

DCU

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

School of Communications PhD Programme

Handbook 2023-2024

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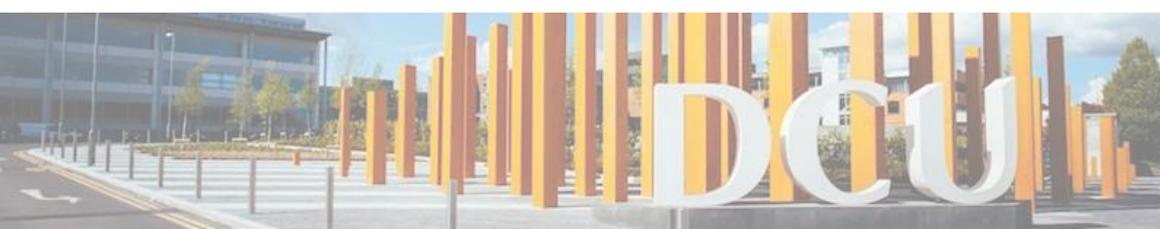
NB: New PhD students should also familiarise themselves with the Graduate Studies Office guide for new research students. [This is the link](#) for guide.



WELCOME

Welcome to the School of Communications at Dublin City University. We are delighted to welcome you to our PhD programme. This programme is designed to provide you with an academically rigorous yet practical grounding for your research career ahead. It aims to provide you with skills that will make the process of doctoral research smoother and more productive.

As you are new to DCU it is important that you familiarise yourself with the academic structures of the university. This handbook is designed to help you find out where to look for the information you need to settle in and progress through DCU. Most of this information is available on the DCU website and we have included links below.

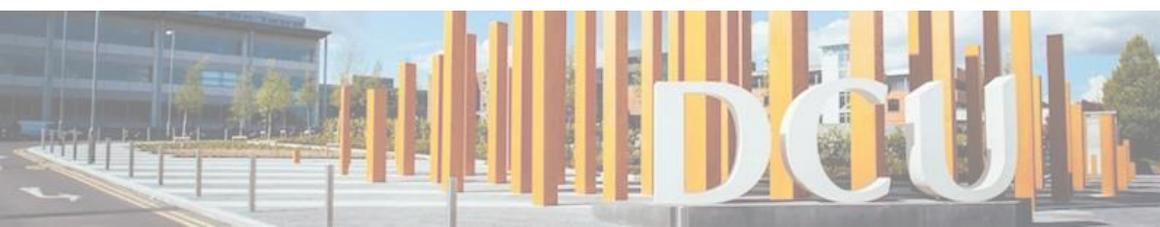


We hope you enjoy the programme and find it both stimulating and rewarding. And we hope you enjoy life in Dublin. We look forward to working with you in the next few years.

*Dr Jim Rogers
PhD Programme Chair*



For announcements and to share your own updates,
follow the School on Twitter [@DCU_SoC](https://twitter.com/DCU_SoC)



ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The School of Communications at DCU is home to almost 1,000 students at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD levels. The School of Communications is an internationally-focused centre for excellence in teaching and research in the areas of media, communications and journalism and is ranked No. 1 for Communications and Media Studies in Ireland (QS World University Rankings). With a tradition stretching back over 40 years, the School has been consistently ranked in the top 200 of almost 4,500 universities worldwide in the area of communications.

The School's academics undertake research that contributes to national and international debates and to public policy formation. They have also led research projects supported by national and international funders.

This cutting-edge research is across a range of (inter)disciplinary fields including (new) media studies, media history, journalism studies, science communication, political communication, social media studies, film and television studies, music industry studies, advertising, and cultural studies. In the past five years, the School has supported approximately 40 doctoral students to achieve PhD awards.



