



# **Procedures for the Submission and Examination of Theses for**

***Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD)***

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All policies and procedures referred to in this document can be found at:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/gs-policies/>

## 1. Introduction: Submission and Examination of a Thesis for the award of Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD)

- a) These regulations detail the roles of candidates, examiners and the independent chair to understand their contributions to, and roles in, the examination and the general procedures operated by the University.
- b) Candidates will be allowed a maximum of 6 years to submit their thesis. Candidates who do not submit their thesis within the 6 years from the date of first registration for the programme, for which they have been approved, will require approval for an extension from the relevant College and must be registered at the time of thesis submission. A detailed review must be undertaken as outlined in the *Progress Review Policy for Research Students* and must accompany the request for an extension.
- c) A candidate must pursue a programme of supervised research and have completed their approved period of registration in order to submit a thesis for a Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD). It is a University requirement that all candidates remain registered until their thesis is submitted for examination.
- d) A Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) is awarded to suitably qualified candidates who prepare, present and defend their thesis in a *viva voce* examination describing original research which is their own work. Such work will include discovery of new facts or new interpretations of existing knowledge, and thus represent a real advance in the field of study.
- e) The thesis should be of publishable standard in peer-reviewed literature, in whole or in part.
- f) To establish that the research is of doctoral standard, the candidate is examined on their thesis formally in an oral examination (*viva voce*).
- g) The examination board consists of an independent chair, internal and external examiners. The external examiner should be an expert in the field of study of the thesis.

## 2. Preparing Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) Thesis

- a) Drafts of the thesis should be prepared under the guidance of the supervisor(s). The thesis format should conform to disciplinary norms within the University. In addition, feedback from the progress review panels (PRP) to the candidate during their research programme will be useful in terms of the

expectations of the likely structure and content of the final thesis. A progress review should be completed annually per *UCC Progress Review Policy for Research Students*.

- b) Plagiarism in research degree theses constitutes a very significant breach of examination regulations. Supervisors should make students aware of all aspects of plagiarism in preparation of their thesis. Students should familiarise themselves with the *Procedure for Investigating Allegations of Plagiarism in Research Theses*.
- c) The use of external professional individuals or organisations for proof-reading, copy-editing of theses or other services on a paid basis is not permitted. Candidates found to have engaged such assistance in preparing their thesis will be deemed to be in breach of examination regulations.
- d) Candidates should familiarise themselves with the norms that apply in their School/Department with regard to structure/style, content, word count, and academic referencing convention.

For example, in the case of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, the length of a Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) thesis should not exceed 80,000 words, unless there are exceptional circumstances and provided it has the support of the School/Departmental Graduate Studies Committee.

In the case of the School of Law, the length of a Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) thesis should be between 80,000–100,000 words inclusive of footnotes and exclusive of tables, appendices and bibliography.

- e) When a thesis is submitted, a signed declaration must be included, stating that the thesis submitted is the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. This declaration must explicitly make reference to the fact that the candidate is aware of the importance of plagiarism and that the text presented for examination does not include plagiarised material. The following wording must be used:

*This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.*

*Digital signature of the candidate:* \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Publication-Based Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) Thesis

- a) UCC permits the presentation of a publication-based thesis. The research described in a publication-based thesis will be presented in the form of a set of manuscripts or other scholarly outputs from the work undertaken during the candidates' period of registration, typically with each manuscript forming one chapter of the thesis.
- b) In the case of candidates admitted under the PhD by Prior Published Work policy, scholarly output undertaken prior to their registration as a PhD student may be included. The typical work included will be in the form of a peer-reviewed journal article, but in certain disciplines it is recognised that other formats (i.e. chapters in books, monographs) may be a recognised final scholarly output. The work should not consist of a series of publications reporting essentially the same data or findings to separate readerships. Presentations at conferences which are not the final dissemination of the work concerned are not usually regarded as suitable for inclusion in such a thesis. As the thesis is a draft document for examination, PDF versions of articles/papers or other outputs as appear in press should not be included in the body of the thesis. The corresponding document in text-based manuscript format can be included. Copies of published material (PDF versions) could be included for information as appendices to the thesis.
- c) A typical publication-based Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) thesis will normally include at least one paper published in a peer-reviewed academic journal or equivalent, and others in press, submitted, or planned for submission. In all cases, a key consideration for the examiners is whether the quantity and quality of work presented represents an appropriate level of scholarly output for a Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) thesis in the discipline concerned.
- d) All papers in a publication-based thesis should fit around the pre-approved coherent PhD topic. Normally, the files used should be the final manuscript files submitted prior to publication. However, there does not have to be an exact correspondence between the published articles and thesis versions as, for example, additional material may be included in versions of publications included in a thesis, or sections contributed by others which are not necessary for the thesis version may be removed.
- e) Publication-based theses must include, as well as the works themselves, a substantial and original introduction and discussion to tie together the work and present a coherent thesis. The introduction will typically take the form of a review of the relevant literature and an explanation of the scope and objectives of the work described in the thesis; the discussion or conclusion should form a critical synthesis or analysis of the overall contribution of the work to the field concerned.

