

University of Worcester

APPLICATION FOR
RESEARCH DEGREE
AWARDING POWERS

OCTOBER 2008



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¹ Appendices are not attached to this document but are collected on the enclosed DVD.

ABBREVIATIONS

AHRC	<i>Arts and Humanities Research Council</i>
ASN	Additional Student Numbers
ASQEC	<i>Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee</i>
AWM	<i>Advantage West Midlands</i>
BDO	Business Development Office
CP@W	<i>Centre for People at Work</i>
CUC	Committee of University Chairmen
FHEQ	<i>Framework for Higher Education Qualifications</i>
GRS	Graduate Research School
HEFCE	<i>Higher Education Funding Council for England</i>
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IHCA	Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts
IHSCP	Institute of Health, Social Care and Psychology
IoE	Institute of Education
IQC	Institute Quality Committee
ISE	Institute of Science and the Environment
ISES	Institute of Sport and Exercise Science
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MARCC	<i>Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre</i>
NPARU	<i>National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit</i>
NQF	<i>National Qualification Framework</i>
PRES	<i>Postgraduate Research Experience Survey</i>
QED	Quality and Educational Development
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RDAP	Research Degree Awarding Powers
RDB	<i>Research Degrees Board</i>
RDP	Research Degree Programme
SPHERE	<i>Shared Police and Higher Education Research and Enterprise</i>
WBS	Worcester Business School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part One of this application provides contextual information about the University. It details the University's vision and values and its aims and objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan, 2007-2012, including those relating to research, advanced scholarship and knowledge transfer. It sets out information about the University's arrangements for executive management, corporate governance, academic governance and research governance. It also describes the University's arrangement for the quality assurance and enhancement of its provision. The section as a whole demonstrates that the institution is well managed and well governed, that it is a mature and reflective organisation with robust systems to ensure and assure the quality of its provision and that it is a trustworthy steward of its taught degree awarding powers.

Part Two describes the University's arrangements for the management of its research degree programmes with particular focus on the role of the Graduate Research School, the *Research Degrees Board* and of the University's supervisors.

Part Three establishes the University's strategy for research and knowledge transfer and the initiatives it has put in place to deliver its strategic aims. It also describes the University's research culture, placing a strong emphasis on how this culture continues to develop as a result of the University's strategy.

This leads into Part Four where the criteria for the award of research degree awarding powers are analysed and evidence of the University's performance against them is provided. The University contends that the evidence provided demonstrates that it fully meets the thresholds set out in the criteria.

Part Five briefly examines how the University of Worcester would manage research degree awarding powers in anticipation of a successful application and presents some general conclusions.

The University believes that it is now ready to assume responsibility for the awarding of its own research degrees. The University's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 (see **Appendix 1**) establishes a clear framework for the generation and development of knowledge and for its effective transfer. This framework is reflected in both the University's definition of research and in the developing research and knowledge transfer strategy. The University has invested in increased staffing in both the Graduate Research School and the Business Development Office to ensure that the necessary support is available to fulfil this important aspect of its mission. Furthermore, the University's criteria for the appointment of new academic staff places a considerable emphasis on research and advanced scholarship.

The University has paid careful attention to the timing of its application to ensure that:

- it well exceeds the minimum number of PhDs required (87 conferments at the time of writing)

- a sufficient period has elapsed since the reforms to the Graduate Research School in 2005, to allow the revised arrangements to become embedded
- the results and recommendations of the QAA *Special Review of Research Degree Programmes* have been addressed.

In making this application, the University has the unqualified support of its current accrediting body, Coventry University (see enclosed letter). It also has the strong support of its own research student community which has shown an understandable desire for the opportunity to receive an award from the University of Worcester - from what they regard as "their" University. Further, it has the support of the University of Birmingham, with whom it has had a strategic partnership since 2002 (see enclosed letter).

The academic and corporate bodies of the University are thus confident in the University's readiness to assume these new powers.

PART ONE - INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

History

- 1.1 The University was awarded University Title by the Privy Council in September 2005 and adopted the title, University of Worcester. At that time, more than 10,000 students had graduated with Worcester awards.
- 1.2 The University's history is, in brief:
 - It was established in 1946 as an Emergency Teacher Training College.
 - The College's programmes were approved by the University of Birmingham from 1948 until 1975, operating as a constituent college of the University's Faculty of Education.
 - In 1974 the College entered a period of diversification and responsibility for the validation of its awards transferred to the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in 1975.
 - Known as the Worcester College of Higher Education, the College continued to grow until in 1992, at the time of incorporation, the College concluded an agreement with Coventry University for the validation of the College's taught degree courses and research degree programmes.
 - In 1995, the College merged with the Worcestershire College of Nursing and Midwifery.
 - The College gained Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 1997 and subsequently in 1999 adopted the title University College Worcester.
 - The institution has been engaged in the supervision of research degree students for over 25 years. From 1976 until 1992, research degrees were managed under the regulations provided by the CNAA.
 - Since 1992, the awarding of research degrees has been developed primarily in conjunction with Coventry University, although in a small number of cases, arrangements have also been made with other institutions, notably with Cardiff University. A full accreditation agreement was concluded with Coventry University in 1999/2000. This was renewed in 2006/07 (see **Appendix 2**).

Strategic Plan 2007-2012

- 1.3 The current Strategic Plan was approved by the University's Board of Governors in July 2006 and launched in January 2007 (see **Appendix 1**). The Plan is the product of an extensive period of discussion and consultation with governors, staff, students and external stakeholders. It seeks to build on previous ambitions and strengths, particularly those around the theme of excellent, inclusive higher education - a central element of the previous plan.

1.4 The 2007-2012 Strategic Plan commits the University to an ambitious programme of educational and physical development. It is supported in this by a range of partners, including HEFCE and *Advantage West Midlands* (AWM).

1.5 The Strategic Plan establishes a clear vision for the University which will inform its further development:

“Over the next five years, the University of Worcester will build on its fine reputation for providing excellent, inclusive higher education. As it does so, the University will become an ever more dynamic engine for social, economic and cultural development in the region, particularly recognised for creative, high achieving work with partner organisations and for promoting opportunity in an equal, inclusive way. At the same time, the University will strive to be at the forefront of progressive development in its specialist fields of higher education, knowledge transfer, scholarship and associated research.” (p.4)

The University is committed to developing and promoting values of intellectual openness and honesty. It is deeply committed to equality, diversity and mutual respect, aiming for equality of opportunity and inclusion in all its activities. The University seeks to help all its students, staff and partners to make the most of their potential in order to benefit from the rewards which stem from higher education and learning.

1.6 The Strategic Plan also sets out the University’s values:

“We are committed to developing, promoting and protecting values of intellectual openness, honesty and love for learning. Our work is inspired by a deep commitment to human equality and dignity, democracy and mutual respect. We aim for equal opportunity and true inclusion in all our activities. We promote sustainable development and active engagement with the community and fully accept our broad responsibilities to society. We believe that every individual matters and aim to help all our students, staff and partners make the most of their own rich human potential, as well as to benefit from the practical rewards which stem from higher education and learning. Our consistent, enduring values will permeate all aspects of the University’s operations, finding expression in a culture of friendliness, creativity, imagination, dynamism and effectiveness.” (pp.4-5)

1.7 This vision and these values translate into a series of key ambitions. These include ambitions to:

- provide excellent, inclusive higher education with first class student care and facilities and outstanding opportunities for learning for local, national and international students

- produce highly employable, innovative, professional and entrepreneurial alumni
- promote first class scholarship, research and knowledge transfer, the great proportion of which will be applied and practical in character
- play an outstanding part in the economic development of the region and in the growth of the knowledge economy, in partnership with employers and strategic partners.

The Strategic Plan goes on to identify success criteria and key strategic risks through which the University will monitor and measure its achievement against these (and other) ambitions.

- 1.8 Subsequent to the launch of the Strategic Plan in January 2007, each academic and service department was required to hold an away day meeting in order to develop its own vision statement together with objectives and targets based on the success criteria in the Strategic Plan for the following two years (2007/08 and 2008/09). The Vice Chancellor attended part of all away days to allow groups of staff to present to him their vision and plans. This consultation has contributed to securing a more widespread understanding of and commitment to the vision, values and ambitions of the University and has formed the creative basis for a better synergy between plans at institute level and the University's overall strategy. Further discussions are underway to enable the continued development of this synergy.
- 1.9 Section 4 of the Strategic Plan, "Generating Knowledge and Promoting Enterprise", identifies a number of aims, objectives and success criteria relevant to research, scholarship and knowledge transfer which have informed the University's definition of research, and its emerging Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy (see paragraphs 3.2-3). The stated aims are:
- to become a vibrant centre of scholarship which contributes to inspiring research-informed learning, teaching and practice
 - to achieve effective synergy between scholarship, research, teaching, knowledge transfer and enterprise to benefit society and contribute to economic prosperity
 - to develop outstanding expertise in selected areas which secures national and international recognition
 - to become a first-class provider of research and consultancy to public and private sector organisations in the sub-region.
- 1.10 A key objective is to ensure that all members of the University's academic staff make a significant contribution to advanced scholarship and/or research, especially that which supports the generation and transfer of knowledge to society more broadly. The critical relationship between research and teaching is reflected in the objective to create a research- and practice-informed teaching environment, for the benefit of students and the wider academic, professional and public good. The professional and vocational character of a significant proportion of the

University's provision is also reflected in the objective to work collaboratively with a range of commercial, professional and academic partners to become the University of Choice for research, consultancy and enterprise within the region. It is in this section of the Strategic Plan that the objective to achieve Research Degree Awarding Powers is established.

- 1.11 Key success criteria include: the development of a strong culture of enterprise and knowledge transfer; the engagement of all academic staff in advanced scholarship, research and/or knowledge transfer through staff development and review; and a successful RDAP application.
- 1.12 The review of academic governance which is discussed below took into account this section of the Strategic Plan. As noted above it has also informed the University's current definition of what constitutes research and this is discussed in Part 3 of the application.

