



## **GUIDE TO THE DOCTORATE IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**

### **Specialist routes in Professional Development for Senior Practitioners**

**Note:** This guide is intended to give you a general understanding of the PDF Doctorate Programme. For full details of all study requirements, you should consult the Programme Handbook and Module Handbook and seek advice from your Learning Coordinator or Programme Advisor.



|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION .....</b>                              | <b>4</b>  |
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 4         |
| UNIVERSITY LINKS .....  | 4         |
| PDF'S MISSION.....  | 4         |
| <b>OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL AWARD .....</b>                                       | <b>6</b>  |
| APPLICATION AND SELECTION .....   | 6         |
| <i>Credit for Research Methodology</i> .....                                      | 7         |
| <i>The Review of Learning</i> .....   | 7         |
| <i>The Programme Plan</i> .....   | 7         |
| <i>Claim for Level 5. Credit</i> .....  | 8         |
| <b>FINAL STAGE [THE D.PROF.].....</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <i>Assessment</i> .....   | 9         |
| <i>Collaborative Programmes</i> .....   | 9         |
| <b>PROGRAMME STRUCTURE FOR THE DOCTORAL AWARD.....</b>                            | <b>10</b> |
| <b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE DOCTORAL AWARD [LEVEL 5.] .....</b>                | <b>11</b> |
| COGNITIVE DESCRIPTORS .....   | 11        |
| TRANSFERABLE SKILLS.....  | 11        |
| OPERATIONAL CONTEXT.....  | 11        |
| <b>INFORMATION AND FACILITIES .....</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| UNIVERSITY PROVISION .....  | 12        |
| PDF PROVISION .....   | 12        |
| OTHER PROVISION.....  | 12        |
| IT LEARNING FACILITIES .....  | 12        |
| <b>THE CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE .....</b>  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>REVIEW OF WORK BASED LEARNING AND STRATEGIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b> | <b>13</b> |
| STRATEGIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....  | 13        |
| KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME .....   | 14        |
| PDF'S ROLE .....  | 14        |
| <b>DOCTORATE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....</b>                                 | <b>15</b> |
| COMPETENCES FOR THE ADVANCED PRACTITIONER .....                                   | 15        |
| THE ADVANCED AWARD IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....                               | 15        |
| <i>Core Requirements</i> .....  | 16        |
| <i>General Requirements</i> .....   | 16        |
| <i>Advanced Requirements</i> .....  | 16        |





## THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

### Introduction

The Professional Development Foundation [PDF] is a non-profit making research trust operating in two key areas. It provides high quality practitioner-directed research and development programmes and also develops consultancy programmes for the public and private sectors.

The PDF operates as a network of consultants, who work together with international associates to support programmes. All are either academics or practitioners and are experts in their respective fields.

### University Links

The PDF's aim is to offer practitioners the opportunity to carry out worthwhile work-based research that is linked to professional Doctorates or Master's degrees and is expected to result in beneficial changes in their organisations. It works with leading departments in a number of universities. In the area of work based learning it cooperates with the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships at Middlesex University which awards the Doctorate in Professional Development

Students working for the award will be subject to the University's regulations and copies of these will be provided to all students and staff. The University's Charter for Students also applies. Both the Regulations and the Charter should be read in conjunction with the University Catalogue and other relevant documents or seen on the following web site:

[http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/quality/chr\\_home.htm](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/quality/chr_home.htm)

This web page also contains useful information about the services that may be available to you, and your responsibilities and rights as a student of the University. The Charter is also printed as an appendix to the University's Catalogue.

### PDF's Mission

- To provide centres of excellence for work based learning partnerships to assist clients and client groups in the areas of personal, professional and organisational development by means of research, information exchange, learning networks, intervention and partnership provision of Diploma, Masters, and Doctorate awards.
- To engage in academically significant research aimed at the development process and to challenge the development agendas of the professions.
- To become the first point of reference for professional bodies seeking partners to create knowledge management systems and networked learning opportunities for their members.



The Foundation attempts to fulfil this mission by promoting understanding of the shared concerns of the professions and their clients through developing five core activities.

