

**Maynooth University
Graduate Studies**

**ROUTE OF PROGRESSION THROUGH THE STRUCTURED PHD
PROGRAMME**

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The core goal of the structured masters and PhD programmes is the advancement of knowledge through original research. The goal of a structured programme is to provide a high-quality research experience, with integrated support for professional development. The structured programmes are therefore designed to meet the needs of the professional researcher and of an employment market that is wider than academia, through the introduction of a range of educational and training opportunities as part of the programme. In doing so, the structured programme aims to address the immediate research needs of candidates, as well as preparing them for future careers in a wide variety of contexts.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

STANDARD APPLICATIONS

To be eligible to enter a course of study and research for the degree of PhD in the University, a student must have reached a high honours standard in their primary degree (normally an overall 2.1 honours award at bachelors or masters level), or present other evidence that satisfies the Head of Department and the relevant faculty of his/her suitability.

PROCEDURES FOR NON-STANDARD ENTRANTS

While there are normally defined academic entry requirements for University programmes, it is appropriate that the University has mechanisms to allow entry to applicants who do not meet the normal requirements, but who are, for other reasons, deserving of admission.

There are two processes in use:

Non standard applicants: This process is used where the case is being made that the applicant's academic qualifications should be considered as the basis for admission. In such cases, application details are forwarded by the Head of Department to the Registrar for inclusion under Registrar's business at faculty meetings. Students are informed of the decision of the faculty by the Registrar.

Recognition of Prior Learning (accredited learning): This process is used if an applicant is seeking exemptions from parts of a programme on the basis of prior accredited learning.

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See Procedure for Non Standard Entrants and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

PROCEDURES FOR INTERNATIONAL ENTRANTS

The Maynooth University International Office (IO) reviews all Non-EU students applications. A report on the academic evaluation and the English language competency is included in the student's application on PAC. International students can only be given an offer when the IO has reviewed the application. If the IO does not recommend making an offer, an applicant can not be accepted. Students requiring visas should be accepted by end of July to enable visa application and to allow the IO sufficient time to write offer letters for immigration purposes. A department cannot supply this letter. The IO is not notified regarding the immigration status of students, rather the student is notified directly.

English Language competency (for non-native speakers of the English language)

All applicants must provide written evidence of competency in the English language. Documentation should be forwarded to PAC.

The list below outlines the minimum standards in English language which must be met for admission to the University.

- Examination Level Required
- IELTS (www.ielts.org) 6.5 overall
- TOEFL (www.toefl.com)
- 585 (Paper based test)
- 95 (Internet based test)
- PEARSON (www.pearsonpte.com) 62

If a student does not satisfy the above English language requirements the student should be directed to the International Office for advice

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REGULATIONS RELATING TO FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME RESEARCH STUDENT REGISTRATION

FULL-TIME PHD STUDENTS

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

In exceptional circumstances, Academic Council may approve submission in a period shorter than three years of full-time study, but no less than two years. In such cases, the student will be required to pay the full-time fee for the minimum three-year period. After three years, a student may be permitted to progress one semester at a time, so that a student who submits in three-and-a-half years is liable for three-and-a-half years of fees.

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

PART-TIME PHD STUDENTS

Part-time status for students wishing to undertake a PhD may be granted on the recommendation of their head of department.

For part time students, the normal duration of the degree is six years. Where a student completes the degree early, the head of department, in conjunction with the supervisor, may approve an early submission after 4.5 years of part-time study.

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

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

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

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The maximum duration of study for the programme is six years from the date of admission for a full-time student and nine years for a part-time student. Students may be allowed to extend beyond the normal maximum period with the permission of the registrar.

Summary: Duration of research degrees in years.

	Normal duration	Minimum duration with approval from head of dept.	Minimum duration with approval from Academic Council	Maximum duration
PhD full time	4	3	2	6
PhD part time	6	4.5	3	9
Research master's full time	2	1	1	3
Research master's part time	3	2	2	5

INDUCTION

Induction programmes are held in September and January.

The purpose of the induction programme is to promote awareness of all aspects of a student's research degree, including the preparation of research plans, performance monitoring and examination procedures. What constitutes a 'reasonable workload' and 'standard attendance' is also discussed. In addition, a student's teaching duties, rights and responsibilities, potential intellectual property issues, the rights and responsibilities of supervisors, plagiarism, safety and ethical considerations, definitions of research misconduct, basic work conditions and regulations, and the supports available from the career development centre and similar services are explained.

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INITIAL MEETING RECORD

As soon as possible after registration, the student should meet the supervisor(s) and agree an individual programme of supporting modules.

