

**DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

***ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE DEGREES  
BY RESEARCH AND THESIS***

**Date of most recent Academic Council approval: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

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## 1. PRINCIPLES

*Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* relate to the research degree offerings of Dublin City University (DCU). They are designed to safeguard both the academic standards of the University and the interests of individual students.

These regulations apply to two types of doctoral awards offered by the University – Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorate. Issues relating to Higher Doctorates (DSc, DEng, DLitt, LLD) are dealt with in a separate document, [Provisions and Regulations: Higher Doctorates](#). In addition to making doctoral awards, the University makes awards at Master's level on the basis of research, and these are also subject to these regulations.

These regulations are guided by the University's *Marks and Standards*; the Irish Universities Quality Board's 'Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education', 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2009); and the National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015).

The regulations apply to all research students registered in DCU, irrespective of the institution in which they commenced their studies. Reference is made in the document where an exception applies for students first registered with St Patrick's College, Drumcondra (SPD) or Mater Dei Institute of Education (MDI).

These regulations are subject to change. In any given academic session, a student is subject to the regulations that are in place at the beginning of that academic session.

### 1.1 Doctoral Awards

The doctoral degree is one of the highest academic qualifications awarded by the University and is at Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. It is awarded, without classification, to successful candidates on the strength of a body of original work of scholarship prepared and presented in accordance with internationally-accepted academic standards.. All candidates for doctoral degrees will be examined in the same manner through external and internal examination of the submitted thesis, followed by a *viva voce* examination.

#### 1.1.1 Doctor of Philosophy

The PhD may vary in model and in format of submission, as outlined below. However, the same academic standards apply in all cases. The degree of PhD is awarded in recognition of research which has made a significant and coherent contribution to knowledge.

##### **Traditional Model**

The degree of PhD is awarded, without classification, on the basis of a thesis submitted for examination. The thesis has a nominal value of 270 ECTS credits.

The University is committed to providing its research students with the best possible research experience. In that context, it is very supportive of research students engaged in the traditional mode of PhD research who wish to take additional courses to enhance their generic and disciplinary research skills. Students registered under this model can take a maximum of 30 additional ECTS credits by means of discipline-specific modules, generic research and

transferable skills, and active contribution to the University. Students who opt to take such modules must have the permission of their supervisors. The successful completion of such modules will be recorded on the student's transcript. All module descriptors relating to modules not already accredited as part of an award programme are subject to approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board. Results of modules will be approved by the GTE Award Board.

### **Structured Model**

The core component of a structured PhD programme is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time, the structured PhD is designed to meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia. In that context, the structured PhD involves a high-quality research experience, training and output consistent with international norms and best practice.

To support the original research activity, the following elements are also included:

- a formalised integrated programme of education, training, and personal and professional development activities which is planned and often thematically focused;
- the development of discipline-specific knowledge, research skills and generic/transferable skills; and
- declared outcomes and graduate attributes in line with national and international best practice.

Progress to completion can be formally monitored against the structured elements outlined above and supported by formal institutional arrangements.

Successful completion and examination of the research thesis is the basis for the award of the PhD degree.

Candidates who wish to pursue a structured PhD programme will undertake discipline-specific modules, research skills courses, and generic and transferable skills courses, as agreed in their Personal Development Plan (PDP), to the value of at least 20 ECTS credits, no more than 90 ECTS credits, but typically in the range 30-60 ECTS credits. Normally, 10 ECTS credits will relate to research skills, transferable and generic skills modules.

All module descriptors relating to modules not already accredited as part of an award programme are subject to approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board. Results of modules will be approved by the GTE Award Board.

### **Model based on Collaboration with Enterprise**

The University recognises the value of PhD-level research which emerges from or is conducted within the context of a company, healthcare setting, voluntary sector organisation, public body or other such organisation. Such collaborative research facilitates the professional development of the PhD student through the integration of academia with other sectors and contributes to the creation of new knowledge relevant to the needs of society, the economy and policy-forming bodies, through original research. The educational outcomes must, in all cases, correspond to the intellectual challenge of a PhD, so the project must be carefully planned and negotiated to ensure that this potential exists.

The degree of PhD is awarded, without classification, on the basis of a thesis submitted for

examination. The thesis has a nominal value of 270 ECTS credits.

At the time of initial registration, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that an agreement between the external organisation and University is put in place which covers such issues as: funding, intellectual property ownership, time which the research student will spend on campus or in the external organisation and the role of the external organisation in the supervision of the student. It is also important that DCU's expectations regarding research awards are made clear to the collaborating enterprise.

Students registered under this model can take a maximum of 30 additional ECTS credits by means of discipline-specific modules, generic research and transferable skills, and active contribution to the University. Students who opt to take such modules must have the permission of their supervisors. The successful completion of such modules will be recorded on the student's transcript. All module descriptors are subject to approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board. Results of modules will be approved by the GTE Award Board.

### **1.1.2 Formats of PhD Submission: Monograph, Publication, Artefact and Creative/ Performance Practice.**

As well as the more traditional monograph, the University offers the opportunity for candidates to submit their research for the award of PhD in the format of published work, of artefacts such as music compositions, and through creative or performance practice. In the case of formats other than a monograph, the submission of a substantial accompanying document which must satisfy the appointed examiners is also required. Requirements for each format are given in section 9 of these regulations.

### **1.1.3 Professional Doctorate**

The Professional Doctorate is awarded in a number of disciplines, without classification, on the basis of a research thesis and other work. The Professional Doctoral Programme is usually a part-time research-based programme. The core aim of the Professional Doctorate is to make significant contributions to knowledge of professional practice through research. In that context, the Professional Doctorate aims to foster professional development through research as well as meeting the requirements of rigour and originality expected of a doctorate.

A Professional Doctorate normally involves the production of a number of significant pieces of written work followed by a thesis. The total ECTS credits will be in the range 240-270. The thesis should constitute no fewer than half the total credits.

The University currently awards the following Professional Doctorates:

EdD	Doctor of Education
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DPsych	Doctor of Psychotherapy
DMusPerf	Doctor of Music in Performance.

## **1.2 Master's Degree by Research**

The Master's degree by Research, (Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications) is awarded, without classification, on the basis of a thesis submitted for examination. It normally has a value of 180 ECTS credits. Master's students may register for a maximum

of 20 ECTS credits of discipline-specific modules, research skills courses or generic skills courses. The Master's degree can be undertaken in the context of collaboration with enterprise. In these cases, it is the supervisor's responsibility at the time of initial registration to ensure that an agreement between the external organisation and the University is put in place which covers such issues such as: funding, intellectual property ownership, time which the research student will spend on campus or in the organisation and the role of the organisation in the supervision of the student.

Examination will take place through internal and external examination of the submitted thesis. A *viva voce* examination is not mandatory but can be requested by the examiners.

The following awards may be made:

LLM	Master of Laws
MA	Master of Arts
MBS	Master of Business Studies
MEng	Master of Engineering
MEd	Master of Education Studies
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MSc	Master of Science

## 2. GENERAL REGULATIONS

- 2.1 Academic Council has overall responsibility in all matters related to graduate research degrees. The University's Graduate Research Studies Board is responsible for all policies and procedures relating to graduate research and reports to Academic Council on these.
- 2.2 The University is prepared to consider proposals for programmes of graduate research work concerned with fundamental research or other areas of scholarship or with any aspects of industrial, commercial, enterprise, clinical, artistic or professional activity.
- 2.3 Students registered for graduate research degree programmes are entitled to the same rights and privileges as all other registered students and are subject to the same *Code of Discipline*. Students must comply with the University's regulations governing graduate research degrees and are obliged to adhere to the University's Code of Good Research Practice, its research ethics guidelines, the DCU Code of Practice on Authorship and the DCU [\*Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy\*](#).
- 2.4 A student may normally be registered at any time for one degree only, and work to be submitted for an award cannot be submitted elsewhere for a degree or other similar award. Any exceptional application for dual registration must be made to the Graduate Research Studies Board.
- 2.5 Students on the Professional Doctorate in Education are registered with the Faculty. All other research students must register with a single School, notwithstanding the fact that he/she may conduct the research across a number of Schools or in one or more University Research Centre.
- 2.6 In the case of interdisciplinary research projects, the School assuming responsibility for the project must be the School with which the student is registered.
- 2.7 The University encourages collaboration in programmes of research between the University and other educational, industrial, commercial, professional or research

institutions. Such arrangements are governed by the University Policy on [Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions](#).

