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1.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for various aspects of research student supervision and progress reporting are detailed in this procedure. These are in compliance with the following policies (available online at the Academic Policy and Document Portal of UCC Academic Affairs and Governance):

[Policy on Resolution of Difficulties for Postgraduate Students](#) (Approved by Academic Council on 21st March 2018)

[Progress Review Policy for Research Students](#) (Approved by Academic Council June 2014)

[UCC Policy on the Supervision of Research Students](#) (Approved by Academic Board on 14th April 2021)

2.0 RESEARCH STUDENT SUPERVISION

Research students are PhD students or Research Masters students. Throughout the expressions “Postgraduate Student” and “Graduate Student” are used synonymously.

2.1 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to lay-out the procedure for the supervision and monitoring of research students at School of Mathematical Sciences (SOMS) at UCC. All students based at SOMS will undertake reviews as described in this procedure. SOMS Graduate Studies Committee will oversee the progress of all SOMS based research students. This procedure takes account of the existing regulations and procedures of the academic programmes in which our students are registered and recognises the fact that students from many different disciplines may require modified supervision modes.

The process of progress reviews for SOMS based research students is intended to be a constructive and positive experience for the students and (co-)supervisor(s) and should recognise and acknowledge good progress made.

2.2 PROGRESS REVIEW PANEL (PRP)

Each research student undertaking research at SOMS will have a Progress Review Panel. The minimum requirement for the PRP is three people including; lead supervisor, co-supervisor/advisor, and monitor (and an academic member of SOMS Graduate Studies Committee in case of re-reviews). The lead supervisor and co-supervisor(s)/advisor are appointed by the academic programme on which the student is registered. The SOMS Graduate Studies Committee appoints the monitor for each student and is responsible for overseeing the Progress Review Process for all students based at SOMS. A minimum of four people, i.e. progress review panel and student must attend progress review meetings.

2.3 PRP ROLES

The roles of the PRP members, for research students at SOMS, will be as follows:

- Lead Supervisor & Co-supervisor(s) (if appointed)
- Advisor (if appointed)
- Monitor
- Academic Member of SOMS Graduate Studies Committee (for re-reviews)

2.3.1 LEAD SUPERVISOR and CO-SUPERVISOR(S)

The **Lead Supervisor** is a member of academic or research staff of UCC who is responsible for the overall direction of the Student's research. This includes managing administrative issues relating to the Student's registration and progression and supporting the student in preparation for examination of their thesis.

Co-supervisors are members of academic or research staff of UCC or may be external to UCC (e.g., in another university, industry or a research organization). A co-supervisor provides significant specialist advice as necessary for the progress of the research. A co-supervisor (whether internal or external) must be an active participant in the supervision of the project.

2.3.2 ADVISOR

The Advisor is a member of academic or research staff of UCC who provides a point of contact on pastoral, procedural and student support issues. The advisor should also be the academic programme's point of contact for the student if the supervisor/student relationship breaks down. In this role, the advisor should be aware of the student support services that the University offers. The advisor does not offer specialist academic support, but is expected to meet the student twice per year at a minimum.

2.3.3 MONITOR

A monitor is an independent person nominated to take an independent view of the research conducted by the graduate student and is not directly involved in the project. The monitor is appointed by the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee and may be a member of it. The monitor is the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee representative on each PRP.

In addition attending Progress Review meetings, the monitor will meet individually with:

- a) the student and,
- b) the lead supervisor /co-supervisor(s)/advisors.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide the student and their supervisory team with the opportunity to discuss any issues arising, in strict confidence, with the monitor. A brief report of this meeting is recorded and sent, by the monitor, to SOMS Graduate Studies in a strictly confidential manner.

3 REVIEWS

The reporting requirements for each review period are outlined below. In addition to those reports, a Research Student Progress Report should be written by PRP, detailing the outcome of the PRP review meeting and documenting any recommendations made by the PRP. The student will subsequently review the report and sign prior to submission of all reports required for each review.

The Research Student Progress Report must include a clear recommendation that the student continues working toward their degree, or details of any other actions required.