The purpose of the initial meeting is to:

- Provide an opportunity to design a unique, individual programme
- Identify modules that will enhance the student's research programme
- Identify modules that students will take in year one
- Agree a calendar of meetings
- Ensure the student attended the induction programme
- Ensure that the student is aware and agrees to the University regulations and policies as outlined in the research student handbook.

Details of the programme are recorded in the Initial Meeting Record (IMR) which is approved by the Departmental Supervisory Committee. The IMR is forwarded by the Departmental Supervisory Committee to the Graduate Studies Office (GSO) by the end of October for inclusion in the student record system. This record informs the annual progress review subsequently carried out by the student's Departmental Supervisory Committee. All students are given a specific registration date. If a student has completed their IMR before their registration date, they can register for the appropriate PhD modules at that time. However, if the IMR is not completed prior to registration, a student must register on the day indicated by Registry (records office), and choose their appropriate modules by the end of October.

[Initial Meeting Record Form](#)

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REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME MODULES

All structured research programmes are supported by formal accredited subject specific modules and transferable modules. Subject specific modules involve advanced specialist doctoral level courses provided by a department/research institute or other 4th level institutions. Subject specific module also include Master's level taught modules in the discipline area or in a cognate discipline area. Transferable modules include modules offered in disciplines other than primary research areas that would enhance the student's skills development.

CREDITS REQUIRED & THE PROCESS FOR CREDIT WAIVERS AND COURSE VARIATIONS

For students who have a four-year undergraduate degree or a three-year undergraduate degree plus a masters, the programme requires that a minimum of 30 credits, and a maximum of 90 credits be taken in modules. Within the programme, subject specific modules must make up 15 credits and transferable modules must make up 15 credits. For students entering the Faculty of Arts, Philosophy and Celtic Studies and the Faculty of Social Science, who have completed a three year undergraduate programme, they are required to take a minimum of 60 credits, with at least 15 credits in subject specific modules and 15 credits in transferable modules and a maximum of 90 credits be taken in modules. When a student has demonstrable prior experience or learning which duplicates the content of the taught module, the requirement to complete the taught module can be waived. The student is advised to complete the attached form [Credits Waivers/Course Variations Form](#). The student's programme must be approved by the Departmental Supervisory Committee and sent to the Dean of International & Graduate Studies for ratification.

STRUCTURED PHD PROGRAMME MODULES

Many departments have developed their own unique programme, with a minimum / maximum amount of credits. Full details on each programme are available at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/phd-research-programmes>

Subject specific modules

Students must take a minimum of 15 credits in subject-specific modules. These modules are specialist doctoral level courses provide by a department/research institute or other 4th level institutions. This category also includes Master's level taught modules in the discipline area or in a cognate discipline area.

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Transferable skills modules

Students must take a minimum of 15 credits in transferable modules. These modules are designed to assist the student to develop and manage their research and future careers across a broad range of employment sectors, including academia. If a module is not part of the departmental programme, students wishing to register for a transferable module must have the support of their supervisor(s). students must complete the [Form for registering for transferable modules](#) and forward it to Registry (records office).

Inter-University and external modules

There are a range of inter-university modules and external modules available for research students. These are usually subject specific modules. Details of the specific registration process should be sought from the module/programme coordinator, where the particular module is being taught. The student must seek the approval of the supervisor(s).

How to register?

1. In the case of the student undertaking an external module as part of their departmental structured programme: when the module is complete the student should bring the transcript to their Maynooth University module/programme co-ordinator for processing.
2. In the case where the module is not listed as part of the departmental structured programme, students should complete the [Gain Accreditation for Intern-Institutional Modules](#) form and forward the results and form to Registry (records office) for processing.

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ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW

The purpose of the annual review is to:

- Assess progression and grant permission to progress based on an assessment of the quality of research output to date
- Give students the opportunity to indicate their satisfaction or lack of it with their supervisory arrangements
- Discuss and record any changes to the student's individualised programme
- Ensure that students have passed their required modules before thesis submission and, where appropriate, that waivers have been ratified by the DRSPC.

In general, students are automatically progressed into year two of their programme, but a substantive review must be completed on all research students within 12 months and no later than 18 months after initial registration. This will provide supervisors and students with the opportunity to identify and rectify problems with a student's progress. Thereafter, students are assessed annually for progression by the June exam board.

The Departmental Supervisory Committee can make one of the following recommendations in respect of each research student:

- Progress
- Not progress
- Change of registration from Masters by Research to PhD or vice versa.

