

## **Regulations for Higher Research Degrees**

### **THE PhD DEGREE**

(Obtainable in any College of the University)

The University may grant the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) to graduates of the University or to graduates of any University, or to candidates of advanced standing, either within or without Ireland, who have:

- a. In the case of a full-time candidate, carried out research in the University for a period of four years and attended such a programme of study as may be prescribed by Regulations. The relevant College will reduce this period where the thesis has been approved for examination prior to the end of the four year period. In such cases, fees will be applied only until the end of the semester in which the thesis is submitted.
- b. In the case of a part-time candidate, carried out research in the University for a period of six years and attended such a programme of study as may be prescribed by Regulations. The relevant College will reduce this period where the thesis has been approved for examination prior to the end of the six year period. In such cases, fees will be applied only until the end of the semester in which the thesis is submitted.
- c. In the case of a full-time or part-time candidate, carried out research in the University and within a partner University with whom the University has agreed through a memorandum of understanding to offer a joint degree. The period of registration and fee schedule that applies is that of (a) or (b) above depending on full or part-time status.
- d. Complied with such Regulations and passed such examinations, if any, as may be prescribed.

### **Entry Requirements and Application Procedures**

1. To be eligible to enter on a programme of study and research for the degree of PhD a candidate must have reached a high honours standard at the examination for the primary degree or presented such other evidence as will satisfy the Head of School and the College of his/her fitness.
2. The application, together with the recommendation of the Head of School, shall be considered by the College in which the programme is to be pursued. The title of the thesis, or a short description outlining the nature of the work, must be provided to the College when the candidate is being recommended for acceptance. If the candidate's application is approved by the College, he/she must register as a PhD candidate for the period set out at (a) or (b) or (c), as relevant, above.
3. The Academic Council is empowered to withdraw the acceptance of any candidate on the recommendation of the College concerned.

### **Supervision**

4. The College, on the nomination of the Head of School, will assign a permanent member of the University's academic staff to be the primary supervisor of the candidate's research. The College may allow for co-supervision of the thesis. In the case of co-supervision, one of the supervisors need not be a member of the academic staff of the University. The name(s) of the supervisor(s) and the names of the three members of the candidate's Graduate Research Committee (GRC), nominated by the Head of School, in consultation with Head of Discipline, must be forwarded when the candidate's name is submitted to the College for approval.
5. Unless permission is given to the candidate by the Academic Council, on the recommendation of the relevant College, to work elsewhere under the general direction of the primary supervisor, the research will be carried out in the School mainly responsible for the subject area concerned but, where the research is interdisciplinary in nature, there shall be due co-operation between the main School and the other School(s) involved. A student who has registered for a joint degree with another institution, with whom a formal memorandum of understanding has been signed, will spend a period of time at the partner institution.
6. The candidate shall pursue research for the period set out at (a) or (b) above and shall also follow such a programme of study in the University as may be prescribed by the College.
7. A formal review of the research candidate's progress is carried out by the candidate's GRC, at least annually. The supervisor(s) shall submit a written report, according to the local agreed format, on the candidate's progress and the

GRC shall review this, together with a written report (according to the local agreed format) from the candidate, and following a meeting, make a recommendation to the relevant sub-committee of the College on progression. Following consideration of this recommendation, a formal decision on progression shall be made by the sub-committee. A candidate may appeal a decision not to allow progression to the Standing Committee of Academic Council.

8. Candidates whose theses have not been approved for examination within the due period from the date of registration must re-apply to the relevant College setting out justification for the requested extension of the allowed time period.

## **Examination**

9. The final draft of the thesis may be submitted after completion of the Approval for Examination form (EOG 020). The student must certify that the thesis is their own work. If the thesis is based on a group project, then the student must indicate the extent of their contribution, with reference to any other theses submitted or published by each collaborator in the project, and a declaration to this effect must be included in the thesis. The 'Approval for Examination' form EOG 020 is signed by the candidate, the primary supervisor(s), and a member of the candidate's GRC. The completed form is submitted by the candidate to the Examinations Office with the thesis (see 10 below). Where a candidate considers that approval for the submission of the thesis has been withheld unreasonably, s/he may appeal to the Standing Committee of Academic Council.

## **Submission of the Thesis**

10. The candidate must follow the directions on format, layout and presentation of a thesis, as described below. Two copies of the PhD thesis, spiral or gum bound, must be lodged with the Examinations Office (unless otherwise stated by the supervisor, such as the case of two external or internal examiners). Each copy of the thesis must be accompanied by:
  - a. a 'Summary of the Contents', not exceeding 300 words in length
  - b. a copy of the completed form EOG 020.