- 2.8. All official communications and administrative procedures relating to graduate research applications, offers of places, registration, continued registration, annual progress reports, examination procedures and results shall be conducted through and by the Registry.

### **3. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

- 3.1 Prior to submitting an application, a candidate must consult with the appropriate School on the proposed programme of study and must ascertain whether or not the School would be prepared to recommend his/her application to the University
- 3.2 To register for a graduate research programme, a candidate must normally have obtained a primary degree classification (Level 8) equivalent to a second-class honours degree, grade two, from an approved university or an approved equivalent degree-awarding body, or have an approved equivalent professional qualification in an area cognate to the proposed research topic. Such candidates are considered for entry only on the research Master's register initially.
- 3.3 Candidates with a taught Master's degree (Level 9) in an appropriate discipline with first- or second-class honours, and candidates with a primary degree in an appropriate discipline with first- or second-class honours, grade one, may apply and be considered for entry to the PhD-track register with a view to proceeding towards a PhD. Such candidates will undergo a confirmation procedure, as outlined in section 8, before being admitted to the PhD register.
- 3.4 Students on the Master's register may apply for transfer to the PhD register under the same conditions, and using the same procedure, as PhD-track candidates requesting confirmation on the PhD register.
- 3.5 Candidates holding an appropriate Master's degree obtained by research may apply for direct entry to the PhD register to conduct research in a cognate area.
- 3.6 In exceptional circumstances only, candidates for a Master's degree who do not meet the stipulated entry requirements but who can demonstrate exceptional ability or aptitude for academic research may apply to pursue studies for a research degree. They may base their application on recognition of their accredited or experiential prior learning, in line with University policies in this regard.

Such candidates may be accepted by the Graduate Research Studies Board without a stipulation that qualifying taught modules first be undertaken; alternatively, one or more qualifying modules may be stipulated. The admission of candidates not holding a prior degree qualification cognate to the area of research being undertaken shall be strictly limited and applicable in exceptional cases only. Such applications must be fully supported and endorsed by the School in which the research will be carried out and supervised. The onus will be on the School and the supervisor to give clear reasons for their recommendation in such a case, and the Graduate Research Studies Board will make the final decision on admission.

- 3.7 Students holding academic qualifications from outside the State will be assessed using the NARIC guidelines and the European Framework of Qualifications.



## 4. APPLICATION AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Candidates must apply through the PAC (Postgraduate Applications Centre) system ([www.pac.ie](http://www.pac.ie)). Only candidates who have contacted the School with which they wish to be registered, and have got a recommendation from the School to apply, will be able to proceed to the completion of the PAC application. All such candidates need to have the support of a potential supervisor.
- 4.2 Successful candidates will be required to register with the University and pay the appropriate fees.
- 4.3 All students are required to re-register on an annual basis. Such registration is subject to payment of the appropriate fees and satisfactory progress certified by the supervisory panel (described in 7.1) and endorsed by the Head of School or nominee.
- 4.4 In normal circumstances, research students registered at DCU will reside within Ireland.
- 4.5 Supervisors, on behalf of registered students, or new applicants not covered by a joint supervision or award agreement but wishing to reside and undertake research outside Ireland for a period of six months or more, must inform the Graduate Research Studies Board, providing details of the rationale for registration in DCU rather than locally, and arrangements for supervisor oversight of the field, experimental or other work. Such arrangements are also subject to the requirements detailed in section 7.15.
- 4.6 Where doctoral or Master's research is to be conducted in formal collaboration with another higher education institution, or undertaken in the context of the enterprise model, the *DCU Policy on Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions* applies. The context should be made clear at the time of the student's application to DCU so that an agreement on joint supervision or joint award can be drawn up with the partner institution or company prior to registration. Significant advance planning is usually required.

## 5. PERIOD OF TIME FOR COMPLETION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

- 5.1 Students register on either a full-time or a part-time basis.
- 5.2 The minimum typical and maximum registration periods for PhD and Research Master's degrees are as follows:

	<b>Minimum registration period</b>	<b>Typical registration period</b>	<b>Maximum registration period</b>
<b>PhD (full time)</b>	3 years	4 years	5 years
<b>PhD (part-time)</b>	5 years	6 years	7 years
<b>Research Master's (full time)</b>	2 years	2 years	3 years
<b>Research Master's (part time)</b>	3 years	3-4 years	5 years
<b>Professional Doctorate (part time)</b>	4 years	4-5 years	6 years

- 5.3 If a student wishes to submit a thesis before the minimum period stipulated, he/she must seek permission from the Graduate Research Studies Board to be allowed to do so. Such permission will be granted in exceptional cases only.
- 5.4 If a student does not complete a thesis within the maximum period stipulated, he/she must seek permission from the Graduate Research Studies Board to be allowed to continue his/her studies. Such extensions will be granted in exceptional cases only.
- 5.5 The registration date for Autumn registration is published in the Academic Calendar. The Spring registration date is 2<sup>nd</sup> March, for Year 1 students only. Students who register on or after this date must re-register for Year 1 in the following September. (Students should check these dates regularly in case of changes.)

## 6. DEFERRAL/WITHDRAWAL

- 6.1 It is preferable for students to conduct their research without interruption in so far as possible. Occasionally, a student may have reason to be absent from the University. If this is for a period of less than three months, no change to registration is required, and regular fee liability applies.
- 6.2 In some circumstances, for example in the case of illness, or financial or family circumstances, it is possible to apply for a formal temporary cessation of registration until the difficulties have been resolved. Deferrals should normally be granted in keeping with *DCU Marks and Standards*, and only in such exceptional circumstances. Deferrals must be approved by the Supervisor and the relevant Head of School and will usually be for a half, or full academic year.
- 6.3 Students wishing to defer must notify the Registry, in advance of the deferral, in writing by completing and submitting an Application for Deferral. Retrospective deferrals are not allowed, except in exceptional cases where a student was adversely affected by illness or other factors, which he/she was unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling to divulge, and is limited to half year deferral.
- 6.4 During any temporary cessation of registration, the student's participation in the research programme is suspended and the student will not be entitled to supervision or to use the University facilities, including the Library.
- 6.5 The minimum period of registration is extended by a period corresponding to the deferred period. Consistent with *DCU Marks and Standards*, the maximum period of registration is not extended.
- 6.6 Tuition fees are adjusted to account for the deferred period.
- 6.7 When a student is externally funded, he/she should discuss the situation with the Supervisor(s) in the first instance, and the sponsoring agency should be consulted if a temporary cessation of study is necessary. Students and supervisors should be aware of any possible implications which this temporary cessation may have on the funding and of any additional requirements stipulated by the funding body. Students who defer do not receive a stipend during this period, as stipends are paid only during active registration. The Graduate Studies Office should be notified prior to the student seeking a deferral from the University.
- 6.8 Research students withdrawing from the University must notify the Registry in writing by completing and submitting a Withdrawal Form. Fee liability will apply if

this occurs after a specific date, which is published by DCU each year.

## 7. SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMMES OF RESEARCH

- 7.1. Each graduate research student will have a supervisory panel.<sup>1</sup> The principal aim of the supervisory panel is to participate in formal decision-making with respect to the student's progress, and provide advice, additional support and pastoral care, and escalate, as appropriate, should problems arise.
  - 7.1.1. The panel will comprise all of the Supervisor(s) plus one or more additional independent member(s) of academic staff.
  - 7.1.2. The panel must include at least one member of academic staff from the academic School in which the student is registered.
  - 7.1.3. While a Supervisor will be an expert in the field of study, there is no requirement that all members of the supervisory panel have this expertise, but they should have some experience of research degree supervision in a similar or related discipline.
  - 7.1.4. For DCU academics new to being a principal supervisor, the supervisory panel for their first two students must include a member experienced in supervision who will be in a position to take an advisory role.<sup>2</sup> Inclusion of such a panel member can be deemed necessary by the Head of School for reasons other than a principal supervisor's relative inexperience.
  - 7.1.5. Heads of School should endeavour to ensure that a supervisory panel has no more than four members in total.
  - 7.1.6. The Independent Panel Member should be appointed by the Head of School and notified to Registry within three months of the student's initial registration.
- 7.2. Supervision remains the sole prerogative of the Supervisor(s) who has/have full responsibility for the overall management and supervision of the student's work and progress.
- 7.3. Appointment of too many supervisors for one candidate is to be avoided, and each supervisor should have a defined and clear role in the work.<sup>3</sup>
- 7.4. Each graduate research student will have a suitably qualified principal supervisor whose responsibility will be to supervise the student on a regular and frequent basis.
  - 7.4.1. In certain cases, where there is a significant requirement that more than one area of expertise be covered, there may be more than one principal supervisor. The supervisors in this instance are referred to as joint principal supervisors and have equal rights and undertake equal responsibilities.
  - 7.4.2. A principal supervisor is normally employed on a permanent contract with the university 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.

