

Guidelines for Preparation, Submission, Examination and Dissemination of Research Degree Theses



1. Introduction

These procedures outline University's guidelines in relation to:

- the recommended layout, form, and presentation of graduate research degree theses,
- the process of preparing and submitting graduate research degree theses for examination,
- the process of examining graduate research degree theses.

These guidelines also outline the parameters within which a graduate research degree thesis can be submitted for examination, to ensure that both the process of thesis submission and examination is conducted in a transparent, effective, and timely manner. It further identifies the responsibilities of students and the University where a student:

- a) requires an extension to their thesis submission deadline due to extenuating circumstances; or
- b) has not completed their thesis by their submission deadline and has not been granted extenuating circumstances.

2. Preparation of the Graduate Research Degree Thesis

The candidate will prepare a thesis under the direction of the Principal Supervisor, and Co-supervisor(s) if relevant, with the support of the Research Studies Panel.

In line with the Academic Regulations, Schools should articulate the range of acceptable formats in which Master's or Doctoral research may be submitted for examination. For example:

- A traditional thesis.
- A collection of papers of publishable/peer reviewed standard describing a coherent programme of research, accompanied by a critical and theoretical overview of the work presented in the papers.
- A substantial collection of original creative material, together with a written thesis that contextualises the work within an academic framework.

A document presenting ' Guidelines for Theses as a Collection of Papers' is available in the Graduate Studies Document Repository¹ and, if this is an acceptable format in the relevant School, can be used in conjunction with local norms and practices.

All formats in which Master's 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 Studies Panel, and as approved by the Graduate Research Board.

The following guidelines for preparation of the traditional thesis format also apply to any thesis component of any other format (as outlined above). These guidelines may, again, be further

¹ Guidelines on Theses as a Collection of Papers' can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>

supplemented by School-specific guidelines.

Research theses will normally be accepted by the University via the eThesis examination system. The University acknowledges, however, there may be circumstances where this may not be possible and guidance should be sought from Assessment, UCD Registry where this is the case.

2.1. Language of Thesis

Theses should normally be written in English. In exceptional circumstances, a School may request permission from the Academic Council on Examinations (ACCE) to present a thesis that is written in another language where there is a clear academic justification for doing so, e.g. where the language is directly linked to the research project, or where there is a clear benefit to the impact and dissemination of the research.

Likewise, the oral examination should normally be conducted in English, except in cases where there are pedagogical reasons for it to be held in another language, or where there is a formal agreement in place that requires the viva to be conducted in another language. Permission should be sought from ACCE for a viva to be conducted in a language other than English. Thesis Abstracts, Examiner's Reports and Recommendations must be written in English.

2.2. Typographical Detail

The cover page of the thesis shall include the candidate's name, the title of the thesis, the year and the degree award sought. See Appendix 1 for an example of a cover page.

- 2.2.1. **Layout:** Margins at the binding edge shall be not less than 30mm and other margins not less than 20mm. One-and-a-half spacing shall be used, except for indented quotations and footnotes, where single spacing may be used.
- 2.2.2. **Font:** The recommended font shall be a sans serif font (including Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma or Trebuchet) and shall not be less than 11pt. Footnotes shall not be less than 9pt.
- 2.2.3. **Length:** The appropriate length of the thesis shall be agreed between the candidate and the Principal Supervisor in accordance with the traditions of the discipline.
- 2.2.4. **Page Numbering:** Pages shall be numbered consecutively throughout the substantive text of the thesis, including appendices. Prefacing pages shall also be numbered consecutively, but utilising the Roman numeral format (i., ii., iii., iv., v., etc.). Page numbers shall be right justified at the bottom of the page. If there is more than one volume, each volume shall carry its own pagination.
- 2.2.5. **Hardbound Copy Printing:** The final hardbound copy of the thesis shall be printed **single-sided**.

2.3. Preliminaries

- 2.3.1. **Title Page:** The title should describe the content of the thesis accurately and concisely. The title page of every volume shall give the following information in the order listed:
 - The full title of the thesis and subtitle, if any.
 - The full name of the author (followed, if desired, by any qualifications).
 - The candidate's UCD student number.
 - That "The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of [Research Masters or Doctor of...(insert as applicable)].
 - The School(s) in which the research was conducted.

