



TUS

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarthar Láir

Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

TUS Postgraduate Research Regulations 2026 – 2028



Document Control Record Template

Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook Volume 7: No 1	
Document Title	TUS Postgraduate Research Regulations 2026 - 2028
Document Entrust	Academic Council Subcommittee: Postgraduate Studies and Research
Document Status	draft
Revision No	2.0
Pages	Page 2 of 72
Approval Body	Academic Council Governing Body
Date of Approval	Academic Council (19/06/2026) Governing Body (21/09/2026)
Next Revision	2029

Revision History	
Revision No	Comments/Summary of Changes
1.0	Approved by Academic Council (16/06/2023)
2.0	Approved by Academic Council (19/06/2026) Approved by Governing Body (21/09/2026)

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List of Abbreviations

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DGS	Dean of Graduate Studies
EU	European Union
EUA	European Universities Association
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IHEQN	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
IUA	Irish Universities Association
NFDE	National Forum for Doctoral Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PGR	Postgraduate Researcher
QA	Quality Assurance
QE	Quality Enhancement
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RDP	Research Degree Programme
REC	Research Ethics Committee
RIO	Research Integrity Officer
RSO	Research Support Office
TU	Technological University
TURN	Technological University Research Network
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

1 Principles, Governance and Policy

Postgraduate research regulations constitute a foundational framework through which academic institutions safeguard the integrity, rigor, and ethical standards of advanced scholarship. Situated at the intersection of governance, pedagogy, and high-level intellectual inquiry, these regulations delineate the expectations, responsibilities, and evaluative criteria that shape the research trajectory from initial proposal to final submission. They not only codify procedural requirements—such as supervision structures, progression milestones, and examination requirements—but also articulate broader principles of academic conduct, originality, and accountability. In doing so, they function as both a regulatory mechanism and an enabling structure, fostering an environment in which innovation can flourish within clearly defined boundaries. A critical engagement with these regulations reveals their dual role: as instruments of institutional oversight and as dynamic texts that reflect evolving norms in research practice, interdisciplinarity, and global academic standards.

These regulations demonstrate the ambition of TUS to continue to grow postgraduate research activity and further instil research activity within the faculties. An underpinning principle of the endeavour to boost research activity, therefore, is that of resourcing and continuing to build supportive research ecosystems to enable our students to achieve and flourish.

1.1 Purpose

The following regulations define TUS's General Policy and Criteria for Postgraduate Research (PGR) Degrees. TUS operates mutually supporting processes and procedures to promote and maintain high quality research. In the context of these guidelines, 'research' covers a wide variety of activities but always represents a purposeful study or investigation based upon a systematic understanding and critical application of knowledge within a particular discipline/field (or across disciplines/fields). It covers innovative work in the whole range of academic, scientific, technological, and professional fields, including (but not exclusive to) the following disciplinary areas: business, humanities, social sciences, engineering, applied sciences, and creative and digital arts. Research also encompasses transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work.

In all these contexts, 'research' is understood to involve the integration of rigour, reflection and critique with a view to creating high quality, novel outputs within a field, discipline or subdiscipline(s). These outputs can also include products/services that

are marketed for commercial (or non-commercial) use and/or that to maximise social, cultural, economic and/or technological impacts for society.

Each Research Degree Programme (RDP) is distinct and should be considered individually beyond the point where the thesis/exegesis (or equivalent) has been submitted.

Supervised RDPs at NFQ Level 9 and NFQ Level 10 are assessed in accordance with the *Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) for Providers of Research Degrees and Related Services* (QQI, 2017)¹. These Guidelines are prepared in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012.

These regulations are informed by a strong institutional commitment to Quality Assurance (QA) and continuous Quality Enhancement (QE). They are therefore underpinned by the following regulatory, policy and legislative corpus for RDPs in Ireland and the European Union (EU):

- *The National Framework for Doctoral Education* (HEA, 2023)
- *The IUA National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland* (Research Integrity National Forum, 2024)
- *The Salzburg principles* (2005)
- *The Salzburg II recommendations* (European University Association (EUA) 2010)
- *The Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training* (European Commission, 2011)
- *HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research within Higher Education Institutions* (HEA 2022)
- *European Qualifications Framework* (Europass, 2026)
- *Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes* (QQI, 2020)
- *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy* (DFHERIS, 2022).
- *Identifying Transferable Skills and Competences to Enhance Early Career Researchers Employability and Competitiveness* (Eurodoc, 2018)

The *National Framework for Doctoral Education* (NFDE) (QQI, 2023) commits Irish HEIs in graduate research to the highest standards in the provision of RDPs through

¹ [QQI \(2017\) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)

the principles below. These principles are therefore infused in all aspects of RDP provision in the TUS Graduate School and in faculty processes and procedures:

- Original contribution to knowledge
- Institutional responsibility
- Quality of learning environment
- Access to research and expertise
- Learning experience
- Disciplinary diversity
- Delivery of supervision and examination through appropriate structures, processes and practices
- Quality of thesis and examination processes
- Quality Assurance (QA)

Postgraduate research activity shall be conducted in accordance with relevant TUS policies and documents including:

- *TUS Research Integrity Policy*
- *TUS Ethics Policy for Researchers*
- *TUS Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *TUS Intellectual Property Policy*
- *TUS (2025) Research Authorship Policy*
- *TUS (2022) Student Code of Conduct and Discipline*
- *TUS (2025) Principles of Good Research in Practice*
- *TUS (2024) Graduate Research Student Handbook*
- *TUS Export Controls For Researchers Policy Guidelines*
- *TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes*
- *TUS Student Complaints and Problem Resolution Procedure*

1.1.1 Interpretation of regulations

The Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar shall ensure that these RDP Regulations are implemented. In the event of any changes to, disagreement or conflict with regard to the implementation or interpretation of any or all of the Regulations, the matter shall be referred to the Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar, whose decision shall be final.

These Regulations apply in each Faculty and Department of TUS, to all students who are registered on Masters by Research and on PhD/Doctoral degrees². An individual Faculty of TUS may stipulate specific regulatory requirements over and above those specified herein, insofar as such proposed additional requirements do not in any way conflict with or compromise the *TUS Postgraduate Research Regulations 2026-2028* detailed here. Such additional requirements may be implemented in conjunction with these regulations by the Faculty concerned and only that Faculty provided the requirement(s) are approved by the Postgraduate Studies & Research Sub-Committee and Academic Council and are clearly communicated to the Graduate School, supervisors and research students. The requirement for the additional regulations may be rescinded by the Faculty with notification to Academic Council. Specific regulations of this format will be kept by the Faculty and the Office of Vice President of Academic Affairs & Registrar.

1.1.2 Updating of regulations

Regulations for research degrees at TUS are subject to periodic review as required by the Academic Council. This regulations document will be reviewed every two years thereafter unless otherwise required.

1.1.3 Scope of Research Awards

Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study within TUS's range of disciplines, subject to the requirement that the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners for the Award.

The thesis may be supplemented by additional material; for example, in artistic and creative disciplines/subdisciplines, creative work may be used as a support for a submitted thesis. All proposed RDPs will be considered for Research Degree registration on their academic merits and independent external assessment. The research proposal, resource deployment and supervisory arrangements should be sufficient and in line with university quality guidelines, so that the Research Candidate has a reasonable expectation of successfully completing their RDP.

² The use of PhD/Doctoral in this context accounts for the similarities and differences in PhD degrees and other forms of Doctoral education including professional doctorates, and their equivalence on the NFQ.

1.2 Governance of Research Degree Provision

1.2.1 Academic Council

The Academic Council is responsible for overseeing all aspects relating to the academic activities of the Technological University. As such, all graduate research programmes come within the purview of Academic Council including procedures, standards, and academic content. Academic Council is free to establish any such committees to assist it in fulfilling its functions in this regard.

The Governing Body has responsibility for governance of the functions of Academic Council under Section 17 of the TU Act (2018). Academic Council makes recommendations to the TU on programmes for the development of research - Section 17 (3) (d).

1.2.2 Postgraduate Studies & Research Sub-Committee

To this end, TUS Academic Council established a Postgraduate Studies & Research Subcommittee which is responsible for ensuring coherence and complementarity between the RDI functions of TUS and its graduate research agenda and will operate in line *with TUS Academic Council Documentation 2026-2029*. In doing so, the subcommittee will operate in accordance with the Constitution of Academic Council, the by-laws thereof and relevant legislation and standards cited therein.

1.2.3 Research Ethics and Research Integrity

Research ethics is an integral part of the overall TUS research governance ecosystem and committee(s) are tasked with the maintenance and oversight of the TUS Ethics Policy. The Research Ethics Committees (REC) at TUS will be responsible for ensuring ethical codes of practice are adhered to, to the highest international standards. Decisions of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) will be conveyed biannually to Academic Council for noting as part of a full report of research ethics activity presented to Academic Council by the REC chair(s).

In accordance with the National Policy Statement and the National Research Integrity Forum, research integrity disciplinary issues will be dealt with by an official with the title of Research Integrity Officer (RIO). The processes for investigation of research misconduct are outlined in the TUS Research Integrity Policy.

1.2.4 Graduate School

TUS has established a Graduate School led by a Dean of Graduate Studies, Head of the Graduate School (DGS). The DGS is responsible for the overall management of the Graduate School and all postgraduate research students (PGRs) and manages the interface between the Graduate School and all other Faculties, Departments and Research Institutes, Centres and Groups in TUS via the Faculty Research Committees (FRCs).

To further the Doctoral provision of TUS, the Graduate School, working in conjunction with TUS faculties has created a framework and regulations which enable the development of Masters by Research and doctoral programmes (including professional doctorates) by the faculties and propose curricular changes where necessary to individual RDPs and research programmes.

A core aim of the Professional Doctorate is one of enhancing the professional competences of the student in a particular discipline/domain whilst extending the state-of-the-art in extant research and contributing to developments in an area of work/industry.³

1.2.5 Graduate School Board

As with the other TUS faculties, the Graduate School coordinates a Graduate School Board to optimise QA, QE and transparency. The Board consists of representatives of the Faculty Deans, Department Heads which sponsor graduate research studies, Heads of Research Institutes/Centres and groups, dedicated research support roles and research supervisors. The meeting quorum is 50% of the total number of members plus one. At least two postgraduate research students (Masters by Research and/or PhD/Doctoral candidates) will be elected to this Board on a biennial basis.

1.2.6 Responsibilities of the Faculty

The Faculty remains the prime focus of graduate research activity in TUS and the centre of study for PGRs. The role of the Graduate School is specific to postgraduate student administration, actively supporting the research activity in TUS which remains centred primarily with each Faculty. Each Faculty has established a Faculty Research Committee (FRC) to oversee graduate research within the Faculty, the functions of which are outlined below. The Graduate School and Research Support Offices (RSOs)

³ Regulations have also been developed for professional doctorates at TUS. Please see [3 TUS-Postgraduate-Research-Regulations-for-Professional-Doctorates-2024-2026-AC-22.11.2024.pdf](#)

support the faculties in student recruitment, QA processes, postgraduate research funding and the continual development of QE.

The FRC is chaired by the Dean of Faculty or their nominee. The membership of the FRC will reflect the research activity and graduate research programmes within the Faculty on a contemporaneous basis. It shall also comprise Heads of Department, research supervisors, Heads of Research Institutes/Centres and groups and any other research active staff in the Faculty, cognisant of the definition of research outlined previously in these regulations.

