

## **School Policy for Graduate Research Students**

### **Introduction**

This document is a brief guide to graduate studies in the School of Physics, and supplements the official UCD policy documents, which are referenced and linked to throughout this document. All committees mentioned anywhere strive to respect gender equality.

### **UCD Policy Documents and Web Pages**

UCD Academic Regulations & Policy:

<https://www.ucd.ie/students/exams/assessinggraduateresearchtheses/regulationsandpolicy/>

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- Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Degree Students
  - Code of Practice for Conflict Resolution for Supervisors and Graduate Research Students
  - Graduate Thesis Policy incl. Application to Continue in Programme, Extenuating Circumstances & Thesis Extension forms
  - Doctoral Studies Panels Terms of Reference
  - Leave of Absence Policy Documents
  - Progression in Doctoral Programmes

UCD Graduate Studies: <http://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/>

UCD Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) <https://www.ucd.ie/registry/staff/registryservices/assessment/academiccouncilcommitteeonexaminationsacce/>

Graduate Fees, Thesis Submission and Deadlines:

<https://www.ucd.ie/students/fees/> (EU or non-EU rates per course)

<https://www.ucd.ie/students/fees/thesis/>

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/researchprogrammes/researchexamination/thesissubmission/>

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/studywithus/feesfundingandscholarships/>

Taught Modules for Research Students:

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/trainingdevelopment/taughtmodulesforresearchstudents/>

College of Science Graduate Studies Intranet (academic staff access only):

<https://intranet.ucd.ie/gsscience/index.html>

## **The UCD Structured Ph.D.**

The UCD structured Ph.D. has several components aimed at supporting and enhancing the academic and professional development of each student. More information on the structured Ph.D. can be found at

<https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Doctoral%20Studies%20UCD%20Structured%20PhD%20brochure.pdf>

The key aspects are:

- Doctoral Studies Panel (DSP)
- Research and Professional Development Plan
- Progression (Stage 1 Transfer)
- Transferable Skills Training
- Credits and Modules

Many aspects of the structured Ph.D. also apply to Research Masters degrees.

## **School of Physics Graduate Studies Requirements**

The requirements for graduate studies in the School of Physics are summarised here and discussed in more detail below.

- Each student is expected to have an annual Doctoral Studies Panel meeting and to complete and provide the necessary documentation.
- Each student is required to undertake the Physics tutoring and demonstrating module (PHYC 40570, Physics Demonstrating and Tutoring), the successful completion of which is one of the requirements for transfer to Stage 2.
- In consultation with the student and supervisor, students may be required to undertake demonstrating/tutoring as prescribed by the Head of School or nominee, of up to 72h per academic year, paid according to the UCD specified rates.
- A Stage 1 Transfer assessment will take place no later than 18 months after commencement of the Ph.D for full-time students.
- As part of the viva voce examination process, the student will make an open presentation of their research to the School.
- Students are expected to attend all seminars in the School of Physics; confirmation of attendance may be asked at DSP meetings and STA interview.

# Doctoral Studies Panel (DSP)

## Purpose of the DSP process

Each PhD graduate student is required to have a Doctoral Studies Panel. The purpose of the DSP is to support and enhance the supervisor-student relationship, to monitor the progress of the student through their doctoral studies, and to provide advice and support to student and supervisor(s). It is also the role of the panel to select the external examiner and at the final meeting to sign off on the thesis title. Each incoming PhD student will be informed of the DSP process and the membership of their DSP by their supervisor.

See full terms of reference in *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Degree Students* (from the UCD Academic Policy web site):  
<https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AScodePracSuperRStudPo.pdf>

## Membership of DSP

The panel is to consist of the principal supervisor, any additional supervisors, plus additional advisors (at least two but not more than four). The principal supervisor should not chair the committee. Of the two nominated advisors,

- at least one will have academic expertise relevant to the student's research work, and
- at least one will have experience in supervising doctoral students to completion.

It is recommended that one DSP member should be from outside the immediate research group of the student.

## Meeting Frequency

The DSP panel is to meet regularly, but not less than once per year, to review the student's progress. The first meeting should take place shortly after (within three months) the student begins his/her studies and advise on their Research and Professional Development Plan and offer advice on, for example, selection of taught modules to aid the research project. The panel should also meet before the stage 1 transfer takes place. **The Supervisor initiates the first DSP meeting and thereafter it is normally the responsibility of the student.**

The student may, if deemed necessary, call a DSP meeting or consult with the DSP members at any time without the inclusion of the supervisor.