- Name(s) of the Head(s) of School(s) in which the research was undertaken.
- Name(s) of the Principal Supervisor, and Co-supervisor(s) if relevant, of the research.
- Name(s) of the members of the Research Studies Panel.
- The month and year of submission of the thesis to the university for examination.
- If a thesis is submitted for re-examination, the resubmission month and year should be listed on the cover page.

2.3.2. Table of Contents: The table of contents shall immediately follow the title page. It should list the title of each chapter and the main sections in each chapter together with the relevant starting page numbers.

2.3.3. Abstract: There shall be a summary abstract of the thesis (of approximately 300 words) immediately following the Table of Contents page(s).

2.3.4. Collaborations: Where the research activity for the thesis was undertaken jointly with others, the name of such collaborators or co-authors must be listed immediately following the statement of original authorship page, including a short description of the nature of the contribution made by each author, including the candidate. The 'Guidelines on Theses as a Collection of Papers' provide additional guidance on acknowledging such collaborations.²

2.4. Appointment of the Examination Committee

The Examination Committee shall consist of a Chair, an Intern and an Extern Examiner(s). The circumstances in which the Chair of the Examination Committee is also an examiner are detailed in Table A. The specific requirements for the constitution of the Examination Committee for all graduate research degrees are outlined in the table below:

² 'Guidelines on Theses as a Collection of Papers' can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>

TABLE A: Appointment of the Examination Committee

	Intern Examiners	Extern Examiners	Chair of Examination Committee	Principal Supervisor and Co Supervisors	Members of the Research Studies Panel
Research Masters	1	1 minimum, second where candidate is faculty or staff member of UCD, or where the relevant Governing Board considers it appropriate	Intern Examiner may act as the Chair	Cannot be Intern Examiner, can attend <i>viva voce</i> (where applicable) in a silent capacity, with the consent of Examination Committee and the candidate	A member of the candidate's Research Studies Panel may not normally be an Intern Examiner on the candidate's Examination Committee due to perceived conflict of interest, but can act as Chair where there is a separate intern examiner appointed
PhD and Professional Doctorates	1	1 minimum, second where candidate is faculty or staff member of UCD, or where the relevant Governing Board considers it appropriate	Normally Head of School (or nominee). The Chair is not an examiner.	Cannot be Intern Examiner or Chair, can attend <i>viva voce</i> in a silent capacity, with the consent of Examination Committee and the candidate	A member of the candidate's Research Studies Panel may not normally be an Intern Examiner on the candidate's Examination Committee due to perceived conflict of interest, but can act as Chair
Doctor of Medicine (MD)	1	1 minimum, second where candidate is faculty or staff member of UCD, or where the relevant Governing Board considers it appropriate	Head of the School of Medicine (or nominee). The Chair is not an examiner.	Cannot be Intern Examiner, or Chair, can attend <i>viva voce</i> (where applicable) in a silent capacity, with the consent of Examination Committee and the candidate	A member of the candidate's Research Studies Panel may not normally be an Intern Examiner on the candidate's Examination Committee due to perceived conflict of interest, but can act as Chair

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.

2.4.1. Appointment of Extern Examiner(s)

The Extern Examiner(s) shall be nominated by the Head of School and, subject to the recommendation of the Graduate Research Board and approval of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE), they shall be recommended to and appointed by the National University of Ireland³. An Extern Examiner for a doctoral thesis or an MD shall be a recognised expert in the area of research of the thesis as evidenced in the curriculum vitae (including publications) of the proposed Extern Examiner, submitted to the Governing Board as part of the approval process. Conflicts of interest, actual or perceived, should be avoided. The Extern Examiner will not normally be appointed if they have had any research or professional collaboration with the candidate or the supervisor(s) within the last five years, and shall not have been a research student of the supervisor(s). The Extern Examiner will not be appointed if they have served as an Extern in the University in any capacity within a three- year time interval prior to the appointment.

³ Information on the Extern Examiner appointment process can be found here: <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/staff/registryservices/assessment/researchdegrees/externexaminers/specialexternresearchdegree/>

2.4.2. Appointment of Intern Examiner(s)

The Intern Examiner(s) shall be proposed by the Head of School and appointed by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations on the recommendation of the Governing Board. An Intern Examiner will be an active researcher in the broad area of the thesis topic or in a cognate discipline and should normally be a member of the academic staff of the University. Conflicts of interest, actual or perceived, should be avoided, see section 2.4.4. for further information.

