

# **Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Associated Rules and Guidelines**

## **1. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

The degree of PhD is awarded after successful completion of an approved programme of research and related studies and submission of a thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners.

## **2. Admission**

- 2.1. Graduates holding a first or upper second class honours degree in a relevant subject of study from a university of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland or from another university approved by the Senate or from the Council for National Academic Awards or applicants deemed by the Senate to hold equivalent qualifications are eligible for admission.
- 2.2. Applicants who do not meet the foregoing requirements may be admitted after successful completion of a preliminary examination in accordance with rules approved by the Senate.
- 2.3. Decisions relating to admission will be made by either the Board of the Faculty (for normal admissions) or by the Doctoral College Board (DCB) on the recommendation of the Board of the Faculty (for exceptional admissions) on behalf of the Senate. The programme of work to be undertaken shall be approved and a supervisor or supervisors appointed in accordance with the guidelines in advance of registration.
- 2.4. The programme of work approved for applicants shall be such that they shall be enabled to acquire competence in the methods of research and scholarship and to display originality and sustained independent effort.
- 2.5. An applicant who wishes to undertake a programme of work leading to the presentation of a thesis accompanied by material in other than written form shall seek the prior approval of the Senate.

## **3. Registration and enrolment**

- 3.1. An applicant for admission, if successful, shall be enrolled as a registered candidate for the degree of PhD.
- 3.2. Initial enrolment shall take effect from the first day of the particular month in any year. Candidates shall enrol annually thereafter.
- 3.3. The University may refuse candidates permission to enrol if they are registered for another award of the University or with another academic or professional institution.
- 3.4. Once enrolled as a research student a candidate may not register for another award of the University or with another academic or professional institution without prior approval of the Senate.

## **4. Duration of Programme of work**

- 4.1. A candidate for the degree of PhD shall normally be required to complete a period of full-time study lasting for three years or a period of part-time study lasting for six years, by the end of which time the thesis shall have been submitted subject to 4.2 below.
- 4.2. In exceptional circumstances, a reduction of the periods specified above that does not fall short of the minimum stipulated in 4.3 below, or an extension may be granted.
- 4.3. The minimum period of registration for a full-time candidate shall be two and a half years and the minimum period of registration for a part-time candidate shall be 4 years. The thesis

shall contain only research that has been conducted during the candidate's period of registration at Ulster unless prior approval of the Senate has been obtained.

- 4.4. A candidate for the degree of PhD who is accepted onto a programme with external funding and whose project requires an internship or a period of study at another institution may, subject to DCB approval, have the duration of the programme extended by the period of the internship up to a maximum four years' registration.

## **5. Progress**

- 5.1. Supervisors shall approve the plan of work of their candidates and shall monitor their progress. A candidate who wishes to modify the programme of work from that agreed at the time of admission shall seek the approval of the Board of the Faculty.
- 5.2. After a period of not more than four months following first enrolment, a full-time candidate for the degree of PhD will undergo an initial assessment of progress which will include a review of training needs. For part-time candidates the initial assessment will take place after not more than ten months.
- 5.3. At the time of the initial assessment all candidates and supervisors will consider the need for ethical approval and make a formal application if necessary. Where an application for ethical approval is not deemed necessary at the stage of initial assessment, a review of the project shall be completed on a regular basis, with a view to making an application if necessary.
- 5.4. After a period of not more than thirty months following first enrolment, a full-time candidate for the degree of PhD will undergo a final assessment of progress. For part-time candidates this will take place after a period of not more than sixty months. The arrangements for and format of this assessment will be at the discretion of individual faculties.
- 5.5. Candidates and supervisors shall submit separate progress reports on or before 1 May each year. These reports will be considered by the Board of the Faculty where decisions on each candidate's progression to the next year of study will be made.
- 5.6. A candidate who fails to submit a progress report, or whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory, may be required to discontinue his/her studies.
- 5.7. The Board of the Faculty may grant a candidate leave of absence for a specified period.

