



Progression in Doctoral Programmes

ACADEMIC POLICY

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Policy Title	Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes
Policy Officer	Michael Kennedy, University Secretariat
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1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* provides a framework for Heads of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinators to define specific guidelines and set-out locally-defined criteria for the formal progression of students on doctoral programmes. Each School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator must document their specific guidelines and criteria and inform students and supervisors of these requirements. The policy recognises good practice in monitoring doctoral student progression where it currently exists and establishes common norms and procedures designed to support the doctoral programmes and all those involved with them.

The aim of the *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* is to provide a framework supplemental to the *Academic Regulations* which articulates the practices and procedures associated with the transfer of students from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme and the progression of students within Stage 2. It defines the mode of assessment, identifies the role and responsibilities of the Assessment Panel in managing and facilitating the process of formal progression, describes the implementation of Assessment Panel decisions, and outlines the mechanism available to students to appeal the decision of the Assessment Panel.

Further support for students and supervisors involved with doctoral programmes is provided by a range of instruments, including the *General Regulations*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Nursing (DN) and Doctor of Midwifery (DM)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Governance (DGov)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medical Specialisation (DVMS)*,¹ the *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Degree Students*² and the constitution of Doctoral Studies Panels³ which underpin student supervision.

2. SCOPE & STRUCTURE OF POLICY

The *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* is structured across the following categories:

- **Roles and Responsibilities of the Assessment Panel** – details on the constitution of the Assessment Panel, the relationship between the Doctoral Studies Panel and the Assessment Panel, the process for adjudication on formal progression, and the relationship of the Assessment Panel and its decision-making processes to Schools, Doctoral Programme Co-ordinators and Graduate Schools;
- **Mode of Assessment** – guidelines on the type of assessment undertaken by students at the point of transfer from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and progression within Stage 2 and the timeframe within which such assessment takes place;

¹ Available at http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/regs_home.htm.

² Available at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/researchs.htm>.

³ Terms of reference available at http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/docs/dstudies_tor.pdf.



- **Implementation of Assessment Panel Decisions** – procedures for managing student transfer and progression and methods for reporting on successful/unsuccessful transfer and progression to the School, College Graduate School Board and relevant University academic and administrative units.
- **Process for Student Appeal of the Assessment Panel Decision** – information on the process through which a student may appeal a decision of the Assessment Panel, the timeframe within which this process should take place, details regarding the composition of the Appeal Committee and guidelines for that committee, and information regarding the possible outcomes of the appeal process.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The Assessment Panel is responsible for formally assessing the progress of a student through their doctoral programme. Membership of the Assessment Panel is defined by the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator and may overlap with the Doctoral Studies Panel. Each Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator may establish either a single Assessment Panel for all students at the end of Stage 1 of a specific doctoral programme, or multiple Assessment Panels as and where appropriate, and nominate a Chair of the Panel. The Assessment Panel must have the experience and disciplinary expertise to conduct the assessment, and will normally consist of three members of the permanent academic staff of the University. The Assessment Panel may include a member of the adjunct or visiting staff of the University whose name has been entered on the Register of Approved Adjunct, Visiting and Affiliated Supervisors.⁴ Where a doctoral programme spans multiple institutions, the Assessment Panel may incorporate academic staff from participating institutions.

The Principal Supervisor, and any Co-Supervisors, shall not normally be members of the Assessment Panel, but shall play a major role in the transfer assessment process through the submission of a written report containing a recommendation on the student's progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Assessment Panel to notify the Principal Supervisor of the timeframe within which the transfer assessment must take place. The Principal Supervisor, in consultation with the student and the Assessment Panel, will define a date on which the student must submit material for consideration of the transfer assessment. The student and Principal Supervisor will be notified of the outcome of the transfer assessment and the recommendation made to the College Graduate School Board within one month of the date of submission of material.

Following the assessment, the Chair of the Assessment Panel is responsible for completing the **Doctoral Programme Stage 1 Transfer Assessment Report** (see Appendix I), which will be made available to the student, Principal Supervisor, Head of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator.

4. MODE OF ASSESSMENT

To accommodate the academic diversity throughout the University, and the different types of research undertaken within doctoral programmes, the mode of assessment for the transfer from Stage 1 to Stage 2 must be flexible enough to capture and accommodate this range of diversity. At the same time, it is also essential that a standard of quality be maintained to ensure that the student is making satisfactory progress in pursuit of the aims and objectives of their research as agreed between themselves, the Principal Supervisor and the Doctoral Studies Panel and documented in the Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP).

The following written reports are required for submission to the Assessment Panel at the point of the transfer assessment, and will form the basis of the decision of the Assessment Panel:

- *Progress Report (to be submitted by the Principal Supervisor)*: a short statement on the progress of the student within Stage 1 and recommendation on their progression to Stage 2;

⁴Information and guidelines on the appointment of Adjunct or Visiting Staff is available at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/adjunctvisiting.htm>.