Current Profile

- 1.13 In 2006/07 the overall student population based on the July HESA return was 7749 (5505 FTEs). This was broken down as follows:
- FT Undergraduate - 3884
 - PT Undergraduate - 2256
 - FT Postgraduate (Taught) - 434
 - PT Postgraduate (Taught) - 1078
 - FT Postgraduate (Research) - 14
 - PT Postgraduate (Research) - 83
- 1.14 In 2007/08 the University took the opportunity to review the structure of its academic departments in the context of the departure of three heads of the existing six departments (two through retirement, one because of re-location to the Republic of Ireland). The Vice and Deputy Vice Chancellor consulted widely before bringing forward proposals to retain an academic structure based on six academic units, and recommending that the University should adopt "Institute" as the nomenclature for describing these units (except in the case of the Business School). The proposals were adopted and from 1st September 2008 the University's academic structure comprises:
- Institute of Education (IoE)
 - Institute of Health, Social Care and Psychology (IHSCP)
 - Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts (IHCA)
 - Institute of Science and the Environment (ISE)
 - Institute of Sport and Exercise Science (ISES)
 - Worcester Business School (WBS)

Table 1 below shows the distribution of students in the above categories across the six institutes:

Institute	FT UG	PT UG	FT PG (Taught)	PT PG (Taught)	FT PG (Research)	PT PG (Research)
IoE	741	1233	370	806	1	15
IHSCP	1083	599	9	91	4	8
IHCA	732	99	3	71	2	3
ISE	358	170	1	16	1	33
ISES	570	17	9	7	2	17
WBS	400	138	42	87	4	7

Table 1: Profile of all students by institute

- 1.15 In support of the University's planned growth, and because of the University's successful application to HEFCE's Strategic Development Fund, the University has been awarded Additional Student Numbers (ASN) for 2007/08 and 2008/09 totalling 1370 (635 in 2007/08 and 735 in 2008/09). The University has worked hard to ensure that its aspirations for growth are matched by a growth in its popularity. UCAS applications for the 2007 entry increased by 34% which was converted into a 13.9% increase in the number of new, full-time, undergraduate students. This growth in applications was sustained during the application cycle for 2008 entry: total applications through UCAS in 2007/08 increased by 9.66%. Applications for 2008 entry through UCAS exceeded 8000 for the first time in the institution's history and in the period 2004-2008, have more than doubled.
- 1.16 At the time of writing, it is too early to confirm the extent to which the University will achieve its baseline plus ASN figure by the census date for the HESE08 return (1st December 2008); indications are that the University will exceed the baseline figure (3453) and will make significant inroads into its 2008/09 ASN target of 735.
- 1.17 As shown above, the University's student population includes significant numbers of students funded by either the NHS or the *Training and Development Agency* (TDA). The allocation of NHS commissioned places has been largely retained and the University has succeeded in achieving its overall targets for Nursing and Midwifery courses for the 2008/09 entry. This is an excellent outcome, taking into account the impact of recent adverse publicity on applicants' appetite for courses in the Nursing and Midwifery professions. TDA numbers remain buoyant and the University has fared well in the context of recent reductions nationally in TDA funded places. With the exception of a small number of shortage secondary subjects, the University met or exceeded its 2008/09 targets for initial teacher education.
- 1.18 The University acknowledges the challenges posed by significant growth. Since 2000 the University's student population has increased by over 50% and there is clear evidence that this growth has been effectively managed. This is not least through a well supported programme of physical development. There has been a significant renewal of the University's St. John's campus. New halls of residence

are being put up. There has been considerable investment in the library. Classrooms, laboratories and specialist facilities for physical education, drama and dance have all been re-equipped or refurbished. The *Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre* was completed in 2004 and new specialist laboratories are currently being built, most notably an extensive new complex which will house the *National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit*. A new City Centre campus is currently under construction, including an innovative Joint Library and History Centre in collaboration with Worcestershire County Council. These developments will provide the facilities necessary to support the University's continuing expansion.

- 1.19 There are other aspects of growth which the University must manage and these include careful attention to the quality of its provision and necessary investment in high quality staff to maintain and enhance its academic provision and its research capacity. At the core of the University's Strategic Plan is a commitment to high levels of student support and satisfaction, encapsulated in the ambition to offer an "outstanding student experience". Careful consideration continues to be paid to ensure that growth does not undermine the quality of the student experience. Equally, close attention is paid to appoint, develop and retain staff who can contribute to high quality provision and a developing reputation for research and advanced scholarship.
- 1.20 Much of the success in attracting more and more applications to study at Worcester is the result of a strategic review of the course offer, which commenced in 2005. This has resulted in a number of new offerings (e.g. in Journalism, Sports' Therapy, Nutritional Therapy), and a complete review and re-launch of undergraduate courses in the Business School. There has also been considerable diversification of the course offer in the Institute of Education, which already had a strong regional and national reputation in Early Years, and which has resulted in new opportunities in foundation degree courses for learning support and other ancillary professions. It is recognised that a significant proportion of growth will need to derive from an expanded portfolio of postgraduate and work-based provision. Progress has been made but this is a priority for 2008/09 and a task and finish group has consequently been set up to review and develop the postgraduate portfolio. As well as course development activities, the University has also sought to build on its reputation for excellent student support and for inclusive higher education. Feedback suggests that this represents a significant factor in attracting additional interest in the University.
- 1.21 The impact of a growth in popularity means that the University has made considerable progress in realising its objective to be a "University of Choice". It has also been successful in diversifying its student population. The University's Access Agreement includes targets to meet, at the very least, its benchmarks for recruiting students from lower socio-economic groups; to maintain its strong position on the recruitment of disabled students; and to increase recruitment from

black and ethnic minority students. Currently, the University exceeds its benchmark in the recruitment of students from the state sector (97% in 2006/07 against a benchmark of 95%); it exceeds its benchmark in the recruitment of young full time undergraduate students from low socio-economic groups (39% against a benchmark of 37%); it was below its benchmark for full time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods in 2006/07 (9% against a benchmark of 12%). In 2006/07 7.48% of the University's students declared a disability and 7% came from a non-white background. The University is ranked highly for the proportion of disabled students and compared with the proportions of ethnic minority persons in its local hinterland, has a high percentage of BME students.

1.22 The University currently has a total staff population of 742. This is broken down as follows:

• FT Academic Staff	-	230
• PT Academic Staff	-	61
• FT Support Staff	-	291
• PT Support Staff	-	160

1.23 Almost all academic staff are allocated to one of the six academic institutes (see above). Support staff are mostly allocated to one of the central administrative support departments. In this coming period of growth in student numbers, the numbers of academic and support staff will also grow and therefore the University has invested considerable effort in reviewing its arrangements for recruitment and selection, career development and review, and continuing professional development. A University Leadership Development programme was launched in the summer of 2008; while a new Professional Development Framework will be rolled out early in 2009. A revised appraisal scheme, with a greater emphasis on high levels of achievement, was introduced in 2007/08.

Corporate Governance

1.24 One of the ambitions in the Strategic Plan is to “be a very well managed, financially-secure institution and a beacon of good practice in corporate and academic governance” (p.5). The Plan includes a section titled “High Achieving Staff in a Well Led University” (pp.20-23), which includes a key success criterion: “to establish a reputation with external regulating bodies for excellent corporate governance”.

1.25 There is good evidence to suggest that the University is well-placed to achieve its ambitions in this area. At the time of the last HEFCE Review of its procedures for governance and risk management in February 2005 (see **Appendix 3** for a copy of the final HEFCE report, together with the University's report one year on), the outcome of the Review placed confidence in the University's arrangements:

“Overall based upon the assurances and other evidence reviewed our conclusion is that we are able to provide a satisfactory level of assurance to our Chief Executive on risk management, control and governance arrangements operating in the University College.”

The University received a number of commendations:

“Examples of successful outcomes and good practice identified during our review include:

- The Board effectiveness review and early adoption of the Lambert Code of Governance*
- The strategic risk-based approaches of the internal and external auditors*
- An effective audit committee*
- The 2004-2008 strategic plan and the process of developing it*
- Improving the links between and strengthening the quality of the service from finance to the departments.”*

1.26 The University was an early adopter of the Lambert Report's recommendation that institutions should have in place a Code of Governance. The Board of Governors approved a Code of Governance in 2003/04, in advance of the launch of the CUC Code which was published in November 2004. The Code was updated to reflect the CUC guidelines but was not changed substantially since it was also based on the Lambert recommendations. The Code is issued to all governors annually at the same time as the Declaration of Interests Form, which serves as a reminder to governors of their remit and responsibilities (a copy of the Code of Governance is at **Appendix 4**).

1.27 There is an annual audit of Governance and Risk Management as part of the Internal Audit Schedule.² For three years (2005-2007), the outcome of the audit has been a report to the Audit Committee and to the Board that substantial assurance can be placed on the internal controls in this area. The 2006/07 Audit in particular looked in depth at the arrangements across the University. A copy of this Report is in **Appendix 5**.

1.28 The annual schedule for internal audit includes an allowance of 10 days for work to audit aspects of the University's capital development programme. In 2007/08 it was agreed that this should be combined with the annual audit of governance and management and, consequently, a 10 day audit of governance and management of the University's capital development programme was conducted. The report concluded that the Board could have confidence in the arrangements in place for the capital development programme and the

² Internal audit has been out-sourced for many years; currently the University's internal auditors are Bentley Jennison.

level of assurance awarded was adequate. The report included 4 recommendations, all of which have been addressed.

- 1.29 The University's External Auditors (PricewaterhouseCoopers) also provide an opinion on the quality of corporate governance, through their consideration of the Corporate Governance statement and their review of the work of the internal audit service. They have confirmed that the University's governance structures and processes meet external requirements, and have since confirmed that the University complies with the new CUC Code of Governance.
- 1.30 The University is governed by its Instrument and Articles of Government. The University's Board of Governors comprises 25 members, which is the maximum recommended. This has long been the case and there are no plans to change the current position. The Constitution and Terms of Reference of the Board (and its sub-committees) is attached at **Appendix 6**. There are two good reasons for retaining the Board's current size: it allows a greater number of elected staff and student representatives (2 academic staff, 1 member of the support staff and 2 students, who are normally sabbatical officers of the Students' Union), and makes it easier to populate the Board's sub-committees.
- 1.31 The Board has completed two reviews of its own effectiveness, most recently in 2006/07. On each occasion, the Board has concluded that it is effective but has identified a number of actions designed to improve its effectiveness. One of the major outcomes of the first review in 2002/03 was a decision to admit staff and students to sub-committees as participating but non-voting observers. This was subject to a trial period of 1 year, but there was unanimous agreement that the new arrangement was helpful and in 2004/05 the practice was confirmed. Another outcome of the review was a concern that the Board's understanding and awareness of the work of the Academic Board could be improved (although the Academic Board reported regularly to the Board of Governors). It was therefore agreed that fuller reports should be made, and that an independent governor should attend Academic Board as an observer. This has worked very well.
- 1.32 The 2006/07 review was conducted through a questionnaire and two half day workshops. The questionnaire was based on the GuildHE publication "Getting to Grips with being a Governor" and the Review also drew on materials in the November 2006 CUC guidance on Key Performance Indicators for use in Higher Education. The first of the workshops was facilitated by the Head of Leadership, Governance and Management at HEFCE, which provided a very useful external national perspective. The outcome of the Review was an expression of confidence in the Board's effectiveness but a commitment to improvements in a number of areas. Papers relating to the Review, including the outcomes, are at **Appendix 7**.

- 1.33 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were a major item of consideration in the course of the review. A set of KPIs was adopted by the Board in December 2004. The Board is not, however, convinced about the usefulness of purely statistical measures of performance. It also felt that the recommended KPIs in the CUC publication were too many in number. It has stated a preference for a set of primary measures of performance, comprising a smaller number of numeric measures, but ultimately moving towards a more qualitative approach. Members were more concerned with receiving an assurance that the Executive Group had appropriate measures in place than with receiving copious quantities of reports on KPIs. Further work has been carried out taking into account the second CUC report on KPIs published in June 2008. A new set of Primary Measures of Performance was approved by the Board on 29th September 2008 (see **Appendix 8**). These are rooted in the University's Strategic Plan and derive from the key success criteria therein. The Board's attitude towards KPIs chimes well with its attitude towards league tables. It recognises the volatility of league tables and, whilst it is pleased when the University 'climbs' a particular table, the Board believes strongly that the University should not stop doing things in which it believes simply to improve its performance in league tables.