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<sup>1</sup> This requirement for a supervisory panel applies to candidates first registered in 2011/2012 or later, and also those who initially registered as SPD or MDI students.

<sup>2</sup> The panel member may be a member of academic staff in another School or, in exceptional cases, in another institution if there are not enough panel members qualified to be advisors available in a School.

<sup>3</sup> Assisting students in a laboratory for instance does not, of itself, constitute supervising.

- 7.5. In certain cases, there may be secondary supervisor(s) as well as principal supervisor(s). A secondary supervisor is appointed when specific expert academic input is required on aspects of the project, or when supervision is being provided by a person who is not a member of DCU staff.
- 7.5.1. Unless subject to a joint award agreement, where a supervisor is not a member of University staff, such a person or persons will be deemed to be secondary supervisors and a University staff member will be the principal supervisor. This includes adjunct faculty. All relevant forms must incorporate the names of all supervisors. The University will, however, accept the signature of the DCU supervisor(s) as signalling assent on the part of both or all supervisors.
- 7.6. For students undertaking Professional Doctorates, appointment of supervisors and the establishment of the supervisory panel may be postponed until the student embarks on the substantive research work.
- 7.7. It is the responsibility of the relevant Head of School to ensure that appropriate supervision remains in place in situations where a supervisor or independent panel member leaves the University.
- 7.7.1. Where a principal supervisor retires or resigns from the University during the programme of study of one or more students, then the supervisor is encouraged to continue supervising the students in their new capacity, but as a secondary supervisor. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to appoint a new principal supervisor in cases where it is necessary under the requirements in 7.1 and to notify Registry using the appropriate form.
- 7.7.2. Where a supervisor is absent (e.g. on sabbatical leave) for part of the duration of the student's research, it will be the School's responsibility to determine whether or not a replacement supervisor is needed for the period in question.
- 7.7.3. It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to ensure a smooth and timely transition where a change of supervisor takes place.
- 7.7.4. Changes in supervisory and/or panel member arrangements must normally be made on the basis of agreement between the supervisor(s), the student, the proposed supervisor(s) and the Head of School or nominee and must be submitted to the Faculty Research Committee for approval and, once approved there, notified to Registry.
- 7.8. Supervisors will be appropriately qualified.
- 7.8.1. Academic staff who undertake the supervision of PhD students or Professional Doctorate students are themselves required to hold a doctoral qualification or a professorship or associate professorship and have relevant experience 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.
- 7.8.2. A person who does not hold a doctoral qualification or a professorship or associate professorship may, however, act as joint principal supervisor or secondary supervisor to a doctoral candidate provided that the other

supervisor holds such an award or title. Such supervisors should have research experience consistent with the level of study.

- 7.8.3. Academic staff undertaking the supervision of research Master's students are themselves required to hold at least a Master's qualification in an area cognate to the proposed area of research. A person who does not hold a Master's qualification may, however, act as joint principal supervisor or secondary supervisor provided that the other supervisor holds such an award or title. Such supervisors should have research experience consistent with the level of study.
- 7.9. A member of academic staff must decline appointment as a supervisor if they expect not to be able to discharge the responsibilities of supervision in full, or withdraw (ref 7.7.4) if circumstances change and they are no longer able to so.
- 7.10. Members of academic staff should normally act as supervisor (principal or secondary) to a maximum of ten research students at any one time. All cases in which the figure exceeds ten should be referred to the Head of School (or the Executive Dean of Faculty where the Head of School is the supervisor) for a decision as to whether or not it is appropriate that the proposed supervisor accept an applicant. Where more than one School is involved in the process, the relevant Head of School is the Head of the School of which the proposed supervisor is a member.
- 7.11. All first-time supervisors must attend training on supervision during, or prior to, the first year of supervising, and all research supervisors are encouraged to attend supervisory training as part of their professional development.
- 7.12. Schools are required to have guidelines on the ranges of frequency and durations of contact with research supervisors that are regarded as reasonable in the relevant discipline.
- 7.13. The responsibilities of the supervisor(s) include the following:
- to advise the student on the selection of the research topic and the nature and quality of the programme of research to be undertaken;
  - to 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 by giving permission for registration for structured training where appropriate;
  - to 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;
  - to ensure that the student is made aware of any inadequacies of progress or standard relative to that expected and, where necessary, to advise on withdrawal from the programme;
  - to liaise with the external supervisor of the co-operating establishment, where relevant;
  - to meet with the student and other supervisory panel members at least twice a year to discuss progress;
  - to advise on the methodology and form of presentation of the thesis and its subsequent examination, and advise on correction and revisions following examination;
  - to complete an annual progress report with the student and advise the Registry if the student is eligible to progress. These reports should include details of the frequency of contact maintained with the candidate and an appraisal of the progress of the work to date; and

- to acknowledge a student's contribution in any presentation, publication or meeting which involves the student's research work.
- 7.14. The responsibilities of the student include the following:
- to comply with relevant DCU regulations;
  - to conduct the research within the ethical standards of the discipline(s) and in accordance with the standards detailed by the University and any appropriate external agencies;
  - to undertake a periodic training needs analysis and maintain a Personal Development Plan (PDP);
  - to engage positively with opportunities for professional development; and
  - to acknowledge the supervisor's role in their research including in any presentation, publication or meeting to which the supervisor has made a contribution.
- 7.15. Where a research candidate is resident outside Ireland for 6 months or more over the period of registration, and the registration is not subject to a co-supervision or joint award agreement with an external institution, the Graduate Research Studies Board should be informed as per regulation 4.5, and the following guidelines for remote supervision should be adhered to:
- 7.15.1. An agreement which incorporates the relevant DCU regulations is written and signed by the DCU supervisor(s), the student and the Head of School, or Executive Dean of Faculty (in cases where the Head of School is a supervisor).
- 7.15.2. The DCU supervisor(s) must have access to any relevant data and/or detailed information on facilities/field sites being used in the candidate's research in order to facilitate evaluation of the methodologies being used and the rigour and integrity of analysis.
- 7.15.3. The DCU supervisor and student need to maintain regular contact to ensure the successful supervision of the student. An annual face-to-face meeting with the DCU supervisor is highly recommended, and either the DCU supervisor or the student may request a face-to-face meeting if they deem it necessary.
- 7.15.4. A mechanism for communication needs to be established and monitored carefully by the Head of School in which the student is registered. It should be ensured that all appropriate technological means are employed to facilitate the supervision process.
- 7.16 Research students and supervisors have access to procedures of the University such as those under the *Policy to Promote Respect and to Protect Dignity in DCU*, the *DCU Code of Discipline and Code of Conduct*, the *Policy on Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct* and the *Student Grievance Procedure* and are subject to DCU's *Guidelines on Best Practice in Research Ethics* and the *DCU Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy*.<sup>4</sup> Significant difficulties which arise within a supervisor/student relationship are dealt with in this context.

In the first instance, a student, supervisor(s) or other panel member should seek a resolution to the issues at School level. This process will normally involve the student, supervisor(s), panel members and Head of School. The Head of School

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<sup>4</sup> This list is not exhaustive and may change. All relevant University policies, in force at any given time, apply.

may wish to seek advice on policy or procedure (without prejudicing any possible subsequent formal procedures) and/or consult with other colleagues on context and background. The resolution to the issues will be captured in writing and circulated to the student and panel members by the Head of School, to ensure clarity for both student and supervisor(s).

If any party does not accept the resolution, or a resolution is not possible within a reasonable timeframe (3-6 weeks), consideration should be given by all parties as to how the issues fall under specific University Policies.