## **6. Confirmation of registration status**

- 6.1. After a period of not less than ten months and, save in exceptional circumstances, not more than twelve months from initial enrolment full-time candidates shall apply to Senate for confirmation of their registration status. Part-time candidates shall apply not less than twelve months and, save in exceptional circumstances, not more than twenty-four months after initial enrolment. Candidates will be required to undergo an oral examination as part of the procedure for confirmation of registration as a candidate for the degree of PhD.
- 6.2. A candidate whose PhD registration is not confirmed may be invited to continue their studies as a candidate for the degree of MPhil and will be expected to submit their thesis as described in the Regulations for the degree of Master of Philosophy.
- 6.3. A candidate registered for the degree of PhD may apply to Senate for their registration to be changed to that for the degree of MPhil.

## **7. Attendance and study away from the University**

- 7.1. It is expected that a full-time candidate for the degree of PhD will be in attendance at the University on a daily basis except by mutual agreement with his or her supervisors and Research Director.
- 7.2. A candidate may be permitted to carry out part of his/her study away from the University provided that the arrangements are acceptable to his/her supervisor or supervisors. A period of absence of more than three months, except where the work is being carried out in an approved collaborating establishment, shall require the prior approval of the Board of the Faculty.

## **8. Submission of thesis**

- 8.1. A candidate shall give the Doctoral College three months' notice in writing of submission of the thesis and shall at the same time provide the exact title of the thesis.
- 8.2. A candidate for the degree of PhD shall, normally during the three months preceding the end of the period of study, submit a thesis embodying the results of his/her work. The thesis must deal with the field of research originally approved or such other field of research as may have been subsequently approved.
- 8.3. Theses shall normally be presented in English but a candidate in one of the language subjects of the University may seek permission from the Board of the Faculty to present his/her thesis written in the language of that subject.
- 8.4. Theses, and supporting material if applicable, shall be presented in accordance with rules approved by the Senate. These rules may be found in the Notes of Guidance for the Presentation of Theses for Research Degrees.

## **9. Appointment of examiners**

- 9.1. The DCB under delegated authority from the Senate shall appoint one or more internal examiners and nominate, for approval by Council, one or more external examiners except as provided for in Sections 9.5 and 10.5.
- 9.2. The candidate's supervisor shall not be appointed as an examiner.
- 9.3. One supervisor may attend the oral examination at the consent of the candidate who shall select a named supervisor of his/her choice from the supervisory team; the supervisor shall not contribute to discussions at the oral examination unless specifically asked to do so by the Chairman; and the candidate shall not ask the supervisor to speak; and neither the candidate nor the named supervisor shall be present when any discussions with regard to the decision to award the degree, or otherwise, are taking place.
- 9.4. Where a candidate is not a member of staff of the University, there shall be one internal and one external examiner, except in exceptional circumstances and subject to the case being approved by the Doctoral College Board.
- 9.5. Where the candidate has been a full time member of staff of the University for a period exceeding two years the Senate may appoint one internal examiner and shall nominate, for approval by Council, two external examiners.
- 9.6. An external examiner must not have published with any of the candidate's supervisors in the preceding three years.
- 9.7. The examiners shall adjudicate on the thesis and, save in exceptional circumstances, shall examine the candidate orally on his/her programme of work and on the field of study in which the performance lies.

- 9.8. Where an oral examination is to be held the Senate shall appoint a senior member of academic staff to act as Chair of the Board of Examiners. The Chair shall not be an examiner.