Contacting staff

Shortly after you start in DCU, you should establish how best to stay in contact with your supervisor, as they may have preferences. If you would like to contact other academic, administrative or technical staff, it's usually best to send them an email first. Staff contact details are available on the School website at:

<https://www.dcu.ie/communications/people/index.shtml>

The School of Communications office is located in office C162 on the first floor of the Henry Grattan building, Ms. Eileen Myers, the School Secretary, can be reached at eileen.myers@dcu.ie or 01-7005220. She will direct you to the right place for any queries relating to practical matters such as desk allocation, telephone, postage, and internet access.

If the query is of an administrative nature it should be directed to, Carol Diamond, the research administrator in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science.

You may also find the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Student Page useful: <https://www.dcu.ie/humanities-and-social-sciences/research-faculty-humanities-social-sciences>



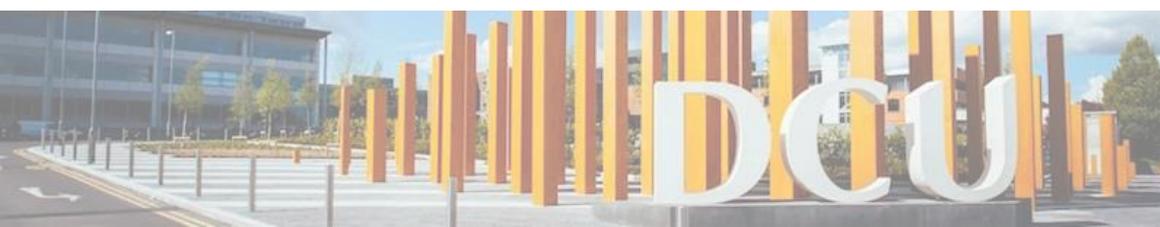
THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

Aims of the programme

There are two aspects to our PhD programme:

- 1) A major piece of research conducted under the supervision of a member(s) of academic staff in the School of Communications;
- 2) A structured training element that supports and advances the candidate's research agenda by enhancing their core theoretical knowledge and/or methodological skills relevant to their disciplinary area. This taught element to the PhD programme helps develop the core skills required to tackle a doctoral research project. Candidates and supervisors will work together to decide which are the most appropriate modules to take. (see 'Modules and Credits' section below)

We also aim to support your access to international networks and training and thus make PhD graduates from DCU internationally competitive. This is achieved through our institutional membership of such research networks as the International Association for Media and Communications Research (IAMCR), the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), and others.



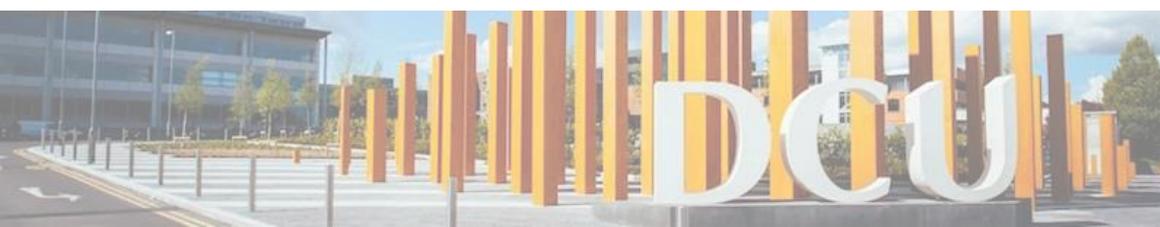
Modules and credits

At graduation, you will have accumulated up to 300 credits. A total of 270 credits (90 for each of the years 1-3 inclusive) will come from work on your thesis. In addition, you can take up to 30 credits on other taught modules.

Taught modules delivered by the School are set out below. Each module requires attendance at 20-24 hours of classes and completion of assessments. These modules are designed to help you complete your dissertation to a high standard. You also have access to specialist postgraduate level modules in sub-fields within your area, subject to discussion with and agreement of your supervisors.

Structured Pathway

The following two pages illustrate the modules available to students as part of the School of Communications structured pathway and detail the programme. It combines core discipline-specific modules, core transferrable skills, and elective modules and training.



