1. **Introduction**

The School of Biochemistry & Immunology provides doctoral training through the provision of a structured programme of research and study. The core component of a structured PhD programme is the advancement of knowledge through original research. Through conducting research, engaging in associated research-related activities and attending courses, our PhD students are supported in their development of a range of skills that meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia. The high quality research experience, training and outputs are consistent with international norms and best practice.

2. **General Information**

2.1 **Starting your research degree**

Incoming PhD students officially start on September 1st or March 1st of each year. Postgraduate registration occurs twice per year in either September or March and is co-ordinated by Academic Registry. All incoming students must complete an online application on the TCD graduate students web page prior to being invited to register.

https://www.tcd.ie/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply/

2.2 **School of Biochemistry and Immunology Contacts:**

Further information and other ongoing announcements associated with graduate student activities are located on the School of Biochemistry and Immunology website: http://www.tcd.ie/Biochemistry/postgraduate/

Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning (DPGTL): Prof Rachel McLoughlin
rachel.mcloughlin@tcd.ie 896-2526

School Administrator: Mr Conor Spillane
conor.spillane@tcd.ie 896-1604

Head of School: Prof Ed Lavelle
lavellee@tcd.ie 896-2488
2.3 College Contacts:
The College also provides a number of contact points useful to postgraduate students.

- **Graduate Studies Office (GSO):** The GSO is responsible for the administration of all Masters and Doctorate programmes in the College. Significant information for graduate students is provided here. See [http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/](http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/)

- **Graduate Students Union (GSU):** The graduate students union is an independent body representing graduate students in Trinity. The GSU is located on the second floor of House 6, at the front of College. All postgraduates are members and the organization serves the entire postgraduate community. The GSU Education and Welfare officer advises students on personal matters, financial concerns, bereavement and illness. All concerns are addressed with the strictest confidentiality. See [https://www.tcdgsu.ie](https://www.tcdgsu.ie)

- **The Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS):** The PAS is a unique and confidential service available to all registered postgraduate students at Trinity College. It offers a comprehensive range of academic, pastoral and professional supports dedicated to enhancing your student experience. The Postgraduate Student Support Officer provides ‘frontline’ support for all postgraduate students at Trinity College Dublin. S/he will act as a first point of contact and a source of support and guidance, both on your arrival in College and at any time during your stay. If you require specific advice, or would like to arrange a confidential meeting with the dedicated Student Support Officer, you can make an appointment by e-mailing pgsupp@tcd.ie. The service is located on the second floor of House 27 in the Senior Tutor’s Office.

See: [www.tcd.ie/senior_tutor/postgraduate](http://www.tcd.ie/senior_tutor/postgraduate)
• **Career Advisory Service:** The careers web site at Trinity College Dublin has a dedicated site for postgraduate students. There are numerous tools and information links to help inform your career path. Calendars of job fairs, careers week and other career-related events are provided throughout the year. Finally, information regarding CV/resume preparation and interview skills can be found here also. A career advisor is also available for an appointment. See: [http://www.tcd.ie/careers](http://www.tcd.ie/careers)

2.4 College Regulations:

Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research are contained in the University Calendar Part III. The University Calendar is available in all College libraries, the School Office and online ([http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/](http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/)).

Please refer to the University Calendar for general regulations, governing higher degrees by research only, for information on topics such as:

- Admission requirements
- Probation
- Subject of research
- Role of Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)
- Progress and continuing registration Role of Supervisors
- Attendance
- Part-time registration
- Extension and off-books
- Transfer to/Confirmation on the PhD register
- Procedure for examination of a candidate
- Complaints concerning supervision
- Appeal against the decision of examiners
- Plagiarism.
3. School of Biochemistry & Immunology Information and Regulations

3.1 Declared outcomes and graduate attributes in line with national and international best practice

The School offers a doctoral training programme in accordance with the learning outcomes expected of a research doctorate (Level 10, National Framework of Qualifications), as specified in the Calendar Part 2 (1.27.4) and the IUQB guidelines for Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education (2009) and the IUA Irish Universities’ PhD Graduate Skills document which has identified the following skills as relevant to PhD student education: research skills and awareness; ethics and social understanding; communication skills; personal effectiveness; team-working and leadership; career management; entrepreneurship and innovation.