Academic Governance

- 1.34 The Academic Board is responsible for ordering the academic affairs of the University. It is the custodian of the institution's academic regulations and procedures and has responsibility for the assurance of the quality of academic provision and the maintenance of academic standards. The Board has 28 members and is chaired by the Vice Chancellor. Its constitution includes representation from all academic institutes: Heads of Institute are ex-officio members and each institute elects further member(s) from among its academic staff, the number being proportionate to the institute's size. Support staff are represented through a system which elects 2 of their members and the Students' Union has 2 representatives. Academic Board meets on 4 occasions each year. Much of its business is discharged through standing committees, constituted to ensure appropriate representation from academic and student representatives in their membership.
- 1.35 A review of the effectiveness of academic governance was conducted in the course of the 2006/07 session. The review was conducted through a working group chaired by the Registrar and Secretary. Membership of the group comprised the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Director of Quality and Educational Development, two heads of academic departments, two elected members of the Academic Board, the Head of Registry Services and the Head of the Academic Quality Unit.
- 1.36 The main outcome of the review was a re-organisation of the structure of the sub-committees of Academic Board, reducing the overall number from 10 to 6. A copy of the constitution and terms of reference of

Academic Board and its sub-committees, in operation since September 2007, is attached at **Appendix 9**.

- 1.37 Changes as a result of the review included:
- The merger of *Research Policy Committee* and *Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Committee* into the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* better reflecting one of the University's key strategic objectives.
 - The merger of *Learning and Teaching* and *Student Affairs* committees to form the *Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee*.
 - The establishment of an *Audit and Review Committee*, a sub-committee of *Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee* (ASQEC), which undertakes detailed work on validation and review, freeing the time for ASQEC to concentrate on matters of policy and strategy.
 - The introduction of Institute Boards to encourage better communication between academic institutes and central committees.
 - The establishment of the *Representations Committee* with a role to keep under review procedures relating to student appeals, complaints, mitigating circumstances, cheating, professional misconduct and student discipline.
 - The formation of an *Academic Governance Committee* whose role is to keep under review the committee structure and to review on an on-going basis, the effectiveness of academic governance.
- 1.38 At the time of writing, the *Academic Governance Committee* is gathering evidence to evaluate and review whether the new arrangements are fit for purpose. All members of Academic Board and its sub-committees have been asked to complete a questionnaire and chairs and secretaries have been asked to review business carried out in 2007/08 and to evaluate the extent to which committees have been able to address their terms of reference.

Executive Management

- 1.39 The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive of the institution. Two other posts are appointed by the Board of Governors: the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Registrar and Secretary (who acts as Clerk to the Board of Governors).
- 1.40 Until the end of the 2007/08 session, there was an Executive Group which comprised the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Registrar and Secretary, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Resources), the Director of Finance, the Director of Personnel, the Director of Quality and Educational Development, and the Director of Information and Learning Services.

- 1.41 From 1st September 2008, a new Executive Management Board was put in place to replace Executive Group consisting of the members of Executive Group plus all academic Heads of Institute and heads of support services (see **Appendix 10** for its membership and terms of reference). This represents an important change in the arrangements for the executive management of the University, ensuring that the University's principal executive body includes in its membership those posts with a key responsibility for implementing the University's principal strategies, policies and procedures.
- 1.42 There is also a Vice Chancellor's Advisory Group whose membership comprises the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Registrar and Secretary, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Resources), the Director of Finance and the Director of Regional Engagement (see **Appendix 10** for terms of reference).
- 1.43 As noted above, the University has six academic institutes. Heads of Institute are responsible for the academic and financial health of their individual institutes. Heads of Institute report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor. They are supported by management teams, which comprise a number of "management" Principal Lecturers and the relevant Academic Support Unit Manager. The management structure in each institute varies according to size and the range of subjects represented. Four Academic Support Units, whose managers report to the Registrar and Secretary, provide administrative support to the institutes.
- 1.44 Located within institutes are the Research Centres, of which there are currently five:
- *Centre for People @ Work* (located in WBS)
 - *Centre for Rural Research* (located in ISE)
 - *International Research Centre for Children's Literature, Literacy and Creativity* (located in IHCA)
 - *Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre* (located in ISES)
 - *National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit* (located in ISE)

The relevant Head of Institute has line-management responsibility for the Centre, which is normally headed by a Director who has responsibility for managing the centre's activities and budget.

Management of Quality and Standards

- 1.45 The Registrar and the Director of Quality and Educational Development (QED) are jointly responsible for standards and quality matters at institutional level. In broad terms, the Registrar is responsible for matters pertaining to admissions, student programme and assessment management, and conferment. The Registrar, together with the Head of Registry Services, is responsible for maintaining and ensuring the application of the academic regulations. The Director of QED along

with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Head of Academic Development and Practice has responsibility for developing and maintaining the quality assurance and enhancement strategy, policies and procedures. The Academic Quality Unit manages the processes associated with programme approval, review, external examiners and annual monitoring, and provides support for key committees. The Registrar, Director of QED and Heads of Registry Services and Quality Assurance and Enhancement work closely together to ensure an integrated approach to the management of quality and standards.

- 1.46 The *Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee* (ASQEC), chaired by the Director of QED, has primary responsibility for quality and standards matters, including the strategic development of policies and practices for quality enhancement. Following the review of academic governance in 2006/07, ASQEC now carries out much of its work through three sub-committees: *Audit and Review Committee* responsible to ASQEC for all matters concerning the effectiveness of the University's academic quality assurance systems, monitoring and reporting arrangements; *Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee* which monitors, reports and makes recommendations to ASQEC on all aspects of the student experience, including learning, teaching and assessment and other service provision impacting directly on the student experience; and *Externally Provided Programmes Committee* which deals with matters relating to the University's collaborative provision.
- 1.47 Academic institutes are the key means through which the quality and standards of provision are supported, realised and evaluated. Each course is 'owned' by an academic institute, including those offered in partner institutions. Institute Boards and Institute Quality Committees (IQCs) are responsible for implementing the quality assurance processes and procedures established by Academic Board. The IQCs provide a report on the academic health of the institute following the annual cycle of course monitoring. These reports are considered by the *Audit and Review Committee* on behalf of ASQEC and the Director of QED produces an annual report to Academic Board on academic standards and quality, drawing on the summary review of external examiner reports, the evaluations of validation and review activity over the previous year and the annual monitoring reports for each institute. In this way, Academic Board is assured of the academic health of taught programmes and can be confident that, where issues are identified, action is taken to address them. The Director of QED and Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement meet regularly with the Chairs of IQC to discuss matters of common interest and policy and procedural developments. Such discussions inform the review and evaluation of quality assurance processes. Academic Board subsequently reports to the Board of Governors transmitting a copy of the Director of QED's report.

- 1.48 The aim of the University's Quality Assurance Strategy, as set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook (see <http://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/>), is to demonstrate that the University's responsibility for awarding its own degrees is being satisfactorily discharged. The objectives of the strategy are:
- to satisfy the institution and external stakeholders that the whole range of provision is of the highest possible quality
 - to demonstrate that standards of awards are appropriate and that provision meets the requirements of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmarks and Codes of Practice
 - to ensure a commitment not only to quality assurance but also to the enhancement of the quality of the student experience
 - to implement the University's approach to quality assurance and enhancement in an efficient and effective manner.
- 1.49 The principles underpinning the quality assurance strategy are:
- comprehensive coverage in addressing quality across the University
 - internal peer review
 - external peer review
 - staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
 - feedback and evaluation by students and staff.
- 1.50 The overall shape of the framework for managing students and quality has evolved over the last decade in response to external stimuli and changing circumstances. The University continues to give careful attention to external reference points and to maintaining robust quality assurance mechanisms. Management of quality and standards is realised through clearly defined responsibilities at course, institute, scheme and university levels, within a framework of policies, procedures and regulations. The Undergraduate and the Postgraduate Regulatory Frameworks, which have undergone careful review and development over the last few years, provide the principles for the design and management of the structure, curriculum and assessment of programmes and help ensure consistency and transparency in the setting and management of academic standards. The Academic Quality Handbook, now in its sixteenth year, which is updated annually, is the comprehensive source of reference and guidance on all matters pertaining to quality assurance.
- 1.51 The University was last subject to a QAA Institutional Audit in November 2005, the outcome of which was a judgement of 'broad confidence'. The Audit Team commended the "exemplary institutional self-evaluation document which provided comprehensive, accurate and self-critical reflection of the University's policy, practice and procedures" and identified the "supportive ethos and range of departmental and central services provided to students and staff in support of the University's mission to deliver an excellent inclusive higher education" and "the effective way in which the University deploys its financial and physical resources in support of learning and

teaching” as features of good practice. Additionally, the team commended the Human Resources Strategy as “well judged to address the University’s commitment to learning and teaching and to raising the level of appropriate research, scholarly and professional activity amongst all staff”. As indicated in Part Three, the University has further strengthened its HR strategies and policies in support of these objectives (see paragraphs 3.19-31).

- 1.52 The audit team identified three ‘advisable’ recommendations all relating to the accuracy and reliability of information, each of which has been addressed, and two ‘desirable’ recommendations relating to planned reviews of effectiveness of IQCs and the development of standard undergraduate regulations, both of which have now been completed. The University submitted its mid-cycle briefing paper to QAA in June 2008 and in September 2008 received confirmation from the QAA that it had made satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendations of the Audit report.

Management of Research and Knowledge Transfer

- 1.53 The governance of matters relating to research and knowledge transfer falls to the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* which is chaired by the Vice Chancellor and whose membership includes the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Director of Quality and Educational Development, the Registrar and Secretary, the Director of Regional Engagement and representatives from the six academic institutes and Information and Learning Services.
- 1.54 The *Research Degrees Board*, which reports to the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee*, is responsible for the oversight of postgraduate research degree programmes under the accreditation agreement with Coventry University (see Section 2 for a fuller discussion). Its membership and terms of reference are set out in **Appendix 11**.
- 1.55 The *Ethics Committee*, which also reports to *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee*, has broad responsibilities for ethical issues across the University including the ethical approval processes for all research activity. Its membership and terms of reference are set out in **Appendix 12**.
- 1.56 Five of the six institutes have a separate sub-committee which deals with business relating to research and knowledge transfer, including research student business, while the sixth, Science and the Environment, includes research and knowledge transfer as a standing item on the agenda for its Institute Board.
- 1.57 Two of the University’s support services have a significant role in the day-to-day management and support of research and knowledge

transfer: the Graduate Research School (GRS) and the Business Development Office (BDO).

- 1.58 The GRS was established in September 2005. Prior to this, a Graduate School was responsible for both postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degree programmes. Following a review by Academic Board, however, it was agreed that it would be re-titled the Graduate Research School and would concentrate on support for research students and on a service to departments in developing their research capability. Responsibility for taught postgraduate courses was transferred to Registry Services. A *Graduate Research School Steering Group* was set up to advise on the direction of the service, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor with the manager of GRS as secretary (see **Appendix 13** for membership and terms of reference).
- 1.59 The principal roles of the GRS are:
- the day-to-day management of Research Degree Programmes
 - providing administrative support for the institution's research committees and working groups
 - provision of the Research Training Programme for research students
 - promoting and supporting research across the institution.
- 1.60 The BDO was established in the summer of 2008 as a successor to the Business Partnerships Office with the express purpose of enhancing the University's culture of enterprise and knowledge transfer.
- 1.61 The BDO organises activities to increase academic staff awareness of and involvement in KT activities across the University such as:
- the development and implementation of a university-wide strategy for increased and enhanced employer engagement
 - the extension of the University's Enterprise Calendar events
 - increased use of work based projects and placements
 - supporting the validation and use of enterprise modules
 - promoting the enterprise curriculum generally
 - the development of a work based learning framework.