## **10. Examination**

- 10.1. Candidates for the degree of PhD are required to have undertaken successfully an investigation and evaluation or a critical study of their approved topic, to have presented a satisfactory thesis and to have demonstrated their understanding of the context and significance of the work. It is a requirement that the programme of work shall result in a significant contribution to knowledge.
- 10.2. Following receipt of the thesis the examiners shall present independent written reports to the Doctoral College prior to the oral examination. These reports shall not be made available to the other examiner(s) until all reports have been received by the Doctoral College; they shall not be available to the candidate or the supervisor.
- 10.3. The examiners may, exceptionally, recommend to the Senate in their reports that the requirement to hold an oral examination should be waived; where no oral examination is to be held the Board of Examiners shall meet to agree its joint report and recommendation in accordance with 10.4 and 10.6.
- 10.4. Following the adjudication of the thesis and the oral examination, the members of the Board of Examiners shall, where they are in agreement, present a joint report and recommendation for the award or otherwise of the degree. Where the examiners are not in agreement separate reports and recommendations shall be made.
- 10.5. Where the recommendation of the Board of Examiners is not unanimous, the Senate may:
- a) accept the recommendation of the external examiner(s), or
  - b) require the appointment of a new Board of Examiners and convene a further oral examination.
- 10.6. For a submission for the degree of PhD the report of the Board of Examiners shall recommend:
- a) that the degree should be awarded, or
  - b) that the degree should be awarded subject to minor corrections to the thesis being made, or to clarifications and/or enhancements being completed, to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within three months of the oral examination in accordance with the definition of 'minor corrections' as detailed in the Handbook for Examiners, or
  - c) that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis being made to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within six months of the oral examination in accordance with the definition of 'corrections' as detailed in the Handbook for Examiners, or
  - d) that the candidate should revise and resubmit the thesis for the degree of PhD, or
  - e) that the candidate should revise and resubmit the thesis for the degree of MPhil, or
  - f) that the candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of an amended thesis in accordance with the provisions for the presentation of a thesis for the degree of MPhil.
  - g) that the degree should not be awarded and no resubmission permitted.

10.7. One resubmission may be permitted, subject to the following:

- a) a candidate shall submit for re-examination within the period of one year from the date on which permission for re-examination was granted;
- b) the examiners shall give the candidate guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission;
- c) the appointment of an additional external examiner may be required for the re-examination;
- d) the examiners may exempt the candidate from repeating any part of the original examination which was deemed to be satisfactory.

10.8. If a candidate for the degree of PhD fails to satisfy the examiners and is allowed a resubmission, the candidate may apply for examination for the degree of MPhil, as an alternative to re-examination for the degree of PhD.

10.9 In any event, where the examiners' recommendation is that the degree for which the candidate has submitted should not be awarded a comprehensive list of the deficiencies of the submission shall be provided.

## **11. Review of decision on progress**

A candidate whose studies have been discontinued under section 6, or who is deemed under section 10 not to be eligible for the award of a degree, may ask for his/her case to be reviewed. Provided that the candidate lodges a request in writing to the Doctoral College within one month of the approval of the recommendation of the Board of the Faculty or of the Board of Examiners in accordance with procedures laid down by Senate, the case shall be reviewed and the initial decision confirmed or amended.

## **12. Remunerative employment**

A full-time candidate for a degree of PhD shall not undertake or continue any remunerative employment unless:

- a) the work consists of demonstrating within the University or teaching or other forms of work directly related to the candidate's programme of work, and
- b) the total demand on the candidate's time, including preparation and travelling, does not exceed six hours a week unless he/she has obtained the prior approval of the Senate.

## **13. Members of staff of the University**

Members of the full-time staff of the University may undertake postgraduate study leading to a degree of PhD on a part-time basis only.

## **14. Intellectual Property**

As a precondition of registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) all students will be required, prior to or at the time of enrolment, to sign agreements which will, or will oblige them in the future to assign to the University their rights in any intellectual property (IP) arising from their studies. Where research by a student registered for a PhD results in an invention and/or creative work, whether by the student working on his/her own or as a member of a team, exploitation of the invention and/or creative work shall be subject to the University's Intellectual Property Policy and Procedures, which provides, amongst other things, incentive and reward schemes should the IP be successfully exploited. If the University does not wish to exploit the IP, provisions are available for the re-assignment of such IP back to the student by the end of his/her studies, subject to any obligations of confidentiality assumed by the University and/or the student in relation to the IP.

The copyright of the student's thesis will be held by the University, but will, subject to the University's Intellectual Property Policy and Procedures, be returned to the student at the end of his/her studies. Should the copyright in the thesis relate to any IP which has been disclosed to Research and Impact by the student and/or his supervisor during or at the end of the study, and should the University wish to exploit such IP, a Student Declaration of Confidentiality may be applied to the thesis for a prescribed period to provide sufficient time for the implementation of appropriate intellectual property protection measures. The student will at all times retain copyright as an author in any papers written in relation to his/her thesis for publication purposes. This is subject to the student at all times complying with his/her obligation not to submit any such papers for publication which may contain potentially exploitable IP without the prior approval of Research and Impact.