3.2 Requirements of a Biochemistry and Immunology PhD

PhD students in the school undertake original research via a structured PhD which promotes the development of in-depth knowledge of their field of study, research skills, critical analysis and communication skills. Any skills gaps that may be identified are addressed by the availability of formal training. Professional development is facilitated through the student’s participation in seminars, workshops and conferences at national and international level. PhD students are expected to undertake taught modules during their PhD (minimum 10 ECTS, maximum 30 ECTS). A minimum of 10 ECTS must be completed by the end of year 2 and written evidence of courses completed provided to examiners at the confirmation process.

3.3 Options for taught modules

- The school offers a bespoke module for PhD students entitled Core Biomedical Research Skills (10 ECTS). This module has been specifically designed for PhD students and will provide them with a unique set of discipline-specific skills that are fundamental for pursuing research in a biomedical field. The module runs in the
first year of the PhD and should be taken by all students in their first year. Details of this module can be found in Appendix I and incoming students should register for this module as soon as possible after accepting their PhD.

- All students are required to take the module **Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era** (5 ECTS). This is an online module which will introduce students to the existing and emerging challenges and opportunities connected with research, presenting and publishing in an open scholarship era. The module comprises a suite of workshops and will focus on issues such as research integrity, the application of Intellectual Property and data protection law to PhD research, the role of and construction of data management plans and strategies for heightened research impact in an open scholarship era. This module is a mandatory requirement for all students. Further details on how to register for this module will soon be made available on the School’s website and will be communicated to all students.

- Students can elect to undertake other modules from taught Masters programmes running in the School or in another School. Permission must be sought directly from the relevant course or module coordinators.

- Other modules provided by non-academic units in College for PhD students include modules provided by the Innovation Academy, Academic Practice and eLearning (CAPSL), Student Learning Development and the Library.

3.4 Progress reporting

- All students must complete an annual progress report at **the end of year 1 and year 3**. This report (appendix II) should comprise a summary of progress for the previous academic year and outline any particular difficulties that may have been encountered. It should not contain significant scientific detail. The student should complete this report (1 page max) and then forward it to their supervisor.
for completion. It is intended that this report creates a formal opportunity for students and supervisors to sit down and review the process on an annual basis. Completed reports should be submitted to the DPGTL by August 1st each year.

- Students must complete a continuation report/examination at 18 months of registration and not later than 22 months. The student in consultation with the supervisor, should prepare a written report and complete a confirmation viva. Guidelines for preparing the confirmation report are attached (Appendix II). The Supervisor will identify 2 appropriate examiners who will form part of the confirmation viva committee. Examiners can come from within or outside the school but it is advised that at least 1 examiner be from within the school. The DPGTL will act as a chair for all confirmation vivas. Following the viva, the panel's findings will be relayed to the student and supervisor. The report should be considered in discussions regarding the current data and future work plan. This stage of the PhD programme is critical for enabling successful completion of the PhD thesis. Further details on the process of arranging a confirmation viva can be found in Appendix III.

**4 Responsibilities of Supervisors and PhD Students**

The supervisor's role is as an academic guide and mentor. In the ideal situation, a strong working relationship will develop between supervisor and student that will extend beyond the PhD study period and be a lasting career benefit. Such a relationship must be based on mutual respect and it will require significant effort by both parties. Regular communication is the essential ingredient to developing a strong working relationship - grievances should not be allowed to fester. Problem issues should be brought explicitly to the attention of the other party – do not assume the other party is aware that a problem exists. Together, the supervisor and student should work to achieve the academic and intellectual independence of the student. The supervisor's role is most important at the beginning of a PhD when the project is being formulated and the student is learning new techniques. As the work progresses the student should become more independent and should not rely on the supervisor for detailed instructions as to what to do. However it is important to recognize
that supervisors have substantial research experience in the field and students should be continually cognisant of their guidance in mastering the many skills that are required to achieve a PhD, including: the choice of scientific problem, experimental design, technical approaches, scientific best practice, critical evaluation of data, critical evaluation of the literature, data presentation, career planning and many other issues. Your supervisor should also play a major role in helping you to track the progress of your work and how to develop good project management skills.

