School of Engineering
Research Programme Handbook
2019–2020
A Note on This Handbook

This handbook applies to postgraduate research students in the School of Engineering. It provides MAI (by research), MSc (by research) and PhD students a guide to what is expected of you on your programme, and the academic and personal support available to you. Please retain it for future reference.

The handbook is intended to complement the regulations and information found in the College Calendar (Part III) which governs all academic activity in Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin. Please familiarize yourself with both the College Calendar and this handbook so that you are fully aware of all information relevant to you and the rules and regulations that apply to your programme of study. The College Calendar may be consulted on the TCD web (www.tcd.ie/calendar) or in the Berkeley library.

The information provided in this handbook is accurate at time of preparation. Any necessary revisions will be notified to students by email. Please note that, in the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the College Calendar and information contained in this handbook, the provisions of the Calendar will prevail.
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# 1. Contact information

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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>l: Simon Perry Building</td>
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<td>Associate Professor Brendan O’Kelly</td>
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<td>l: Biotechnology Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative support</td>
<td>Ms Patricia Hughes</td>
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<tr>
<td>e: <a href="mailto:pahughes@tcd.ie">pahughes@tcd.ie</a></td>
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<td>l: Engineering School Office, 1st floor, Museum Building</td>
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<td><strong>Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering</strong></td>
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<td>Head of Department</td>
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<td>Ms Judith Lee</td>
<td>Senior Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Ms Serena Clark</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Ms Catherine Keogh</td>
<td>Centre Administrator</td>
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<td>Mr Martin John McAndrew</td>
<td>Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/">http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/</a></td>
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<td>Deputy Supervisor</td>
<td>Ms Jackie Byrne</td>
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<td>e: <a href="mailto:jabyrne@tcd.ie">jabyrne@tcd.ie</a></td>
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<td>p: +353 1 896 1852</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/fees-payments/">http://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/fees-payments/</a></td>
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<td>Ms Rachel McNamara</td>
<td>e: <a href="mailto:byrnera@tcd.ie">byrnera@tcd.ie</a></td>
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<td>p: +353 1 896 4500</td>
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<td>e: <a href="mailto:student-counselling@tcd.ie">student-counselling@tcd.ie</a></td>
<td>p: +353 1 896 1407</td>
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<tr>
<td>l: 3rd floor, 7-9 South Leinster Street</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/">http://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/</a></td>
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<th><strong>Graduate Student’s Union</strong></th>
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<td>e: <a href="http://tcdgsu.ie/">http://tcdgsu.ie/</a></td>
<td>l: 2nd floor, House 6</td>
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2. Admission and registration

2.1 Admission

Applications for admission as a Research Student are made through the online application system. All applications must identify a proposed supervisor and provide a short research project proposal. Successful applications must be accepted by the proposed supervisor, Head of Discipline, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Within approximately six weeks of their first registration as a research student, each student should prepare an initial research plan jointly with their Supervisor. This plan should normally be based on the research proposal submitted upon application and set out the project objectives, research methods and facilities to be used, and the main tasks to be completed. It should be approximately two pages in length and copies should be retained by both student and supervisor.

As per the College regulations, entry is normally onto the PhD register on a probationary basis and students are required to undergo a formal review process within 18 months of registration in order to continue on the PhD register (extended to 30 months for part-time students). Students who enter on the MSc register but who wish to transfer to the PhD register go through a similar transfer process. Further details are provided in the Confirmation/Transfer section below.

2.2 Registration

A student record is created from the moment a student is admitted to the College and is maintained during their academic career while in College.

New and continuing TCD students will be sent an email inviting them to complete the online registration process annually via the my.tcd.ie web portal.

Prior to registering, consult the registration guide on the Academic Registry’s website.

Your fees must be paid before registration can be completed. If your fees are being paid by a research account, submit a stamped and signed copy of this department/research funding form to academic.registry@tcd.ie with subject line “FAO Student Finance”.

The form must be signed and stamped by an authorised approver. No hard copies will be accepted. The department or research body approving the funding are to retain the original document.

NB A new form is required for each academic year.
3. ** Supervision **

A student’s Supervisor shall provide advice and assistance that shall include, in particular, reference to the College regulations and matters relating to academic progression and examination. The Supervisor shall provide advice and guidance on sources of funding and introduce the student to others in their Department and research group.

The Supervisor shall also give the students all possible assistance regarding access to the material, equipment and other resources essential to their research and in developing a feasible research plan that will lead to a thesis of acceptable standard.