Additionally, monitors will email their strictly confidential reports directly to SOMS Graduate Studies.

3.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT AND PRP FOR PROGRESS REVIEWS

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to schedule the review meetings. Reporting dates are taken from the date the student registers on an academic programme. Students and supervisors should be emailed 1 month prior to reports becoming due.

When a student receives a reminder, they should:

- liaise with their supervisor in organising their review meeting,
- complete the student section of the Research/PhD Student Progress Report Form,
- prepare a Research Summary Report and circulate it to the Progress Review Panel.

The Research Summary Report of the PhD Student may consist of the presentation given at the progress review meeting.

When a lead supervisor receives a reminder, they should:

- liaise with the student and other PRP members to schedule the progress review at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is recognised that, due to other work commitments, it is not always feasible to schedule a time to suit all PRP members around the exact time of the review. All PRP members should assist by striving to find a review date that suits everybody within 2 months of the review period.

Both student and supervisor(s) are responsible for informing the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee (somsgs@ucc.ie) of the review date. If no review date has been notified within 2 months of a report being due, corrective actions will be implemented.

3.2 0-3 MONTH RESEARCH STUDENT LEARNING PLAN

The Research Student Learning Plan should be discussed and set up by the student, lead supervisor and co-supervisor(s)/advisor within the first three month of a student commencing a research programme. The primary purpose of this plan is to define and clarify roles and expectations, for student and supervisor(s)/advisor for the duration of the research. The original document will be retained by the supervisor(s) and a copy will be given to the student. The Research Student Learning Plan is intended to serve as an indicative plan of action which can be revised and updated throughout the course of the student's programme of study, as necessary.

3.3 3-6 MONTH REVIEW

Preliminary meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objectives

1. Ensure student has adequate working resources.
2. Check that project is defined and planned.
3. Check that the student's Personal Development Plan is set up.

Outputs:

1. An agreed outline Research Project Plan (see Appendix A of Progress Review Report) prepared by the research student in consultation with the supervisor. This is to be a 'live' document subject to continuous review and update during the course of the project.
2. Personal Development Plan (see Appendix A of Progress Review Report). This should include, for example:
 - Details of the taught modules the student will be expected to attend including schedule, and assessments they will be expected to pass, and when;
 - Literature to be studied by student;
 - An expectation for "transferable-skills" training the student will be expected to undertake;
 - Conferences or workshops the student might be expected to attend and when.

This document will be reviewed and updated at subsequent progress review meetings.

3. Research Summary Report.
4. Monitor's Reports (Strictly Confidential).

3.4 12 MONTH REVIEW FOR 3-YEAR-PHD AND 4-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objectives:

The objectives of the 12 Month Review are: to provide feedback to the student on progress made so far, to acknowledge good progress, to formulate clear recommendations for future work, to decide whether the student should continue on their current programme or transfer from MSc/MEngSc to PhD and vice versa.

1. Student prepares a written Research Summary Report to be delivered 2 weeks in advance of meeting to the supervisor. Students are encouraged to use supporting material from pre-prints,

publications, technical reports, technical drawings, or any other relevant documentation in preparation of the report.

2. Student makes a formal presentation (20 mins) to Panel followed by a Q&A session.
3. Panel discusses report and presentation.
4. Panel reviews Student Development Plan.
5. Panel reviews student progress on module requirements for structured PhD programme.

Outputs:

1. 12 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor's Reports (Strictly Confidential).
4. Updated Research Project Plan.
5. Updated Personal Development Plan.
6. Update on modules successfully completed to date, modules currently being undertaken and modules planned as part of the structured PhD programme.

If appropriate, the Progress Review Panel makes a recommendation to transfer from MSc/MEngSc to PhD, vice versa, to be approved by the relevant Graduate Studies Committee for the academic programme as per academic regulations.

3.5 24 MONTH REVIEW FOR 3-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of the 24 Month Review are to check that the student is on track to complete their research programme within the time allotted and to acknowledge good progress made. If the work is not on track, one of the outputs for the review will be a set of actions required to bring the research back into line with what would be expected for this timeframe.