Students should make themselves familiar with the document on good research practice and supervision guidelines available from the Graduate Studies Office webpage: https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/

In summary, a student can expect their supervisor to:
• meet with them at mutually convenient times on a regular basis
• advise on experimental or research strategies
• assist in interpretation of data and results
• work with the student to prepare work for publication

A supervisor can expect a student to:
• conduct their work with integrity and diligence
• avoid plagiarism and all other forms of academic misconduct
• keep a detailed lab notebook
• report the status of their work at regular lab meetings
• write the first draft of manuscripts arising from the student’s work
• prepare and deliver seminars within the School as well as at international conferences
• communicate any difficulties to the supervisor as soon as they arise

5 Grievance resolution
If a problem arises the best solution is resolution with the supervisor directly – thus, good communication and mutual respect between supervisor and student is essential. In
the event that the problem cannot be resolved in this way, then it is recommended that the problem be addressed through mediation with the following people, preferably in this order:

1. Director of postgraduate teaching and learning
2. Panel members of the confirmation viva.
3. Head of Discipline

If the problem remains unresolved, the student should contact the Head of School for advice. All discussions will be held in the strictest confidence.

College also provides a Postgraduate Advisory Service and students may refer to this service for advice and assistance. However, we strongly recommend that a resolution is sought within the School before seeking external assistance.

6. Postgraduate Award - Keith Tipton Prize

The Keith Tipton Prize will be awarded to the top PhD student in their second year of the programme. The prize is in honour of the contributions of Professor Keith Tipton, a world-renowned biochemist who has contributed to our understanding of enzyme function and neurochemistry. In order to be eligible, students must complete the confirmation process by the deadline in year 2. Students will be evaluated for the quality of the thesis writing and organization, research output, lecture to the viva panel, and the defence of the thesis. In addition students may be required to give a short presentation during the prize giving event. The winner will receive a medal and a modest cash prize at a reception for all post-graduate students held in the second half of the first term.
Check List

Please ensure that you have contacted everyone below, in order to familiarize yourself with the resources and support available during your graduate studies.

☐ School Executive Officers - 3rd floor

☐ Safety officer – Dr Nóirín Nic a’ Bháird (Rm 5.08)

☐ Chief Technical Officer – Liam McCarthy (Rm 3.21)

☐ Liam Cross and Noel Breslin (RM Basement -2.52), Technical Services

☐ Director - Postgraduate Teaching – Prof Rachel McLoughlin (Rm 3.13)
Appendix I- BIP77100

Core Biomedical Research Skills for PhD students (10 ECTS credits)

Module Co-coordinator: Dr Nóirín Nic a’ Bháird

Module Description: This module will provide training in core research skills that are required to pursue a PhD by research in a biomedical field. Through a series of workshops, it will provide students with hands-on training in tissue culture, a basic technique underpinning the majority of biomedical research, in addition to more advanced technologies such as flow cytometry, confocal microscopy and electron microscopy. In addition, through participation in the Biochemical Research Seminar Series students will have an opportunity to broaden their research knowledge and appreciation of the discipline and will have the opportunity to interact with world-renowned expert speakers from the fields of biochemistry and immunology, thus promoting their communication skills.

Module Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

1. Outline all health and safety aspects pertaining to work with biological reagents and prepare a biological risk assessment for their research.
2. Describe cell culture basics, including the requirements of a cell culture lab, safety, aseptic technique, recognise microbial contamination of cell cultures, as well as demonstrate the basic methods for passaging, freezing and thawing cultured cells, establishing primary cultures and selecting appropriate culture conditions for downstream applications.
3. Explain the fundamentals and applications of flow cytometry and design their own experiments.
4. Explain the fundamentals of sample preparation and experimental design for light-based microscopy.
5. Describe the basic theory of Transmission Electron Microscopy and the variables involved in the preparation of biological samples and demonstrate the ability to successfully image samples and critically analyse results.
6. Critically appraise current scientific research in the fields of biochemistry and immunology through the acquisition of enhanced abilities to discuss and communicate scientific concepts and the development and application of critical thinking and analytical skills.

Attendance/Participation:

Students’ performance on the module is evaluated on the basis of good attendance and a pass on the assigned assessments. In order to accrue the 10 ECTS, participants will be expected to attend lectures and practicals comprising all six workshops and complete the course assessments.
Assessment:

a. Participation in technical workshops 1-5: (35% contribution to final mark).
b. Assessment 1: Complete a Biological Risk assessment for specific PhD research project: (5% contribution to final mark)
c. Assessment 2: Preparation of resource-driven archive- repository of technical/application on one of the techniques covered in the workshop series (up to ~1000 words plus graphics): (12.5% contribution to final mark).
d. Assessment 3: Design of an experimental protocol utilising one of the technologies covered to address a specific research question relevant to the PhD project: (10% contribution to final mark)
e. Attend 10 biochemical research seminars and participate in post seminar discussion forum with guest speaker: (25% contribution to the final mark)
f. Assessment 4: Submit a written report (~2000 words) on 1 seminar/discussion forum: (12.5% contribution to final mark).

