

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Version 1.3.1

**UCD Graduate Studies**

Introduction

Research and Professional Development planning (RPDP) is an integral part of the Structured PhD programme at UCD. Its purpose is to ensure that your work is clearly focused on achieving your research and professional goals. This will play a major part in informing the trajectory of your PhD research and in your training and development as a researcher. Your RPDP will help you develop key skills that will be invaluable for both your current research and your future career prospects.

The Structured PhD requires a minimum of 30 taught credits that you must document in the RPDP. These credits are central to the PhD experience and fundamental to acquiring transferable skills. Research Masters students may take taught modules relevant to their area of research or professional development as required or recommended by their Principal Supervisor.

In line with University policy, PhD candidates can apply for recognition of prior/concurrent, learning which will not normally amount to more than 30% of the total requirement.

A further mandatory part of your doctoral programme will be the satisfactory completion of Research Integrity Training. This can take the form of an [online module or](https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/currentgradstudents/researchphdsupport/researchintegritytrainingforresearchdegreestudents/) a blended module (SCI50020) that you must record in your RPDP.

The RPDP will also inform discussions at your meetings with your supervisor and Research Studies Panel (RSP). You will find a template in this document which you can use to structure the meetings.

For PhD students, the RPDP record will be a mandatory input to your Stage Transfer Assessment which will determine whether you progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of your doctoral studies. The Stage Transfer Assessment Panel will normally consist of three members of the permanent faculty of the University. Your Principal/ co-supervisor will not be a member of the panel. The Stage Transfer Assessment will normally occur within 5 trimesters of registration for a full-time student and 7 trimesters for part-time.

Your RPDP form is treated as confidential and is normally only available to your supervisor and RSP. In addition, as part of the Stage 1 to Stage 2 assessment process the Transfer Assessment Panel, staff associated with the Transfer Assessment process (the School Administrator, the Governing Board) will also have access to the RPDP.

There are three main components to your Research and Professional Development plan:

1. A RESEARCH PLAN

The purpose of your Research Plan is to provide you with a clear research focus and a coherent work programme. A well-structured Research Plan will enable you to review your progress and adjust your objectives as your research evolves.

Keeping your Research Plan up to date will help support your writing progress reports, preparing presentations and publications, drafting funding applications and completing your thesis.

2. A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

On leaving UCD with a research degree it will be expected that, in addition to having produced a body of research, you will also have developed a set of generic and transferable skills that will enhance employability and career development.

UCD offers a range of opportunities to acquire transferable skills. We support a model of developing career skills in your research programme and from your research programme. Research degree holders are well- positioned in an increasingly cross-sectoral market that emphasises flexibility, creativity and critical thinking. Research Student Training and Development

3. RESEARCH STUDIES PANEL MEETING RECORD

Central to your programme are regular meetings with your supervisor and RSP to discuss your research, your professional development and progress in achieving your goals. A mandatory outcome of the meetings with your RSP is a formal record of your research and professional plans and your progress to date. These records will also inform your Stage Transfer Assessment.

The formal record form for these meetings is appended at the back of this document as a writeable PDF. This must be completed following each RSP meeting, signed by all members of your RSP, including yourself. Please [upload a](https://intranet.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/t4media/Step%20by%20step%20guide%20to%20upload%20Student-Supervisor%20meeting%20records%20in%20Infohub.pdf) signed copy to your SISWEB. You should also submit a signed copy to your School administrator.

Your RSP will normally be comprised of your principal supervisor / co-supervisor and at least two (but not normally more than four) advisors, one of whom must be a UCD faculty member, The RSP will provide advice and support during the course of your doctoral studies and will assist in monitoring your progress. For more details about your RSP, please contact your School

# Research Planning

A course of study and research leading to the research master’s degree is pursued in one stage. The primary purpose of master’s research is to develop in the student the skills and competencies required to conduct effective research: it may include experiential research training and does not necessarily result in the creation of new knowledge. The distinguishing feature of doctoral research is that it is original research, the outcome of which is an original and substantial addition to knowledge and understanding.

A research plan is a structure which you design to organise your thoughts about your topic and schedule the specific tasks that you need to do, while building towards the successful completion of a structured programme of research.

Keep in mind that the objectives and goals you set yourself in your plan should be specific, challenging and achievable within a defined timeframe.

There is no such thing as an ideal research plan, but common to all is **structure** and **timeframe**: research is always planned in stages, each designed with some idea of how long it will take. There are two critical things to remember when you begin to design a research plan.

**First**, your supervisor is there to advise you. S/ he will guide you as you formulate your plan. In consultation with your supervisor you should, within the first trimester of your PhD, be able to identify major tasks and work out the order in which they should be done. Members of your RSP will also discuss your plan at RSP meetings.

**Second**, research plans change as research progresses. The secrets of a successful research project are (a) the realisation that a research plan is always a work-in-progress and (b) the ability to adjust a project’s structure and timeframe without losing sight of its goals.

At the start of your studies, your emphasis will be primarily on devising, developing and implementing your research. As you progress, your focus will also encompass the dissemination of your research results and the preparation of your thesis.