## Meeting Reports & Research and Professional Development Plan

As part of the structured PhD at UCD students are expected to keep and maintain a Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP, see

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/trainingdevelopment/researchprofessionaldevelopmentplanning/> )

In addition, the graduate student is required to keep a record of their DSP meetings by filling out the appropriate form (from the above link), which serves as part of their RPDP. After each meeting the form must be signed by the advisers and a copy should be given to the School Office to be kept on record. Supervisors and students (starting their programmes after September 2016) may avail of the Infohub system for managing meetings. For staff this can be accessed through “View Meetings” under Home/Students/Registration & Class List./My Graduate Research Students.

### **Masters Studies Panels**

A Research Masters Panel should be established for all research Masters students. It should comprise the Principal Supervisor and at least two other advisers appointed by the School. The Research Masters Panel will monitor progress against the prescribed programme of research and study on a regular basis.

#### Further Information:

*Doctoral Studies Panel Terms of Reference* document (available on the academic policy website): [https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/dstudies\\_tor.pdf](https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/dstudies_tor.pdf)

## **Conflict Resolution, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

If a conflict between the student and the supervisor arises, the procedure outlined in the document *Code of Practice for Conflict Resolution for Supervisors and Graduate Students* should be followed: <https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AScodePracConflictResPo.pdf>. Additionally, the student is encouraged to approach the School’s Director of Graduate Studies (Research). More generally, UCD seeks to ensure that the promotion of mental health and wellbeing is part of the student experience. Support is available at <https://www.ucd.ie/stuhealth/services/mentalhealth/>

## **Credits and Modules**

PhD students are required to take 30 ECTS credits of taught modules as part of their PhD programme, up to 20 of these credits may be awarded as Recognition of Prior Learning, undertaken before starting the PhD programme. Modules taken external to UCD, during the PhD programme, may also be counted towards the 30 credits, if approved by the supervisor/DSP, the Head of Graduate Studies and the Science Graduate School.

In addition to the *Physics Demonstrating and Tutoring* module, students can undertake additional modules as agreed with their supervisor/DSP. Some programs may have specific taught module requirements.

The taught modules are included as part of the Ph.D. and do not incur additional fees. For more information on taught modules for research students in the College of Science see: <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/trainingdevelopment/taughtmodulesforresearchstudents/>

## **Ph.D. Stage Transfer Assessment (STA)**

Doctoral studies comprise two stages. Stage 1 is when the research plan is defined, research skills are developed and original research work for the doctorate is initiated. Stage 2 is primarily dedicated to continuing original research, but may also include some advanced education and training. In order to advance from Stage 1 to Stage 2, a Stage Transfer Assessment will take place. The purpose of the STA is to assess the progress of the student and to evaluate their competence and capacity to complete a doctorate and become an independent researcher. Please note: this is not a results-based assessment, rather the purpose of the STA is to ascertain whether the student has an overview of the research project and field, has made progress in acquiring the skills needed to complete the project, and has a realistic research plan for the coming years.

### **STA Timing**

The STA will normally be held 15-18 months (for full-time students) or 24-36 months (for part-time students) after commencement of their research.

### **STA Panel Membership & Role of DSP**

The transfer panel will consist of three members of academic staff, one of whom acts as chair. The chair does not participate in the assessment but coordinates the STA and ensures that the process is fair. The Chair of the STA panel should be independent of the student's DSP. The supervisor is not permitted to be a member of the panel. One member of the panel should have some expertise in the area of research of the student, and may be selected from the student's DSP.

The DSP should ensure that where issues arise in relation to progress, that the student and principal supervisor are fully aware of the issues and have had an opportunity to address them before presenting for STA.

If the student is away from UCD at the time when the transfer is due to happen, then the transfer can take place at the remote laboratory/institution but must involve a member of UCD staff (e.g. via Skype) and should follow the agreed procedure (report, presentation, interview).

### **Student Requirements**

- The student will produce a report (10 pages max. + references) detailing progress to date and an outline of the research plan. The report should be submitted one week before the STA date and should contain:

- o A clear and referenced overview of the field giving a context for the intended research.
  - o Clear outline of what the student has done to date, showing what contribution, if any, comes from colleagues/collaborators.
  - o Plan for completion.
- A 15-minute presentation will be made to the School staff and students detailing the research project, work to date and research plan.
  - The student will undergo an interview with the STA Panel
  - The student must complete and pass the *Physics Demonstrating and Tutoring Module* prior to the STA.
  - The report and presentation should not be overly technical and should be pitched to a general physics audience.

### **Supervisor Requirements**

The supervisor is required to submit a short report to the transfer panel in advance of the interview to state whether they are happy with the progress to date, support the transfer, and whether the successful and timely completion of the project is likely.