- Research – through practitioner led research to contribute to professional competence, organisational effectiveness, client benefit, models of practice and policy development.
- Influence – based on research to contribute to debates on policy and practice and where necessary to challenge the development agenda of the professions.
- Standards – to promote understanding of appropriate standards for practitioner led research and practice, together with the quality systems needed to support practitioners in their efforts to enhance their own development or that of their clients and organisations.
- Knowledge - whether through knowledge transfer, continuing professional development, information exchange, networking, research fora or academic research and awards, to contribute to the body of knowledge on professional development.
- Learning – to share and develop opportunities for learning within the professions and to establish appropriate partnerships with professional bodies, practitioners, universities and other agencies to further the commitment of all to lifelong continuous learning and development.



## OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL AWARD

### Application and Selection

- Candidates should have a Master's Degree or a Master's level professional qualification, and/or extensive and substantial post-graduate level professional experience.
- Before joining a programme, all candidates attend an introductory seminar at which the programme requirements are explained. They are then invited for an extended discussion during which their prior experience and suitability for self-directed study are explored. If a place on the programme is offered, the formal application process is completed and candidates are registered on the Preliminary Stage of the programme.
- The Preliminary Stage of the programme is designated the M.Prof. [Master's in Professional Development] and is designed to ensure that candidates plan their study thoroughly from the outset and are given proper support during this process. All candidates are initially registered by the university as M.Prof. students.

It is possible for candidates to stop at the end of the first stage and in this case they would achieve the award of M.Prof. However the scheme of study provides an integrated programme for those who want to continue to Doctorate level.

- A key feature of the Doctorate in Professional Development is that candidates can gain credit for prior learning, whether certificated or experiential. This means that the total period of study may be substantially shorter than for a PhD. The minimum total period of the D.Prof. is 26 months.
- Note: Although the university uses the term "student" for participants in the programme, the PDF designation is "Researcher" or "Research Associate".

### Preliminary Stage [the M.Prof.]

Eligibility for credit is usually established at interview. All PDF candidates could normally expect to gain substantial credit at level 4 [Master's level] and also gain some at level 5.

Completion of this stage requires a total of 140 credits at Level 4, made up of the following compulsory elements:

- Research and Development Capacity - 60 credits
- Professional Learning - 40 credits
- Review of Learning - 20 credits
- Programme Plan - 20 credits



### ***Credit for Research Methodology***

- Credit may be given for evidence of prior learning and learning from practical experience of work-based research. Candidates produce a written statement of their research experience which demonstrates their capability for research and which is mapped against the Level 5. Descriptors. Note that, for accreditation purposes, these descriptors will be interpreted at level 4/5.
- Candidates who have previously undertaken academic research will be able to produce evidence of relevant study. Practical experience is evidenced by summarising major projects undertaken by the candidate, accompanied by an explanation of the development of underpinning knowledge.
- Candidates who are active researchers or already have Doctoral qualifications may be able to gain the full 60 credits. Most PDF candidates can expect to gain 40 credits and would achieve the remaining 20 credits by undertaking a Research Awareness unit from which they produce a portfolio for assessment.

The Research Portfolio will include:

- a research learning diary,
- research notes, e.g. information about exploratory literature search, annotated bibliography, outline of research approach,
- research exercises,
- a 2000 word essay on methodology and epistemology of practitioner research, as applied to their own professional field,
- the research proposal, fully explained for the main project; a subsidiary may be envisaged, but need not be included at this stage,
- 500-word reflection on learning from producing the portfolio.

### ***The Review of Learning***

This is a 5000 word assessed essay which reviews the individual's personal and professional development. It should include critical points, an explanation of how development of current capabilities has occurred and what areas would need to be addressed in order to meet the Level 5. descriptors.

### ***The Programme Plan***

The Programme Plan is a statement of the total proposed programme and is about 3000 words. It covers both those elements already completed and those remaining and includes:

- a Learning Agreement,
- the rationale for the D.Prof. research proposal,
- continued reflections on the issues covered by the Review of Learning,
- a proposal for a claim for credit at Level 5., if being made.

Acceptance of the plan is required for candidates to be officially registered as Doctoral students of the university. Acceptance requires both assessment and approval. Assessment covers the plan's academic rigour in relation to Doctoral standards, while approval is concerned with its overall suitability and coherence in relation to professional development. It includes a presentation by the candidate which accounts for 50% of the assessment grade.