1.2.7 Organisational and Reporting Structure of the TUS Graduate School

The organisational and reporting structure of the TUS Graduate School is that it reports into the Academic Council through the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee. The Graduate School and each TUS Faculty will be represented on the subcommittee. Regular reports from the REC and from FRCs will be accorded due consideration by the subcommittee.

2 Award Types

2.1 Structured Learning

Reflecting the transformative and innovative character of graduate education, TUS will actively build upon its existing research programme provision at Masters by Research level and promote the development and range of its PhD/Doctoral provision.

In order to embed key skills required for research performance and employability, and corresponding with the NFDE (HEA, 2023), TUS will require all research students to undertake and complete taught components as part of their research programme. Taught components will cover three categories of skills:

- **Research Skills:** building research proficiency expertise.
- **Disciplinary Specific Skills:** enhancing subject matter expertise.
- **Transferable Skills:** growing personal and professional skills for employability.

As per the *NFDE* (HEA, 2023), the following shall be incorporated into RDPs and module provision as connected to the research skills, discipline specific skills and transferable skills listed above.

- Ethics and social understanding.
- Personal effectiveness transferable skills.
- Team-working and leadership skills.
- Communication skills.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation skills.

2.2 Masters Programme Types

The qualifications on offer to students studying Masters by Research degrees are:

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business (MBus)
- Master of Engineering (MEng)
- Master of Law (LLM)
- Master of Research (M. Res.)
- Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)

A separate NFQ Level 9 offering, the Postgraduate Diploma in Research (PG Dip. Res.) is incorporated as an exit award for Masters by Research programmes.

The Masters by Research will consist of 120 ECTS of which 15 ECTS will be taught modules. A pass grade is required in all taught elements of the course. The Masters by Research can be completed on a full-time or a part-time basis. The usual length of time to complete a Masters by Research full-time is two years. Students must remain on the Masters by Register for a minimum of one year FT before submitting their thesis.

A Research Master's degree is usually three years part-time. Students must remain on the Masters by Register for a minimum of 18 months before submitting their thesis, when completing on an PT basis.

The 15 ECTS of structured learning required by Masters by Research students by the end of their programme of study, are as follows:

15 ECTS credits of Research Skills:

- Research Methodology (5 ECTS)
- Research Ethics (5 ECTS)
- Academic Writing (5 ECTS)

This applies to students registered on the programmes below. The unstructured research nature of the M.Phil. degree circumvents the requirement for module credits.

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business (MBus)
- Master of Engineering (MEng)
- Master of Law (LLM)
- Master of Research (M. Res.)

Students who transfer from the Masters by Research to the PhD register at TUS can carry forward structured learning credits attained on the Masters programme once they have successfully completed the ECTS requirements above.

The Degree of Master's by Research is of honours standard and is awarded without classification. In the case of successful Research Candidates, the Broadsheet of Results should be annotated "REC" (Recommended) and signed by the Examiner(s) concerned. In the case of unsuccessful Research Candidates, the Broadsheet of Results should be annotated "NR" (Not Recommended) and signed by the Examiner(s) concerned.

2.3 Doctoral Programme Types

2.3.1 Structured PhDs

These regulations apply to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – a research-based programme with a focus on the generation of new knowledge and academic excellence. PhDs which require taught modules, are referred to as 'Structured' PhDs.

While separate regulations have been developed for Professional Doctorates, Article Based PhDs/PhDs by Publication and industry-based PhDs to ensure effective functioning, there is exceptionally close alignments between these sets of regulations to ensure accuracy, transparency and maximise quality.

TUS requires all PhD students undertaking a structured PhD to complete a minimum of 30 ECTS credits of such learning by the end of their programme of study. While the taught training requirements of students will be determined by the supervisor(s) and student in accordance with the requirements of the individual students and their RDPs and will form the basis of their Individual Development Plans (IDPs),⁴ the ECTS will be drawn from the following structure: 15 ECTS of Research Skills per the modules below.

- Research Methodology (5 ECTS)
- Research Ethics (5 ECTS)
- Academic Writing (5 ECTS)

And a minimum of 15 ECTS should be completed in any combination from:

- Up to 15 ECTS of Disciplinary Skills
- Up to 15 ECTS Transferable Skills

Elective programmes to complete the 30 ECTS minimum will be agreed by the supervisor and the student in the first instance. Applications shall then be forwarded

⁴ Please see TUS (2025). *TUS Individual Development Plan (IDP) for Postgraduate Research Studies*. (downloaded via [12 TUS-Individual-Development-Plan-IDP-for-Postgraduate-Research-Studies-AC-12.09.25.pdf](#), last accessed 08/05/2026).

to the relevant FRC via the Graduate School for further consideration who will subsequently inform the Graduate School. In some cases, RPL may apply. The RPL policy is covered in the TUS RPL policy.

Records of the completion of individual credit bearing and training programmes should be noted by the student on their Individual Development Plans (IDP), and in student records held by the TUS Graduate School.

2.4 Qualification Requirements

2.4.1 Criteria for Award of Degree of Masters (NFQ Level 9)

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business (MBus)
- Master of Engineering (MEng)
- Master of Law (LLM)
- Master of Research (M.Res.)
- Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)

TUS's Generic Standards for Masters by Research Degrees sets the standard (of knowledge, skill and competence) to be acquired for the Masters by research degree, for the qualifications listed above.

A Masters by Research Degree is awarded to a research student who has carried out a programme of research and has attained the standard specified by TUS in accordance with the level indicators and award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ Level 9). Graduates of Masters by Research programmes listed above should have a mastery of principles and theory of their discipline, competence in appropriate research methods, an ability to manage complexity, integrate knowledge and may contribute to the literature in a field. Required taught modules must also be successfully completed.

The usual word count for a Masters by Research degree is approximately 25,000-30,000 words. The word count for an M.Phil. is approximately 40,000-50,000 words.

The distinction between Masters degrees which are taught and Masters by Research degrees is also noteworthy as *per Ireland's Framework for Good Practice for Research Degrees* (p. 10). This states:

While most Irish degrees at level 9 encompass some learning through research, a master's programme is considered a research degree programme only when the considerable majority of learning is through research. Research master's programmes, even those organised for a cohort of students, are generally managed and administered quite differently to taught programmes.

Evidence of achievement which underpins or parallels the research may be acknowledged in many different ways, but only a substantive piece of research output can justify awarding of a research degree.... Procedures ensure that the thesis, irrespective of format, is held to a consistent standard: i.e. that of a master's or doctorate (QQI, 2017, p. 13)

The overall standard at level 9 of the NFQ was established for the development, recognition, and award of qualifications in Ireland in 2003², which remains the standard as set out by QQI in *Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes* in 2020³.

“Learning outcomes at this level relate to the demonstration of knowledge and understanding which is the forefront of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to the application of knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to a field of study. The outcomes are associated with an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgements. Outcomes associated with level 9 would link with employment as a senior professional or manager with responsibility for the work outputs of teams”.

2.4.2 Examination of Masters by Research thesis

Examiners are required to assess students on all Masters by Research programmes using the thesis as evidence and satisfy themselves that the student has attained the appropriate NFQ L9 standard. The examiners are required to report under each of the eight learning outcome strands (knowledge, skill and competence) described in the standard (see Table 1 for details).

To recommend the award the examiners must be convinced that the student has attained all of the outcomes. The examiners, in cases of doubt or in situations where they require additional clarification on points contained within, may formally request a *viva voce*. A *viva voce* is at the discretion of examiners save in situations where an

M.Phil. is being examined. This degree is always examined by a thesis submission and a *viva voce* exam.

At that point, the Masters by Research degree is either awarded with no changes required, major corrections, minor corrections or they may be advised to remain on the register and resubmit within a recommended time period, or the examiners may recommend a fail grade.

Masters by Research and M.Phil. candidates are assessed by one external examiner and one internal examiner, save when the student is also a TUS staff member, who are assessed by two external examiners. Supervisors must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest (COI) when choosing examiners and should rigorously comply with the TUS Conflict of Interest Policy.⁵

Standard to be attained by the student:

Examiners should assess and may recommend the award of Degree of Master (Research) in accordance with the general criteria outlined in Table 1.

⁵ [TUS Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

Table 1. TUS Award Standard

Title Name	Master's Degree Master of Arts (MA) Master of Science (MSc) Master of Business (MBus) Master of Engineering (MEng) Master of Law (LLM) Master of Research (M.Res.) Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) ⁶
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, ethics, innovation, teamwork, communication, participation in society, industry, enterprise, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	9
Volume	Large
Knowledge – breadth	A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge – kind	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
Know-how and skill – range	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques
Know-how and skill – selectivity	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
Competence – context	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts

⁶ Award standards of Masters by Research degrees map to the learning outcomes of European Quality Framework (EQF) Level 7 in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy.

The Helsinki Conference on master's degrees (Helsinki [2003](#), p.4) an derivative of the *Bologna declaration* stated that students who are awarded a master's degree:

"Must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience. Students with a master's degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner". Table 1 is also mapped to the Bologna Second Cycle, as provided on p. 63 of QQI (2017).

Competence – role	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
Competence – learning to learn	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
Competence – insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
Progression & Transfer	Progression to programmes leading to Doctoral Degree (Level 10), or to another Master’s Degree, or to a Postgraduate Diploma (9)

The degree of Masters by Research is an NFQ Level 9 Major Award and is awarded without classification - (recognised as equivalent to an honour classification for progression purposes).

2.4.3 Postgraduate Diploma in Research

Students who are registered but who have not successfully completed a Masters by Research or PhD degree may be eligible for an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Research. This applies in cases where students have completed the mandatory ECTS credit requirement (15 ECTS) for taught modules and the requisite level of research at 45 ECTS, pending internal and external examiner’s expert assessments of the work that the candidate has reached the required standard.

To qualify, research candidates must complete the following which is equivalent to 60 ECTS.

- 15 ECTS credits in compulsory modules at NFQ L9, Research Ethics, Research Methodology, Academic Writing (15 ECTS)
- A research thesis that is equivalent to 45 ECTS credits at NFQ Level 9 (15,000-20,000 words).

NQAI (2003, p. 20)⁷ states that:

‘Learning outcomes at this level relate to the demonstration of knowledge and understanding which is the forefront of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to the application of knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to a field of study.

⁷ NFQI (2003). *National Framework of Qualifications*. Dublin: NFQI. Downloaded via [determinations.qxd](#), last accessed 07/05/2026).

The outcomes are associated with an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgements. Outcomes associated with this level would link with employment as a senior professional or manager with responsibility for the work outputs of teams’.

2.4.4 Criteria for Award of Doctor of Philosophy

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is available to research students who successfully complete this Research Degree Programme (RDP) at NFQ Level 10. To be eligible for consideration for the award of a NFQ Level 10 (Doctoral) degree, the learner must accumulate the requisite credits as specified in the Academic Regulations for RDPs.

The Doctor of Philosophy award is made on the basis of knowledge, skill and competency normally gained through a validated supervised RDP resulting in the production of a thesis or an exegesis and in the case of the exegesis, an artistic/creative work. Where appropriate, in some instances, a product or prototype may be developed.