### **STA Panel Requirements**

Following its consideration, the STA panel may make one of the following decisions:

- that the student progresses to Stage 2;
- that the student does not progress, but may present for re-assessment at a later stage, with a date set for the re-assessment;
- that the student does not progress, may not present for re-assessment, and exits the Ph.D. programme, possibly transferring to an M.Sc. Programme;
- that the student's registration be terminated in line with the University's continuation process.

The panel are required to fill out the Doctoral Programme Stage 1 Transfer Assessment Report and the Doctoral Programme Stage 1 Transfer Assessment Recommendations, stating clearly the decision made and the reason(s) for this decision. The student should receive a copy of the report, which should be communicated in a timely manner to the student by the Chair of the STA panel. Copies of all documentation relating to the STA are to be kept in the School office on the student's file. Forms to be filled out are available on the academic policy website: (Search S for Stage Transfer Assessment)

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>

## Appeal of decision of the STA panel

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the STA panel may do so through the procedures for a formal assessment appeal determined by the UCD Policy on Assessment Appeals. Information relating to Assessment Appeals can be found at <http://www.ucd.ie/appeals/> .

## Assessment in Stage 2

If a supervisor and/or DSP is concerned about the progress/academic ability of a student to complete their research, they should carry out a formal assessment. A panel that is independent of the student's DSP should do this formal assessment. The student should be given sufficient notification *in writing* of the assessment process and of the nature of the material/documents that he/she is required to submit/present for this assessment. This notification should clearly state that the assessment will consider the capacity of the student to continue the PhD project. The assessment panel may make a recommendation of a) continuation, b) termination of their studies, or c) transfer to an MSc programme.

### Further Information:

*Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* document, available from the UCD Policy site (link: [https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/W\\_HU\\_MENU.P\\_DOWNLOAD\\_FILE?p\\_filename=Progression%20in%20Doctoral%20Programmes%20Policy.pdf&p\\_parameters=36F8A0AC5B0D6F23FA1EEB8E7C5668E87D47F894CE813A2C5A31FE1A69D113A3E1C278129BDAF0CFDDCE3164583EBA539C946595AC7CD1E3E960F754EBB6883C](https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/W_HU_MENU.P_DOWNLOAD_FILE?p_filename=Progression%20in%20Doctoral%20Programmes%20Policy.pdf&p_parameters=36F8A0AC5B0D6F23FA1EEB8E7C5668E87D47F894CE813A2C5A31FE1A69D113A3E1C278129BDAF0CFDDCE3164583EBA539C946595AC7CD1E3E960F754EBB6883C))

Section 19 of the Academic Regulations: *Progression in the PhD Degree*.

## Permission to Continue in Programme

For full-time Research Master students the normal period of registration is between 1 and 2 calendar years and for part-time Research Master students it is between 2 and 4 years (Academic Regulations 8.6). For full-time Ph.D. students the normal period of registration is normally not more than 4 calendar years and for part-time students is normally not more than 6 calendar years (Academic Regulations 16.6). Students who do not complete within the above timeframes “*must reapply to the College Graduate School Board, presenting justification, for permission to continue in the programme beyond the prescribed period of registration.*” (Academic Regulations 8.6.1 & 16.6.2). Please note that a student must be registered and fee compliant at the time the thesis is submitted. A leave of absence or extension due to extenuating circumstances may be applied for, but retrospective applications are generally not approved by the College GSB.

See: <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>  
<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/researchprogrammes/phdinanutshell/>

## M.Sc./ Ph.D. Examination & Examiner Guidelines

For the rules governing the selection of external examiners for Research Masters and Ph.D. degrees please see the accompanying College of Sciences document. The Research Masters/Doctoral Studies Panel selects the examination panel, which is then approved by the School Graduate Committee, the College GSB and ACCE. There is now a template document for the external examiner's CV (available from the School office), and among the criteria that the College looks for is evidence of active research and graduate student supervision and/or examination.

It is important that all documentation be provided at least 3 months prior to the date the viva examination is intended to take place (please see submission dates to be sure). The Ph.D. submission deadlines occur three times each year, in **January, April and August**.

## Requests: Forms and Templates

All requests to the College Graduate School Board (GSB) must first be processed by the School of Physics Graduate Committee.

Templates for the various requests, which must be submitted through the School Graduate Committee are available on the UCD Graduate School policy website and links to the most commonly used ones are available on the Graduate Studies website:

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>

<https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/researchstudenthub/>

## Deadlines for College of Sciences Graduate School

The deadlines for submission of requests to the College Graduate School Board (GSB) are sent periodically by email.

Please ensure requests are submitted to Angela Dunne O'Toole well in advance to allow time for processing.

Approval of requests by the GSB normally takes one to two weeks.

### Document Version Log

March 2014	Assoc. Prof. J. Quinn	
October 2016	Assoc. Prof. N.V. Buchete	Prof. M.W. Grünewald
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