

**Ollscoil Mhá Nuad
Maynooth University**

**An tAcadamh Taighde Iarchéime
Graduate Research Academy**



Rialacháin Iarchéime le haghaidh Céimeanna Taighde Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees

**An tAcadamh Taighde Iarchéime
Graduate Research Academy**

2024

Table of Contents

1	Principles	4
2	Research Awards	4
	2.1 Doctoral Awards.....	4
	2.1.1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).....	4
	2.1.2 Professional Doctorate	5
	2.2 Research Master’s Awards.....	5
3	Structured Research Programmes	5
	3.1 Types of Modules	5
	3.1.1 Subject-Specific Modules	5
	3.1.2 Transferable Skills Modules	6
	3.2 Credits Required	6
	3.2.1 Doctoral Programmes	6
	3.2.2 Research Master’s Programmes	6
	3.3 Credit Waivers and Course Variations.....	6
4	Entry Requirements	6
	4.1 Standard Entrants.....	6
	4.1.1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).....	6
	4.1.2 Professional Doctorate	6
	4.1.3 PhD by Prior Published Works.....	6
	4.1.4 Research Master’s.....	7
	4.2 Non-standard Entrants.....	7
	4.3 International Entrants.....	7
	4.4 English Language Competency Requirements	7
5	Application, Selection and Admission Procedures	7
6	Research Student Registration	8
	6.1 Registration.....	8
	6.1.1 Transfer to the PhD Register.....	8
	6.2 Duration of Registration	8
	6.3 Full-time Registration	9
	6.4 Part-time registration	9
	6.5 Transferring from Full-Time to Part-Time Registration and Vice Versa.....	9
	6.6 Suspension and Withdrawal from Research Programmes.....	10
	6.6.1 Suspension.....	10
	6.6.2 Withdrawal.....	10
7	Supervision of Research Students.....	10
	7.1 Supervisory Arrangements.....	11
	7.1.1 Supervision Arrangements within a Department	11
	7.1.2 Joint Supervision Across Departments in Maynooth University.....	11
	7.2 External Co-Supervisors	12
	7.3 Criteria for Supervision.....	12
8	Research Student Programme Stages	13
	8.1 Induction	13
	8.2 Initial Meeting Record	13
	8.3 Progression	13
	8.3.1 Role of Departmental Research Student Progress Committee	13
	8.3.2 Role of the University Research Student Progression Examination Board	14
	8.4 Annual Progression Reviews for PhD and Research Master’s Students	14
	8.4.1 Assessment Outcomes	15
	8.4.2 Notification and Ratification of DRSPC Recommendations by the University Research Student Progression Examination Board (RPEB).....	16
	8.5 Thesis Preparation and Submission	16
	8.5.1 Thesis Formatting and Presentation	16
	8.5.2 Thesis Editing.....	16
	8.5.3 Submission of a Thesis for Examination	16

9	Establishment of the Examination Board.....	17
	9.1 Composition of the Examination Board for Doctoral Degrees.....	17
	9.1.1 Criteria for Appointment of the Board.....	17
	9.2 Composition of the Examination Board for the Research Master's Degree	18
10	Viva Voce Examination	19
	10.1 The Viva Voce Examination	19
	10.1.1 Prior to the Viva	19
	10.1.2 Supervisor's Role During the Viva Voce Examination.....	19
	10.1.3 Venue.....	19
11	Research Master's Degree Examination	19
12	Recommendation of Examiners for a Research Degree	20
	12.1 Recommendation for a Doctoral Degree.....	20
	12.2 Recommendation for a Research Master's Degree	20
	12.3 Possible Outcomes of the Examination.....	20
	12.4 Awarding a Research Degree.....	21
	12.4.1 Examiners Not in Agreement	21
	12.5 Ratification of the Award.....	21
13	Deposit of Thesis in Library.....	21
14	Disputes.....	22
15	Appeals	22
16	Complaints	22

1 Principles

The Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees apply to postgraduate research programmes offered at Maynooth University. These programmes sit at Level 9 (Master's degrees) or Level 10 (doctoral programmes) on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The core of a postgraduate research programme is the advancement of knowledge through original research. The statement of that advancement is the research thesis (doctoral or Master's). The goal of the structured research programmes is to provide a high-quality research experience with integrated support for professional development.

These regulations are informed by the National Framework for Doctoral Education (HEA, 2022), the Framework for Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes (QQI, 2019) and the Irish Universities Association PhD Graduate Skills Statement (IUA, 2022).

These regulations are subject to change. In any given academic session, the regulations that are in place at the beginning of that academic year apply. These regulations should be read in conjunction with the Maynooth University *Marks and Standards*, the *Postgraduate Research Programmes Roles and Responsibilities Statement* and, for collaborative programmes, the relevant memorandum of agreement (MOA).

Responsibilities of research students are set out in the *Postgraduate Research Programmes Roles and Responsibilities Statement*.

Where this policy refers to the decision of a Head of Department, it remains open to the Head, where appropriate and in relation to operational matters, to delegate to an appropriately qualified member of the academic staff of the department.

2 Research Awards

2.1 Doctoral Awards

The doctoral degree is the highest academic qualification awarded by the University. All students for doctoral degrees are examined in the same manner, with external and, normally, internal examiners of the submitted thesis and by a viva voce (oral) examination.

Successful completion and examination of the research thesis is the basis for the award of the PhD Degree and the Professional Doctorate. The completed thesis will be made available online in the institutional theses archive, in accordance with the *Maynooth University Policy on Open Access*.

2.1.1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

The PhD is awarded without classification on the strength of a body of original work of scholarship prepared and presented in accordance with internationally accepted academic standards.