PART TWO – ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

- 2.1 As noted in Part One, the University of Worcester established a full accreditation agreement for the award of research degrees by Coventry University in 1999 (renewed in 2006/07). Under the terms of this agreement, the procedures for Worcester's Research Degree Programmes must observe Coventry University's regulations for higher degrees (see **Appendix 14**). The Chair of Worcester's *Research Degree Board* and the Manager of Worcester's Graduate Research School (GRS) meet annually with the Chair of Coventry's *Research Degrees Committee* and staff from Coventry's Research Section to discuss changes in regulations and developments in practice. Worcester is consulted on any developments and is also able to propose local variations to procedures (which must be approved by Coventry's *Research Degrees Committee*). Variations in Worcester's management of the research degree procedures have, on occasion, fed into Coventry's practices. For example, Worcester introduced an Independent Chair for the *viva voce* in 2002 and when Coventry did so subsequently in 2003 it drew on Worcester's experience and documentation.
- 2.2 Worcester's procedures for its research degree programmes are set out in detail in the *Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors* (see **Appendix 15**). The effectiveness of these procedures in securing and enhancing the quality and standards of its research degree programmes was deemed 'appropriate and satisfactory' by the assessors as part of the QAA *Special Review of Research Degree Programmes* (see **Appendix 16** and paragraphs 4.31-52 for further discussion).
- 2.3 Further, the University participated in the national *Postgraduate Research Experience Survey* in both 2007 and 2008 (see **Appendices 17 and 18**). Although results from both years have highlighted areas for continued development, they have demonstrated a high level of student satisfaction with the Worcester research degree 'experience' and scores in all categories compare favourably with national averages.
- 2.4 The management of Research Degree Programmes at Worcester is devolved to the GRS and the Research Degrees Board.

Graduate Research School

- 2.5 The day-to-day management of the programmes is the responsibility of the GRS Manager and her administrative team. This includes the co-ordination of selection, admissions and induction procedures and

assisting students and supervisors with the processes of registration, transfer and examination.

- 2.6 The GRS Manager, as secretary of the *Research Degrees Board* (RDB), works closely with the Chair of RDB to ensure it is in receipt of all necessary information. She also takes responsibility for liaising with the appropriate staff in the Research Section at Coventry University.

Research Degrees Board

- 2.7 The *Research Degrees Board* is primarily responsible for the scrutiny and approval of research degree student registration (RDB1) and transfer (RDB2) and for the initial approval of examination arrangements (RDB3) subject to final approval by Coventry. RDB monitors the progress of students through the programme, receiving a detailed report on all research degree students at each of its meetings.
- 2.8 This rigorous tracking process ensures that students move through the programme at an appropriate rate. RDB has in the past few years been particularly focused on minimising the time between initial enrolment and formal registration. Its success in this regard is demonstrated by the increased number of applications for registration considered by RDB in 2007/08, which at 23 is the highest ever number of new applications, with the majority being approved or approved subject to minor changes during the year. Similarly the nine successful applications for transfer from MPhil to PhD in 2007/08 was also the highest ever, some way above the average of 5 for the last 5 years.
- 2.9 This tracking has also proved effective in maintaining and improving the retention of research students. The average number of registered students who have withdrawn over the last 5 years is just 3.2; just 2 registered students withdrew in 2007/08. Taking into account the number of non-registered students who withdrew in 2007/08, this constitutes a continuation rate of over 95%.
- 2.10 RDB also leads the development, review and implementation of practice in relation to Research Degree Programmes to ensure procedures are aligned with the codes of practice. It has been active, for example, in the last twelve months in putting in place the Register of Approved Supervisors (see paragraphs 2.17-20).
- 2.11 RDB's membership consists of representatives from each of the institutes. The University ensures that RDB's members have the appropriate expertise and experience to deal competently with the business it receives. It is therefore a normal requirement that members should be actively engaged in research supervision. The experience of having successfully supervised and examined postgraduate research programmes is especially valued (see **Appendix 11** for terms of reference and membership).

- 2.12 RDB reports its business to the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* and also provides an annual report for the *Research Degrees Committee* of Coventry University which sets out the business it has undertaken (see **Appendix 19** for the 2007/08 report).

Supervisory Teams

- 2.13 Central to the effectiveness and quality of research degree programmes at Worcester are the supervisors. All research degree students at the University of Worcester are supervised by teams of two or more. The team is led by an internal supervisor, referred to as the Director of Studies, who is assisted by at least one, often two, other supervisors, who may be internal or external. Where a proposed internal has yet to act as a supervisor, an appropriate, experienced member of Worcester staff will always form part of the team to act as a mentor to the new supervisor (as well as fulfilling his/her normal supervisory duties). In addition, it is possible to nominate advisers (internal or external) for specific stages of a student's research degree. An adviser might, for example, be brought in to assist a student with a particular theoretical or methodological approach where it is felt the student might benefit from the additional expertise. This is most common where a student is engaged in interdisciplinary research.
- 2.14 An internal supervisor must be a current member of staff at Worcester on a FT or fractional contract. It is expected that any new member of staff who does not have experience of research supervision will undertake the University's *Research Training Programme*. Any new member of staff who has experience of research degree supervision at another HEI will also *normally* be required to undertake the programme. Not all existing staff involved in supervision at UW have undertaken the programme in its current form. All such staff, however, are encouraged to attend – not least to impart their experience – and it is intended to introduce a 'refresher' programme which all such staff will subsequently be expected to attend.
- 2.15 An internal supervisor is not normally expected to supervise more than 6 research degree student FTEs in total and should act as Director of Studies for no more than 3 FTEs. No supervisor exceeds these numbers and the Register of Approved Supervisors (see **Appendix 21** and paragraphs 2.18-21 below) allows the Research Degrees Board to keep a careful track of the number of supervisions per supervisor. Nevertheless, it is recognised that in some subject areas – for example, Education, Psychology and Sports Science - a small number of supervisors have for some time had a relatively large responsibility. A significant number of recent appointments in these subject areas and others, and a concerted effort to engage existing staff in research supervision, has led to a considerable expansion of the supervisory base.

- 2.16 An external supervisor is normally an academic from another UK or overseas University or research organisation with the requisite expertise but may also be a non-academic with appropriate work-based experience. It will be observed that 22 out of 53 current external supervisors work at a research-intensive Russell Group university, (representing 8 Russell group universities), with several others based at leading overseas Universities, for example Perugia and Stockholm (see **Appendix 20**).
- 2.17 All members of a supervisory team must submit a CV which details research supervision experience and research activity (RDB12). The team is subject to scrutiny at the registration stage (RDB1): firstly by the relevant institute sub-committee and secondly by the *Research Degrees Board*. The primary function of this scrutiny is to ensure that the team has sufficient experience: the regulations require that a team must have a minimum of 3 successful research degree completions, at least one of which is at the appropriate level. A team will not be approved, however, unless it has both the requisite supervisory experience *and* appropriate expertise in the subject area.

Register of Approved Supervisors

- 2.18 In addition to this scrutiny, as of 2008/09 all internal supervisors must now be included on the 'Register of Approved Supervisors' before they can engage in supervision (see **Appendix 21**). Staff are included on the register who have recent experience of research supervision (i.e. those who have recently supervised to completion or who are currently supervising either at Worcester or externally) or who have undertaken the Research Supervisor Training Programme at Worcester. Inclusion on the register also requires that these staff are able to demonstrate that they have "substantial relevant knowledge, understanding and experience of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area".
- 2.19 Any member of staff wishing to be added to the register must normally have completed the Research Supervisor Training Programme as well as meeting the criteria with regard to their expertise.
- 2.20 This register is subject to annual scrutiny by the *Research Degrees Board* and staff may be removed from the register if they do not show evidence that they continue to meet the necessary criteria.
- 2.21 It is believed that the register will function to ensure and enhance the quality of supervision and will improve the student experience. The register has also had a very positive impact on staff engagement with research supervision across the institution, reflected by a growth in the number of staff attending the training programme in 2008.

PART THREE - RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: STRATEGY AND CULTURE

- 3.1 The University of Worcester has, in recent years, established a strong, underpinning culture that encourages and supports high quality research and scholarship amongst its academic staff and its research students. Through its emerging strategy for research and knowledge transfer, it is now seeking to strengthen and enhance this culture.

Strategy for Research and Knowledge Transfer

- 3.2 As noted in paragraph 1.9, the University's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 sets out a series of aims related to the research and knowledge transfer agenda. These aims have directly informed the development of strategies for both research (see **Appendix 22**) and knowledge transfer. The synergy between these two areas led to the decision to bring together the principal research policy committee with the knowledge transfer committee (see paragraph 1.37). In turn, this has led to the decision to combine these strategies: a draft Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy will consequently be considered by the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* in December 2008.
- 3.3 In light of the Strategic Plan, several key objectives have been identified:
- the improvement of research achievement and infrastructure throughout the University by identifying, supporting and rewarding excellence and achievement in research and innovation
 - ensuring the research capability of staff at all levels is nurtured
 - the enhancement of the University's research profile by the establishment of direction and policies for cross disciplinary activity both internally and externally
 - increasing the amount of income from research grants
 - the achievement of Research Degree Awarding Powers
 - the continued support for both full-time and part-time research degree students and their research programmes with the aim to achieve 200 research degree completions by 2012
 - the diversification of the research student portfolio.

The University's Definition of Research and Advanced Scholarship

- 3.4 The University's definition of research and advanced scholarship has been developed in concert with discussions about the research and knowledge transfer strategy and its approach to RAE 2008. It was felt that the definition should reflect the applied, professional and practice based focus of the majority of its academic institutes and its commitment to achieve effective synergy between research, scholarship, learning, teaching, knowledge transfer and enterprise.

The definition was approved in 2007/08 and appended to the Research Strategy (see **Appendix 22**).

3.5 Under this definition, research and advanced scholarship at Worcester includes:

- original investigation undertaken to produce knowledge and understanding
- enquiry which refocuses critical opinion or re-orientates professional practice
- creative practice-based endeavour resulting in public output (exhibitions, performances, etc)
- consultancy and knowledge transfer activity which generates new knowledge and understanding, technologies or methodologies, to meet the needs of government, voluntary or public sector bodies, commerce or industry
- action research, evidence-based research and pedagogic evaluation that contributes to the enhancement, innovation and effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in higher education and other educational contexts
- applied investigative or evaluative work which leads to improvement in service delivery, professional practice and/or policy development;
- integration or synthesis of existing knowledge to develop understanding, such as through the writing of textbooks, review articles, development of e-learning resources, etc.

3.6 Worcester's definition of research and advanced scholarship celebrates the breadth of activity being undertaken across the University. It also reflects the variation in research cultures across its academic subject areas. In some areas, in particular in the humanities and in certain areas of the sciences, there is a focus on what might be viewed as 'traditional research'. In others, such as nursing and midwifery, there is a greater concentration on contributing to the development of high level professional skills.

3.7 Research at Worcester thus includes articles in peer-reviewed journals and monographs but also includes textbooks aimed at HE students and practitioners and work that seeks to re-orientate practice by drawing extensively on professional experience and pedagogic evaluation.

RAE

3.8 The University submitted to the Research Assessment Exercises in 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008. Table 2 (below) demonstrates that between RAE 1992 and RAE 2001, there was a modest improvement in the rating for most Units of Assessment to which the University submitted.

Unit of Assessment	RAE 1992	RAE 1996	RAE 2001
Biological Sciences	-	-	2
Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	2	3b	3a*
Earth Sciences	1	-	-
Education	2	3b	3b
English Language and Literature	1	2	3b
Geography	1	1	2
History	1	2	3a
Psychology	-	1	2
Sociology	1	2	2

Table 2: The University of Worcester's ratings in RAE 1992, 1996, 2001

3.9 The University, in line with many other institutions, took a more selective, strategic approach to RAE 2008. A working group, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, was set up in 2005/06 to assess potential areas for submission based on the quality of research outputs, when matched against the RAE criteria and guidelines, and on the size and coherence of the potential submission. This resulted in submissions being made to four units of assessment as set out in Table 3.

UOA	Cat A h/c	Cat A FTE	Cat B h/c	Cat C h/c	Cat D h/c	Res. Ass. FTE
12 - Allied Health Professions and Studies	9	8.20	0	0	0	5.80
32 - Geography and Environmental Studies	5	5.00	0	0	0	2.40
57 - English Language and Literature	6	5.40	1	2	0	0.00
62 – History	5	4.50	2	0	0	0.00

Table 3: Submissions to RAE 2008 with staff data (RA0)

3.10 A number of other subject areas were considered against the RAE criteria but were not submitted: these were Archaeology, Biological Sciences, Business and Management, Education, Sociology and Sports Studies.

3.11 The University believes its approach to RAE 2008 is very much in line with its overall research and knowledge transfer strategy which supports the enhancement of excellence in specific areas whilst encouraging the development of a broad culture of research and advanced scholarship.

Funding for Research and Knowledge Transfer

3.12 The University suffered a considerable fall in QR funding following RAE 2001, as did many institutions, from approximately £600,000 to £60,000. In 2003, the current Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice

Chancellor took up their posts at Worcester. An early consideration was the development of a new institutional strategy for research and advanced scholarship which would strengthen the research culture and improve achievement in this area within a context where income from QR funding would be negligible or non-existent. The University has continued to invest in research and advanced scholarship and will do so after RAE 2008 regardless of the financial outcome.

- 3.13 The University has funded research and knowledge transfer in a number of ways. It has in recent years appointed several professors with a strong research focus (see paragraph 3.33-36). In 2008, it appointed a Research Support and Development Officer in the Graduate Research School with responsibility for delivering research training to research students and staff and for developing the University's external funding profile. Two posts were created in Information and Learning Services solely concerned with developing the University's research collection.
- 3.14 The University has also invested in research through its Research and Project Leave Scheme (see paragraph 3.29 below) and, at the institute level, through support for staff to attend conferences and through the allocation of working time for specific research projects.
- 3.15 Of particular significance is the University's investment in full time PhD studentships. The University has appointed to 94 such studentships in the last 15 years. There was no reduction in the numbers offered after RAE 2001 and in fact there has been a notable increase in investment in the last three years. In 2006/07, there were 5 new studentships and an overall spend on bursaries of just under £150,000. In 2007/08, there were 6 new studentships and a spend of £190,000. In 2008/09, there have been appointments to 6 new studentships with 3 studentships still to be appointed. The current annual commitment to bursaries is over £240,000.
- 3.16 The University has also been able to utilise external funding effectively to advance its research and knowledge transfer strategy. HEIF funding has been used to appoint new staff in the Business Development Office and to support Knowledge Transfer Fellowships (see paragraph 3.30 below) and other KT initiatives. It also received significant JISC funding for the development of *Worcester Research and Publications* (WRaP), an e-repository for staff and research student outputs.
- 3.17 The University has received approximately £3.5 million from *Advantage West Midlands* (AWM) to develop two of the University's research centres. In 2003/04 it received over £1m from AWM to invest in a state of the art advanced biomechanics and motion analysis laboratory for the *Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre*. In 2007/08 it received £2.25m to build a dedicated laboratory and test room space on campus along with a climate controlled test chamber for the

National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit. In both cases, the University more than matched the funding received from AWM.

- 3.18 University staff have been successful in bidding for funding from a wide range of sources including the research councils; major charities such as the British Academy; government departments, such as DEFRA; and the EU. It is recognised in the research strategy, however, that there is room for significant development in this area and recent appointments in both the Graduate Research School and the Business Development Office are focused on increasing income from research and knowledge transfer grants.

Recruitment, Selection and Appointment

- 3.19 The University's research and knowledge transfer objectives are supported through its strategy for recruitment, selection and appointment of academic staff. This strategy aims to ensure that the selection and appointment process attracts excellent, inspirational university teachers from throughout the academic and professional community. The University aspires to recruit staff with doctorates and with a current publication profile and/or high quality work/career-related achievement and/or high level standing within their profession. All new staff are expected to be producing work of value in research, advanced scholarship, policy or leading edge thinking in their discipline.

- 3.20 The result of this policy, and of an active investment in new academic posts, is an increase in high quality applicants and appointments from throughout the UK University sector, and from Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, as well as leading individuals from the professions. The award of full University title by the Privy Council in 2005 accelerated this improvement.

Institute	% of FT Staff with a doctorate	% of All Staff with a doctorate
IoE	19.6	19.5
IHSCP	21.8	22.4
IHCA	52.9	50
ISE	90.5	87
ISES	19.2	22.2
WBS	41.2	43.2
Overall	34.2	33.6

Table 4: % of Academic Staff with a Doctorate

- 3.21 33.6% of all academic staff (and a little over 34% of FT staff) have a doctorate, a figure which compares favourably with the overall percentage for Post-92 Universities.

- 3.22 Table 4 breaks down these figures to the institute level and reveals some considerable but not unexpected variation between institutes. The higher percentage in ISE and IHCA reflects that in subject areas

such as Archaeology, Geography and Biological Sciences (located in ISE), and English Literature and History (located in IHCA) 100% of staff have a doctorate. The lower percentages in other institutes reflect the different skills required and backgrounds of staff in the relevant subject areas. In IHSCP and IoE, a high level of professional expertise, combined with a record of successful professional practice, is a prerequisite: instructing future teachers, nurses and midwives demands extensive experience of professional practice and, therefore, higher education is necessarily a second career for most staff in these areas. A high proportion of staff in ISES are professionally qualified with a high level of specialisation in elite coaching; the majority have relevant academic and professional experience in other HE institutions or organisations.

Institute	% of FT Staff with a Masters and/or a doctorate	% of All Staff with a Masters and/or a doctorate
IoE	78.6	70.2
IHSCP	70.3	76.5
IHCA	94.1	91.3
ISE	90.5	91.3
ISES	92.3	92.6
WBS	88.2	89.2
Overall	88.3	81.4

Table 5: % of All Staff with a Masters and/or a Doctorate

3.23 In subject areas, such as Nursing and Midwifery, Education, Art and Design, Media, Sport and Business Studies, a high proportion of academic staff have a Masters degree in addition to a professional qualification. Table 5 demonstrates that more than 80% of all academic staff have a Masters as their highest qualification (over 88% of FT staff) and reveals much less variation across institutes.

Academic Staff Development and Appraisal Opportunities

3.24 The University has a number of schemes and development opportunities for staff which actively support its research and knowledge transfer strategy:

- Higher Degrees policy
- Academic Promotions Scheme
- Research and Scholarly Activity Days
- Research and Project Leave Scheme
- Medici and Knowledge Transfer Fellowships
- Staff Development Seminars and Workshops

3.25 The University encourages staff without a higher degree by supporting study either at Worcester or at another institution towards a research degree where the programme of study is directly related to the future development of the Institute. This support is both financial - up to 50%

of the fees for a PhD - and practical – through the allocation of additional time when needed (see paragraph 3.28). Staff with an established record in research and advanced scholarship may also pursue a PhD by Portfolio, a pathway introduced through agreement with Coventry in 2007/08. 30 staff are currently undertaking a doctorate (including 2 on the PhD by Portfolio pathway) emphasising the strong commitment the University has to developing the research capability of its staff.

- 3.26 The University has had an annual Academic Promotions Scheme in operation since September 2004, which includes promotion to Principal Lecturer and Senior Lecturer, award of contribution points and accelerated promotion through the incremental scale for Senior and Principal Lecturers. Research and scholarly activity is one of the three key criteria for promotion (the other two being Teaching and Learning and Leadership and Management). For promotion to Principal Lecturer, applicants are expected to be exceptional and outstanding in two out of the three criteria and to meet the strategic needs of academic institutes and the University.
- 3.27 There is also an annual internal call for promotion to Professor. This gives public recognition to individual academic distinction and leadership achieved in a field of learning relevant to the mission of the University. Candidates must be outstanding in at least one of the following criteria and be able to demonstrate substantial strengths in at least one other:
- (a) Significant Furtherance of Knowledge:
A national or international contribution – by scholarship, research, consultancy or creative achievement – to the furtherance of knowledge or its application to society. Furtherance of knowledge in creative achievement may be recognised in any field, for example, Fine Art, Design, Creative Writing, Film, Visual Media, Performance.
 - (b) Excellence in Teaching:
A national or international reputation as a teacher as exemplified by contribution to the development of subjects or fields of study, to pioneering developments in pedagogy or to creativity or other innovation in teaching and learning.
 - (c) Excellence in Academic Leadership:
substantial academic leadership externally at a regional, national or international level; national or international standing of the individual in his or her profession, Learned Societies, Subject Associations or other such organisation; qualities of academic leadership relevant to the vision, values and strategic objectives of the University; leading change and development.
- 3.28 All academic staff are entitled to 20 days of ‘scholarly activity’ which may be used for research or advanced scholarship, or scholarly activity that increases their knowledge and understanding of recent developments in their discipline and in learning, teaching and

assessment and professional practice. It must be approved by the Head of Institute or line manager, as meeting the strategic aims for research and scholarly activity within the University and the Institute's Strategic Plan. The kinds of activity supported include:

- preparation time for academic and professional papers and books
- writing up time for MPhil/PhD dissertations for academic staff without higher degrees
- attendance at agreed conferences, normally presenting a paper
- international exchanges and visits
- externally funded projects
- consultancy

3.29 The Research and Project Leave Scheme provides an opportunity for staff to undertake a period of leave, between four weeks and one semester, to complete a specified project. The leave must result in a major published output; typically this might be:

- completing a book or significant paper
- undertaking a major study visit, resulting in a published output which will make a contribution to strategic development
- a new system development, or a significant piece of work to turn contract research, or policy-making work, or professional activity into a major piece of scholarly work.

3.30 Medici Fellowships are aimed at early career academics with little or no commercial experience and recruits as an annual cohort with seven partner Midlands HEIs; while the University's own Knowledge Transfer Fellowships are aimed at more experienced members of staff who need to devote more time to developing a project, whilst at the same time enhancing their commercialisation skills.

3.31 Staff development seminars and workshops relating to research, knowledge transfer and advanced scholarship are delivered by a number of academic and service departments including the Graduate Research School, the Academic Development and Practice Unit, the Business Development Office and Information and Learning Services.

Research Culture in the Institutes

3.32 The primary responsibility for the initiation and conduct of research and knowledge transfer activity rests with academic and research staff in the institutes, led by the Head of Institute, and supported in particular by the Professoriate and Research Coordinators.

3.33 The University's commitment to strengthening the culture of research and advanced scholarship in the institutes, particularly to ensuring that there is the necessary experience and expertise to lead effectively on this agenda, is clearly demonstrated by two recent appointments to the position of Head of Institute. In 2008, Professor Antonia Payne, former Director of Research at Dartington College of Arts and co-ordinator of

the AHRC's peer review Panel 2, Visual Arts and Media, was appointed Head of the Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts. At the same time, Professor John Newbury, former deputy head of the Department of Biosciences at the University of Birmingham and a distinguished plant scientist, was appointed Head of the Institute of Science and Environment. Further, the career development of longstanding Heads of Institute reflects their status as recognised leaders in their area of expertise. For example, Professor Chris Robertson, Head of the Institute of Education, was successful in her application for a professorship in 2008. This followed her election as Chair of the *Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers* Management Forum in 2007. Louise Jones, Head of the Institute of Health, Social Care and Psychology, was elected as Vice-Chair of the Council of the *Chartered Society of Physiotherapists*.