## **8. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

### **8.1 Annual Progression**

- 8.1.1 Continued registration for a higher degree is dependent on the submission of a satisfactory annual progress report. A student's progress is formally evaluated on an annual basis through the completion of an Annual Progress Report as made available by Registry.
- 8.1.2 Annual Progress Review will be carried out at School level, with the relevant report completed by the principal supervisor(s), approved by the supervisory panel and endorsed by the Head of School or nominee. A copy of the report should be submitted to the Registry each year on or before the date published in the Academic Calendar. The student should retain a copy of the final electronic form.
- 8.1.3 In the case of a negative recommendation, the University will take the view that the student is unlikely to achieve the degree for which he/she is registered and he/she will not be permitted to continue as a registered graduate research student.
- 8.1.4 A student has the right to appeal a negative recommendation made by the supervisory panel. The process for appealing is detailed in section 13.
- 8.1.5 For students undertaking Professional Doctorates, the requirement for an Annual Progress Report may be postponed until the student embarks on the substantive research work. Decisions on annual progression in the interim are managed in a way which is appropriate to the specific programme structure. The basis of progression decisions, when they relate to module completion, will be made known to candidates and, as a general principle, students should get useful feedback on progress every year.

### **8.2 Assessment for confirmation on, or transfer to, the PhD Register**

- 8.2.1 Students initially admitted on a PhD-track registration will have to undergo a confirmation procedure generally no earlier than one year after initial registration but, at most, after twenty-one months research for full-time students and at an appropriate corresponding time for part-time students. This is a distinct and separate exercise to Annual Progress Review.  
Applications from such candidates for confirmation on the PhD register must be supported by the Principal Supervisor and will be subject to both an evaluation of a written submission and a satisfactory performance in an oral examination

conducted by the Principal Supervisor and an Internal Examiner. It is not allowable that the independent panel member or a colleague who does not themselves have a doctorate act as the internal examiner for confirmation or transfer.

- 8.2.2 The application form requesting confirmation on the PhD register should be signed by the examiner(s) and Head of School or appropriate nominee (such as the Director of Research or Research Convenor within the School). It should include both a report on the oral examination and a general progress report on the student's research performance (as evidenced by a substantial body of work such as a significant written report). In determining whether or not such confirmation should take place, the Graduate Research Studies Board will require evidence that the student's progress to date has been satisfactory and that the programme of research envisaged provides a satisfactory basis for work at PhD standard. If the outcome of the confirmation procedure is unsuccessful the student may, if appropriate, be invited to complete such research as will allow him/her to graduate with a Master's degree. In exceptional circumstances, students may also be advised to re-apply for confirmation on the PhD register within a period of six months; this may be the case if the examiners believe that there is real potential but that it is not possible to make a positive recommendation at the time when confirmation is originally requested.
- 8.2.3 Procedures for applying to transfer to the PhD register from the Master's register mirror those of the confirmation process. Applications to transfer from PhD or PhD-track to the Master's register should be made directly to Registry, supported by the student, supervisory panel and Head of School.
- 8.2.4 Transfer between professional doctorate and PhD registration is not common and, for the benefit of both awards, approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board is subject to examination of the rationale and criteria underpinning any such recommendation, reference to a framework for transfer (where relevant) as well as satisfactory progress and an appropriate basis for further research as outlined in 8.2.2.
- 8.2.5 A student has the right to appeal an unsuccessful confirmation or transfer result. The process for appealing is detailed in section 13.

### **8.3 Notice of Intention to Submit for Examination**

Through the principal supervisor(s), a student must provide three months' notice to the Registry of his/her intention to submit for examination. The supervisor and Head of School must recommend (on the appropriate form) the name of appropriate External and Internal Examiners for appointment by the Graduate Research Studies Board. Candidates should confirm the format of their submission at this stage, and indicate whether a specific non-disclosure agreement is required.

In cases of disagreement between a student and a supervisor as to the appropriateness of submitting the thesis for examination, the matter is to be referred to the Head of School for resolution. In exceptional circumstances, such as an allegation of research misconduct, or alleged breach of a legally binding contract, the university may decide to postpone or deny the facility of an examination.

The completed thesis must be submitted to the Registry, which will send it to the approved examiners. In no circumstances should it be sent to the examiners by either the supervisor or the student.



## 8.4 Assessment Processes for Candidates for a Research Degree

- 8.4.1 Candidates for a doctoral degree will be assessed on the basis of a written thesis and a *viva voce* examination. In the case of Master's candidates, the usual expectation is that there will be no *viva voce* examination. However, an examiner may recommend that a *viva voce* examination be held.
- 8.4.2 Each candidate for a higher degree by research will be examined by at least one Internal Examiner and at least one External Examiner.
- 8.4.3 The *viva voce* examination shall be held at Dublin City University unless prior approval has been obtained from the Graduate Research Studies Board to hold it elsewhere. Where absolutely necessary, consideration may be given to using the University's videoconferencing facilities for the *viva voce* examination. The standard procedures for conducting a *viva voce* using videoconferencing must be followed.
- 8.4.4 The proceedings of the *viva voce* examination shall be supervised by an Independent Chairperson appointed by the Head of School or nominee in consultation with the supervisor.
- 8.4.5 A candidate for a doctoral degree will be required to show ability to engage in original investigation or scholarship, to test ideas whether his/her own or those of others, and to understand the background and fundamental basis of the work undertaken.
- 8.4.6 A candidate for a Master's degree will be required to demonstrate competence in the investigation or critical study of the chosen topic and lucidity in the presentation of the results.
- 8.4.7 In cases where a *viva voce* is being held, both External and Internal Examiners should send preliminary written reports to the Independent Chairperson of the examination committee prior to the *viva voce* examination. Once these are all available, the Chairperson shall arrange for copies of preliminary reports from each examiner to be exchanged among all examiners in advance of the *viva voce* examination, so that they are aware of one another's views.
- 8.4.8 In cases where no *viva voce* is being held, the examination report forms are completed by both examiners and the Internal Examiner submits them to Registry.
- 8.4.9 Following the *viva voce* the Internal and External Examiners shall furnish the Independent Chairperson with a joint written report (on the appropriate form) on the outcome of the candidate's examination for the higher degree for which he/she is registered. This form should be completed on the day of the *viva voce* and be submitted to Registry by the Independent Chairperson. The Chairperson should also make a formal report to the Head of School on the quality of the examination process and on any recommendations made by the examiners in order to allow the School to get appropriate feedback on the process with a view to maintaining the overall quality of future activities.

## 8.5 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees

- 8.5.1 The Registry will make the necessary arrangements to convene a meeting of the relevant Faculty Awards Board for Research degrees to consider the examination

reports of students who have been examined.

- 8.5.2 Following the meetings of Faculty Awards Boards, the Registry will submit to Academic Council, for its approval, a composite listing of candidates recommended for awards.

## **8.6 Approval of awards by Academic Council**

- 8.6.1 All examination results and recommendations are subject to final approval and confirmation by Academic Council.
- 8.6.2 All candidates for higher degrees shall be informed in writing by the Registry of their official position following the meeting of Academic Council.
- 8.6.3 Re-submission by an unsuccessful candidate may take place only with the approval of Academic Council on the recommendation of, and under the conditions proposed by, the Examiners and with the concurrence of the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees.

## **9. THESIS FORMAT**

All theses submitted must conform strictly to the regulations and requirements detailed below. All doctoral theses are examined under the same conditions and through the same processes of independent examiners and a *viva voce* examination.

### **9.1 Formats of Research Thesis**

A thesis must:

- consist of the candidate's own account of his/her research;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the field of study;
- include critical analysis of related work;
- in the case of a PhD thesis, constitute a significant contribution to existing academic knowledge;
- in the case of a professional doctoral thesis, constitute a significant contribution to existing professional knowledge and practice; and
- be based on work which has been conducted while the candidate has been registered as a research student at DCU.

#### **9.1.1 PhD Thesis (Monograph):**

The traditional PhD thesis presents the research undertaken by the candidate as an integrated whole. It should include:

- a. an introduction;
- b. critical analysis of existing research;
- c. in-depth discussions of the methodological approach taken by the candidate;
- d. presentation and critical analysis, of the findings of the research undertaken by the candidate; and
- e. a substantive conclusion which indicates scope for further research arising out of the candidate's research.

The maximum word length, including bibliography and notes, is 90,000. Any appendices remain outside the word limit.

A variety of media may be used to support/inform research work – e.g. CDs, websites, photographs and emerging technologies.

The order in which components b. to d. are presented, and the nature of any additional written work, will vary from discipline to discipline.

Candidates who have pursued a structured PhD also follow this format in relation to their thesis. All candidates are encouraged to publish material in advance of presentation of the thesis, and reference should be made to any such publication in the thesis.

### **9.1.2 PhD by Publication:**

Students should, ideally, indicate their intention to submit using publications at the time of application for transfer/confirmation on the PhD register but, at the latest, at the time of indicating their intention to submit for examination.