[Annual Review Form](#)

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THESIS SUBMISSION

Once a student's Departmental Supervisory Committee has approved the completion of the individualised programme and that sufficient credits have been obtained, the student can proceed towards submission of the PhD thesis. Each departmental graduate study handbook should set out the departmental style and procedures for written thesis and viva voce examination (henceforth referred to as the viva).

The supervisor must approve the final draft of the PhD thesis for examination and confirm this with the Head of Department. In the case of students pursuing joint PhD programmes, supervisor(s) from the partner university (or universities) must provide a written statement confirming approval for examination, which must be attached to the Maynooth University supervisor's approval.

Following approval of the appointment of examiners, the Head of Department confirms approval for examination of the final draft of the PhD thesis to the examinations office and the fees office has confirmed that the student is not in arrears, the thesis is sent out for examination.

A student should lodge the PhD thesis (gum bound) at least three months in advance of the appropriate faculty meeting at which the examiners' reports are considered. Faculty meetings are normally held in September, October, November, January, March and May. Students pursuing a joint PhD programme may be required to submit their thesis earlier if their viva is held at the partner institution and they should consult their local supervisor about this possibility.

Three copies of the PhD thesis, (gum-bound) and completed Submission Forms for Doctoral Thesis should be sent to Registry (examinations office). Each copy of the thesis must be accompanied by a summary of the contents, not exceeding 300 words. students pursuing a joint PhD programme should refer to the memorandum of agreement (MoA) applicable to their programme as the MoA determines the required number of copies and other requirements applicable to the submission of their thesis.

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

[Submission Forms for Doctoral Thesis \(pdf Version\)](#)

[Submission Forms for Joint PhD Thesis \(pdf Version\)](#)

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(maintained by the Examinations Office)

THESIS EDITING

Professional editing services must not be used for preparation of the thesis. Students found to have used such assistance will be deemed to be in breach of examination regulations unless their thesis submission is accompanied by a letter from the supervisor sanctioning its use. It is proposed that if a supervisor deems editing necessary under particular circumstances the supervisor may request this, but should check the thesis for possible anomalies introduced in the process.

VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

The aim of the viva is to provide an opportunity for the examiners to question the student on aspects of the thesis. It is designed to assess the quality of the thesis and to elicit information on any or all of the following issues:

1. Explanation of the structure of the thesis
2. Justification for the inclusion or exclusion of material
3. Explanation for and justification of the use of particular research methods and techniques
4. Verification that the thesis is the student's own work
5. Defence of the originality of the thesis
6. Clarification of any points of ambiguity within the thesis
7. Justification for the theoretical approach taken in the thesis
8. The depth of knowledge of the contextual background of the thesis topic.

ESTABLISHMENT OF EXAMINATION BOARD

In all faculties, the examination board normally consists of two examiners, at least one of whom is internal and one external and an independent Chair. Examiners must be approved by the faculty on the recommendation of the head of department and in agreement with the supervisor. In the case of a thesis being presented by a full-time member of the academic staff of

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the University, the internal examiner is replaced by a second external examiner. Two external examiners may be required in cases where there is no suitable internal examiner available. One of the external examiners must take responsibility for role of internal examiners, as indicated by the Head of Department.

In the case of a joint PhD thesis, the composition of the examination board is detailed in the relevant Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and students should refer to their MoA for full details. In all cases the examination board is overseen by an independent chair.

The Registrar appoints the chair when the thesis has been submitted for examination to the examination office. The examination office forwards to each of the examiners and the chair a copy of the PhD thesis together with a copy of the 300-word summary, and a report form.

[Appointment for External Examiners Forms](#)

[See Code of Practice for Viva Voce Examinations](#)

EXAMINATION AND AWARDING OF PHD THESIS

The viva should normally be held on campus but, in exceptional circumstances (for example, the examination of students based overseas), the examination may be held elsewhere, provided the student agrees to the arrangement. Video conferencing may be used in some circumstances. Care should be taken in choosing the location for the viva to ensure that the examination can be conducted in an accessible, relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, without risk of interruption and extraneous noise.

With the agreement of the examiners and the student, the supervisor may attend the examination, but does not question the student and can only provide clarification on any matters when requested by the Board. The supervisor does not participate in the final decision and leaves the examination room while deliberations take place, unless asked to remain by the chair.

PRIOR TO THE EXAMINATION

Prior to the viva, each examiner should separately complete an individual written report on the thesis. A preparatory meeting should be held to review the written reports (often on the same

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day but prior to the time scheduled for the student and their supervisor to attend) and to agree the approach of the examination. This preparatory meeting should allow sufficient time to (1) agree the approach of the viva and (2) review the written reports. The supervisor should normally be available for consultation with the examiners during this meeting.

