

The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education

In collaboration with

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam)

Admissions policy and procedure for postgraduate research students

1. Queen's Postgraduate Research Programme

- 1.1. The remit of this policy extends to admissions to the Queen's postgraduate research programme. This does not apply to taught postgraduate programmes.
- 1.2. We seek applications with proposals for original research from prospective doctoral candidates in theology. Applicants may be full or part-time, based in the UK or elsewhere. The PhD programme normally takes between 3-4 years full-time and between 6-8 part-time.
- 1.3. As an ecumenical college, we welcome applicants from diverse contexts and perspectives. Applicants must be in sympathy with the Christian ecumenical ethos of the Foundation.
- 1.4. We welcome applications from all students irrespective of background. All selection for admission takes place without regard to sex, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, sexual orientation, social background or other irrelevant distinction. Applications from students with disabilities are considered on exactly the same grounds as those for other candidates. We are committed to making arrangements wherever practicable to enable such students to participate as fully as possible in student life.

2. The Queen's Research Degrees Committee (QRDC)

- 2.1. The Queen's Research Degrees Committee (QRDC) is responsible for formulating the admissions policy and monitoring its processes.
- 2.2. The QRDC is responsible for the publicity that is used, and will ensure it is compliant with the Queen's publicity policy, ensuring both accuracy and that it is fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- 2.3. The QRDC oversees the admissions stage from enquiry through to a proposal being submitted to VU Amsterdam for consideration by their Professors' Meeting. At every stage the QRDC ensures that this is done in consultation with VU Amsterdam.
- 2.4. The QRDC monitors the process of admissions ensuring that it is fair, that its decisions are transparent, and that student enquiries and applications are dealt with in a timely way. Decisions on admissions are based solely on the individual merits of each candidate, their suitability for the postgraduate research programme applied for (bearing in mind any requirements laid down by any professional and/or sponsoring body and the capacity of Queen's to supervise the research), and assessed by the selection criteria described below (see 3.4, 3.5, 4.4, 4.5, 5.4, 5.5, as appropriate).

3. Admissions Process for UK/EU Applicants

- 3.1. Enquirers will be directed to the Queen's website where the application process is described, and application forms and guidelines on applying are available.
- 3.2. For information about what we do with your data, please see section 6 of this Admissions Policy.
- 3.3. Having researched pursuing postgraduate research at Queen's, students who now wish to make an application should follow the advice given in *Guidelines and Notes on Preparing a PhD Proposal* when completing their application form.

3.4. Initial Application Selection Criteria

Applications should be submitted as directed on the application form. Your application form will be acknowledged and then scrutinised initially by members of the research team. They will decide one of the following:

- 3.4.1. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about the candidates' prior qualifications in terms of:
- An awarded master's degree.
 - Sufficient command of the English Language to complete the programme of work satisfactorily and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Where a candidate has not completed prior degrees in English medium the candidate should have achieved: British Council /UCLES IELTS 7 (6 in writing) or TOEFL (paper based test 600, computer based test 250, internet test 100).
 - Appropriate theological educational background. We would normally expect applicants to have a master's degree in theology or related discipline. Alternatively there must be evidence of sufficient theological competence to pursue doctoral theological research.
- 3.4.2. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about whether supervisory expertise is available.
- 3.4.3. To seek further information from the application.
- 3.4.4. To conduct an initial interview, often by Skype or phone.

3.5. The Interview Selection Criteria

- 3.5.1. The interview will normally be conducted by members of the research team and appropriate academic staff, and its purpose is the following:
- To explore the situation of the applicant;
 - To gain further information about the intended project;
 - To advise the applicant about doctoral study and the relationship between Queen's and VU Amsterdam;
 - And to make a judgement on the suitability of the candidate and their proposal.
- 3.5.2. The interviewer(s) aims to gain sufficient understanding of the applicant, their situation and their interests that can guide the QRDC about:
- The capacity and competence of the applicant;
 - The feasibility of their project, including that the proposal is realistic within the timescale;
 - The viability of funding for the duration of the research;
 - Project desirability in relation to the research interests and institutional partnerships of Queen's;

- Our capacity (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to supervise it;
- Our ability (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to provide appropriate facilities and research environment for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme.

