

MLitt/PhD Programme Guidelines

UCD School of Economics

Current Version: **September 2022**

Overview

This set of guidelines is specific to the MLitt/PhD programme, School of Economics, University College Dublin (UCD). The school is part of the College of Social Sciences and Law (CoSSL) at UCD, and college-level guidelines are available in a separate document. It can be accessed [here](#).

All timing in the document is in relation to starting at UCD with the intention of receiving a PhD.

Year 1 of the Programme (MLitt phase)

At the beginning of the programme, all students are enrolled on the MLitt register.

During the first year of the programme, full-time students will take three modules in the autumn trimester and three modules in the spring trimester, for a total of six ten-credit modules. In the autumn trimester, students take ECON505750 (PhD Microeconomics 1), ECON50740 (PhD Macroeconomics 1), and ECON50710 (PhD Econometrics 1). In the spring trimester, students will take ECON50720 (PhD Microeconomics 2), ECON50730 (PhD Macroeconomics 2), and ECON50580 (PhD Econometrics 2). In other words, students take a complete two-module sequence in each of the three core subject areas of microeconomics, macroeconomics, and econometrics. In addition, in the autumn and spring trimesters students will attend the weekly School of Economics research seminar and the weekly seminar for PhD students (ECON50120), where PhD students in later years (i.e. second, third, fourth, etc.) present work in progress. Students who fail a module should organize a resit exam with the instructor; this exam must be taken by the end of the following trimester. If students pass the resit exam (after failing the module), they receive a grade of D- for the module. Students must pass all six modules and attain a GPA of at least 3.4 across the 60 taught credits. If they fail to do so, they will have to leave the MLitt/PhD programme.

The student with the highest GPA in the six first-year PhD modules receives the Finola Kennedy Award, which is worth €200 (€100 in cash and €100 in a research account). In the event of a tie, all recipients will receive the award and the money will be distributed evenly between recipients.

To enrol to modules, students should complete the module registration form provided by the Graduate Studies. Information on this can be found [here](#). All of our MLitt students follow Method B to enrol on modules. A student cannot be retrospectively registered to or withdrawn from a module, so please complete the form in a timely manner.

Students should meet regularly with their assigned supervisor. Although students should work on developing their dissertation topic, the primary goal during the first year is to complete the taught modules.

Part-time students may take additional time to complete the 6 modules. Note that the two modules in each subject are taught in sequence, such that the first module in a subject must be taken before the second. For example, students cannot take PhD Microeconomics 2 until they have completed PhD Microeconomics 1. We strongly encourage that both modules of a subject should be taken within the same academic year.

Year 2 of the Programme (PhD phase)

Once students have completed their coursework and their qualifying exams, the next step is to determine the research topic of the dissertation. Students should choose a supervisor who is well qualified to assist them in their dissertation topic. Because students may not know their dissertation topic when they arrive at UCD, students are allowed to switch supervisors once they have completed their qualifying exams. It is expected that, under normal circumstances, the ultimate supervisor is in place by the start of Year 2. If students have any concerns about their supervision or wish to discuss their supervision, they are encouraged to contact the PhD Coordinator and/or the Deputy Head for Postgraduate Programmes.

During the second year, students and their supervisors will set up a research studies panel (RSP) within three months of the date of transfer to the PhD register. At this time, the student has to inform the PhD coordinator about the composition of the RSP. Typically, the RSP comprises of the supervisor(s) and two advisors (one of which will act as the panel Chair). The purpose of the RSP is to support and enhance the supervisor-student relationship, to monitor progress during the course of the doctoral studies, and to provide advice and support both to the student and to the supervisor. One of the nominated advisors will have academic expertise relevant to the student's research work and also have experience in supervising doctoral students. It is possible that one or both advisors are from other schools or even other institutions.

The RSP should have its first meeting by March, but preferably before, of the second year in order to review the student's research and professional development plan (RPDP). At least one additional meeting should be held in the first year of the student's registration. Thereafter, it is expected that students should have two RSP meetings per academic year. Students should be pro-active in arranging such meetings in conjunction with their supervisor. The student, or another member of the RSP, may convene a meeting of the panel at any stage if it is considered desirable or necessary to address any relevant issue(s) that may arise.

Meeting reports of the RSP meetings are maintained as part of the Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP). Students should complete the Doctoral Studies Panel Meeting Record Report after each RSP meeting, which should be signed by all DSP members. Schools should ensure that RPDP records are maintained centrally by a designated administrator within the School. It is strongly recommended that the key recommendations of RSP meetings are recorded. In most cases the report should be brief but, where there are issues relating to student performance/progress, the report should document the weaknesses/issues raised and recommendations for improvement. If there is a serious issue with student performance raised

at a DSP meeting, the School Deputy Head of Postgraduate Programmes or PhD Coordinator should be notified. College level information on research and professional development planning can be found [here](#).

