. NetEd at LSE – this takes resources to plan and carry out – unclear what central services can do Live streaming permission with CCSS not clear at MDX – there seems to be a limited service from Audio visual (Annette trialed in Feb) and CCSS needs to be contacted separately – so needs further investigation*
- *Consistency across the Stage 1 and Stage 2 provision – **treat separately with Stage 1 groups online from the beginning of the studies – to allow formation of special interest groups***
- *Seminars – advertised more – slides put up but this needs to be communicated back when they are ready – MyLearning universal email – candidates need to have university emails active or forwarded – then what about discussion for peers after this to help explain and embed expert seminars and relate to peer questions/discussion? More discussion work within seminars – shorten talk and build in round tables for candidates?*
- *Comparison of ... academic services for DProf to ... in Education that is now being resourced and staffed – look at good practice?*

Credit Framework for England 2021

This table draws together the FHEQ levels as well as having an additional column for the ECTS value from the Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). It is a table of typical qualifications, levels and credit volumes awarded by higher education providers. It cannot and does not attempt to contain all types and titles of higher education awards.

Values shown in column 3 are the minimum that are typically associated with the qualification (plus any permissible minimum or maximum at a specified level shown in parentheses).



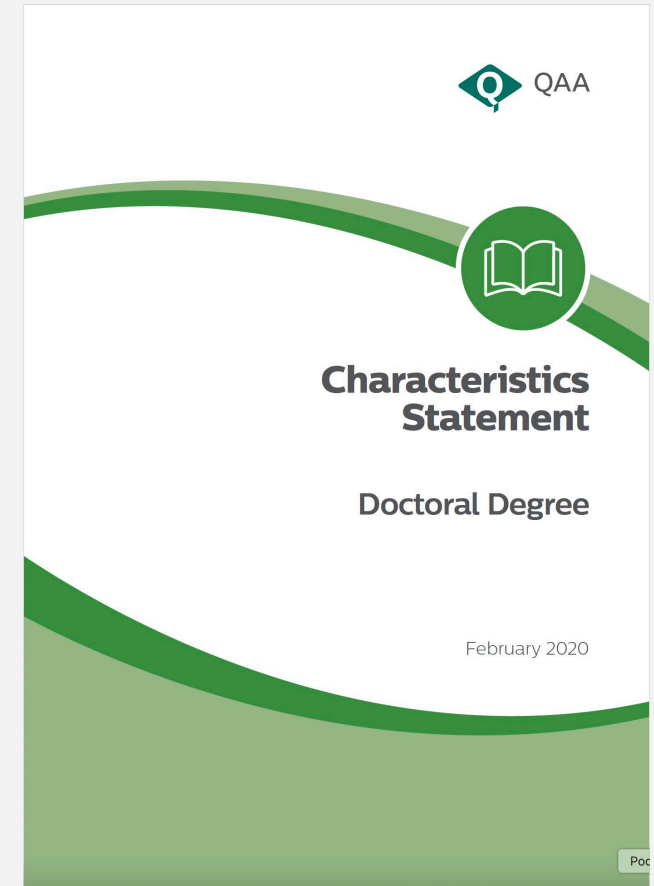
Typical higher education qualifications within each level	FHEQ Level	Minimum credit	QF-EHEA cycles	ECTS credit ranges from the QF-EHEA
PhD/DPhil	8	Not typically credit-rated	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	Not typically credit-rated
Professional doctorates (eg DProf, EdD, DBA, DClInPsy)		540 (360 at FHEQ level 8)		
Research master's degrees (eg MRes, MPhil)	7	Not typically credit-rated	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	The minimum requirement is 60 ECTS; however a range of 90-100 ECTS credits is more typical at second cycle level
Taught master's degrees (eg MA, MSc)		180 (150 at FHEQ level 7)		
Integrated master's degrees (eg MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)		480 (120 at FHEQ level 7)		
Primary (or first) qualifications in medicine, (eg BM BS) and dentistry (eg BDS)		Not typically credit-rated		
Postgraduate diplomas		120 (90 at FHEQ level 7)		
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)		60 (40 at FHEQ level 7)		
Postgraduate certificates		60 (40 at FHEQ level 7)		

Professional Doctorate and practitioner PhD

Category 3: Professional and practice-based (or practitioner) doctorates

“Professional and practice-based doctorates provide an opportunity for individuals to situate professional knowledge developed over time in a theoretical academic framework. As such, they have different structures from other forms of doctorate. They are often post-experience qualifications and therefore they are frequently the doctoral degree of choice for mid-career professionals. However, in some cases they are required for entry to a profession, namely as a license to practice, or undertaken for reasons other than career development.” (QAA, 2020, p. 8)

The approach in every provider that awards research degrees is informed by The Quality Code, *Advice and Guidance Theme: Research Degrees*; Guiding principle 4 states that ‘Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development’ (QAA, 2020, p. 13)