The PhD thesis by publication should consist of:

- a. a set of published papers and/or papers accepted for publication; and
- b. an accompanying document no less than 10,000 words in length which sets the papers in the context of existing literature, gives a detailed overview of the theme(s) common to all papers included in the thesis, argues the coherence of these publications, and justifies the methodology adopted. This overarching critical document should evaluate the contribution that the research in the submitted publications makes to the advancement of knowledge in the research area.

Only peer-reviewed book chapters or papers (published journal papers, or papers accepted for publication) in reputable peer-reviewed outputs for the discipline(s) in question should be considered for inclusion. The number of papers may vary across disciplines and also with the length of individual papers and the extent of the candidate's contribution thereto.

Where jointly-authored publications are included in the submission, the candidate should declare the extent to which the publication is his/her work and what his/her specific contributions were, and this should normally be certified by the supervisory panel and all authors concerned, but at least independently verified in all cases. This statement should be bound with the other submitted materials.

Novel contribution should normally be apparent in at least three of the papers in which the candidate is main or key contributor. Other papers with smaller or more specific contributions can also be included in the thesis, where this makes sense in terms of its overall coherence. All papers and the accompanying overview should be presented and bound (together) in accordance with the regulations in section 9.4.

### **9.1.3 PhD by Artefact**

This format is restricted to candidates undertaking research in disciplines where output in forms other than a monograph (such as a music composition, critical edition, film, multimedia production, arts based works etc.) are accepted internationally as evidence of scholarly achievement at the level of the research award. Specific discipline-based additional admission requirements, linked to skills-based competency, may apply to candidates for research projects intended to be presented in this format.

The format requires:

- A substantial artefact, or portfolio of artefacts.
- and
- An accompanying commentary of no less than 20,000 words in length. This overarching critical document should detail the research questions addressed through the medium of the artefact(s), sets the artefact(s) in the context of existing literature, give a detailed overview of the theme(s) common to all elements included, argue the coherence of the submission and justify the methodology adopted. It should evaluate the contribution that the research presented in the submitted artefact makes to the advancement of knowledge in the research area.

#### **9.1.4 PhD through Creative and/or Performance Practice**

This format is restricted to candidates submitting research in disciplines where it is a recognised norm internationally. Specific additional admission requirements, linked to skills-based competency, will apply to candidates for research projects intended to be presented in this format.

The format requires:

- A portfolio of creative or performance-based elements of substantial nature,
- and
- An accompanying commentary of no less than 30,000 words in length. This overarching critical document should detail the research questions addressed through the medium of the creative work / performance in the context of existing practice, give a detailed overview of the theme(s) common to all elements included, argue the coherence of the submission, and justify the methodology adopted. It should evaluate the contribution that the research presented in the creative work/performance makes to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

#### **9.1.5 Professional Doctoral Thesis:**

The professional doctoral thesis may follow either of the structures described in 9.1.1 and 9.1.2. Alternatively, the Professional Doctoral thesis may take the following format:

- a. a research report; and
  - b. a clinical portfolio or a reflective practice portfolio.
- In this case, the research report should constitute no less than 50% of the contribution of the final thesis.

#### **9.1.6 Research Master's Thesis:**

The research Master's thesis is a monograph including:

- a. an introduction;
- b. critical analysis of existing research;
- c. in-depth discussions of the methodological approach taken by the candidate;
- d. presentation, and critical analysis, of the findings of the research undertaken by the candidate; and
- e. a substantive conclusion which indicates scope for further research arising out of the candidate's research.

The maximum word length, including bibliography and notes, is 45,000. Any appendices remain outside the word limit.

A variety of media may be used to support/inform research work – e.g. CDs, websites,

photographs and emerging technologies.

The order in which components b. to d. are presented, and the nature of any additional written work, will vary from discipline to discipline.

## 9.2 Thesis Submission Procedure

- 9.2.1 The student should provide the Registry with one soft-bound printed copy of the thesis for each examiner. The binding is deemed to be temporary, pending completion of the examination process. The student must also provide one electronic PDF copy of the thesis for examination. This should be submitted to Registry in a single PDF file entitled with student number and date of submission, which should be saved on a memory key. The PDF should have the wording “pre-examination copy” and the submission date included as a watermark, or as a footer, on each page of the document. A supervisor or students should, in no instance, send the thesis directly to an examiner, either in soft-bound printed or electronic format.
- 9.2.2 On completion of the examination process, two hard-bound copies of the thesis should be submitted to the Registry.
- 9.2.3 Also, on completion of the examination process, one additional copy of the thesis shall be submitted in electronic format. It shall be subject to the regulations as to format, except where those apply specifically to physical properties of the print copies, for example, regulations under 9.4 covering binding. In all other respects, the electronic copy shall contain exactly the same content as, and be an exact surrogate of, the print copy. The electronic copy shall be uploaded to a secure web space by a principal supervisor. All accompanying material, e.g. appendices, or files contained on CD-ROM or DVD, that is submitted with the bound copy of the thesis, must also be uploaded to the secure web space. The candidate will be required to sign a declaration form confirming that an e-version of the approved thesis has been submitted to the Library. The completed form must be submitted to Registry with the two hard-bound print copies of the thesis.

## 9.3 Thesis Ownership and Access

- 9.3.1 Copies of the thesis submitted for examination will remain the property of the University. The University will place one print copy and one electronic copy of the thesis in the Library for free consultation. The Library retains the right, subject to paragraph 9.3.2 below, to include the summary or abstract in any list of theses published by the University or any publication to which the University may decide to contribute a list of theses.
- 9.3.2 Candidates are required to sign a declaration form (Thesis Access Consent Form) at the time of submission of the thesis for examination, permitting access to their thesis. Where questions of the confidentiality of the contents arise, candidates may request and obtain temporary restriction of access up to a maximum of four years for sufficient cogent reasons, using the appropriate form. An application for the restriction of access must be approved and countersigned by a research student's supervisor.
- 9.3.3 Copyright in the thesis, ownership of the intellectual property arising in the course of its preparation, and patent rights in respect of any relevant product or process are

matters for agreement between the candidate and the University.

- 9.3.4 Every candidate irrevocably grants to DCU and its respective successors and assigns, a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty free, perpetual licence to reproduce, distribute, modify, store, copy, publicly perform and publicly display, with the right to sub-licence through multiple tiers of sub-licences, and the right to assign such rights in and to the thesis including, without limitation the right to use in any way whatsoever the thesis. DCU may copy, publish, make available, distribute, license, or otherwise use the thesis in any manner worldwide via any medium including without limitation the internet, intranets, extranets, mobile phones, GSM/3G phones, WAP phones, databases, print, interactive television, digital media services, electronic media services, platforms, or any networks (including without limitation telecommunications, wireless, radio, television, cable, satellite, terrestrial networks) currently in existence or which may be developed in the future.

## 9.4 Thesis Design and Layout

- 9.4.1 The language of the thesis shall normally be either English or Irish. Other languages shall require the approval of the Graduate Research Studies Board. This approval should be sought and justified at initial registration.
- 9.4.2 A thesis should not be excessively long. The maximum limit for a doctoral thesis is 90,000 words of text, including bibliography and notes and, for a Master's thesis, is 45,000 words of text, including bibliography and notes. In the case of scientific and technological theses, the amount of text may be less. Because of this variation from subject to subject, the advice of the supervisor should be sought at an early stage in the preparation of the thesis. For professional doctorates, the acceptable word length should fall between the parameters of a Master's thesis and a doctoral thesis, and is a matter for discussion between the supervisor and the student.
- 9.4.3 The use of external professional individuals or organisations for proof-reading or copy-editing of theses on a paid basis is not permitted.
- 9.4.4 The thesis shall:
- Be bound within boards of sufficient rigidity to support the work when it is standing upon a shelf. The colour of the boards shall be University blue (Pantone Ref: 289);
  - Have the following information on the front (board) cover:
    - the title of the thesis in at least 24pt (8 mm) type;
    - the initials and name of the candidate;
    - the award for which the thesis is submitted e.g. MA, MBS, LLM, MSc, MEng, MPhil, EdD, DPsych, DBA, DMusPerf, PhD; and
    - the year of submission, i.e. the calendar year in which the Faculty Awards Board approves the award.

The subject area must not be stated; the reference should be to, for example, 'PhD', not 'PhD in xxxx'.