2.4.3. Appointment of the Chair of the Examination Committee

For the Research Master's Degree, the Intern Examiner will normally act as the Chair of the Examination Committee. For the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, Professional doctorates and the Doctor of Medicine degree, the Head of the relevant School or their nominee, will normally act as the Chair of the Examination Committee.

2.4.4. Conflict of Interest

The term 'conflict of interest' refers to a conflict between the duties of a member of the UCD Community involved in UCD activities on the one hand and their personal interests on the other. The University's Conflict of Interest policy⁴ outlines:

*A member of the UCD Community shall be considered to have an **actual conflict of interest** when they or a Connected Person or Entity (as defined in the Policy) hold a financial, beneficial or other interest, whether direct or indirect, of which they are aware and which in the opinion of a reasonably informed and well-advised person is sufficient to put into question the independence, impartiality, and objectivity that the said member of the UCD Community is obliged to exercise in the performance of their duties.*

*A member of the UCD Community shall be considered to have a **perceived conflict of interest** when they or a Connected Person or Entity (as defined in the Policy) appears to have, in the opinion of a reasonably informed and well-advised person, an interest, financial or otherwise, whether direct or indirect, that is sufficient to put into question the independence, impartiality, and objectivity that they are obliged to exercise in the performance of their duties.*

It is the responsibility of a member of the UCD Community to identify and declare any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest, whether financial, beneficial, personal, ethical, legal, or other, so that this does not become a complicating or actionable issue.

Faculty members and staff are sometimes involved in teaching their children, partners, other family members or other friends and associates. These situations have the potential of creating problems in relation to examining. Faculty members and staff should anticipate these potential problems and alert their Head of School to the situation. In order to avoid any perceptions of bias and to protect the faculty or staff member (and the candidate) from any allegations of lack of objectivity, the Head of School should take appropriate steps to avert a situation where the individual would be required to examine the work of family, friends or associates by changing the School's teaching or supervisory arrangements or, where this is not feasible, by appointing an alternative Intern Examiner. The member of faculty or staff should not be involved in any discussion with Intern or Extern Examiner(s) and should withdraw at the appropriate juncture. All Intern Examiners in the School should be careful to exercise objectivity towards any candidate who is related to or associated with a colleague. Care should also be taken by the Head of School with respect to the appointment of Extern Examiners to ensure that no possible conflict of interest may arise.

⁴ UCD Conflict of Interest Policy

https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=85

All matters relating to the management of the potential for conflict of interest relating to the examination of graduate research degrees shall be subject to review by the Graduate Research Board (GRB) and ACCE.

3. Pre-Thesis Submission: Extension Request to Submission Deadline, Leave of Absence and Extension of Graduate Research Registration

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 registration⁵ as outlined in University Academic Regulations. Information regarding the submission deadlines for graduate research theses, which are aligned with the approved University term dates, is available on the Fees section of the Registry website.⁶

The University recognises that students may experience unforeseen extenuating personal, medical or academic circumstances that may prevent them from meeting their thesis submission deadline, and in such instances, a student may apply for an extension in accordance with UCD's Policy on Extenuating Circumstances.⁷ In some cases, it may be appropriate for the student to apply for Leave of Absence⁸ for a period of time away from their research programme. In instances where the student has not completed their thesis within the prescribed period of registration and there are no extenuating personal, medical or academic circumstances, the student should apply for extension of their graduate research registration.

In instances where students are registered concurrently to more than one programme (under the conditions outlined in the Academic Regulations), this may not be used as a rationale for applying for extenuating circumstances in the context of either programme.

Students on graduate research programmes seeking 1) an extension of their registration or 2) leave of Absence⁸ should communicate with their Principal Supervisor and other members of their Research Studies Panel as soon as is reasonably possible. There are a variety of support systems within UCD where a student may seek further advice and assistance. An up-to-date list of these support systems can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/students/studentsupport.html>.

It is the responsibility of students on graduate research programmes to apply for an extension or permission to continue in the programme. A graduate research student's registration will be cancelled when:

- they do not submit their thesis by the submission deadline for their programme, and
- they do not apply for an extension or for permission to continue in their programme, and
- they are absent from the University for a period of greater than three months without notifying the University, and
- where they 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 their last notified email address.

Such students will remain liable for any fees up to the date of that final notice.

⁵ Prescribed period of registration refers to the period of time during which a research degree student is expected to be registered to their programme of study, as set out in the relevant regulations.