Work for which a degree in Maynooth University, or elsewhere, has already been obtained will not be accepted as the main work for a PhD degree.

The PhD may vary in model and in format of submission. However, the same academic standards apply in all cases.

2.1.2 Professional Doctorate

The Professional Doctorate is awarded in a number of disciplines, without classification, based on a research thesis and other work. The core aim is to make a significant contribution to the knowledge base of and for professional practice through research.

2.2 Research Master's Awards

The Research Master's Degree is designed for students to develop advanced skills in carrying out independent research. The thesis demonstrates a critical application of specialist knowledge and makes a substantial contribution to existing scholarship in the area of research. All students for the Research Master's degree will normally be examined in the same manner, through examination by an external and internal examiner of the submitted thesis. Successful completion and examination of the research thesis is the basis for the award of the Research Master's. The Research Master's degrees are awarded without classification. The completed thesis will be made available online in the institutional theses archive, in accordance with the *University Policy on Open Access*.

The titles for Research Master's Degrees are Master of Literature (MLitt), Master of Science (MSc) and Master of Engineering Science (MEngSc).

3 Structured Research Programmes

To support the original research of individual students, a personalised integrated programme of education, training, and personal and professional development activities is agreed between the student and their supervisor(s), within the framework of the relevant departmental structured research programme. This agreed programme is recorded in a document called the *Initial Meeting Record*, which serves as point of reference for the duration of the research programme and for formal annual progress monitoring.

The department should seek to ensure that mechanisms are in place to promote regular contact between academics, support staff and graduate students, such as orientation programmes, departmental seminars, departmental workshops and training.

The department will produce a departmental graduate handbook and will make it available to all graduate students. The handbook should contain details on requirements and procedures relating to all graduate matters administered at departmental level.

Each department will have a Departmental Research Student Progression Board (DRSPC) to monitor students' academic progress and resolve any issues that may arise during their research programme. The roles and responsibilities of the DRSPC are outlined in the *Postgraduate Research Programmes: Roles and Responsibilities Statement*.

3.1 Types of Modules

The structured research programmes include advanced specialist doctoral and Master's level modules of two types: subject-specific modules and transferable skills modules.

3.1.1 Subject-Specific Modules

Subject-specific modules are advanced specialist courses provided by a department, school or research institute. In addition, a range of inter-university modules and external modules are available for research students. These are usually subject-specific modules.

3.1.2 Transferable Skills Modules

Transferable skills modules include modules offered in disciplines other than primary research area that would enhance the student's skills development. These modules are designed to assist the student in developing and managing their research and future careers across a broad range of employment sectors, including academia. If a transferrable skills module is not part of the departmental programme, students wishing to register for the module must have the support of their supervisor(s).

3.2 Credits Required

3.2.1 Doctoral Programmes

PhD students are required to complete a minimum of 30 credits in taught modules. Individual structured PhD programmes may specify higher minimum requirements. Students may earn additional credits up to a maximum of 90 credits. Subject-specific modules must make up 15 credits and transferable skills modules must make up 15 credits.

Professional Doctorate students are required to complete the minimum credits as set out in their specific programme of study. Professional doctorate taught modules may or may not contribute to the award, as defined in the programme specification.

3.2.2 Research Master's Programmes

Research Master's students are required to complete a minimum of 10 credits. Subject-specific modules must make up 5 credits and transferable skills modules must make up 5 credits.

3.3 Credit Waivers and Course Variations

Students are encouraged to avail of the flexibility of the structured research programmes rather than seeking credit waivers and course variations. Credit waivers or course variations may however be granted where the student has prior certified or experiential learning which mirrors modules identified in the specific programmes. Where the student agrees with their supervisor that a credit waiver or course variation is appropriate in their circumstances, an application should be made to the Departmental Research Student Progress Committee (DRSPC). If the request is approved by the DRSPC, the application should be forwarded to the Director of Graduate Research for ratification.

4 Entry Requirements

4.1 Standard Entrants

4.1.1 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

To be eligible to enter a course of study and research for the degree of PhD in the University, an applicant must have reached a high honours standard in their primary degree (normally an overall 2.1 honours award at Bachelor's or Master's level), or present other evidence that satisfies the Head of Department and the relevant Faculty of their suitability.

4.1.2 Professional Doctorate

Entry requirements for Professional Doctorate programmes are set for each programme.

4.1.3 PhD by Prior Published Works

Entry requirements and eligibility are set out in the Maynooth University Regulations on PhD by Prior Published Works.

4.1.4 Research Master's

To be eligible to undertake a Research Master's, an applicant must have obtained at least a 2.2 honours award at Bachelor's or a Master's level, or present other evidence that satisfies the relevant Head of Department and the relevant Faculty of their suitability. However, it should be noted that an individual department may set a higher entry requirement.

4.2 Non-standard Entrants

Applicants not meeting the above specified requirements may be deemed admissible as non-standard applicants. A case can be made that the applicant's academic qualifications should be considered as the basis for admission. Applicants can also be deemed admissible on the basis of recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL). In such cases, applicants must submit the relevant form for consideration by the Registrar's Office well in advance of the commencement of their programme.

4.3 International Entrants

The Maynooth University Admissions Office reviews applications from non-EU applicants and will confirm to the department where entry criteria have been met. If the Admissions Office does not recommend making an offer, an applicant cannot be accepted. Applicants requiring visas should make their application well in advance of the programme start date.

4.4 English Language Competency Requirements

Applicants who are non-native speakers of the English language must provide written evidence of competency in the English language that satisfy the programme-specific requirements set out by the Maynooth University International Office. The relevant documentation should be included at the time of application.

