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1.0 Introduction to PhD Study in the School of Engineering

The School of Engineering at Ulster University boasts a strong research portfolio covering areas that include biomaterials, healthcare technologies, materials characterization, nanomaterials, photocatalysis, plasma physics, control electronics and advanced composite manufacturing. A healthy balance of theoretical and applied multidisciplinary activities facilitate successful research impacting highly important global challenge areas and in turn promoting healthy and sustainable futures for all citizens.

Engineering Research at Ulster is administered primarily within the School of Engineering which is based at the University’s Jordanstown (Belfast) Campus. A further spoke of engineering research activity has been established in the North West of the province at the Magee campus (Derry/Londonderry) - activity at that campus is primarily affiliated with the School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems.

Engineering at Ulster brings together a 140 strong multi-disciplinary group of researchers (academic, contract researchers and PhD Researchers) from a range of disciplines to undertake various forms of advanced engineering research in a number of key challenge areas. This work is undertaken in two main divisions/centres, namely:

- Nanotechnology and Integrated Bioengineering Centre (NIBEC)
- Advanced Future Materials and Manufacturing (AFM2)

PhD Researchers form an integral part of the research environment within the School, currently there are over 60 PhD Researchers working alongside academics and Post-Doctoral Researchers.

1.1 Managing your PhD Journey

**PhD Manager** is the primary tool used by the Doctoral College, the School and both you and your Supervisors to manage all aspects of your PhD journey ([https://phdmanager.ulster.ac.uk](https://phdmanager.ulster.ac.uk)). There are a series of guides available on PhD Manager to help you learn to navigate around the system with detailed videos to show you how to conduct the majority of the tasks and processes required during your PhD study.

PhD Researchers will be assigned to a lead Supervisor (Chair of the Supervisory Team) and at least one joint Supervisor prior to registration. Supervisors will be experts in the field of the PhD. For interdisciplinary projects the Supervisory team may include Supervisors from other Faculties/Schools within the University. External Supervisors can also be assigned from other universities, companies or specialist partners (e.g. clinical collaborators) where appropriate. Supervisors will meet with PhD Researchers within the first week of study to discuss the research topic and develop a Research Plan for the 3 years (7 years part-time) of the PhD programme. PhD Researchers and Supervisors are required to meet regularly (at least once per month) to discuss progress throughout the course of study. **PhD Manager should be used to schedule and record meeting notes from Supervision Meetings – with the PhD Researcher being responsible for scheduling meetings and preparing draft meeting notes for assessment and confirmation by the Supervisor.**

In addition to the support provided by Supervisors, the School of Engineering provides administrative, academic and personal support throughout the course of your PhD study - details of primary contacts and useful links to information can be found within this guide. Information on the training provided by the Doctoral College and the School can be found within the training section of this guide.
1.2 Attendance
PhD Researchers within the School are expected to work full-time (35 to 40 hours a week) and will be based at one of the School’s dedicated facilities (e.g. in NIBEC, NIACE, or other labs on either the Jordanstown or Magee campus). PhD Researchers are entitled to 26 days of annual leave per year plus University closure days. Working arrangements for Part-time PhD Researchers will be discussed and agreed prior to registration. Requests for, approval of and details relating to your annual leave allowance should be processed via PhD Manager.

1.3 Important Milestones
There are four major assessment milestones throughout the duration of study (3 years for full time, 7 years for part-time), described on the Doctoral College website: [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/handbooks-and-policies/research-studies-handbook/the-phd-journey-key-milestones](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/handbooks-and-policies/research-studies-handbook/the-phd-journey-key-milestones). The first is the initial assessment which occurs around 3 months into the PhD (10 months for part-time). The second, the confirmation assessment, occurs 8-10 months into PhD study (16-20 months for part-time), with a third checkpoint (the final assessment) scheduled for month 30. PhD Researchers are expected to submit their PhD thesis at month 36 and begin preparation for the final element of assessment, the viva. Further details on the structure and content for each assessment can be found within the Assessments section of this guide.