<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/characteristics-statements/characteristics-statement-doctoral-degrees>

QAA Level 8

QAA 2024 4.7 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 8

pp 27-28

4.8 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF Level 12 on the FQHEIS



Doctoral degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the Frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other Level 8/Level 12 qualifications.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- ï the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- ï a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- ï the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- ï a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

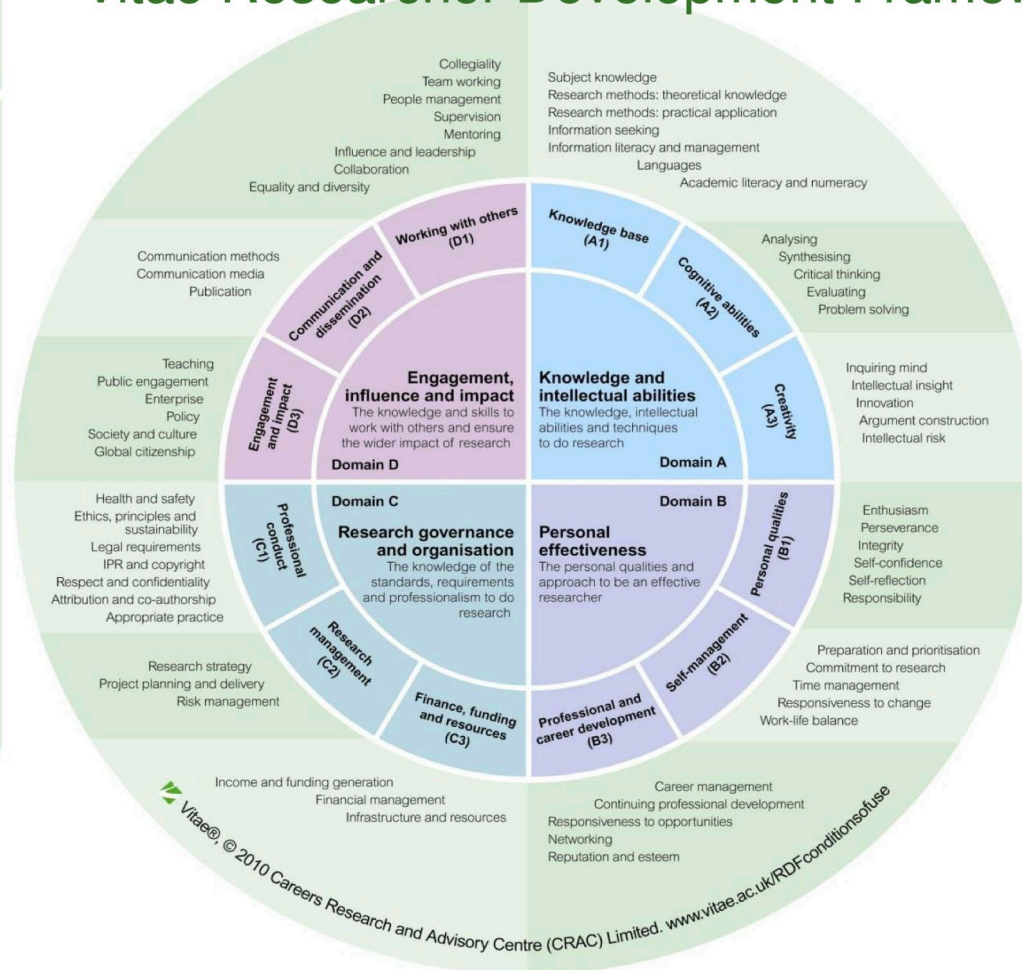
- ï make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- ï continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- ï the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Researcher Development Framework

Vitae Researcher Development Framework

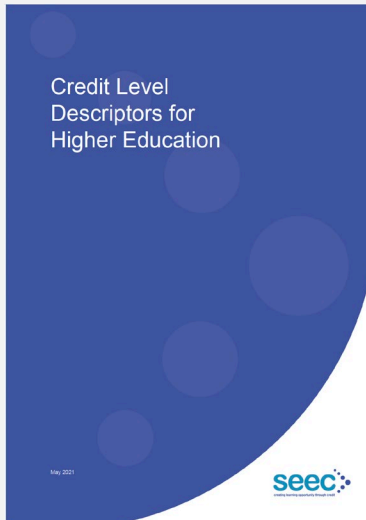
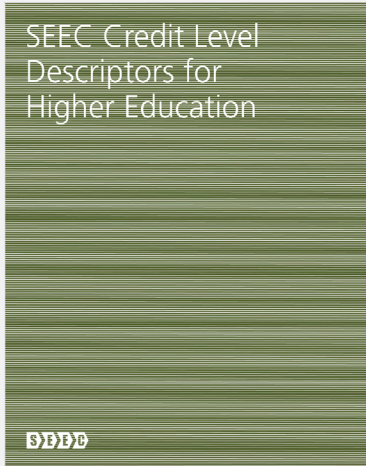


- Knowledge, behaviour and attributes of successful researchers
- Self-assessment of strengths and areas for development
- Common language for researchers capabilities
- Basis for institutional and course provision
- Inspires and confirms

www.vitae.ac.uk

SEEC 1985 – 2025

(Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer)



About seec

Formed in 1985, **seec** operated independently until 2020 and is now a Network of the University Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL).

Its members are practitioners and representatives from universities and higher education providers working together to advance the use and practice of academic credit, widening access to learning. Aligned with the UALL mission, the purpose of **seec** is to create learning opportunity through credit. **seec** aims 'to advance education for the public benefit by developing credit accumulation and transfer and promoting lifelong learning, at the higher education level'.

Since its formation in 1985², **seec** has served as a reference point on credit-based learning, structures and processes in the UK and in the developing field of European credit. It promotes links and collaborative ventures between our members, employers, professional bodies and other organisations with interests in credit, to open up market opportunities in the UK and internationally.

For more information, visit **www.seec.org.uk**

LINK FOR SEEC MAY 2021 LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/1krdaok92fj40oocr8bxs/AOUGXbGF4UI6DVGx-fpUgPQ?e=2&preview=MDX_SEEC-Descriptors_Update-May-2021_Version-2_For-screen_AW13885.pdf&rlkey=ib96j3isi57iw7cqey31l3cms&st=ez4l33fk&dl=0

Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
<p>Applies an understanding of pre-defined areas of knowledge and skills in familiar learning, work or practice contexts. Acts largely under direction; working within pre-defined guidelines and using predefined techniques. Takes responsibility for initiating and completing tasks as well as the evaluation of own capabilities. Uses pre-defined principles to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate information. Develops projects and/or activities to support own and/or others learning, work and practice.</p>	<p>Applies an understanding of established areas of knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar learning, work or practice contexts. Acts with support and uses techniques within established guidelines. Takes responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs and the evaluation of own capabilities and development. Uses established principles to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate the relevance and significance of information. Develops projects and/or activities to inform own and/or others learning, work or practice.</p>	<p>Applies an understanding of wide-ranging areas of knowledge and a range of relevant skills in learning, work or practice contexts of varying complexity. Acts with partial self-direction and works within relevant guidelines using a wide range of techniques. Takes responsibility for achieving personal and/or group outcomes/outputs and evaluates own capabilities and development using relevant criteria. Uses a range of principles to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate the reliability and validity of a variety of information sources. Develops a range of relevant projects and/or activities to improve areas of own and/or others learning, work or practice.</p>	<p>Applies an in-depth understanding of areas of knowledge and relevant selected specialist skills in complex and interrelated learning, work or practice contexts. Acts autonomously and works within relevant self-selected guidelines using specialist techniques. Takes responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes and for the critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities and development. Selects relevant specialist strategies and principles to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate the significance of information and data in complex contexts. Designs and develops specialist projects and/or activities to enhance inter-related areas of own and/or others learning.</p>	<p>Applies a systematic understanding of areas of knowledge and advanced skills in abstract and unpredictably complex learning, work or practice contexts. Acts autonomously to make strategic decisions taking responsibility for outcomes and for leading the systematic and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development. Uses specialist techniques, advanced methodologies and criteria to systematically analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate incomplete and/or contradictory information and data. Designs and develops advanced specialist projects and/or activities to strategically enhance own and/or others learning, work or practice.</p>	<p>Applies a comprehensive understanding of areas of knowledge and highly advanced skills in highly abstract and complex learning, work or practice contexts at the forefront of knowledge. Acts autonomously, often in a professional capacity, to make strategic decisions that drive and develop transformative initiatives. Uses highly advanced and specialist techniques to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate information, data and evidence at the forefront of knowledge. Takes full accountability for the comprehensive and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development. Uses highly advanced methodologies to drive the production of new knowledge. Designs and develops highly advanced, specialist and innovative projects and/or activities to transform own and/or others learning, work or practice.</p>



seec descriptors: by level

Level 7

Summary credit level descriptor

Applies a systematic understanding of areas of knowledge and advanced skills in abstract and unpredictably complex learning, work or practice contexts. Acts autonomously to make strategic decisions taking responsibility for outcomes and for leading the systematic and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development. Uses specialist techniques, advanced methodologies and criteria to systematically analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate incomplete and/or contradictory information and data. Designs and develops advanced specialist projects and/or activities to strategically enhance own and/or others learning, work or practice.

Setting

Operational context	Operates in abstract and unpredictably complex learning, work or practice contexts, requiring selection and application of advanced and specialist techniques and information sources.
Autonomy and responsibility for actions	Acts autonomously to make strategic decisions and develops appropriate practice guidelines, taking responsibility for outcomes in abstract and unpredictably complex contexts.