The Doctor of Philosophy award is conferred for advanced levels of achievement, in which the research student demonstrates outstanding scholarship and ability. The research student must demonstrate that they have conducted original, independent research, have a broad knowledge of a particular field of study, a comprehensive knowledge of the specialist area upon which their research is focused, and have made a novel contribution to knowledge in their field. Required taught modules and a viva voce examination must also be completed successfully in order to graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. As per the NFQ, the minimum amount of time for a FT student to be registered on a PhD programme is three years before thesis submission (QQI, 2021).⁸ However, the usual length of time to complete a PhD degree is four years.

The overall standard at level 10 of the framework as set out in QQI documentation:

“Learning outcomes at this level relate to the discovery and development of new knowledge and skills and delivering findings at the frontiers of knowledge and application. Further outcomes at this level relate to specialist

⁸ QQI (2021). *The National Framework of Qualifications*. (webpage downloaded via [The National Framework of Qualifications | Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#), last accessed 07/05/2026).

skills and transferable skills required for managing such as the abilities to critique and develop organisational structures and initiate change.'

"Doctoral graduates should have the ability to discover, analyse, evaluate, manage, conserve and communicate an ever-increasing volume of knowledge from a range of sources and think critically about problems to produce innovative solutions and create new knowledge" (QQI, 2017, p. 11).

Examiners must be entirely satisfied that the student has attained the standard for the award. The examiners are required to report under each of the eight learning outcome strands (knowledge, skill and competence) described in the standard as per Table 2.

PhD theses are assessed by one external examiner and one internal examiner, save when the student is also a TUS staff member, who are assessed by two external examiners. Supervisors must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest (COI) when choosing examiners and should rigorously comply with the TUS Conflict of Interest Policy.⁹

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy is awarded without classification. In the case of successful Research Candidates, the Broadsheet of Results should be annotated "REC" (Recommended) and signed by the Examiner(s) concerned. In the case of unsuccessful Research Candidates, the Broadsheet of Results should be annotated "NR" (Not Recommended) and signed by the Examiner(s) concerned.

Standard to be attained by the student:

Examiners should assess and may recommend the award of Degree of Doctor of philosophy in accordance with the general criteria outlined in Table 2.

⁹ TUS (2022). *TUS Conflict of Interest Policy*, (downloaded via [TUS Conflict of Interest Policy](#), last accessed 07/05/2026).

Table 2. TUS Award Standard

Title Name	Doctoral Degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training. ¹⁰
Level	10
Volume	Large
Knowledge – breadth	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge – kind	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers
Know-how and skill – range	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials
Know-how and skill – selectivity	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge
Competence – context	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts
Competence – role	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes
Competence – learning to learn	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts
Competence – insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them

¹⁰ Commensurate with EQF Level 8 which states that ‘Knowledge produced in this degree is at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and/or at the interface between fields’. For more on this, please see [Description of the eight EQF levels | Europass](#)

A level 10 (Doctoral) degree is awarded without classification.

The recommended word count for a PhD degree is maximum of 100,000 words.

2.5 Collaborative Provision and Joint awards

In line with TUS Policy on Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational),¹¹ TUS encourages co-operation with other HEIs, industrial, commercial, professional, enterprise, community organisations, universities, and research institutes, regionally, nationally and internationally, for the purposes of research leading to Research Degree awards. Such co-operation is intended:

- To encourage outward-looking and relevant research.
- To extend the research student's own experience and perspectives of the work.
- To provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project.
- To be mutually beneficial and maximise societal and economic impact nationally and internationally.
- To enable the research student to become a member of a research community.
- Further develop institutional expertise and facilitate research mobility.
- To operationalise the provisions of Irish policy in the area of university-industry (UIC) collaborations (Department of Education and Skills, 2019) which includes *Impact 2030* (DFHERIS, 2022) and relevant policies on internationalisation (DFHERIS, 2024).

As outlined in the TUS Policy for collaborative Provision (National and Transnational), collaborative provision refers to “two or more providers being involved by formal agreement in provision of a programme of higher education and training” (QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (Revised 2012)).

In all cases of collaborative research degrees in TUS, the *TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational) 2023 – 2028* apply. Research programme development teams should adhere to the provisions of this policy in the development of collaborative research degree programmes.

¹¹ TUS (2023). *TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational), 2023-2028*. (downloaded via [Draft document. Confidential to QSU and VPAA&SE](#), last accessed 07/05/2026)

2.7 Change in Research Degree Programme

Where new circumstances make a major change to the research project desirable during the programme of the work, a supplementary application setting out the proposed changes should be submitted on the appropriate form to the Graduate School signed by the principal supervisor. If in order, it will then be provided to the relevant FRC for review. If approved, it shall then to be provided to the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and subsequently to Academic Council for approval.

3. Programme Development and Approval

TUS offers a specifically designed research-based programme within a particular disciplinary or inter-disciplinary field where there is critical mass in the faculty/department to develop and deliver the programme. A submission for approval from a faculty, department or a Research Institute/Centre will specify:

- a) The discipline or sub-discipline area in which the programme will be offered.
- b) The uniqueness of the programme and where it fits with other programmes that are broadly comparable/similar.
- c) The critical mass of research active expertise within the TU.
- d) Research networks (external and internal) which can be brought to bear on the proposed programme including emeritus researcher in Ireland/overseas.
- e) The pool of principal supervisors and co-supervisors available to the programme
- f) The availability of the requisite suite of taught modules in the core disciplinary and non-core transferable skills modules.
- g) If expertise is required from outside of TUS to develop/deliver it.
- h) Professional Accreditation (if applicable)
- i) Alignment of the programme with the TUS Strategic Plan and the RDI Strategic Plan: *Resilience, Sustainability & Inclusive Growth 2025-2029*.
- j) Timelines for delivery
- k) Resourcing that may be required (e.g. library, training, finances)
- l) The necessary financial and infrastructure supports e.g. labs present in the faculty or wider TU to support the planned programme of research.

3.1 Programme Approval

The stages of programme approval are represented in the following table:

Table 3: Overview of the Stages for Major Award Validation

Stage	Overview
1. Preliminary Scoping and Planning Approval	This phase marks the genesis of programme development and usually occurs within the relevant Faculty/Department. It involves the establishment of a Provisional Programme Board and preliminary scoping. The primary step within this phase is the securing of approval for the development of the programme on submission of an application to Academic Council, via the Postgraduate Studies and Research subcommittee.
2. Development of Programme Specification	This involves detailed discussion and developmental work at New Programme Board meetings. An evidence base is generated from appropriate research and stakeholder engagement. Discussion with relevant external stakeholders including industry and employment sectors, and professional bodies form an integral part of this process. This phase results in the development of the draft Programme Specification.
3. Internal Review	The internal panel review serves to provide a critical, independent peer assessment of the programme's design, structure and delivery, ensuring it meets quality standards and aligns with the University strategy. The purpose is to make recommendations on areas for improvement before a programme is submitted for validation and to ensure that the documentation presented is of a quality and standard to be issued to the External Panel.
4. External Validation	The External Review process involves the review of the proposed programme by the External Panel on behalf of Academic Council. The Panel makes a recommendation to Academic Council with respect to the Validation outcome. The New Programme Board responds formally to the External Panel Report and actions the findings, conditions and recommendations as appropriate.
5. Academic Council Approval	This phase involves the Academic Council consideration of the Validation Panel Report and Programme Board Response, through the Postgraduate Studies and Research subcommittee, following by Academic Council Approval of the New Award as appropriate. The External Panel Report, Programme Board Response and Final Approved Programme Document are archived, and a Certificate of Programme Approval is maintained by the Office of VP Academic Affairs & Registrar.

Stage 1: Preliminary Scoping and Academic Council Approval to Develop

The new programme is normally proposed by a programme team in consultation with the Head of Department and the Dean of the Faculty/School. The Head of Department establishes a Provisional Programme Board to conduct initial exploration and further the proposal.¹² Interdisciplinary programmes may involve more than one Department/Faculty, and such programmes may be jointly proposed by Departments and Faculty/School.

- 1) The Provisional Programme Board is responsible for the development of the programme from initial planning to validation and approval. Where appropriate, cross-departmental and cross-campus participation is encouraged across the University.
- 2) The Provisional Programme Board is constituted by the proposing Head(s) of Department/Faculty/School. It shall normally comprise:
 - Head(s) of Department/Faculty/School (lead proposer(s)), as required;
 - Academic staff with experience and expertise in the relevant discipline area(s)
 - Other nominees with relevant expertise may be co-opted/consulted as appropriate.
- 3) The Provisional Programme Board conducts a preliminary scoping exercise with appropriate research to inform and support the rationale and demand for the proposed programme.
- 4) A New Programme Proposal Form is completed by the Provisional Programme Board. The completed proposal includes a summary of:
 - 1) rationale of the programme, including design and delivery options; the uniqueness of the proposed programme *vis-a-vis* other providers; and/or the niche/educational opportunity the programme will address;
 - 2) expected educational demand by applicants for the programme, including projected intake of students;
 - 3) employment, industry, and professional opportunities that the programme will address;
 - 4) resource implications for the delivery of the programme, including staffing and physical resource implications.
- 5) The completed New Programme Proposal Form for Postgraduate Research Programmes is submitted to Academic Council for comment and academic approval, via the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee. The submission

¹² Note: Following validation, the Provisional Programme Board is discontinued, and a Programme Board is established for the management of the programme.

to subcommittee is subject to the approval of relevant Head of Department and Dean of Faculty.

- 6) If approved by Academic Council, the proposal is progressed to the next stage. Unsuccessful proposals may be returned to the proposing team for further information, clarification, or reconsideration of the original proposal.
- 7) An Approved New Programme Proposal is valid for two years from the date of Academic Council approval and expires thereafter requiring reconsideration.

A proposal for a new programme should normally be submitted sufficiently well in advance of the proposed starting date to allow time for the validation process to be conducted. Consultation with the Registrar's Office and Admissions Office and submission of detail of potential new programmes in consideration would be beneficial.

Stage 2: Preparation and Development of New Programme Document

- 1) The Provisional Programme Board in consultation with the Head of Department develop and draft a new Programme Specification. The Programme Specification is developed in Academic Module Manager.
- 2) The Provisional Programme Board builds on the preliminary scoping to conduct appropriate research and stakeholder consultation to inform the development of the programme.
- 3) Programme development teams are requested to utilise the following resources to assist during the process of programme development and validation:
 - a) Putting Learning First: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
 - b) TUS Graduate Attributes Framework.
 - c) TUS Guide to Writing and Using Learning Outcomes.
 - d) TUS Programme Design Guidelines
 - e) TUS Compendium of Approaches to Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum.
 - f) TUS Compendium of Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- 4) A New Programme Specification is required for each award presented for validation.
- 6) The New Programme Specification should be structured and completed with information provided on each of the headings included in the New Programme Template.

- 7) The Head of Department arranges for the submission of a soft copy of the New Programme Specification to the Graduate School Office to support the conduct of an Internal Review Panel.

Stage 3: Internal Review

As part of a self-assessment process, conducted by the programme team, an Internal Review of the programme document is conducted by an Internal Review Panel. The purpose of the Internal Review is to provide a constructive and critical review to support the programme team in preparing the proposal for the external validation meeting, to make recommendations on areas for improvement and to ensure that the documentation presented is of a quality and standard to be issued to the External Panel. The internal panel review serves to provide a critical, independent peer assessment of the programme's design, structure and delivery, ensuring it meets quality standards and aligns with the University strategy

The Internal Review Panel is required to make an impartial judgement on the standard and content of the proposed programme(s).

- 1) The Dean of Graduate Studies in conjunction with the relevant Dean of Faculty/Head of Department is responsible for constituting the Internal Review Panel.
- 2) The Internal Review Panel shall be comprised of no less than four persons including:
 - a) a Chairperson, Dean of Graduate Studies or their Nominee;
 - b) a Dean of Faculty or Head of Department from a TUS Faculty/School not involved in offering the programme for review;
and at least any two of the following
 - c) an experienced Academic from a Department not involved in offering the programme for review, who has discipline-specific or discipline related knowledge;
 - d) an Assistant Registrar/Head of Quality or an experienced member of TUS Functional areas such as CPID or Library *inter alia*;
 - e) one external Academic and/or one external Industry/Employer representative in the proposed programme discipline.

In selecting the panel, the faculty shall ensure that normally at least one member of the panel has discipline-specific or discipline-related knowledge.

- 3) The Faculty/Graduate School Office shall consult with nominees as appropriate, to ascertain their willingness and availability to act on the Internal Review Panel.
- 4) The Internal Review Panel shall satisfy itself that the Validation Criteria for New TUS Awards have been met (*available in Appendix 5, TUS Guide for Programme Assessors, TUS Procedures for Taught Programme Validation/Modification*).
- 5) Where an Internal Review Panel is not satisfied that the validation criteria have been met, the Provisional Programme Board may be requested to resubmit the programme document subject to recommendation(s).
- 6) Where an Internal Review Panel is satisfied that the validation criteria have been met, the internal review panel recommends that the programme may be submitted for External Validation (Stage 4).
 - a) The panel may make recommendations to enhance the proposal/programme specification prior to submission for external validation.
 - b) The Chair shall prepare an Internal Review Report for the relevant Dean of the Faculty/School for issue to the Provisional Programme Board for their consideration.
- 7) The Provisional Programme Board considers the Internal Review Panel Report:
 - a) It shall make the necessary amendments to the Programme Specification(s) in the context of the report;
 - b) It shall prepare a response to the Findings.
- 8) The Provisional Programme Board shall submit a copy of the Internal Panel Report to the Head of Department who shall consider the response in consultation with the Dean of Faculty as appropriate.
- 9) On consideration of the response, the Head of Department, in conjunction with the relevant Faculty/School Office, submits a soft copy of the revised Programme Specification(s) to the Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar's to support the conduct of the External Validation. This notice shall include confirmation that the Report of the Internal Review Panel has been fully considered.
- 10) On receipt of this notice, the next stage of the validation process is requested, that is, the convening of an External Panel for external review and formal validation.

Stage 4: External Validation

The Office of Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar, in conjunction with the relevant Faculty, is responsible for constituting the External Validation Panel.

- 1) A Panel is normally composed of a Panel Chair and representatives from Industry and Academia, as follows:
 - a) a chairperson (an academic with senior management experience in Higher education);
 - b) two academic members of Higher Education Institutions;
 - c) two members from relevant employment sectors/industry.
 - d) an enrolled or formerly enrolled learner.
- 2) The Dean of Graduate Studies shall nominate a Secretary to the Validation Panel to assist and support it with its work.
- 3) In constituting the external panel:
 - a) due consideration should be given to avoid any conflict of interest/perceived conflict of interest;
 - b) efforts will be made to ensure gender balance;
 - c) Former External Examiners, who served in the proposing Department, shall not normally be invited to serve as panel members before a lapse period of at least two years from the date on which they ceased acting as an External Examiner.
- 4) The Graduate School Office in conjunction with the relevant Faculty/Department:
 - a) agrees a date for the External Validation Event and for receipt by the Office of the Programme Specification(s);
 - b) determines if the validation will be virtual or in-person and if in-person agrees the location;
- 5) The Graduate School Office shall issue the following to the validation panel members, normally at least two weeks in advance of the agreed meeting date:
 - a) meeting agenda;
 - b) a Conflict-of-Interest declaration;
 - c) soft copies of Programme Specification(s);
 - d) TUS Guide for Programme Assessors;
 - e) any additional relevant information provided by the Faculty/Department.
- 6) The panel members shall submit conflict-of-interest declarations in advance of the validation meeting.
- 7) The Head of Department and Provisional Programme Board shall undertake any necessary preparation for the validation meeting, including circulating all documentation to team members.
- 8) The External Validation Panel shall satisfy itself that the Validation Criteria for New TUS Awards have been met to recommend approval of the programme(s).

- 9) The Validation Panel can make one of the following Main Findings:
 - a) recommend to Academic Council the approval of the proposed programme(s) without modification;
 - b) recommend to Academic Council the approval of the proposed programme(s) subject to Condition(s) and/or Recommendations;
 - c) recommend not to approve the proposed programme.
 - d) recommend not to approve the proposed programme and request resubmission of a revised programme proposal to the same validation panel.
- 10) The panel may include Commendations and Observations as part of their Main Findings.
- 11) At the end of the validation meeting, the Chairperson shall normally make an oral presentation of the main findings agreed by the panel to the TUS Senior Management Team and Provisional Programme Board representatives present.
- 12) The Secretary to the panel shall prepare an External Validation Panel Report.
- 13) The report shall be agreed by all panel members and signed by the Chairperson on behalf of the panel.
- 14) The Secretary to the Panel shall send the signed Report to the Dean of the Faculty/School and Head of Department for response by the Provisional Programme Board. A copy of the report is sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies and to Office of Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar.
- 15) If the report from the External Validation Panel sets conditions and/or makes recommendations requiring the proposed programme to be modified, the Head of Department arranges for the Provisional Programme Board to be reconvened and additional work to be carried out in response to the findings of the validation process.
- 16) The provisional programme board are required to complete a response to the External Validation Panel. The Provisional Programme Board shall make the necessary changes deemed appropriate to the programme documents in the context of the External Validation Panel report, taking account of any condition(s) and/or recommendations(s). Any changes to the original programme document should be referenced in the response.

Stage 5: Academic Council Approval

- 1) The Provisional Programme Board issues their External Validation Panel Response to the Head of Department/Dean of Faculty for their review.

- 2) The Head of Department, via the relevant Faculty/School Office, as appropriate, organises for the submission of the completed Response Form to the Graduate School Office for presentation to Academic Council, via the Postgraduate Studies and Research subcommittee. The revised Final Programme Specification must also be submitted to the Graduate School Office.
- 3) The response to the External Validation Panel is considered by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee.
- 4) If the Subcommittee approves the response to the report, programme approval can proceed through Academic Council.
- 5) The Subcommittee notifies the subsequent Academic Council that a satisfactory response to the External Panel Report has been received and a Final Programme Document has been created. If required, the sub-committee brings any matters of concern directly to Academic Council.
- 6) On noting the satisfactory response document, Academic Council approves the Programme for an award of the Technological University as relevant.
- 7) When a Programme has been approved, the Office of VP Academic Affairs and Registrar generate a Certificate of Programme Approval, indicating any conditions and/or recommendations attached to the approval. Copies of the Certificates of Programme Approval are retained in the VP Academic Affairs and Registrar and available upon request.
- 8) The Head of Department in conjunction with Dean of Faculty/School shall ensure that required details about the new programme are included in the relevant prospectus, public advertisements, and other publications.
- 9) When a programme does not receive approval, it may not proceed.
- 10) The Programme Coordinator shall send the approved programme for upload to Banner in Academic Module Manager.
- 11) The Curriculum Office shall include the Validated Programme in the subsequent listing provided to the QQI, Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ).

3.2 Approval of Modules – Existing Postgraduate Research Programmes

All modules which are proposed to form part of the curriculum of currently existing research degrees in TUS shall undergo a desk review exercise, conducted by a suitably qualified academic that is external to TUS. Conflict of interest policies should also be observed. This applies if the module is entirely new to TUS or if it has been approved previously but not attached to a research degree. The review should be sent

to the Graduate School for review, the FRC and then the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee of Academic Council and Academic Council.

3.3 Requirements for Entry to the Postgraduate Research Register

3.3.1 Masters by Research

- A student for the Masters by research programme will normally have achieved minimum of 2.1 grade in the relevant discipline in a Level 8 Honours degree award. The Bachelor's qualification is usually in a field of study directly related to the subject matter of the Doctoral Degree although this is decided on a case-by-case basis.

RPL applications for entry to the Masters by Research register can be made in line with the *TUS Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL).

While all Masters by research students will be admitted through the relevant Department and Faculty, approval for admission will be subject to consideration by the relevant FRC which will make recommendations for acceptance or otherwise to the Graduate School for approval by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

In all cases, the research proposal, resource deployment and supervisory arrangements should be sufficient so that the research student has a reasonable expectation of successfully completing their RDP. Prior to applying, a candidate and their supervisors must consult with the appropriate Faculty on the proposed programme of study and must ascertain whether or not the Faculty would be prepared to recommend their application for admission.

3.3.2 PhD Direct Entry

There are two direct entry routes:

- a) Undergraduate award direct entry; and
- b) Masters award direct entry.

All students with at least a 2.1 honours undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline are eligible for direct entry to a PhD programme. All such applications will be considered by the Graduate School, in consultation with the relevant FRC.

Similarly, all students with a Masters by Research in a relevant discipline are eligible for direct entry to a PhD programme. Students who have completed a taught Masters

programme may apply for PhD admittance if they have achieved at least a second-class honours award (minimum 2.2 or equivalent) in the Masters programme. There may be derogations to this in the case of professional doctorates which may require additional professional experience for admission to some programmes. This is decided on a case-by-case basis by individual programme boards.

While all research students will be admitted through the relevant department, approval for admission will be subject to consideration by the relevant FRC which will make recommendations for acceptance or otherwise to the Graduate School.

4 Supervision

Supervision of research students should occur within the framework of a Faculty/Department or of a recognised Research Institute, Centre or Group within a department. TUS ascribes to QQI (2017, p. 41) that *'the supervision of each research student is the collective responsibility of the supervisor(s), the department/school/other appropriate research unit and the HEI'*.

The Dean of Faculty, in co-operation with the DGS and the relevant 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. Although there is variance in the number of research students that an individual staff member can normally supervise (as lead and/or as co-supervisor) across universities, the standard number is approximately eight. In situations where staff members are supervising a higher number of postgraduate research students than eight, the HOD, DGS and the relevant Dean of Faculty must be satisfied that this will not compromise the quality of supervision provided.

In addition, Deans of Faculty, in co-operation with the DGS and relevant Head 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.

The supervisory panel is responsible for providing guidance on the research carried out by the student. All research students will have a minimum of two supervisors - one principal supervisor who will have main responsibility for the oversight and management of the student's research. A co-supervisor will assist the principal supervisor and where necessary provide a complementary skill set to the principal supervisor. Both supervisors will have responsibility for supervising the research student on a regular and frequent basis. A mentor supervisor may also be appointed where the primary or second supervisor have not previously brought a postgraduate research student to completion. An industry, practice or enterprise supervisor may also be appointed when they have significant when they have skills, knowledge, qualifications. and expertise that is relevant and necessary to the project.