Other important dates relate to:
- Re-enrolment, annually mid-September – online via the Ulster portal.
- Annual Report, to be completed by the first week in May each year – online via PhD Manager. This is your opportunity to report progress and provide feedback on your supervision and the research environment.
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), annually end of May – online via a unique link emailed from Doctoral College staff. PRES is the only UK higher education sector-wide survey to gain insight from postgraduate researchers about their learning and supervision experience. In the 2019 PRES the School of Engineering showed an overall satisfaction score of 82%.

1.4 Local Induction
During Welcome Week in mid-September, a local induction will be organised to introduce PhD Researchers to the School facilities, key staff and Supervisors. An overview of relevant University and School Policies will be provided. This Local Induction is complemented by a Doctoral College Induction, details of these arrangements are sent directly by the Doctoral College.

1.5 Disseminating Research Findings
During your PhD you will generate new knowledge - it is important that you share this with the research community via conference presentations, publications and through public and school’s engagement events. Planning how you disseminate your research requires close collaboration with your Supervision Team. Learning how to develop research questions, design experiments, conduct data analysis and discuss findings is hugely important – your Supervisors will be able to provide guidance and help with this aspect of your PhD. Publishing your work permits the opportunity for peer-review and is an excellent way to demonstrate your research potential to future employers.
1.6 Help and Support

If you have questions related to the content of this handbook or any other aspect of the PhD process, please ask your Supervisor/s or those listed in the Contacts section of the Handbook – we are all happy to help.

Additional information regarding help with PhD budgets, travel, purchasing, changes during your PhD and support services can be found within the Additional Information section of this guide.

A detailed FAQ guide is also available on the Doctoral College website: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/faqs

Central University Support is provided via Student Wellbeing. This includes Health and Wellbeing (physical and mental health, academic support) and Money advice (dealing with debt and crisis funds available to all PhD Researchers who can evidence hardship). Feedback from PhD researchers who have accessed this support has been extremely positive.

PhD Forums take place regularly and are a great way to interact with your fellow researchers, to share news, ideas, techniques and support cross disciplinary projects. The Postgraduate Tutor (PGT), Research Director (RD) and Academic Excellence Executive Assistant (AEEA) are often present and will relay any key information or good news stories. PhD Forums take place physically on campus or virtually on MS Teams, with invites shared to all PhD Researchers via email.
2.0 Contacts for PhD Researchers

Whilst your Supervisory team will be your primary contact, a number of key staff are on hand to help as described below:

**Administrative contact for PhD Researchers:**
Charly Mifsud (Academic Excellence Executive Assistant).
[cmifsud@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:cmifsud@ulster.ac.uk)
+44 28 9036 6927
Room 25A01 (NIBEC Office)
[https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/c-mifsud](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/c-mifsud)
Charly’s working hours are Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-4pm

Charly Mifsud is the Research Administrator within the School, please contact Charly for information related to travel/expenses, purchasing, assessments, change requests, PhD Manager system queries and any other administrative processes.

**Administrative contact (NWCAM Project):**
Tracey McCarron
[t.mccarron@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:t.mccarron@ulster.ac.uk)
+44 28 9036 6128
Room 05B08A
[https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/t-mccarron](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/t-mccarron)
Tracey’s working hours are Wednesday 9am-12pm, Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-4pm

Tracey McCarron provides administrative support for Academics, Researchers and PhD Researchers working on the NWCAM Project. For PhD Researchers working on NWCAM please contact Tracey for information related to travel/expenses and purchasing.

**Administrative contact (ECME Project):**
Ann Blair
[a.blair@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:a.blair@ulster.ac.uk)
+44 28 9036 8664
Room 25A01
[https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/a-blair](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/a-blair)
Ann’s working hours are Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-4pm

Ann Blair is the Project Officer for the ECME project. For PhD Researchers working on the ECME project please contact Ann Blair for information related to travel/expenses and purchasing.
Post-Graduate Tutor:
Dr Patrick Dunlop (Senior Lecturer)
psm.dunlop@ulster.ac.uk
+44 28 9036 8942
Room 25A20
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/psm-dunlop

Dr Patrick Dunlop is a Senior Lecturer and the Post-graduate tutor for the School. Dr Dunlop is responsible for supporting PhD Researchers with their studies and is the point of contact for academic support, personal support and support with assessments for both PhD Researchers and Supervisors. Contact Patrick directly by email if you wish to arrange a meeting.