5 Application, Selection and Admission Procedures

Potential applicants must consult with the department/school/research institute or supervisor to determine whether they are willing to consider the formal application.

The selection and admission processes are undertaken at departmental level. The department will put in place proper selection and admission procedures, which should seek to ensure that:

- The student is suitably qualified for admission for the proposed degree;
- The proposed research project is appropriate for the degree;
- The department is the most appropriate in which to conduct the proposed research;
- The proposed research project is feasible in terms of time, departmental resources (staff, facilities etc.) for the expected duration of the research project.

All applicants must have the support of a potential supervisor before submitting a formal application via the University's online admissions portal. All applicants must formally apply for admission online; the online portal is then used for communication with applicants regarding their application.

Prospective students must accept an offer of a place at least 24 hours in advance of registration.

6 Research Student Registration

6.1 Registration

Maynooth University operates two standard registration times for research students, in September and January. Research students are encouraged to avail of the standard registration times. Student fees are applied for the entire semester in which the first registration occurs.

If a standard September/January registration is not possible, in particular where another registration date is stipulated by terms and conditions of external funding, students will be permitted to register outside of standard registration times.

Students register on either a full-time or part-time basis.

All students are required to re-register on an annual basis in September. Deadlines for registration apply and students who fail to re-register by the relevant deadline will be subject to a late registration penalty.

All registrations are subject to payment of the applicable fees and satisfactory progress.

Research students' registration consists of (i) registration for the programme (whereby they become the university's registered research students) and (ii) registration for modules to be taken in the relevant semester. At the beginning of the academic year, the two types of registration can be completed at the same time or separately; registration for modules can only be completed after a student is registered for the programme for the given academic year.

6.1.1 Transfer to the PhD Register

A student who is registered for and pursuing a Research Master's degree may petition to transfer to the PhD register. The student must submit the transfer request along with the signatures of the supervisor and the Departmental Research Student Progress Committee for approval by the Director of Graduate Research. All approvals will be noted by the Graduate Education Committee.

6.2 Duration of Registration

For professional doctorate programmes, durations of registration are set out in the programme specifications. Normal, minimum and maximum durations for PhD and Master's research programmes are as follows:

Duration in Years Programme	Normal Duration	Minimum Duration with approval from the Head of Department	Minimum Duration with approval from Academic Council	Maximum Duration
PhD full-time	4	3	2	6
PhD part-time	6	4.5	3	9
PhD by Prior Published Works	2	n/a	n/a	4
Research Master's full-time	2	1	1	3
Research Master's part-time	3	2	2	5

Students may be granted an extension beyond the specified maximum period with the permission of their Head of Department and the Director of Graduate Research. Before applying for an extension, students should discuss the matter with their supervisor.

An extension to the registration period does not create a corresponding extension to any scholarship funding that students may be in receipt of. Students must approach the relevant funding body directly in relation to possible extensions of their funding.

6.3 Full-time Registration

The normal duration of a PhD degree is four years of full-time study. Where a student completes the degree early, the Head of Department, in conjunction with the supervisor, may approve an early submission after three years of full-time study.

In exceptional circumstances, Academic Council may approve submission of the PhD in a period shorter than three years of full-time study, but not less than two years. In such cases, the student will be required to pay the full-time fee for the minimum three-year period. After three years, a student may be permitted to progress one semester at a time, so that a student who submits in three-and-a-half years is liable for three-and-a-half years of fees.

The normal duration of a Master's degree is two years of full-time study. Where a student completes the degree early, the Head of Department, in conjunction with the supervisor, may approve an early submission after one year of full-time study.

After the normal period of registration, the fee is normally adjusted to a reduced continuation fee equivalent to the part-time fee.

6.4 Part-time registration

Part-time status for students wishing to undertake a PhD may be granted on the recommendation of their Head of Department. For part-time PhD students, the normal duration of the degree is six years. Where a student completes the degree early, the Head of Department, in conjunction with the supervisor, may approve an early submission after 4.5 years of part-time study.

In exceptional circumstances, Academic Council may approve submission of the PhD in a period shorter than 4.5 years part time study, but no less than three years. In such cases the student will be required to pay the part-time fees for the minimum 4.5 year period.

After 4.5 years, a student may be permitted to progress one semester at a time.

Part-time status for students wishing to undertake a Master's research programme may be granted on the recommendation of their Head of Department. For part-time Master's students, the normal duration of the degree is three years. Where a student completes the degree early, the Head of Department, in conjunction with the supervisor, may approve an early submission after two years of part-time study.

6.5 Transferring from Full-Time to Part-Time Registration and Vice Versa

Students on the PhD and Research Master's programmes may transfer from full-time to part-time and vice versa, where this reflects a genuine change in the time devoted to the research. Where a student has a combination of full-time and part-time registration, the minimum period is calculated on the basis that one-year part time is equal to two-thirds of a year full time. Students must pay the equivalent of three years' full-time fees.

The Head of Department should request a transfer from full time to part time (or vice-versa) in writing to the Student Records Office.

6.6 Suspension and Withdrawal from Research Programmes

6.6.1 Suspension

In circumstances where there is an unavoidable disruption in studies, the University may allow a student to suspend registration for a specified period of time. While suspended, the student is not a registered student of the university, is not expected to work on the research project, and does not pay fees. During a period of suspension, a student should not expect supervision or guidance from the supervisor, or access to University services such as computing facilities, teaching, Library, and other support services. In exceptional cases, a request can be made to the Registrar for continuing access to the Library.