- *Statement of Progress and Research Plan (to be submitted by the student)*: supporting documentation, as determined and documented by the School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, may include one or more of the following: written work, oral presentation, portfolio, evidence of successful completion of taught modules as required or recommended by the Principal Supervisor and/or Doctoral Studies Panel;
- An interview and/or the Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP) may also form part of the process.

All relevant documentation should be kept on record by the relevant School Office for 13 months after the date of a student's completion of the doctoral programme.

The transfer assessment will take place 12 months from the date of registration, and no later than 18 months from the date of registration for full-time students, and from 24 months to 36 months from the date of registration for part-time students.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT PANEL DECISIONS

The student and Principal Supervisor will be notified of the outcome of the assessment and the recommendation made to the Graduate School Board normally within one month of the date of the submission of material. To this end, upon completion of the progression assessment, and normally within one month of the date of the formal assessment, the **Doctoral Programme Stage 1 Transfer Assessment Report** shall be circulated to the student, Principal Supervisor, Head of School, and where relevant Institute Director and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator.

As stipulated in the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Nursing (DN) and Doctor of Midwifery (DM)*, the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Governance (DGov)* and the *Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medical Specialisation (DVMS)*, the Assessment Panel will make one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Board using the appropriate template for **Doctoral Programme Stage 1 Transfer Assessment Recommendation** (see Appendix II):

- (i) that the student should progress to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme;
- (ii) that the student should not progress to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme, and that:
 - a) the student should re-submit for assessment within six months (with an indication of the month/year in which the subsequent formal assessment of progress will take place);
 - b) the student should apply to transfer to another graduate programme utilising, where appropriate, any credits already accumulated in Stage 1 of the doctoral programme;
 - c) a recommendation be made to the University Programmes Board that the student's registration be terminated.

The **Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Recommendation** shall be signed by the Chair of the Assessment Panel, the Head of School and the Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, and the Chair of the Assessment Panel shall forward the recommendation to the relevant Graduate School Office.

The Graduate School Board will formally approve the recommendation of the Assessment Panel. When the recommendation has been formally approved, the Graduate School Office will inform the student, the Principal Supervisor, the Chair of the Assessment Panel, the Head of School, the Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, and where relevant the Institute Director. The Graduate School Office will also inform UCD Registry of the outcome of the formal assessment, who will ensure that the student's record is updated accordingly. It is the responsibility of the Graduate School Office to maintain a record of the relevant documentation for 13 months after the date of a student's completion of the doctoral programme.

6. OTHER FORMAL ASSESSMENTS OF PROGRESS



On the recommendation of the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, or the Chair of the Graduate School Board, additional formal assessments to determine progression within Stage 2 of the doctoral programme may be undertaken, or such assessments may be a normal element of a doctoral programme. In such instances, students must be notified of the requirement for an additional formal assessment no less than one month before the date of submission for that assessment. The procedures for undertaking any additional formal assessments of progress should be the same as those used for the formal transfer assessment from Stage 1 to Stage 2, as detailed throughout this policy. The **Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Report** (see Appendix III) and the **Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Recommendation** (see Appendix IV) should be used for this purpose.

7. PROCESS FOR STUDENT APPEAL OF ANY FORMAL ASSESSMENT PANEL DECISION

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Assessment Panel may do so by writing to their Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator within one week of receiving formal notification of the Assessment Panel decision.

On receipt of the student's written appeal the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator shall forward the appeal to the academic member of staff responsible for arranging formal progression assessment in the School (normally the Chair of the relevant Assessment Panel). Where the Chair of the Assessment Panel is not available, the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator shall forward the student's appeal to the School's Head of Teaching & Learning. This should be done within one working day of receipt of the student's appeal.

The member of staff who receives the student's appeal from the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator must organise an Appeal Committee. This Appeal Committee will comprise of three members of academic staff⁵ who are not involved with supervision of the student, or had any involvement with their formal progression assessment. The Appeal Committee should be constituted within one week of receipt of the student's appeal and the meeting of the Appeal Committee held no later than the following week.⁶

The purpose of the Appeal Committee is to determine:

- (i) Whether or not fair procedures were followed in the formal progression assessment (see below); and
- (ii) Whether or not a fair outcome was reached in the circumstances pertaining to the student.

It is not the function of the Appeal Committee to re-assess the student. However, in order to assist it to reach a decision, the Appeal Committee will need a copy of all the documentation pertaining to the student that was available to the original Assessment Panel.