Joint supervision is permitted if approval is obtained from the Dean of Graduate Studies. Where appropriate, an external co-supervisor from outside College can be appointed. In all cases of joint supervision one Supervisor shall be the Principal Supervisor and they should be a member of the academic staff in the School of Engineering. A co-supervisor request form can be downloaded [here](#).

Complaints about the adequacy of supervision should normally be made first to the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). In line with College regulations, complaints about the adequacy of supervision will not be entertained once a thesis has been presented for examination.

It is a research student’s responsibility to keep their supervisor fully informed about the progress of their research, including any difficulties or delays they experience. The communication of information about ongoing research in this manner is an important element of an engineering research student’s education and training. Research students must inform their Supervisor as soon as is practicable if they are incapacitated by illness or other grave cause and unable to undertake their agreed research programme.

**Alternative advice**

If a research student is experiencing difficulties which need to be discussed confidentially, in addition to the Supervisor as support, the Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning in the School can provide confidential advice on academic and pastoral matters. Alternatively, the Postgraduate Advisory Service (in House no 27) and the Graduate Student’s Union (House no 6) are also available to advise postgraduates in difficulty. All of these services are offered in strict confidence.
4. Programme requirements

4.1 Modules

As all PhD programmes in the School of Engineering are structured, students are required to undertake taught modules to support their research and postgraduate education. Modules worth a minimum of 10 ECTS or equivalent must be completed by each student. A separate document listing the allowable level 9 modules in College is available on the School website and will be sent to all new PhD students by e-mail at the beginning of the academic year. If a module not on this list is proposed to be taken, the prior approval of the Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning should be sought, having first received the approval of your supervisor.

MSc research students and part-time MAI students are exempt from this requirement, but should consult with their supervisors on how the completion of modules could support their particular research project.

The modules to be completed should be selected by each student in consultation with their supervisor, taking into account their individual circumstances and requirements in light of their prior qualifications and their research project. The modules selected may enhance the candidate’s breadth and depth in their area, strengthen their research and research-related skills, or provide other expertise that may enhance their potential career opportunities. These modules may be

- Discipline specific, i.e. related to the student’s field of research
- Generic engineering, i.e. supporting a wide range of engineering research
- Broad curriculum, i.e. intended to expand a student’s learning experience

The modules can be completed in any appropriate setting, including the School of Engineering, elsewhere in College, or at another University or Institute in Ireland e.g. a Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) or Structured PhD Program (SPP) partner, or elsewhere. Wherever possible PhD students should endeavour to complete PhD level (Level 10) modules, but it is recognised that these are not available in all subject areas.

Students are advised to complete their modules within 12 months of admission to College as a postgraduate research student. All research students must complete their modules prior to submission of their thesis. MSc students wishing to transfer to the PhD register must have completed or be completing 10 ECTS of modules. PhD students should normally complete their modules prior to confirmation on the PhD register (see below). Exceptionally for scheduling or other reasons, PhD students may complete some of their modules following the
confirmation stage, but in this case the modules and a date for their completion must be set out in the student’s confirmation report.

Students participating in certain thematically structured PhD programs (SPPs) may need to complete additional requirements, set out in each case by the Director of the SPP. These requirements must be additional to and compatible with the general College regulations and Engineering School requirements set out in this handbook.

**Module information**

Further information on available modules may be found in but is not limited to the following:

Tangent, Trinity’s Ideas Workspace:  
http://www.tcd.ie/tangent/education/postgraduate/joint.php

MSc Bioengineering: http://www.tcd.ie/bioengineering/msc/

MSc Civil Engineering:  
http://www.tcd.ie/civileng/programmes/postgraduate/msc/

MPhil Music and Media Technology: http://www.tcd.ie/eleceng/mmt/

MSc in Electronic Information Engineering:  
https://www.tcd.ie/eleceng/postgraduate/MSc/index.php

MSc in Mechanical Engineering:  
https://www.tcd.ie/mecheng/postgraduate/mscbymodule/

Postgraduate Diploma in Statistics:  
https://www.scss.tcd.ie/postgraduate/pgcertstats/

### 4.2 Confirmation / transfer process

A stringent process of academic assessment for all PhD students to confirm their continuation on the PhD register must be arranged within 18 months of registering on the programme (extended by a further year for part-time PhD students). This assessment represents an important part of a student’s postgraduate education. It provides a formal opportunity for a review of the research project by an independent expert whose external considered view is normally of much value in planning the remainder of the project.

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to email on behalf of the student the course administrator, Patricia Hughes (pahughes@tcd.ie) the confirmation report.
and along with the completed confirmation form. The form is available on the Graduate Studies website at this link.