Interim Research Director:
Professor Tony Byrne
j.byrne@ulster.ac.uk
+44 28 9036 8941
Room 25B10
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/j-byrne

Professor Tony Byrne is the Interim Research Director for the School of Engineering. Professor Byrne is responsible for the Research activities within the School, including oversight of PhD Researcher achievements and wellbeing. If there are any queries throughout your studies that cannot be resolved by your Supervisors and/or the Post-Graduate tutor, then the Research Director, Professor Byrne is the next contact. To arrange a meeting please contact Charly Mifsud (details above).

Interim Associate Dean (Research and Impact):
Professor Dewar Finlay
d.finlay@ulster.ac.uk
+44 28 9036 6586
Room 25B06
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/d-finlay

Professor Dewar Finlay is the Interim Associate Dean (Research and Impact) for the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment. Professor Finlay has oversight of all Research activities within the Faculty including PhD Researchers.
3.0 Facilities and Training

NIBEC and NIACE contain a broad range of specialist facilities to support research. Please refer to the Useful Links section for a breakdown of the key pieces of equipment available within each centre. PhD Researchers and Supervisors will agree throughout the PhD on the most appropriate equipment for use during your project. Please note that for a small number of specialist systems, an introduction to the system may be provided and you will be assisted to run samples. Following completion of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) on PhD Manager, a training development plan should be agreed with Supervisors early in the PhD – including both generic and specific training needs. You will be asked to confirm that the TNA has been completed at your Initial Assessment.

3.1 Local Training

PhD Researchers should arrange to be fully trained on necessary equipment and complete appropriate health and safety training, including risk and COSHH assessments before any equipment is used. The online equipment booking systems can be used to reserve time on the major items of equipment. Certificates will be issued once every six months for training on the main pieces of equipment in NIBEC (those on the central booking system). If the equipment hasn’t been used during the last 6 months refresher training will be required. Local training procedures are in place in Block 6, NIACE and Magee through the associated technical staff. Specific training complements the Doctoral College Researcher Development Programme.

3.2 Doctoral College Based Training

The Doctoral College provides excellent training for your PhD through the Researcher Development Programme (RDP), details are available here: [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/researcherdevelopment](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/researcherdevelopment). Sessions should be booked in advance via PhD Manager (Events/Workshops section), please ensure you attend or cancel in good time. If you have questions relating to the RDP please contact Lisa Thompson, l.thompson@ulster.ac.uk.

There are several mandatory courses, such as Research Integrity Training, which must be completed before submission of reports for the initial assessment – this is an online course on Blackboard. It’s advised to complete this training as soon as possible after you start your PhD – the assessment panel will ask you to confirm completion of this mandatory training at your assessments. A wide range of generic training opportunities can be used to support your training development plan – soft-skills are highly regarded by employers; developing scientific writing and presentation skills will help you prepare for preparation of reports, conference presentations etc.; some excellent courses are available to help you prepare for your final viva.

Your Doctoral College training and development activity is recorded on PhD Manager and produces a Training Log, including downloadable certificates. This Training Log can also be updated with external activities, so that you have a comprehensive record of all your researcher development activity over the course of your PhD.
3.3 Teaching and Demonstrating

Many PhD Researchers help teach tutorials, act as lab demonstrators and occasionally undertake coursework assessment within the School. If you are interested in demonstrating, please discuss with your Supervisor in the first instance. Charly Mifsud will circulate forms to all PhD Researchers before the start of each semester asking for your availability for teaching and demonstrating, as agreed with your Supervisors, and you will be subsequently assigned hours as available. We cannot guarantee teaching opportunities for all PhD Researchers but will try to accommodate as many requests as possible.

Whilst most Scholarships prevent paid part-time working, PhD Researchers are permitted to conduct up to 6 hours per week of University demonstration. School Office staff will provide details of the payment process - the demonstrating rate, paperwork and claim deadlines etc. For queries regarding the payment and claim process please contact the School Office staff on seng@ulster.ac.uk.

