



FAQ for students:  
*Policy on Theses in Graduate  
Research Programmes*

Policy Approved by Academic Council on 28 April 2011

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## A. Roles and Responsibilities of the Graduate Research Student

### 1. As a graduate research student, what are my responsibilities?

As a graduate research student, the measure of your programme success is the submission of a thesis for examination. In relation to this, you have a number of responsibilities that include among them the requirement to be properly registered and fees compliant, to be fully cognisant of all relevant regulations, policies and codes of practice and to have met and worked productively with your Principal Supervisor (and members of their Research Masters Panel or Doctoral Studies Panel) in the conduct of your research.

A full list of your responsibilities can be found in Section 7 of the *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes* and the purpose of these FAQs is to assist you in navigating and accessing the important information contained within this policy in order to further support you in submitting your thesis.

The **Principal Supervisor and Head of School** play a central role in supporting you as a graduate research student. Their roles and responsibilities, as well as those of the Chair of the Examination Committee, Internal Examiner, Extern Examiner, UCD Registry, Academic Council Committee on Examinations, the UCD Conferring Unit and Librarian are also set out in Section 7 of the policy.

## B. Preparation and submission of the graduate research thesis

### 1. Where can I find guidelines on the format and preparation of my thesis?

The format in which Masters or Doctoral research may be submitted for examination must be consistent with the needs of the research project, as recommended by the Principal Supervisor, Research Masters Panel or Doctoral Studies Panel, and as approved by the relevant Graduate School Board.

Section 3 of the *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes* sets down guidelines for the preparation of the traditional thesis format (sub-sections 3.1 and 3.2). **It is important to remember that the guidelines set down in the policy may be further supplemented by School-specific guidelines.**

### 2. Do I have to be registered for a particular length of time before I am eligible to submit my graduate research thesis?

A candidate for a graduate research degree must be a fully registered student and fees compliant at the time when the thesis is submitted for examination. You can check your fees status on your UCD Student Information System (SIS) account (to log in please go to [https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis/twbkwbis.P\\_WWWLogin](https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin)).

Students on graduate research programmes are normally expected to submit their thesis by the submission deadline for their programme and within the **prescribed period of registration\*** as outlined in the regulations.

\* **Prescribed period of registration:** this refers to the period of time during which a research degree student is normally expected to be registered to their programme of study as laid down in the relevant Academic Regulations.

Programme type	Minimum registration period		Maximum registration period	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Research Masters Degree	1 calendar year	2 calendar years	2 calendar years	4 calendar years
PhD Degree (post-2006) **	3 calendar years	5 calendar years	4 calendar years	6 calendar years
PhD Degree (pre-2006)			6 calendar years	
MD Degree	2 years	4 years	2 years	4 years
DN/DM Degree	3 years	6 years	3 years	6 years

\*\* **Please note:** in exceptional circumstances, a PhD student may be permitted to present for the degree of PhD following a shorter period of registration. Please see PhD Regulation 16.6.1 for full information (available at [http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol\\_regs.htm](http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_regs.htm)).



**3. What is my submission deadline?**

Information regarding the submission deadlines for graduate research degree theses (and the associated fees) is available on the Fees and Grants section of the Registry website – <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/adminservices/fees/index.html>.

A completed (typed) *Research Degree Examination Form* (available at <https://intranet.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/acce.html>) must be submitted together with the appropriate number of copies of the thesis to the Student Desk, UCD Registry. The Principal Supervisor must sign this form to indicate that s/he is satisfied that the thesis is of sufficient standard for submission and that the candidate has successfully satisfied the credit requirements of the programme.

**4. How many copies of my thesis must I submit for examination?**

The appropriate number of copies of the thesis (based on the number of members of the Examination Committee) must be submitted to the Student Desk, UCD Registry by the thesis submission deadline. Students should check with their School to confirm the number of copies required.

A completed (typed) *Research Degree Examination Form* (including the signature of the Principal Supervisor) must accompany the thesis submitted for examination.

**Additional important information** can be found in Section 5 of the *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes* (Submission of the Graduate Research Degree Thesis). For example:

- The thesis submitted for examination must be in soft-bound format.
- The *Research Degree Examination Form*, which **should be typed**, is available to download from <https://intranet.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/acce.html>.