### **Claim for Level 5. Credit**

Between 80 and 160 credits may be awarded for work demonstrating Doctoral level capability. The claim for credit is developed from the material in the Review of Learning and must explain:

- The nature of the work undertaken, the outcomes and evidence for them
- Personal and professional development, in relation to issues explored in the Review of Learning
- How the learning meets the Level 5. descriptors
- A commentary justifying the claim

### **Final Stage [the D.Prof.]**

Completion of the Doctorate requires a research project which must be of a minimum “size” of 200 credits. In terms of word-count, 20 credits at Level 5. equate to 5000 words.

The maximum credit possible for the whole M/D.Prof. is 60 credits at Level 4. [Preliminary Stage] and 160 credits at Level 5. [Final Stage].

The Final Stage requires a total of 260 credits which may be achieved by either:

- a major project for 160 credits plus a minor project for 80 credits,
- or
- a claim for between 80 and 120 credits plus a project for the balance,
- or
- a project for the whole 260 credits.

The research study should make a significant contribution to your own development and that of your organisation. The purpose is not to create academic researchers, but to develop a professionals' ability to apply appropriate research principles to their work, thereby providing a model for evidence-based practice.

The following are the generic capabilities which apply to the research project:<sup>1</sup>

1. **knowledge, research & analysis:** knowledge outcomes will be specific to the focus of the project but must include critical analysis of both relevant interdisciplinary and advanced theoretical and/or research issues, and justification of methods used.
2. **synthesis & evaluation:** ability to design new responses to new situations and comprehensively evaluate them.
3. **problem solving:** ability to construct and assess problem solving strategies in a wide range of situations.
4. **self appraisal and management of learning:** ability to strategically plan and implement development of own professional learning and critically reflect on outcomes.
5. **communication:** evidence of engagement with “critical communities” through whom new or modified paradigms are being established; ability to present work orally.
6. **responsibility & ethical understanding:** evidence of responsibility for self and others and ethical understanding including complex, unpredictable and/or specialised work contexts.

---

<sup>1</sup> Middlesex University NCWBLP M/D.Prof. Module Handbook



## **Assessment**

The standard form of research output is a written report which is submitted for assessment. Candidates will also give a presentation and attend a *viva voce*. Where non-standard outputs are produced, e.g. a video, they must be accompanied by a full written critique.

## **Collaborative Programmes**

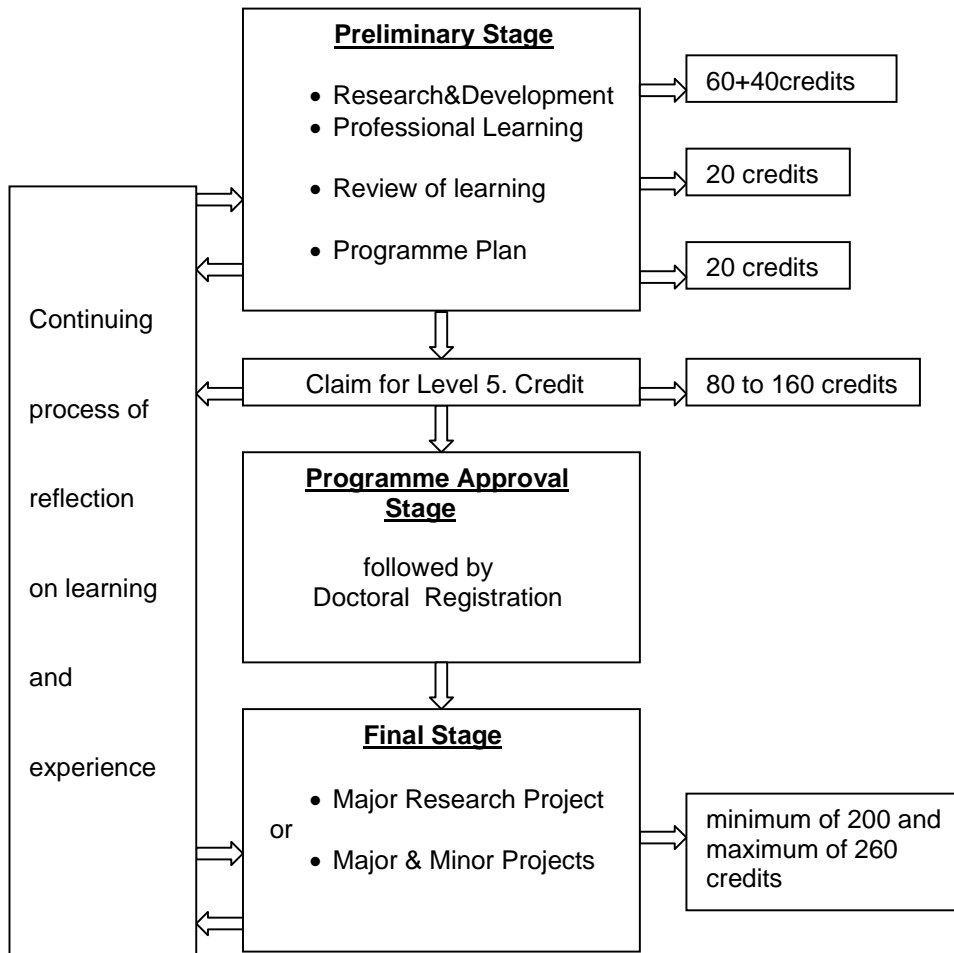
Organisations implementing an internal change programme may use the Doctorate award as a framework for action-based research. A change team within the organisation can register for the award and will be given support to ensure that personal, professional and organisational analysis is focused on relevant issues.