- f) The candidate is normally first author and key contributor to the papers presented in a publication-based Thesis. However, disciplinary norms in regard to policy on authorship will be respected. The contribution of the candidate to each of the papers presented within the thesis must be articulated clearly.
- g) In all cases where papers presented in a publication-based thesis have multiple authors, the individual contributions of the candidate and the co-authors to the paper should be clearly specified for each article. In addition, candidates must inform co-authors of the inclusion of such work in their thesis and quantify the extent of such additional input.
- h) Examiners will be asked to judge in the *viva voce* examination that the overall level of contribution and intellectual ownership of the work by the candidate is at the requisite level for the award of a Doctoratus Philosophiae PhD.
- i) All elements submitted within the thesis, including material already published, are under examination by the examiners. Amendments to the version of the work included in the thesis as a text-based document (i.e., not the PDF of the published article) may be required. While presentation of work which is publishable in whole or in part as a work of serious scholarship is a key criterion for the PhD examination, publication of work does not in any way predetermine the outcome of the examination.

#### 4. The Examination of Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD)

- a) The Examination Board normally consists of an independent chair, an external examiner and an internal examiner for each thesis.
- b) If the candidate is a member of UCC academic staff, or a permanent member of staff of the University, or holds an employment contract of 3 or more years, either full-time or part-time, there will be a second external examiner. For the purposes of this regulation, a candidate will not be classified as a part-time member of staff where:
  - I. they only carry out work for the School/Department pursuant to a student support scheme or
  - II. they are paid on an hourly basis, and, in the opinion of the Head of School/Department is not such as to justify the application of the rule requiring an additional external examiner.
- c) In the case of theses in inter-disciplinary fields, where a reasoned academic case may be made that a broader diversity of academic expertise is required to examine the thesis, the examination board may

be extended to include an additional internal and/or external examiner, to a maximum of four examiners in total.

- d) The examiners are nominated by the Head of School/Department following consultation with the supervisors and other relevant expertise where appropriate (e.g., Head of Discipline). The examiner nominations are approved by the appropriate Head of College Graduate School. In the case of any conflict of interest by the Head of School/Department (e.g. if the Head is also a supervisor), the nomination should be made by the Head of College. In the case of a conflict of interest by the Head of College, the nomination should be made by the Deputy President and Registrar.
- e) The external examiner should have a strong track-record in the research field of the thesis and will have experience of examining Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) theses in UCC or elsewhere. The Head of School/Department must satisfy themselves as to the expertise of proposed external examiner(s) in the subject of the thesis and an examiner nomination form (*Approval of Examiners Form*) must be fully completed for each proposed external examiner so that an informed decision can be made.
- f) The internal examiner is expected to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject area of the research topic to enable them to judge the quality of the thesis. The internal examiner is expected to play a full part in determining the outcome of the examination. The Head of School/Department must satisfy themselves as to the experience of the proposed internal examiner(s) and an examiner nomination form (*Approval of Examiners Form*) must be fully completed for each proposed internal examiner so that an informed decision can be made.
- g) There must be no conflict of interest, whether personal, professional or commercial, between the proposed examiners of a thesis and the candidate, supervisor, University or subject matter. Specific examples of circumstances which may lead to a conflict of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - I. Formal association between the external examiner and UCC (e.g., as staff member or student) within the past five years;
  - II. A personal or family relationship with the candidate or supervisor(s);
  - III. Co-authorship of publications with the candidate;
  - IV. Collaboration with the candidate in the work described in the thesis;
  - V. Acting as external examiner for a thesis by the same supervisor in the past three years, unless a strong reasoned case for this being the best examiner for the thesis is presented;
  - VI. Commercial interest in the work described in the thesis;
  - VII. Acting in the past, or near future, as an employer of the candidate;