⁶ Fees Section of the Registry Website: <http://www.ucd.ie/students/fees/thesis.html>

⁷ Policy on Extenuating Circumstances: https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=126

⁸ Leave of Absence Policy: https://sisweb.ucd.ie/usis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=129

3.1. Leave of Absence

The purpose of the leave of absence is to enable and facilitate a student to take an approved and specified period of time off before returning and completing the programme. The student must apply for Leave of Absence to the relevant Governing Board. If Leave of Absence is approved, the student's participation on the research programme is suspended. The student is not registered in the University and this period will not be counted toward the prescribed registration period of the programme. At the end of the Leave of Absence, the student will need to re-register to the university prior to their return.

3.2. Extension of Graduate Research Registration⁹

Students who are entering Year 5 FT or Year 7 PT PhD or Year 3 FT or year 5 PT for Masters by Research must apply to extend their registration in the programme because they have exceeded the maximum registration period stated in the academic regulations (7.11, 8.12 and 9.10). These applications are made, via their School to the Graduate Research Board (GRB).

In the event that an extension is sought on the basis of extenuating circumstances then an exemption from fees may be sought to accompany this extension. Such extensions are typically sought/granted by trimester. Please note that it is normally expected that students seeking such extensions will have reached the period of maximum registration for their programme.

In the event of a student seeking an extension on the basis of extenuating circumstances then supporting documentation must be provided that confirms the period of time you were unable to work on your programme for. Additional information on the UCD policy on Extenuating Circumstances can be found at https://hub.ucd.ie/usis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=126.

Before applying for an extension please first discuss the matter with your supervisor(s). After discussions with your supervisor(s), the student must apply for an extension in advance of the thesis submission deadline with supporting documents, via the School, and it must be approved by the relevant School and the Graduate Research Board. It is suggested that students make such an application at least two months before their original submission date to allow for a timely response. The granting of an extension to registration does is a separate matter from any stipend you might receive, please consult your supervisor or your funding agency about the status of a stipend (if applicable).

3.3. Application procedure

Both the School and the Graduate Research Board have responsibility for reviewing and granting student applications seeking extensions or Leave of Absence. Students should document and report as much information as possible in the application procedure to allow for detailed analysis of the situation. Information on how to initiate an application can be sought from the Principal Supervisor or relevant School Office.

All requests must be supported by the Principal Supervisor and the relevant Head of School (or their nominee) to which the graduate research student is registered. Where the support of the Principal Supervisor is not forthcoming, the student may appeal directly to the Head of School, supplying all associated documentation. Where the support of the Head of School to which the graduate research student is registered is not forthcoming, the student may appeal directly to the Graduate Research Board, supplying all associated documentation.

⁹ Information on extensions can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/aboutus/faqsforgraduateresearchstudents/thesisextensions>

The School shall review the application and all relevant supporting documentation. If satisfied, the student should receive an extension or permission to continue in the programme, the School shall submit all relevant documentation, accompanied by its recommendation including an agreed work plan if necessary (in the case of applications for extension of registration in the programme), to the relevant Graduate Research Board. A School representative must be present and prepared to discuss each case at the meeting of the Governing Board to which the application is submitted.

4. Submission of the Graduate Research Degree Thesis

Prerequisites for the submission of a thesis for examination

- The candidate must be a fully registered student, fee compliant and registered for the minimum period required by the programme at the time when the thesis is submitted for examination.
- The thesis must reflect the work of the candidate and where there is collaboration the contribution of each contributor is clearly indicated in line with the UCD Plagiarism Policy.
- The thesis will only be accepted by the University when the candidate has met all Programme-specific requirements as set out by the Governing Board including, in the case of PhD candidates, a required minimum of 30 taught credits that have been awarded, or approved through recognition of prior/concurrent learning.
- For those candidates who wish to restrict access to their research on RRU for a period of time, the candidate has applied for, and secured the approval of the relevant Governing Board for such a thesis embargo.

Information regarding the deadlines for submission of graduate research degree theses (and the associated fees) is available on the Fees section¹⁰ and the Student Information section⁹¹¹ of the Registry website.

The relevant Governing Board is responsible for undertaking a programme compliance check for each candidate, which confirms that the candidate has satisfied the requirements of their programme, including any taught modules as well as research activity. Candidates are required to submit their thesis through the University's eThesis examination system, confirming that the research is their own work, and that they have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in the thesis. The Principal Supervisor must also confirm, through the eThesis examination system, that the research has been carried out and the final draft of the thesis as submitted, has been prepared for examination under their guidance.