You will need to undertake the one-day Introduction to Teaching and Learning for PG Teaching Assistants prior to being eligible for teaching / demonstrating – this course is available multiple times in the academic year and can be accessed via the Doctoral College Researcher Development Programme.
4.0 Assessments

4.1 Initial Assessment Guidelines

**Purpose**

After approximately 3-4 months (100 days) of full-time postgraduate study, or after 10 months in the case of part-time mode of attendance, it is expected that PhD Researchers will have developed a reasonable understanding of the area of research in which they are working and will have some initial ideas on the likely contribution to knowledge that it will make to the subject(s) concerned. The initial assessment seeks to ensure that this level of progress has been achieved.

The dates of the initial assessment will be notified to Postgraduate Researchers by Charly Mifsud, Academic Excellence Executive Assistant, School of Engineering.

**Content**

The assessment process comprises both a written and an oral element and addressing these requirements should be organised in close co-operation with the project Supervisors.

PhD Researchers are expected to give an oral presentation, using appropriate materials, e.g. PowerPoint, to an Assessment Panel including one or more of their Supervisors, a reviewer and a chairperson appointed by the Research Director.

The presentation will normally last 10 minutes and will then be followed by 10 minutes of questions. It should provide information on:

- Project background.
- Overall aim of the research.
- Objectives to be achieved within the first 10 months (full-time) or 20 months (part-time) and the activities that will be undertaken to achieve these objectives.
- Type of training and equipment required to advance the project.
- Gantt chart indicating plans over the next 9 months.

The associated written element should be presented as a concise Research Plan, in font Arial 12 with 1.5 line spacing not exceeding four A4 pages in length, excluding appendices and a Gantt chart (as presented in the oral element). Please note that the reviewers are not required to read beyond the four-page limit.

**Assessment Criteria**

The Panel will be seeking to answer the following core questions:

1. Is the project clearly defined?
2. Are the objectives realistic and achievable in the time period available?
3. Will the project provide adequate research training for the student to at least MPhil level?
4. Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for PhD study?
5. Does the student show evidence of at least a basic understanding of the research topic, the nature of the approach being taken to investigate it and the relationship of the work to other research in the field?
6. Are the Supervisory arrangements, including meeting schedules, satisfactory?
7. Is the student content with the research environment?
Note: Supervisors are required to complete a short report on PhD Manager prior to the assessment meeting. Assessors are asked to email the Chair of the assessment panel with a short paragraph of their comments two days prior to the initial assessment.

Procedure

- An Assessment Panel, comprising a reviewer (suggestions are requested from the Supervisors) and a Chairperson, will be appointed by the RD / PGT. The other individuals present at the assessment will be the PhD Researcher, at least one Supervisor and, possibly, an adviser, if one has been appointed.
- Your initial assessment report should be submitted to and assessed via PhD Manager. Once you receive the date of your assessment, please log into PhD Manager and click on **PhD Research Project** followed by **Initial Assessment** to initiate the process. A training video is available at the following link to guide you through this process: [https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=8b9e3030-8978-4fd8-a582-a98b00fddac8](https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=8b9e3030-8978-4fd8-a582-a98b00fddac8)
- Your report needs to be uploaded **no later than 10 calendar days before your initial assessment**. The report you upload should be approved by your Supervisor as the final version - changes to the submitted document cannot be made.
- **PhD Researchers also need to submit the report document to Turnitin for a plagiarism check.** The process to obtain your Turnitin report is straightforward – simply access the relevant area within Blackboard ([www.learning.ulster.ac.uk](http://www.learning.ulster.ac.uk)), enter your usual password and select ‘Courses’. From here, you should see ‘PhD Researchers Turnitin’. You then just need to click on the icon for your Faculty and follow the upload instructions. Within Blackboard, there are various guides on submitting an assignment, which you may follow if you have any difficulties. Additional support can be provided by the admin staff within the School.
- Once you have uploaded your assignment through the link you just need to login again after a period of time (usually 30 minutes or so) and click on the link again. You will then see your Turnitin report instead of an option to upload. **It is important that you do not use this system to ‘test’ your submissions or work at any stage as this will affect the final Turnitin report, which will show a higher similarity index than expected.**
- Note that you should upload the FULL Turnitin report not just the submission receipt.
4.2 Confirmation Assessment Guidelines

**Purpose**
Within the first year of study, at approximately month 10 for full-time PhD Researchers and month 20 for part-time Researchers (assuming there are no exceptional circumstances), PhD researchers will complete their confirmation assessment. The outcome of this assessment will be that the PhD researcher will either have his/her PhD registration status confirmed, will be invited to transfer registration and continue studying for the degree of MPhil or will be withdrawn from study – the process is again conducted via PhD Manager.