- VIII. Substantial contact with the candidate or supervisor in any other circumstance which might jeopardise the independence of the examination.
- h) Any request for deviation in the composition of the examination board must be approved by the chair of the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee.
- i) An independent chair will be part of the examination process for all Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) theses. An Independent Chair should be a member of academic staff from a different School/Department within the relevant college from which the candidate and the supervisor(s) come. In addition, the independent chair must be free of any conflicts of interest regarding the candidate, supervisor(s) or thesis under examination. An independent Chair must have previous *viva voce* examination experience. Each College will provide a panel of staff, who will act in this role. At the time of nomination of the examiners, the relevant Head of College Graduate School will nominate/approve an independent chair. In the case of any conflict of interest (e.g. if the Head of College Graduate School is also a supervisor), the nomination should be made by the Head of College. In the case of a conflict of interest by the Head of College, the nomination should be made by the Deputy President and Registrar. Full detail on Independent Chair, eligibility, role and responsibilities can be found in the appendix below.

## 5. Submission Procedure

- a) In consultation with supervisor(s), the candidate submits an *Intention to Submit* online to the Graduate Studies Office at least three months before the likely date of submission. Failure to do this will delay the examination.
- b) Once the *intention to submit* process has been completed the Graduate Studies Office contacts the Head of School/Department, to ensure that the *Approval of Examiners Form* is fully completed (including examiner biographical details and if an examiner requires a paper copy of the thesis and which model of *viva voce* has been agreed on: (a) onsite (at UCC), (b) virtual or (c) hybrid<sup>1</sup>). The form is then emailed by the Head of School/Department to the relevant College Graduate School for approval. Once approved, the form is uploaded by the College office to a OneDrive folder which is shared with the Graduate Studies Office for processing.

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<sup>1</sup> A hybrid model may take the form of one or more members(s) of the examination board being on-site at UCC. This does not include the supervisors who are not examiners.



- c) When the final draft of the thesis is ready, it is submitted online to the Graduate Studies Office along with the *Submission for Examination Form* signed (digital signature) by the supervisor(s) and Head of School/Department. This form not only confirms approval that the thesis is ready to be submitted for examination but also confirms access conditions for the final thesis when uploaded to CORA (the UCC Institutional Repository). Where an examiner has requested a paper copy, the candidate will submit this to the Graduate Studies Office at the same time as the e-thesis submission. Any candidate who believes that such a signature(s) has been unreasonably withheld may still submit their thesis, but must be notified in writing by the Head of School/Department that this is against the advice of the School/Department. In such cases, the supervisor(s) must submit an independent report to the Head of School/Department outlining the reasons for not supporting submission. The Head of School/Department (or Head of the College Graduate School if the Head is a supervisor of the student in question) should email this report to the Head of the Graduate Studies Office. This will then be considered alongside the report(s) arising from the examination by the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee before a final recommendation is made to Academic Board on the result of the examination of the thesis. In cases where the thesis is rejected or failed, the Graduate Studies Office will notify examiners of the fact that the supervisor(s) did not approve submission of the thesis after the examination is complete.
- d) No changes may be made to the e-thesis after online submission to the Graduate Studies Office. The external and internal examiners may not communicate with the candidate about the thesis in the period between the submission of the thesis for examination and the completion of the examination process.
- e) The Graduate Studies Office will send the thesis to all examiners, along with a link to the *Examination Procedures for Submission and Examination of Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD)*. Details of the dates of meetings of the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee, to which reports should be returned, will also be included.
- f) The process of reading and examining the thesis, including the *viva voce* examination, should take a maximum of three months.
- g) The supervisor(s) are notified that the thesis has been sent to the examiners, and the internal examiner arranges a suitable date, time and venue for the *viva voce* examination, in consultation with the candidate, external examiner, independent chair and supervisors. Arrangements, once agreed, should be confirmed in writing to all parties by the internal examiner.