Provided they are registered and fee compliant at the time of thesis submission, a candidate will continue to be a registered student until such time as the examination has been completed and the recommendation of the Examination Committee has been considered by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations, and the Academic Council Committee on Examinations has authorised or not authorised the award of the degree.

Once an eligible candidate has submitted their thesis for examination, the examination must proceed in accordance with Academic Regulations until such time as a final decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations has been made. During this period the candidate shall not be liable for tuition fees, but their student card will remain valid and they 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 trimester.

¹⁰ <http://www.ucd.ie/students/fees/thesis.html>

¹¹ Includes information and policy on Leave of Absence <http://www.ucd.ie/students/leaveofabsence/index.html> and Withdrawal <http://www.ucd.ie/students/withdrawal.html>

With respect to the examination of Research Masters and Doctor of Medicine theses, where a viva voce examination is required only on the request of the Head of School (or the MD Committee), or at the behest of the examiners, a candidate will continue to be a registered student until such time as a final decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations has been made.

5. Examination of the Graduate Research Degree Thesis

The University shall establish an Examination Committee to assess the candidate on the basis of the thesis submitted and to make a recommendation on the award (or otherwise) of the degree. All matters relating to the examination of graduate research degree theses must be treated as confidential. Examiners are not permitted to divulge the content of previously unpublished material contained in a candidate's thesis until such time as the thesis has been deposited in the University's open access repository, Research Repository UCD (RRU) and has been made publicly available.

All examiners are required to comply with the procedures for examination of theses outlined in this section.

5.1. Research Master's Thesis Examination

On the request of a Head of School, or at the behest of the examiners, a viva voce examination may be arranged. The viva voce examination will normally be held within two months of receipt of the thesis by the examiners. In such instances, the conduct of the viva voce examination will be held in accordance with the arrangements outlined in section 5.3.2.

When conducting an examination of the candidate, examiners are encouraged to be cognizant of the learning outcomes associated with the Research Master's degree award (NFQ Level 9).

Table B: UCD Research Master's Degree Award Descriptor

Title	Master's (MLitt, MPhil, MA, MSc, etc)
Class of Award	Major
Purpose	<p>The core of the Research Master's degree award is a coherent programme of supervised research which requires that the student successfully completes Masters-level research, the principal outcome of which is a submitted thesis in acceptable form and deemed to be of a satisfactory standard. The primary purpose of master's level research is to develop in the student the skills and competencies required to conduct research.</p> <p>The Research Master's degree programme may also include additional personal and professional development elements which develop the skills and competencies required for successful research and/or support the acquisition of generic or transferable skills. This may be provided via specific modules from the advanced educational programme of the University.</p>
NFQ Level	9
Volume	Large
Knowledge & Understanding	Have demonstrated specialized, detailed or advanced theoretical and conceptual knowledge and understanding, which is based on consideration of current debate and controversy at the forefront of the field and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context.
Applying Knowledge & Understanding	Can apply their knowledge, understanding, and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts, or to generate new knowledge through research.
Making Judgements	Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, and to reflect on wider disciplinary, scientific, professional issues and social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.
Communications & Working Skills	Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously.
Learning Skills	Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

Source: UCD Level Descriptors

5.2. Doctor of Medicine (MD) Thesis Examination

On the request of the Head of School, or at the behest of the examiners, a viva voce examination may be arranged. The viva voce examination will normally be held within two months of receipt of the thesis by the examiners. In such instances, the conduct of the viva voce examination will be held in accordance with the arrangements outlined in section 5.3.2.

When examining an MD thesis, examiners are encouraged to be cognizant of the learning outcomes associated with NFQ Level 9 degree awards as outlined in Table B in section 5.1.

5.3. PhD and Professional Doctorates thesis Examination

It is the policy of the University that every PhD and Professional Doctorate candidate must be examined through a viva voce examination by an Examination Committee. The viva voce examination will normally be held within two months of receipt of the thesis by the examiners.

Upon submission, the thesis will be sent, via the eThesis examination system, to all members of the Examination Committee, provided that the Examination Committee has been appointed by the ACCE. Through the eThesis examination system, the Chair of the Examination Committee will ensure that preliminary reports from each examiner are exchanged amongst members of the Examination Committee in advance of the viva voce examination.