The University reserves the right to retain a copy of the thesis, in written or digital format, in the University Library. The University reserves the right to be granted a non-exclusive royalty-free perpetual licence by the student for use of his/her thesis for non-profit academic purposes such as teaching, research and general internal use if deemed appropriate, subject always to the University's obligation to respect the moral rights of the student in relation to such copyright material.

## **15. Plagiarism**

It is a requirement that all assessment material, including the final thesis, be presented as one electronic file in order to facilitate the use by examiners of software designed to detect plagiarism. For this purpose, students should use industry standard software in the production of theses and should submit an electronic file on an easily read medium, preferably CD.

## **16. Deposit of raw data and samples**

In accordance with the requirements of the University Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research each student must deposit all raw data and samples with his/her supervisor prior to final presentation of the thesis. A statement confirming that the supervisor is content that all appropriate materials have been deposited must be presented to the Doctoral College at the time of submission.

### **Rules for Preliminary Examination for Admission to Research Studies**

1. Applicants who are not eligible for direct admission to research studies may be permitted to take a preliminary examination in the subject of the proposed research. The preliminary examination may be preceded by a preliminary course lasting for one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study.
2. The preliminary examination is a university examination of honours level and an upper second class honours degree standard in the preliminary examination is deemed to be equivalent to the minimum standard required for direct admission as a research student. A candidate is not entitled to sit the preliminary examination on more than one occasion.

### **Appointment of Supervisors**

1. The student shall be supervised by two or more supervisors working as a team and shall be appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the Faculty. This Supervisory Team shall include a chair, who in addition to providing a supervisory role in relation to the student's research shall deal with all administrative matters relating to the degree programme, take responsibility for all formal reporting and set-up the oral examination.
2. The Team shall also include at least one supervisor who has successfully supervised to completion at doctoral level and at least one supervisor who has a track record of achievement in research consistent with inclusion in the REF.

3. Other team members can include academic and research staff with specialist knowledge in the research area or who have extensive experience in research supervision. All team members shall have the ability to demonstrate expertise in the project area.
4. All team members shall hold a doctoral level qualification or in exceptional circumstances, the Team can include one member who is able to demonstrate considerable equivalent experience. Supervisors who have not supervised to successful completion shall receive training in supervision prior to appointment or as soon as possible thereafter.
5. The Supervisory Team shall normally comprise two or three supervisors only.
6. Where collaboration has been arranged with another establishment, this establishment will normally appoint an additional supervisor.
7. A person who is registered for a research degree shall not normally be permitted to take on duties as a supervisor for a research student.
8. Should it be necessary, either on academic or other grounds, for a supervisor to be changed, approval of the Senate must be sought.
9. Where a supervisor cannot be appointed in accordance with the requirements of this section the Senate may make special arrangements for supervision.
10. Where the research work of a candidate is to be conducted away from the University and at the premises of another organisation, the appointment of an external supervisor in accordance with the appropriate guidelines may be considered. Where a candidate is a part-time student based outside the United Kingdom or Ireland, the appointment of an external supervisor in accordance with the Framework for Distance Research Study will be required other than in exceptional circumstances.

#### **Rules for the Final Presentation of Theses following Examination**

1. A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD shall not exceed 100,000 words in length, excluding appendices, footnotes, bibliographies and diagrams. These limits shall be strictly enforced and only in exceptional circumstances will permission to exceed them be granted. Faculties may recommend lower lengths as standard within an academic discipline.
2. One printed copy of each complete PhD thesis must be lodged with the Doctoral College and shall be forwarded to the lead supervisor. The thesis shall be securely bound and a summary or abstract of the work not exceeding 300 words in length shall form part of the thesis. The abstract shall be in a form suitable for publishing in learned journals. Additionally, an electronic version of the thesis shall be submitted for online distribution. No degree will be awarded until both the bound and electronic copies have been received. The Senate shall approve guidelines for the presentation of theses and supporting material.
3. The thesis must include a statement of the candidate's objectives and must acknowledge published or other sources of material and any assistance received.
4. Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative group project the thesis must indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
5. Any part of the work which has been previously submitted for any other degree must be clearly indicated in the thesis.
6. Where permission has been granted to a candidate to present a thesis in a language other than English, an appropriate digest of the thesis written in English must also be submitted. This digest should consist of a summary of the introductory material, followed by a brief account of the contents of each chapter, and finally a statement of the general conclusions.

