

Postgraduate Research Degrees Posthumous and Aegrotat Award Policy

Approved by UEC: 5th July 2023

Effective Date: 2023/24 Academic Year



This policy replaces the Posthumous Award policy and guidance previously approved by ULTSEC on 15th July 2015.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies in cases where a postgraduate research degree student dies during their research degree programme (Posthumous) or receives the diagnosis of a terminal or debilitating illness that makes completion of the research degree programme impossible, regardless of reasonable adjustments. (Aegrotat).
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Student Death Procedure](#).

2. Process for initiating a request for a Posthumous or Aegrotat award

- 2.1 Initial queries about an award of a Posthumous or Aegrotat research degree should be made by the Academic Supervisor to the Graduate School Manager who will check the eligibility of the student for a Posthumous or an Aegrotat award by reviewing the student's completed candidature and will indicate which of the following options is to be followed.

3. Posthumous Awards

- 3.1 Posthumous research degree award submissions should normally have the support of the student's family and should be endorsed by the Head of Academic Unit (or nominee) in which the student was registered.
- 3.2 In all cases, the student must have completed a significant body of work and be on the trajectory to Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or Doctoral standard. This is necessary to demonstrate that the student would have met the appropriate assessment criteria for the award of the degree.
- 3.3 The Academic Supervisor should:
 - Collate all material produced by the student, 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.
 - Produce a Supporting Statement outlining why the student should be considered for a Posthumous award, explaining the nature of the submission, outlining where the material produced by the student fits into the planned programme of work, and how any omissions would have been filled.
 - Nominate an Internal and External Examiner, providing a short justification for the appointment, along with a CV for the External Examiner.

4. Aegrotat Award

- 4.1 In exceptional circumstances, where the student is prevented due to terminal or debilitating illness from engaging in the normal examination processes, e.g., making a final submission of their thesis, undertaking the viva, or completing post-viva corrections, including a resubmission, the Academic Supervisor and/or student may wish to consider instigating the Aegrotat Award process.
- 4.2 Aegrotat research degree award submissions should normally have the support of the student or the student's family and should be endorsed by the Head of Academic Unit (or nominee) in which the student is (or was) registered.

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- 4.3 It may not be possible for a professional doctorate student to receive an Aegrotat award and the programme specific regulations should indicate whether this is a possibility.
- 4.4 An Aegrotat award does not entitle the holder to registration with a professional body, or exemption from the requirements of any professional qualification which might otherwise be associated with the programme of study.
- 4.5 Where an Aegrotat award is to be considered, the relevant Graduate School/Dean of Postgraduate Studies should be satisfied that the student's prior performance shows beyond a reasonable doubt, that the student would have successfully completed the degree were it not for their illness. Appropriate medical evidence must be provided to support an Aegrotat award and will be treated as confidential by the Graduate School/Dean of Postgraduate Studies.
- 4.6 The submission for the Aegrotat award requires:
- Collation of all material which demonstrates the student's 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.
 - A Supporting Statement explaining the nature of the submission, outlining where the material produced fits into the planned programme of work, and how any omissions would have been filled.
- This should typically be completed by the student with support from the Academic Supervisor. In exceptional circumstances this may be completed by the Academic Supervisor in consultation with the student or their family.
- 4.7 The Academic Supervisor will:
- Nominate an Internal and External Examiner, providing a short justification for the appointment, along with a CV for the External Examiner, if examiners have not already been appointed.

5. Submission Process

- 5.1 For both Posthumous and Aegrotat submissions the Academic Supervisor will share the submission and statement with the relevant Director of Postgraduate Studies.
- 5.2 The Director of Postgraduate Studies will:
- Review the submission, statement and nominated examiners to determine whether the submission should be sent to examiners for consideration and if they are supportive, the material should be shared with the relevant Graduate School for review by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.
- 5.3 The Dean of Postgraduate Studies will:
- Review the submission, Supporting Statement and formally approve the nominated examiners.
- 5.4 The Graduate School Manager will:
- Formally appoint the Internal and External Examiners, asking the External Examiner to complete and return a Conditions of Service document.
 - Make the examiners aware of the circumstances surrounding the submission. The examiners will consider the portfolio of work submitted, along with the supporting statement.
- 5.5 The Examiners will review the thesis in line with one of the following options and should be aware that the normal corrections and revisions required of a research degree thesis following examination will not need to be completed.