Application of knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding	Applies a systematic understanding of knowledge and specialist theoretical and methodological approaches, suggesting and incorporating interrelationships with other relevant disciplines in abstract and unpredictably complex contexts.
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Cognitive skills

Conceptualisation and critical thinking	Selects and applies advanced principles, concepts, theoretical frameworks and approaches to critically develop systematic responses to existing discourses and methodologies, suggesting new ideas in unpredictably complex contexts.
Problem solving and enquiry	Selects and adapts appropriate advanced problem-solving strategies, methods and techniques to design systematic investigations that define and critically evaluate problems, using specialist information and data in unpredictable and complex contexts.
Synthesis and creativity	Systematically synthesises advanced and specialist information and ideas and formulates and develops innovative proposals to address strategic issues or opportunities in unpredictably complex contexts.
Analysis and evaluation	Systematically and critically analyses and evaluates, incomplete and/or contradictory data and evidence, developing effective and advanced methodologies to explain and support conclusions and recommendations in unpredictably complex contexts.

Practical skills

Organisation and communication of information	Systematically organises and communicates advanced information, using criteria developed for specialist audiences in unpredictably complex contexts.
Interpersonal, team and networking skills	Applies and develops advanced interpersonal, team and networking skills to strategically enhance team performance in unpredictably complex contexts and contributes to specialist professional communities.
Project and activity design and development skills	Designs and develops advanced specialist projects and/or activities to strategically enhance own and/or others learning, work or practice within unpredictably complex contexts.

Behaviours and values

Ethical awareness and application	Systematically applies an advanced awareness of ethical and professional values and codes of conduct, to personal and strategic decisions, actions, responsibilities, outcomes and dilemmas, whilst working proactively with others to suggest and advocate appropriate solutions in unpredictably complex contexts.
Personal responsibility and leadership	Takes responsibility for leading the systematic and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development, applying strategic management approaches in unpredictably complex contexts.

seec descriptors: by level

Level 8

Summary credit level descriptor

Applies a comprehensive understanding of areas of knowledge and highly advanced skills in highly abstract and complex learning, work or practice contexts at the forefront of knowledge. Acts autonomously, often in a professional capacity, to make strategic decisions that drive and develop transformative initiatives. Uses highly advanced and specialist techniques to analyse, evaluate, organise and communicate information, data and evidence at the forefront of knowledge. Takes full accountability for the comprehensive and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development. Uses highly advanced methodologies to drive the production of new knowledge. Designs and develops highly advanced, specialist and innovative projects and/or activities to transform own and/or others learning, work or practice.

Setting

Operational context	Operates in highly abstract and complex learning, work or practice contexts at the forefront of knowledge requiring selection, development and innovative application of highly advanced and specialist techniques and information sources.
Autonomy and responsibility for actions	Acts autonomously to drive and develop transformative initiatives and guidelines, often in a professional capacity, with full accountability for self and others in highly abstract and complex contexts at the forefront of knowledge, work and practice.

Application of knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding	Applies a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, techniques and methodologies at the forefront of the discipline to drive the production of new knowledge in highly abstract and complex contexts.
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Cognitive skills

Conceptualisation and critical thinking	Develops and applies innovative and highly advanced principles, concepts, theoretical frameworks and approaches to critically produce a comprehensive and coherent discourse and methodology to underpin new ideas in highly abstract and complex contexts.
Problem solving and enquiry	Develops innovative and highly advanced problem-solving strategies, methods and techniques to design comprehensive investigations that critically evaluate problems to generate new information and data in highly abstract and complex contexts.
Synthesis and creativity	Comprehensively synthesises highly advanced and specialist information and ideas and formulates and develops new and transformative proposals to address and challenge issues or opportunities at the forefront of knowledge, in highly abstract and complex contexts.
Analysis and evaluation	Comprehensively and critically analyses and evaluates incomplete and/or contradictory data and evidence at the forefront of knowledge, developing innovative methodologies to explain, support, challenge and drive the production of new knowledge in highly complex contexts.

Practical skills

Organisation and communication of information	Comprehensively organises and communicates new and highly advanced information using criteria at the forefront of knowledge, developed for specialist audiences in highly complex contexts.
Interpersonal, team and networking skills	Applies and develops highly advanced interpersonal, team and networking skills to transformatively enhance team performance in highly complex contexts and innovatively contributes to specialist professional communities.
Project and activity design and development skills	Designs and develops highly advanced, specialist and innovative projects and/or activities to transform own and/or others learning, work or practice in highly complex contexts.

Behaviours and values

Ethical awareness and application	Comprehensively applies a highly advanced awareness of ethical and professional values and codes of conduct, as an accountable aspect of own professional practice and works transformatively with others to formulate and implement innovative solutions and value frameworks in highly complex contexts.
Personal responsibility and leadership	Leads and is accountable for the comprehensive and critical evaluation of own and others' capabilities, performance and development, applying innovative and transformative leadership approaches in highly complex contexts.