5.3.1. Examiners' Preliminary Thesis Reports

When reading the thesis, examiners should give particular attention to the following points:

- The originality of the work described, and the theories developed in the thesis.
- The candidate's familiarity with the published work of other authors in their own and 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 thesis.
- The candidate's prose style, which should be appropriate to the discipline, consist of clear, simple, unambiguous writing, and be syntactically and grammatically correct.
- 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 (where appropriate).
- Presentation of the results of the research – are the results presented in a clear, accessible way? Are tables, figures or plates, where included, adequately annotated and correctly referenced in the text?
- Interpretation of results – are the candidate's conclusions reasonable based on 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 lacunae in the evidence adduced?
- 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 thesis - is it free of typographical and other errors?

The Examination Committee shall also take into consideration the student's performance in any taught modules and/or applied professional practice elements of the doctoral programme.

5.3.2. Conduct of the Viva Voce Examination

The objectives of the viva voce examination are to provide an opportunity for the examiners to:

- to establish the originality of the candidate's work and ideas
- test the candidate's knowledge of the thesis topic and related areas of research
- clarify any issues of fact which may have arisen in the course of the preliminary reading of the thesis.

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.

The thesis examination (viva voce) is carried out in private with only the candidate and the Examination Committee in attendance (the Principal Supervisor or Co-Supervisor(s) may be invited to attend the viva voce examination at the request of the student, as an observer(s)).

All matters relating to the examination must be treated as confidential by the Examination Committee.

The Chair of the Examination Committee shall make the arrangements for the viva voce examination. Viva voce examinations should normally be held on a UCD campus in Dublin, where possible. The examination may be held elsewhere or via electronic means, provided the candidate and all members of the Examination Committee agree to the arrangement and appropriate conditions are maintained. University guidelines in relation to conducting the viva voce virtually should be followed in this regard.¹² Care should be taken in choosing the location for the viva voce examination to ensure that the examination can be conducted in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere without risk of interruptions or extraneous noise. Examiners and the candidate should be reminded to switch off phones before the commencement of the examination.

The Extern Examiner(s) shall play the major role in the viva voce examination. The Extern Examiner(s) should lead the discussion with the candidate and explore the strengths and weaknesses of the research work and the thesis. The Extern Examiner(s) should also test the candidate's knowledge of the field and familiarity with recent publications in the area.

When conducting an examination of the candidate, examiners are encouraged to be cognizant of the specific learning outcomes associated with the programme (NFQ Level 10). The UCD Doctoral Award Descriptor is based on existing guidelines such as the NFQ Level 10 Indicators, the NFQ Level 10 "Dublin Descriptors" and the IUA PhD Graduate Skills Statement. In addition, the QQI QA Guidelines for research degrees¹³ and Ireland's framework of good practice for research degree programmes¹⁴.

¹² <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/researchprogrammes/researchexamination/vivavoceexamination/virtualvivavoce/>

¹³ <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Research%20Degree%20Programmes%20QA%20Guidelines.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Ireland's%20Framework%20of%20Good%20Practice%20Research%20Degree%20Programmes.pdf>

Table C: UCD Doctoral Degree Award Descriptor

Title	Doctor (PhD, DPsychSc, DGov, DVMS, DEdPsych)
Class of Award	Major
Purpose	This award is characterised by a significant original contribution to scholarship, based largely on a major research project which is also complemented by the development of a range of transferable and professional skills. It may be used for career progression to advanced levels of academia and research.
Level	10
Volume	Large
Knowledge – breadth	A coherent understanding of the problems at the forefront of knowledge and potential approaches and solutions, as well as in-depth knowledge of the relevant scholarship in a particular field or discipline.
Knowledge – kind	A contribution through original research which extends the frontiers of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication.
Know-how and skill – range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity to recognise and evaluate problems. • Original autonomous thinking. • Capacity for critical analysis, reflection and evaluation. • Understanding and application of basic principles of project and time management, presentation skills and working in a collaborative capacity.
Know-how and skill – selectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas. • Formulation and application of solutions to research problems and effective interpretation of results. • Ability to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge-based society.
Competence – context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a significant contribution to the application of knowledge and skill, including in novel contexts. • Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts.
Competence – role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate results of research and innovation to peers. • Engage in critical dialogue both within academia and in other relevant contexts; Lead and originate complex social processes.
Competence – learning to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to reflect on the process of learning and achievement and a capacity to plan for personal, educational and career development. • Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.
Competence – insight	Critical awareness of the global intellectual, social and cultural implications of developments in their own and other’s area of research and expertise.
Progression & Transfer	None
Articulation	The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is awarded following successful completion of a programme of supervised research and advanced education and training. This programme may include articulation with a taught or research Masters (NFQ Level 9) programme, where there are in existence formal processes to assess the progress of a candidate and their suitability for advanced doctoral research and training.