Documentation and Credit

To monitor progress, students will record their workshop attendance (contact hours) and assessments with the ECTS Monitoring Form which is kept on file. Once this form is received, a certificate of module completion will be issued. It is envisioned that in the future this information will be recorded on SITS and credits will appear on the students transcript.

Registration:

To register for a place on this module please email NICABHAN@tcd.ie.

Closing date for registration 30/9/18
## Timetable 2018/19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 1: Safety Training</th>
<th>Lecture 1</th>
<th>NNB</th>
<th>1/10/18</th>
<th>11am-12pm</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>College Biological Safety Training</td>
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<td>24/10/18</td>
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### Assessment 1 Due 30/10/18

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<thead>
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<th>Workshop 2: Cell Culture Technology</th>
<th>Lecture 1</th>
<th>NMW &amp;BM</th>
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<th>FRED</th>
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<td>Practical Session 1</td>
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<td>4/12/18</td>
<td>9am-1pm</td>
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<td>Practical Session 2</td>
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<td>4/12/18</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
<td>L3.15</td>
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<th>Lecture 1</th>
<th>NMW &amp;BM</th>
<th>5/12/18</th>
<th>9am-1pm</th>
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<td>5/12/18</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
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<td>6/12/18</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>L3.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture 3</td>
<td>NMW &amp;BM</td>
<td>7/12/18</td>
<td>9-1</td>
<td>FRED</td>
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<td>7/12/18</td>
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<th>Lecture 1</th>
<th>GMcM</th>
<th>4/2/19</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>6.07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical Session 1</td>
<td>GMcM</td>
<td>7/2/19</td>
<td>10-1pm</td>
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**Workshop 5: Principles of Biological Transmission Electron Microscopy**

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<th>Lecture 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical Session 1</td>
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**Assessments 2 & 3 Due 22/02/19**

**Workshop 6: Biomedical Seminar series**

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<th>Biochemical Research Seminars</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Various dates*</td>
<td>Usually 3.30-4.30pm</td>
<td>FRED</td>
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**Assessment 4 Due 30/6/19**


* The Biochemical Seminar series calendar will be available on the school website and is subject to change

### Biochemical Seminar Series Semester 1 2018/19:

#### Semester 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time of talk</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Discussion w PGs</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Oct</td>
<td>5pm</td>
<td>Peter Andersen</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>FRED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Nov</td>
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<td>Linda Sinclair</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>12noon</td>
<td>FRED</td>
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<td>22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Nov</td>
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<td>Markus Engstler</td>
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<td>FRED</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nicholas Ktistakis</td>
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<td>FRED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Speaker</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<td>Patrick Harrison</td>
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**Semester 2**

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<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Thomas Kufer</td>
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<td>9th May</td>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Francesco Colucci</td>
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</table>
Appendix II: Guidelines for submission of PhD progress/confirmation report.
The report should normally be submitted after eighteen months of registration and not later than 22 months.

The purpose of the confirmation report process is:

1. To provide an independent confirmation that research question or area under investigation forms a valid subject for a doctoral thesis.
2. To consider whether the approaches taken so far are valid and likely to yield results and insights at a level commensurate with what would be expected of a doctoral thesis.
3. To provide an evaluation of the rate of progress towards the goal of a doctoral thesis and likelihood that the student will submit a doctoral thesis within the normal timescale.
4. To provide independent advice on possible directions the research might take.
5. To encourage both student and supervisor to take stock of the situation at the mid point position of the normal PhD timescale.

What should the report contain?
It is important to keep in mind that this process in not a dry run for a PhD write up and viva, although it should be helpful in preparing for this task. The prime objective of the process is to determine what the research is about, whether it an appropriate subject for a PhD?