Periods of suspension are not considered for the purposes of calculating minimum or maximum durations. Requests for suspensions must be approved by the Head of Department and processed by the Student Records Office in advance of the intended break.

Suspensions can only be obtained for a minimum of one semester and maximum of one year. Should a student require a further suspension, a new request must be made. Suspension requests should normally be made during the annual progress review.

Suspensions should not exceed three years cumulatively over the course of the programme. Should a student request a suspension exceeding cumulatively three years, the department may ask the student to reapply to the programme. Suspensions will not be applied retrospectively.

Students returning after an unauthorised suspension should request permission to re-join their programme by applying for re-registration to the Registry. Any outstanding fee liabilities must be settled before a re-registration request can be approved.

6.6.2 Withdrawal

Withdrawal is where a student leaves their programme of study before they have completed the programme for which they are registered. A student should complete the relevant form and submit to the Head of Department and the Registrar for approval. When a student withdraws from their programme, their registration is terminated and they are no longer entitled to use the facilities available to students. This includes Library access and access to supervision. Any student who wishes to resume their programme after having been withdrawn will be required to apply for permission to re-register on their programme, which may or may not be granted. Students who are considering withdrawing from their studies should seek advice from their Department, Registry and the Fees Office before making their final decision to withdraw.

7 Supervision of Research Students

Each research student will have a suitably qualified lead supervisor. A supervisory team composed of Maynooth University academic staff members should be established where practicable. However alternative supervisory arrangements are also possible.

Supervision should be available to students during normal office hours. Heads of department are responsible for ensuring that alternative supervisory arrangements are made if the need arises, such as when a supervisor is on leave of absence or where a change in research direction occurs.

Supervisor responsibilities are set out in the *Postgraduate Research Programmes: Roles and Responsibilities Statement*.

7.1 Supervisory Arrangements

The Head of Department should ensure that supervisors do not advise a greater number of graduate students than would compromise the quality of advice to any student or have a negative impact on the supervisor's other duties (undergraduate, graduate, administrative) within the department.

Responsibilities of supervisors are set out in the *Postgraduate Research Programmes Roles and Responsibilities Statement*.

7.1.1 Supervision Arrangements within a Department

Sole supervisor

The student will work with one supervisor within the department.

Co-supervision

Co-supervision involves two equal supervisors within a department who work with the student via individual and joint meetings and correspondence, ensuring that decisions on the direction, scope and quality of the research are agreed and coherently supported. In the case of co-supervision, one of the supervisors will take the lead in managing the administrative arrangements for the student and this role will be clarified with the student before registration by the relevant department.

Supervision by a Primary and Secondary Supervisor

The primary supervisor has the main responsibility. The secondary supervisor has a clearly defined role, usually related to an important aspect of the research. The secondary supervisor advises the student in relation to the defined aspect of the research and liaises with both student and primary supervisor. Normally a joint meeting involving primary and secondary supervisor together with the student will be convened once per semester.

Supervision by a Supervisory Team

A supervisory team comprises more than two supervisors. Team members may have expertise in different aspects of the research. One member of the team should be designated to take overall responsibility for the supervision of the work.

7.1.2 Joint Supervision Across Departments in Maynooth University

This section relates to co-supervision/supervisory teams involved in equal supervision of a student. The student must apply to a single department. Prior to accepting the student, the supervision partners will consult each other and come to an agreed arrangement. It is crucial that supervisory arrangements have been agreed with the relevant heads and/or directors and the proposed supervisors prior to student registration. The students must be fully informed and must be in agreement with the arrangements.

Following registration, the department to which the application was made must notify the Student Records Office of the joint supervision arrangements. Joint supervision is recorded on the student records system which allows the student to register for modules within both departments/schools/ institutes.

Where it is appropriate for a student to be supervised by a team comprised of members of more than one academic department/school or institute, there shall be due co-operation between the departments involved and the following requirements apply:

- One department should be designated as the administrative lead. The administrative lead will be responsible for the reporting of progress and coordination of submission and assessment;

- The supervisory team should work together to review progress and decide on progression;
- The progress should be reported to both (or all) the academic units involved.

In the event of a disagreement between departments which cannot be resolved by the Head of Department, the matter should be referred to the Director of Graduate Research.

7.2 External Co-Supervisors

In justified cases, typically in the case of research projects involving cooperation with another academic institution, an external co-supervisor may be appointed.

The external co-supervisor is expected to:

- Agree the scope and frequency of involvement in the supervision with the student and the lead supervisor;
- Keep written records of supervision and copy these to the lead supervisor;
- Discuss the progress with the lead supervisor at least annually.

Where an external co-supervisor is appointed, the internal supervisor is required to:

- Fulfil the roles and duties outlined in the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor;
- Ensure that the external supervisor is carrying out her/his responsibilities to the student and to the university. This includes contributing to progress monitoring reports and ensuring that they are presented at the required time;
- Meet the student with the external supervisor to discuss the research project at least once a year.

The student will work under the general direction of the internal supervisor whether the research is being carried out at Maynooth University or elsewhere.

Conditions of appointments must be agreed in advance. Normally, no payment will be made to the external supervisor. The Head of Department submits the relevant form to Faculty for approval of the appointment.

7.3 Criteria for Supervision

Generally, supervisors are permanent academic members of staff.

Supervisors are expected to be appropriately qualified, sufficiently expert and interested in the research area to offer the student proper advice.

A supervisor should normally hold a PhD, or have previous experience of supervision of doctoral research, or have equivalent expertise.

Supervisors who have not previously supervised doctoral research to successful completion of a degree are normally expected to participate in training and co-supervise with an experienced supervisor, where feasible.

Full-time temporary academic staff with at least a three-year contract, qualified to PhD level and suitably experienced, may undertake supervision of PhD or Research Master's students with the approval of the Head of Department. The granting of approval will be reported to the Director of Graduate Research who will notify Academic Council. The Head of Department must also provide the name of a member of permanent academic staff as secondary supervisor, and thus ensure that the department is able to provide alternative supervisory arrangements. These regulations apply only to lecturing staff appointed on three-year contracts and not to staff who have completed three or more years on multiple contracts of shorter duration. Students should be informed of the status of temporary academic staff before commencement of their registration.

8 Research Student Programme Stages

8.1 Induction

Postgraduate research students are required to attend the induction programme in the first year of their registration. The purpose of induction is to promote awareness of applicable regulations and supports with content including but not limited to students' rights and responsibilities, rights and responsibilities of supervisors, progression monitoring, research integrity, plagiarism, ethical considerations, potential intellectual property issues, and processes and supports available within the University. Induction programmes are held in September and January. PhD and Research Master's students are required to attend the Graduate Research Academy induction programme in their first year of registration as well as departmental induction programmes. Professional Doctoral students are required to attend specific departmental induction programmes.

8.2 Initial Meeting Record

As soon as possible after registration, the student should attend the initial meeting with their supervisor(s) / supervisory team. The purpose of the initial meeting is to design an individualised research plan for the student, identify modules that will enhance the student's research programme, to agree a calendar of meetings, and to ensure that the student is aware and agrees to the university regulations.

Details of the agreed programme are recorded in the *Initial Meeting Record and Professional Development Plan* (IMR) which is approved by the Departmental Research Student Progress Committee (DRSPC). The IMR informs the annual progress review subsequently carried out by the student's DRSPC.

8.3 Progression

Progress of PhD and Research Master's students is monitored on an ongoing basis by their supervisor(s) and is formally evaluated annually by the DRSPC, usually in May or June. In exceptional cases, at the request of the supervisor or the student, the DRSPC may meet during the academic year if a student is identified as being unable to make progress or if concerns have arisen during the year.

Continued registration for a research degree is subject to successful progress. Progression must be recorded on a student's record in order for the student to be able to register for the following year.

8.3.1 Role of Departmental Research Student Progress Committee

The DRSPC monitors the student's academic progress and provides a mechanism for identification and resolution of any problems that emerge in relation to a student's progress. The DRSPC is responsible for assessing the academic progress of a student through their research programme. It should therefore have the experience and disciplinary expertise to conduct the assessment.

A DRSPC will normally comprise three members of academic staff of the university. Where a research programme spans multiple departments and/or institutions, the DRSPC may include academic staff from participating departments/institutions. In the case of larger/smaller departments, alternative arrangements may be made depending on particular circumstances.

Departments may choose to adopt the same committee membership for all students within the department or to individualise the committee per student. Any member of the committee whose students are under consideration should not take part in the progress discussions involving those students.

8.3.2 Role of the University Research Student Progression Examination Board

The role of the University Research Student Progression Examination Board is to:

- Ratify the recommendations of the annual progress review of the DRSPCs;
- In the case of students who receive a recommendation of Progress with Conditions or Not Progress, ensure that students have been advised of the outcomes of the DRSPC and where appropriate been given the opportunity to provide further information.

Membership of the University Research Student Progression Examination Board will include the Registrar, the Director of Graduate Research, the Deans of the Faculties or their nominees, Heads of Departments or their nominees, a member of the Examinations Office and a nominee from the Graduate Research Academy. The University Research Student Progression Examination Board meets annually, normally in August.

8.4 Annual Progression Reviews for PhD and Research Master's Students

DRSPCs undertake formal annual progress reviews of all PhD and Master's by Research students. The purpose of the annual review is to:

- Assess progression and grant permission to progress based on an assessment of the quality of research output to date;
- Give students the opportunity to indicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their supervisory arrangements;
- Discuss and record any changes to the student's individualised programme;
- Ensure that students have passed their required modules before thesis submission and, where appropriate, that waivers have been ratified by the DRSPC;
- Consider applications for suspension, withdrawal, transfer to the PhD/ Master's register, and transfer to the PhD by Publication thesis submission route.

The following will form the basis of the decision of the DRSPC:

- Annual progress review form, which includes a statement of progress and research plan from the student, the expected time to completion, the number of credits taken to date and the student's feedback on supervisory and departmental support; and
- Interview (optional), which can be requested by the DRSPC or by the student.

First Year Reviews for PhD Students

The first-year annual progress review normally takes place approximately nine months after initial registration. It allows the DRSPC to monitor the student's initial progress and provides a mechanism for identifying and resolving problems early in the process. The result code "Progress on PhD Track" is used by the DRSPC at the annual review to indicate the successful progression of the student.

Substantive Review for PhD Students

The substantive review provides an opportunity to assess the progress made by the PhD student towards their research objectives and goals and ensures that the project is on track and progressing according to the timeline outlined in the research proposal. The role of the DRSPC is to indicate that the project is of sufficient quality and scope for continuation on the PhD programme. This stage marks the transfer from the initial phase of the PhD programme to the latter phase.

The mode of assessment for the annual and substantive review will be determined at departmental level to ensure that academic diversity and different types of research undertaken within doctoral programmes are accommodated as appropriate.

The substantive review normally takes place by the end of Year Two for full-time students, and by the end of Year Three for part-time students. There is an option to postpone the substantive review once for an additional year or to repeat the substantive review process once. Following this further year, the student should progress to the latter stages of the PhD programme, transfer to a Research Master’s degree or exit the programme.