Source: UCD Level Descriptors, NFQ Level 10 Indicators, the NFQ Level 10 “Dublin Descriptors” and the IUA PhD Graduate Skills Statement

5.4. Post-Examination Procedures

When the examination is complete, and if all examiners are in agreement, the Chair is responsible for overseeing the compilation of a high-level joint Final Degree Report, on behalf of all examiners, on the academic standard of the thesis and the candidate's performance in the viva voce examination (where relevant). The Chair may delegate this function to another member of the Examination Committee. The final report should contain a high-level summary of the examination, it should not normally contain details of corrections that may be required of the candidate. In writing their final report, the examiners should bear in mind that the report will be considered by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations, and that not all of its members will be experts in the subject matter of the thesis.

The report should include the following:

- Clear justification outlining why the Examination Committee's recommendation was reached.
- A brief description, in non-technical terms, of the work presented in the thesis and an outline of its principal conclusions.
- A brief assessment of the candidate's knowledge and comprehension of the background to the research topic and the work of other authors in related fields.
- The examiners should comment broadly on the strengths and weaknesses of the research and of the theoretical framework developed by the candidate in the thesis and at the viva voce examination (where relevant).
- The examiners should also indicate whether the thesis is worthy of publication, in whole or in part.
- The quality of the presentation of the thesis should be referred to in the report.
- For Professional Doctorates, the report should provide confirmation that the candidate has satisfactorily completed the required taught components and the professional practice elements of the programme.

It is important that there should be consistency between the opinions expressed in the report and the examiners' recommendation in relation to the award of the degree. For example, if several negative comments are included in a report which recommends the award of the degree, the examiners should take care to indicate the strengths of the work which outweigh its weaknesses and which persuaded them to recommend that the degree be awarded.

The Degree Report shall include a recommendation to:

- a) Award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – no corrections required
- b) Award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – revisions required¹⁵
- c) Revise thesis and submit for re-examination¹⁶
- d) Do not award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – recommendation that the candidate transfer to an appropriate graduate programme
- e) Do not award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree.

The Academic Council Committee on Examinations will decide, on the basis of the report(s) and, where necessary, clarification or correspondence with the examiners, to authorise or not to authorise

¹⁵ This is used where changes are required to the thesis, but where the examiners do not consider a new examination necessary. Typically, revisions are carried out within 3 months.

¹⁶ This is used where the examiners feel that the scope and nature of the changes are such that the candidate's work should go through a full examination process again

the award of the degree. A candidate is 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 Examination.

5.4.1. Post Examination Procedures: Unanimous Recommendation to Award Degree

Where the examiners unanimously recommend award of the graduate research degree, the Examination Committee shall submit the joint Final Degree Report, via the Chair of the Examination Committee, to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations indicating their opinion on the quality of the thesis and of the research on which it is based, and recommending the award of the degree.

Where, in the opinion of the examiners, corrections or revisions are required, the Chair of the Examination Committee (or nominee – normally an Intern Examiner) shall be responsible for ensuring that any corrections or revisions have been made to the thesis prior the award of the degree being authorised by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. The Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform the candidate and the Principal Supervisor that they have recommended the award of the degree subject to any corrections or revisions being made (where required) and to the approval of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations.

5.4.2. Post Examination Procedures: Unanimous Recommendation not to Award Degree

Where the examiners unanimously recommend that the graduate research degree not be awarded, the Examination Committee shall submit a high-level joint Final Degree Report, via the Chair of the Examination Committee, to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations indicating their opinion on the quality of the thesis and of the research on which it is based, and indicating the areas of weakness which led to their decision not to recommend the award of the degree.

- The Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform the candidate and the Principal Supervisor that the award is not recommended.
- The Chair of the Examination Committee shall notify the Academic Council Committee on Examinations that the Examination Committee has not recommended the award of the degree and the Academic Council Committee on Examinations shall inform the candidate of the decision of the Examination Committee.