**Content**
The assessment comprises written and oral elements and should be organised in close co-operation with the project Supervisors.

1) The written element comprises two components:

   a) A Literature Review, in font Arial 12 with 1.5 line spacing, not exceeding 30 A4 pages, including any relevant additional information contained in appendices. Please note that the reviewer is not required to read beyond the 30 pages limit. References are not included within the 30-page limit.

   The Literature Review should:
   - Identify the area in which the student’s research is being undertaken.
   - Describe the particular problem being addressed.
   - Summarise relevant work in that area.
   - Conclude with a summary evaluation of previous work (possibly in tabular form) showing strengths and weaknesses. This should reveal the knowledge gap(s) that the student’s research is attempting to fill.

   b) A progress update, a written summary of the work completed to date, not exceeding 10 A4 pages.

   The progress update should:
   - Identify the primary aim of the research project.
   - Summarise the work completed to date, and identify any conferences, publications or presentations to date or planned for the near future.
   - Outline the plan of activity for the remaining period of study (including a Gantt chart).
   - Summarise the thesis outline emphasizing the structure and how it meets the research aims.

   The progress report and literature review should be merged together and uploaded to PhD manager as one document.

2) Oral Presentation

   PhD Researchers are expected to give an oral presentation to the Assessment Panel, using appropriate materials, e.g. PowerPoint, summarising the information contained in the written components.

   The following points are suggested as guidelines (not requirements) for the presentation content:
   - Title slide.
   - Background to the problem.
   - Aims of the research and planned contribution to knowledge.
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- Progress to date, with a plan of activity for the remaining period.
- Thesis outline, emphasising its logical structure and how it meets the aims of the research.
- Conferences/journal publications/presentations to date or proposed.
- Summary slide.

Assessment

A maximum of one hour is set aside for each Confirmation Assessment. The presentation will normally last between 10-15 minutes, followed by up to 30 minutes for the Panel to question the student and Supervisors(s). The final 10-15 minutes will be a private discussion between the Panel and the Supervisor(s). The Researcher will then be invited back into the room to hear the outcome of the assessment.

The Assessment Panel will consider the following questions:

1. Have the objectives of the first 10 (20) months period of work been achieved?
2. Is the proposed programme of work a logical extension of the completed studies?
3. Are the defined objectives likely to be achieved with the available resources?
4. Is the work likely to provide adequate research training to doctorate level for the student?
5. Is the work sufficiently well defined to (potentially) provide publishable work within a 12-18 (24-30) month period?
6. Can the practical studies be completed within the next 18-20 (30) month period?
7. Does the student show evidence of ability to critically evaluate the work and place it within the context of related studies?
8. Are the Supervisors satisfied with the student’s progress to date?
9. Is the student satisfied with the current Supervisory arrangements?
10. Should the student be permitted to confirm registration status of PhD?

Note: Supervisors are required to complete a short report on PhD Manager prior to the assessment meeting. Assessors are asked to email the Chair of the assessment panel with a short paragraph of their comments 2 days prior to the initial assessment.

Procedure

- An Assessment Panel, comprising a reviewer (usually the same reviewer as the initial assessment) and a chairperson, will be appointed by the RD / PGT. The other individuals present at the viva will be the PhD Researcher, at least one Supervisor and, possibly, an adviser, if one has been appointed.
- **Upon receipt of the date for your confirmation assessment, please log in to PhD Manager and click on the PhD Research Project followed by Confirmation Assessment to initiate the process.** A training video is available at the following link to guide you through this process: [https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=8b9e3030-8978-4fd8-a582-a98b00fddac8](https://ulster.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=8b9e3030-8978-4fd8-a582-a98b00fddac8)
- **All paperwork needs to be uploaded no later than calendar 10 days before your confirmation assessment. The reports you upload are final and cannot be changed** so please ensure they the reports have been discussed with your Supervisor and are correct at the time of upload.
- **PhD Researchers need to submit the document to Turnitin for a plagiarism check.** The process to obtain your Turnitin report is as described in the initial assessment guide. **It is important that you do not use this system to 'test' your submissions or work at any stage as this will affect the final Turnitin report, which will show a higher similarity index than expected.**
4.3 Final Assessment Guidelines

**Purpose**

To help prepare for the final submission of your thesis and the viva examination, the Final Assessment will take place at 30 months (full-time) and 60 months (part-time) of initial registration.

The Final Assessment will take the form of a structured meeting to discuss progress towards completion of your Thesis. The meeting will be undertaken in collaboration with your Supervisors. In advance of the meeting PhD Researchers should complete the Final Assessment Template (available on SharePoint, see Section 7 or via Charly Mifsud), which will help prompt the discussion at the meeting with Supervisor.

**Content and Procedure**

1. PhD Researchers should first talk to your Supervisors to set up a meeting for the Final Assessment. The School administrator will also prompt Researchers and Supervisors to plan the final assessment.

2. Once the meeting date has been identified, you should begin the Final Assessment process through PhD Manager. This will allow for the formal assessment to be made by your Supervisors.

3. The Final Assessment Template should be used to record details of the assessment:
   - A review of the research plan submitted during the Confirmation Assessment should be undertaken (the aims and objectives of the thesis and thesis structure should be updated and agreed). Key findings and contributions to knowledge could be identified within each section /Chapter of the proposed thesis plan.
   - A submission timeline – plan the work required to complete your PhD and submit in a timely fashion, identify when you will begin writing your thesis, when/how your Supervisors will receive a first draft/chapters and when/how you will receive feedback on the submissions. **A realistic submission date for the final thesis should be agreed.**
   - A discussion of potential External Examiners for your viva (thesis defence) may be undertaken.

4. You should aim to submit the required Template 10 days in advance of your meeting to allow your Supervisors to prepare for the Final Assessment meeting. Submissions of the Final Assessment Template should be made using PhD Manager.

5. Following the assessment, your Supervisor will provide comments/feedback (through PhD Manager). This should include:
   - A short description of progress to date.
   - Comment on how far the PhD Researcher is from completion and if the current plan/timetable is feasible. Proposed key dates associated with preparation of the final thesis should be included, likely within the Assessment Template. The expected submission date should be stated.
   - If required, a statement of difficulties/issues encountered or significant events preventing timely submission should be included.
   - If required, a statement detailing additional support required to ensure thesis submission.
   - Any other comments.

Feedback should be shared with the PhD Researcher and discussed at the next Supervisory meeting.
4.4 Preparing your Thesis and Final Viva

All aspects of thesis submission and the final oral examination (viva) process are handled via PhD Manager.

Please speak with your Supervisor and refer to the Doctoral College website for guidance on preparing your thesis (https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current/submitting-your-thesis). Doctoral College organise regular training events to help you prepare for your final viva, your Supervisory team will usually conduct a mock viva close to the date of your final viva.


Please read the information carefully and ensure you and your Supervisor are aware of what is expected when completing this process on PhD Manager. Contact Charly Mifsud if you need support.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisors to select and liaise with Examiners in advance of the Viva. A guide for Supervisors is available in Section 9.3 of the PhD Manager website.
5.0 Useful Links for PhD Researchers

PhD Manager: https://phdmanager.ulster.ac.uk/

PhD Manager is the system used to record all activities in your PhD. Supervisor meetings, initial assessments, confirmation assessments, final assessments and vivas, changes to Supervisors, project titles etc., leave requests, training and final assessments will all be recorded on PhD Manager. Log in using your University email address through the link above. Guides are available on PhD Manager for processing requests etc. via the system: https://phdmanager.ulster.ac.uk/do/activity/guides/all

Doctoral College: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/home

The Doctoral College website includes handbooks and policies, guidelines for your PhD, information on the Researcher Development Programme and Information for International PhD Researchers. Details of events and competitions for PhD Researchers across the University will also be advertised on the Doctoral College Website. An excellent FAQ section is available here: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/faqs

Researcher Development Programme: www.ulster.ac.uk/researcherdevelopment

This website gives an overview of all the training and development opportunities available to PhD Researchers as well as additional activities such as PhD Researcher-led Initiatives, Festival of PhD Research and the Three Minute Thesis competition.

School of Engineering Research Website includes details of the research conducted within the School, including current projects, staff lists and information on facilities and equipment. https://www.ulster.ac.uk/faculties/computing-engineering-and-the-built-environment/schools/engineering/research

A list of the major pieces of equipment within NIBEC can be found here: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/nibec/equipment/equipment, the facilities booking system for NIBEC is available at: http://www.supersaas.co.uk/schedule/ERI_Equipment/NIBEC

Information relating to capabilities at NIACE is available here: http://www.niace-centre.org.uk/

The booking system for equipment in Block 6 is available here https://www.supersaas.co.uk/schedule/UUEngineeringBlock6/School_of_Engineering. Guide to using the system can be found in the appendices.

Following training, please use the above links to book time on the equipment in NIBEC and Block 6. Supervisors will discuss equipment needs with PhD Researchers and will arrange for training. Note: Risk and COSHH assessments must be completed when appropriate with details communicated to the Engineering Facilities Coordinator, Mr Brian McGrath (b.mcgrath@ulster.ac.uk).
6.0 Additional Information

6.1 Accommodation Details
PhD Researchers will be invited to attend a local induction during registration week, where you will have the opportunity to meet key staff within your research area. You will be assigned a desk in your first week of study. PhD Researchers will discuss needs for a computer etc. with their Supervisors and any arrangements will be made as soon as possible after registration. There are kitchen facilities including tea/coffee making facilities and fridges/microwaves both in NIBEC and in Block 5. PhD Researchers will be given a facilities tour during the local induction.

6.2 Technical Support
Technical support for PCs is available within NIBEC via Mr Damien McDonald (Room 25A05, d.mcdonald@ulster.ac.uk) and in Block 5 via Dr Paddy Porter (Room 5F07, p.porter@ulster.ac.uk). Please use the Feynman ticket system to raise any problems and get technical assistance. Guide and link to the ticket system in appendices.

6.3 PhD Budgets
PhD Researchers in receipt of Scholarship funding will receive an annual or monthly budget for the purchasing of materials/equipment or for attendance at conferences or training etc. Specific scholarships have different funding structures. PhD Budgets will be discussed at local induction and Supervisors will agree with PhD Researchers how this budget will be spent throughout the course of the PhD. An account of your budget will be held by the Admin Contact for your area.

6.4 Change Requests
Throughout the course of study, changes in circumstances may occur. Change requests are processed through the PhD Manager system. Guides are available on PhD Manager to aid processing changes including, but not limited to, Change of Supervisors; Change of Project Title; Leave of Absence; Extension of Time.

6.5 Research Seminar Series
The School is reinvigorating the Research Seminar Series to provide PhD researchers with an opportunity to practice oral presentation skills, share research findings with your peers, hear from leading experts visiting the School and from School staff. Contact Dr Navneet Soin, n.soin@ulster.ac.uk.

6.6 Campus Social Spaces
The Docs @Ulster have been established on each Campus to facilitate interdisciplinary interactions and to help you engage with other researchers. Many of the Doctoral College RDP events are based in
the Doc and the space is available for researchers to use for work and social activities. The Doc @ UUJ is based on the Commercial Mall.

A large number of Student Societies organised by the UU Students Union, in particular the Ulster Society of Student Engineers (USSE) https://www.uusu.org/organisation/usse/ and the Doctoral Society https://www.uusu.org/organisation/uusudoctoral.