The award of the result code “Progress on PhD” following the substantive review indicates that the DRSPC deems that the project is of sufficient quality and scope for continuation on the PhD programme.

Third Year and Subsequent Annual Progress Review(s)

The third year and subsequent annual review(s) affords the DRSPC further opportunities to support and monitor the progress of the doctoral student. The fourth-year progress review provides an opportunity to confirm that the student is on track to submit or has submitted and that actions have been taken by the department to facilitate submission and examination.

8.4.1 Assessment Outcomes

Assessment Outcomes for PhD Students

For doctoral students, the DRSPC can make one of the following recommendations in respect of each student’s progress:

Progress on PhD Track	The DRSPC believes adequate progress is being made for this point in the research degree.
Progress on PhD	The DRSPC believes adequate progress is being made for this point in the research degree, having completed the substantive review process.
Progress with Conditions	The progress made to date is not what is expected for this stage in the degree. The student may register and continue, but a change in performance is needed. Normally, the conditions set will be revisited by the DRSPC at the subsequent year’s annual progression review.
Not Progress	The University will not permit further registration as (a) the work produced is not of the required standard; and/or (b) the project is no longer viable.
Transfer to Research Master’s Degree	The student is permitted to complete the thesis and have it assessed as a research Master’s degree.

Assessment Outcomes for Professional Doctorate students

Assessment outcomes for the Professional Doctorate programmes are as described in the relevant programme specification.

Assessment Outcomes for Research Master’s Students

For Research Master’s degrees, the DRSPC can make one of the following recommendations in respect of each student’s progress:

- Progress;
- Not Progress.

8.4.2 Notification and Ratification of DRSPC Recommendations by the University Research Student Progression Examination Board (RPEB)

The DRSPC's recommendations are recorded in the Annual Progress Review Form and stored in the department. Students and supervisors are advised to keep a copy of the annual Progress Review Forms. Students, their supervisors and the Graduate Research Academy will be informed of DRSPC recommendations by the DRSPC in May/June annually. Students and supervisors may discuss the recommendations with the DRSPC at that point and submit any further evidence that might impact on the recommendations.

Where a student has been requested to submit supplemental work over the summer period, the DRSPC must re-evaluate the progress of the student prior to the University Research Student Progression Examination Board. The department is responsible for uploading all recommendations for consideration by the University Research Student Progression Examination Board.

The University Research Student Progression Examination Board will ratify the recommendations of the DRSPC. In the case of students who receive a recommendation of 'Progress with Conditions' or 'Not Progress', the University Research Student Progression Examination Board will ensure that students have been advised of the outcomes of the DRSPC, and where appropriate given the opportunity to provide further information. Procedures for appeal of examination results are set out in Section 15 below.

Where a student has received a result of 'Not Progress', applications for readmission to the PhD register must be made in writing to the Registrar.

8.5 Thesis Preparation and Submission

8.5.1 Thesis Formatting and Presentation

Recommendations for the presentation of the postgraduate research theses are made available by the Examinations Office. Each departmental graduate research handbook should set out the departmental style and conventions for written theses and viva voce examination.

Students who have been approved to submit their thesis as a PhD by Publication should consult the relevant policy for formatting and presentation guidance. The student must have received formal approval from their DRSPC to complete the PhD by Publication.

Student completing a PhD by Prior Published Works should consult the relevant policy and consult with their supervisors for formatting and presentation guidance.

8.5.2 Thesis Editing

Professional editing services may not be used in the preparation of the thesis.

8.5.3 Submission of a Thesis for Examination

The supervisor must confirm approval of the thesis for examination to the Head of Department before the student can submit their thesis. The student must submit the completed forms to the Examinations Office, who will confirm that the student is registered, and that fees are in order. In the case of students pursuing joint PhD programmes, supervisor(s) from the partner university (or universities) must provide a written statement confirming their approval for examination which must be attached to the Maynooth University supervisor's approval. The Head of Department confirms approval for examination of the final draft of the PhD thesis to the Examinations Office.

Where a student considers that approval has been withheld unreasonably, the student may appeal to the Registrar.

A copy of the PhD thesis (electronic) and completed Submission Forms for Doctoral Thesis should be sent to the Examinations Office. The thesis must be accompanied by an abstract not exceeding 300 words.

Students pursuing a joint PhD programme should refer to the memorandum of agreement (MoA) applicable to their programme for other requirements applicable to the submission of their thesis.

The Examinations Office is responsible for forwarding an electronic copy of the thesis, the 300-word abstract, and a report form to each of the examiners and the chair.

Further details on the process are available in the *Guidelines for Thesis Submission* and the *Code of Practice for the Viva Voce Examination*.

9 Establishment of the Examination Board

9.1 Composition of the Examination Board for Doctoral Degrees

Detailed information about the role of the Board is provided in the *Code of Practice for Viva Voce Examinations*.

The Examination Board normally consists of two examiners, one of whom is internal and one external to the University. Examiners must be approved by the relevant Faculty on the recommendation of the Head of Department and in agreement with the supervisor. In the case of a thesis being presented by a full-time member of the academic staff of the university (with the exception of students who commenced the role towards the end of their registration or after submission of the thesis), the internal examiner is replaced by a second external examiner. Two external examiners may also be required in cases where there is no suitable internal examiner available or where a perceived or actual conflict of interest might apply. Where there are two external examiners, one of the external examiners must take responsibility for the role of internal examiner, as indicated by the Head of Department.

In the case of a joint doctoral award, variations to the composition of the Examination Board are detailed in the relevant memorandum of agreement (MOA).

9.1.1 Criteria for Appointment of the Board

Heads of Department should ensure, insofar as possible, a balanced gender representation in the appointment of external and internal examiners.