- a) When supervisor(s) are being nominated, due cognisance should be taken of any potential conflicts of interest, including those of a personal, research or professional nature.
- b) A principal supervisor will be a permanent academic staff member of the TUS Faculty in which the research student is registered (including Heads of Department, Deans of Faculty, or academic/research staff members). They must hold the level of qualification that the student is studying for (i.e. supervisors of Masters by Research programmes should have already attained a taught/Masters by Research degree previously or in the case of PhD candidates, supervisors must have attained a PhD/Doctoral qualification).
- c) A full-time academic/research staff member of TUS on a temporary contract of four years or more can be appointed as a principal or co-supervisor or mentor supervisor for PhD candidates. FT academic/research staff members whose contract is minimum two years duration can supervise a Masters by Research student as lead, co-supervisor or mentor supervisor. In both cases, the appointed co-supervisor(s) should be prepared to assume primary supervisor duties if the original primary supervisors' contract ends prior to completion of the RDP. Supervisory arrangements should be finalised before the student is registered.
- d) Where a supervisor retires or resigns from the staff of TUS, provision will be made for the supervisor to continue in that role as the first preference until the completion of that RDP, where it is to the benefit of the student and the project. If that is not possible for whatever reason, a new lead supervisor will be proposed to the Graduate School and the subcommittee by the supervisory team. In most instances, the lead supervisor will be drawn from the current supervisory team.
- e) Co-supervisors from other HEIs who hold the requisite qualifications and experience to supervise Masters by Research or PhD/Doctoral degrees can be appointed to co-supervisory roles.

4.1 Qualifications of Research Supervisors

Principal supervisors for both PhD and Masters by Research students will normally be active researchers in the broad area of the student's topic, having a record of peer reviewed publications of international standing or other thematically relevant dissemination activities including exhibitions. In addition, principal/co-supervisors will not be currently registered for a postgraduate research award at the same level as the student.

- For PhD Degrees, the principal supervisor shall be the holder of a Doctoral Degree (e.g. a PhD or Professional Doctorate).

- For Masters Degrees, the principal supervisor shall be The holder of a Master's Degree or higher. This can include persons who hold taught Masters degrees as well as Masters by Research degrees.

Where a Principal Supervisor has not previously supervised a research degree to completion, a Mentor Supervisor will be added to the supervisory team. The Mentor Supervisor will advise the Principal Supervisor on any challenges encountered and their role is mainly to support the supervision team.

Before agreeing to supervise a student, the supervision partners will consult with one another to reach an agreed arrangement. All supervisory arrangements must be approved by the relevant Deans of Faculty, FRCs and the Graduate School, the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council. Students must be fully informed of these arrangements and confirm their agreement.

Where a supervisor is unable to continue to supervise the assigned research student (for any reason), the supervisory panel shall propose a new supervisor to the panel. This proposal must be sent as a formal application to the Graduate School and recommended approved by the Faculty Research Committee and subsequently approved by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

4.2 Qualification of Co-supervisors

Co-supervisors are normally specialists in the research area. Where a co-supervisor is not a member of TUS academic staff, their CV indicating their qualifications, supervisory experience and any publications should be submitted with the student's application, for recommendation by the Graduate School, the FRC and approval by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

Co-supervisors at Masters level will normally have at least a Masters qualification or equivalent. Co-supervisors on PhD/Doctoral programmes will normally have a PhD/Doctoral degree. However, in certain instances where co-supervisors have a highly unique skillset required by the student/panel and/or relevant professional and/or industrial expertise, they can be added to panels as a co-supervisor on a PhD/Doctoral programme if they hold a Master's degree and/or a high-level skillset that is relevant and necessary to the RDP. This should be clearly outlined in an application for appointment as an examiner which is assessed by the Graduate School, the relevant

FRC, and subsequently by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

4.3 Supervisor Training and Support

All supervisors, whether principal or co-supervisors must have taken appropriate training in supervision whether provided by the TU itself or validated by an alternative HEI.

Early career supervisors will be offered a mentor from the discipline area from within TUS or outside of it. The mentor will advise on an on-going basis on any problems or challenges which the supervisors is encountering. The Graduate School in consultation with Faculties will also offer relevant supervisory training including mentorship training for new supervisors.

4.4 Supervisor Responsibilities

The principal supervisor has the main responsibility for the academic supervision of the research student. The co-supervisor provides complementary expertise and experience. Specifically, principal and co-supervisors should:

- Make adequate time available to maintain contact with their research student.
- Agree with the student and the co-supervisors on the scope and frequency of their supervisory involvement.
- Review written records of supervisory meetings and provide feedback on written work where required.
- Discuss the student's progress with the co-supervisory team/
- Provide advice and guidance about the direction of the research project and the strategies that might be used to achieve the research goals
- Advise the student on their specific, transferrable and generic training needs and the regulations governing their RDP within TUS
- Support the health and wellbeing of students and recommend referrals to student services and other supports when necessary.
- Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to students supported by the disability support service.
- Provide guidance on the standard of research expected for a research Master's or PhD/Doctoral degree and communicate clearly to the student how they are performing, particularly when the required standards are not being met.

- Monitor the progress of the research student's work by setting appropriate academic standards and milestones.
- Ensure that lines of communication with the student are efficient, that regular contacts are maintained, and that all important understandings and decisions are recorded and agreed. There should be clear and agreed frequencies of consultations between supervisors and students.
- Provide encouragement, advice and assistance with the presentation of conference papers and the publication of scholarly papers emanating from the research project. This should be undertaken in line with the *TUS Authorship Policy 2025-2028*.
- Ensure that the research is conducted in a safe manner and to the highest ethical standards.
- Participate at the student's annual progression panel.
- Identify insufficient progress as early as possible in order to allow adequate time for re-orientation and address by the research student.
- Notify the Graduate School and relevant Head of Department/Deans of Faculty of any breach of TUS Policies and Procedures by, or any breakdown in communication with the research student.
- Assess performance and provide constructive, timely feedback.
- Provide guidance to the research student on attendance at conferences and seminars where possible.
- Normally co-author a minimum of one peer reviewed publication/output (which can include a conference/colloquium presentation/IDF/Patent application) per annum with each of their research students.
- Provide recommendation on changes to candidature and transfer between
- Registers, where appropriate.
- Nominate examiners for recommendation to Academic Council to assess the research student's final thesis/exegesis/exhibition work.
- Review and provide guidance to the research student on drafts of the thesis/exegesis/exhibition work where possible.
- Attend at the final *viva voce*.
- Liaise with the FRC and the Graduate School on all aspects of the student's assessment and progression.
- Propose changes in supervision arrangements where appropriate and where necessary.

- Maintain a written record of all interaction with the student. This should form the basis of the staged review report to be submitted to the Research Progression Review Panel.
- Ensure registered research students are attending and actively engaged in their IDPs (where appropriate).
- Notify the Graduate School Office and relevant Head of Department/Deans of Faculty of any breach of TUS Policies and Procedures by, or any breakdown in communication with the research student.

All supervisors (lead, co-supervisors and mentor supervisors) are expected to:

- Adhere to TUS Policies and Procedures.
- Actively publish, attend and present at conferences
- Collaborate with external organisations.
- Apply for external research funding.
- Adhere to QQI (2017) '*Good Practice Statements*' on supervision (Part 8), pp. 43-46.¹³

4.5 Change in Supervisor

If a research student requests a change in supervisor and/or if a staff member wishes to cease supervision, this request should be put forward on the appropriate form. Changes in supervision from the current supervisory team to the Graduate School, the FRC and approval by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

4.6 Complaints and Conflict Resolution

The existing complaints procedures in the *TUS Student Complaints and Problem Resolution Procedure*¹⁴, will apply for students registered on Research Degree Programmes.

¹³ Note: the 'Good Practice' statements also contain provisions for individual HEIs to support timely completion and is organised around the following Supervision, Support for and monitoring of timely progress toward completion, formal monitoring of progress and preparing to submit a thesis.

¹⁴ TUS (2022). *TUS Student Complaints and Problem Resolution Procedure 2022 – 2025*. (Downloaded via [3 TUS Student Complaints and Problem Resolution Procedure 2022 - 2025 1.pdf](#), last accessed 07/05/2026).

5 Studentship

5.1 Induction

Research student success is linked to a sense of belonging to the research community in a discipline or HEI, to an ability to understand the norms and expectations of that community and to the quality of the research community. TUS endeavours to ensure that research students are provided with an environment that is conducive to successful completion of their research, and to the training and career development of the student.

In order to assist students to become familiar with the TUS research community, all research students are required to attend the annual induction programme for postgraduate researchers. Additional to this, some faculties or departments may require students registered in their departments to attend short subject-specific induction courses.

The Research Postgraduate Induction Programme aims to:

- a) Provide orientation including information on Student Support Services, Careers Service, Computer Services, Health & Safety, Library Services, Grants & Fees and any other relevant support functions.
- b) Introduce research students to the TUS Research Community, including existing research students in disciplines other than their own, Postgraduate Society, Research Management, and Senior Researchers in TUS's Research
- c) Institutes/Centres and Groups.
- d) Make research students aware that they are required to be conversant with TUS regulations, procedures and standards with respect to research and scholarship including the functioning of the Research Ethics Committee, their rights and responsibilities as research students and the rights and responsibilities of supervisors.
- e) Inform research students that there are standard norms and methods for carrying out research including ethical considerations and plagiarism, the presenting of research in the form of theses/exegeses, articles for journals, submission guidance on Moodle and Turnitin and training opportunities
- f) Encourage research students to embrace good research practice, to become knowledgeable of relevant institutional policies, including IP and the authorship policy and the importance and operations of Pure.

- g) Present research students with information on a variety of aspects of research management, skills training, information on laboratories, postgraduate researcher's rooms and other facilities and include presentations from postgraduates who have recently completed their research.
- h) Introduce students to Student Union postgraduate representatives and the supports the Student Union can provide to students.
- i) Promote a good research environment for research students, thereby pre-empting academic isolation.
- j) Sign the TUS Postgraduate Research Student/Supervisor Learner Agreement.

5.2 Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Thesis Planning

Research students are issued with an Individual Development Planner (IDP) for identification of research, discipline specific and transferable skills training needs at the beginning of their studies. The IDP is completed in collaboration with the principal supervisor, and the research student shall be invited to appropriate training sessions provided by the TUS Graduate School on how to use the IDP to maximum effect. As learning styles are heterogeneous and supervisors have different styles, the IDP is not compulsory for students, but it shall be provided as a tool, nonetheless.

A Generic Thesis Planner shall also be provided at Postgraduate Research Induction. This is a tool used by the research student and principal supervisor during thesis preparation. It shall also be made available by the Graduate School to individual students and supervisors to assist with planning and progression.

5.3 Research Student Responsibilities

The research student must:

- Remain in good financial standing with TUS.
- Attend and actively participate in the provided Postgraduate Research Induction, annual progression, examination and assessment and relevant training sessions identified by the student with their supervisory panel.
- Undertake mandatory and elective modules as agreed with their supervisor.
- Be conversant with and adhere to TUS rules and regulations governing research and awards by research and they must not undertake any research without prior appropriate approval being granted by TUS's Research Ethics committee.

