



Guidelines on Applying for Temporary Restriction of Access to Research Theses

Please read these guidelines in full before submitting an application for temporary restriction of access to a research thesis (PGR8 Form).

Introduction

DCU is committed to making research openly available. In very limited circumstances, it may be necessary to request a restriction on access to a research thesis for a specific period in time. The PGR8 form, available from the Registry's website, must be used to apply for this temporary restriction. Full support and sign off from the Principal Supervisor(s) is required.

Following an analysis in 2025 of the use of the PGR8 form over the past five years, the Graduate Research Studies Board agreed to move to a process whereby a - Standing Committee of GRSB would be established to consider applications for temporary restriction of access to theses. The Terms of Reference of the GRSB Standing Committee on Restriction of Access to Theses (hereafter 'the Standing Committee') can be viewed here.

Timing

Applications for restriction of access to theses will be formally considered by the relevant Standing Committee of the Graduate Research Studies Board twice per year. Applications can only be made after the Faculty Award Board for Research Degrees (FABRD) approves the award. The typical timeline is as follows:

Meeting	Indicative Date
Faculty Award Board for Research Degrees (Autumn)	September (Week 3)
Meeting of Standing Committee of GRSB on Restriction of Access to Theses	Plus 7 Days from FABRD
Communication of decision by Secretary	Plus 7 Days from Standing Committee Meeting
Faculty Award Board for Research Degrees (Spring)	January (Week 3)
Meeting of Standing Committee of GRSB on Restriction of Access to Theses	Plus 7 Days from FABRD
Communication of decision by Secretary	Plus 7 Days from Standing Committee Meeting

Deadlines for submission of the PGR8 form will be posted on [Registry's Website](#) each year. Late applications cannot be considered.

Cogent Reasons for Requesting a Thesis Restriction

There are a limited number of reasons under which a restriction can be granted. Applications for restriction will need to specify one of these reasons and provide concrete evidence to support the need.

The allowable reasons are:

1. Intellectual Property considerations
2. Publisher contract that explicitly mandates non-publication of the thesis for a specific period of time
3. Sensitive information (non-commercial) that could impact on the safety of the researcher or research participants

Note that there may be overlap between the reasons above. Applicants should select the **one reason** that best describes their context.

Further information about each of the reasons is provided below.

1. Intellectual Property Considerations

Patent Application Pending

DCU Innovate has already been contacted and an application for a patent has already been submitted. Applicants should provide information to support this reason, e.g. patent application ID number.

Non-Disclosure Agreement

Some theses may require consideration of a non-disclosure agreement due to commercial sensitivities and/or intellectual property considerations (please review the relevant [policy](#) here). The NDA may be put in place at any point during the research timeline, e.g. at the commencement stage, during the research project, or upon submission of the thesis for examination. A PGR8 form is required.

A PGR4 form is used to signal at least three months' notice of intention to submit a thesis for examination. This form nominates examiners and includes a section where the requirement for an NDA agreement is highlighted. If no NDA has been put in place already, **this is the appropriate time to signal its requirement**. DCU Innovate will then be contacted to discuss the process.

In limited cases, non-disclosure requirements might emerge after the PGR4 form has been submitted and these can be dealt with by contacting DCU Innovate as soon as this requirement emerges. Candidates and supervisors should not wait until the thesis is about to be published online to signal a requirement for an NDA.

Confidentiality Clause

If a collaborative research agreement or funder's terms and conditions mandate the use of a confidentiality clause, this reason should be selected. Applicants should provide explicit information on the wording of that clause and the research project award number in their applications.

2. Publisher Contract

Where the applicant has been offered a publishing contract based on the research that **explicitly mandates** non-publication of the thesis for a specified period of time, this reason should be selected. Applicants should note the following: lack of a publisher's contract means the application will be ineligible. If the publisher contract does not specify that the thesis should not be published, then the application will also be ineligible. Applicants should note that publishing a book on the basis of a thesis normally requires substantial rewriting and it is often the case that there are low similarities between the thesis and final version of the book. Therefore, a publishing contract is a relatively weak reason for requesting a restriction. This will only be considered if the publisher explicitly requests it.

3. Sensitive Information (Non-Commercial)

If the thesis contains sensitive information of a non-commercial kind that could legitimately be considered a risk to the safety of the researcher and/or research participants, this reason should be selected. Applicants should note that this is not a mechanism for dealing with weak research ethics practices where risks to researchers and researched need to be considered in detail and adequately dealt with in research ethics approval requests. It is acknowledged that risks could emerge after ethics approval has been granted, due to circumstances beyond the control of the researcher. These should be discussed in detail by the supervisory panel and dealt with, insofar as possible, prior to submission of the thesis for examination.

Duration

Restrictions cannot normally be longer than 4 years from the date of conferral.

The requested time should match the reason selected. For example, if a publisher contract has mandated the restriction, and the manuscript deadline is one year from the date of application, then a reasonable request would be for a two-year restriction.

If a patent application is pending, then the Standing Committee will consult with DCU Innovate on the expected timeline for the patent and a reasonable time for restriction of access.

The Standing Committee reserves the right to specify the duration of the restriction.

A restriction of access to a thesis that has been approved by the GRSB Standing Committee can be lifted earlier than the approved timeline on submission of a written communication from the graduand to the GRSB Standing Committee via the following email address: postgraduate.research@dcu.ie.

This request must be accompanied by written confirmation from the Primary Supervisor(s) agreeing to the request. The graduand should outline the reasons for the requested change in access. If applicable, the Standing Committee will liaise with DCU Innovate, the Research Ethics Committee, or the COO's Office. Such requests can normally only be considered at the two scheduled Standing Committee meetings per annum.

An extension to a restriction of access to a thesis beyond the agreed timeline or beyond the maximum extension period of four years will only be considered in *exceptional* circumstances. A cogent case will have to be put forward by the graduand, along with written support from the Primary Supervisor(s) for any extensions. If applicable, the Standing Committee will liaise with DCU Innovate, the Research Ethics Committee, or the COO's Office. Extensions beyond the maximum restriction period may be

limited and the timeline will be decided by the Standing Committee. Such requests can normally only be considered at the two scheduled Standing Committee meetings per annum.

Decision Making

The GRSB Standing Committee will consider each submission and any supporting evidence, which should be limited to only necessary documentation. The rationale for the request should be put succinctly in the PGR8 form. The decision will be made on the basis of the following criteria:

- Does the reason offered match one of the eligible reasons listed above and in the form?
- Is concrete and credible evidence provided to support the reason cited?
- Is the request in compliance with funder terms and conditions (where applicable)?


If the request is approved, the Standing Committee will also consider:

- Is the timeline requested reasonable, considering the reason cited?

If approval is granted, the Standing Committee may choose to approve a timeline different from the one requested.

Decisions will be communicated via the secretary of the Standing Committee to applicants within one week of the Standing Committee meeting date and will be noted at GRSB.

As the standard practice in DCU is that all theses should be deposited in the institutional repository, the procedure described here is considered to be a request for an *exception* to standard practice. As such, the Standing Committee decision is final and binding and no further requests or appeals will be considered.

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