**5. What is my registration status once I have submitted my thesis?**

Once you have submitted your thesis you will continue to be registered as a student until such time as the examination has been completed and the award is authorised by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. Your registration status shall be 'For Assessment' (FA). You shall not be liable for tuition fees, but your student card shall be extended and you will have access to University facilities in order to prepare for the *viva voce* examination and to complete papers for publication, normally until the end of the term subsequent to the term in which the thesis was submitted.

**C. Options where the graduate research thesis cannot be submitted on time****1. What are my options if I don't submit my graduate research degree thesis on time?**

A graduate research student may apply in writing for an extension<sup>1</sup> (where there are extenuating circumstances<sup>2</sup>) or for permission to continue in the programme<sup>3</sup>. Application forms can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol.htm#g> and completed (typed) forms should be submitted to your School Office as soon as possible and normally in advance of the thesis submission deadline.

**Before you make an application**, you should communicate with your Principal Supervisor and other members of your Doctoral Studies Panel, Research Masters Panel or MD Committee as soon as is reasonably possible. There are a variety of support systems within UCD where you may seek further advice and assistance. An up-to-date list of these support systems can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/students/studentssupport.html>.

In making an application for an extension (extenuating circumstances) or permission to continue in the programme, you should document and report as much information as possible to ensure complete analysis of the situation. **It is recommended that you retain a copy of the application and supporting documentation for your records as supporting documentation is non-returnable.**

<sup>1</sup>An **extension** is a variation to the submission deadline that compensates for a period of time where a student has paid full fees but has been unable to pursue studies for extenuating personal, medical or academic circumstances.

- An extension may only be granted where there are such extenuating circumstances.



- The student must normally apply for an extension in advance of the thesis submission deadline.
- The application must be approved by the relevant School and Graduate School Board.
- A student is not normally liable for fees.
- The University reserves the right to investigate the validity of applications. In cases where there is a suspicion that an application may have been submitted fraudulently, the issue may be referred to the University's disciplinary process.

## <sup>2</sup>What are extenuating circumstances?

Extenuating personal, medical or academic circumstances are serious unforeseen circumstances beyond a graduate research student's control which may prevent them from meeting their thesis submission deadline<sup>A</sup>. In such instances, a student may apply for an extension. The *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes* is not prescriptive with regard to the specific types of extenuating circumstances that may be considered acceptable justification, but may include the following:

- **Personal circumstances** include, but are not limited to, family bereavement, family illness, disability, maternity, paternity or adoptive leave, carer duties and/or childcare difficulties.
- **Medical circumstances** include any medical condition for which a medical certificate has been supplied certifying that the student has been unable to attend the University or otherwise fulfil the requirements of their academic programme.
- **Academic circumstances** are exceptional academic problems that may include changing research and scholarship which requires fundamental changes in the research question as approved, or situations where a Principal Supervisor has been absent due to unforeseen circumstances.

For examples of what may not normally be considered grounds for extenuating circumstances please refer to the *Student Guide to the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances* which can be accessed at [http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol\\_ext\\_circum\\_gn.pdf](http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum_gn.pdf).

<sup>A</sup> Where such extenuating circumstances adversely affect a student's ability to study, complete assessments or attend their required classes and other learning activities for their **taught modules**, a student may make an application under the *Policy on Extenuating Circumstances* (<http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol.htm#e>).

<sup>3</sup>A student applies for **permission to continue in their programme** beyond their prescribed period of registration where they have not submitted their thesis by their submission deadline and have not had extenuating personal, medical or academic circumstances.

- Each application to continue in the programme is made for a period no shorter than a term and no longer than three terms in duration.
- The application must normally be made in advance of a student's thesis submission deadline.
- The application is submitted for the approval of the relevant School and Graduate School Board.
- A student is liable for fees.

## 2. Retrospective Applications

An application for **extension** should be made well in advance of the thesis submission deadline. Retrospective applications may be considered only in exceptional cases, and it is at the discretion of the Graduate School Board whether or not to consider late applications.

An application for **permission to continue in the programme** should be made as soon as possible and normally in advance of the thesis submission deadline. Retrospective applications may be considered only in exceptional cases, and it is at the discretion of the Graduate School Board whether or not to consider late applications.