School of Communications

Overview

This overview proposes a structured 4-year PhD programme for the School of Communications that will act as the umbrella programme for candidate graduate students registered in the School with a focus of conducting discipline-based research. The student's original research is presented in thesis format and this thesis is the sole means of assessment for the award of the PhD.

Selection and Registration

In addition, during their period of registration students can avail of a mix of modules to provide discipline-specific knowledge, generic skills and autonomy to augment and support their postgraduate research. These will include:

- Up to 20 credits of core discipline-specific modules;
- 10 credits of core generic and transferable skills;
- Up to 20 additional credits for selected elective modules.

Students would normally take 10 credits each year for Years 1-3, with Year 4 most likely focused exclusively on research, but discretion about the number of annual credits taken is permitted to suit the work programme of each student. A student may register for alternative modules other than those outlined on this structure if the original module(s) are not available, provided the alternative meets the required research/graduate training objective as agreed with the Supervisor.

Along with Level 9 modules, appropriate Level 8 modules may be taken following discussion with the Supervisor and module coordinator.

It is policy in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences that all research students who are assigned any teaching-related responsibilities must complete GS602 'Postgraduate Tutoring Principles and Practice'.

All research students in their first year of registration must also complete the relevant stream of the self-directed 'Online Research Integrity Training Module'. Students should register for their approved GTEs during the online registration process.

Progression

The Structured Pathway work plan for each student should be discussed and agreed in the first instance with the Supervisor and progress (including confirmation of completion of the Online Research Integrity Training Module and other modules) recorded on the annual PGR2 form.

Induction and Training

Research students are also encouraged to take advantage of additional training opportunities offered by the Graduate Studies Office as appropriate throughout their period of study. Year One students are expected to attend orientation sessions, the GSO- and library-run programme and other relevant induction sessions at the time of initial registration.

Structured Doctoral Pathway 2023-24

Core Discipline Specific Modules

Year 1 - 3

Media & Communication Theory

- Understanding Social Media (**CM5002**) (10 ECTS)
- Media Audiences & Consumption (**CM536**) (10 ECTS)

Journalism & Political Communication

- Social Media, Journalism & Democracy (**CM5630**) (10 ECTS)
- Media & Politics in Ireland (**CM569**) (10 ECTS)
- Political Communication: Concepts & Issues (**CM548**) (10 ECTS)

Science & Health Communication

- Science & Health in the Media (**CM534**) (10 ECTS)
- Strategic Communications in STEM, Environment & Healthcare (**CM5032**) (10 ECTS)
- Data Communication (**CM5033**) (10 ECTS)
- Climate Change & the Media (**CM5028**) (10 ECTS)

Core Transferable Skills Modules

Year 1 - 3

- Postgraduate Tutoring Principles & Practice (**GS602**) (5 ECTS)
- Research Methods (**CM603**) (10 ECTS)
- Strategies for Academic Writing (**GS608BS**) (5 ECTS)
- Advanced Academic Writing in the Humanities (**TP600**) (5 ECTS)
- Conference / Academic Event Organisation (**TP601**) (5 ECTS)
- Navigating the Academic Publishing Landscape (LC604) (5 ECTS)
- Interdisciplinary Research Design (CM604) (5 ECTS)
- Ethics in Digital Research Design (CM605) (5 ECTS)

Elective Modules

Year 1 - 3

- Qualitative Research Methods Summer School (**NS5055**) (5 ECTS) (Delivered by School of Nursing) (Limited places). Students must also register for summer school sessions separately).
- Quantitative Methods for Social Science 1 (**LG602**) (5 ECTS)
- Intellectual Property & Commercialisation (**GS601**) (5 ECTS)
- Research Ethics (**TP602**) (5 ECTS)
- Engaged Research (**CM602**) (10 ECTS)

Non-accredited Training, Workshops and Masterclasses

Year 1

- Graduate Studies Office Orientation Programme
- Online Research Integrity Training Module (non – accredited, compulsory)
- Students are also encouraged to engage with centrally offered workshops and seminars which align with their development needs at a given time.



