MRes in Animal and Plant Science (CKS81)

Student guide to procedures before and after entry to the programme

1) Application process

a) <u>Study the brochure</u> and satisfy yourself that this could be the degree programme for you and that you are eligible to apply. You must have gained a 2.1 or higher primary degree, though lower degrees may be considered if there are compelling extenuating circumstances. The degree should be from a relevant discipline.

b) <u>Examine projects</u> or project areas currently on offer on the BEES website [here](#).

c) <u>Contact a potential supervisor</u> to discuss the project. **It is essential that you do this before applying formally**. If you have a project or research area in mind that is not currently on offer, please contact the supervisor most closely aligned to that project or research area to see if they are available to take on other projects. At this point it is important for the student and the supervisor to establish that the project is likely to lead to a novel research outcome, that it is likely to be feasible (logistically and legally, i.e., with respect to ethics and wildlife licensing requirements for example) and that it can be achieved within the time and budget available. The bench fee must cover all direct costs associated with the MRes, including among other things computer equipment, travel, research expense, and there will be no additional budget to cover costs during the programme.

d) Once the supervisor has agreed in principle to supervise you, after registering on the PAC system, you may then <u>submit a PAC application</u> [here](#). The programme code is CKS81 and you can find the apply link under the "Research Programme Listing" section. Part of the application will include a personal statement (maximum 500 words) written by you (the student) that describes your i) background, ii) a brief outline of the nature and aims of the proposed research project, iii) your motivation for doing an MRes in general, and iv) your motivation for doing the selected research project in particular.

e) The supervisor and the relevant Head of Discipline will <u>review the application</u>, and a formal decision will be made, normally within 2-4 weeks of submission. If insufficient information is provided in the application, an informal interview may be required. Once accepted in principle, an offer of a place will be made. If the required qualifying primary degree standard has not yet been met, the offer will be conditional on getting the grades before

registration. Accepted applicants will register at the start of the academic semester.

2) Timeline during the programme

a) **Modules:** You will select the modules you would like to take as part of your degree programme as soon as possible, ideally in the week of arrival. Modules usually run only once per year in specific semesters. It will be essential to ensure that attendance at lectures, and the eventual exam, do not clash with your research project requirements, which will need careful planning with your supervisor. Note that if you register in September, you may be able to select modules that take place in Semester 1 or Semester 2. If you register in January, you may only be able to take modules available in Semester 2. Note that a whole series of additional PG (postgrad) modules not mentioned on the brochure are also potentially available, depending on space (see postgraduate training modules on UCC's book of modules [here](#)).

b) **Literature review:** You will complete a 2-3,000 word literature review on the topic, outlining in detail the background and aims of the project, detailing the methods and experimental design, and providing a GANT chart showing the projected timeline for the main milestones. This should be completed 6-8 weeks after the programme start date.

c) **Research plan review:** Under the auspices of the School of BEES Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), within 2 weeks of the literature review being completed, the student will deliver a 10 minute presentation to a member of the GSC, the Head of Discipline, and potentially other staff, outlining in detail the i) plans for their research, ii) licensing issues, iii) budget. This will be followed with a ca. 15 minute discussion to review the detailed project plan and to ensure the project is likely to generate the projected outcomes.

d) **Data collection:** The exact timing of data collection will depend on the project. Note that many projects can only be conducted at certain times of the year, and it will be essential to choose the appropriate start date to ensure the project can be completed within the allocated 12 months.

e) **Progress**: Progress during data collection and the write up phase is the responsibility of the research student, but will be monitored by the supervisor(s).

f) **Thesis structure:** The format of the thesis will consist of i) Table of contents; ii) the Literature Review as above; iii) the main section of the thesis which will normally be a single Chapter written in the style of a Scientific Paper (with Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion section, Figures and Tables), (or in some cases 2 papers); iv) a general conclusions section (normally not more than 1-2000 words); v) a bibliography containing all references in the thesis; and vi) Appendices where appropriate, including hard copies and electronic copies of spreadsheets including all the raw data used in the thesis. Note that it will be good practice to ensure the literature review and the methods in ii) are written up <u>before</u> data collection has been completed. The total thesis (excluding