Earlier version comparison

Professional Doctorate and Phd

Studies In Higher Education

Following

Article

Full-text available

Conceptualizing the practitioner doctorate

December 2004 · Studies In Higher Education 29(6):757-770

DOI: 10.1080/0307507042000287249

Stan Lester

Overview

Stats

Citations (125)

References (54)

Abstract

Professional doctorates now form an established alternative to the PhD, both in the UK and Australia. Recent developments have seen the emergence of what some commentators call second-generation doctorates, more closely geared to the needs of professional practitioners. The current culmination of this development is represented by what might be termed practitioner doctorates, based on development projects which result in substantial organizational or professional change and (to paraphrase the widely used criterion for a PhD thesis) a significant contribution to practice. These programmes pose a challenge to traditional notions of doctoral work based on research. They can, however, be conceptualized in a way that is both robust academically and represents a high level of adequacy for the complex and far-reaching problems encountered in contemporary society.

Table 4: DProf and PhD compared

Areas of development	DProf	PhD
Point of view and self awareness of candidate	Central to consideration of professional knowledge claims	May be relevant, for example, as part of research process
Knowledge	Practice based; often procedural and propositional knowledge; potentially wide-ranging and likely to be trans-disciplinary in nature	Likely to be propositional; often cumulative
Originality/distinctiveness	Considered as a vital part of the case for professional excellence and/or major organisational change	Core criterion for knowledge claim
Impact	Core criterion and incorporated within the level descriptors	Considered in relation to knowledge claim
Working with others	Regarded as standard and incorporated within the level descriptors	Not standard
Nature of works	Wide-ranging – many will not be formally ‘published’; possibly of different types within the same claim (for example, articles, plans, policy papers)	Potential to be wide-ranging but within a single claim; more likely to be of the same type (for example, a series of articles or a collection of artefacts)

Earlier use of SEEC Level Descriptors

Table 5: Level 8 learning outcomes

Key area	Assessment criterion
Knowledge and understanding	A1 – Knowledge: Evidence that the candidate has depth and range of knowledge in a complex area and is currently working at the leading edge of practice underpinned by theoretical understanding.
	A2 – Research and development capability: Demonstrates effective and critical selection, combination and use of research and development methods; can develop new approaches in new situations and contribute to the development of practice based research methodology.
	A3 – Ethical understanding: Demonstrates awareness of ethical dilemmas and conflicting values which may arise in professional practice and work situations; able to formulate solutions in dialogue with superiors, peers, clients, mentors and others.
Cognitive (thinking) skills	B1 – Analysis and synthesis: Demonstrates ability to analyse and synthesise complex and possibly conflicting ideas and information in order to redefine knowledge and develop new approaches.
	B2 – Self appraisal/reflection on practice: Provides evidence of work with 'critical communities' through whom a new or modified paradigm is being established. Habitually reflects on own and others practice so that self-appraisal and reflective inquiry are intertwined, thereby improving the candidate's own and others' action.
	B3 – Planning/management of learning: Is autonomous in management of own learning; makes professional use of others in support of self-directed learning and is fully aware of political implications of the study.
	B4 – Evaluation: Can independently evaluate/argue a complex position concerning alternative approaches; can accurately assess/report on own and others work; can critique and justify evaluations as constituting bases for improvement in practice.