Other training

As well as the training provided through the programme modules, there are additional opportunities for software training and other research skills. This will typically be communicated to you through the Graduate Studies Office. You should consult your supervisor(s) and/or the Director of the PhD programme if you identify training that would be useful for your research.

OPPORTUNITIES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff & postgraduate research seminars

Across the two teaching semesters, the School of Communications usually hosts a series of hour-long staff and postgraduate research seminars (usually on Tuesdays at 12pm-12.50pm). Each week, a colleague or senior doctoral candidate presents their recent or ongoing research to the school community. Presentations are approximately 30 minutes in duration, and each session is chaired by a colleague within the school, who facilitates a short Q&A and discussion afterwards. Attendance at these seminars will form an important part of training for doctoral candidates across their period of registration **and it is advised that you try to attend as many as possible, as it also provides the opportunity to get to know the staff and other researchers.** Doctoral candidates will often be requested to present at these seminars in the latter years of their studies, depending on their progress.



Funding

Doing a PhD is expensive and we hope to offer as much support as we can to our PhD candidates.

Postgraduate Scholarship Awards

Each year, the School of Communications awards a number of scholarships (usually four or five) to PhD candidates whose interests align with specific areas of expertise in our school. The value of each scholarship is currently €19,000 per year, for four-years duration (plus fees paid). This is an open competition; scholarships are advertised in late spring each year, and usually start at the beginning of the following academic year (September 1st).

Teaching support

All school PhD researchers are eligible to apply for seminar tutor / teaching support duties in the School of Communications. This usually takes the form of facilitating seminars or workshops with students, and related assignment corrections. To note, there is an expectation that *all* research candidates in receipt of a School / Faculty scholarship award will contribute towards such teaching/teaching assistance within the school in any given academic year. Tutors are currently paid a rate of €29.51 per hour (taxable at source), with an additional payment where corrections are involved. Lecturers on the relevant modules will provide the necessary guidance and support in terms of preparing and delivering. The School of Communications are mindful that such assigned activities should, in so far as possible, be consistent with the candidate's overall research plan and training needs.

External funding

There are also external funding schemes, notably with the Irish Research Council (IRC), which you should aim to secure. Candidates who are in receipt of a scholarship from the School are requested to apply for an IRC doctoral scholarship in year one and, if necessary, year two.

Conference Travel Fund

Each PhD candidate, full-time or part-time, can apply once for a Conference and Travel Grant from the DCU Research Committee, capped at €500. The scheme is administered through the Graduate Studies Office (GSO), based in LG13 in the McNulty Building. Terms and conditions, and the application procedure, can be found at:

https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/research/pdfs/conference_travel_grant_-_terms_and_conditions_updated_7.1.20.pdf

PG Researcher Publication Fund

This scheme is to provide funding support to facilitate journal publication by research students (in their 3rd or later year) in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU. The scheme provides support for research leading to publication in a SCOPUS-ranked journal. The article can be sole-authored by the student or co-authored with a member of DCU staff, most typically, but not exclusively, a student's supervisor. Items supported could include fieldwork; archive/research travel; conference dissemination; data generation. It is likely the value of any single award will be in the region on €1,000.

Networks

At whatever stage of their career, academics should always aim to prioritise continuing professional development. This can include the acquisition of new research skills but also involves networking. Communications students should try to stay up to date with opportunities and happenings in their field, and it is possible to do that through various mailing lists and updates.



Presenting at conferences is also an essential part of your training and of doing a PhD. It offers you the opportunity to present your research to your peers and receive feedback on it. You may get ideas that won't come to you by sitting at your desk, reading and writing for four years.