Criteria for Appointment of Examiners (Internal and External)

Examiners should normally:

- Have experience in supervising doctoral students;
- Hold a formal academic qualification at doctoral level and/or a professional qualification or experience at an appropriate level for and relevant to the area being examined;
- Be willing to read the thesis and complete the examiners' reports within specified time deadlines;
- Be available to attend the viva voce examination;
- Not have a close personal relationship with other examiners, supervisors or the student, if it might be construed by a reasonable person as entailing a conflict of interest.

Criteria for External Examiners

External examiners should have recognised expertise in the subject matter of the thesis being examined.

For research awards, external examiners are appointed for specific students, except in the case of some professional doctorates, where external examiners may be appointed to examine a cohort of students on a

programme. External examiners for research students should not normally be appointed more than twice in a four year period. Such appointments may be made irrespective of external examiners' duties with regard to taught programmes.

The external examiner should be independent of the university, of its internal examiners, supervisors and of the student presenting the thesis for examination. Thus, all external examiners should:

- Normally be a permanent member of academic staff of another university or equivalent institution;
- Not have been in the employ of the University (in any capacity) in the five years prior to appointment;
- Not have been a student of the University in the five years prior to appointment;
- Not, in the past five years, have been a beneficiary of any bursary or remuneration from the University other than from posts such as external examiner, member of accreditation panel, member of quality review panel, member of recruitment/promotions panel or similar;
- Not have assisted/advised the student on the work underpinning the preparation of the student's thesis;
- In the case of nominees who are retired, normally demonstrate relevant research activity within the previous four years.

Criteria for Internal Examiners

The internal examiner should normally:

- Have sufficient knowledge (although not necessarily expert knowledge) of the general subject area to judge the quality of the thesis;
- Be a permanent member of the academic staff of the university with experience supervising research students;
- As far as practicable, be independent of the research, the student and the other examiner(s) and not be conflicted in any way in terms of the relationship to the supervisor or student.

If departments wish to recommend internal or external examiners who do not satisfy the above criteria, this should be highlighted in the nomination form and a case provided for consideration by the relevant Faculty.

In all cases, the Examination Board is overseen by an independent chair who is appointed by the Registrar.

Criteria for Appointment of Chair

The Chair should normally:

- Be a permanent member of the academic staff of the University, at the grade of Associate Professor or higher;
- Hold a PhD qualification;
- Not be a member of the department in which the student is registered.

9.2 Composition of the Examination Board for the Research Master's Degree

The thesis should be examined by two examiners, an external examiner who is an expert in the research area and an internal examiner. In the case of a thesis being presented by a full-time member of the academic staff of the university (with the exception of students who commenced the role towards the end of their registration or after submission of the thesis), the internal examiner is replaced by a second external examiner. Two external examiners may also be required in cases where there is no suitable internal examiner available or where a perceived or actual conflict of interest might apply.

In the case of a Research Master's Degree thesis in interdisciplinary fields, where a reasoned academic case may be made that a broader diversity of academic expertise is required to examine the thesis, the Examination Board may be extended to include an additional internal and/or external examiner. The examiners must be approved by Faculty on the recommendation of the Head of Department in agreement with the supervisor.

10 Viva Voce Examination

The aim of the viva voce is to assess the quality of the thesis and to determine whether the thesis is publishable in whole or in part.

All doctoral students are examined with a viva voce examination.

Detailed information about the viva voce examination are provided in the *Code of Practice for Viva Voce Examinations*.

10.1 The Viva Voce Examination

10.1.1 Prior to the Viva

Prior to the viva voce examination, each examiner must separately complete an individual pre-report on the thesis. A preliminary meeting of the chair and examiners is held, often on the same day as the viva voce examination, prior to the time scheduled for the student to attend, to review the pre-reports and to agree the format of the examination. This preliminary meeting should allow sufficient time to (1) agree the format of the viva voce and (2) review the pre-reports.

10.1.2 Supervisor's Role During the Viva Voce Examination

The supervisor(s) should normally be available for consultation with the examiners during the pre-viva meeting. With the agreement of the examiners and the student, the supervisor may attend the examination, but does not question the student and can only provide clarification on any matters when requested by the Board. The supervisor does not participate in the final decision and leaves the examination room while deliberations take place, unless asked to remain by the chair.

10.1.3 Venue

The viva voce should normally be held on campus. External examiners may elect to attend online, with the student's agreement and with the approval of the Head of Department. The Head of Department should inform the Examinations Office that the external examiner is joining the examination online.

In exceptional circumstances (for example, the examination of students based overseas) the examination may be held elsewhere or online, with the prior approval of the Director for Graduate Research, provided the student, Head of Department and Examination Board agree to the arrangement.

11 Research Master's Degree Examination

The student's original research as presented in the thesis (or in such form appropriate to their discipline) is normally the sole means of assessment for the award of the Research Master's degree.

Students of the Research Master's degree will not normally be orally examined unless the Examination Board requests it.

12 Recommendation of Examiners for a Research Degree

Where examiners are in agreement, a joint *Report on the Recommendations of the Examiners* is written.

The *Report on the Recommendation of the Examiners* should comment on:

- The quality of the research;
- The contribution the thesis makes to knowledge and scholarship;
- The written style and overall presentation of the thesis;
- The nature of corrections required (if any).

In the case of doctoral degrees, the chair acts as a coordinator for completion of appropriate forms at the end of the examination. In the case of Research Master's degrees, the internal examiner acts as a coordinator for completion of appropriate forms at the end of the examination and communicates the outcome of the examiners' assessment to the student, recommending any corrections that should be made.

