



Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Academic Roles & Responsibilities in Graduate Research

Dublin City University
Graduate Studies

Supporting Excellence in Postgraduate Research

2nd Edition 2017

Table 1

Responsibilities of Heads of School with respect to research students, supervision, administration and examination processes.

Head of School	
Requirement	Each research Student is registered in a School, and comes under responsibility of a Head of School.
Responsibilities in relation to research student administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the University's academic regulations and practices are implemented with respect to admission, supervision arrangements, progress monitoring and examination of each research Student. • Ensure, at time of admission, that entry requirements are met, supervision is appropriate, and appropriate resources are in place for the project and student support. • Ensure that the School develop guidelines on the ranges of frequency and durations of contact with research supervisors that are regarded as reasonable in the discipline.¹ • Decide whether a Supervisor can exceed the maximum number of research students (10). • Ensure an appropriate replacement Supervisor is put in place where a Supervisor leaves the University. • Ensure that a Supervisory Panel is put in place for each Student within 3 months of initial registration and inform Registry of its composition.² • Sign off on annual reports.* • Sign off on confirmation/transfer requests.* • Approve deferral requests.* • Approve changes in supervisory arrangements.* • Follow up on issues such as poor progression, student dissatisfaction, etc., raised in annual progress reports which require action. • Mediate in cases where there is a breakdown in the relationship between a Student and Supervisor, and escalate where appropriate in line with University policy. • Mediate in cases of disagreement between a Student and a Supervisor as to the appropriateness of submitting the thesis for examination. • Consult with Supervisor(s) and sign off on nominations for Internal and External Examiners, in keeping with University requirements for appropriate expertise, experience and independence. • Determine whether or not a Candidate falls into the category of a Candidate for whom two External Examiners are required (those on part-time or short-term contracts with DCU). • Nominate a suitable Independent Chairperson for each <i>viva voce</i> examination. • Ensure, in so far as possible, a balanced gender representation in the appointment of Examiners and Independent Chairperson. • Review the Independent Chairperson reports in order to maintain the overall quality of future activities. <p>*This responsibility may be delegated to a nominee.</p>

¹ Guidance to do this for general discipline areas is in section 4.4 Workloads of IUQB guidelines.

² Heads may find it more workable to appoint panels at fixed times rather than as individual students register.

Table 2

Supervisory Panel Members

Role	Qualifications/Profile
<p>Principal Supervisor(s)</p> <p>Requirement At least one required for all research students.</p> <p>Appointment of Joint Principal Supervisors is possible if they undertake all responsibilities equally.</p>	<p>A qualification at the level of the research award or a professorship or associate professorship.</p> <p>and</p> <p>Relevant expertise in an area cognate to the proposed area of research usually reflected by publications relating to the general area of research being undertaken by the Candidate.</p> <p>and</p> <p>Normally a member of Dublin City University staff with a permanent contract or one which extends beyond the normal expected registration period of the Candidate. If these conditions are not met, then a supervisory plan must be put in place which satisfies the Head of School.</p>
<p>Secondary Supervisor(s)</p> <p>Requirement: When specific expert academic input is needed or being given on a significant aspect of the project.³</p> <p>or When supervision is being provided by a person who is not a member of DCU staff such as a DCU retiree, adjunct faculty, or researcher external to DCU.</p>	<p>Active scholar in the area of research with the required specific expertise.</p> <p>A qualification at the level of research award not absolutely necessary, but research experience consistent with this level expected.</p> <p>May or may not be a member of University staff.</p> <p>May be paid if not a member of DCU staff (matter for local discussion).</p>
<p>Independent Panel Member(s)</p> <p>Requirement At least one other member of panel in addition to Supervisor(s) required for all students first registered in 2010/11 or later.</p>	<p>Some experience of research degree supervision at the level of the award in a similar or related discipline, but no requirement to be expert in the field of study.</p> <p>and</p> <p>A member of academic staff in the School in which Student is registered, if no other member of the panel is.</p> <p>and</p> <p>Significant experience in research student supervision at the award level, if the Principal Supervisor is supervising his/her first or second research student at this level (or the Head of School deems it necessary to have a Supervisor mentor in place for any reason), and no other panel members fulfills the Supervisor mentor role.⁴</p>

Too many supervisors is undesirable. All Joint Principal Supervisors and Secondary Supervisors should have a defined and clear role in the work. Normally there are no more than four Supervisory Panel members in total.

³ Supporting roles such as assisting students in a laboratory do not, of themselves, constitute supervising.

⁴ The panel member may be a member of academic staff in another School or, in exceptional cases, in another institution there are not enough qualified mentors available in the School.