The following pages lists some useful groups to consider joining:

Mailing lists:

- *Comms List*: Sign up at <http://commlist.org/>

Mailing List run by Nico Carpentier, providing updates across all topics in the Communications field (calls for papers, conferences, book launches, journal special issues, etc) -

- *Meccsa list*: <https://www.meccsa.org.uk/discussion-list/>

Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (UK): sign up to discussion list and see other lists for specific areas of research

Facebook pages/groups:

Look for specific Facebook or Twitter pages/groups to join, related to your area of interest. Both ECREA and ICA have pages for many of their divisions, and for early-career researchers. Some include:

Young ECREA: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/yecrea/>

ICA Student & Early Career Scholars Community:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/386119558234727/>

IAMCR: <https://www.facebook.com/iamcr.org/>

ECREA Political Communication:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1394409020594291/>

ECREA Digital Culture & Communication:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1005132429597657/>

ECREA Journalism Studies section:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ecreaJSS/>

ECREA Communication & Democracy:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/826583880724187/>

ICA Health Communication:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1754132684876713/>

ICA Ethnicity & Race in Communication:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eric.ica/>

ICA/APSA Political Communication

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/politicalcommunication.org/>



ROLES OF THE CHAIR & SUPERVISORY PANELS

The role of the chair of PhD studies

Along with this handbook, the graduate student's handbook and the relevant areas on the DCU website, the Chair of PhD Studies will be your key contact relating to the administrative aspects of the PhD. If you have any problems or concerns about the overall PhD programme, you can approach the Programme Chair informally to discuss them. You should also inform the Chair about any significant changes in your circumstances, i.e., whether you intend to be absent from the School for significant periods of time, unable to attend departmental seminars, intend to go on a field trip, etc. The PhD Programme Director will normally take the responsibility for the supervisory panel member for all students. Candidates can meet with the Programme Chair on issues that concern them twice a year or by appointment.

Your Principal Supervisor(s) will oversee and advise you on your research project. Additionally, each candidate will be assigned an Independent Panel Member.



Role of the supervisor(s)

Supervisors have both a reactive and a proactive role. On the one hand, supervisors will be accessible to the candidate for academic support and advice across the entire duration of the research project. On the other hand, supervisors have an active duty to be informed about the progress of the research student's work, to give constructive opinions about this work (whether or not these are asked for), to make sure that the student is aware of the quantity and quality of work required, and to negotiate and monitor a timetable for its submission. Furthermore, while the PhD is your own, candidates should not substantially change their research projects without discussion with, and approval from, their supervisor.

Candidates and supervisors should agree on how regularly they will meet throughout the academic year. For most PhD candidates in the School of Communications, monthly meetings are the norm, but this may fluctuate depending on the circumstances of student and supervisors at any given time.

Supervisors will do everything they can to provide careful analysis and constructive criticism of all work submitted to them within an agreed period of time, and to make themselves available, when feasible, for discussions with candidates.

Supervisors also have an administrative duty to submit the necessary forms to allow their student progress and submit the PhD.



Role of the independent panel member

The Independent Panel Member (IPM) is not involved in direct supervision of the research candidate or their project. The IPM's role primarily involves meeting with the student (and where necessary with the other supervisory panel members) to discuss progress; participating in the formal annual review process (PGR2); providing the candidate with advice, additional supports and pastoral care where needed, and directing the student to the relevant DCU supports where appropriate; aiding resolution, at a local level where possible, in cases of difficulties such as a lack of progression or a breakdown in the student-supervisory relationship. In *most* cases, the Chair of PhD Studies will act as IPM for postgraduate research candidates in the School of Communications.

THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The research candidate must keep in contact with his or her supervisor(s) and inform them about the progress of the research. He or she should meet the supervisors for discussions, submit written work and perform other academic exercises (for example, attending and contributing to the Research Seminars) according to a timetable negotiated with the supervisor(s).

Candidates are encouraged to engage with other staff members beyond their supervisor(s) to draw on additional support and expertise, but should be reminded that staff have many other commitments. Therefore, candidates should be patient and reasonable in their expectations regarding the time and labour available from other staff.