PhD students in year 2 are expected to present their work once, in either the autumn or spring trimester, in the weekly seminar for PhD students (ECON50120). The length of the presentation will vary based on the number of students enrolled in the programme and the time that the student has been enrolled in the programme. Students will be given more detailed information on the expectations for the presentations at the start of the trimester. Moreover, students are required to regularly attend the School of Economics research seminar.

[Applications for the IRC Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship](#)

PhD students who are receipt of a scholarship from the School of Economics are required to apply for the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship by the Irish Research Council (IRC) in year 2 of the MLitt/PhD programme (for funding starting in year 3), but all PhD students are encouraged to apply. The application process should ideally begin in early September. Students should check the deadlines on the IRC webpage. Typically, the deadline is in late October. If an application is unsuccessful in year 2, students are required to apply again in year 3 of their PhD (for funding starting in year 4). Students are also encouraged to apply for IRC funding in year 1 of the MLitt/PhD programme (for funding starting in year 2).

[Year 3 of the Programme \(PhD phase\)](#)

PhD students in year 3 and above are expected to present their work at least once per academic year in the weekly seminar for PhD students (ECON50120).

All students are required to undergo a transfer assessment in order to move from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the PhD programme. Stage 1 is an initial period of advanced education, training and research. Stage 2 is largely dedicated to carrying out a body of original, publishable research required for the award of a PhD. In order to transfer to Stage 2 students are assessed by a Transfer Assessment Panel (TAP) who make a decision as to whether a student has made sufficient progress towards completion of the PhD research. The TAP will be convened by the School and will contain at least three members of academic staff; however, it will not include supervisor(s). At the discretion of the School, a supervisor may be present in a purely observational capacity. Stage Transfer Assessment will take place during the first six months of the year 3. This time frame equates to the university requirement of completing the TAP between 12-18 months 12-18 after transferring from the MLitt to the PhD program (full-time) or 18-27 months (part-time).

In order to progress to Stage 2 of the PhD programme, economics students must have completed 60 credits of taught modules at the time of assessment, including all core modules, with a B average grade across modules undertaken, and they must have passed the qualifying exams.

The following documents must be submitted to the TAP

- One piece of substantive written work which will comprise either a draft chapter, a draft paper, or a detailed research proposal with specific information on contribution, data (where applicable), and methods.
- An updated research proposal/work plan briefly stating the core research problem, relevant research questions, and research strategy, and including a detailed chapter structure and work plan for the entire thesis.
- A copy of the student's latest transcript.
- A formal written recommendation from the Supervisor based on the advice of the RSP. The recommendation is to be sent directly by the supervisor to the TAP and the PhD Coordinator.

During the TAP meeting, the student has to give a presentation, which includes a short presentation of the research carried out so far and the research plan for the rest of the PhD. The School's Transfer Assessment Panel will, after careful review of the documentation and a meeting with the candidate, make one of the following recommendations to the College Graduate School Board:

- Resubmission of revised materials at a later date, with a time line agreed between the RSP and the TAP.
- Transfer to Stage 2 of the PhD programme.
- Transfer to another graduate programme, utilizing, where possible and where appropriate, the credits accumulated.
- Termination of the registration with a certificate for any modules for which credit has been awarded.

The recommendation will have to be formally agreed by the College's Graduate School Board (GSB) and any proposed transfer to another programme will have to be agreed with that programme. Students will be notified shortly after the transfer assessment of the outcome. If the recommendation is to progress to Stage 2, students will progress to the next phase of the PhD. If the recommendation is other than for progression to Stage 2, the options recommended by the assessment panel, and the potential for re-presenting to the assessment panel sitting, will be discussed with the RSP. Students have the right to appeal a decision of the TAP. For more information on the appeals process, go to www.ucd.ie/appeals/exam_appeal.htm

All students who complete their TAP by the deadline are eligible for the Cormac O'Grada award for the best transfer seminar paper. To be considered, the TAP must indicate to the PhD Coordinator that they believe the paper should be considered. The evaluation committee will consist of the Head of School, Deputy Head of School for Postgraduate Programmes and the PhD Coordinator. The winner of the award receives €200 in cash and €300 in a research account. In the event of a tie, all recipients will receive the award and the money will be distributed evenly between recipients.

Years 4 and Beyond (PhD phase)

The final, but most important part of the PhD programme, is the completion of the dissertation. The majority of dissertations in the school are composed of three or more research papers. Usually these papers have a common theme, but they are not required to do so. Research papers

can be co-authored. In line with the College Guidelines, if all the research papers are co-authored, a fourth paper is required. The student should also provide a written explanation of their personal contribution on each paper to their supervisor and to the RSP in advance of submitting the dissertation to the university. The School strongly recommends that one paper is single authored, which is helpful to signal a student's ability on the academic job market.