Table 3a

Supervisory Panel Members' Responsibilities

Supervisory Panel

Role	Responsibilities
Principal Supervisor(s)	<p>Responsibilities which apply to all panel members (table 3b), and also to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the Student on the selection of the research topic. • Ensure, at time of initial registration, that an appropriate agreement (as per the regulations) is in place where the research involves an external organisation. • Ensure that the Student acquires training in the methodology of research and scholarship and in the skills necessary for sustained independent effort by advising on their training needs analysis and their Personal Development Plan (PDP), and giving permission for registration for structured training where appropriate. • Provide contact and guidance through regular and systematic meetings; to request regular written submissions as appropriate and to provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time. • Ensure that the Student is made aware of any inadequacies of progress or standards relative to the standard expected and, where necessary, to advise on withdrawal from the programme. • Liaise with the External Supervisor of the co-operating establishment, where relevant. • Advise on the methodology and form of presentation of the thesis and its subsequent examination. • Consult with the Head of School on the nomination of Examiners. • Advise the Candidate of the composition of the Board for the viva voce examination, and that he/she is precluded from making direct contact with the External Examiner. • Advise Student in relevant aspects of regulations and etiquette with respect to oral examinations if relevant. • Attend the oral examination unless the student requests otherwise. • Advise on the correction and revision of the thesis following examination. • Attend the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees meeting at which the Candidate's Examiners' reports and recommendations are approved. • Upload the electronic copy of the thesis to DORAS on behalf of the Student (joint responsibility with the Internal Examiner).

Unless specified, the roles and responsibilities indicated apply to research master's students in the same way as they do to doctoral students

Table 3b

Supervisory Panel Members' Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Secondary Supervisor(s)	<p>Responsibilities which apply to all panel members (below), and also to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on relevant training in the methodology of aspects of the research and scholarship and in the skills necessary for sustained independent effort in this area. • Provide contact and guidance on specific aspects of the research project; request regular written submissions as appropriate and provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time. • Ensure that the Student is made aware of any inadequacies of progress or standards relative to the standard expected. • Advise on the methodology and form of presentation of aspects of the thesis and its subsequent examination. • Advise on aspects of the correction and revision of the thesis following examination.
Independent Panel Member(s)	<p>Responsibilities which apply to all panel members (below), and also to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the Student with advice, additional support and pastoral care. • Refer to the Head of School, as appropriate, should problems arise. • In some cases advise inexperienced supervisors.
All Supervisory Panel Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the Candidate and other panel members at least twice a year to discuss progress. • Complete the formal annual progress report with the Candidate (including details of the frequency of contact maintained with the Candidate and an appraisal by Supervisors of the progress of the work to date) and advise Registry if the Candidate is eligible to progress. • Decline appointment if they expect not to be able to discharge the responsibilities of supervision in full or to withdraw if circumstances change and they are no longer able to fulfil their role. • Acknowledge a Student's contribution in any presentation, publication or meeting which involves the Student's research work. • Undertake professional development, as appropriate, with respect to supervisory skills.

Supervisory Panel

These tables reflect DCU's Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis, which is the primary source of information regarding all matters relating to research degrees. The lists are not intended to be exhaustive and do not, in all cases, cover everything that is alluded to in the regulations.

Table 4

Requirements and qualifications of those involved in thesis examination

Examiners	
Requirement	One Internal Examiner and one External Examiner required for all research award candidates. Two External Examiners may be required if Candidate is a member of DCU staff, as determined by the Head of School. ⁵
Qualifications and Restrictions	Overarching intention is that quality, rigour and independence are the guiding principles in the nomination and approval of all Examiners.
External Examiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent of the research, the Student, the Supervisor(s),⁶ the other Examiner(s) and the University.⁷ • Recognised expert in the area which is the subject matter of the thesis being examined.⁸ • Experienced in supervising research students and in the examination process of such students. • A doctoral qualification or equivalent formal academic qualification or a professorship or associate professorship or professional qualification which is recognised within the particular discipline as being a suitable background to act in the role of External Examiner.
Internal Examiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of academic staff, emeritus professor, retired DCU academic, senior researcher, or adjunct faculty. • Independent of the research, the Student, and the other Examiner(s) and not conflicted or constrained in any way in terms of their relationship to the Supervisor.⁹ Not a member of the Candidate's Supervisory Panel. • A broad familiarity with the area of research. • Experienced in supervising research students to completion. • A doctoral qualification or equivalent formal academic qualification or a professorship or associate professorship.
Independent Chairperson	
Requirement	One required for every Candidate undertaking a <i>viva voce</i> examination.
Qualifications and Restrictions	Experienced member of academic staff unconnected with the programme of research carried out by the Candidate. Experienced in doctoral supervision, and normally has supervised a student to completion. The Independent Chairperson does not have to be from the school in which the Student is registered.

⁵ Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis gives an indication as to how this is applied.

⁶ An External Examiner must not have published with the Supervisor in the previous 5 years.

⁷ Neither a DCU staff member nor a DCU student in the previous 5 years.