- Agree in advance with the supervisor(s) the programme of work, research question, aims, objectives and timeframe for the proposed programme, including the nature and extent of the guidance expected.
- Conduct their programme of work in a professional and ethical manner in accordance with the TUS Research Integrity Policy and TUS Ethics Policy and comply with all relevant legislation, including but not limited to GDPR and TUS health and safety policy.
- Maintain an Individual Development Plan (IDP) where appropriate and as agreed with supervisors.
- Remain aware of the need to identify valuable Intellectual Property arising from all work carried out on their RDP.
- Disseminate research findings in a manner consistent with best practice adhering to TUS's Research Publication Policy.
- Regularly attend and present at research seminars (local and/or external) at the direction of their principal supervisor.
- Agree a schedule of meetings with the supervisor(s) and arrangements for the evaluation of progress.
- Inform the supervisor(s) of any significant problems and difficulties encountered as early as possible.
- Participate as deemed appropriate in seminars or colloquia organised by Faculty.
- Submit a thesis/exegesis in accordance with the schedule of examinations of TUS.
- Ensure that the thesis/exegesis presentation format is in accordance with the TUS Regulations.
- Not initiate contact with External and/or Internal Examiner(s);
- Sign the TUS Postgraduate Research Student/Supervisor Learner Agreement.

Students failing in this regard will have their registration reviewed under "Sanction" and/or "Termination" procedures (as appropriate).

5.4 Research Students Learning and Development

The provision of a research-informed teaching environment is a stated TUS Strategic Priority. It is important therefore that postgraduate research students in TUS should

both seek, and be facilitated with, opportunities which allow them to bring their research activity and findings to undergraduate students.

Postgraduate students in receipt of a TUS funded stipend are normally allocated tutorial and laboratory demonstration hours. This equates to a maximum of two hours per week which they can do in lieu of their stipend payment and a further four hours that they can be paid for. Students who receive stipends from other external sources like Research Ireland (ri) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) (non-TUS funded) can be allocated six hours in total and can be paid for all six.

The nature and quantum of any such allocation should be agreed in advance through consultation between the student, principal supervisor, the Graduate School, and the principal supervisor's Head of Department. Such consultation should seek to ensure that any such hours of delivery are consistent with the postgraduate student's individual RDP and should be cognisant of the timeframe for completion for that student. Tutorial and demonstration hours should also correspond to guidance agreed at Academic Management Group (AMG) on hours allocation for PGRs. They should also be allocated to tutoring and demonstration work only.

Postgraduate research students should not normally be allocated greater than 140 such hours over a single academic year in this manner.

6 Application and Registration

6.1 Application

TUS's consideration of applications to Masters by Research and PhD/Doctoral programmes is based on assessing the knowledge, skill and competence of each applicant who intends to seek registration as a research student. In all cases, the relevant FRC will consider all applications for RDPs and make a recommendation for acceptance or otherwise to the Graduate School.

New research programmes will be considered for approval by Academic Council on recommendation from the Graduate School and the Postgraduate Studies and Research subcommittee.

On successful completion of application procedures and approval by Academic Council, applicants shall be enrolled on the relevant postgraduate degree at TUS.

While students will normally enrol and register either in Semester 1 or Semester 2 of each academic year, multiple times of entry will be facilitated, and approvals will occur throughout the year.

Registration for part-time research may be permitted by TUS provided that students can attend TUS for such periods as are necessary for student induction, adequate supervision, completion of taught modules, laboratory work or desk research (or any other meetings that may be necessary).

Research students on the full-time register who obtain other full-time employment may apply in writing to the FRC via the Graduate School for transfer to the part-time register for the remainder of their registration. Such applications must have the written support of the Principal Supervisor. Where transfer is affected, the new time limits apply from the original date of full-time registration.

6.2 Registration

To qualify for entry to a research degree, students must be registered with TUS for a minimum period of time. The minimum period of registration for a Master's degree by research is one year (full-time equivalent) and for a PhD degree is three years (full-time equivalent) - which may include time spent pursuing a Masters RDP or a Masters, prior to transferring to the Doctoral register. Research students may also register on a part-time basis, with minimum registration related to full-time equivalence.

All students are required to re-register on an annual basis. Such registration is subject to payment of the appropriate fees and satisfactory progress certified by the progression panel and endorsed by the Head of School, DGS or their nominee(s).

6.2.1 Dual Registration

A research student shall not be eligible to register for a Masters by Research degree or Degree of Doctor of Philosophy if simultaneously they are registered for another programme within TUS or another HEI, without the prior permission of Academic Council for such dual registration. This applies to students who are registered for a research degree at TUS, but who may be completing a Bachelors, Masters or a PhD, or other qualification leading to a major award at another HEI.

Instances where a research student may be permitted to register for another programme or module of study concurrently with the RDP registration, are that either the RDP registration or the other programme of study is by part-time study and that the dual registration either benefits or at a minimum does not detract from the research. A student seeking dual registration should apply on the appropriate form to the Graduate School and the FRC. This is normally accompanied by a letter from the supervision team confirming that they are knowledgeable of the dual registration with an accompanying detailed plan for the RDP and suitable and appropriate outputs that are relevant to the research for the length of time that the student remains registered on the non-RDP programme.

6.2.2 Change in Registration Status

Changes in registration status recommended by the supervisors are brought to the FRC for approval and recommendation to the Graduate School. Changes to registration status may include:

- a) Application for a change in thesis title.
- b) Application for a change in registration mode from full-time to part-time and vice versa.
- c) Application to withdraw from a research degree programme.

6.2.3 Student Residency Status

Students must be compliant with current government residency policy.

6.4 Sanction

Allegations of misconduct against a research student will be investigated in accordance with the principles of natural justice and in accordance with the procedure set out in the *TUS Student Code of Conduct and Discipline 2023-2026* as appropriate.

6.5 Freeze/Interruption of Studies and Withdrawal

In special circumstances other than academic e.g. financial, medical or personal reasons a student may be granted a freeze of registration/interruption of studies. An initial application to freeze registration may last for up to six months' leave of absence from the postgraduate register. Application should be made to the FRC via the Graduate School using the appropriate form. Where the application is linked to personal issues including health, maternity, paternity, parental, adoptive, compassionate, carer's leave, processing of the application will be aligned with overarching HR policies and take cognisance of GDPR implications. Supervisors and students should indicate any academic or financial implications to the student when a freeze of registration is requested. In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the relevant FRC, this period may be extended up to a maximum of one calendar year.

The outcome of the review of the student's circumstances will be forwarded to the student, and other relevant internal and external bodies as required. The student's registration is deemed to be held at this point, and any time lapse will not count towards the minimum registration period required before submission. Fees for the period of leave of absence will not apply.

Prior to readmission to the Doctoral or Masters register, as applicable, the student must review in detail the work to date with their supervisor(s). Once the appropriate form has been completed and signed by the student, supervisor and Head of Department, it should be presented for approval by the Research Committee and recommended to the Graduate School.

If through a combination of circumstances, research has been halted for a period of two years or more, in instances where the student's research or data has been superseded or any required facilities/resources are no longer available, the supervisor(s), DGS and Head of Department will review any revised research proposal. Once the revised research proposal has been agreed and the Research Postgraduate Readmission Form has been completed and signed by the student,

supervisor(s) and the Head of Department, it should be presented for approval by the Research Committee and recommended to the Graduate School.

In instances where the supervisory expertise in the original or new research area is unavailable, the Head of Department will recommend revised appropriate supervision arrangements. The recommendation will be reviewed for approval by the Faculty Research Committee, for recommendation to the Graduate School. On resumption of their studies, a research student who has completed the minimum registration period for their research degree must re-register and pay the appropriate academic fee.

6.6 Termination

FRCs may recommend to the Graduate School and Academic Council a termination of registration on foot of a review of the student's progress in accordance with the procedures specified in these Regulations. Examples include but are not limited to unsatisfactory progress illustrated in progress reports, disciplinary procedures being pursued, or a breach of Academic or Examination Regulations.

While every effort will be made to facilitate research students, in the case of a student who ceases communication with TUS and does not respond to efforts made to remain in communication, the student will not be approved to progress and will be removed from the relevant research postgraduate register.

In cases where a research student's registration has been terminated, should they wish to present for the relevant award at a future date, they may re-apply for registration as outlined in the next section.

6.7 Re-Application for Registration

The appropriate application form, signed by the proposed supervisory panel, Head of Department and Dean of Faculty, should be submitted for consideration by the relevant FRC and recommended to the Graduate School for approval.

7 Progression & Transfer

7.1.1 Research Progression Review Panel

Working collaboratively with the TUS Graduate School, FRCs and supervisory panels will put in place a Research Progression Review Panel.

This is to ensure the student's progress is monitored on an ongoing basis. Normally this panel will be constituted prior to the summer examination board. Panels may also be convened at other times of the year to review research student performance, at the request of the Head of Department, supervisor or research student, with decisions reported back to the FRC and the Graduate School. This staged progression report, will relate to relevant milestones achieved by the research student and must be reflective of full-time and part-time registration status. Students who have been approved to freeze registration will not be put forward for the Research Progression Review Panel.

The following topics are significant to these progression reviews, but supervisors, faculties and departments may wish to adapt these to suit individual students' circumstances:

- Areas of achievement
- Progress with fieldwork and/or laboratory work
- Timelines for submission of chapters and/or publications
- Assessment and examination
- Modules and transferable skills
- Publications/research dissemination
- Careers

The Research Progression Review Panel will normally consist of the supervisor(s), the Dean of Faculty/DGS (or their nominee/representative) and at least one independent panel member, nominated by the Dean of Faculty/DGS. The panel member should be independent to the research (i.e. they should not or ever have been a supervisor of the student/project). The Chairperson will be a research active academic who meets the criteria to be a principal supervisor on PhDs in TUS. The supervisors cannot act as chairpersons of the Research Progression Review Panel.

The Progression Assessment Guidance should inform the standards of the progression panels across TUS faculties.

7.1.2 Annual Research Progression Review

The panel shall require the research student to make a written presentation of their research and/or present their research to the panel. The Research Progression Review Panel's assessment of a research student's progress will take cognisance of the duration on the research register, full or part-time registration and, where applicable, the programme structure approved by TUS.

The purpose of Research Progression Review Panel is to adjudicate on whether or not sufficient progress has been maintained to enable the research student progress to the next stage of the research undertaking. The Panel's recommendation shall be one of the following:

- a) the student meets the criteria to progress to the subsequent stage;
- b) the student does not meet the criteria to progress to the subsequent stage and is referred to the relevant FRC.

In cases where the student does not meet the criteria to progress to the subsequent stage in advance of the summer exam board, they will be invited to repeat their Research Progression Review Panel in advance of the autumn exam board.

- Students who do not attend or engage with the progression process will be removed from the register.
- Students who successfully progress to the next stage of study, are not guaranteed to gain an award.
- The research progression review panel process does not need to be undertaken by research students who have submitted a copy of their thesis for examination or those on an approved freeze from their studies.
- Students who have returned from a freeze on their studies within ten weeks prior to the progression meeting are also exempt.
- Students who are completing the final changes/amendments to their dissertation after their viva examinations are also exempt from panels.
- Students who completed a transfer viva within 10 weeks prior to the date of the progression panel are exempt. Also, students who have submitted their transfer reports and who are awaiting a transfer viva are excused.