- 3.34 The University has also appointed several professors (full time and part time) in research areas targeted for development in the last three years: Professor Dominic Upton in the area of health and well-being; Professor Richard White, Tissue Viability; and Professor Mary Nolan, Perinatal Education. Professorial appointments in Inclusive Education and in Dementia Studies are being advertised at the time of submission.
- 3.35 The University has recognised the particular value of appointing Honorary and Visiting Professors who can enhance its strengths and develop new areas of research. So, for example, it has appointed Honorary Professors Ashok Rai (Professor of Rheumatology) and Richard Lewis (Professor of Respiratory Medicine); and Visiting Professors James Riordan (Professor of Sport), Ken Hardman (Professor of Physical Education) and Maria Nikolajeva (Professor of Comparative Literature).
- 3.36 It is the expectation that the professoriate actively engages with other academic staff in the promotion of research: by providing necessary and vital experience for supervisory teams; by developing internal and external collaborative research projects; and by offering general support and guidance to other academic staff. So, for example, Professor Hardman is part of a supervisory team for five research students in the area of Sport and Exercise Science, acting as a mentor for other staff on the team who have limited experience of research supervision. Professor White has engaged academic staff in funded research projects and developed opportunities for joint working with internal and external partners. Professor Nolan has been working with colleagues from across the University to augment the current level of research in child and perinatal health and this has resulted in an active and vibrant group of researchers who have increased their research activity. Professor Lewis has worked closely with Professor Jean Emberlin, Director of the National Pollen and Aerobiology Unit, to develop innovative collaborative research initiatives in the health sciences. Similarly, Professor Nikolajeva has collaborated with

Professor Jean Webb, Director of the *International Research Centre for Children's Literature, Literacy and Creativity*, in advancing the University's well established expertise in Children's Literature.

- 3.37 Each Institute has one or more Research Co-ordinators, in each case, an experienced and established researcher whose role is to provide support and guidance for other researchers within the Institute but who has particular responsibilities for research students. These responsibilities range from receiving all relevant applications for research degrees to reviewing the progress of research students within their institute.
- 3.38 The institutes are currently being asked to develop their research and knowledge transfer strategies in train with the University's strategy and its definition of research and advanced scholarship. It is envisaged that these definitions will strongly reflect the varying focus of the institutes but each will place a strong emphasis on the need to develop further their academic staff's research capabilities.
- 3.39 The research and knowledge transfer activity of the institutes and of the Research Centres (see below) is recorded in annual reports which are submitted to the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee*. The reports include the following information:
- a general overview of activity
 - a record of outputs
 - details of conferences attended
 - details of income received for research and consultancy projects, and a note of unsuccessful bids
 - postgraduate research activity, to include information on the number of students supervised in the institute by year and area of study, number of graduates, and the number of staff supervising

Research Centres

- 3.40 The University's five Research Centres are of particular importance to the strategy and culture of those institutes in which they are embedded. These Centres provide a focus for the enhancement and development of particular areas of research, as well as being a vehicle to increase the national and international recognition of key aspects of the University's work. The Centres act as an important focus for external funding, for collaboration internally and with other institutions and organisations and for research students.
- 3.41 For example, the *National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit* (NPARU) is internationally renowned for its expertise in palynology, airborne allergens, aerobiology (organic matter in the air) and the relationships between environmental factors and health. It has an established record of high quality research and consultancy work and has engaged in a wide range of interdisciplinary research work. Collaborators in the UK and beyond include University College London,

Rothamsted Research, Aston University, the German Weather Service, Cordoba University (Spain), University Hospital, Vienna and the University of Poznam (Poland).

- 3.42 *The Centre for People @ Work (CP@W)* is based in the Business School and is a joint collaboration, established in 2006, between Business and the Psychology and Health Sciences Unit in IHSCP. It brings together the expertise of Human Resource specialists and occupational psychologists and has allowed the development of new research and knowledge transfer initiatives which span both areas (such as research into temporal intelligence in leadership and the provision of accredited training courses in psychometric testing). Much emphasis is placed on collaborative working both internally at UW and externally. Typically, projects have been pursued and/or delivered internally with Sports and Exercise Science, Sociology, Art and Design, the *Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre* and the *Centre for Rural Research* and with a range of external collaborators, at both national (e.g. Universities of Manchester, Strathclyde, Loughborough, Brighton) and international level (e.g. Bryant University (US), University of Technology, Pretoria). 4 FT research students are currently based in CP@W.
- 3.43 The *International Research Centre for Children's Literature, Literacy and Creativity* embraces research expertise in both children's literature and education. It reflects the University's unique expertise in education, early childhood, literacy and children's literature, something reflected in its international reputation and research profile. It has active research links with Australia, Canada, India, Germany, the Czech Republic, the Nordic countries, Russia, South Africa, and USA. These have resulted in research exchanges of staff and students, conferences, joint publications and joint research supervision. The Centre was prominent in the formation of *NorChilNet*, a Nordic postgraduate research-training network for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers in children's literature, and in setting up the new Children's Literature Association of India.

Collaborative and Cross-disciplinary Research

- 3.44 Central to the University's research strategy is the development of both collaborative and cross-disciplinary research. A number of partnerships and initiatives have been established in order to achieve this objective.
- 3.45 A Strategic Partnership with the University of Birmingham has been in operation since January 2002 guided by a Steering Group co-chaired by the Vice Principal of the University of Birmingham and the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Worcester. Its terms of reference are given in **Appendix 23**.

- 3.46 A number of significant research and knowledge transfer initiatives have emerged from this partnership, particularly in areas of mutual research strengths such as geography, environment, education, business and sport, including joint studentships, research collaborations, joint research seminars and involvement in regional initiatives, such as the Central Technology Belt and Birmingham as a Science City.
- 3.47 A number of joint cross-University “brainstorming” research seminars with the University of Birmingham, have been held, with the aim of exploring further joint research and other opportunities beyond what already exists. These have tended to be broad theme-based seminars. For example, the April 2007 seminar brought together 15 key senior staff and researchers from across the broad spectrum of Cultural Studies, Heritage and Tourism, and included academics from archaeology, environment, languages and sport. This resulted in a range of positive outcomes, including identifying specific areas for joint research and supervision, joint teaching and curriculum development and the opportunity to share more systematically research seminars. The next “brainstorming” seminar is being planned for spring 2009 and will cover Health, Well being and Social Care topics.
- 3.48 A ‘Joint Innovation Day’ was held in March 2008 at Worcester in conjunction with Coventry University, the aim of which was to explore potential areas of collaboration between the two Universities in the area of research and knowledge transfer, to identify where links could be usefully made and to consider how to take these links forward. A number of key areas were identified, for example: Early Years, literacy and management. The success of the initial event has led to the organisation of further Innovation Days in 2008/09.
- 3.49 It has also led both universities to earmark some funding to pump prime collaborative activity. This funding is being used to set up two PhD studentships, beginning in 2009/10, to be jointly supervised by staff from Worcester and Coventry. It is envisaged that these studentships will support new or developing collaborative research projects.
- 3.50 Collaboration with commercial, professional and governmental organizations is exemplified by the SPHERE (*Shared Police and Higher Education Research and Enterprise*) partnership with the local police service, West Mercia Constabulary. SPHERE was initiated in 1997 to enable the force to utilise academic expertise to enhance its operational effectiveness and to allow University students and staff the opportunity to enhance their applied research and knowledge transfer experience. To date, forty-seven projects have been completed by UG and PG students and staff on a range of topics from police training and careers to the impact of neighbourhood wardens on communities. This has resulted in an impressive array of research and knowledge transfer outputs and importantly, the work has fed back directly into teaching

programmes, particularly in Public Sector Management, Human Resource Management, Psychology and IT.

- 3.51 Cross institute research is primarily promoted under the banner of the Research Focus One-Day Conferences, a series of themed events consistent with the University's Curriculum and Development Groups organized by the Graduate Research School. These events act as a showcase for some of the subject-based and interdisciplinary research and advanced scholarship currently ongoing at the University among staff and research students.
- 3.52 Two Research Focus conferences have taken place in 2007/08. The first, in May 2007, focusing upon the 'Integrated Children's Agenda', saw a wide range of papers, many interdisciplinary, from staff and research students in IoE, ISES, IHCA and the *International Research Centre for Children's Literature, Literacy and Creativity*. The second, in February 2008, built around the theme of 'Health and Well-Being', saw papers from staff and research students from IHSCP, IoE, ISES, WBS and the CP@W.
- 3.53 The next event, in November 2008, is focused on 'Landscape and Heritage', with subsequent conferences being built around the themes of 'Culture, Media, Sport and Tourism' and 'Leadership and Management'.

The Research Student Community

- 3.54 It should be apparent that the research student body is central to both the University's strategy for research and knowledge transfer and its culture. As far as is possible, research students are integrated into the culture of their Institute and/or Research Centre. This is alongside the research student culture that the University has sought to develop within the Graduate Research School. In a few instances, FT research students are physically grouped together within their Institute. The relatively small number of FT students in any one subject area does not make this desirable in all cases. Therefore the majority of FT research students are located in offices within the Graduate Research School which also houses a dedicated PT student room. This creates a strong sense of community and support among these students.
- 3.55 In 2008/09, the Graduate Research School has developed a fuller programme of training seminars and workshops and has liaised with the students themselves in developing a PG Work-in-Progress seminar series. It is believed that these developments will help to strengthen this community and to reinforce the research student culture.

PART FOUR – ADDRESSING THE CRITERIA

Criterion 1

- 4.1 At the heart of this application is the contention that staff involved in the delivery of the University’s research degree programmes are fully engaged in current research and advanced scholarship in their subject areas and that their research and advanced scholarship informs their supervision.
- 4.2 The University also contends, however, that a significant and appropriate number of *all* FT staff are engaged in research or advanced scholarship and that the University therefore meets the thresholds set out in the guidelines for Criterion 1.
- 4.3 It also contends that the University provides an appropriate environment for staff to develop and enhance their knowledge of current research and advanced scholarship and that it provides the appropriate staff development and appraisal opportunities. This has been demonstrated in Part Three of this application.

Staff involved in the delivery of research degree programmes

- 4.4 There are, at the time of the submission of this application, 69 supervisors on the University’s Register of Approved Supervisors (see paragraphs 2.16-20 and **Appendix 21**). This section will focus on these “approved supervisors”.
- 4.5 These supervisors represent a broad range of subject areas and specialisms and this is clearly reflected in the diversity of research degree projects currently being undertaken (see **Appendix 24**). 25 have supervised a research degree to successful completion, totalling 86 PhDs and 14 MPhils.

Institute	Number of Staff who are approved supervisors	Number of approved supervisors with a PhD	% of approved supervisors with a PhD
IoE	15	14	93.3
IHSCP	14	11	78.6
IHCA	14	14	100
ISE	12	12	100
ISES	10	7	70
WBS	4	4	100
Overall	69	62	89.8

Table 6: Qualifications of active supervisors

- 4.6 Nearly 90% of the approved supervisors have a PhD. As can be seen in Table 6, in three Institutes this figure is 100% and in two others it is

close to 100%. Of the seven staff who do not have a doctorate, all have a Masters and all have relevant professional qualifications in their research area.