## 3. What happens if I do not submit my thesis by the submission deadline and do not apply for an extension or permission to continue in the programme?

It is your responsibility as a student on a graduate research programme to apply for an extension or permission to continue in the programme where you do not submit your thesis by the submission deadline.



It is important to note that your registration will be cancelled where you:

- a. Do not submit your thesis by the submission deadline for your programme,
- b. Do not apply for an extension or for permission to continue in your programme,
- c. Are absent from the University for a period of greater than three months, without notifying the University, and
- d. Fail to reply within 30 days to a registered letter posted to the last permanent postal address held by the University or an email sent to your last notified email address.

**You will remain liable for any fees up to the date of that final notice (as at d. above).**

For periods of extended absence, a student should apply formally for a leave of absence. For further information please refer to the *Leave of Absence Academic Policy*, which can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol.htm#> (you can access a Graduate Programmes Guide to this policy here also).

## D. Examination of the graduate research thesis

### 1. What is the *viva voce* examination?

It is the policy of the University that every PhD candidate must be examined through a *viva voce* examination (oral examination). On the request of a Head of School, or at the behest of the examiners, a *viva voce* examination of a Research Masters Degree candidate may be arranged.

Where the examiners agree that a thesis is satisfactory for examination, the Examination Committee shall conduct a *viva voce* examination of the candidate, which will normally be held within two months of submission of the thesis.

The objectives of the *viva voce* examination are to provide an opportunity for the examiners to clarify any issues of fact which may have arisen in the course of their reading of the thesis, to test the candidate's knowledge of the thesis topic and related areas of research and, as far as possible, to establish the originality of the candidate's work and ideas.

The *viva voce* examination also provides an opportunity for the candidate to elaborate on aspects of the research which may not have been included in the thesis and to defend the arguments presented and the ideas developed in the thesis.

Further information on how the *viva voce* examination is conducted can be found in sub-section 6.3.2 of the Policy.

### 2. What is the composition of the Examination Committee?

The Examination Committee shall consist of both internal and extern examiner(s). The members of the Examination Committee should be appointed and approved **at least three months prior to submission** by the candidate of the graduate research degree thesis.

The table below (from the policy) outlines the specific requirements for the constitution of the examination committee for each degree programme.

**TABLE A: Appointment of the Examination Committee**

	Internal Examiners	Extern Examiners	Chair of Examination Committee	Principal Supervisor
Research Masters	1 or 2	1 minimum, second where candidate is FT academic staff of UCD or other College of NUI	Normally internal examiner	Normally cannot be internal examiner, can attend <i>viva voce</i> (where applicable) in a silent capacity, with consent of candidate and Chair



<b>Doctor of Medicine (MD)</b>	1	1 minimum, second where candidate is FT academic staff <sup>2</sup> of UCD or other College of NUI	Head of the School of Medicine and Medical Science (or nominee) and is not an examiner, and is an additional member of Exam Committee	Cannot be internal examiner, can attend <i>viva voce</i> (where applicable) in a silent capacity, with consent of candidate and Chair
<b>PhD (pre-2006)</b>	2 minimum	1 minimum, second where candidate is FT academic staff <sup>3</sup> of UCD or other College of NUI (in which case, 2 <sup>nd</sup> extern replaces 2 <sup>nd</sup> intern)	Normally Head of School (or nominee), and can be an internal examiner, and is not an additional member of Exam Committee	Can be an internal examiner and can be Chair
<b>PhD (post-2006)</b>	1 or 2	1 minimum, second where candidate is FT academic staff <sup>4</sup> of UCD or other College of NUI (in which case, 2 <sup>nd</sup> extern is additional and does not replace an internal examiner)	Normally Head of School (or nominee) and is not an examiner, and is an additional member of Exam Committee	Cannot be internal examiner, cannot be Chair, can attend <i>viva voce</i> in a silent capacity, with consent of candidate and Chair
<b>Doctor of Nursing/ Midwifery (DN/DM)</b>	1 or 2	1 minimum, second where candidate is FT academic staff <sup>5</sup> of UCD or other College of NUI (in which case, 2 <sup>nd</sup> extern is additional and does not replace an internal examiner)	Head of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems (or nominee) and is not an examiner, and is an additional member of Exam Committee	Cannot be internal examiner, cannot be Chair, can attend <i>viva voce</i> in a silent capacity, with consent of candidate and Chair

<sup>1</sup> See *Academic Regulation* 14.1.4

<sup>2</sup> See *Academic Regulation* 30.1.4

<sup>3</sup> See *Academic Council Regulation* 4, 5.3

<sup>4</sup> See *Academic Regulation* 22.1.4. A second extern examiner should also be appointed for other PhD candidates where the Graduate School Board considers a potential conflict of interest may arise.

