

Introduction and Welcome

Welcome – or welcome back – to your research degree at Newcastle. Whatever subject you’re studying, wherever you’ve come from and whoever you are, you are very welcome here.

You come at a good time. Last year we redesigned our Postgraduate Research (PGR) strategy, rethinking what PGR means for the University and for how our PGR students – you! – can get the most from your experience here. At the heart of the strategy is this statement:

Our vision is to embed PGR students at the centre of our activities, providing them with leading-edge education, training and development that will allow them to flourish in many different futures. Our PGR students will be enabled to contribute fully to our research excellence and impact by advancing knowledge, working with our partners, and providing creative solutions to regional, national and global challenges.

As you can see, the commitment here is to ensure that postgraduate research is recognised as one of the core activities of the University – just as crucial as undergraduate teaching, or big research projects. And second, we want to ensure that you are receiving training that goes beyond the narrow specialist subject of your thesis (however interesting and important that special subject may be!). Above all, we want you to share in the University’s mission for our research and education, that alongside its inherent worth, it should also deliver societal benefit, whether here in the North East or globally.

Our new PGR strategic plan has many elements. Some are quite long-term, such as developing new modes of delivering PGR degrees, perhaps online or by professional practice. Others are already being implemented. For instance, we are committing ourselves to developing a one-University model for PGR support, including access to information and internal funding opportunities and policy implementation. The University’s Doctoral College will be leading on this. We already have much of the infrastructure in place. For instance, there’s the Research Enhancement Fund, which can provide bursaries and awards to support things like conference attendance, your research activities, opportunities for student enterprise and so on.

For this coming year, you’ll continue to find support of various kinds in your School or Institute, and in your Faculty, as well as from the Doctoral College. And of course, you’ll be receiving training and advice from individual academics, most obviously your supervisors. Alongside that, you’ll get encouragement, advice and friendship from other students in your community. The Newcastle University Students’ Union—run by students, for students—is dedicated to championing student issues and enhancing your university experience. It also offers great opportunities to connect with the research student community and get involved in its activities.

And then there’s this Handbook. What you’ll find here is information on our various PGR policies and procedures. This will be more, or less, relevant to you depending on the stage you’re at with your work. For those just starting your course, there is valuable advice here on choosing your topic and establishing good relationships with your supervisors. In fact, we hope that supervisors as well as students will read the handbook: there’s great advice for everyone.

Finally then, thank-you for coming – or returning – to Newcastle. I ‘m sure you’ll have a wonderful, exciting, and enriching time here during your degree, and we hope that you will feel like a valued member of our community, both in your own academic home and the University as a whole. I wish you every success in your work.

Professor Matthew Grenby

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation