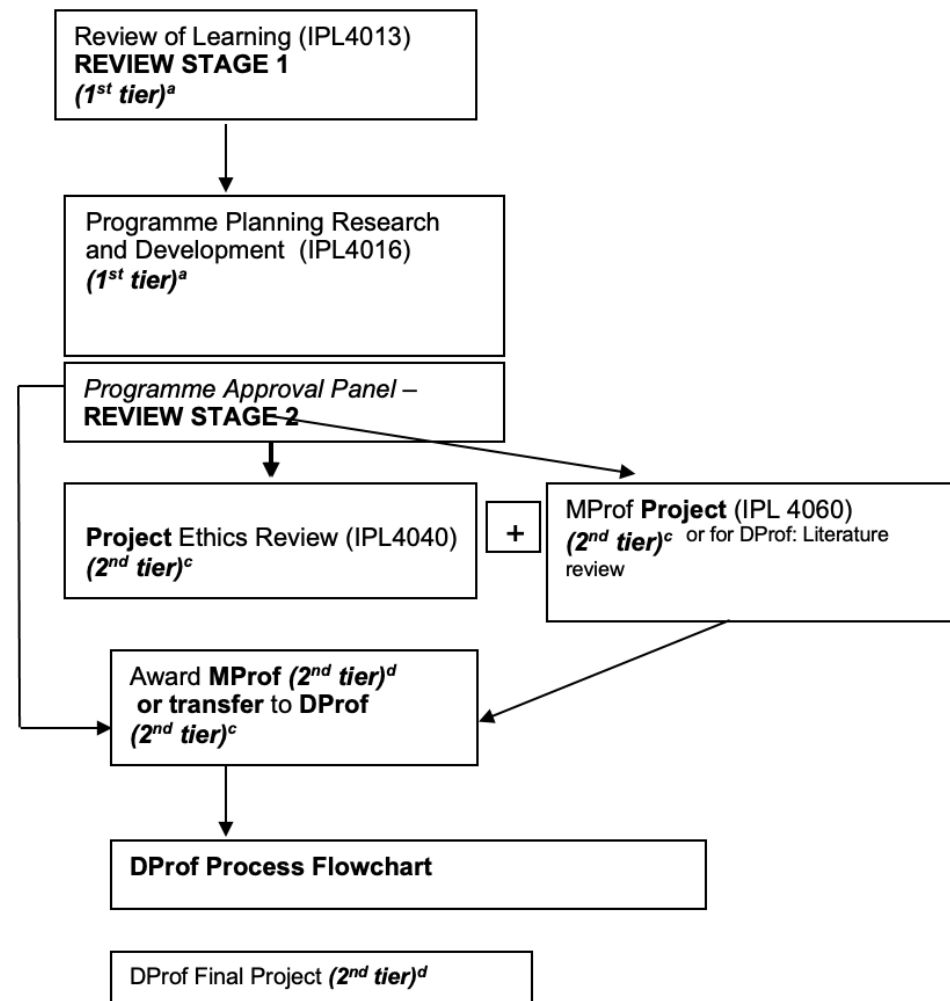
Practical skills	C1 – Operational context and application of learning: Innovative approaches address issues arising in unpredictable, specialised work contexts beyond the current state of knowledge. Can be multi, inter or transdisciplinary in approach, content or in the contribution to understanding. Outcomes can include workable frameworks and/or models for practice.
	C2 – Engagement with professional and academic communities Use of resources: Systematic application of advanced interpersonal and networking skills to promote the transformation of professional practice.
	C3 – Communication and information management: Professional and academic communication with others in the field include papers/presentations to 'critical communities' and are of a quality to; satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of professional knowledge in a specific area of professional practice, and merit publication to appropriate professional and/or academic audiences.
Personal and enabling skills	D1 – Planning and management of professional development: Autonomy in the management of own learning; self-critically integrates into on-going reflective practice and informed by engagement with professional and academic communities. Makes professional use of others in support of learning and fully aware of the political implications of dialogue, practice inquiry and the dissemination of innovation.
	D2 – Responsibility and accountability in work/practice contexts: High levels of responsibility for self and others and has the ability to provide leadership in complex or unpredictable environments.

Learning Unit Narratives

Unit Code	Unit Title	Unit Leader
IPL4013	Review of Learning	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4016	Planning Practitioner Research & Development Programme	Dr Leena Robertson and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4040	Project Ethics Review	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4060	MProf Project	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
	Expert Seminar Series: Explorations in Leadership: Followership, Change Management and Transformation	Dr Gordon Weller, Core M/DProf Team
IPL5360	Project Unit (Level 8 DProf)	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller

In this section you will find details of all the units associated with your programme.

MProf/DProf Process Flowchart



Professional Doctorate

Unit Code: IPL4013
Unit Title: Review of Learning (Review Stage 1)
Level M
Pre-Requisites: None
Co-Requisites: None
Notional Study Hours: 180 hours
Unit Team: Dr Ruth Plume, Dr Gordon Weller, Dr Elda Nikolou-Walker, Dr Paula Nottingham

Aims:

The Unit provides an opportunity for the participant to critically review and reflect upon the learning they have achieved during their professional experience and to link this to their aspirations for the high-level work required for the award of a Research Degree. The argument presented will be congruent with the level M and/or level D criteria.

As leadership is a core component of the doctorate at level M and D, candidates will be facilitated in thinking about their understanding and experience of leadership, followership and transformational change.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this Unit, the participant will be able to:

1. outline the range and depth of their professional knowledge and responsibilities
2. demonstrate the ability to critically review, analyse and evaluate their own experience in their professional context, including how they manage their own learning, solve problems and communicate with others
3. convincingly argue a case for how professional work already undertaken is relevant to both the level and proposed focus of the masters/doctoral work to be subsequently undertaken on the programme, which should include perspectives on leadership.
4. state the authority they have, the resources they command and relationships they have with other stakeholders, which will enable them to successfully plan, implement and conclude their research project work on the Programme
5. write and present succinctly, critically, comprehensively and in a cogently argued way.