The same information (excluding the title of the thesis) shall be printed in the same order in at least 24 pt (8 mm) type along the spine of the cover in such a way as to be easily legible when the thesis is lying flat with its front cover uppermost. All lettering on the cover and the spine shall be gold in colour and clear of any graphic design.

- The content must be printed, typewritten or otherwise reproduced on single sided or

double sided good-quality (100gsm minimum) white A4-sized paper (210mm x 297mm), with a minimum font size of 11, doubly or one-and-a-half spaced, with a binding edge margin of not less than 35mm and all other margins not less than 20mm.

- Double-sided printing is recommended for the body of the thesis, but the title page, abstract, declaration and pages including any figures likely to show through the paper should be single-sided.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively throughout the text, including those pages incorporating photographs or diagrams which are included as whole pages.
- Where the thesis consists of more than one volume, the pagination should indicate the Arabic number of the volume as well as the page number referring to the volume. Both volumes should include the title page, declaration and table of contents. Table of contents should reference the complete work in both volumes.
- Page numbers should be located centrally at the bottom of the page and about 10 mm above the edge of the page.
- Appendices should be named alphabetically, and each appendix paginated consecutively but separately from the main text and from the others.
- The thesis must contain a title page with the following information:
  - the full title of the thesis, and subtitle, if any, the name of the candidate and his/her qualifications,;
  - the award for which the work is submitted;
  - the name of the University, the supervisor(s) and of the School with which the candidate is registered;
  - the name and affiliation of external supervisors (if any);
  - the month and year of submission (relevant to softbound thesis submission at examination stage and then updated for final hardbound thesis submission); and
  - the total number of volumes and the number of the particular volume, if there is more than one volume.
- The thesis must have a page, bound into the thesis immediately following the title page, containing the following declaration, signed by the candidate:

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of ..... (insert title of degree for which registered) is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Candidate) ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- It should include a table of contents listing chapters, sections, and appendices. This should be printed or typed in single spacing and include right-justified page numbers. Lists of abbreviations, tables, and figures should immediately follow the table of contents, prior to the abstract. Any abbreviations, other than those in normal use must be included in this explanatory list.
- The thesis should include an abstract of not more than 300 words. The abstract should be printed or typed in single spacing and should indicate the author and the title of the thesis in the form of a heading.
- Photographs and/or diagrams must be of high quality and appropriately indexed, each accompanied by an explanatory legend. They should also be centrally justified as much as possible and only positioned otherwise if essential to the work.
- Where footnotes and indented quotations are used, these may be in single spacing.

## 10. APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

The purpose of this section is not only to enunciate procedures for the appointment of examiners but also to set out what students can reasonably expect from the University regarding the examination of their work. The Graduate Research Studies Board is responsible for approving the appointment of both Internal and External Examiners.

Each candidate for a higher degree by research will be examined by at least one Internal Examiner and at least one External Examiner.

In line with the University's policy and stated commitment to best practice in equality issues, Heads of School must ensure, in so far as possible, a balanced gender representation in the appointment of examiners to the examining team for research awards. Where necessary, gender balance may be attained for the *viva voce* examination in the appointment of the Independent Chairperson.

### 10.1 Selection and Nomination of Internal Examiners

The regulations and guidelines informing the appointment of Internal Examiners shall be, to all intents and purposes and, in as far as is possible, the same as the regulations and guidelines for appointment of External Examiners as set out below. However, unlike the External Examiner, it will be sufficient for the Internal Examiner to have a broad rather than specific familiarity with the area of research.

The Internal Examiner should normally be a member of academic staff, emeritus professor, retired DCU academic, senior researcher, or adjunct faculty member of the University and either hold a doctoral qualification or be of the grade of Associate Professor or Professor. The Internal Examiner must be independent of the research, the student and the other examiner(s) and not be conflicted in any way in terms of his/her relationship to the supervisor.<sup>5</sup> The Internal Examiner may not be a member of the candidate's supervisory panel, but should be experienced in supervising research students.

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

### 10.2 Selection and Nomination of External Examiners

10.2.1 For research awards, External Examiners are appointed for specific candidates. External Examiners for research students should not be appointed more than twice in a four-year period. Appointments may be made irrespective of External Examiners' duties with regard to taught programmes. No distinction should be made, for the purposes of appointing External Examiners, between Master's and doctoral students.

10.2.2 In no circumstances should the student be involved in any aspect of the selection

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<sup>5</sup> While it is not expected that the Internal Examiner will necessarily be completely professionally independent of the supervisor, e.g. 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 which could be deemed to impair the examiner's independence in reaching a decision on the examined work. Cases where the supervisor is line manager of a staff member on short term contract, or within their probationary period, would, for example, preclude their appointment as an examiner for a given student.



of the External Examiner.

- 10.2.3 If the candidate is a member of staff of the University, two External Examiners are appointed to add an additional layer of independent assurance to the process. Where the candidate holds, or within a period of five years prior to the notification of intention to submit has held, a part-time or short-term contract with the University, the Head of School (or Executive Dean of Faculty where the Head of School is the supervisor) will be requested to determine whether or not he/she falls into the category of candidate for whom two External Examiners are required.
- 10.2.4 In no circumstances may a staff member from DCU act as an External Examiner to a linked college, or *vice versa*, nor may a staff member of a linked college act as an External Examiner in another linked college. A staff member from Dundalk Institute of Technology may not be appointed as an external examiner for a DCU registered research student nor *vice versa*.
- 10.2.5 No individual external to the university who has acted as supervisor to a student, or has been involved with the progress of the candidate's research, may act as External Examiner for the student following the submission of the thesis.
- 10.2.6 Reciprocal examining arrangements between the University and other colleges/institutions in the same subject area should be avoided, as should disproportionate dependence on any specific School or Department in a given institution. Typically, a year should elapse between appointments involving the same Schools/Departments.
- 10.2.7 The External Examiner(s) should be contacted informally by the supervisor to ascertain availability and willingness to undertake the role within the timescale envisaged.
- 10.2.8 All nominations of External Examiners are submitted for approval to the Graduate Research Studies Board by means of the notification of intention to submit thesis for examination form, which includes an outline *curriculum vitae* for completion. Approved appointments are valid for a period of 12 months.
- 10.2.9 External Examiners should normally have the following qualities and competencies:
- recognised expertise in the area which is the subject matter of the thesis being examined;
  - experience in supervising research students and in the examination process of such students; and
  - formal academic qualification and/or professional qualification which is recognised within the particular discipline as forming a suitable background to allow the individual to act in the role of External Examiner.

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

- 10.2.10 It is imperative, for quality assurance purposes, that the External Examiner is independent of the University, of the supervisor, of its Internal Examiners and of the candidate presenting him/herself for examination. Therefore the DCU [Conflict of Interest Policy and Guidelines](#) should be adhered to in relation to any appointment. In particular, it must be ensured that all External Examiners should:

- not have been in the employ of the University (in any capacity) in the five years prior to appointment;
- not have been a student of the University in the five years prior to appointment;
- not be a beneficiary of any bursary or remuneration from the University (other than from the post of External Examiner, membership of an Accreditation Board, quality review panel or recruitment/promotions panel);
- not have advised the student on the work underpinning the preparation of his/her thesis;
- not have published with any of the supervisors in the previous five years;
- have no close personal relationship with the candidate, supervisor(s) or other examiner(s) such that, in the opinion of the Head of School, there is a risk that the Conflict of Interest Policy and Guidelines might be breached; and
- have no professional relationship with the candidate, supervisor(s) or other examiner(s) such that, in the opinion of the Head of School, there is a risk that the Conflict of Interest Policy and Guidelines might be breached.