3.6. The interviewer(s) will recommend to the QRDC one of the following:

- 3.6.1. To decline the application;
- 3.6.2. To advise the applicant to undertake further work on their intended project with a view to a further application within a specified period of time (e.g. 1 month or 6 months);
- 3.6.3. To admit the applicant as a Queen's postgraduate research student (QPGRS) while they develop their proposal according to VU Amsterdam requirements and a potential supervisory team is confirmed. We would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 12 months for part-time and 6 months for full-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS.
- 3.6.4. QPGRS may be enrolled at the start of any of the three research terms, which are: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; 1 June – 30 September.

3.7. Fees.

- 3.7.1. The normal PhD student fee is charged from the time a QPGRS is admitted. This entitles the student to library membership, including e-resources for journals, and regular supervision meetings, initially with their adviser and subsequently with their supervisory team (for full-time students this would normally be at least once a month, and for part-time students the equivalent). The fee covers the whole year of study, and incorporates any costs associated with the transfer to, and subsequent registration with, VU Amsterdam and the annual research residential. Flexible payment options, including payment by termly instalments, are available.
- 3.7.2. There is a £50 registration fee payable upon acceptance of an offer, deductible from the first year's fees.
- 3.7.3. Currently students are expected to pay their own costs in attending (including travel and accommodation) their own public defence. Students are advised of other costs they will incur, for example in the purchase of books, in travel to supervision meetings, attending conferences.
- 3.7.4. Fees continue to be applicable until the public defence is completed, charged on a termly basis. All fees must be discharged in full before the student's public defence.
- 3.7.5. If a student, for any reason including failure to progress at any stage, has to withdraw from the programme, fees outstanding will be charged, normally on a termly basis.
- 3.7.6. For the purposes of fees, from 2018-2019 academic year, research terms are set as follows: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; and 1 June – 30 September. For students enrolled before October 2018, each term consists of four months, beginning from the start date of each student.

3.8. **The application to VU Amsterdam.** The QRDC will appoint an adviser or advisers to the QPGRS, who are suitably qualified and experienced to support their application to VU Amsterdam, which includes registering (with supporting documentation) with VU Amsterdam's Graduate School of Religion and Theology (hereafter, the Graduate School), a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) approved by the Director of the Graduate School, and a research proposal. As a partner institution with VU Amsterdam, the process of applying to VU

Amsterdam for QPGR students differs slightly from that described on VU Amsterdam website. While becoming a member of the Graduate School once registered with an approved TSP, typically the proposal is submitted soon after this registration, and no yearly membership fee of the Graduate School is required (see 3.7).

3.9. In the event that a proposal is not approved by VU Amsterdam, the student ceases to be registered with VU Amsterdam and therefore will also be removed from Queen's postgraduate programme. Work on the proposal continues while the TSP is drawn up and registration is prepared, and therefore we normally would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 12 months for part-time and 6 months for full-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS. As part of this application process to VU Amsterdam, a VU Amsterdam supervisor is identified and must agree to support the student's application. The risks of and reasons for possible removal from the programme are fully explained to students prior to enrolment as a QPGRS.

3.9.1. On successful submission of the proposal and acceptance by the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting the student becomes a registered Doctoral Researcher in the Queen's Foundation and continues as a member of the Graduate School, with the supervisory team as agreed between the QRDC and VU Amsterdam.

3.9.2. If the application to VU Amsterdam is not accepted then the QRDC will advise the PG Researcher either that they cannot continue (there is no refund of fees and fees will apply up to and including the term, defined in 3.7.6, of withdrawal) or that a re-submission is possible (and fees will continue to be charged).

4. Admissions Process for Applicants Outside the EU for Distance Learning/Split Location

4.1. Enquirers will be directed to the Queen's website where the application process is described, and application forms and guidelines on applying are available.