Specific assessment requirements apply to team-based projects, in order to ensure that both the collaborative nature of the research and individual contributions are properly examined.

Collaboration may also take place with professional bodies. In this case, relevant competences and areas of practice will be incorporated within the programme, in order to satisfy the requirements of the professional body concerned.



## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE FOR THE DOCTORAL AWARD



**A TOTAL OF 580 CREDITS IS REQUIRED FOR THE DOCTORAL AWARD. THIS IS MADE UP OF:**

- 60 credits for Research and Development
- 20 credits for the Portfolio
- 20 credits for Programme Plan
- 40 credits for Professional Learning
- 80-160 Level 5 credits for prior or professional learning [where applicable]
- 200-260 credits for Research Project, depending on Level 5 credits for prior learning



## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE DOCTORAL AWARD [LEVEL 5.]

### Cognitive Descriptors

- i. Knowledge: evidence that the student has great depth of knowledge of an inter-disciplinary nature in a complex area and is working at current limits of theoretical and/or research understanding.
- ii. Analysis: can deal with complexity, lacunae and/or contradictions in the knowledge base and make confident selection of tools for the job.
- iii. Synthesis: can autonomously synthesise information/ideas and create responses to problems that expand or re-define existing knowledge and develop new approaches in new situations, through adding a new dimension to existing understanding or predicting an outcome that can be verified.
- iv. Evaluation: can independently evaluate/argue alternative approaches and accurately assess/report on own and others work with justification and in a way that constitutes a basis for improvement in practice.

### Transferable Skills

- i. Self-Appraisal/Reflection on Practice: evidence that the student has worked with “critical communities” through whom a new or modified paradigm is being established. Habitually reflects on own and others’ practice so that self-appraisal and reflexive inquiry become intertwined, thereby improving the student’s own and others’ practice.
- ii. Planning/Management of Learning: is autonomous in study and use of resources; makes professional use of others in support of self-directed learning and is fully aware of political implications of the study.
- iii. Problem Solving: can isolate, assess and resolve problems of all degrees of predictability in work situations in an autonomous manner and can tackle unpredictable problems in novel ways.
- iv. Communication/Presentation: can engage in full professional and academic communication with others in their field and place of work and give papers/presentations to “critical communities” for developmental purposes.
- v. Research Capability: can demonstrate effective selection, combination and use of research methods, with full appreciation of their limitations and possibilities in achieving objectivity, reliability and validity appropriate to the area and subject of study in the work situation. Can contribute to the development of applied research methodology.

### Operational Context

- i. Context: complex, unpredictable, specialised work contexts requiring innovative study which will involve exploring current limits of knowledge and particularly interdisciplinary approaches and understanding.
- ii. Responsibility: autonomy within bounds of professional practice with high level of responsibility for self and others.
- iii. Ethical Understanding: awareness of ethical dilemmas likely to arise in research, professional practice and work situations. Ability to form solutions in dialogue with superiors, peers, clients, mentors and others.



## INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

### University provision

PDF Research Associates are registered in the student faculty of Middlesex University and are therefore able to benefit from its library and learning facilities. This also applies where they are registered with a professional body. Where necessary, the PDF will try to make individual arrangements for access to other University libraries.