### *Directions on Format, Layout and Presentation*

There must be a title page which shall contain the following information:

- a. The full title (and subtitle, if any)
- b. The volume number and total number of volumes, if more than one
- c. The full name of the candidate, followed, if desired, by any degree and/or professional qualification(s)
- d. The name(s) of the supervisor(s), school(s), component discipline(s), institution
- e. The month and year of submission.

### *Table of Contents*

The 'Table of Contents', which should not be over-detailed, shall immediately follow the title page.

### *Format and Layout*

The text must be printed on good quality (110g/m<sup>2</sup>) A4 size paper. Line-spacing should be a maximum of one-and-a-half; text must be left justified with a left-hand margin of 4 cm and may be right justified. An easily readable layout and double-sided printing are recommended for the body text. More compact formats, with smaller font sizes, are usually appropriate for certain sections, such as reference lists, bibliographies and some kinds of appendices. Pages must be numbered consecutively, with page numbers located centrally, at the bottom, and chapter headers at the top, of each page. Diagrams, graphs, photographs and tables should be properly numbered and located in relation to the text.

### *Article-based PhD*

In this format, a number of research articles written by the student while registered for the PhD, either published or accepted for publication, are presented with an introductory chapter, explanation of the research question, relevant literature and methodology and a concluding chapter. The student's contribution to each article must be made explicit. Further information on the article-based PhD is to be found in the guidelines.

### *Binding*

The copies of the thesis presented initially for examination must be spiral or gum-bound. The copy of the final bound thesis must be bound within boards with leaves permanently secured. The cover of the copies of the final bound thesis must bear the title of the thesis, candidate's name, degree awarded and the date of submission. The spine bears the candidate's name, the degree awarded and the date of submission.

## **Approval of Examiners & Chair of the viva**

11. The primary supervisor is responsible for organisation of the overall examination process and for checking that the candidate, examiners and chair have been supplied with the information necessary for understanding their roles.
12. The Examinations Office is responsible for processing the submitted thesis and the subsequent Examiners' Report.
13. The examination of a PhD candidate involves at least two examiners, one external and one internal. The primary supervisor discusses with the GRC the choice of the external and internal examiners. The candidate is informed in good time when potential examiners and the overall make-up of the examinations board are being considered. At that stage, while providing a rationale for doing so, a candidate may object to the appointment of a particular examiner. If an examiner is recommended for appointment despite an objection from the candidate, a written rationale for the recommendation is supplied to the College by the primary supervisor. Following the consultation outlined above, the primary supervisor submits an online 'Approval of Examiners EOG 031' request. The recommended examiners must be first approved by a member of the GRC, and then the Head of School, before approval of College can be granted.
14. A chair of the *viva* must be nominated, and approved by the College, for each PhD examination. The chair will not be an examiner and will not be required to read the thesis. The chair will normally be the Established Professor of the relevant discipline; however he/she may nominate another member of staff in the discipline to act as chair. When the Established Professor is the supervisor of the candidate being examined an alternate chair must be appointed. In the event of a vacancy in the Established Professorship, the Head of School, following appropriate consultation, will appoint the chair. The candidate is informed in good time when the chair is being considered. At that stage, while providing a rationale for doing so, a candidate may object to the appointment of a particular chair.
15. Any member of academic staff who has appropriate expertise and experience may act as an internal examiner.
16. A supervisor may not act as an examiner for his/her student. A supervisor may attend the *viva*, subject to the agreement of the examiners, chair and the student. In the case of co-supervision, only one supervisor attends; the decision on who attends is made by the co-supervisors. The supervisor, if present at the *viva*, does not participate in the final decision and leaves the examination when final deliberations are taking place.
17. The external examiner shall have expertise in the field of study of the thesis. A short curriculum vitae of the external examiner will be provided, by the supervisor, to the College to accompany the online request for the approval of Examiners. Extern examiners should normally be appointed from outside the Republic of Ireland. The external examiner shall not be drawn from within the NUI system or the University of Limerick, related to the University's alliance with the University of Limerick except, with the approval of Standing Committee, under clearly defined and exceptional circumstances, where the expertise required cannot readily be found elsewhere. The external examiner, with his/her letter of appointment will be asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest that he/she may have. Diversification in the range of persons appointed as external examiners is encouraged while it being recognised that there may be a particular reason for availing of the expertise of a particular extern for a number of theses within a given period of time.
18. A second external examiner is appointed:
  - a. When the candidate to be examined is a full time member of staff of the University
  - b. When the work being examined, because of its nature, justifies this.
19. All examiners participate fully in the two stages of the process: (i) the examination of the thesis and (ii) the *viva* examination of the candidate.