4.2. For information about what we do with your data, please see section 6 of this Admissions Policy.

4.3. Having researched pursuing postgraduate research at Queen's, students who now wish to make an application should follow the advice given in *Guidelines and Notes on Preparing a PhD Proposal* when completing their application form.

4.4. Initial Application Selection Criteria

Applications should be submitted as directed on the application form. Your application form will be acknowledged and then scrutinised initially by members of the research team. They will decide one of the following:

- 4.4.1. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about the candidates' prior qualifications in terms of:
- An awarded master's degree.
 - Sufficient command of the English Language to complete the programme of work satisfactorily and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Where a candidate has not completed prior degrees in English medium the candidate should have achieved: British Council /UCLES IELTS 7 (6 in writing) or TOEFL (paper based test 600, computer based test 250, internet test 100).

- Appropriate theological educational background. We would normally expect applicants to have a master's degree in theology or related discipline. Alternatively there must be evidence of sufficient theological competence to pursue doctoral theological research.

4.4.2. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about whether supervisory expertise is available.

4.4.3. To seek further information from the application.

4.4.4. To conduct an initial interview, often by Skype or phone.

4.5. The Interview Selection Criteria

4.5.1. The interview will normally be conducted by members of the research team and appropriate academic staff, and its purpose is the following:

- To explore the situation of the applicant and in particular to gain an understanding of the resources and facilities locally available, and the feasibility of sustaining part-time study alongside other employment;
- To ascertain the contribution of the proposed research to the development of local theological resources, mission and ministry;
- To gain further information about the intended project;
- To clarify the sources of funding and the feasibility of periods of residence in the UK;
- To advise the applicant about doctoral study and the relationship between Queen's and VU Amsterdam;
- And to make a judgement on the suitability of the candidate and their proposal.

4.5.2. The interviewers aim to gain sufficient understanding of the applicant and their interests that can guide the QRDC about:

- The capacity and competence of the applicant;
- The feasibility of their project, including that the proposal is realistic within the timescale;
- The viability of funding for the duration of the research;
- Project desirability in relation to the research interests and institutional partnerships of Queen's;
- Our capacity (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to supervise it;
- Our ability (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to provide appropriate facilities and research environment for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme.

4.6. As a result the interviewers will recommend to the QRDC:

4.6.1. To decline the application;

4.6.2. To advise the applicant to undertake further work on their intended project with a view to a further application within a specified period of time (e.g. 1 month or 6 months);

4.6.3. To admit the applicant as a Queen's postgraduate research student (QPGRS) while they develop their proposal according to VU Amsterdam requirements and a potential supervisory team is confirmed. We would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 12 months for part-time and 6 months for full-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS.

4.6.4. QPGRS may be enrolled at the start of any of the three research terms, which are: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; 1 June – 30 September.

4.7. **Fees.** The normal PhD student fee is charged from the time a QPGRS is admitted. This entitles the student to library membership, including e-resources for journals, and regular supervision meetings, initially with their adviser and subsequently with their supervisory team (for full-time students this would normally be at least once a month, and for part-time students the equivalent conducted via skype). The fee covers the whole year of study, and incorporates any costs associated with the transfer to, and subsequent registration with, VU Amsterdam. Flexible payment options, including payment by instalments, are available. There is a £50 registration fee payable upon acceptance of an offer, deductible from the first year's fees. Currently students are expected to pay their own costs in attending (including travel and accommodation) their own public defence. Students are advised of other costs they will incur, for example in the purchase of books, in travel to supervision meetings, attending conferences.

4.7.1. Fees continue to be applicable until the public defence is completed, charged on a termly basis. All fees must be discharged in full before the student's public defence.

4.7.2. If a student, for any reason, including failure to progress at any stage, has to withdraw from the programme, fees outstanding will be charged, normally on a termly basis.