- 4.7 62 active supervisors (approximately 90%) have produced outputs from research or advanced scholarship of national or international standing subject to authoritative peer review in the period of the last RAE. This is most clearly evidenced by the 51 active supervisors who have had articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Between them they have published 179 articles in a wide range of journals (120 in total), many with high impact factors. 23 have published books, including 23 monographs and 6 textbooks, with publishers such as OUP, Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan and Prentice Hall. 21 were submitted to RAE 2008.
- 4.8 82% of approved supervisors have recent experience of research activity at another HEI. Recent (that is in the last three years) experience is defined here as:
- forming part of a supervisory team for a research degree at Worcester which included an external supervisor
 - acting as a research degree supervisor at another HEI
 - engaging in a collaborative research project
 - working at another HEI
 - acting as an external examiner for a research degree
- 4.9 82% of approved supervisors are identified as being active and recognised contributors to subject associations, learned societies or professional bodies. 'Active and recognised' is defined here as fulfilling one or more of the following:
- attending association/society/body conferences, seminars, exhibitions, performances, etc
 - presenting or exhibiting at association/society/body conferences or venues
 - chairing or organizing panels at association/society/body conferences
 - organizing association/society/body seminar series
 - giving public lectures, etc under the banner of the association/society/body
 - participation in association/society/body -based research projects, policy initiatives, special reports, etc
 - membership of association/society/body governing committees, working groups, steering groups, etc
 - membership of association/society/body awards' or grants' panels
 - membership of association/society/body editorial boards
 - being a fellow or chartered member of an association/society/body

The University's definition of active incorporates attendance at conferences since it is felt that this is vital to the creation and maintenance of informal research networks and to keeping staff fully

abreast of key developments within their discipline and is thus just as important as other forms of 'activity'.

- 4.10 63% of approved supervisors have produced an output from research or advanced scholarship of national or international standing subject to authoritative peer review **and** have recent experience of research activity at another HEI **and** are active and recognised contributors to subject associations, learned societies or professional bodies.
- 4.11 These figures strongly support the view that staff involved in the delivery of its research degree programmes are fully engaged in current research and advanced scholarship in their subject areas.

The relationship between research and advanced scholarship and supervision

- 4.12 Through its *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*, the University aims to strengthen research and practice informed teaching and learning (which includes supervision) by:
- enabling staff to engage with developments in their field so that the curriculum is up-to-date and supported by resources linked to current research and practice
 - ensuring courses are designed in ways that support the development of learning outcomes concerned with an understanding of knowledge creation, research and its application, and professional and research practice
 - fostering research and advanced scholarship on learning, teaching and assessment in higher education.
- 4.13 In this way, the University not only seeks to foster the synergy between learning, teaching, research and knowledge transfer, but also ensures that a culture and understanding of research enquiry informs the teaching and learning process throughout the institution. With this in mind, at the beginning of 2004/05 and again in 2007/08, a short survey was carried out in all academic institutes to ascertain how research and advanced scholarship feeds into the teaching process, including research supervision. The survey results demonstrated a significant range of examples of the ways in which learning and teaching is 'research-informed' (see **Appendix 25** for the results of the 2007/08 survey).
- 4.14 It is therefore a clear expectation that supervision, as part of learning and teaching, must be informed by research and advanced scholarship.

Full-Time Staff³

Active and Recognised Contributors

4.15 Just under 60% of FT academic staff have been identified as active and recognised contributors to a subject association, learned society or professional body according to the definition as set out in paragraph 4.9. Thus, the University meets the stated threshold of 50% in the guidelines with no institute falling below this. Table 7 breaks down these figures to the institute level.

Institute	% of FT staff
IoE	54.7
IHSCP	59.1
IHCA	56.3
ISE	72.7
ISES	74.1
WBS	50
Overall	59.7

Table 7: % FT Staff who are active and recognised contributors to a learned society, subject association or professional body

4.16 The University is seeking further improvement in the percentage of active and recognised contributors especially in those institutes which only just reached or slightly exceeded the threshold. In some subject areas, these lower percentages might be explained by a culture wherein enhancement of relevant discipline or subject knowledge is often sought and provided outside the confines of professional and learned societies. So, for example, in the Institute of Education over 90% of staff in primary and secondary ITT, Early Childhood and Post-Compulsory Education are actively involved in attending regular national/regional professional events and conferences in their appropriate area of interest. Such professional community and network meetings and events may be organised by QAA, Teacher Development Agency, Escalate, Primary National Strategy, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Children's Workforce Development Council or Lifelong Learning UK. Nevertheless, the University is still committed to an improvement in these figures.

Experience of research activity at another Higher Education Institution

4.17 Over 43% of FT academic staff have recent experience of research activity at another HEI according to the definition set out in paragraph 4.9. Thus, the University meets the stated threshold of 33% in the

³ The following figures are derived from an audit of staff in autumn 2007. For this audit all academic and research staff were asked to complete a questionnaire on their research and scholarly activity and to provide an up-to-date CV (see **Appendix 26** for questionnaire and CV template plus explanatory notes). Updated figures will be available in December 2008, following a 2008/09 audit.

guidelines. Table 8 below breaks down these figures to the institute level.

Institute	%
IoE	47.2
IHSCP	33.3
IHCA	56.3
ISE	59.1
ISES	55.5
WBS	25
Overall	43.9

Table 8: % of FT staff engaged in research activity with another HEI

4.18 These figures are likely to underestimate the true extent of staff engagement with research activity at another HEI. Collaborative research projects in their early stages, before findings have been disseminated, are not captured in this data. Nor will this data capture information about informal research networks or groups, particularly if they are embryonic. This may at least partly explain the lower percentages in the Business School (which falls below the threshold) and IHSCP (which only just reaches the threshold). This issue is being addressed at University level and in the relevant institutes.

Institute	Member of validation or review panel at another HEI	Examiner for a Taught PG Degree	Examiner for a UG Degree
IoE	22	9	23
IHSCP	21	12	21
IHCA	15	3	10
ISE	7	0	2
ISES	6	3	8
WBS	11	3	8
Overall	82	30	72

Table 9: FT Staff who have acted as a member of validation/review panel; as an examiner for a Taught PG Degree or UG Degree

4.19 Further, other activities will bring staff tangentially if not directly into contact with research activity at another HEI but are not included in these figures. These include acting as a member of a validation or review panel at another University; acting as an external examiner for a taught PG degree or for an UG degree. Table 9 gives the figures for these categories.

Achievements recognised by the wider academic community

4.20 Just over 50% of FT academic staff are engaged in research or other forms of advanced scholarship who can demonstrate achievements that are recognised by the wider academic community to be of national and/or international standing. Thus, the University meets the stated

threshold of 33% in the guidelines. Table 10 breaks down these figures to the institute level.

Institute	%
IoE	37.7
IHSCP	50
IHCA	65.6
ISE	63.6
ISES	55.6
WBS	46.5
Overall	50.9

Table 10: % FT academic staff who can demonstrate achievements that are recognised by the wider academic community to be of national and/or international standing

- 4.21 In collating these figures the University has included staff who have:
- Produced a research output which has been subject to authoritative peer review
 - Acted as an editor for a journal of at least national standing
 - Formed part of an editorial board for a journal or book series
 - Acted as a referee for a journal or publisher of at least national standing
 - Been in receipt of a research grant awarded through a competitive, peer-reviewed process

Criterion 2- National guidance relating to the award of research degrees

- 4.22 The research degree process is subject to rigorous scrutiny both internally, through the *Research Degrees Board (RDB)*, and externally, through Coventry's *Research Degrees Committee*. The process has also been subject to the QAA Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes which adjudged the institutions management of quality and standards as "appropriate and satisfactory".

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

- 4.23 The University research degrees are awarded in line with qualification descriptors as set out by Coventry University. Until 2005/06, these descriptors, which make explicit reference to the FHEQ, were set out in the Coventry University Research Degree Regulations. From 2006/07, these descriptors were no longer included in the regulations but rather were incorporated into the Coventry *Guide for Research Students and Supervisors*. In 2007/08, the descriptors were integrated into Worcester's *Research Student Handbook* (now the *Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors*, see **Appendix 15**).
- 4.24 The required standards for research degree awards are reiterated to students through the Research Student Training Programme and to

staff through the Research Supervisor Training Programme and the Research Examiner Training Programme.

- 4.25 Should Worcester be successful in its application for RDAP, it intends to include specific reference to the FHEQ in its regulations. This will mirror Worcester's current Postgraduate Regulatory Framework (for taught PG programmes) which explicitly references the FHEQ and the *National Qualification Framework (NQF)*.
- 4.26 Conformity to the required standards at the registration stage (RDB1) and at the transfer/mid-point monitoring stage (RDB2/RDB2a) is ensured, internally, by the scrutiny of the relevant Institute Sub-Committees and of RDB and, externally, by experts who review and comment on the RDB1 and RDB2.
- 4.27 Conformity at the examination stage is ensured firstly by RDB which receives the RDB3 (Examination Arrangements) and provisionally approves these arrangements. Final approval for these arrangements, however, is given by Coventry's *Research Degrees Committee*.
- 4.28 Coventry then receives the examiners' reports and recommendations: Examiner's Preliminary Report (RDB10a) and Examiners' Final Report (RDB10b).
- 4.29 No student submitted for PhD or MPhil has failed outright. 8 students have been allowed to re-submit a revised thesis within 12 months (referred to as 'major amendments'). Each has done so successfully. This would seem to indicate that in the view of its peers, i.e. external examiners, Worcester is ensuring that its research students meet the required standards.

QAA Code of Practice

- 4.30 The format of the QAA Special Review of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes was closely linked to the QAA *Code of Practice* (Section 1, *Postgraduate Research Programmes*), and the University's response to the questionnaire submission dealt with the extent to which it met the Code's precepts. The special review assessors' judgement was that "...overall the institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programme provision was appropriate and satisfactory". No recommendations for further consideration were made and four aspects of good practice were identified:
- The informative and helpful information provided to staff
 - The range of ways in which the University collaborates to extend the research environment available to its RDP students
 - The procedures to advise students who could not be offered a place on an RDP
 - The design and implementation of Progress Files and Personal Development Planning specifically for RDP students

- 4.31 The University regularly considers its practice against the different sections of the Code of Practice. In respect of section 1, a mapping exercise was carried out in 2005 following publication of the revised and updated section. This was presented to RDB, identifying a number of areas where arrangements could be developed or enhanced. The mapping also informed the response to the QAA special review.
- 4.32 The rest of this section deals briefly with developments in arrangements for research degree programmes since the submission made in response to the special review. The more detailed account of how the expectations of the Code of Practice are satisfied can be found in the University's response to the QAA special review questionnaire (**Appendix 16**) and the resulting QAA Report.

Institutional arrangements (precepts 1-4)

- 4.33 In the submission for the special review the University stated that it intended to strengthen arrangements for managing research at academic department level. This has been achieved in a number of ways:
- Seminars run by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (who is responsible for research) for Heads of Institute and for Principal Lecturers with a strong research focus
 - Monthly meetings between the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Heads of Institute

Research environment (precept 5)

- 4.34 This has been dealt with in Part Three.

Selection, admission and induction (precepts 6 – 10)

- 4.35 At the time of the special review the University was in the process of ensuring that those involved in admissions decisions were appropriately trained and was about to introduce more formalised equal opportunities monitoring of applications.
- 4.36 All staff involved in selection and admissions must now attend a general 'Recruitment and Selection Workshop' run through the University's Personnel Department. In addition, those involved in admissions for an RDP are provided with a short training course run by the GRS which familiarizes selectors with research student admission procedures.
- 4.37 All applications to a research degree programme are now subject to EO monitoring and statistics are collated in the GRS annually. These statistics are submitted to the University's *Diversity and Equality Committee* for scrutiny.