Candidates should inform their supervisor(s) and the PhD Programme Chair as early as possible regarding any issue that might affect their ability to complete an agreed programme of work on schedule. The essential point to remember is that the School is on the side of its postgraduate students in relation to almost any problem that might arise, and will do everything possible to help, given good notice and the information necessary to do so.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarise themselves with the university's rules on academic integrity and plagiarism (see <https://www.dcu.ie/info/regulations/plagiarism.shtml>) Plagiarism is academic theft and is one of the most serious offences in academia. Candidates found to have plagiarised may be required to withdraw from the PhD programme. Also consult the DCU handbook, *Code of Good Research Practice*.

Research Ethics

Any candidate conducting research on human subjects is required to obtain approval from the Research Ethics Committee. (This includes interviews and surveys, and applies regardless of whether or not the data is anonymised). Candidates should complete the form [<https://www.dcu.ie/researchsupport/ethicsapproval.shtml>] and get it signed by their supervisor. Ethics approval must be received as early as possible and BEFORE the start of the data collection/analysis



Writing style and conventions

Writing a PhD is different from anything you are likely to have written before. It requires that almost everything you write is backed up by evidence or a citation, so it is important that you learn how to cite properly. It also requires that your language is clear and unambiguous. You also need to be completely consistent in any of the writing conventions you adopt. You should refer to books on writing a PhD. Patrick Dunleavy has one called *Authoring a PhD* published by Palgrave (in the library at call number 808.02/DUN).

Advanced Academic Writing for the Humanities (TP600)

For candidates who are concerned about their writing ability, or who wish to learn more about the conventions of academic writing, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences offer a specific GTE module to address such concerns. The TP600 module engages postgraduate research students in approaches to advanced academic writing in the Humanities. It includes critical structural analysis of existing texts, interpretative writing, descriptive writing in the context of texts, music, visuals, film etc. Mirroring a peer-review system, it takes into consideration audience, argument and voice in academic writing and examines the role and function of academic writing conventions.



ACADEMIC PROGRESSION

A full list of the academic regulations is available from Registry. Be aware that these may change and you should always check the most recent regulations.

The Annual Review Process (PGR2)

All postgraduate research candidates will engage in a formal review of their work on an annual in consultation with their supervisory panel. This annual review process (PGR2) happens in early summer each year and facilitates a recommendation being made about continued registration into the following academic year. As such, it is a very important aspect of progress monitoring.

The process initially involves the candidate undertaking a comprehensive summary of work completed in the current academic year, and an outline of the research work to be undertaken in the following period. Subsequently, the principal supervisor will be asked to evaluate the progress made by the candidate, and issue a recommendation regarding continued registration.

Progress to PhD degree (PGR3)

On starting the PhD programme, you will enter a PhD track. Then a PGR3 PhD-track/PhD Confirmation Procedure form must be completed and submitted to Registry. Your application must be supported by your Supervisor(s) and is subject to satisfactory performance in an oral examination conducted jointly by your Supervisor(s) and another Internal Examiner. The completed PGR3 form must be submitted to the Registry at least two weeks in advance of the Graduate Studies Board (GSB) meeting (see Schedule of Meetings at <https://www.dcu.ie/staff/timetables/index.shtml>). If your transfer is successful, you will be granted appropriate retrospection normally to the date of original registration on the PhD-track register and you will receive a letter confirming this with your new student ID card from Registry.

The confirmation procedure must take place not later than the second year of research for full-time students – at some point between 12-21 months after registration – and at an appropriate corresponding time for part-time students (usually between years 2 and 3). If the outcome of the confirmation procedure is unsuccessful you may, if appropriate, be invited to complete such research as will allow you to graduate with a Master's degree.