Posthumous and Aegrotat Examination Options

6. **Option 1 - Where the thesis has already been examined and there is an examination outcome**

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recommending changes be made to the thesis.

- 6.1 The Examiner(s) should consider the thesis along with the Supporting Statement to determine their recommendation.
 - 6.2 For Doctoral submissions, if the Examiner(s) are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous or Aegrotat award will be made:
 - Award of Doctor of Philosophy
 - Award of Master of Philosophy
 - 6.3 For Master of Philosophy submissions, if the Examiner(s) are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous or Aegrotat award will be made:
 - Award of Master of Philosophy
- For both Doctoral and Master of Philosophy submissions, if the Examiner(s) are of the opinion that the standard for Doctoral or Master of Philosophy has not been met, then they should make a recommendation of 'No Award'.

7 Option 2 – Where the Doctoral or Master of Philosophy thesis has been submitted (or re-submitted) but no oral examination has taken place (including, where required for a resubmission)

- 7.1 The thesis should be examined as outlined in the Assessment Regulations for the research degree programme. As there will be no oral examination, the Examiners should consider the thesis along with the Supporting Statement to determine their recommendation.
 - 7.2 For Doctoral submissions, if the Examiners are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous or Aegrotat award will be made:
 - Award of Doctor of Philosophy
 - Award of Master of Philosophy
 - 7.3 For Master of Philosophy submissions, if the examiners are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous or Aegrotat award will be made:
 - Award of Master of Philosophy
- For both Doctoral and Master of Philosophy submissions, if the Examiners are of the opinion that the standard for Doctoral or Master of Philosophy has not been met, then they should make a recommendation of 'No Award'.

8. Option 3 – Where the Doctoral or Master of Philosophy thesis has not been submitted

- 8.1 Where a thesis has not already been submitted for examination, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, in conjunction with the PGR Director and Supervisor will give consideration to the following, in order to determine whether to progress to examination:
 - Amount of candidature completed by the student (e.g., has minimum candidature been completed?)
 - Whether there is a sufficient portfolio of work to be sent for consideration of an award.
 - Are there any tuition fee issues, e.g., are there any outstanding tuition fees and/or if minimum candidature has not been completed, will a tuition fee waiver be required?
- 8.2 Where it is decided to progress to the consideration of an award, the Examiners will receive an incomplete thesis for review, which will contain draft and incomplete chapters, or other work that the student was working on. The Examiners should consider the material submitted along with the Supporting Statement to determine their recommendation.

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8.3 For Doctoral submissions, if the Examiners are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous award or Aegrotat will be made:

- Award of Doctor of Philosophy
- Award of Master of Philosophy

8.4 For Master of Philosophy submissions, if the Examiners are of the opinion they can make one of the following recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, then a Posthumous or Aegrotat award will be made:

- Award of Master of Philosophy

For both Doctoral and Master of Philosophy submissions, if the Examiners are of the opinion that the standard for Doctoral or Master of Philosophy has not been met, then they should make a recommendation of 'No Award'.

9. On Award

9.1 The Graduate School will:

- Produce a Pass List and make clear that the degree is either a Posthumous or Aegrotat award, however, the degree certificate will not be marked as such.
- Add an explanatory note to the submission specifying the nature of the award (Posthumous or Aegrotat) and retain a copy in the Graduate School. A copy of the submission will not be shared with the Library.
- Update the student record accordingly and send a copy of the Pass List to the following:
 - Posthumous Awards - Academic Supervisor, SHWS and Congregations (however Congregations will await guidance from SHWS about whether student's family wish to attend a Congregation ceremony)
 - Aegrotat Awards – Student, Academic Supervisor and Congregations (however Congregations will await guidance from the Graduate School about whether the student (or the student's family on their behalf) wish to attend a Congregation ceremony)
- Check with SHWS that any Posthumous award can be reported to Senate and if yes, ask the Academic Supervisor if they wish to provide a short paragraph about the student/submission to accompany the report.
- Provide the Executive and Governance Office with the following details so that the award can be reported to Senate:
 - name of student
 - title of thesis
 - Academic Unit/Faculty
 - degree awarded
 - Type of Award (Posthumous or Aegrotat)
 - date of award
 - Paragraph from Academic Supervisor (if provided)

Queries on this policy should be directed to doctoralcollege@ncl.ac.uk