### **10.3 Appointment and Examination Procedures**

- 10.3.1 Candidates for research degrees are required to notify their supervisor initially of their intention to submit a thesis for examination, using the appropriate form. They must give at least three months' notice and provide a typed 300-word abstract of their work.
- 10.3.2 On receipt of this notice of intention to submit a thesis, the supervisor is required to consult with the relevant Head(s) of School on the selection and nomination of appropriate Internal and External Examiners. The Head of School is responsible for ensuring the nomination is in line with the regulations. The supervisor is responsible for making initial contact with the proposed External Examiner.
- 10.3.3 Following completion of the process of consultation referred to above, the supervisor is required to submit the completed form to the Registry within two weeks of initial receipt from the candidate. Completed forms will be submitted to the next scheduled meeting of the Graduate Research Studies Board.
- 10.3.4 Following approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board of the appointment of the Examiners nominated, the Registry will issue a formal written invitation to the person(s) nominated to act as External Examiner(s) and, in addition, will provide a copy of the abstract of the work to be examined.
- 10.3.5 Candidates are required to submit soft-bound copies of the thesis to the Registry as outlined in 9.2.1 above. The agreement of their principal or joint principal supervisors, or Head of School, to submit the thesis should be obtained prior to such submission (see 8.3 above).
- 10.3.6 Following receipt of these copies, the Registry will immediately forward a copy to each Examiner together with the web link to the relevant Examiners' Report Form and Examination Regulations for Examiners. Examiners are normally expected to carry out their duties within two months of receipt of the thesis to avoid hardship to the candidate. The Registry and the candidate's supervisor(s) should be notified immediately if there is any difficulty in adhering to this time requirement.
- 10.3.7 In the case of a thesis submitted for the award of a PhD or Professional Doctorate,

the *viva voce* examination will be supervised by an Independent Chairperson appointed by the Head of School in consultation with the candidate's supervisor. It will be the duty of the supervisor to liaise with the Examiners and Independent Chairperson regarding arrangements for the *viva voce* examination. Such arrangements should be finalised as soon as possible after receipt of the thesis by the Examiners and notified in writing to the candidate. The supervisor will also notify the examiners of the contact details of the Independent Chairperson and advise them that all further communication about the examination should go directly, and only, to the Chairperson. The candidate will be advised of the composition of the Board for the *viva voce* examination. However, the candidate is precluded from making any contact with the External Examiner prior to the *viva voce* examination.

- 10.3.8 In the case of a thesis submitted for the award of a Master's degree, a *viva voce* is not normally required but may be requested by the examiners,
- 10.3.9 Examiners' Reports and Recommendations will be referred to the next meeting of the relevant Faculty Awards Board for Research degrees (see Section 12 for details).

## **11. REGULATIONS FOR EXAMINATIONS FOR MASTER'S, PhD DEGREES BY RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES**

### **11.1 Internal and External Examiners**

- 11.1.1 Each candidate for a higher degree by research will be examined by at least one Internal Examiner and at least one External Examiner (see Section 10 regarding appointment regulations and procedures).
- 11.1.2 The thesis will be referred by the Registry to the Examiners, who cannot accept it directly from the candidate or the supervisor.
- 11.1.3 Examiners are normally expected to carry out their duties within two months of receipt of the thesis. Examiners' draft written reports on the thesis should be made available to the Independent Chairperson of the viva at least one week prior to the *viva voce* examination. Such draft reports can be modified by the examiners on the day of the examination in light of insight afforded by the examination.

### **11.2 Examination of the Thesis**

- 11.2.1 Examiners should assess a Master's thesis in the light of the following criteria:
- the thesis should show evidence of independent thought and work by the candidate;
  - the investigation or critical study should be scholarly;
  - the candidate should understand the significance of the work; and
  - the thesis and abstract should be presented in grammatically-correct English or Irish or, exceptionally, in another language, and should be readable and succinct.
- 11.2.2 Examiners should assess a doctoral thesis in the light of the following criteria:
- the thesis should contain original, independent work that is rigorous, weighty and significant;
  - the thesis should represent a significant contribution to knowledge of the

subject through the discovery of new facts and/or the exercise of independent critical powers;

- the thesis should demonstrate the candidate's ability to undertake further research;
- the thesis and abstract should be presented in grammatically correct English or Irish or, exceptionally, in another language, and should be readable and succinct;
- if the candidate's research is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis should indicate clearly the candidate's contribution and the extent of the collaboration; and
- in the *viva voce* examination, the candidate should demonstrate that the thesis presented is his/her own work, and that he/she has an adequate understanding of the research topic and of the broader field of knowledge to which the research belongs.

### 11.3 *Viva Voce* Examination

- 11.3.1 The *viva voce* proceedings shall be managed by an Independent Chairperson who is appointed by the relevant Head of School in consultation with the candidate's supervisor. A Chairperson should be experienced in doctoral supervision, and normally have supervised a student to completion. The Chairperson is expected to steer the examination process through to a conclusion. In very exceptional cases where the examination outcome is not straightforward, the Chairperson's involvement may extend to engagement with the Head of School, Associate Dean for Research, Faculty Research Award Board, Graduate Research Studies Board or the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Chairperson does not have to be from the School in which the student is registered.
- 11.3.2 Candidates must not contact their examiners prior to the *viva voce* examination; any communication should be through the supervisor(s) to the Independent Chairperson.
- 11.3.3 The *viva voce* examination should be held at Dublin City University (Glasnevin or St Patrick's campuses) unless prior approval has been obtained from the Graduate Research Studies Board to hold it elsewhere.
- 11.3.4 External and Internal Examiners may meet in advance of a *viva voce* examination, if any of the examiners desires, without a candidate's academic supervisor and/or the Independent Chairperson of the examination being present.
- 11.3.5 The *viva voce* examination shall be carried out jointly by the External and Internal Examiners. The candidate's supervisor may be present at the *viva voce* examination. However, the candidate must be given the option of stating to the Independent Chairperson, not later than ten days prior to the examination, that he/she would prefer the supervisor not to be present. If this is indicated, then the supervisor should not be present. The supervisor, where present, is not permitted to participate in the examination. He/she should provide clarification of any matters only if and when requested by the examiners or the Independent Chairperson. The supervisor does not participate in the final decision and should leave the meeting while the deliberations leading to this decision are taking place, unless asked by the Chairperson to remain.

### 11.4 Examiners' Reports and Recommendations

- 11.4.1 Following the *viva voce* examination, the examiners should complete the form

relating to the examination of the thesis. Reports should incorporate a commentary on the work presented for examination as well as detailing any corrections to be made. Where the Examiners recommend a revision and re-submission of the thesis, they should provide the candidate with a clear written statement of the changes required, and should also include this with their reports.

- 11.4.2 If an examiner wishes to change the written report on the thesis after the *viva voce*, then this should be done at the end of the examination or, at the latest, within one week of the examination (in the latter case, the report should be sent to the Independent Chairperson).
- 11.4.3 The Chairperson is responsible for sending the report to the Registry.
- 11.4.4 In the case of a Master's candidate where, normally, no *viva voce* examination is required, the Internal Examiner is responsible for sending the completed reports to the Registry, and informing the student of the recommendation.
- 11.4.5 Examiners should give clear grounds for their recommendation, particularly if it is not clear-cut and favourable, and indicate a timeframe for corrections or revisions. The final outcome of the examination process should be reported as one of the following recommendations:
- that the degree sought be awarded;
  - that the degree sought be awarded subject to clearly specified textual emendations;
  - that the degree sought be awarded subject to clearly specified revisions to content;
  - that no degree be awarded, but that the candidate be allowed to submit a revised thesis, normally within a year;
  - that, where a doctoral award is sought, a Master's degree be awarded instead
  - that no degree be awarded as the candidate is unlikely to reach the standard for a research award; or
  - that, where a Master's degree was sought, the candidate be advised and permitted to withdraw the thesis for revision and re-submission at a later date for the award of a doctorate, subject to the following conditions: The candidate, prior to such re-submission for the doctoral award, must have been a registered full-time graduate research student for at least twenty-four months (or pro rata for a part-time registered postgraduate student). The re-submitted thesis shall be examined in accordance with the regulations for examination of theses presented for a doctoral award and, in an exception to regulation 11.4.7, by a different External Examiner, to be appointed by Graduate Research Studies Board.
- 11.4.6 Where a thesis has to be corrected or revised, the revisions shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner and/or the External Examiner(s), as may be determined by the examiners. As the supervisor does not participate in the examination process, he/she should not sign off on revised theses. Such signing off is the sole responsibility of the examiners.
- 11.4.7 Where no award but a resubmission is recommended, normally the same examiners assess the new thesis. In such cases, the period for revision of the thesis and/or presentation for re-examination shall normally be not more than one year from the date when the student is informed of the recommendation. This is the date of the *viva voce* or, where no *viva voce* is held, the date when the Internal Examiner communicates the recommendation to the student.

- 11.4.8 Following incorporation of revisions, the thesis should be reviewed only to establish the extent to which the Examiners' recommendations have been met. There should be no further review of the thesis on other grounds. Examiners should approve corrections within six weeks of getting the revised thesis.