EXAMINERS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The examiners should not recommend awarding the degree unless they judge the work to be worthy of publication, in full or in part, as a work of serious scholarship. Following the examination where examiners are in agreement, a joint report should be made with their recommendation. Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports should be submitted. Both examiners must complete and sign the relevant forms at the end of the viva.

The report should comment on:

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

The examiners may recommend that the student should:

1. Be awarded a PhD without further examination or amendment, or
2. Be awarded a PhD without further examination, subject to making any minor changes specified to the satisfaction of the internal examiner (applied where examiners estimate up to six weeks further work is required by the student), or
3. Be awarded a PhD without further examination, subject to making specified changes to the satisfaction of both internal and external examiners (applied where examiners estimate that more than six weeks and less than six months additional work is required),
or
4. Not be awarded the degree, but be permitted to re-submit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination by the same examiners (applied where examiners estimate that there is more than six months additional work required), or
5. Not be awarded a PhD and not be permitted to submit for re-examination as a PhD.

If the examiners recommend that the PhD degree be awarded, the student must re-submit three hard

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bound copies of the thesis, including an electronic copy (on CD/DVD) of one PDF file mirroring the hard-bound copy and embodying any changes prescribed by the examiners.

The examiners' report will not be considered by faculty until three hardbound copies and the electronic copy of the revised thesis incorporating the recommended changes and confirmed by the internal examiner, have been lodged with Registry (Examinations Office).

In the case of a thesis submitted for a joint PhD programme, the number of hardbound copies and CDs is determined in the Memorandum of Agreement applicable to the relevant joint PhD programme.

Where the opinions of the examiners differ, each examiner should submit a separate written report for consideration by the appropriate faculty without the requirement for submission of hard-bound copies of the thesis.

Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the faculty may:

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

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

The Deans' Office informs the National University of Ireland (NUI) of the award of degree following the approval of Maynooth University's Academic Council.

REGULATIONS REGARDING DEPOSIT OF E-THESES

Unless students request otherwise, a copy of the Thesis plus an electronic copy (on CD/DVD) of one PDF file mirroring the hard bound copy, containing the approved final version will be lodged in the University Library and in the Institutional eTheses Archive. In the case of a joint

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PhD programme, the partner institution(s) might require additional electronic copies of the thesis. Students should consult the relevant Memorandum of Agreement governing their Joint PhD programme. students will be required to complete the Thesis Depositor Declaration Form when lodging hardbound copies of the Thesis for the Ph.D. Degree. All Theses shall remain the property of the University and may be made available in the University Library.

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

Should the author of a thesis wish to withhold permission for the use of her/his work, a written application must be made to the Dean of International & Graduate Studies at the time of submission of the thesis for examination. Such applications must have the written support of the author's Supervisor or Head of Department. In the case of a Joint PhD programme, the supervisor(s) at the partner institution(s) must also provide a statement of support of withholding. This application must state the reasons for the request for a stay on access and must provide a contact address. If permission to withhold access is granted the Thesis Depositor Declaration Form must be signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The maximum length of a stay is one year/two years. During this period of withheld permission the thesis will only be consulted, lent or copied with the written permission of the author who is under an obligation to reply to all requests within a reasonable time. These requests are processed through the Dean of International & Graduate Studies. Should the author wish to withhold access beyond that time frame, s/he must make a further application to the Dean of International and Graduate Studies.

A declaration form is signed by each reader to agree their compliance with the lending and copying regulations.

Date: 8th Jan 2015

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VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by
1	Sept 2008	Extracted from the PhD Supervisory Policy	Prof Ray O'Neill
2	Sept 2009	Framework for the Delivery of Structured Doctoral Programmes	Prof Honor Fagan
3	February 2010	Guidelines for the development of a Joint PhD Programme	Prof Honor Fagan
4	May 2010	Amended Structured Research Programme Records	Prof Honor Fagan
5	December 2010	Changes to Thesis Editing: Chairs for Viva Voce examinations	Prof Honor Fagan
6	May 2011	Development of Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning	Prof Aidan Mulkeen
7	September 2011	Criteria for selection of external examiners	Prof Honor Fagan
8	October 2011	Change to the Masters and Doctoral Research Examination Recommendations	Prof Honor Fagan
9	May 2012	Independent Chairs (PhD Viva Examinations) E-Thesis Archive	Prof Honor Fagan
10	September 2012	Thesis Depositor Declaration Form	Prof Honor Fagan
11	December 2012	Revised Guidelines for the development of a Joint PhD Programme	Prof Honor Fagan
12	January 2015	Full-time and part-time research student registration	Prof Ronan Reilly