The PGR3 form is available online via student and staff portal pages under the Research tab and from the following link on the Registry Postgraduate Research page:

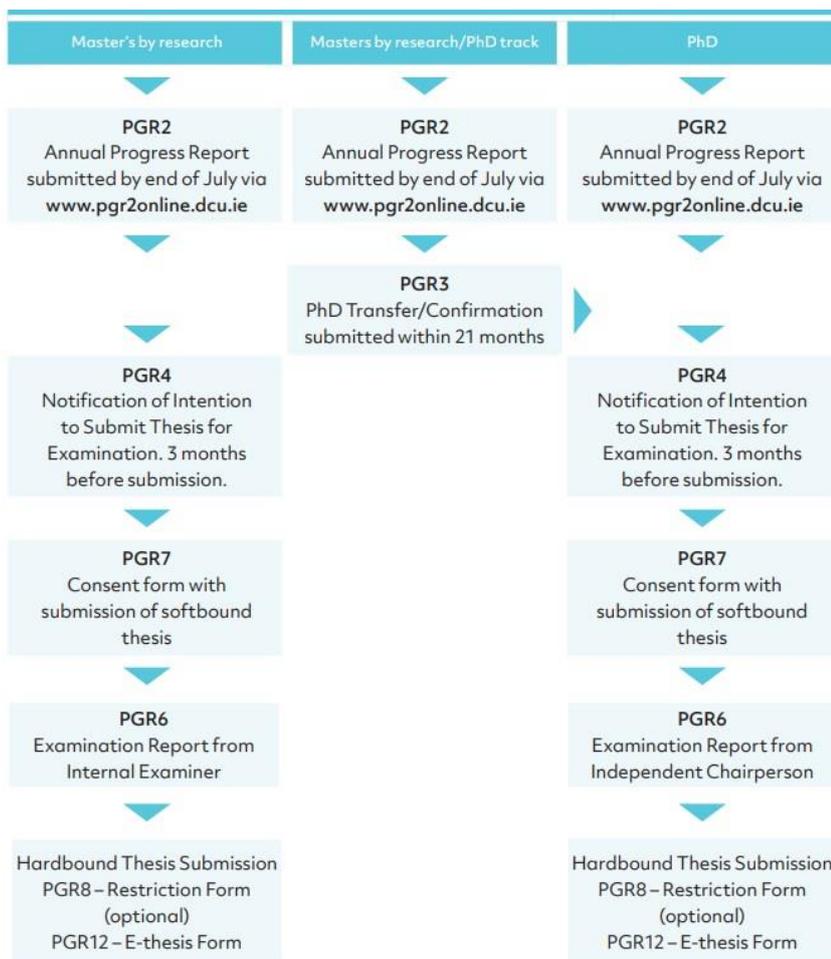
http://www.dcu.ie/registry/application_forms.shtml

Intention to submit (PGR4)

At least three months before you submit your thesis for examination, you must submit the PGR4 form, showing your intention to submit. It will list your internal/external examiner (who your supervisor, NOT the candidate, should contact before you submit the PGR4).

The chart below shows the route of progression through the PhD programme. Students should always ensure they have the up-to-date forms and deadlines from Registry.





Reproduced from the DCU Graduate Research Guide

LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Our library facilities very much lie at the heart of our institution and form a fundamental resource supporting our research work.

Our Subject Librarian, Alexander Kouker (alexander.kouker@dcu.ie) is available to provide help and advice on such issues as:

- Finding quality information for your research
- Finding books, e-books and journal articles in your subject area
- Searching our wide range of library databases
- Devising an effective search strategy
- Using the best library resources for your discipline
- Conducting a comprehensive review of the literature
- Citing and referencing support

KEY CONTACTS

Head of School

Dr Mark O'Brien

mark.obrien@dcu.ie



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|--|-----------------|--|
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| Faculty Admin Officer | Carol Diamond | carol.diamond@dcu.ie |
| FH&SS Librarian | Alex Kouker | alex.kouker@dcu.ie |
| Research and Scholarships Administrator (Graduate Studies Office) | Jonny Hobson | jonny.hobson@dcu.ie |

NB: This handbook makes every effort to be up to date, but PhD candidates should always check to ensure they have the accurate information from Registry and the Graduate Studies Office