## 6. *Viva Voce* Examination

- a) The *viva voce* examination is compulsory for Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) degrees. In exceptional circumstances, on the written recommendation of the Head of School/Department, and with the written consent of the external examiner(s), the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee may waive the requirement to hold the *viva voce* examination.
- b) The supervisor(s) shall advise the candidate about the procedures under which *viva voce* examinations are conducted. The supervisor(s) should also give the candidate general advice about preparation for the *viva voce* examination, and is normally expected to attend the *viva voce* examination.
- c) The *viva voce* examination can be (a) onsite (at UCC), (b) virtual or (c) hybrid<sup>2</sup>. The full policy on *viva voce* examinations is appended below. The independent chair, external and internal examiners, the candidate and the supervisor(s) should be present at the *viva voce* examination. If the candidate does not wish the supervisor(s) to be present, the candidate must state this in writing to the Head of the Graduate Studies Office that they do not wish the supervisor(s) to be present.
- d) If the model of *viva voce* is onsite (at UCC) or hybrid the venue chosen should be large enough to accommodate all those attending. It should be free for the expected duration of the examination to avoid the possibility of interruptions. All telephones, including mobile phones, should be switched off or diverted during the examination.
- e) The only persons present during the *viva voce* examination should be the independent chair, examiners, the candidate and the supervisor(s). In exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the chair of Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee, others may attend.
- f) Immediately prior to the *viva voce* examination, the examiners must discuss and agree the order and procedure of the examination.
- g) In some School/Departments/Research Centres, candidates may be invited in advance to prepare a short verbal or audio-visual summary of their work which they present to the examination board at the beginning of the *viva voce* Examination. Reasonable notice of such requirements will normally be given by the internal examiner to the candidate in writing. Candidates are not obliged to make such a

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<sup>2</sup> A hybrid model may take the form of one or more members(s) of the examination board being on-site at UCC. This does not include the supervisors who are not examiners

presentation, and may indicate in writing to the internal examiner that they do not wish to make a presentation.

- h) In some School/Departments/Research Centres, individuals other than the examiners may be invited to attend a public presentation. While a public presentation of a candidate's work can have acknowledged benefits as part of the research programme and culture of an academic unit or research centre, it is not part of the *viva voce* examination process.
- i) The independent chair is responsible for the conduct of the *viva voce* examination. This would include:
  - I. Clarify and ensure compliance with all regulations and procedures for the conduct of the *viva voce* examination.
  - II. Ensure that the *viva voce* examination is conducted in a fair and appropriate manner
  - III. Ensuring that opportunities for breaks are offered to the candidate
  - IV. On occasion where there is information to be made known to examiners at the end of the examination (e.g., where a supervisor has not signed off on a thesis submission, and has indicated reasons for doing so), this will be held by the independent chair and introduced by him/her as appropriate.

The candidate may request a break at any time during the examination.

The external examiner should lead the discussion of the candidate's thesis. The initial questions should be generally designed to put the candidate at ease and may be of a general nature.

At the end of the *viva voce* examination, the candidate should be asked to leave whilst the examiners confer. The supervisor(s) may be invited by the examiners to participate in the discussion at this point, to allow any remaining issues to be identified and, if necessary, bring to the attention of the examiners any additional information which may be relevant (e.g., the nature of decisions taken at intermediate stages in the research programme). The examiners must ensure that they have all the information they need on which to base their judgement, and may recall the candidate if there are any further matters of substance for discussion. When the examiners have agreed their recommendation, the candidate should be finally recalled, and informed that they will be notified officially of the result by the Graduate Studies Office. Normally, the examiners notify the candidate of the recommended outcome of the *viva voce* examination at this point, making it clear that the result is only a recommendation that has to be confirmed by the University, and that they will receive formal notification in writing once the result has been approved by the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee and the Academic Board. In addition, the examiners are expected to directly provide the candidate with explicit instructions for any amendments to the thesis required as a result of the *viva voce* examination.