To produce their dissertations, students should work closely with their supervisor(s) to ensure that the research and presentation meets the standards expected of a doctoral thesis. Before submission, the primary supervisor is required to sign a statement that the thesis is ready for submission. Students who are of the opinion that such a statement is being unreasonably withheld can appeal in the first instance to the Deputy Head of School for Postgraduate Programmes and/or the PhD Coordinator, the School PhD Committee, the Graduate School Director and, ultimately, to the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations.

All dissertations submitted must include a statement on plagiarism in accordance with the University's policy on plagiarism. The UCD policy on plagiarism is available [here](#).

PhD dissertations can only be submitted if fees are paid in full and student registration is current. Information on submitting your thesis can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Thesis Examination

In order to submit a dissertation, all students must have transferred into Stage 2 of the structured PhD programme and have completed the mandatory 60 credits of taught modules satisfactorily. PhD theses are examined by a PhD Examination Committee comprising of one external examiner, one internal examiner, and a Chair. The external examiner, who must be a recognised expert in the field, is nominated by the School, approved by the Graduate School Board, and then ratified by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE). The internal examiner is a member of the School of Economics who is not the student's supervisor. The thesis is assessed in accordance with UCD guidelines. Particular account is taken of the following:

- The originality of the work described and the theories developed in the dissertation
- The candidate's familiarity with the published work of other authors in related areas
- The candidate's ability to summarise the work of other authors and to synthesise a theoretical framework within which to position the work described in the dissertation
- The methodology adopted by the candidate to address the research topic
- Is it accurately and comprehensively described? Is it appropriate to the topic?
- Is the candidate aware of alternative methodologies which might have been employed?
- Is the candidate sensitive to any inherent weaknesses in the methodology?
- Where a novel method has been developed, has it been tested and calibrated appropriately?
- Experimental design
- Presentation of the results of the research.
- Are the results presented in a clear, accessible way?
- Are tables, figures or diagrams, where included, adequately annotated and correctly referenced in the text?

- Interpretation of results. Are the candidate's conclusions reasonable on the basis of the evidence presented?
- Has the significance of the results been fully appreciated by the candidate?
- Has the correct statistical analysis been employed (where appropriate) and justifiable conclusions arrived at?
- Have theories formulated on the basis of the results taken into account relevant findings published by other authors?
- Has the candidate identified any weaknesses or gaps in the evidence brought forward?
- The bibliography: Is it comprehensive and up-to-date? Are references to the published literature annotated accurately and consistently in a recognised citation style?
- Presentation of the dissertation - is it free of typographical and other errors?

You can read important guidelines in relation to your thesis [here](#)

Students are examined orally in a viva voce examination where they must defend their work and the resultant conclusions (in the context of the foregoing criteria). After the viva voce the report of the examiners is considered by the ACCE.

Possible outcomes of the viva voce examination:

- *Award Degree: no corrections required*
- *Award Degree: corrections required*
- *Award Degree: revision without re-examination*
- *Revise thesis and submit for re-examination*
- *Do not award Degree: recommendation that the candidate transfers to an appropriate graduate programme*
- *Do not award Degree*

Some amendments to the dissertation are usually required. In the event of a recommendation by the examiners that a PhD degree should not be awarded, the student can submit a revised dissertation for re-examination subject to the conditions set out by the ACCE. On submission, the revised dissertation must be accompanied by a statement from the supervisor(s) that the dissertation has been revised under their supervision. Students can also appeal a decision of the ACCE to the Assessments Appeals Committee.

Participation Throughout the Programme

Throughout the programme, students are expected to participate in and contribute to the research activities in the School. This particularly includes regular attendance of research seminars and brown bag seminars as well as regular attendance and presentations in the PhD seminar.

Leave of Absence

Students who, under unforeseen circumstances, need to take time out of the programme can apply for a leave of absence (LoA). An LoA can be for up to a maximum of one-third of the length of the programme (four trimesters for full time students and six trimesters for part time

students) and must be sought by week six from the start of term. After this time, retrospective applications are only approved due to extenuating circumstances. In the first instance, students should contact their supervisor, School, or Graduate School on the process. A student on LoA cannot be active on the programme i.e. they cannot meet with supervisor(s), attend lectures, access the library, or receive grants/scholarships. However, students will continue to have access to their UCD Connect account, including email, during this time.

For more information and guidance on the leave of absence policy, and to apply online, please click [here](#)

Please ensure to inform the PhD Administrator if you apply for a Leave of Absence online.

Withdrawal

If you wish to withdraw from the programme, please complete the online form via your SISWEB account and notify the PhD administrator.

The policy and online form can be found [here](#).

School Contacts:

PhD Coordinator: Dr Frank Walsh (frank.walsh@ucd.ie)

Head for Postgraduate Programmes: Dr Benjamin Elsner (econresearch@ucd.ie)

Head of School: Dr Kevin Denny (econhead@ucd.ie)

Graduate Administrator: Mrs Lesley Tohill (lesley.tohill@ucd.ie)