6.7 Covid-19 Planning and Changes
Due to the current ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic the School has put in place additional safety procedures and restrictions to campus access. These mitigations are regularly reviewed by the university and are updated as appropriate based on the most current NI Executive guidance. PhD Researchers will be contacted to discuss arrangements for work on campus at various stages and will be given access to labs as required for experimental work. Please follow current University guidance at all times and read all updates regarding School guidance and procedures.

Ulster University information, FAQs and guidance can be found on the UU Coronavirus webpage here: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/coronavirus

Specific information for PhD Researchers can be found on the Doctoral College Coronavirus webpage here: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/coronavirus/staff/phd-researchers

Any queries regarding the current local Covid-19 procedures should be directed to Charly Mifsud (c.mifsud@ulster.ac.uk) in the first instance.
7.0 Appendices

Online versions of relevant Forms can be obtained from SharePoint: https://ulster-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/c_mifsud_ulster_ac_uk/EgNyGbmc9KrKBJ8KINENABfUrNqaU35PWJdyKTHDWOg?e=spJzm5

7.1 Prior Approval Form

7.2 Travel Expenses Claim Form
7.3 Mileage Expense Form
7.4 Requisition Guidelines

Requisition Guidelines

1. Use email spreadsheet attached sent to YNHO/Office supplier name - e.g. 20232024H Account
2. Include as much detail on the items as possible e.g. product name, descriptions, units of purchase etc.
3. Use currency of purchase
4. Clearly mark when a purchase should be VAT exempt (due to intended use in medical research)
5. Make sure cost code is included – using project code if applicable
6. Some Research Institutes require evidence of value for money for every order. If placing an order under £100 or £250 funded grant please include an alternative, more expensive quote as proof. If there are no alternative quotes please complete a Single Tender Notice (STN)
   justification form
7. UIE has some contracted suppliers that are trusted, therefore when using these suppliers we don’t require proof of value for money or £100 funded grants
8. All purchases over £100 will require a second quote or STN form as proof of value for money
9. If you are unsure of whether a cost code or supplier requires 2 quotes please check with the office by emailing ehsu@shef.ac.uk
10. Attach all quotes to email spreadsheet format YNHO/Office supplier name q123.xlsx. All supplier forms to be saved in format YNHO/Office supplier name Excel
11. If a purchase is over £100 or we will have to make sure the supplier is set up on the procurement system before ordering them there, if they’re not a new supplier form should be sent in along with the requisition
12. Send requisition form, quotes and any additional forms or information to ehsu@shef.ac.uk

For further information:
https://www.shef.ac.uk/procurement/formularies/formularies

Contracted/Touched Suppliers (no quotes required for WI grants):

- RS Components
- Formed/Cressall
- Sigma
- Preston Scientific
- AGIL/VAI
- Avant
7.6 Technical Support Ticket System Guide

**Technical Support Ticket System**

The system can be found at [https://itwenman.ulster.ac.uk/rft/](https://itwenman.ulster.ac.uk/rft/) and you should login with your staff/student number and password as usual.

**Important**

When you first login, you will need (once only) to tell the system your email address.
Hover on "Logged in as e..." at the top;
Hover on "Settings" that will appear;
Click on "About Me";
Fill in the details on identity in the top left;
Click "Save Preferences" at the bottom

Ulster University
7.7 SuperSaaS Booking System Guide (Block 6)

**School of Engineering – SuperSaaS User Guide**

As a reminder to keep the space as open as possible, here is a brief note for use with the SuperSaaS booking system for the School of Engineering equipment located in both Block B and Block D.

- **Equipment Use**: The equipment can only be used if it is booked.
- **Booking**: Booking equipment/offices is essential to avoid any conflicts with other users. If you need to cancel a booking, please do so immediately.
- **Extension**: If you require an extension on any booking or need to cancel a booking, please contact the relevant area technical coordinator or engineer.
- **Prioritization**: In the event of a conflict, equipment will be prioritized for use by students, followed by faculty, and then the public. Specialized equipment will be prioritized for use by students and faculty.
- **Matters of Concern**: Any issues arising during use should be reported immediately to the relevant area technical coordinator or engineer.

If you are not sure about booking specific equipment, please contact the relevant area technical coordinator for assistance. The system can be found in the Office 1, please have in mind your staff or students’ unique equipment requests.