In evaluating whether or not fair procedures have been followed the Appeal Committee should consider the following:

- Did the student have regular meetings with his/her Principal Supervisor and were these meetings documented?
- Did the student meet with his/her Doctoral Studies Panel as required by their School or Thematic Programme? Were the Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP) reports from these Doctoral Studies Panel meetings forwarded to the appropriate School office and were they made available to the members of the Assessment Panel?
- Did the student follow-up on the agreed recommendations from meetings with his / her Principal Supervisor and from Doctoral Studies Panel meetings?
- Was the student informed in writing, and in reasonable time, of the requirements for their formal progression assessment?

⁵ Where desired, academic staff from another School can be part of the Appeal Committee.

⁶ In total, this entire appeal process should take no longer than three weeks. Therefore, should the student wish to lodge a formal appeal with the University, he or she will be within the 30-day time limit for such appeals. Information on the University's formal appeals process is available at <http://www.ucd.ie/appeals/>.



- Was the composition of the Assessment Panel appropriate?
- Were there extenuating circumstances that affected the student's performance on the day of the formal progression assessment?

Having reviewed all of the above criteria (or any additional criteria that they may wish to look at), the Appeal Committee shall decide either:

- (i) To uphold the original decision of the Assessment Panel because the procedure and outcome were fair.
- (ii) Not to uphold the original decision of the Assessment Panel because, although the procedures were fair, the outcome did not take extenuating circumstances into consideration. In this instance the Appeal Committee should recommend that the student re-submit for assessment within six months, provided the student submits the appropriate extenuating circumstances documentation. The extenuating circumstance must be of a most serious and unexpected nature which had a major impact on the student on the day of the assessment. On-going medical conditions, nerves, minor illnesses, faulty IT issues etc. do not qualify.
- (iii) Not to uphold the original decision of the Assessment Panel because fair procedures were not fully followed. In this instance the Appeal Committee should recommend that the student re-submit for assessment within six months.
- (iv) To overturn the original decision of the Assessment Panel and allow the student to progress. In this instance, the Appeal Committee must document all the reasons for reaching this decision and all Appeal Committee members must be in agreement.

The Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator will inform the student, in writing, of the Appeal Committee's decision. The student will also have the right to formally appeal this decision without prejudice. Upon receipt of written notification from the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, which communicates the final outcome of the appeals process and the final decision of the Appeal Committee, the student may then, if they so wish, initiate a formal appeal to the University. In this event, the student may appeal to the Academic Council Committee on Assessment Appeals in the prescribed format. The procedures for a formal University appeal are governed by *Academic Council Regulation 2* and are available at www.ucd.ie/appeals. Students should note that such appeals may take between three to six months to complete and that they may not be able, or eligible, to progress in their doctoral programme until the formal appeals process has been completed.



Tracking Information

Personnel

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Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	2 Mar 07	First draft	Michael Kennedy
1.1	5 Mar 07	Revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Michael Kennedy
1.2	9 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Prof Julie Berndsen Michael Kennedy
1.3	26 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of UGPB and Policy Working Group	Prof Julie Berndsen Michael Kennedy
1.4	28 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Prof Julie Berndsen Michael Kennedy
1.5	5 Apr 07	Further revision incorporating comments of ACEC	Michael Kennedy
1.6	22 Mar 11	Revision to include additional section on process for student appeal of the Assessment Panel decision. Additional minor editorial revisions and to reflect inclusion of professional doctoral programmes.	Clare O'Connor Cliona McGovern Michael Kennedy
1.7	15 Apr 11	Minor changes following discussion at UGPB on 14 April 2011 relating to inclusion of "and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator" in instances where HoS is also mentioned.	Michael Kennedy
1.8	22 Jan 13	Changes following ongoing discussions by the Standing Committee on Continuation (a sub-committee of UUPB/UGPB).	Michael Kennedy
1.9	20 Mar 13	Changes following discussion with the Deputy Register for Graduate Studies.	Prof Julie Bernsden Michael Kennedy
1.10	25 Mar 13	Changes following discussion with the Graduate School Directors	Michael Kennedy

Consultation and Approvals Plan

Committee/Group	Date		Version	Action	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Policy Working Group on PhD Stage 1 Transfer Assessment	2 Feb 07			Discussion	Suggestions made
Policy Working Group on PhD Stage 1 Transfer Assessment	2 Mar 07	1 Mar 07	1.0	Discussion	Changes recommended
Policy Working Group on PhD Stage 1 Transfer Assessment	9 Mar 07	5 Mar 07	1.1	Discussion	Changes recommended
Graduate School Directors & Dean of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Training		9 Mar 07	1.2	Review	Changes recommended
University Graduate Programmes Board (UGPB)	14 Mar 07	9 Mar 07	1.2	Review	Changes recommended