<sup>5</sup> See *Academic Regulation* 38.1.4. A second extern examiner should also be appointed for other DN/DM candidates where the Graduate School Board considers a potential conflict of interest may arise.

## E. Following the examination of the graduate research thesis

### 1. What are the possible outcomes of the examination?

The possible recommendations that the Examination Committee can make to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) are listed below. For further information please refer to Section 6 of the policy.

- Examiners unanimously recommend awarding a graduate research degree: no corrections.
- Examiners unanimously recommend awarding a graduate research degree: corrections required.
- Examiners unanimously recommend that the graduate research degree not be awarded, which may also include a recommendation to the candidate to substantially revise and re-submit the thesis.
- No unanimous recommendation.

In all cases, the Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform the candidate and the Principal Supervisor of the recommendation made to ACCE. All candidates are entitled to a copy of the examiners' degree report(s) following the authorisation or otherwise of the award of the degree by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations.

In addition, a candidate may appeal a decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations on not to award of the degree to the Academic Council Committee on Assessment Appeals. Information on the grounds and procedure for making such an appeal can be found at [http://www.ucd.ie/appeals/exam\\_appeal.htm](http://www.ucd.ie/appeals/exam_appeal.htm).



**2. What happens where I have to make corrections to my thesis?**

Where corrections to your thesis are required by the examiners, the Chair of the Examination Committee (or nominee) shall communicate the changes to you, and indicate the timeline within which the corrections should be completed. This is normally no longer than the end of the term in which the examination was held.

While making the recommended corrections, you will remain registered as 'For Assessment' during the period in which corrections must be made. **However, failure to complete the corrections within the allocated timeframe may result in a change to your registration status which may make you liable for tuition fees.**

Once the corrections have been completed and verified by the Chair of the Examination Committee (or nominee), the Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform ACCE that the required corrections have been made.

**3. What happens where I have to revise and submit my thesis for re-examination?**

Where you are required to revise and submit the thesis for re-examination, the Examination Committee shall agree the timeline within which such major revisions shall be undertaken and **you must register as normal and will be liable for fees for this period.** The Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform you and the Principal Supervisor of the timeline. Based on the recommendations of the Examination Committee, the student, under the supervision and guidance of the Principal Supervisor, shall revise the thesis for submission for re-examination.

Upon submission of the thesis for re-examination, the Examination Committee shall be re-convened by the Chair of the Examination Committee and a decision taken on the necessity of holding a second *viva voce* examination, prior to the completion of the final thesis report by the Examination Committee.

**4. What is the process for submitting the final thesis?**

A hard-bound copy of the thesis, incorporating any corrections required by the examiners – together with the *Thesis Corrections Sign-Off Form* (available at <https://intranet.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/acce.html>) – must be lodged by the candidate with the Student Desk, UCD Registry before the Academic Council Committee on Examinations will consider the award of the degree.

The candidate shall normally also present a hard-bound copy of the thesis to the Principal Supervisor and/or the Head of School.

**5. How is the thesis deposited in the UCD Library?**

Following the meeting of the ACCE, the candidate is required to complete and submit to the library the *Graduate Research Degree Thesis – Deposition in the Library Form* that they receive from the ACCE along with the notification of the award of the research degree.

A sample copy of the form is available at: <https://intranet.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/acce.html>. When completing the form the candidate must indicate:

- Whether the hard-bound copy should be made available immediately for consultation (under conditions laid down by the University), or
- Whether access to it should be deferred (in this case the thesis will not be available for consultation for a period agreed upon by the author (candidate) and the University; this period will not exceed one year).

All issues relating to intellectual property will be subject to the University's practices and policies.