## 11.5 Remit of the Independent Chairperson

- 11.5.1 The Chairperson's role is to manage the *viva voce* examination, ensuring that the candidate is treated fairly, to provide guidance on the University's academic regulations and practices and to communicate the outcome of the examination to the student following the *viva voce* examination. The Chairperson will make sure that all the required documentation is completed and will communicate the outcome to the appropriate parties.
- 11.5.2 The Chairperson should be drawn from a pool of experienced academic staff with experience of doctoral supervision. He/she shall be unconnected with the programme of research carried out by the candidate under examination. It is not allowable that the independent panel member act as the Chairperson.
- 11.5.3 The Chairperson shall not have any input into, or participate in any way in, the assessment of the candidate; the assessment of the candidate remains the sole responsibility of the examiners.
- 11.5.4 The Chairperson, prior to the *viva voce* examination and in consultation with the examiners, will determine the order of questions and the overall format of the examination.
- 11.5.5 A candidate may be asked by the Chairperson to introduce his/her research briefly and summarise the main findings.
- 11.5.6 The length of the *viva voce* examination may vary in accordance with different disciplinary practices, and it will also depend on the examiners' requirements. As a guideline, it should normally be in the range one-and-a-half hours to three hours.
- 11.5.7 At the end of the *viva voce* examination, the candidate and the supervisor, if present, will be asked to leave the room while the examiners deliberate on the outcome (unless the supervisor is asked by the Chairperson to remain). They will normally be requested to return after the decision has been made in order to be informed of it by the examiners.
- 11.5.8 With reference to these regulations, and in consultation with the examiners, the Chairperson will clarify the timeframes for submission of corrections, if any, and sign-off by the relevant examiner(s).
- 11.5.9 The Independent Chairperson ensures that a corrected or revised thesis is sent to the appropriate examiner(s) for review and final sign-off.
- 11.5.10 In cases where no award but a resubmission is recommended, the Chairperson informs the examiners, supervisor(s) and candidate of regulations 11.4.5 and 11.4.7 regarding examination of a resubmitted thesis.
- 11.5.11 The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the examination form, which includes the examiners' reports on the thesis and on the *viva voce* examination, is

correctly filled out and is returned to the Registry once the final thesis has been signed off by the Internal and/or External Examiner(s). If a resubmission, or no award, is being recommended, then a revised thesis is not expected at this time, and the forms are to be returned to Registry without delay.

## **11.6 Procedure after Examination**

- 11.6.1 The Registry will refer the examiners' reports to the appropriate Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees for consideration at its next meeting. Thereafter, a consolidated report listing the names of candidates recommended for a higher degree is presented to Academic Council for approval, and a note of cases recommended for resubmission, and the number where an award was not recommended.
- 11.6.2 The Registry advises candidates of the official outcome of the examination process, including in cases where a thesis has been referred for resubmission or where no award, or an award lower than the one sought, has been recommended by the examiners.
- 11.6.3 A candidate cannot appeal the outcome of the examination on the basis of the examiners' judgment. A candidate does, however, have the right to appeal the outcome on the grounds of process and procedure, as detailed in section 13.
- 11.6.4 In the event that, subsequent to an award being made, plagiarism or academic fraud related to a research award thesis is proven, Academic Council may rescind the approval of a research award.

## **12. FACULTY AWARDS BOARDS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES**

### **12.1 Establishment of Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees**

- 12.1.1 In each Faculty, there shall be constituted a Board for Research degrees chaired by the Dean of the Faculty or his/her nominee (who will normally be the Associate Dean for Research).
- 12.1.2 The membership of each Board shall be drawn from the academic staff of the Faculty together with relevant academic staff of other Faculties who have been involved in cross-disciplinary research projects. Supervisors of candidates who have been examined, and Internal Examiners of same, must attend. In exceptional cases, where a supervisor or Internal Examiner cannot attend, a suitable nominee who has been briefed on the examination must attend.

### **12.2 Scheduling of Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees**

- 12.2.1 There will be two officially-scheduled meetings per calendar year of each of the Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees, one in Spring and one in Autumn. The exact dates will be indicated in the Academic Calendar.
- 12.2.2 The convening of a meeting of the Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees shall be notified to academic staff by the Registry following consultation with the relevant Dean/Associate Dean.

### **12.3 Remit of Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees**

12.3.1 The remit of the FABRD is to:

- consider and approve (or otherwise where necessary) examiners' reports and their recommendations in respect of candidates presenting for Research Master's and Doctoral Degrees.
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12.3.2 Processing of examiners' reports and their recommendations:

- The Board will be required to ensure that the examination process for each candidate has been carried out in accordance with these *Academic Regulations*.
- The Board will be required to draw the attention of the Graduate Research Studies Board to individual comments by examiners if such comments are deemed to provide useful feedback to the University.
- The Board will be required to specifically consider issues arising from a negative recommendation by an examiner, and recommend an appropriate course of action to the Graduate Research Studies Board and Academic Council for their consideration. The subsequent decision of Academic Council in respect of a recommendation submitted by the relevant Faculty Awards Board for Research Degrees will be communicated in writing by the Registry to the research student concerned.

### **12.4 Documentation for Meetings**

12.4.1 Examiners' reports on candidates for research degrees will be provided by the Registry and will be available to the Chair for consultation before the meeting. A copy of each thesis examined will be available at the Board.

## **13. APPEALS**

Appeals can be submitted in respect of negative recommendations regarding progression, decisions not to confirm or transfer a student to the PhD register, and the outcome of an examination. Transfer/confirmation recommendations are approved at GR SB, examination recommendations are approved at the relevant FABRD meeting and the opportunity to appeal follows notification of the decisions of these Boards. In respect of negative progression recommendation, the date of decision is taken as the date when the completed review form is submitted to Registry.

### **13.1 Appeals submission**

13.1.1 Appeals must be submitted, using the appropriate form and with supporting written documentation, to the Secretary of the Graduate Research Studies Board.

13.1.2 Appeals must be submitted by the next deadline for consideration by a meeting of the Standing Committee, following notification of approval of the relevant decision. Dates are published in the Academic Calendar, and late appeals are not considered.

### **13.2 The GR SB Appeals Standing Committee**



- 13.2.1 GRSB will establish a Standing Committee to consider appeals. The term of the Standing Committee is 3 years, but replacement members can be appointed by the GRSB, should that be required within this timeframe.
- 13.2.2 The Standing Committee is normally chaired by the Chair of GRSB. The Secretary of GRSB acts as Secretary to the Standing Committee, and attends in a non-voting capacity.
- 13.2.3 Membership of the Standing Committee is no fewer than 4, but can be up to 8, and includes a mix of genders and Faculties and a student representative. Up to 3 members of the Standing Committee may be drawn from outside GRSB, from a pool of Emeritus professors, and other colleagues very experienced in research student supervision and examination.
- 13.2.4 No member of the Standing Committee can consider a case where he/she has a conflict of interest or prior significant involvement. The Dean of Graduate Studies can appoint a temporary member if the total membership falls below 4, or gender or Faculty mix is not achieved because of such circumstances. Where the Dean of Graduate Studies has a conflict of interest or prior involvement in a particular case, the Standing Committee is chaired by an independent Associate Dean for Research.
- 13.2.5 Decisions of the Standing Committee are subject to approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board, are then final and binding, and are submitted for noting at Academic Council.

### **13.3 Grounds for Appeal**

- 13.3.1 A student must make explicit the grounds upon which he/she is appealing against a decision of a supervisory panel or examiners.
- 13.3.2 An appeal may not be based on disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners or supervisory panel.
- 13.3.3 An appeal is considered only on the basis of one of the following:
- an alleged failure to adhere to the regulations of the University or an argument as to insufficiency of regulations which had a bearing on the case;
  - documented circumstances affecting the candidate's performance which he/she was unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling to divulge before a decision was reached and which would have made a real and substantial difference to the decision;
  - a case that sufficient weight was not given to documented extenuating circumstances notified prior to the decision being reached; or
  - evidence of a material administrative error or a material irregularity in how the examination/review was assessed which has made a real and substantial difference to the supervisory panel's or examiner's decision.
- 13.3.4 Appeals may not be submitted on the basis of allegations of inadequacies in supervision; complaints of that nature, not resolved (as per regulation 7.16) during the period of study and before the submission of the thesis/confirmation/ transfer report or annual review will not be taken as grounds for appeal.

### **13.4 Outcome of an Appeal**

Successful appeals will not result in a new academic decision, as the Standing Committee does not re-examine student work. However, candidates in respect of whom an appeal is upheld may be awarded further opportunities to have work considered, or some other remedy applied as appropriate.