### PDF provision

The PDF maintains regular subscriptions to leading professional journals and students have access to these, as well as to a small library of essential course books. We also offer facilities for statistical processing (SPSS).

The PDF has a number Centres of Excellence in various areas of professional practice and develops links with similar centres in other institutions. These are a valuable resource, especially for current literature and for contact with leading specialists. All Research Associates have access to the centre or centres relevant to their field and may choose to work through association with the Centres.

Meeting rooms are available at our City office, where learning sets can meet or tutorials be arranged.

### Other provision

All organisations operating programmes with us provide on-site facilities for their own candidates.

### IT Learning Facilities

The PDF is currently developing the following services, which will be brought on-line progressively over the coming months:

- On-line interactive modules.
- Networked support via virtual learning sets.
- Networked access to subscription databases for business and social science abstracts.
- On-line tutor support, learning sets and peer discussion groups.

## THE CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

PDF has set up a series of Centres of Excellence which will operate in a number of important professional areas. These centres cooperate with others groups and individuals who can bring relevant expertise to the programmes. They will play a key role in both generating Research Associates for the Doctoral programme and providing expert guidance to them. They include Centres such as the International Centre for the Study of Coaching, and Vet Learning Network.



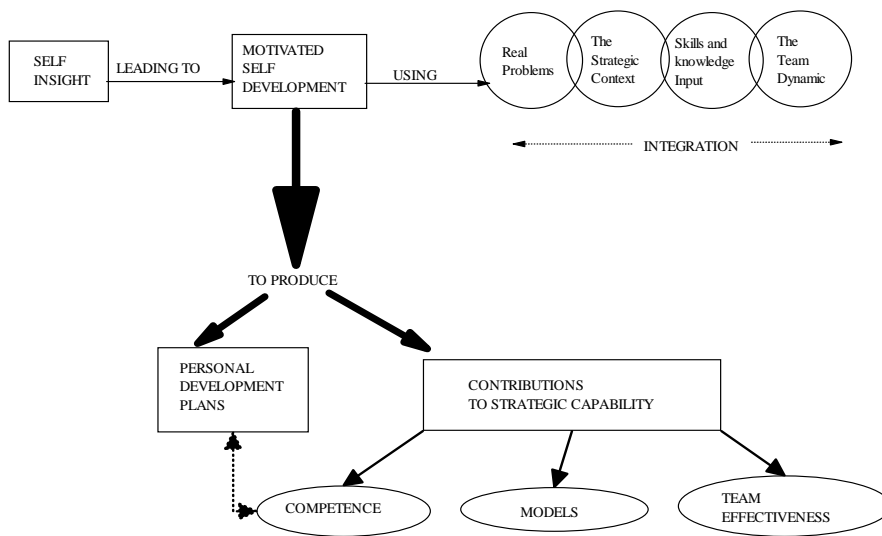
## REVIEW OF WORK BASED LEARNING AND STRATEGIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of the Reflective Practitioner draws upon the idea that professional practice is most effective when we are able to understand the factors that affect our capability at work, the context in which we work, the people we work with and the results we are trying to achieve.

By critically examining and reflecting on each of these areas and locating that analysis within the framework of sets of values, codes of conduct and changing scientific, social and political influences, we are able to develop more effective policies and practice.

An approach to self-development that combines reflective practice and action research contributes to both personal and organisational capability.

### Self Insight-Linking Personal and Organisational Development



### Strategic Professional Development

In the pressure of day-to-day work, practitioners often have to focus on a single issue and “fire-fight” the symptoms of change. Management of this type is reactive and aimed at trying to solve immediate problems. In such circumstances finding time to think, let alone plan for the future, is very difficult. A further consequence is that training is often undertaken on an opportunistic basis, rather than forming part of a strategic plan for the future. The impact of such training on everyday practice may, as a result, be impaired. An alternative approach to this situation is to ensure that professional development activity is part of the strategic plan for the organisation. The Doctoral Award in Professional Development provides a framework enabling real organisational issues to be tackled, while also enhancing strategic capacity.



Being strategic implies:

Continuously expanding the capacity to create your own future through:

- not trying to solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions,
- looking at whole situations, not just parts of problems,
- examining causes and structures, not just symptoms.

Surfacing and challenging mental models and exploring;

- the underlying perceptions which drive practice but are rarely stated,
- your own views,
- those of your colleagues,
- the organisation's views.