When developing your research plan, it may be helpful to consider the following:

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A RESEARCH PLAN

* Your research question or hypothesis and its importance
* Ensuring that all or any ethical requirements associated with your research are addressed
* Reviewing the relevant literature
* A plan of how you intend to investigate your hypothesis and interpret your results
* Reviewing your findings and incorporating any changes to the research plan
* Drawing conclusions
* How you intend to disseminate findings

DISSEMINATING YOUR RESEARCH

* Where do you intend to present the results of your work?
* Where do you intend to publish the results of your work?

WRITING UP YOUR THESIS

* Have you prepared a thesis plan?
* Are you familiar with how best to present your work in thesis form and what the requirements are?
* What progress have you made in writing chapters of your thesis?
* [When do you hope to have](https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/) your first draft completed?
* When do you hope to submit?

You will also need to set a timeframe to each of the aspects outlined above. Devising a realistic schedule for each step on the way is extremely important if you want to complete your PhD within the timeframe required.

**Time bound** include a time-scale for in which to

achieve your objective or goal.

relevant to the achievement of your research aims

**Relevant**

**Achievable** objectives need to be realistic, challenging and motivating.

**Measurable** quantitative and/or qualitative (if

objectives are not measurable then it is difficult to determine whether they have been achieved).

specific and clear statements about what is to be achieved.

**Specific**

**The SMART guidelines indicate that objectives should be:**

# Professional Development Planning

As a graduate research student, you will be supported by your supervisor / co-supervisor and RSP in identifying your educational training and personal and professional development needs. During the course of your research studies, you will have opportunities to acquire new skills and to hone existing ones.

You should consult the [HEA’s National Framework for](https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf) [Doctoral Education.](https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf) It sets out the core principles of doctoral education in Ireland. In line with these principals, UCD strongly supports and encourages professional skills development. This includes opportunities to explore transferable skills training as well as potential employer networking and engagement. UCD’s Careers Network offers a range of valuable support services, including a dedicated Career and Skills Consultant for graduate research students.

DEVELOPING THE RELEVANT SKILLS

First, identify the relevant skills you require for effective research and for your potential career paths. Every discipline area has its own particular suite of skills, and you may already have acquired many of these as a prerequisite to enrolling for a PhD programme. However, in order to develop career flexibility, it is advisable to acquire additional transferable and cross-sectoral skills.

Remember that you are encouraged to take modules and attend relevant workshops outside your School or College. You should consider identifying opportunities in the following broad areas: research skills; ethics and social understanding; communication and educational skills; personal effectiveness and development; team working and leadership; career management, in line with the [IUA Skills Statement.](https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/IUA-PhD-Graduate-Skills-Statement-2021-final.pdf)

For more information, please visit: [UCD Graduate](https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/) [Studies](https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/) website.

## RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORM

### Part 1 - RECORD OF STUDENT ACTIVITY

#### to be completed by the student

Candidate name and student number:

Date of meeting:

Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Study:

How many RSP meetings have you had this academic year:

Please state the dates of your previous RSP meetings:

##### Section A

**RECORD OF ONGOING RESEARCH**

Please provide updates of your research progress (no more than *5*00 words):

##### Section B

**FUTURE PLAN**

Please provide updates of your research plan for the following year (no more than 500 words):

##### Section C

1. **RECORD OF CREDIT-BEARING MODULES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Module Code and Title | Credits |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

##### Section C - cont.

* 1. **RECORD OF CREDIT-BEARING MODULES - cont.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Module Code and Title | Credits |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

* 1. **RECORD OF ANY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AWARDED**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Description | Credits (if applicable) |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

##### Section D

**RECORD OF PROFESSIONAL & CAREER DEVELOPMENT MODULES / WORKSHOPS/ACTIVITIES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Credits

Module Code and Title

Date

##### Section E

**RECORD OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY TRAINING**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Description eg. module code or certificate | Credits (if applicable) |
|  |  |  |

##### Section F

**RECORD OF OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES**

For example, you can record attendance / presentations at conferences, research visits, research mobility, networking events and placements / internships here (no more than *5*00 words):

### Part 2 - RESEARCH STUDIES PANEL MEETING REPORT

#### To be completed by the Chair of the RSP

##### Section A

**PROGRESS REPORT**

Progress to date (no more than 400 words):

##### Section B

Recommendations going forward (no more than 400 words):

##### Section C

Additional comments (if any)

Section D

RESEARCH STUDIES PANEL MEETING RECORD REPORT

**DECLARATION**

We agree that this report is an accurate account of the meeting of the Doctoral Studies Panel.

Signature of PhD student Date:

Signature of Principal Supervisor Date:

Signature of RSP Adviser 1 Date:

Signature of RSP Adviser 2 Date:

(Signature of RSP Adviser 3) Date:

Next meeting Date:

**\* Please sign or write your name in block capital letters**

**\*\* Please upload to your SISWeb account and email a copy to the School Office**



**UCD Graduate Studies**

[www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies](http://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies)