



Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes

Policy owner

Graduate Studies

Approval date and body

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Version 1.15

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* defines specific guidelines for the formal progression of students on doctoral programmes. Each School can have locally defined requirements but the School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator must document their specific guidelines and criteria and inform students and supervisors of these requirements. The policy recognises good practice in monitoring doctoral student progression where it currently exists and establishes common norms and procedures designed to support the doctoral programmes and all those involved with them.

The aim of the *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* is to provide a framework supplemental to the *Academic Regulations* which articulates the practices and procedures associated with the transfer of students from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme and the progression of students within Stage 2. It defines the mode of assessment, identifies the role and responsibilities of the Assessment Panel in managing and facilitating the process of formal progression, describes the implementation of Assessment Panel decisions, and outlines the mechanism available to students to appeal the decision of the Assessment Panel.

Further support for students and supervisors involved with doctoral programmes is provided by a range of instruments, including the *UCD Academic Regulations*, and the *Policy for Supervision of Research Degree Students*¹.

¹ Available at www.ucd.ie/governance/documentlibrary/

2. SCOPE & STRUCTURE OF POLICY

The *Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes* is structured across the following categories:

- **Roles and Responsibilities of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel** – details on the constitution of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel, the relationship between the Research Studies Panel and the Assessment Panel, the process for adjudication on formal progression, and the relationship of the Assessment Panel and its decision-making processes to Schools Doctoral Programme Co-ordinators and Governing Board (Graduate Research Board).
- **Mode of Assessment** – guidelines on the type of assessment undertaken by students at the point of transfer from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and progression within Stage 2 and the timeframe within which such assessment takes place.
- **Implementation of Stage Transfer Assessment Panel Decisions** – procedures for managing student transfer and progression and methods for reporting on successful/unsuccessful transfer and progression to the School, Governing Board and relevant University academic and administrative units.
- **Process for Student Appeal of the Assessment Panel Decision** – information on the process through which a student may appeal a decision of the Assessment Panel, the timeframe within which this process should take place, details regarding the composition of the Appeal Committee and guidelines for that committee, and information regarding the possible outcomes of the appeal process.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The Assessment Panel is responsible for formally assessing the progress of a student through their doctoral programme. Membership of the Assessment Panel is defined by the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator. Each Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator may establish either a single Assessment Panel for all students at the end of Stage 1 of a specific doctoral programme, or multiple Assessment Panels as and where appropriate. The Assessment Panel must have the experience and disciplinary expertise to conduct the assessment, and will normally consist of three members of faculty of the University at least one of whom will be a permanent member of faculty. The Assessment Panel may include a member of the adjunct or visiting staff of the University whose name has been entered on the Register of Approved Adjunct, Visiting and Affiliated Supervisors². Where a doctoral programme spans multiple institutions, the Assessment Panel may incorporate academic staff from participating higher education institutions. Membership of the student's Stage Transfer Assessment Panel and their Research Studies Panel should not normally overlap. Any overlap of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel and the Research Studies Panel requires the prior approval of the Graduate Research Board.

The Principal Supervisor, and any Co-Supervisor, shall not be a member of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel. However, the Principal Supervisor shall play a major role in the transfer assessment process through the submission of a written report on the student's progress within Stage 1 or any formal assessment within Stage 2 recommended by the School.

² Procedure for approval of Adjunct or Visiting staff as Supervisors can be found here <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository>

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Assessment Panel to notify the Principal Supervisor of the timeframe within which the transfer assessment must take place. The Principal Supervisor, in consultation with the student and the Assessment Panel, will define a date on which the student must submit material for consideration of the transfer assessment. The student and Principal Supervisor will be notified of the outcome of the transfer assessment and the recommendation made to the Graduate Research Board within one month of the date of submission of material.

Following the Stage Transfer Assessment, the Chair of the Assessment Panel is responsible for completing the Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Report & Recommendation Form, which will be made available to the student, Principal Supervisor(and Co-supervisor, if relevant)Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator.

4 MODE OF ASSESSMENT

To accommodate the academic diversity across the University, and the different types of research undertaken within doctoral programmes, the mode of assessment for the transfer from Stage 1 to Stage 2 must be flexible enough to capture and accommodate this range of diversity. At the same time, it is also essential that a standard of quality be maintained to ensure that the student is making satisfactory progress in pursuit of the aims and objectives of their research as agreed with the Principal Supervisor, any Co-supervisor(s) and the Research Studies Panel and documented in the Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP).

The Stage Transfer Assessment will take place within five trimesters from the date of registration for full-time doctoral students, and within seven trimesters from the date of registration for part-time doctoral students.

The following written reports are required for submission to the Assessment Panel at the point of the transfer assessment, and will form the basis of the decision of the Assessment Panel:

- *Supporting documentation*, as determined and documented by the School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, such as examples of written work, draft chapter of the thesis, portfolio, evidence of successful completion of taught modules as required or recommended by the Principal Supervisor and/or Research Studies Panel
- Research and Professional Development Plan (RPDP): Part 1 and Part 2 of the RPDP Form, from the most recent Research Studies Panel (RSP) meeting, must be completed and signed off by the student and Chair of the RSP. The student should submit a copy to their School as part of the Transfer Assessment submission.
- *Progress Report by the Principal Supervisor*: a short report on the progress of the student within Stage 1 or any formal assessment within Stage 2 recommended by the relevant Governing Board.

An oral presentation by the student, and an interview with the student, must also form part of the process. The Assessment Panel may interview the Principal Supervisor (and Co-supervisor if relevant).

All relevant documentation should be kept on record by the School Office for 13 months after the date of a student's completion of the doctoral programme.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT PANEL DECISIONS

The student and Principal Supervisor will be notified of the outcome of the assessment and the recommendation made to the Graduate Research Board normally within one month of the date of the formal assessment. To this end, upon completion of the progression assessment, and normally within one month of the date of the formal assessment, the completed Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Report & Recommendation Form³ shall be circulated to the student, Principal Supervisor, Head of School and where relevant, Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator

As stipulated in the *Academic Regulations*, the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel will make one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Board.

- A. that the student should progress to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme;
- B. that the student should not progress to Stage 2 of the doctoral programme, and that:
 - I. The student should re-submit for assessment within six months (with an indication of the month/year in which the subsequent formal assessment of progress will take place). This option is only available on a maximum of two occasions after which, option (ii) or (iii) must be recommended.
 - II. The student should apply to transfer to another graduate programme utilising, where appropriate, any credits already accumulated in Stage 1 of the doctoral programme;
 - III. In line with the University's continuation policy and procedures, a recommendation be made to the Governing Board that the student's registration is discontinued

The Doctoral Programme Progression Assessment Report and Recommendation Form shall be signed by the Chair of the Assessment Panel, the Head of School and the Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, and the Chair of the Assessment Panel shall forward the recommendation to the relevant Programme Office.

The Graduate Research Board will formally approve the recommendation of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel and the student's record will be updated accordingly. When the recommendation has been formally approved, the relevant School Office will inform the student, the Principal Supervisor, the Chair of the Assessment Panel and the other Stage Transfer Assessment Panel members. It is the responsibility of the relevant School Office to maintain a record of the relevant documentation for 13 months after the date of a student's completion of the doctoral programme.

6. OTHER FORMAL ASSESSMENTS OF PROGRESS

On the recommendation of the Head of School and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator, additional formal assessments to determine progression within Stage 2 of the doctoral programme may be undertaken, or such assessments may be a normal element of a doctoral programme. In such instances, students must be notified of the requirement for an additional formal assessment no less than one month before the date of submission for that assessment. The procedures for undertaking any additional formal assessments of progress should be the same as those used for the formal transfer assessment from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

³ Available here : <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/documentrepository/>

7. PROCESS FOR STUDENT APPEAL OF ANY FORMAL ASSESSMENT PANEL DECISION

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Stage Transfer Assessment Panel may do so through the procedures for a formal assessment appeal determined in the UCD Policy on Assessment Appeals. Information relating to Assessment Appeals can be found at: <http://www.ucd.ie/appeals/>

8. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	2 Mar 07	First draft	Michael Kennedy
1.1	5 Mar 07	Revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Michael Kennedy
1.2	9 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Prof Julie Berndsen Michael Kennedy
1.3	26 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of UGPB and Policy Working Group	Prof Julie Berndsen
1.4	28 Mar 07	Further revision incorporating comments of Policy Working Group	Michael Kennedy Prof Julie Berndsen
1.5	5 Apr 07	Further revision incorporating comments of ACEC	Michael Kennedy
1.6	22 Mar 11	Revision to include additional section on process for student appeal of the Assessment Panel decision. Additional minor editorial revisions and to reflect inclusion of professional doctoral programmes.	Clare O'Connor Cliona McGovern Michael Kennedy
1.7	15 Apr 11	Minor changes following discussion at UGPB on 14 April 2011 relating to inclusion of "and/or Doctoral Programme Co-ordinator" in instances where HoS is also mentioned.	Michael Kennedy
1.8	22 Jan 13	Changes following ongoing discussions by the Standing Committee on Continuation (a sub-committee of UUPB/UGPB).	Michael Kennedy
1.9	20 Mar 13	Changes following discussion with the Deputy Register for Graduate Studies.	Prof Julie Berndsen Michael Kennedy
1.10	25 Mar 13	Changes following discussion with the Graduate School Directors	Michael Kennedy
1.11	3 Oct 16	Changes following review of UCD Assessment Appeals Policy	Hanna Laitinen
1.12	7 Mar 19	Changes to bring policy in line with 2019 Academic Regulations	Emer Cunningham
1.13	9.Dec 20	Changes to bring clarity to the use of the RPDP in the Stage Transfer assessment	Emer Cunningham
1.14	Aug 20	Changes to reflect the approved practice from Sept 2020 in relation to student continuation and readmission	Emer Cunningham
1.15	Aug 23	Changes to align the Policy with Revised Academic Regulations 2023/24	Emer Cunningham