Appendices) should be no more than 25,000 words including references, but when assessing the thesis, emphasis will be placed on quality.

g) **Thesis formatting:** Single sided numbered pages. Font size should be 12 point Times New Roman or equivalent size in a different font, with 1.5 line spacing. Continuous line numbers should also be inserted in the submitted version, though these should be removed in the corrected version once the degree is awarded. References in text should be cited as names, not numbers (e.g. Darwin & Mendele 1874, rather than [1]). Excessive use of Tables and Figures is discouraged. Include important tables and figures in the main results chapters, and additional supplementary Tables as Appendices.

3) Assessment and award of the MRes

a) MRes students must pass (mark of 40%) all taught modules before the thesis can be submitted for examination. Students must resit the exam for any failed module before the thesis can be submitted for examination.

b) The thesis will be completed and submitted to UCC Graduate Studies within 12 months of the start date. Failure to submit on time could result in additional semester fees.

c) The students must submit an "Intention to submit thesis" form 9 months after first registering for the programme, i.e., within 3 months of the intended thesis submission date, so that the examiners can be invited in advance.

d) You must submit the thesis for examination to UCC's Graduate Studies (not the School of BEES Graduate Studies Committee). They will ask an external examiner and an internal examiner, who cannot be your supervisor, to examine the thesis. For further details on this process, please refer to the "Procedures for Submission and Examination of Research Masters Degrees" on the web at this link.

e) Award of Research Masters Degrees: When considering the thesis under examination, the Examiners may give particular attention to the following (subject to the nature of the thesis(s), and being mindful of the national and European descriptors for Level 9 qualifications):
   • Does the thesis demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning?
   • Does the thesis demonstrate a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning?
   • Has the candidate demonstrated a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry?
   • Was appropriate methodology adopted?
   • Has the candidate demonstrated that they can select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning and developed new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques? If a new methodology has been developed, has it been tested and validated appropriately?

• Has the candidate demonstrated an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity for form judgements?
• Is the candidate familiar with other published work in the field and can the candidate summarise the work of other authors so as to synthesise an appropriate theoretical framework for the work described in the thesis?
• If relevant, were all ethical requirements met?
• Are results interpreted appropriately? Are reasonable conclusions reached based on the evidence presented in the thesis? If relevant, have appropriate statistical methods been employed? Does the candidate appreciate the significance of the results and do conclusions reached take into account relevant published findings by other authors?
Presentation of the thesis:
• Is the thesis presented in a style appropriate to the discipline, and with a minimum of typographical and grammatical errors?
• Are results presented appropriately and in a clear and accessible way? Are all tables, figures and plates, where included, adequately annotated and correctly referenced in the text?
• Is the bibliography complete, comprehensive and up-to-date? Is it referenced appropriately in the text with a recognised citation style?
• Is the thesis accompanied by an acceptable abstract which accurately summarises the work described therein?
• Where the candidate worked as part of a research team, does the thesis clearly identify the individual contribution of the candidate to the overall research project?

f) The student must correct the thesis before the thesis can be passed and the degree awarded.

g) **Informally, the ambition is that you generate a piece of work that approaches publishable standard, and that you ultimately publish the work. Realistically this may not always occur, and is unlikely to occur before your degree has been awarded.**

For queries related to PAC, contact pachelp@pac.ie

For queries related to specific research projects, contact the relevant supervisor.

For further information on Zoology related projects, contact the Programme Coordinator Prof. John Quinn (Head of Discipline, Zoology) j.quinn@ucc.ie

For further information on Plants related projects, contact Prof. Astrid Wingler (the Head of Discipline, Plant Science) astrid.wingler@ucc.ie

For queries relating to the examination process, contact Student Records and Examinations exams@ucc.ie