7.1.3 Transfer from Masters to PhD Register

The transfer viva shall be chaired by an independent chairperson who is independent of the research student supervisory panel and shall include at least one External Examiner and one internal examiner, save when the student is a staff member. In such cases, two external examiners shall be appointed. The panel shall be convened to consider transfer of a research student from the Masters to the PhD register, as relevant.

The research student shall complete and submit a written report on their research and students are advised to discuss the content of the Confirmation or Transfer Report with their academic supervisor(s). The panel shall require the research student to present their research in a *viva voce* style format to the panel.

In cases where the proposed research is being carried out in the context of a larger research programme, the research report should put the student's project in context. In particular, the research proposal should seek to critically discuss how it will meet the criteria for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Table 2), the contribution of the student to the project to date and the distinctive and original contribution that the research makes to the field of study.

The Written Report prepared by the student must include:

- a) Substantial report on progress and achievements to date in the Masters (append copy of original Masters Research proposal).
- b) Abstract (maximum 400 words) summarising the progress and achievements with respect to the original work plan.
- c) Maximum 10,000-word report on the research carried out to date for students transferring to structured doctoral degrees with the exception of PhDs by Practice. The word limit for students transferring to the PhD by Practice is 7000 words. This may also be accompanied by a body of artistic work.

For the transfer, the precise format of the report will vary according to the nature of the research project but as a general guideline, will include:

- An abstract;
- Introductory sections including aims, formulation of research question(s) and theoretical or conceptual aspects of the research;
- A substantial literature review;

- Proposed methodology including the design, sampling, data collection tools, data analysis technique(s) as well as ethical issues as relevant;
- Work carried out to date which may also include any alterations to the original work plan;
- A section detailing future research objectives and plans with an accompanying GANNT chart;
- Details of any publications/exhibitions to date;
- A proposed feasible timeline for the completion of the research.

7.1.4 Review Process

The decision of the Research Progression Review Panel and Transfer from Masters to PhD Register Panel may be reviewed. Students have the right to seek a review of the decision of these panels.

8 Examination

In the case of applications for final examination, the Principal Supervisor, on behalf of the supervisory panel, shall complete and submit An Intention to Submit for Examination Form. Only in exceptional circumstances may a student be facilitated in the absence of the support of their supervisory panel to apply for final examination. In such cases, the student must supply a supportive letter/statement from the Dean of Faculty and HOD to the Graduate School and the relevant FRC.

The documentation listed below must be submitted to the Graduate School for notification to the Academic Council via the Graduate School at least six months in advance of the relevant Research Postgraduate Examination Board.

- A fully completed and signed notice of intention to submit for examination form with accompanying documentation (i.e. detailed CVs for proposed examiners).
- Confirmation that the required ECTS have been successfully achieved.

The Graduate School shall ensure that the criteria for the appointment of Examiners and Independent Chair are fulfilled, together with achievement of ECTS credits.

8.1 Examiner qualifications

The supervisory team, via the Research Committee propose the external and internal examiners. CV's of proposed examiners will be provided to the relevant FRC and the Graduate School for approval by the Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee and Academic Council.

Examiners must have demonstrably high levels of competence in the specific area/discipline/subdiscipline of the research, manifest through publications record in the area, conference publications or outputs that are sufficiently linked to the topic being examined. These stipulations apply to all TUS research examinations and to the internal and external examiners.

8.1.1 Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners

External examiners shall be independent of TUS (i.e. employed in another institution), the research student and their supervisory panel, and any collaborating or sponsoring institution where appropriate. Appointments must be in line with the TUS Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy.

Two external examiners must be appointed if the research student is a staff member of TUS. If the student is not a member of staff, they should have one internal and one external examiner.

The external examiner will be a specialist in the subject area, will be known for their contribution to, and will normally be currently active in research in the research student's discipline area. The external examiner will have academic qualifications to at least the level of the award to be examined.

At least one examiner shall normally have experience of examining research degrees at least at Masters by Research level. In an examination for a PhD award, at least one examiner shall have experience of examining the award of PhD.

An external examiner shall not normally be a supervisor of another research student of TUS.

Former members of staff or students of TUS should not be proposed as external examiners for RDPs until five years after the termination of their employment or period of study.

No staff member who is registered for an RDP at TUS may act as an external or internal examiner at the level which they are studying at themselves.

An external examiner cannot examine more than three theses in any five-year period for TUS. In exceptional circumstances, an appeal to allow the same external examiner to examine within the exclusion period can be made to the Vice President Research Development & Innovation and the Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar.

8.1.2 Criteria for the Appointment of Internal Examiners

The research student's thesis shall be examined by at least one internal examiner in addition to the external examiner(s). The internal examiner shall not be the research student's supervisor and should not have supervised the student previously in the course of their RDP. COI must be observed.

In addition to examining the thesis, the Internal Examiner has an administrative role in maintaining contact as appropriate with the Graduate School on behalf of the other Examiner(s) with regard to assessment. When the student is a staff member, two external examiners shall be appointed.

8.1.3 Independent Chair

An objective chairperson who is independent of the research student, supervisory panel, collaborating or sponsoring institution(s), and the Examination team will be nominated by the Graduate School. In advance of viva examinations, all chairs are required to complete mandatory training on the role of the chair convened by the Graduate School in conjunction with TUS faculties.

The Independent Chair appointed shall meet the requirements for principal supervisor of an RDP in TUS. Where possible, independent chairs for PhD/Doctoral level RDPs shall be chaired by staff members who also hold PhD/Doctoral level qualifications. In the case of viva voce examinations at Masters level, where appropriate, independent chairs who hold at least a Masters Degree shall be appointed.

A non-voting, objective chair is a requirement for the following processes:

- Final practice-based Masters Examination.
- Final Masters by Research where a *viva voce* is requested by the External Examiner.
- Masters to PhD Transfer examinations.
- Final PhD *viva voce* examination
- Viva voce examinations for all other doctoral degrees including professional doctorates.

The Chairperson is required to send his/her report to the Graduate School as soon as possible after the assessment on the appropriate form. The report should include a brief outline of the exam, with any unusual incidents reported (if there are any), if breaks were taken and at what times, the names of each of the Examiners along with a report of the consensus recommendation.

Chairs and examiners must not deviate from the options presented to them in the relevant forms.

8.1.4 Examiner Recommendations

Where the Examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, TUS may:

- a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
- b) accept the recommendation of the external examiner(s);

- c) require the appointment of an additional External Examiner, whose appointment will be processed through the Postgraduate Studies and Research Sub Committee in the normal manner.

Where an additional External Examiner is appointed, they shall prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the submission and, if considered necessary, conduct a further *viva voce*. That examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. In instances where this is a re-examination, the examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners.

One re-examination may be permitted by TUS subject to the following requirements:

- a) A Research Candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners at the examination (including the *Viva Voce*) may on the recommendation of the Examiners and the approval of Academic Council be allowed to submit the thesis and be re-examined. This applies to students who attain a fail grade in their Masters by Research/PhD/Doctoral degree and those who are recommended to remain on the register with no degree awarded.
- b) The Examiners must provide the Research Candidate with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission.
- c) The Research Candidate must submit for re-examination within the period of one calendar year from the date that the result was conveyed to the student. The Postgraduate Studies and Research Subcommittee may, where there are good reasons, recommend an extension of this period to Academic Council for a maximum of six additional months (i.e. certified illness).

The following also applies to research degree examinations.

- a) Where the Research Candidate's performance in the *Viva Voce* was satisfactory, but the thesis was unsatisfactory, the Examiners may request resubmission of the thesis. TUS may or may not exempt the Research Candidate from a second *Viva Voce* or otherwise depending on the views of examiners.
- b) Where the thesis submission is considered satisfactory but the performance in the *Viva Voce* does not satisfy the Examiners, the Research Candidate may be re-examined in the *Viva Voce* and/or other Examinations. A strict time limit of two calendar months from the date of the first *viva voce* will apply.
- c) Where on the first examination the thesis and the *viva voce* satisfies the Examiners but the Research Candidate's performance in modules is not satisfactory, the

requisite number of ECTS credits must be completed prior to the relevant final exam board.

8.1.5 Reports of Internal and External Examiners

Following completion of the examination process the internal and external examiners should prepare their final reports and forward them to the Graduate School. Separate forms apply for the Master's, Transfer and PhD exam processes. Internal and external examiners should forward separate reports.

In circumstances where corrections to the thesis are required (either minor or major), the examiners must indicate to the research candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required. The amended thesis must be submitted within the requisite timeframe as agreed at the viva examination or in the case of a Masters by Research student, as agreed by the examiners (even if a viva did not take place).

If examiners are satisfied that the research candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the thesis requires some minor amendments and corrections that are not so substantial (i.e. up to three months of amendments), they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the research candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner, who will check for the amendments. In such cases a statement from the internal examiner(s) as appropriate, certifying that the amendments and corrections made are satisfactory must be submitted with the recommendation of the examiners or as soon afterwards as possible.

The statement must be signed and dated by the internal and/or external examiners as decided by the examiners after the *Viva Voce*. In cases where the amendments are deemed to be more substantial (i.e. up to a maximum of six months), changes must be considered by both the internal and external examiners.

In cases where no award is made, in addition to making a recommendation as set out above, external and internal examiners shall be required to give a report which outlines clearly the precise grounds upon which an award is not recommended.

In situations where corrections to the thesis are required but are not made within the required timeframe, the student should normally apply formally to the Graduate School and the FRC for an extension of time. This is granted only in exceptional circumstances (i.e. illness) and should be certified where possible. If amendments are

not made within the timeframe as agreed, the student can be removed from the PGR register with the agreement of the FRC.

8.2 Research Postgraduate Examination Board

Where the Graduate School is satisfied that all is in order with the application to present for examination, a recommendation in respect of the examiner nominations, is submitted to the Academic Council. In special circumstances the Academic Council may act directly to appoint Examiners.

All arrangements for the final examination are made by the Graduate School, who liaise with the approved examiners and independent chairperson (where appropriate) on one hand, and the research student and their supervisory panel on the other.

When the examiners have been approved by the Academic Council and have accepted their roles, there should be no communication between the research student and/or their supervisory panel with any member of the Research Postgraduate Examination Board with regard to the final examination. Notwithstanding this, following the initial assessment and *viva voce* examination (where appropriate) the internal examiner, acting on behalf of the Research Postgraduate Examination Board, may liaise with the principal supervisor, acting on behalf of the research student, regarding any amendments to the text which may be required.

8.3 Thesis types and specifications

The form and method of presentation of the research student's work shall be appropriate to the nature of the work. A Master's thesis will normally be submitted as a monograph. A PhD/Doctoral thesis can be submitted in either monograph or article-based format. In the case of certain disciplines, submission at Masters or PhD level may take the form of an exhibition or a performance or computer software etc together with an Exegesis.

Submission specifications have been developed by the Graduate School and should be followed.