The Doctoral programme is designed to create and develop these capabilities. It ensures that in the management of professional practice you are able to be:

|                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| <b>Reactive</b>  | - | dealing with issues as they arise,                              |
| <b>Emergent</b>  | - | developing policy from current practice,                        |
| <b>Proactive</b> | - | identifying issues before they arise and planning the response, |
| <b>Strategic</b> | - | expanding capacity to create the future.                        |

Our belief, based on twenty-five years of experience in the Foundation's professional network, is that the most effective driver for professional development comes from motivated self-development, based on self-insight. Organisation-dominated schemes, in which the individual is the passive recipient of their own development, stifle many of the qualities needed to cope with the changing world of professional practice.

## Key elements of the programme

- i. Use of a series of analytic tools to examine personal learning followed by a module to place that learning in the context of a research programme.
- ii. Use of a series of analytic tools to explore organisational context and undertake a job analysis in preparation for a module to create a project for work based studies.
- iii. Participation in a learning set of colleagues exploring similar types of organisational and development issues.
- iv. Establishment of a personal development plan.
- v. Creation of a work based project focusing on exploring a significant area of activity.
- vi. A framework for generating co-operative activity within the organisation to ensure that the programme contributes to the organisation's strategic capability.

## PDF's role

- encouraging your life long learning,
- helping you to learn from experience,
- increasing your capacity for reflective practice,
- helping you to generate a significant piece of work based research.



## DOCTORATE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Competences For The Advanced Practitioner

#### The Advanced Award In Professional Development

The Doctorate in Professional Development is an advanced award designed for practitioners who can demonstrate leadership and expertise in their area of work. Practitioners who achieve this award will be making contributions to the development of services in their organisation and in their profession through policy making, innovative practice, research and education.

The award requires both evidence of competence at an advanced level and completion of a significant project in work based studies. To achieve it, you will design a Programme Plan in which you set out your strengths and any development areas, against a set of standards which you identify. The PDF module *Developing Professional Competence [1]* is provided to help you to do this.

In areas where appropriate standards do not exist, or in specialist areas of professional practice, or where there is rapid change, you will need to define new competencies. The PDF module *[Developing Professional Competence 2]* is provided for this purpose.

The model of professional development on which this award is based is that of the Reflective Practitioner. There are three key areas of competence:

- Core Requirements: these apply to all professional practice at this level.
- General Requirements: these reflect a commitment to appropriate standards of practice.
- Advanced Requirements these represent an advanced contribution to practice.

You will be required to present evidence of your competence against these professional standards. Evidence may be developed during your learning programme or accredited against prior learning from study or experience.

In working towards the advanced award in professional development, you will be required to show that you meet the core requirements that apply to all areas of professional development. In addition you will identify areas of competence specific to your area of professional activity which may be in one or more of the following:

- Professional practice
- Education and training
- Management
- Research

Although one of the above areas may be the primary focus for your work, some competences from other areas will almost certainly also be relevant.



### ***Core Requirements***

All candidates must demonstrate:

- analysis and critical reflection which informs and influences practice, policy and service provision within their field,
- reflective practice in the management of self, others and work,
- commitment to sustaining professional values in the light of continuing scientific, social, economic, technical and political change and the ability to define and develop policies and practices accordingly.

### ***General Requirements***

All candidates must demonstrate:

- critical appraisal of relevant theoretical models,
- critical appraisal of relevant policies and statutes in their own area, including knowledge of local, national and international perspectives,
- skilled use of a wide repertoire of methods, including selection and use of the most effective approach to meeting client/consumer needs,
- competence in enhancing the capabilities of others to inform and improve practice or service delivery,
- competence in strategic networking, negotiation and collaboration,
- competence in responding to and managing change in your chosen area, including the ability to respond to unintended outcomes,
- knowledge and understanding of the impact of relevant policy, practice and institutions within the European or international context in order to inform practice or service development,
- the ability to work independently and be accountable in fulfilling professional responsibilities.

### ***Advanced Requirements***

All candidates must demonstrate:

- evidence of significant contribution to the development, delivery and evaluation of the service provided in a chosen area, through the ability to research, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies for improvement or change,
- evidence of leadership in chosen field.

More detailed information specific to each development area is available on request.  
We look forward to working with you.