4.7.3. For the purposes of fees, from 2018-2019 academic year, research terms are set as follows: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; and 1 June – 30 September. For students enrolled before October 2018, each term consists of four months, beginning from the start date of each student.

4.8. Entry to QPGRS status can only be approved if the QRDC is satisfied that:

4.8.1. The candidate is suitably qualified;

4.8.2. The development of an acceptable proposal is realistic within the timescale;

4.8.3. There is appropriate supervisory expertise and capacity;

4.8.4. Queen's and VU Amsterdam together are able to provide appropriate facilities and research environment for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme;

4.8.5. There is satisfactory evidence of the adequacy of the support and facilities available for the research both in the Queen's Foundation and VU Amsterdam and in the local context, for example through the designation of an appropriate collaborating institution outside the UK.

4.8.6. The supervisory arrangements enable frequent and substantial contact between the candidate and the supervisory team;

4.8.7. The student will be able to undertake intensive periods of residence in the UK or at VU Amsterdam in the Netherlands (normally 6 months over the period of study);

4.8.8. The candidate has sufficient command of the English language to complete the programme of work satisfactorily and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Where a candidate has not completed prior degrees in English medium, the candidate should have achieved: British Council/UCLES IELTS 7 (6 in writing) or TOEFL (paper based test 600, computer based test 250, internet test 100).

4.9. **The application to VU Amsterdam.** The QRDC will appoint an adviser or advisers to the QPGRS, who are suitably qualified and experienced to support their application to VU Amsterdam, which includes registering (with supporting documentation) with VU Amsterdam's

Graduate School of Religion and Theology (hereafter, the Graduate School), a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) approved by the Director of the Graduate School, and a research proposal. As a partner institution with VU Amsterdam, the process of applying to VU Amsterdam for QPGR students differs slightly from that described on VU Amsterdam website. While becoming a member of the Graduate School once registered with an approved TSP, typically the proposal is submitted soon after this registration, and no yearly membership fee of the Graduate School is required (see 4.7).

4.10. In the event that a proposal is not approved by VU Amsterdam, the student ceases to be registered with VU Amsterdam and therefore will also be removed from Queen's postgraduate programme. Work on the proposal continues while the TSP is drawn up and registration is prepared, and therefore we normally would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 12 months for part-time and 6 months for full-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS. As part of this application process to VU Amsterdam, a VU Amsterdam supervisor is identified and must agree to support the student's application. The risks of and reasons for possible removal from the programme are fully explained to students prior to enrolment as a QPGRS.

4.10.1. On successful submission of the proposal and acceptance by the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting the student becomes a registered Doctoral Researcher in the Queen's Foundation and continues as a member of the Graduate School, with the supervisory team as agreed between the QRDC and VU Amsterdam.

4.10.2. If the application to VU Amsterdam is not accepted then the QRDC will advise the PG Researcher either that they cannot continue (there is no refund of fees paid and fees will apply up to an including the term, as defined in 4.7.3, in which this occurs) or that a re-submission is possible (and fees will continue to be charged).

5. Admissions Process for Applicants Applying from Outside the UK/EU to Study Full-time

5.1. Enquirers will be directed to the Queen's website where the application process is described, and application forms and guidelines on applying are available.

5.2. For information about what we do with your data, please see section 6 of this Admissions Policy.

5.3. Having researched pursuing postgraduate research at Queen's, students who now wish to make an application should follow the advice given in *Guidelines and Notes on Preparing a PhD Proposal* when completing their application form.

5.4. Initial Application Selection Criteria

Applications should be submitted as directed on the application form. Your application form will be acknowledged and then scrutinised initially by members of the research team. They will decide one of the following:

5.4.1. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about the candidates' prior qualifications in terms of:

- An awarded master's degree.
- Sufficient command of the English Language to complete the programme of work satisfactorily and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. Where a candidate has not completed prior degrees in English medium the candidate should have

achieved: British Council /UCLES IELTS 7 (6 in writing) or TOEFL (paper based test 600, computer based test 250, internet test 100).