## 7. Award of Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD)

- a) When considering the thesis and in their conduct of the *viva voce* examination, the examiners may give particular attention to the following (subject to the nature of the discipline(s) in question):
- I. Is the thesis presented in a style appropriate to the discipline, and with a minimum of typographical and grammatical errors?
  - II. Does the thesis contain an acceptable abstract which accurately summarises the work described therein?
  - III. Does the thesis form a coherent piece of work? In the case of publication-based theses, does the candidate present an appropriate framework for the work described in the thesis and its contribution to the field in the introduction and discussion sections of the thesis?
  - IV. Is the work the candidate's own or, where the candidate worked as part of a research team, does the thesis clearly demonstrate a sufficient individual contribution of the candidate, as primary researcher or author, to the overall research project to merit the award of Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD).
  - V. If relevant, were all ethical requirements met?
  - VI. Was appropriate methodology adopted and described in the thesis? Is the candidate aware of alternative methodologies? Does the candidate appreciate any inherent weaknesses in the methodology adopted? If a new methodology has been developed, has it been tested and calibrated appropriately?
  - VII. Has the thesis in whole or part met the standard required for peer-reviewed publication in journals appropriate to the discipline or by reputable academic publishers? In the case of Publication-based theses, this will be demonstrated by inclusion of material which has been published and/or is ready for publication.
  - VIII. Is the candidate familiar with other work in the field published up to the date of submission of the thesis, and can the candidate summarise and critically evaluate the relevant work of other authors?
  - IX. Are results presented appropriately and in a clear and accessible way?
  - X. Are all tables, figures and graphs, where included, adequately annotated and correctly referenced in the text?
  - XI. Are results interpreted appropriately?
  - XII. Are reasonable conclusions reached based on the evidence presented in the thesis?
  - XIII. Have appropriate statistical methods been employed?

- XIV. Does the candidate appreciate the significance of the results and do conclusions reached take into account relevant published findings by other authors?
- XV. Has the thesis demonstrated a significant and original contribution to knowledge?
- XVI. Is the bibliography complete, comprehensive and up-to-date? Is it referenced appropriately in the text with a recognised citation style?
- XVII. Can the candidate defend their work in the *viva voce* examination through high-level debate with experts in the subject area?

b) The *viva voce* examination should play an important part in evaluating the thesis against the above standards for award of the Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD). In addition, it should allow the examiners to raise any issues concerning material presented in the thesis, enable the candidate to explain any aspects of the thesis that require further clarification or elaboration. Furthermore, it allows the examiners to ascertain that the candidate has undertaken the work and has a thorough understanding of the theoretical and conceptual framework, issues, methods and analysis involved in the research.

c) All examiners will consult and prepare a joint written report on the thesis after the *viva voce* examination, using the electronic template supplied by the Graduate Studies Office. The internal examiner will submit this joint report to the Graduate Studies Office for consideration by the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee. Where the examiners are not in agreement, the internal examiner must ensure that separate reports are made and submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for consideration by the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee. The independent Chair will sign the examination report form confirming that the *viva voce* examination was conducted in a fair and appropriate manner. Any concerns regarding the conduct of the examination must be detailed in writing to the chair of the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee.

d) The examiners must recommend one of the following results:

- I. **Award, no amendments needed** (the degree is awarded without any changes).
- II. **Award, on condition minor amendments are carried out.** This includes minor recommendations that do not significantly affect the argument and/or conclusions of the thesis (such as typographical errors, minor changes in phraseology, inclusion of additional minor points of discussion, or correction or updating of the bibliography). These amendments must be verified to the Graduate Studies Office by the internal examiner within 3 months of the approval of the Examiners' report by Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee. Failure to comply with this date will significantly impact conferring and subsequently the official date of successful completion and issuance of the candidate's transcript. The supervisor(s) will play a supporting role in ensuring that this process is brought to completion.

