

UCC Policy on the Supervision of Research Students

Guiding Principles

1. UCC follows a team supervision model.
2. All “Research Students” at UCC will have a “Supervisory Team” consisting of a minimum of two members, one of whom is the designated “Lead Supervisor¹”.
3. In addition to the “Lead Supervisor”, the “Supervisory Team” will include “Co-supervisor(s)” and/or “Advisor(s)”.
4. All research students at UCC will have a “Research Learning Plan” and “Research Progress Reviews”.

Definitions and Roles

5. The **Research Student**, henceforth Student, is a UCC postgraduate student registered for a Research Masters or Doctoral programme.
6. 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.
7. **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.
8. 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.
9. Ultimate approval of the Supervisory Team lies with the respective **Head of Unit** (normally the Head of School/Department or appropriate nominee), henceforth Head of Unit, of the staff involved.
10. The Unit of the Lead Supervisor will be deemed, for administrative purposes, to be the Unit of the Student. Ordinarily, the Student will be assigned to the **Graduate Studies Committee** of

¹ This term is used for purely administrative purposes; it is used to identify clearly which member of the supervisory team will ensure that all the administrative tasks are fulfilled. The term is not intended to create a hierarchy of supervisors.

this Unit.

11. Supervisory Teams can include UCC staff members from different academic units. Where the Supervisory Team is derived from different academic units in UCC, FTE splits must be agreed and clearly stated at the admission stage.
12. The **Research Learning Plan** is a document that must be drafted and agreed between the Student and the Supervisory Team within the first three months of the programme and is updated following each Research Progress Review. This Research Learning Plan must include, at a minimum, details on the frequency of meetings (minimum of 10 recorded meetings per annum for full time students and 5 for part-time), expectations, objectives and related timelines, dates of annual progress reviews, module requirements.

Supervisory Team: Eligibility

13. The Lead Supervisor is drawn from research-active academic or research staff of UCC. Co-supervisors can be internal or external to UCC. The Lead Supervisor's UCC contract must extend beyond the minimum duration of the Student's approved programme.
14. Where an external (non-UCC) supervisor is involved, the Head of Unit of the Lead Supervisor must satisfy themselves of the credentials of the external Co-supervisor. The external Co-supervisor must confirm agreement with the supervision principles of UCC.
15. Each Supervisory Team must include:
 - a. At least two members of UCC academic or research staff.
 - b. At least 1 person (not the Advisor or external Co-supervisor) must hold a doctoral degree if the Student being supervised is registered on a doctoral programme.
 - c. At least 1 person (not the Advisor or external Co-supervisor) must have successfully supervised a Student to completion in the relevant programme, i.e. a doctoral student cannot be supervised by a team where no member of the team has yet to supervise successfully a doctoral student to graduation. A research Masters student cannot be supervised by a team where no member of the team has yet to supervise successfully at least 1 Research Masters or Doctoral Student to completion.
16. An Advisor shall be an experienced member of staff who is aware of the student support services that the University offers and is aware of the current regulations and processes relating to the programme. The Advisor does not offer specialist academic support but is expected to meet the student twice per year at a minimum.
17. There should be no conflict of interest between any member of the Supervisory Team and the Student. Where a conflict of interest does arise (for example, a personal or family

relationship), this must be reported to the **Head of Unit** who may appoint an additional co-supervisor and who will report the matter to the relevant Vice Dean or Chair of the College Graduate Studies Committee for approval and possible further determination.

Responsibilities

18. It is the responsibility of the **Student** to:

- a. Work as a professional, independent researcher, accountable for the development and responsible conduct of their own research.
- b. Maintain a professional, respectful and constructive relationship with the Supervisory Team and the university community.
- c. Maintain regular communications with the Supervisory Team and respond to requests/inquiries promptly.
- d. Engage with Research Progress Reviews and co-development of the Research Learning Plan.
- e. Ensure good record keeping in relation to the research, including recording of supervision meetings, actions, outcomes and timeframes which are agreed by the Student and the Supervisory Team.
- f. Familiarise themselves with and fulfil all academic or training requirements relevant to the programme.
- g. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of University regulations and administrative requirements relevant to the research degree, including those relating to research integrity, dispute resolution, thesis submission and examination and plagiarism.

19. It is the responsibility of the **Supervisory Team** to:

- a. Provide intellectual and pedagogical support of the Student's research.
- b. Maintain a respectful, professional and constructive relationship with the Student, encouraging the Student to become an active member of the research community, for example by advising on attendance at orientation events, conferences, workshops and on publication of research output and responding to funding calls.
- c. Maintain regular communications with the Student and respond to requests/inquiries promptly.
- d. Engage with Research Progress Reviews and co-development of the Research Learning Plan.

- e. Ensure good record keeping in relation to the research, including recording of supervision meetings, actions, outcomes and timeframes which are agreed by the Student and the Supervisory Team.
 - f. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of University regulations and administrative requirements relevant to the research programme, including those relating to research integrity, dispute resolution, thesis submission and examination and plagiarism.
 - g. Advise the Student on conduct of responsible research, including principles of good practice, ethical approval, competence, responsibility, integrity, rights and dignity of research participants, data management and dissemination.
20. In addition to the responsibilities detailed in item 19, the **Lead Supervisor** also has responsibility for ensuring that all required administrative tasks have been undertaken and appropriately recorded. These include:
- a. Ensuring that a Research Learning Plan (specified in item 12) is discussed, agreed and signed by the Supervisory Team and the Student within the first three months of the programme.
 - b. Ensuring that Research Progress Reviews take place and are appropriately recorded.
 - c. Liaising with the Supervisory Team to assist the Head of Unit to identify suitable examiners.
21. It is the responsibility of the **Head of Unit** to:
- a. Ensure that the Student has been provided with access to adequate resources, facilities and equipment for their research programme.
 - b. Ensure that the Student is assigned to the appropriate Graduate Studies Committee,² which is responsible *inter alia* for:
 - Monitoring and supporting the progress of the Student.
 - Providing a mechanism for local identification and resolution of any problems that may emerge.
 - Maintaining accurate records of all relevant procedures, activities and meetings, including Student's Research Progress Reviews.
 - c. Assess the appropriateness of and approve the Supervisory Team to ensure that the Student is suitably supported.

² It is UCC policy that all Units have a Graduate Studies Committee.

- d. Support supervisors in engaging with appropriate supervisor training.
- e. Assess supervisor(s)'s workload considerations. The number of students that an individual can supervise satisfactorily will vary with the nature and size of the research group, and with the scope of their other duties. Ordinarily, supervisors will have no more than 8 full-time research students; any exceptions must be discussed with the Head of Unit to ensure that the workload is sustainable so that the research student is appropriately supported.
- f. In consultation with the Supervisory Team, identify and propose examiners.

22. The relevant policies and documentation are available on the Academic Policy Portal:

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

- Code of Research Conduct
- Progress Review Policy for Research Students
- Recognition of Courses or Modules taken externally for Research Students
- Policy on Resolution of Difficulties as a Postgraduate Research Student
- Policy on Temporary Cessation of Registration (Leave of Absence) for Research Students
- Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Plagiarism in Research Theses
- Submission and Examination
- Examination Appeals
- Research Learning Plan Template (to be provided)
- Research Progress Review Reporting Template (to be provided)

Approved: Academic Board 14th April 2021 on the recommendation of Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee. The policy supersedes the following policies:

- Code of Practice for the Supervision of Research Students, April 2010 and
- Models of Supervision at UCC, December 2009 and updated October 2016