- Appropriate theological educational background. We would normally expect applicants to have a master's degree in theology or related discipline. Alternatively there must be evidence of sufficient theological competence to pursue doctoral theological research.

5.4.2. To decline the application before interview if there are sufficient doubts about whether supervisory expertise is available.

5.4.3. To seek further information from the application.

5.4.4. To conduct an initial interview, usually by Skype or phone.

5.5. The Interview Selection Criteria

5.5.1. The interview will normally be conducted members of the research team and appropriate academic staff, and its purpose is the following:

- To explore the situation of the applicant;
- To gain further information about the intended project;
- To advise the applicant about doctoral study and the relationship between Queen's and VU Amsterdam.
- And to make a judgement on the suitability of the candidate and their proposal.

5.5.2. The interviewers aim to gain sufficient understanding of the applicant, their situation and their interests that can guide the QRDC about:

- The capacity and competence of the applicant;
- The feasibility of their project, including that the proposal is realistic within the timescale;
- The viability of funding for the duration of the research;
- Project desirability in relation to the research interests and institutional partnerships of Queen's;
- Our capacity (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to supervise it;
- Our ability (jointly with VU Amsterdam) to provide appropriate facilities and research environment for the conduct of scholarly research in the area of the research programme.

5.6. The interviewers will recommend to the QRDC one of the following:

5.6.1. To decline the application;

5.6.2. To advise the applicant to undertake further work on their intended project with a view to a further application within a specified period of time (e.g. 1 month or 6 months);

5.6.3. To admit the applicant as a Queen's postgraduate research student (QPGRS) while they develop their proposal according to VU Amsterdam requirements and a potential supervisory team is confirmed.

5.6.4. QPGRS may be enrolled at the start of any of the three research terms, which are: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; 1 June – 30 September.

5.7. Becoming a Queen's Postgraduate Research Student.

5.7.1. A student normally will begin their research as a part-time distance learning QPGRS. We would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would

be within 12 months for part-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS.

The admissions panel need to be confident that:

- 5.7.1.1. The student has the time and resources (library and IT) to work at a distance;
 - 5.7.1.2. The student demonstrates a high level of ability in English enabling them to flourish as an independent learner;
 - 5.7.1.3. The student has prior experience of working in a Higher Education institutions that gives them insight into the way European universities function.
- 5.7.2. In exceptional cases, where the admissions panel is not confident that the student has the necessary support for distance learning, a student may begin their research full-time as a QPGRS resident on the Queen's campus. We would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 6 months from the point of date of entry to the UK as a QPGRS. This option will be conditional on the student obtaining a short-term study visa and will be at the discretion of the admissions panel who will recommend this option if:
- 5.7.2.1. The student requires the resources of the Queen's campus to develop their proposal;
 - 5.7.2.2. The student is likely to require more intensive support because they are unfamiliar with European University expectations, or because of language support for academic English;
 - 5.7.2.3. The student would not have the time or permission to undertake part-time studies in their home context.

5.8. The application to VU Amsterdam. The QRDC will appoint an adviser or advisers to the QPGRS (whether working at a distance or resident on Queen's campus). The adviser will be suitably qualified and experienced to support the student's application to VU Amsterdam, which includes registering (with supporting documentation) with VU Amsterdam's Graduate School of Religion and Theology (hereafter, the Graduate School), a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) approved by the Director of the Graduate School, and a research proposal. As a partner institution with VU Amsterdam, the process of applying to VU Amsterdam for QPGR students differs slightly from that described on VU Amsterdam website. While becoming a member of the Graduate School once registered with an approved TSP, typically the proposal is submitted soon after this registration, and no yearly membership fee of the Graduate School is required (see 5.10).

5.9. In the event that a proposal is not approved by VU Amsterdam, the student ceases to be registered with VU Amsterdam and therefore will also be removed from Queen's postgraduate programme. Work on the proposal continues while the TSP is drawn up and registration is prepared, and therefore we normally would expect that submission to the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting would be within 12 months for part-time and 6 months for full-time students from the date of enrolling as a QPGRS. As part of this application process to VU Amsterdam, a VU Amsterdam supervisor is identified and must agree to support the student's application. The risks of and reasons for possible removal from the programme are fully explained to students prior to enrolment as a QPGRS.