- III. **Award, on condition major amendments are carried out**, i.e. the thesis requires substantial modification including rewriting of parts of chapters or sections of the thesis, introduction of new material, further experiments or calculations, analysis or data. The modifications required should be such as to make the thesis acceptable but would not normally require another *viva voce* examination. These amendments must be verified by the internal and external examiners to the Graduate Studies Office, within 6 months of the approval of the Examiners' report by Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee. Failure to comply with this date will significantly impact conferring and subsequently the official date of successful completion and issuance of the candidate's transcript. Should the amendments recommended not be made to the satisfaction of the examiners or within the given timeframe, the award may be changed from Award on condition major amendments are carried out to a **Reject judgement**.
- IV. **Reject, but permit the submission of a revised thesis**, i.e., a major rewrite of all or a significant part of the thesis, leading to a new thesis being submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for examination. This may include substantial rewriting of parts of the thesis, including introduction of new research and appropriate correction of an inherently flawed and unsound argument or methodology. Such revision may include a requirement for additional material where examiners believe the candidate's individual contribution to the work or publications presented has been insufficient or there is not sufficient material of publishable standard to meet the required standard in the case of publication-based theses. The modification(s) would normally be so great as to require re-examination in a second *viva voce* examination. This process must be completed within 12 months of the approval of the Examiners' report by Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee, during which time the candidate must be registered as a PhD student and the revised thesis should be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office. Failure to comply with this date will significantly impact conferring and subsequently the official date of successful completion and issuance of the candidate's transcript. If the candidate is not capable, in the opinion of the examiners, of carrying out such a significant revision of the thesis, then option (V) or (VI) is preferable. If a student does not wish to resubmit a revised thesis and the examiners wish to allow the award of a lower degree (as per (V) below), this option may be offered to the candidate and if accepted, this written acceptance should accompany the examiner's report.
- V. **Reject, but allow the award of a lower degree** - a Research Master's degree is awarded in lieu of a Doctoratus Philosophiae (PhD) award. The lower award is made either based on the thesis as it currently stands or subject to minor amendments as in (II) above or may be awarded once substantial modifications are satisfactorily carried out as under (III) above. A recommendation will also need to be made on the grade of award of the lower degree (on the original thesis), where appropriate.

- VI. **Reject. No degree is awarded as the thesis is very seriously and inherently deficient.** In this case the examiners must be of the opinion that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that it is reasonable to suppose that the candidate will not be in a position to bring it up to Research Master standard within a reasonable time. Examiners should be convinced that this is the only decision open to them.
- e) Reports submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for consideration by Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee must be made on the electronic form provided by the Graduate Studies Office and:
- I. give an indication of the content of the thesis, its contribution to knowledge and the quality of its presentation;
  - II. comment on the candidate's performance in the *viva voce* examination;
  - III. indicate, where appropriate, the nature and extent of any amendments that are required to the thesis;
  - IV. clearly indicate a recommendation of result
  - V. typically be a minimum of 500 words in length;
  - VI. be sufficiently clear and informative to allow Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee to make a recommendation to Academic Board;
  - VII. be a joint report and signed by all examiners
- f) The Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee has delegated authority to approve examiner reports and recommend the conferral of research degrees to Academic Board. The Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee may refer back to the examiners if the information given is not sufficiently complete to enable the committee to reach a decision on the recommendation of the examiners, or if any of the required elements in the report (e.g. a formal indication of a recommended result, an examiner's signature) is missing. If the report does not justify the recommendation made, the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee may recommend an alternative judgement to the examiners.
- g) The Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee makes a recommendation to the Academic Board as to the award of the degree or otherwise. The candidate will be notified in writing of the result after consideration by Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee, subject to final approval by Academic Board.
- h) The supervisor(s) is responsible for overseeing the amendments required by the examiners. The award of the degree will not be made until all amendments have been made to the satisfaction of the

internal examiner and, if required (as in the case of major amendments), the internal and external examiners.

- i) Once the amendments have been carried out, and this has been confirmed to the Graduate Studies Office by the relevant examiners, the candidate uploads the final electronic (PDF) thesis version to [CORA](#) (UCC Boole Library institutional repository). The candidate is then notified by the Graduate Studies Office that they are now eligible to graduate at the next conferring ceremony. The thesis will then be lodged in the Boole Library and the access rights as agreed by the candidate and supervisor(s) in the *Submission for Examination Form* (detailed in section 5 above) will be applied. Relevant section of the [Boole Library site](#):

<https://libguides.ucc.ie/theses/access>

- j) Staff and students should familiarize themselves with the full online instructions for research thesis submission and examination:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/study/postgrad/currentresearchstudents/thesis/>

## 8. Appeals

Candidates may appeal a result by following the procedures of the University.