A candidate may appeal the decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations to the Academic Council Committee on Student Appeals and Complaints.

5.4.3. Post Examination Procedures: No Unanimous Recommendation

Where the examiners disagree and cannot unanimously recommend that the degree be awarded, members of the Examination Committee shall submit, via the Chair of the Examination Committee, separate reports to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. The Chair of the Examination Committee shall inform the candidate and the Principal Supervisor that the Examination Committee has not reached an unanimous decision on the award of the degree and that the matter has been referred to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations for adjudication. The Academic Council Committee on Examinations may decide to:

- a) Award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – no corrections required
- b) Award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – revisions required
- c) Revise thesis and submit for re-examination
- d) Do not award the [Research Masters / MD / Doctoral] degree – recommendation that the candidate transfer to an appropriate graduate programme
- e) Do not award the [Research Masters / MD/ Doctoral] degree.

A candidate may appeal the decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations to the Assessment Appeals office¹⁷

5.5. Thesis Revisions

Where revisions are required by the examiners (award category b), the Chair of the Examination Committee (or nominee – normally the Intern Examiner) shall communicate the details of the required revisions to the candidate. Revisions are typically completed within 3 months. Candidates shall remain a registered student during the period in which corrections or revisions must be made. The revisions should be approved offline, before the final version of the thesis is uploaded in the eThesis examination system. Upon completion of the revisions, the nominated examiner will be required to review them and confirm, on behalf of the Examination Committee, that the candidate has satisfactorily completed all revisions required. The candidate is then required to upload the final version of the thesis to the eThesis examination system for final sign off by the Examination Committee. Theses with highlighted corrections/revisions should not be transferred to the RRU. Once the student uploads the thesis, they cannot exchange it, however, the Chair can reject any versions uploaded in error. The Examination Committee must then sign off on the fact that the candidate has met all the examination requirements and the examination outcome is sent to the Academic Council Committee on Examinations for review and approval.

Where the candidate is required to revise and submit the thesis for re-examination (award category c)), the Chair of the Examination Committee shall, with the agreement of the other members of the Examination Committee, indicate the timeline within which such major revisions shall be undertaken and the student must register as normal and will be liable for fees for this period. Upon submission of the thesis for re-examination, the Examination Committee shall be re-convened by the Chair of the Examination Committee to conduct a second viva voce examination in accordance with the procedures outlined in the University's Academic Regulations.

5.6. Submission of Final Thesis to Research Repository UCD (RRU) and required archival hardbound copy

Following each meeting of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations, Assessment, UCD Registry shall notify candidates of the authorisation of the award of the degree by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations. Following award of the degree, the candidate's thesis will be transferred from the eThesis examination system and uploaded to the University's open access repository Research Repository UCD (RRU). The thesis will then become automatically available for viewing, unless an embargo has been previously approved by the relevant Governing Board.

Candidates will also be required to submit, in a timely manner post examination, a final hardbound archival copy of the thesis to the Student Desk, UCD Registry for deposition in the Library. This archival copy is held in closed store in UCD Library. A graduation hold will be placed on a candidate's student record and the candidate will not be permitted to graduate or access transcripts, until such time as they submit the hardbound copy to the University. The hardbound copy shall be printed **single-sided**.

As a courtesy, the candidate shall normally also present a hardbound copy of the final thesis to the Principal Supervisor and/or the Head of School.

¹⁷ [UCD Student Engagement, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals office](#)

5.7. Intellectual Property

All issues relating to intellectual property will be subject to the University's practices and policies. As per the University's Academic Regulations, all theses remain the property of University College Dublin, giving due recognition to inventors.

5.8. Degree Award and Conferring

Once the Academic Council Committee on Examinations has authorised the award of the degree, Assessment, UCD Registry and the Conferring Unit shall complete their responsibilities as outlined in the University's Policy for Theses in Graduate Research Programmes.

Appendix 1 - Sample of cover sheet



The detailed study of a specific topic in a specific discipline

By

Mary Smith, BSc

UCD Student Number: 12345678

The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in xxxx.

UCD School of xxxx

Head of School: Professor John Smith

Principal Supervisor: Dr Sean Smyth

Members of the Research Studies Panel:

Professor Melissa Smith

Dr Matthew Smith

Professor Fiona Smyth

May, 2020