12.1 Recommendation for a Doctoral Degree

The examiners should not recommend awarding the degree unless they judge the work to be worthy of publication, in full or in part, as a work of serious scholarship.

12.2 Recommendation for a Research Master's Degree

The examiners should not recommend awarding the degree unless they agree that the student pursued an agreed project and demonstrated a critical application of specialist knowledge, and the project made a substantial contribution to existing scholarship in the area of research. The degree of MLitt/MSc/MEngSc by research is awarded as an honours degree - there is no assignment of first or second class honours.

12.3 Possible Outcomes of the Examination

The examiners may recommend that the student should:

	Recommendation of Examiners
1	Be awarded the research degree without further examination or amendment.
2	Be awarded the research degree without further examination, subject to making the changes specified, which must be subsequently carried out to the satisfaction of the internal examiner.
3	Be awarded the research degree without further examination subject to making specified changes to the satisfaction of both internal and external examiners.
4	Not be awarded the research degree but be permitted to re-submit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination by the same examiners. In this case, the areas requiring major amendments will be detailed by the Examiners.
5	Not be awarded the research degree and not be permitted to submit for re-examination for the research degree.

Where changes are required, in Category 2 and 3 above, these should normally be completed within six months.

Where the degree is not awarded but the student is permitted to re-submit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination by the same examiners (Category 4 above), the student must be registered in order for the revised thesis to be accepted for re-examination. Normally the revised thesis should be submitted within 12 months following the examination.

In the case of a PhD degree, where the examiners recommend that the doctorate not be awarded and that the student not be permitted to submit for re-examination, the examiners may consider whether or not the work is sufficient for an award at Master's level. If they agree that a Master's level award would be merited, then a separate recommendation to that effect may be made in writing to the relevant Faculty. This option should be seen as exceptional rather than as one of the usual possible outcomes of a doctoral examination.

12.4 Awarding a Research Degree

The *Report on the Recommendations of the Examiners* will be considered by Faculty when the following have been lodged with the Examinations Office:

- One hardbound copy of the thesis;
- An electronic copy consisting of one PDF file mirroring the hard-bound copy;
- Where examiners have advised changes to the thesis, the completion of changes is confirmed in writing by the internal examiner, or internal and external examiner, as appropriate.

In the case of a thesis submitted for a joint programme, the number of hardbound copies may vary. Requirements are set out in the relevant MOA.

12.4.1 Examiners Not in Agreement

Where the opinions of the examiners differ, each examiner should submit a separate written report for consideration by the appropriate Faculty. The reports will be considered by Faculty without the requirement for submission of a hard-bound copy of the thesis.

The Faculty may in such cases:

- Accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
- Accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
- Require the appointment of an additional external examiner.

12.5 Ratification of the Award

Following Faculty approval, the award is then ratified by Academic Council and the Conferring Office is notified.

The Conferring Office informs the National University of Ireland (NUI) of the award of degree following the approval of the appropriate Maynooth University Faculty and Academic Council.

13 Deposit of Thesis in Library

The hard bound copy of the thesis plus an electronic copy of one PDF file mirroring the hard-bound thesis will be lodged in the University Library and in the institutional theses archive and made available to readers. All theses shall remain the property of the university and may be made available in the University Library.

The author of a thesis is required to make a signed declaration at the time of submission of the thesis for examination to Maynooth University regarding the use the university may make of this thesis. The declaration will allow the university, at its discretion, to lend or, in accordance with the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 and the *Maynooth University Open Access Policy*, copy from this thesis, upon request.

Should the student wish to withhold permission for the use of her/his work, a written application must be made to the Director of Graduate Research at the time of submission of the thesis for examination. Such applications must have the written support of the author's supervisor. In the case of a joint PhD programme,

the supervisor(s) at the partner institution(s) must also provide a statement of support of withholding. This application must state the reasons for the request for a stay on access and must provide a contact address.

The standard length of a stay is three years. For the duration of the stay, the author and title of the thesis will be visible in the institutional theses archive, with a note that the thesis is not yet available. Should the author wish to withhold access beyond that time frame, the author must make a further application to the Director of Graduate Research.

Once a thesis is made available in the institutional theses archive, it will remain available unless otherwise directed by the Vice-President for Research and Innovation. Further information is set out in the *Maynooth University Thesis Depositor Policy*.

14 Disputes

From time to time, students and supervisors may encounter difficulties at some point during a student’s programme. Students and supervisors are encouraged to identify, address and settle issues as early as it becomes apparent that problems are arising. Initially problems should be addressed directly between the student and the supervisor(s). Where a dispute cannot be settled at this level, assistance should be sought from the head of department or the departmental postgraduate research coordinator. The head of department/postgraduate research coordinator should discuss the matter with the concerned student and supervisor(s) and write to them giving an opinion on the situation, requesting a written response.

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the dispute will be referred to the Director of Graduate Research.

15 Appeals

Students wishing to appeal an examination result should follow the procedures set out in the University’s *Examination Appeals Policy*.

16 Complaints

Complaints may be made by following the University’s *Student Complaints Procedure*.

Version History

Document	Sponsor	Approved	Review Date
Maynooth University Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees	Graduate Research Academy	Academic Council (May, 2024)	2029
Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees	Graduate Studies	Academic Council (December, 2022)	
PhD Registration and Progression (PhD Track) – Implementation	Graduate Studies & Registry	Academic Council (February, 2020)	
PhD Registration and Progression (PhD Track)	Graduate Studies	Academic Council (February, 2018)	
Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees	Graduate Studies	Academic Council (September, 2016)	