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/gs-policies/>



## 9. Appendix: Independent Chair, eligibility, role and responsibilities

An independent chair will be part of the *viva voce* examination. An independent chair should be a member of academic staff from a different School/Department within the relevant college from which the candidate and the supervisor(s) come. In addition, the independent chair must be free of any conflicts of interest regarding the candidate, supervisor(s) or thesis under examination. An independent chair must have previously examined at least two *viva voce* examinations. Each College will provide a panel of staff, who will act in this role. At the time of nomination of the examiners, the relevant Head of College Graduate School will nominate/approve an independent chair. In the case of any conflict of interest (e.g. if the Head of College Graduate School is also a supervisor), the nomination should be made by the Head of College. In the case of a conflict of interest by the Head of College, the nomination should be made by the Deputy President and Registrar.

### Eligibility to Act as an Independent Chair

The principal duty of the chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally, and in accordance with University regulations. It is therefore important that the Independent Chair:

- is familiar with, and experienced in, the research award regulations of the University.
- must be proficient in the language being used in the *viva voce* examination.
- can be chosen, by mutual agreement, from any College in the University.
- is a member of UCC academic staff and have previously examined at least two *viva voce* examinations or
- is an Emeritus Professor in UCC and has acted as an internal examiner in a *viva voce* examination at UCC, within the past three years.

An individual cannot act as chair for the same supervisor more than once in three years. Derogations from the 3-year time limit are permissible by prior arrangement for all research degrees by the Head of the relevant College Graduate School.

### Role and Responsibilities of Independent Chair at *viva voce* Examinations

1. The role of the independent chair is to chair the examination in order to facilitate a fair and smoothly run examination, and to advise on UCC examination regulations, where appropriate.
2. The independent chair is required to attend the pre-*viva voce* meeting with the examiners and be present for the duration of the *viva voce* examination and post-*viva voce* discussions.
3. When the examination includes an oral presentation, the chair should be in attendance with the examiners.

4. At the pre-*viva voce* meeting, the chair must ensure that all examiners understand the chair's role in the examining process.
5. The chair must ensure that the University's regulations are followed. In relation to these, and ensuring good practice, the chair is responsible for the following:
  - a. Ensuring that during the pre-*viva voce* meeting, the examiners develop an agenda or plan of questioning for the oral examination.
  - b. Confirming that, if the candidate's supervisors attend the *viva voce* examination, the supervisors are not part of the examination process. The chair may ask the supervisors to leave the room if they intervene inappropriately in the examination process. Supervisors can only contribute during the examination with permission of the chair after consultation with the examiners.
  - c. Knowing how to contact a supervisor, if not present at the *viva voce* examination (phone extension or mobile phone number) in case they are required.
  - d. Welcoming the candidate to the examination room; introducing everybody; explaining the chair's role in the process and making sure that the candidate is ready to start and is comfortable.
  - e. Take notes of the progress of the *viva voce* examination with a time line noted in the margin. These notes may be used in the case of a complaint or appeal.
  - f. Intervening if judged that an examiner's questioning is too aggressive or may be biased or discriminatory. If necessary, the chair has the right to call a temporary break to discuss these concerns with the examiners.
  - g. If the candidate is showing signs of extreme stress, suspending the *viva voce* examination and allowing the candidate a short break to compose themselves. In very extreme cases, the chair has the right to suspend the *viva voce* examination. In such cases, the Head of the Graduate Studies Office must be informed immediately and the chair referred to the Dean of Graduate Studies for advice on how to proceed.
  - h. Where there is information to be made known to examiners at the end of the examination (e.g., where a supervisor has not signed off on a thesis submission, and has indicated reasons for doing so), this will be held by the chair who will introduce this information as appropriate.
  - i. Ensure all academic outcomes are determined in accordance with University academic standards and regulations. The chair should ensure that the examiners understand the options for the result of the examination and discuss the options with the examiners, if deemed necessary.

- j. Ensure all outcomes, including the requirements for amendments or re-submission are agreed and clearly conveyed to the candidate before the conclusion of the *viva voce*.
- k. Ensuring that all members of the examining team, including the chair, sign the examiners' joint report form.
- l. The chair must emphasise that it is the responsibility of the internal examiner to ensure that the joint examiners report and a formal written identification of the corrections required (or notes for guidance if the thesis is referred for resubmission) must be submitted to the [thesissubmission@ucc.ie](mailto:thesissubmission@ucc.ie) as soon after the end of the *viva voce* examination as possible, or at least within a two-week period from the date of the examination.

