

## **Aegrotat Award of Research Degrees**

### **The Registry**

**December 2003**

**Updated February 2011**

#### **Preamble:**

In June 1996 Academic Council adopted criteria and established a process for aegrotat awards for taught programmes where a student, due to permanent disability or death, is unable to complete the assessment schedule for a final-year module (or modules) and thereby is prevented from completing final year studies. Following application of the criteria and process, an aegrotat award may be made by Academic Council where progress has been such that the Progression and Awards Board has sufficient information available to enable it to recommend that, if the student had been able to complete the programme, an award would have been made.

At its meeting of 15 October 2003 Academic Council accepted a recommendation from the Standing Committee of Academic Council:

- ◆ that it should establish the principle of an aegrotat award for postgraduate research degrees
- ◆ that the criteria to be used in supporting the case for an award should be evidence-based, and
- ◆ that the process for establishing that these criteria have been met in any particular case be subject to external assessment.

The Standing Committee was asked to develop appropriate criteria for such awards and to recommend a process for establishing that these criteria have been met whenever an aegrotat research award is proposed to Academic Council. The policy below was adopted by Academic Council at its 10 December 2003 meeting. The Graduate Studies Board, at its meeting of 11 November 2010, approved modifications to it to ensure that it reflected revised management and administrative structures. These modifications were approved by the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 February 2011 and by Academic Council at its meeting of 9 February 2011.

#### **Student Circumstances**

A student may be eligible for an aegrotat research award at either Masters or Doctoral level provided:

1. the student, because of permanent disability or death, has become incapable of ever completing a research programme in pursuit of the degree for which he/she is registered, and
2. the medical or other relevant evidence acceptable to the University confirms this. The University may, where appropriate, seek medical opinion from its own medical advisors. In the event of serious illness or disability it is assumed that the university will have previously been notified and that every possible consideration has been afforded the student to permit completion of the research and submission and examination of the thesis in the normal manner. Only when these have been exhausted should an aegrotat award be considered.

#### **Academic Considerations**

3. A decision as to whether an aegrotat award may be considered requires the availability, for assessment purposes, of substantial research output by the student. Suitable material might include published papers, significant contribution to a book, draft thesis chapters or similar such evidence of a substantial level of research achievement by the student.
4. The available documentary material must be such that, if the student had been able to complete the programme of research, an award would have been made.

#### **The Process**

5. The student's research supervisor should draw the situation to the attention of the Associate Dean for Research who, if it is felt appropriate, will initiate the process by presenting a *prima facie* case to the Faculty Research Committee.
6. If the Faculty Research Committee accepts the *prima facie* case it will recommend a process to be followed for collection and presentation of the documentary material, in addition to proposing an appropriate independent external assessor to the Faculty Research Committee. The Faculty Research Committee will submit the nomination of the external assessor to the Graduate Studies Board for approval.

7. At this stage, the student or his/her representative should be informed of the *prima facie* case being made. In particular, the academic nature of the process and the absence of any guarantee of a positive outcome should be drawn to the attention of the student or his/her representative. The process should not progress beyond this point without their written informed consent.

8. In gathering the material for submission to the independent external assessor, it is permissible for hand-written documents to be word processed and for these and other appropriate output to be collected together and bound for presentation. A statement, signed by the presenter, attesting to the origins and authorship of the material and providing a brief background to the case, should also be included.

9. The external assessor will examine the collected documentary material and report to the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees on his/her findings. The report should be accompanied by a recommendation as to whether or not, in the particular circumstances, an aegrotat award may be justified and, if so, whether at Masters or Doctoral level.

10. If, having considered the report and recommendation, the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees considers that an aegrotat award should be made, it shall so propose to Academic Council.

11. All recommendations in respect of the policy on aegrotat awards of research degrees will be subject to review by the Graduate Studies Board and ultimate approval by Academic Council.

12. If granted, the student's academic transcript will record that an aegrotat research degree has been awarded.