1. Student prepares a written Research Summary Report to be delivered 2 weeks in advance of meeting with Panel. This report should consist of collection of reprints/preprints written by the student, plus summary of progress and programme for future work to completion. The summary may consist of a written report, a copy of a publication, a PDF file of the student's presentation, or any other suitable summary as defined by the supervisor. The summary should also include discussion of publication / conference presentation plans and review of personal development plan.
2. Student makes a formal presentation (20 mins) to Panel followed by a Q&A session.
3. Panel discusses report and presentation.
4. Panel reviews Student Development Plan.
5. Panel reviews student progress on module requirements for structured PhD programme. Students are expected to have completed their module requirements by the end of year 2 – with the exception of PhD Eng Sc stream 2 students.

In particular, the PRP carries out the following "Health Check" during this meeting:

- Is research work on schedule?
- Is the research work following project plans?
- Has a significant part of the thesis been written?
- What papers have been written / submitted / published?
- Have all structured PhD module requirements been completed?
- What conferences have been attended / papers presented?
- Prizes/publicity
- Career plans

Outputs:

1. 24 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor's Reports (Strictly Confidential).

4. Updated Research Project Plan.
5. Updated Personal Development Plan.
6. Recommendation: Student will continue with the PhD programme or transfer to MSc/M.Eng.Sc, if appropriate.
7. Update on modules successfully completed to date and justification for any outstanding modules.

In exceptional circumstances, the Progress Review Panel may make a recommendation to transfer from PhD to MSc/MEngSc, to be approved by the relevant Graduate Studies Committee for the academic programme as per academic regulations.

3.6 24 MONTH REVIEW FOR 4-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of the 24 Month Review are to check that the student is on track to complete their research programme within the time allotted and to acknowledge good progress made. If the work is not on track, one of the outputs for the review will be a set of actions required to bring the research back into line with what would be expected for this timeframe.

1. Student prepares a written Research Summary Report to be delivered 2 weeks in advance of meeting with Panel. This report should consist of collection of reprints/ preprints written by the student, plus summary of progress and programme for future work to completion. The summary may consist of a written report, a copy of a publication, a PDF file of the student's presentation, or any other suitable summary as defined by the supervisor. The summary should also include discussion of publication / conference presentation plans and review of personal development plan.
2. Student makes a formal presentation (20 mins) to Panel followed by a Q&A session.
3. Panel discusses report and presentation.
4. Panel reviews Student Development Plan.
5. Panel reviews student progress on module requirements for structured PhD programme. Students are expected to have completed their module requirements by the end of year 2 – with the exception of PhD Eng Sc stream 2 students.

Outputs:

1. 24 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor's Reports (Strictly Confidential).
4. Updated Research Project Plan.
5. Updated Personal Development Plan.
6. Recommendation: Student will continue with the PhD programme or transfer to MSc/M.Eng.Sc, if appropriate.
7. Update on modules successfully completed to date and justification for any outstanding modules.

In exceptional circumstances, the Progress Review Panel may make a recommendation to transfer from PhD to MSc/MEngSc, to be approved by the relevant Graduate Studies Committee as per academic regulations.

3.7 36 MONTH REVIEW FOR 3-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objective:

1. To check that student is nearing completion.
2. Has a submission date been decided? If not, what further actions are required before submission.

Outputs:

1. 36 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor's Reports (Strictly Confidential).

4. Thesis Submission Plan.

3.8 36 MONTH REVIEW FOR 4-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objectives:

“Health Check”: Meeting between Panel and student with checklist as follows:

- Is research work on schedule?
- Is the research work following project plans?
- Has a significant part of the thesis been written?
- What papers have been written/ submitted / published?
- Have all structured PhD module requirements been completed?
- What conferences have been attended / papers presented?
- Prizes/publicity
- Career plans

Outputs:

1. 36 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor’s Reports (Strictly Confidential).
4. Updated Research Project Plan.
5. Updated Personal Development Plan.
6. Update on modules successfully completed to date.