### **Disagreement between Examiners**

In the event of disagreement between the examiners, the chair will seek to reach an agreed conclusion. In the event of the examiners failing to reach agreement, the chair must ensure that the examiners understand the requirements of the university for individual reports and recommendations such as to enable the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee to satisfy itself that due process has been followed.

The independent chair will confirm on the examination report form(s) that the examination was conducted in a fair and appropriate manner. Any concerns regarding the conduct of the examination must be outlined in writing to the chair of the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee.

### **Duration of Role**

The chair will act in this capacity throughout the examination process of the student in question, including any re-submission that also requires a second *viva voce*.

The chair may be called upon to comment or give evidence to any appeal hearing granted in respect of the outcome of an examination process.

## 10. Appendix: Policy on Viva Voce Examination for Research Students

1. On the *approval of examiners form* the internal examiner will indicate that s/he has received written approval from all examination board members, including the candidate, that they agree to an (a) onsite (at UCC), (b) virtual or a (c) hybrid<sup>3</sup> viva voce examination.
2. This form is approved by the relevant Vice Dean (Head of College Graduate School).
3. The internal examiner is responsible for ensuring that all parties involved in the examination are informed of the details of the viva voce examination arrangements.
4. All associated costs of the external examiner for the viva voce whether in person or remote are covered by the School/Department.
5. Any time differences between the different locations must be taken into account to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged by an examination taking place at an inappropriate time.
6. Where (a) member(s) of the examination board is attending on-site in UCC, current public health guidelines must be adhered to at all times.
7. Use of fully virtual or hybrid viva voce examination cannot be used as grounds for appeal.
8. Only platforms as advised by UCC IT Services should be used <https://www.ucc.ie/en/it/>
9. In each location measures should be taken such that appropriate conditions are in place ensuring minimal disruption, security and integrity of the examination.
10. The candidate, the internal examiner and external examiner should be able to see one another at all times during the viva voce examination, with the exception of when the candidate is making a presentation. In addition, with the exception of introduction and closing of the meeting, the independent chair and supervisors can attend off-camera.
11. No viva voce is to be conducted solely by audio or by phone.
12. A virtual private network (VPN) and/or other solutions may be required where the intellectual property of the thesis needs to be protected; and it is the responsibility of the supervisors and internal examiner to ensure that these are in place ahead of the examination.
13. If a presentation is required, this may be facilitated through screen sharing or distributing the presentation to members of the examining committee via the internal examiner.
14. The viva voce must not be recorded.
15. The internal examiner has the responsibility to test the platform chosen ahead of the viva voce examination both with the candidate and the examiners and the independent chair.
16. Normally, if communication is broken during the viva voce and a connection cannot be re-established, the examination must be terminated and re-scheduled by the internal examiner.

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<sup>3</sup> A hybrid model may take the form of one or more members(s) of the examination board being on-site at UCC. This does not include the supervisors who are not examiners.

17. Any re-scheduled examination should normally take place within one month of the original *viva voce*.
18. The conduct of the *viva voce* must be aligned with the relevant UCC research examination regulations.
19. The examiners must comment on the conduct of the virtual *viva voce* (whether fully virtual or hybrid) on the final report.
20. Following the *viva voce*, the candidate must leave the meeting (whether virtual or in person) to allow the examiners to discuss a recommendation.
21. Once a recommendation is agreed the candidate is invited to re-join the meeting to be advised of the outcome of the examination.

NB: The internal examiner must ensure that all of the following are in place before, during and after a virtual or hybrid *viva voce* examination.

Vice Dean (Head of relevant College Graduate School) approval	
Written agreement by <b>all</b> parties has been received by the internal examiner	
Only platforms as advised by UCC IT Services should be used.	
Appropriate conditions in each location	
Adherence to current public health guidelines at all times	
Video in use to ensure all parties can see one another	
VPN in use where IP needs to be protected	
Presentation, if required, circulated through the internal examiner or through screen sharing	
<i>Viva voce</i> not be recorded	
Internal examiner has conducted tests prior to examination	
Candidate is asked to leave the fully virtual or hybrid examination to allow the examiners to discuss the recommendation and is invited back to the virtual or hybrid examination once a recommendation has been made	
Examiners' report includes comment on the conduct of the virtual or hybrid <i>viva voce</i> on the final report.	