7. The copyright of the thesis will be held by the University but will be returned to the candidate following implementation of appropriate intellectual property protection measures.
8. A candidate or collaborating establishment may apply for the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work. The period approved shall not normally exceed two years. This regulation shall not apply to the abstract.
9. It is a requirement that the theses be presented in electronic format so they can be stored and made available, by the library, through the Ulster Institutional Repository and/or EThOS under the terms of the Ulster eTheses Deposit Agreement. For this purpose, students should use industry standard software in the production of the thesis and submit the final digital copy in PDF format and as a single file where possible.

## **Guidelines for PhD submissions involving practice**

### **1. Application**

An applicant shall clarify in his/her proposal that the research will include a practical component. This must be addressed at interview, and the potential form of practice outcomes clarified at the Initial Assessment of Progress. Any amendments to the nature or extent of the practical component shall be approved by the Faculty.

### **2. Scope**

2.1. The written documentation for PhDs that include a practical component must, in all cases, cover the following;

- a) a substantive critical review of the appropriate literature and relevant practice;
- b) a critical methodology appropriate to the subject;
- c) a comprehensive description and discussion of the research findings; which includes a contextualising explanation of the practical component;
- d) a critical evaluation of the findings in the light of the literature and methodology.

2.2. For a PhD research programme that includes a practical component, and in line with the following principles, the supervisor and the candidate will devise a programme of research and outputs that will be approved at the Initial Assessment of Progress and confirmed at Confirmation of Registration.

- a) The work must be undertaken as part of a registered research programme.
- b) The practical component must be set in its relevant theoretical, historical, critical and, where appropriate, visual context.
- c) The practical component must be accompanied by a written text.
- d) The length of the accompanying text will be negotiated between the student and the supervisor at the beginning of the project and reviewed at the Initial Assessment of Progress; it will be at least 20,000 words long and not exceed 100,000 words.
- e) Individual faculties may set individual limits within the above range.
- f) The work must constitute an independent and original contribution to knowledge.
- g) The submission must demonstrate an understanding of appropriate research methods.
- h) The written documentation and the practical component will together form 100% of the examined submission both are of importance in pursuing the research question.
- i) Where the planned programme of work changes substantially, it must be approved by the Faculty.

### **3. Submission**

3.1. The PhD submission shall be a substantial piece of work in which the candidate is required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and critical appreciation of the subject. It will make a distinct and original contribution to knowledge, as appropriate to the field.

- 3.2. A PhD submission may consist of a practice element, supported by appropriate documentation, and a written thesis indicating the project's originality and contribution to the discipline or interdisciplinary field.
- 3.3. All submissions that include a practical component must provide a permanent record, of the practical component, stored in a way that makes it accessible and retrievable (e.g. in the form of photographs, scores, drawings, CD-ROM, DVD or other recorded material).
- 3.4. The submission, including both the written and practical component, must have been completed during the student's period of registration with the University.

#### 4. **Examination**

- 4.1. The examination arrangements will be substantially the same as for a PhD submitted by thesis.
- 4.2. Arrangements for the practical component to be considered by the Board of Examiners (if not presented by means of documentation only) shall be notified via the Application for Approval of Examination Arrangements.
- 4.3. The practical component must be accessible to the Board of Examiners prior to the viva voce and where possible not just as documentation.
- 4.4. The Application for Approval of Examination Arrangements must provide details on how, where and when the Board of Examiners will have access to the practical component. All parties will endeavour to enable such arrangements.
- 4.5. If, however, access proves impossible or would delay examination beyond three months after submission, the viva voce will take place in a timely manner and the candidate will be given the opportunity to verbally present and discuss the practical component submitted.