3.9 48 MONTH FOR 4-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS

Formal meeting between Progress Review Panel and student.

Objective:

- To check that student is nearing completion.
- Has a submission date been decided? If not, what further actions are required before submission.

Outputs:

1. 48 Month Progress Report.
2. Research Summary Report.
3. Monitor’s Reports (Strictly Confidential).
4. Thesis Submission Plan.

a. **BEYOND 36 MONTH REVIEW FOR 3-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS / BEYOND 48 MONTH REVIEW FOR 4-YEAR-PHD STUDENTS / STUDENTS NEARING COMPLETION / “WRITING UP”**

Students and supervisors continue to receive emails reminders of reviews due until the student has completed their thesis. Progress reports are required at 6 monthly intervals beyond 36 months, respectively 48 months, in order to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made during the writing up phase. When a student is writing up the supervisor should notify SOMS Graduate Studies and provide an expected submission time.

b. **PART TIME PHD STUDENTS**

Students registered for a PhD programme on a part time basis will be required to undertake a periodic progress review at the following stages: 12 month, 24 month, 36 month, 48 month and subsequently at 12

monthly intervals. Additionally, part time PhD students should email a project plan to their progress review panel before the end of their first 6 months after registration.

c. RESEARCH MASTERS STUDENTS

Students registered for a Masters-by-Research programme will be required to undertake a progress review if they are registered for more than one calendar year. In this case the students will be required to undertake a periodic progress review at the following stages: 3-6 months and 12 months. The details for these reports are as previously defined. Subsequently, at 6-monthly intervals, the student will circulate a progress update to the progress review panel by email. If the progress review panel approve of the update, no formal meeting is required. If at any stage beyond 12 months the student, or any member of the progress review panel, requests a formal review then this will be arranged by the student.

3.13 ADJUDICATION AND RESOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES

The process of progress reviews is clearly intended to be a constructive and positive experience for the student and Progress Review Panel and should recognise and acknowledge good progress made.

3.13.1 UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Academic regulations allow for, and support, the early exit of unsuitable students from research based degree programmes. One of the aims of the process described above is to monitor and document progress, and to highlight and address any issues that may be hindering satisfactory progress at an early stage. The Progress Review Panel should highlight progress which they deem to be unsatisfactory in the meeting summary reports. The SOMS Graduate Studies Committee will review such cases and make appropriate recommendations to the Head of SOMS and its management.

3.13.2 MISCONDUCT

In the case of misconduct, matters will be dealt with in accordance with UCC regulations and the academic regulations of the academic programme on which the student is registered. The Head of SOMS will take whatever steps deemed necessary under those regulations and the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee will make appropriate recommendations to the relevant academic programme on which the student is registered.

3.13.3 APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

The progress review panels are designed to act in the best interests of the student. Through the panels, it is intended that the identification and resolution of any potential problem should occur at an early stage. In circumstances where the student does not feel that their concerns are being adequately dealt with by supervisors or co-supervisors, the advisor and/or members of the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee are intended as a standing neutral point of contact. The monitor is intended as an additional neutral point of contact in the context of PRP meetings.

The student may also avail of the “UCC Student Advisor and Ombudsman” as they deem necessary.

In cases where the student does not feel their concerns have been dealt with in a satisfactory manner by any of the above mechanisms, the student may present their position directly to the SOMS Graduate Studies Committee, who will recommend to the SEFS Graduate Studies whatever changes to the supervision management as they deem necessary. In this case, the PRP members will also be asked to attend the relevant committee meeting, and will be expected to discuss the case with the committee. Members of the Progress Review Panel will be expected to withdraw from any closed sessions of the Graduate Studies Committee to discuss matters and not participate in any votes that may be taken. Student and supervisor will have the option of inviting an independent observer to the meeting. Observers will not have the right to speak at the meeting.

Students also have redress to a Formal Grievance Resolution Procedure as defined by UCC Policy Document “*Resolution of Difficulties for Postgraduate Research Students*”

4 RECORDS

The Main Office of the SOMS maintains records of all research student progress reports.