8.4 Examination procedures

8.4.1 Assessment Criteria for the Degree of Masters

Examiners should assess the level of knowledge, skill and competence in accordance with TUS's Criteria for Award of Degree of Masters and may recommend the award of

Degree of Masters (Research) in accordance with the following criteria drawn from Table 1 in these regulations:

- a) The thesis/exegesis should show evidence of independent thought and research and must demonstrate a mastery of the student's chosen subject.
- b) The research student should demonstrate an understanding of methodologies appropriate to their chosen field and show adequate knowledge of literature on the subject and of the work of other scholars in the field.
- c) The research student should be capable of relating knowledge of particular topics to the broader field of study involved and of presenting such knowledge in a critical and scholarly way.
- d) Where required, the research student must present and successfully defend the body of work at a *viva voce* (either in person, hybrid or remotely).

Supervisors and students should consult the appropriate Table 1 presented previously in these regulations on same.

The decision on undertaking the *viva voce* in person, hybrid or remotely, shall be made in a timely manner by the Graduate School in consultation with the examiners and individual students on a case-by-case basis.

All ECTS credit requirements must also be fulfilled prior to graduation as modules are an intrinsic part of the student's overall learning and development.

8.4.2 Assessment Criteria for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Examiners should assess the level of knowledge, skill and competence in accordance with TUS's Criteria for Award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and may recommend the award of Doctor of Philosophy in accordance with the following criteria and in line with Table 2:

- a) The research student shall have demonstrated the capacity of pursuing original independent research in their field of study, of exercising critical judgement, and making a novel contribution to knowledge in their field.
- b) The thesis/exegesis must make a substantial and original contribution to scholarship and provide evidence of originality by the exercise of independent critical powers.

- c) The thesis/exegesis must contain an acceptable amount of original work by the research student, which is considered by the examiners to be of publishable standard in the form inter alia of:
- Articles in appropriate refereed journals.
 - A book or other scholarly publication.
 - A research/creative or self-expressive monograph which meets the standard of refereed academic publications.
- d) The research student must present and successfully defend the body of work at a *viva voce* (either in person, hybrid or remotely).

All ECTS credit requirements must be fulfilled prior to graduation as modules are an intrinsic part of the student's overall learning and development.

8.4.3 The *Viva Voce* Examination

A *Viva Voce* is a mandatory requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy. A *Viva Voce* at Master's Degree (Research) Level is exceptional and should be available if requested by the external and/or internal examiner.

The *Viva Voce* will normally take place as soon as possible, or within three months of submission of the work presented.

The Examiner(s) for a *Viva Voce* should consist of the Examiners, Internal and External, chaired by an independent chair, appointed by TUS as appropriate, who has not previously been involved with the candidacy or the examination process. The Principal and Co-Supervisors may, with the consent of the Research Candidate, attend the *Viva Voce* but must not participate in the discussion unless directly addressed by the examiners and must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.

The purpose of a *Viva Voce* is to assess the work submitted by the research candidate. It gives the research candidate the opportunity to present and defend the work through high-level debate with experts in the subject. It enables the examiners to confirm that the research candidate has a thorough understanding of the practical and theoretical aspects and methods involved in the work.

8.4.4 Conduct of the Doctoral Degree *Viva Voce* Examination

For each examination process, to ensure fairness and consistency, TUS will engage an Independent Chairperson. The Chairperson will Chair the *Viva Voce* and his/her role will be to

- a) ensure the implementation of procedures for the assessment of learners which are fair and consistent and for the purpose of compliance with standards determined by TUS.
- b) to ensure that the examiners and the Research Candidate have adequate time for discussion of issues arising from the work submitted.
- c) communicate with the examiners to achieve consensus among them.
- d) the Chairperson should liaise with the Graduate School with respect to the organisation of the examination on the day. This includes determining whether the Research Candidate has any special requirements for the examination.
- e) before the examination itself, the Chairperson should ensure that the External and the Internal Examiners have had the opportunity to confer. The Chairperson should agree the approach and broad lines of questioning with the examiners, allowing the External Examiner(s) the major say in the framing of these. It is particularly important to identify problematic areas in advance, in order to ensure that these are adequately explored in the dialogue between Research Candidate and examiners.
- f) The Chairperson should introduce the examiners to the Research Candidate, briefly explain the purpose of the examination, the procedures to be followed and advise the Research Candidate to deal with questions as comprehensively as possible. The Chairperson's overall aim should be to ensure a fair and constructive dialogue between the examiners and the Research Candidate.
- g) ensuring that the duration of *Viva Voce* examinations shall not exceed 3 hours (180 minutes) including the formal presentation by the Research Candidate.
- h) Comprehensive guidance for chairpersons, approved by Academic Council is available in the form of GS 20 at [Graduate School Forms - TUS](#)

8.4.5 Preparation of Examiner Reports

In the case of a Masters award where a *viva voce* examination does not take place, both Examiners confer to try reach a consensus recommendation. Where a *viva voce* is required, each Examiner will present an independent preliminary typewritten report on the thesis/exegesis, as appropriate, to the Independent Chair and the Graduate

School prior to the *viva voce*. In completing the preliminary report, each Examiner shall consider whether the submission provisionally satisfies the requirements of the Degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation (subject to the outcome of the *viva voce* in the case of PhD Examination).

A final examiner report will be prepared by the Graduate School signed by examiners. This detailed report, must provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the Examination Board to satisfy itself that the criteria for the award of the RDP have been met.

Information must be provided under each heading and should be sufficiently informative to allow the Graduate School to make a recommendation to Academic Council. A report detailing the amendments to be made, if any, should also be prepared by each Examiner.

The report should comment on the following areas:

- a) The overall standard and quality of research in the thesis/exegesis.
- b) The strengths of the thesis/exegesis.
- c) The weaknesses of the thesis/exegesis.
- d) The original contribution the thesis/exegesis makes to knowledge and scholarship.
- e) Potential for publication.
- f) The writing style and overall presentation of the thesis/exegesis.
- g) The ability of the student to defend the research in the *viva voce*.
- h) Details of amendments and/or corrections required.

Award recommendation as follows:

- a) The degree of Master/PhD be awarded, no amendments needed.
- b) The degree of Master /PhD be awarded subject to the correction of any minor errors within a period of three months for reconsideration by the Internal Examiner.
- c) The degree of Master/PhD be awarded subject to the completion of any prescribed amendments within a period of six months for reconsideration by the Internal and External Examiner, potentially including the requirement for a *viva voce* (*with the same Examiners*).
- d) No degree be awarded, and the student continues on the Masters/PhD register.

- e) In the case of PhD, the student be awarded the degree of Masters subject to the completion of any prescribed amendments within a period of six months for reconsideration by the Internal Examiner.
- f) No degree be awarded.

8.4.6 Examination of Performed/Exhibited Elements and of Composition

Practice-led research is research where creative practice, is undertaken as an integral part of a research process. The final thesis consists of a substantial body of creative work and a scholarly exegesis presented as an integrated whole. In the case of Art, Design, and Creative Media the candidate may wish to submit, as part of their thesis, practical components consisting of, art or design work, photographs, video, film, installations, websites, performances, or other digital/print material, alongside a reduced textual component. The creative work submitted must be original, and be as integral to the research aims, processes, and outcomes of the project as the textual component itself. The final thesis as a whole will therefore demonstrate the integration of its practical and theoretical components, so that the text or exegesis and practice reflect critically on each other.

- a) The practical components must be original and not have been previously submitted to another awarding body. The thesis/exegesis must conform to the normal scholarly requirements, placing the research student's work in the relevant theoretical, historical, critical, artistic or design context and demonstrating an understanding of that context. The length of the scholarly text should normally be between 10,000 - 20,000 words for Masters by Practice and 30,000- 60,000 words for a PhD by Practice.
- b) The practical component should fully and creatively exploit the medium in which it is made and should contribute to the thesis that could not have been made in words.
- c) The practical component should not be merely illustrative of the theory but must make an original contribution in its own right, which relates back, in an integral fashion, to the theoretical component of the thesis.

Creative practice, exhibitions or performances produced as part of the research should be appropriately documented.

Performed, exhibited elements and related composition as approved at the time of registration of the RDP will be examined as follows:

- a portfolio of works which would normally comprise of a variety of works. It may comprise of a single large-scale work. The thesis must conform to the normal scholarly requirements, placing the research candidate's work in the relevant theoretical, historical, critical, artistic and/or design contexts and demonstrating a clear, comprehensive and scholarly understanding of that context.

Or

- a public performance of appropriate duration and content. The thesis must conform to the normal scholarly requirements, placing the Research Candidate's work in the relevant theoretical, historical, critical, artistic or design context and demonstrating an understanding of that context.

A performance or exhibition which shall be recorded (e.g. video, notebooks, diary, photographs, CD, CD-ROM, score, diagrams etc.) and shall be accompanied by notes appropriately presented.

A bound dissertation should be presented, together with the other records (e.g. notebook, journal, video, CD, CD-ROM, and exhibition catalogue) in appropriate form (e.g. album, specially designed box etc.). Both the dissertation and the permanent record form the thesis.

8.5 Exit Awards

Candidates who have been registered but who have not successfully completed a PhD/Doctoral degree may be eligible for an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Research or a Masters by Research. This applies in cases where students have completed the mandatory ECTS requirement (15 ECTS) for taught modules and the requisite level of research for either a PG Dip in Research or a Masters in Research and is pending internal and external examiner's expert assessments of the work that the candidate has reached the required standard.

9. Reviews and Disputes

The review process applies to the following examination types:

- Final Masters Examination (with or without a *viva voce* element/traditional or practice-based).
- Final PhD/Doctoral Examination.

A request for a review may only be made in relation to the decision of TUS based on the recommendation of the Examiners. Alleged inadequacy of supervision, or other arrangements, during the period of study do not constitute grounds for requesting a review of the Examination decision.

Requests for a review are permitted only on the following grounds:

- a) That there are circumstances affecting the research student's performance of which the Examiners were not aware at the *viva voce*.
- b) That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the Examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different without such irregularity.
- c) That there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the Examiners.

Research Students may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the Examiners.

9.1 Procedures for a Review

A research student may apply to request a review within two weeks from the date of the notification of the result. The application should state the grounds on which the review is requested.

The review will be considered by a Review Panel chaired by the VP Research, Development and Innovation and two TUS academic staff members who have experience of supervising and examining RDPs and who have had no previous involvement in the case/study. No student or research candidate may be a member of an RDP Review Panel.

If a Review Panel upholds the grounds on which the review was requested, they may:

- a) Invite the Examiners to reconsider their decision or

b) Recommend that new Examiners be appointed.

A Review Panel is not constituted as a review board/examinations board and has no authority to set aside the decision of the board of first instance.

Where evidence of cheating or plagiarism in the preparation of the submission or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the matter shall be referred to the TUS Research Integrity Officer for consideration under the TUS Research Integrity Policy.

The outcome of the review may be appealed to the Academic Council Board of Appeal.

10 Conferment and post-graduation

Conferment and post-graduation will be in line with the current TUS policies.

10.1 Career development

The TUS Careers and Employability service will be available to students to consult re career development opportunities. In line with TUS local and regional enterprise engagement, TUS will consult with local employers on soft skill module provision. Building on already ongoing data collection processes, career tracking will continue to be developed within TUS.

10.2 Revocation of degrees

The Academic Council may revoke any award made by TUS, or its parent institutions, and all privileges connected therewith if it shall be discovered at any time and proven to the satisfaction of TUS that the award is found to have been obtained by fraud or deception.

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