Unit Code: IPL4016
Unit Title: Planning a Practitioner Research & Development Programme
Level M
Pre-Requisites: None
Co-Requisites: None
Notional Study Hours: 540 hours
Unit Team: Dr Leena Robertson, Dr Gordon Weller, Dr Elda Nikolou-Walker, Dr Paula Nottingham

Aims

The Unit aims are to:

- support you to construct a credible and cohesive doctoral or master level work based research programme plan in your specialist field of professional practice,
- enable you to build on your professional knowledge biography to expand your research capability of work based research methodologies including your positionality, methods, ethics and impact,
- engender in you critical appreciation and understandings of research philosophies, a range of methodological approaches and methods of inquiry relevant to the practitioner engaged in research and development activities for 'real life' issues,
- facilitate you in producing a sustainable contribution to the body of professional knowledge in your specialist sphere of practice.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this Unit you will be able to:

1. Design and plan a cohesive and coherent doctoral or master research programme incorporating your existing knowledge and skills in different contexts and a robust and sustainable work based research proposal that contributes to the enhancement of professional knowledge and practice
2. Explore the nature of knowledge and processes of knowledge production and use
3. Examine philosophical and theoretical perspectives in the understanding, explication and valuing of an epistemology of practice
4. Formulate a research question based on an analysis and synthesis of the literature and contemporary professional practice
5. Propose a research design and strategy, inclusive of an ethical, political and legal organising framework, congruent with investigating the research question
6. Develop a critical and ethical understanding of a range of research methods for data production and analysis relevant to your professional field
7. Demonstrate understanding for rigour of work based research processes
8. Critically appraise the potential impact of the programme plan, including your leadership, to professional practice and key stakeholders in your work organisation and /or professional community.

Professional Doctorate

Learning Unit Narratives

Unit Code	Unit Title	Unit Leader
IPL4013	Review of Learning	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4016	Planning Practitioner Research & Development Programme	Dr Leena Robertson and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4040	Project Ethics Review	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
IPL4060	MProf Project	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller
	Expert Seminar Series: Explorations in Leadership: Followership, Change Management and Transformation	Dr Gordon Weller, Core M/DProf Team
IPL5360	Project Unit (Level 8 DProf)	Dr Ruth Plume and Dr Gordon Weller

In this section you will find details of all the units associated with your programme.

Unit Code: IPL5360
Unit Title: DProf Final Project
Level: Level D
Pre-Requisites: IPL4016 (Programme Plan) and IPL4040 (Project Ethics Review)
Co-Requisites: None
Notional Study Hours: 2400 & 2700 hours
Unit Team: Dr Ruth Plume, Dr Gordon Weller, Dr Elda Nikolou-Walker, Dr Paula Nottingham

Rationale Including Aims:

It is in the DProf project that participants are able to demonstrate the complex and sophisticated knowledge and skills appropriate to personal professional and organisational learning and draw together the learning achieved on other components of the framework.

This emphasis requires that the participant develops and demonstrates expertise in the wide-ranging areas detailed in the Framework Learning Outcomes and Level M and D criteria. These criteria are congruent with the ability to engage with new, unfamiliar, and ever-changing contexts appropriate to the work of senior and experienced professionals.

A critical commentary enables the candidate to review and reflect upon the effectiveness of their work including the appropriateness of the research design and methodology; the strategy for dissemination and change management; and to articulate and relate to their ethical and personal philosophy and its effect on their work.

The Unit meets the criteria for a DProf final project:

Learning Outcomes:

Project units are the culmination of the learning achieved on the framework, and on the successful completion, the participants will be able to demonstrate the following capabilities:

- 1 The integration of their learning and experience into cohesive work that makes a significant contribution to their professional and/or organisational development.
- 2 Capabilities detailed in the level M and D criteria

Professional Doctorate

Unit Code:	IPL5360
Unit Title:	DProf Final Project
Level:	Level D
Pre-Requisites:	IPL4016 (Programme Plan) and IPL4040 (Project Ethics Review)
Co-Requisites:	None
Notional Study Hours:	2400 & 2700 hours
Unit Team:	Dr Ruth Plume, Dr Gordon Weller, Dr Elda Nikolou-Walker, Dr Paula Nottingham

Rationale Including Aims:

It is in the DProf project that participants are able to demonstrate the complex and sophisticated knowledge and skills appropriate to personal professional and organisational learning and draw together the learning achieved on other components of the framework.

This emphasis requires that the participant develops and demonstrates expertise in the wide-ranging areas detailed in the Framework Learning Outcomes and Level M and D criteria. These criteria are congruent with the ability to engage with new, unfamiliar, and ever-changing contexts appropriate to the work of senior and experienced professionals.

A critical commentary enables the candidate to review and reflect upon the effectiveness of their work including the appropriateness of the research design and methodology; the strategy for dissemination and change management; and to articulate and relate to their ethical and personal philosophy and its effect on their work.