- 5.9.1. On successful submission of the proposal and acceptance by the VU Amsterdam Professors' Meeting the student will apply for a Tier 4 visa to enable them to study full-time in the UK for three years.

- 5.9.2. On gaining the visa the student becomes a registered Doctoral Researcher in the Queen's Foundation continues as a member of the Graduate School, with the supervisory team as agreed between the QRDC and VU Amsterdam.
- 5.9.3. If the application to VU Amsterdam is not accepted then the QRDC will advise the PG Researcher either that they cannot continue (and fees will be due up to and including the term when this occurs) or that a re-submission is possible (and fees will continue to be charged). For full-time students this latter would require them returning home once the short-term study visa expires, continuing as a QPGRS in a part-time distance mode, and being charged the relevant part-time international student fee.
- 5.10. **Fees.**
- 5.10.1. A part-time PhD international student tuition fee is charged from the time a QPGRS is admitted on the initial part-time pathway. A full-time PhD international student fee is charged from the time a QPGRS begins their period of study as a resident on the Queen's campus. The fee in both cases entitles the student to library membership, including e-resources for journals, and regular supervision meetings, initially with their adviser and subsequently with their supervisory team (for full-time students this would normally be at least once a month, and for part-time students the equivalent). A full-time QPGRS and then, if admitted as a Doctoral researcher, will also be charged a maintenance fee for their board and accommodation costs at Queen's. Additional costs such as health insurance, flights and travel are fully explained during their application process. The fee covers the whole year of study, and incorporates any costs associated with the transfer to, and subsequent registration with, VU Amsterdam and the annual research residential. Flexible payment options, including payment by termly instalments, are available.
- 5.10.2. There is a £50 registration fee payable upon acceptance of an offer, deductible from the first year's fees.
- 5.10.3. Currently students are expected to pay their own costs in attending (including travel and accommodation) their own public defence. Students are advised of other costs they will incur, for example in the purchase of books, in travel to supervision meetings, attending conferences
- 5.10.4. Fees continue to be applicable until the public defence is completed, charged on a termly basis. All fees must be discharged in full before the student's public defence.
- 5.10.5. If a student, for any reason, including failure to progress at any stage, has to withdraw from the programme, fees outstanding will be charged, normally on a termly basis.
- 5.10.6. For the purposes of fees, from 2018-2019 academic year, research terms are set as follows: 1 October – 31 January; 1 February – 31 May; and 1 June – 30 September. For students enrolled before October 2018, each term consists of four months, beginning from the start date of each student.

6. Data Protection

- 6.1. An electronic log of enquiries is maintained. We will include you on this and keep copies of correspondence (including electronic) with you for up to 24 months from the date of the last communication from you. We do this as the application process can be lengthy and it is also helpful to you for us to keep you up to date with relevant events such as open days. The legal

basis for holding data in this way under GDPR is 'legitimate interest'. If you choose not to apply and wish for your details to be removed earlier than 24 months then contact research@queens.ac.uk to request this.

6.2. If you choose to submit an application then you will be sharing with us personal sensitive information including supporting documentation such as relevant qualifications and documents of identity. Copies of these are stored in paper copy on a file in a secure office, and also electronically (if we receive them in this format, if we do not then we will scan documents) in a named file on a secure centrally administered server. We hold this data as a 'legitimate interest' but also as part of a 'public duty' to report to the Office for Students information on admissions applicants as part of the widening access agenda. If your application is rejected or if you chose not to accept an offer that is made following your application, then we will destroy your data at the end of the current academic year (retaining anonymised information about your background as an applicant for the public duty reporting requirements).

6.3. If you chose to accept the offer of a place and become a Foundation student then you will receive more information about how your data is stored and shared at that point.