⁸ In the case of nominees for the role of External Examiner who are retired, evidence of relevant research activity within the previous 4 years will normally be expected.

⁹ While it is not expected that the Internal Examiner will be necessarily completely professionally independent of the Supervisor, in terms of other current or former collaborations unrelated to the work under examination, it is expected that the Internal Examiner's relationship to the Supervisor will be such that no conflicts due to personal relationships or constraints due to professional or other dependencies exist which could be deemed to impair the Examiner's independence in reaching a decision on the examined work. Cases where any Supervisor is line manager of a staff member on a short-term contract, or within their probationary period would, for example, preclude their appointment as an Examiner for a given student.

Table 5

Responsibilities of Examiners & Supervisors with respect to the examination process

All Examiners	
Responsibilities of both Examiners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out examination duties within two months of receipt of a thesis (normally). • Assess a thesis in the light of the criteria published in the DCU Academic <i>Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis</i>. • Send a written report on the thesis (to the Independent Chairperson for circulation to other Examiners prior to the viva voce examination in cases where an oral examination is to take place, to the Internal Examiner in cases where there is to be no viva voce examination). • Participate in any private meeting of Examiners prior to the viva voce examination. • Conduct an oral exam (where relevant) which tests that the thesis presented is the Candidate's own work, that he/she has an adequate understanding of the research topic and of the broader field of knowledge to which the research belongs, and which facilitates a robust defence of the independent, rigorous and significant nature of the research. A doctoral Candidate must demonstrate that the thesis is an original contribution to knowledge. • Complete a written report on the outcome of the Candidate's oral examination on the day of the <i>viva voce</i> examination (where relevant). • Provide a recommendation and clear grounds for same. • Provide a clear and written statement of the changes required in cases where corrections are indicated. • Determine which Examiner(s) should sign off on the corrections (where required). • If required, change the written report on the thesis after the <i>viva voce</i> examination within one week of the examination. • If nominated to do so, review the corrected thesis to establish that the Examiners' recommendations have been met and complete the examination form, normally within 6 weeks of receipt of the corrected thesis.
Additional responsibilities of Internal Examiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees meeting at which the Candidate's Examiners' reports and recommendations are approved.
Principal/Joint Principal Supervisor(s)	
Responsibilities in relation to examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise & help the Student prepare for the examination & associated processes. • Where relevant, advise Student in relevant aspects of regulations & etiquette with respect to oral examinations, and attend the oral examination if the Student is happy for them to do so. • Advise on the correction and revision of the thesis following examination, in collaboration with the Secondary Supervisor(s) for relevant aspects. • Attend the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees meeting at which the Candidate's Examiners' reports and recommendations are approved.

Table 6

Responsibilities of the *viva voce* examination Independent Chairperson.

Independent Chairperson	
Responsibilities	<p>Arrange for copies of preliminary reports from each Examiner to be exchanged, (only once all have been received) among all Examiners in advance of the <i>viva voce</i> examination.</p> <p>Ask the Candidate whether he/she does not wish the Supervisor to be present at the <i>viva voce</i> examination and subsequently, as needed, liaise with both Candidate and Supervisor in such cases.</p> <p>Manage the <i>viva voce</i> examination, normally in the range of 1 ½ to 3 hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance on the University's academic regulations and practices as required. • Prior to the <i>viva voce</i> examination and in consultation with the Examiners, discuss the order of questions and the overall format of the examination. • Where relevant, ask the Candidate to introduce his/her research briefly and summarise the main findings. • Ensure that the Candidate is treated fairly. • Ask the Candidate and the Supervisor(s) to leave the room while the board deliberates on the outcome. Supervisors may stay, however, in cases where their presence is requested by the Examiners. • Communicate, or invite the External Examiner to communicate, the outcome of the examination to the Student. • Ensure that the timeframes for corrections and sign off of same are clear to the Candidate and Examiners. • In cases of no award but a resubmission being recommended, inform the Examiners, Candidate and Supervisor of regulations relating to examination of a resubmitted thesis. <p>Communicate the outcome of the <i>viva voce</i> examination to the appropriate parties. Make a formal report to the Head of School on the quality of the examination process and on any recommendations made.</p> <p>Ensure that all the required documentation is completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where a resubmission, no award, or an award with no corrections is recommended, the signed examination form goes directly to Registry following the <i>viva voce</i> examination. • In cases where an award is recommended subject to corrections, the Independent Chairperson ensures that a corrected or revised thesis is sent to the appropriate Examiner(s) for review and final sign off, and that the completed form is subsequently returned to Registry. <p>The Independent Chairperson is expected to steer the examination process through to conclusion. In very exceptional cases where the outcome is not straightforward, the Independent Chairperson's involvement may extend to engagement with the Head of School, Associate Dean for Research, Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees, Graduate Research Studies Board or Dean of Graduate Studies.</p>