The Unit meets the criteria for a DProf final project:

Learning Outcomes:

Project units are the culmination of the learning achieved on the framework, and on the successful completion, the participants will be able to demonstrate the following capabilities:

- 1 The integration of their learning and experience into cohesive work that makes a significant contribution to their professional and/or organisational development.
- 2 Capabilities detailed in the level M and D criteria


NEW Professional Doctorate 2024-2025

Review Stage 1 and Review Stage 2 (Registration and Programme Approval Panel (PAP) as Transfer)

Outline: Master of Professional Studies (MProf)

At Masters level 7	
Review Stage 1	Unit 1 Review of Learning
Review Stage 2	Unit 2 Planning Practitioner Research
	Project Ethics Review
At Masters level 7	
	Masters Project (MProf only)
At Doctoral level 8	
	Doctoral Project

NEW Professional Doctorate 2024-2025



***Masters and Doctorate
in Professional Studies***

**Review of Learning Handbook
Unit 1
2024/25**

**Faculties of
Health, Social Care and Education
and
Science and Technology**

Unit Leader:
Dr Paula McIver Nottingham
& M/DProf Team

Unit Description
Review of Learning Unit 1
Masters Level 7

Rationale Including Aims:

The unit provides an opportunity for the participant to critically review and reflect upon the learning they have achieved during their professional experience and to link this to their aspirations for the high-level work required for the award of a Research Degree. The argument presented will be congruent with the level 7 criteria but can refer to the Level 8 requirements of the degree. As a consequence of the continued professional development (CPD) work presented (written submission and panel) , the student work may be recognised as meeting the requirements for Stage 1 (Registration). Students will then be able to undertake Planning Practitioner Research and an Ethics Review in order to complete Stage 2 Programme Approval Panel (PAP) and Ethics review.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this unit, the participant will be able to:

- Outline the range and depth of their professional knowledge and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically review, analyse and evaluate their own experience in their professional context, including how they manage their own learning, solve problems and communicate with others.
- Convincingly argue, orally and in written form, a case for how professional work already undertaken is relevant to both the level and proposed focus of the masters/doctoral work to be subsequently undertaken on your programme.
- State the authority they have, the resources they command and relationships they have with other stakeholders, which will enable them to successfully plan, implement and conclude their project work.
- Write succinctly, comprehensively and in a cogently argued way and to demonstrate this in a critique of relevant literature to their field of research interest.

Content:

The participants own knowledge base and professional experience from the theories and practical sources introduced for this unit.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

A variety of approaches appropriate to adult learners will be utilised. This will include seminars, group work, self-managed learning and personal tutorials. In order to meet the learning needs of all professionals, delivery will be online via Zoom unless otherwise stated and will include an online discussion board and session recordings.

Contact hours / teaching activity / seminar preparation

6 x 2 hour seminars over 1 semester
1 x 1 hour individual tutorials

Independent learning activity per week

Sufficient to complete the unit.

NEW Professional Doctorate 2024-2025

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Reviewing the literature

The University of Edinburgh (n.d.) states,

‘A literature review is a piece of academic writing demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the academic literature on a specific topic placed in context.’

Following the last activity, which required us to identify a key point (critical incident) in our career that has influenced our professional development, I selected the point when I became the Intellectual Property Strategic Lead for my organisation, XXXX. From a theoretical perspective, I then applied the ‘Novice to Expert: the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition’ (Dreyfus, 1986) to my professional development and created a timeline covering my entire career as a librarian and charting progression within the area of copyright.

For the next activity, we were required to undertake a literature search of our area of practice, reviewing what we had done in the past and now with a more specific goal for our future University work. We had to find, read, and summarise our choice (Appendix 4).

Conclusion

Reviewing the SEEC descriptors have been a useful way to review programme aims and guidance through careful consideration about what it is candidates need to achieve from this degree and how we can help make sure that this experience and outputs match doctoral examination requirements for a distinctive and meaningful contribution to knowledge. At the heart of this M/DProf approach are the pedagogic principles that recognise many differing types of knowledge where a professional person conveys “practical wisdom” (Maxwell, 2019, p. 8). This applies to professional competences as well as propositional knowledge.

The HSCE/S&T M/DProf provides a structured approach for senior professionals to communicate their own progression and autonomy. Candidates who have affiliation or chartership to professional bodies can use these affiliations to enhance the research and personal/professional learning. The refresh of the curriculum supports conducting research projects and the critical review of doctorates by published work that contribute to knowledge and incorporate as a central principle “personal responsibility and leadership” (SEEC , 2021, p 17).

Our key achievements for the refresh using the SEEC level descriptors are:

- Collaborative development and CPD redesign for Stage 1, Stage 2 and final projects
- Expanding a professional focus to include relevant career progression
- Alignment of the specialist pathways to meet candidate and industry needs
- Support of candidate's academic and professional public engagement and networking

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THANK YOU

p.nottingham@mdx.ac.uk