The report should contain:
(i) An introduction that clearly and precisely introduces the research under consideration. It should be clear from the introduction what the research question(s) is and why it is important. All non-original material (figures etc.) should be properly referenced. The introduction should focus on the issues and literature that are relevant to the research question. It is not necessary to write an exhaustive review of the field. The introduction should conclude with a list of clear aims and objectives of the proposed doctoral thesis.
(ii) A methods section that contains appropriate detail on how the experiments were performed and the major methodologies employed. It is important to note that candidates
may be requested to explain the key technologies they have used to generate their data.

(iii) A results section constructed in a clear and logical manner that allows the reader follow the experimental data and evidence being presented. Particular attention should be given to the presentation and titles of figures. In all cases appropriate legends should be included. The results section should demonstrate sufficient progress towards the goal of delivering conclusions, insights or outcomes that would be expected of a doctoral thesis. However, it is important to stress that at this stage (after 18 months work) the results do not necessarily have to be conclusive or completely novel but should generate an expectation among the reviewers that these are both achievable within the normal time scale considered appropriate for a doctoral thesis.

(iv) A discussion section that draws appropriate conclusion from the results, places them in the context of other published results and develops new insights where appropriate. At this stage (after 18 months work) it is not expected that these insights or proposals be fully formed but represent reasonable conjectures.

The final section should contain an outline (1-2 pages) of the proposed future directions of the work with an estimated time line of expected key experiments/results and the intended submission date of the thesis.

A complete list of references should be provided using a peer review journal accepted format. If you cite an article you should be familiar with the details and contents of the article as you may be quizzed on this point. If you have hundreds of references you may well attract attention to this point.

**The report should also contain:**

A single page abstract/summary of the report should also be provided.

A complete list of abbreviations employed; standard definitions, ATP etc. are not necessary

**How long should the report be?**

There is no absolute limit but the expected size of a confirmation report should be approximately 50 –70 pages. It is important to keep in mind that after 18 months you are not expected to produce a mini-version your PhD thesis.
Appendix III:

**Steps to complete confirmation of continuation on the PhD register process**

This process must be completed at the latest by the end of year 2  
**Students will not be invited register for their 3rd year until this process has been completed***

1. Student with the guidance of their supervisor completes their confirmation report (Guidelines: see appendix II of PhD handbook).

2. Supervisor identifies 2 appropriate individuals and requests their participation on the confirmation panel (any academic staff eligible to supervise).

3. Supervisor/student liaises with the chosen examiners and the DPGTL to arrange a date and time for confirmation viva.

4. Supervisor/student books an appropriate room for the confirmation viva with the school office.

5. Student provides a copy of the confirmation report to each examiner.

6. Supervisor completes the confirmation form (attached) and forwards a signed copy by email to the DPGTL.

7. DPGTL or their nominated representative will attend for the duration of the viva to act as chair.

8. Examiners will complete a single written report (prepared jointly) to provide feedback to the student and supervisor on the project and give their recommendation for continuation on the PhD register. This is forwarded by email to the DPGTL.

9. DPGTL forwards the report to the student and supervisor while retaining a copy on file.

10. DPGTL submits the final confirmation report form to the Dean of graduate studies to complete the process.

11. Upon receipt of the examiners’ report the student and supervisor should meet to formally discuss the examiners’ report and make clear plans for the remainder of the PhD
Confirmation on the Ph.D. Register

This Confirmation Form must be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies Office, Trinity College, Dublin 2 for every student accepted directly to the Ph.D. register, normally within the first 18 months of the student’s registration.

This Confirmation Form must be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies Office, Arts Building, Trinity College, Dublin 2 for every student accepted directly to the Ph.D. register, normally within the first 18 months of the student’s registration.

I seek the Dean’s approval for confirming the following student on the Ph.D. register:

Name (in CAPITALS): _______________________________________________________

I.D. Number: _____________________________________________________________

Date when entered College on the Ph.D. register year 1:_______________________

Date when Ph.D. Confirmation Process has been completed:___________________

State month and year of the student’s intended Ph.D. thesis submission date:

___________________________________________

Supervisor’s name: _______________________________________________________

Supervisor’s signature: ___________________________________________________

I would like to confirm that the Confirmation Process has been completed as a result of an academic assessment carried out in the School with respect to the student.

School: __________________________________________________________________

Director of Teaching & Learning (Postgraduate) (Signature): __________________

Director of Teaching & Learning (Postgraduate) (Name): ______________________

Date of submission to the Graduate Studies Office: ___________________________

Date of approval:_________ Dean of Graduate Studies_______________________