- 4.38 The University's induction procedures, while noted as one of its strengths in the response to the questionnaire, were subject to review by the student body in 2006/07. Initially, it was intended to do this via a dedicated questionnaire. The University, however, instead chose to participate in the national *Postgraduate Research Experience Survey* (PRES) part of which focused on selection, admissions and induction (see **Appendix 17**).
- 4.39 Although the results of the survey showed that students had found the induction process a positive experience (and Worcester's scores in this respect almost exactly mirrored the national averages), it was decided for 2008/09 to set up a fuller induction programme which more clearly outlined the obligations and responsibilities of the University and of research students. The programme will run five times over the year to ensure that all students can attend.

Supervision (precepts 11-14)

- 4.40 Three aspects of the University's supervisory arrangements were flagged up for further review in the submission to QAA. Firstly, it was intended to develop further research supervisor training. This has been achieved initially through the refinement of the existing training programme. In response to feedback, the programme now makes clear distinctions between the role of the Director of Studies and other supervisors; and focuses more fully on specific procedures and regulations at Worcester. Further, it is intended to develop an M-level module in 2008/09 on research practice – with a strong emphasis on research supervision – as part of a new *MA in Higher Education* to be offered to new academic staff.
- 4.41 It was also indicated that the University would re-visit the guidance on frequency of contact between supervisors and students, and also clarify policy on research supervisor workloads. Following much discussion and the establishment of a small working group of RDB, it was decided to address these matters by drafting a statement of entitlement for research degree students.

Monitoring and review arrangements (precepts 15-17)

- 4.42 The University's own code of practice at the time of the special review required that all students maintain an ongoing record of their research progress and personal development, monitored by Directors of Study, but it did not extend this requirement to formal records of meetings with supervisors as proposed in precept 17. It is now a requirement that students maintain formal records of meetings with their supervisory team.
- 4.43 Additionally, the University has sought to strengthen annual monitoring and it is now policy that face-to face annual progress interviews are

arranged for both full and part-time students. A checklist is provided for those undertaking these interviews.

Development of research and other skills (precepts 18 – 20)

- 4.44 Since the special review, the university has adopted a formal training needs analysis that maps the full range of support and training available for research degree students. Now, all new students undertake this, as part of their induction. Continuing students are asked to review their training needs on an annual basis.
- 4.45 Academic Institutes are also being encouraged to review their policy and practice in relation to involving research students in teaching and where appropriate to support them in taking the first module of the PG Cert Learning and Teaching in HE.

Feedback (precept 21)

- 4.46 In the submission for the special review, although the assessors concluded that arrangements for feedback were appropriate and satisfactory, four areas for development were identified:
- The re-introduction of exit interviews for all research students
 - The improvement of electronic communication between staff and students through the virtual learning environment
 - Development of mechanisms to improve the quality of feedback received from external examiners for research student viva examinations
 - Identification of ways to obtain feedback from external parties identified in the code to include sponsors, collaborating organisations and employers
- 4.47 All completing and withdrawing research students are asked to fill out an exit questionnaire and are also given the option of an exit interview which will normally take place with the appropriate Research Coordinator.
- 4.48 Research students are now expected to utilise their SOLE (Student Online Learning Environment) pages and information is communicated to them via these pages.
- 4.49 In addition to the comments an external examiner was already able to make in the Examination Report Form (RDB10b), an additional feedback form is provided for not only the external examiner but all those involved in the examination process – internal examiner and independent chair – which allows more direct comment on the organisation and conduct of the oral examination and on the institution's assessment procedures

Assessment (precepts 22-24)

4.50 The arrangements for assessment – governed by Coventry’s regulations – are clearly articulated in the *Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors*. One area for development was flagged up in the submission: to discuss with Coventry University the possibility of amplification of its assessment criteria for MPhil and PhD. This issue has been addressed through the amplification of criteria in the Worcester handbook.

Representation, complaints and appeals (precepts 25- 27)

4.51 Procedures for complaints and appeals remain unchanged, but we are currently reviewing procedures against the Code of Practice.

Research Degree Management Frameworks

4.52 The *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* which formulates the University’s research and KT policy now receives and considers research degree management frameworks as issued by the research councils, funding bodies and other bodies, although such frameworks may initially be routed through Institute Sub-committees, *Research Degrees Board* or *Ethics Committee*, as appropriate. The University’s research governance is thus directly informed by these frameworks.

Ethics and Research Conduct

4.53 All new research degree proposals, staff and student, are subject to an ethical approval system (see **Appendix 27**). A revised system has been developed for 2008/09. The approval system and associated guidelines are subject to annual monitoring and review by the University’s *Ethics Committee*. This review is informed by frameworks and guidelines published by the Research Councils, Funding Bodies, Government Departments and other bodies.

4.54 The University has in addition developed a policy on Good Research Conduct (see **Appendix 28**) in the light of the Research Councils’ guidelines on this issue and their 2006 and 2007 surveys. This policy was agreed by the *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* and referred to the University’s *Ethics Committee* for ongoing review. It will be subject to its next review in Autumn 2008/09.

Research Training and Skills Development

4.55 The Research Training Programme maps on to the Research Councils’ Joint Skills Statement (2001). The programme was approved by the AHRC in 2005 as fit for purpose.

Criterion 3 - PhD Conferments

- 4.56 The University at the point of submission (October 2008) had achieved 87 PhD conferments and an additional 24 MPhil conferments and thus more than meets criterion 3.
- 4.57 The PhD conferments are set out by year and by research area in Table 11 and those for MPhil in Table 12. The tables show clearly that Worcester has established a strong tradition of effective, successful research degree supervision in the Institute of Science and the Environment and in the Institute of Education. The university has also produced successful research degree supervision in the past five years from all the other institutes and in a good variety of discipline areas.
- 4.58 The tables also demonstrate that, over the last 5 years, 48 research degrees have been awarded of which 44 were PhDs. Thus, half of the total PhD conferments at Worcester have been made in the last 5 years. Further, the proportion of PhDs to MPhils is 11:1 from 2004 onwards compared to a ratio of 4.3:1 before 2004.
- 4.59 It is an objective of the University's Research Strategy to reach 200 research degree completions by 2012. This is an ambitious but achievable target.
- 4.60 There are currently 20 FT students and 79 PT students. With a current completion rate of 54 months for FT students and 69 for PT students it would be expected that 14 FT students and 64 PT students would have completed by the end of 2012. That is 78 new completions giving a figure of 189 in total. This figure must be reduced to reflect the predicted withdrawal of approximately 13 registered students in this period. On the other hand, the role of the *Research Degrees Board* in reducing the time between enrolment and registration (as outlined in paragraph 2.8) should lead to faster completion rates and a greater number of completions than predicted on the current rates. Further, the diversification of the research student profile, that is the introduction of the PhD by Portfolio and the planned introduction of a Masters by Research (MRes), should also add to these figures.

Year	Drama	Education	English	Geography	History	Nursing & Midwifery	Psychology	Science	Sports Science	Business	Total
Pre-1999	1	6	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	0	16
1999	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
2000	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	2	1	0	9
2001	0	3	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	8
2002	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
2003	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2004	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	4	0	0	9
2005	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	0	8
2006	2	3	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	10
2007	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
2008	0	4	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	11
Total	3	26	5	8	10	1	8	22	3	1	87

Table 11: PhD Conferments by year and by research area

	Education	English	Geography	Health Studies	History	Psychology	Science	Sociology	Total
Pre-1999	5	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	10
1999	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
2000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
2002	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
2003	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
2004	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2007	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
2008	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	8	1	1	3	7	1	2	1	24

Table 12: MPhil Conferments by year and by research area

PART FIVE - CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This application demonstrates that the University meets the requirements for the three criteria and that the University has in place a strong underpinning research culture and a strategy for research and knowledge transfer that will allow the further development and enhancement of this culture.
- 5.2 In anticipation of and in preparation for a successful application for research degree awarding powers, the University is currently considering two key aspects of its management and use of these powers:
- the regulations and associated procedures for research degrees
 - the extension of the research degree portfolio
- 5.3 A small working group consisting of the Chair of RDB, the Manager of GRS, the Head of Registry Services and two members of RDB, was set up to review relevant recent developments in the sector, such as the introduction of credit-based research degree frameworks.
- 5.4 In its discussion, this Group has taken particular account of Coventry's *Curriculum Framework for Research and Professional Degrees* which was introduced at Coventry in 2007/08 and which Worcester would be expected to adopt in 2010/11. This framework 'modularizes' the research degree process.
- 5.5 The Group made the following initial observations:
- Worcester's research degree regulations and the associated procedures would need to retain the rigor of the current system. In particular, it was vital to maintain the careful scrutiny of research proposals, of supervisory teams and of examination teams that the RDB process provided.
 - There should be a distinct PG Research Degree regulatory framework which would draw on and overlap with the model of the University's existing PG Taught Degree framework. In particular, it should incorporate the very clear references to FHEQ levels and the NQF in the PGT framework.
 - The current modular element of the research degree, that is the Research Training Programme, should be strengthened and extended to produce a 'modular core' to the University's research degree programmes.
- 5.6 It was agreed that the GRS Manager and the Head of Registry Services would draft a 'Regulatory Framework for Research Degrees' to be submitted to RDB in the first instance early in 2009.
- 5.7 It is envisaged that the procedures that map on to this framework will, initially at least, be very closely related to the current procedures. These procedures have proved to be robust in relation to academic

standards and at the same time supportive to research students as they move from enrolment to registration to conferment.

- 5.8 The university has already expanded its research degree portfolio through the introduction of a PhD by Portfolio. This route was made available in September 2007.
- 5.9 It is intended to develop two further areas:
- Masters by Research (MRes)
 - Professional Doctorate
- 5.10 The University has already been in discussion with Coventry with regard the MRes and it is recognised that this degree programme could be easily mapped on to the existing taught element of the MPhil and PhD programmes (i.e. the Research Training Programme).
- 5.11 The MRes is viewed as a valuable addition to the course offer in areas such as Business and Psychology.
- 5.12 The development of a professional doctorate seems particularly appropriate in an institution whose research is in many instances practice based and which already attracts a number of professionals from education and the health professions on to its research degree programmes.
- 5.13 A working group was established by *Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee* to look at the development of a professional doctorate. A short research project, to be funded through the *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Life Long Learning Network*, has been commissioned by the group to look at demand models for such a doctorate. It is intended that the group will use the information from this project to produce a 'mock' validation document for a professional doctorate in autumn 2008.
- 5.14 The University strongly believes that it is now ready to assume responsibility for the awarding of its own research degrees. It has the unqualified support of its current accrediting body, Coventry University (see enclosed letter); and of its own research student community. It also has the support of the University of Birmingham, with whom it has had a strategic partnership since 2002 (see enclosed letter). The timing of the application has ensured that a sufficient period has elapsed since the reform of the Graduate Research School in 2005 to allow the revised arrangements to become embedded and for the results and recommendations of the QAA Special Review of Research Degree Programmes to be addressed fully. The University's management of its research degree procedures is rigorous and assures the quality of its research degree programmes. Furthermore, it has a clear vision of how it will develop these procedures and how it will utilise research degree awarding powers should it be successful in its application