### **The Viva (Oral) Examination**

20. The *viva* is arranged by the supervisor at a time suitable for the candidate, examiners and chair. The *viva* should normally be held within two months of the submission of the thesis. The candidate is made familiar by the supervisor in advance with the standard format, timetable and normal length for such examinations.
21. A short written preliminary report is prepared by each examiner before the *viva* and sent to the Chair and only then should the examiners confer.
22. The Chair must know the PhD regulations, be able to advise the examiners of these regulations and has a particular responsibility to ensure they are implemented. The Chair should meet the examiners prior to the *viva* and agree the agenda, format of the examination and procedures to be followed. The Chair should introduce the examiners and the candidate and outline to the candidate the procedure for the *viva*.

23. Normally the *viva* should have a minimum duration of one hour and after about two hours a break should be offered. The *viva* should not normally exceed three hours. Except in exceptional circumstances, the *viva* should be held on campus with all examiners physically present. Where it is not possible for the external examiner to attend in person, an application for the participation of the extern by video conference must be made two months in advance of the proposed date of the *viva*. The student must agree to the *viva* being held by video conference and the approval of a GRC member, Head of School, Dean of College and Dean of Graduate Studies obtained (Form GS 060).
24. As soon as is practicable after the *viva*, feedback is given to the candidate by the Chair of the *viva*.
25. Where the examiners are in agreement, they shall submit a joint report with a recommendation for award or otherwise of the degree on the online system; in addition, all examiners must submit a signed copy of their recommendations. This report shall be submitted by the internal examiner to the Examinations Office within two weeks of the oral examination. The report will be considered by the Academic Council Standing Committee.
26. Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports must be made by each examiner, and all reports submitted together to the Examinations Office. The reports will be considered by the Academic Council Standing Committee. In accordance with the general regulations of the University, the opinion of an external examiner as to the overall result to be awarded to a candidate shall not be overruled unless by decision of not less than two-thirds of all the members of the Standing Committee then in office.
27. Only reports that are received at **least five days** prior to a Standing Committee meeting will be considered at that meeting.
28. Where the examiners have recommended that award of the PhD be conditional on corrections being made to the thesis, the primary supervisor is responsible for monitoring the implementation of these corrections, and the internal examiner(s), (in consultation with the external examiner, if necessary) is responsible for ensuring that the changes made satisfy the requirements of the examiners. The internal examiner shall communicate in writing with the Examinations Office that the corrections are made. The timeline for the re-submission of the thesis requiring minor corrections to be made, either typographical or in content, is one month. Three months are allowed for the re-submission of a thesis which is deemed to require major corrections in content. These deadlines may be extended by the Dean of Graduate Studies in extenuating circumstances.
29. Where the examiners have recommended that the PhD be referred, they are required to state whether a second *viva* is required. However, a candidate may not be failed on their re-submission without the opportunity of a second *viva*. The re-examination of the thesis must be undertaken by the same examiners. Formal contact should be made with the student by the Dean of College to inform the candidate of the decision and to ensure that they receive the examiners' report. The time limit for re-submission is one year.
30. The candidate may not graduate until the revised thesis, incorporating the required changes as confirmed by the internal examiner(s), has been lodged with the Examinations Office. Where the award of the PhD has been recommended, and (where necessary), when the internal examiner has confirmed in writing that all the requirements of the examiners have been met in relation to the thesis in its print and online formats, the candidate must re-submit a hard-bound print copy of the thesis to the Examinations Office. This copy of the thesis must be submitted through the Student Contact Centre to be lodged in the University Library with the appropriate accompanying form signed by the candidate (Library Submission Form, EOG 051). All theses shall remain the property of the University. Candidates approved for examination after April 1, 2011 may not graduate unless they also submit an online copy to the Library, via the ARAN (Access to Research at NUI Galway) system.
31. A procedure to appeal the result of a PhD examination is outlined in Section 6 of the University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes. An appeal may not question the academic judgement of the examiners. Potential grounds for appeal are as follows: circumstances affecting the candidate's performance which the examiners were not aware of at the *viva*; procedural irregularities that occurred in the conduct of the examination which give rise to doubt as to whether the same conclusion would have been reached had the irregularities not occurred; evidence of prejudice, bias, unfair or inadequate assessment in the examination process. Appeals may not be submitted on the basis of inadequate supervision; complaints of that nature should be lodged during the period of study and before the submission of the thesis.