Policy Working Group on PhD Stage 1 Transfer Assessment	26 Mar 07		1.3	Review	Changes recommended
Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC)	5 April 07	29 Mar 07	1.4	Review	Changes recommended
Academic Council	12 April 07	5 April 07	1.5	Approval	Policy Approved
University Graduate Programmes Board (UGPB)	14 April 11	7 April 11	1.6	Review	Changes recommended
Academic Council	28 April 11	20 April 11	1.7	Approval	Amended Policy Approved
Graduate School Directors Workshop	25 Mar 13	20 Mar 13	1.9	Discussion	Changes recommended
University Graduate Programmes Board (UGPB)	10 April 13	3 April 13	1.10	Review	Recommended
Academic Council	9 May 13	2 May 13	1.10	Approval	Amended Policy Approved





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DOCTORAL PROGRAMME STAGE 1 TRANSFER ASSESSMENT REPORT

This form should be completed following the Stage 1 transfer assessment and should be made available to the student, Principal Supervisor, Head of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator.

Student:

Student Number:

School:

Graduate School:

Thematic Doctoral Programme:
(if applicable)

Principal Supervisor:

Provisional Title of Thesis:

Date of Assessment:

Supporting Documentation: **Progress Report** (to be submitted by Principal Supervisor)

Statement of Progress and Research Plan

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written work | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taught modules | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Supervisor Recommendation for Transfer to Stage 2: yes no

Report (approximately 200 words):

Assessment Panel Recommendation:

- Progress to the Stage 2 of the doctoral programme**
- Re-submit for assessment within 6 months (indicate month/year: _____)**
- Transfer to another graduate programme (please indicate: _____)**
- Recommend to the University Programmes Board that registration be terminated**

Print Name _____
Chair of the Assessment Panel

Signed _____

Print Name _____
Assessment Panel Member 1

Signed _____

Print Name _____
Assessment Panel Member 2

Signed _____

Date: _____



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DOCTORAL PROGRAMME STAGE 1 TRANSFER ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATION

This form should be signed by the Chair of the Assessment Panel, Head of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator and forwarded to the relevant Graduate School Office.

Student:

Student Number:

School:

Graduate School:

Thematic Doctoral Programme:
(if applicable)

Principal Supervisor:

Provisional Title of Thesis:

Date of Assessment:

- Recommendation:
- Progress to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme
 - Re-submit for assessment within 6 months (indicate month/year: _____)
 - Transfer to another graduate programme (please indicate: _____)
 - Recommend to the University Programmes Board that registration be terminated

**Please attach to this recommendation a copy of the
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME STAGE 1 TRANSFERASSESSMENT REPORT.**

Signed _____
Chair of the Assessment Panel

Date Recommended: _____

Signed _____
Head of School

Date Recommended: _____

Signed _____
Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator

Date Recommended: _____

GRADUATE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL

Signed _____
Graduate School Director

Date Approved: _____



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University College Dublin

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME PROGRESSION ASSESSMENT REPORT

This form should be completed following any formal progression assessment and should be made available to the student, Principal Supervisor, Head of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator.

Student:

Student Number:

School:

Graduate School:

Thematic Doctoral Programme:
(if applicable)

Principal Supervisor:

Provisional Title of Thesis:

Date of Assessment:

Supporting Documentation: **Progress Report** *(to be submitted by Principal Supervisor)*

Statement of Progress and Research Plan

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written work | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taught modules | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Supervisor Recommendation for Progression: yes no

Report (approximately 200 words):

Assessment Panel Recommendation:

- Progress to the next stage/year of the doctoral programme**
- Re-submit for assessment within 6 months (indicate month/year: _____)**
- Transfer to another graduate programme (please indicate: _____)**
- Recommend to the University's Continuation Standing Committee that registration be terminated**

Print Name _____
Chair of the Assessment Panel

Signed _____

Print Name _____
Assessment Panel Member 1

Signed _____

Print Name _____
Assessment Panel Member 2

Signed _____

Date: _____

Appendix IV.



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**DOCTORAL PROGRAMME PROGRESSION ASSESSMENT
RECOMMENDATION**

This form should be signed by the Chair of the Assessment Panel, Head of School and Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator and forwarded to the relevant Graduate School Office.

Student:

Student Number:

School:

Graduate School:

Thematic Doctoral Programme:
(if applicable)

Principal Supervisor:

Provisional Title of Thesis:

Date of Assessment:

- Recommendation:
- Progress to the next stage/year of the doctoral programme
 - Re-submit for assessment within 6 months (indicate month/year: _____)
 - Transfer to another graduate programme (please indicate: _____)
 - Recommend to the University Programmes Board that registration be terminated

**Please attach to this recommendation a copy of the
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME PROGRESSIONASSESSMENT REPORT.**

Signed _____
Chair of the Assessment Panel

Date Recommended: _____

Signed _____
Head of School

Date Recommended: _____

Signed _____
Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator

Date Recommended: _____

GRADUATE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL

Signed _____
Graduate School Director

Date Approved: _____