The confirmation form must be submitted by the end of a student’s second year (and by the end of the third year for part-time students). Failure to submit the confirmation form will prevent a student from registering for the next academic year.

The PhD confirmation process requires the student to prepare a PhD Confirmation Report; this report should provide sufficient information on the context, objectives, progress and planning of the project to allow an assessment to be made of whether the student should continue to work towards the completion of a PhD thesis. The student’s supervisor will provide guidance to the student on the contents and preparation of the report, and advise the student of the standard required. Guidelines for the contents of the report are provided below, but as each PhD thesis represents a unique original research work, no single form of report is universally applicable. In the review document submitted, evidence of having obtained the necessary ECTS credits must be provided (or that participation in such courses is in progress), otherwise confirmation cannot be granted.

The student shall be invited to attend a PhD confirmation interview to discuss their confirmation report and plans for completion. The PhD confirmation panel for each student will comprise two members of the academic staff, normally identified by the student’s supervisor and approved by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). The Supervisor shall not be a member of the PhD confirmation panel, but should be present at the interview to ensure that they are aware of the panel’s critique of the student’s work. Feedback shall be given to the student as soon as possible after the interview. The panel shall recommend one of the following: (a) continuation on the PhD register, (b) continuation on the PhD register after some minor changes have been made to the PhD confirmation report, (c) continuation on the PhD register subject to the completion of identified modules within a specified time period, (d) continuation on the PhD not recommended at this time: a new report to be written and confirmation interview to be held again as soon as possible thereafter, (e) a recommendation to change to the general Masters register to submit a Masters thesis, or (f) not to continue as a postgraduate research student. A student may appeal the result of a PhD confirmation interview.

A transfer process shall be completed to decide on the eligibility of students on the MSc register who wish to be transferred to the PhD register. This process is similar to the PhD confirmation process outlined above and shall normally be completed within the first 24 months of registration.
Confirmation report guidelines

School of Engineering confirmation report guidelines are available here.

4.3 Annual progress reports

All PhD students are required to complete an annual progress report at the end of year 1 and year 3 (if not submitting the thesis at that time). If a fifth year is needed, for which permission is required of the Head of School, then an annual report is also required at the end of year 4. The Supervisor also has to complete his/her section of this report. A progress report template can be downloaded here and should be submitted to Patricia Hughes at pahughes@tcd.ie in the School Office by 31 July for the September registrants or by 1st February for the March registrants. Failure to submit a progress report will prevent a student registering for the next academic year.

4.4 Thesis submission

The maximum periods before submission of a thesis by research students on the full-time MSc and PhD registers are two and four years respectively. An extension of the period within which the thesis can be presented may be obtained by application to the Dean of Graduate Studies by the student’s Supervisor and must have a strong recommendation from the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) and the approval of the Head of School.

The submission of a thesis is at the discretion of the candidate. A candidate is advised, but not required, to seek the agreement of his/her Supervisor prior to submission. The essential requirements of Masters and PhD theses are set out in the Calendar.

4.5 Examination

Following thesis submission, the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in consultation with the Supervisor will nominate an external examiner and an internal examiner to independently examine the thesis. A viva voce examination is a requirement of the examination of a PhD candidate. For a Masters examination a viva voce will be arranged at the request of either examiner or the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). The internal examiner has overall responsibility for organising the viva voce examination, supported by the student’s supervisor and the School administration. The viva voce will be chaired by a senior academic nominated by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). The Supervisor may be present at the viva voce examination purely as an observer.
unless the student wishes otherwise. The Supervisor may record decisions on changes to the thesis on the interviewee’s behalf.

In the case of a Masters degree the examiners may propose that

(i) the degree be awarded for the thesis as it stands;
(ii) the degree be awarded for the thesis subject to minor corrections;
(iii) the thesis be referred for major revision and subsequent re-examination; or
(iv) the thesis be failed.

When examiners propose either failure or referral of an MSc thesis for major revision, they must hold a *viva voce* examination.

In the case of a PhD thesis the examiners may propose that

(i) the degree be awarded for the thesis as it stands;
(ii) the degree be awarded for the thesis subject to minor corrections;
(iii) the thesis be referred for major revision and subsequent re-examination, for which six months are normally allowed from the time of notification,
(iv) a lower degree be awarded, if necessary following minor corrections to the thesis, or
(v) the thesis be failed.

For MSc and PhD theses, minor corrections should be completed within two months of the candidate being informed of corrections required by the Graduate Studies Office. The supervisor should advise the candidate in addressing the matters raised prior to re-submission of the thesis. The internal examiner will confirm that corrections have been carried out satisfactorily and inform the Graduate Studies Office. Major revision of the thesis should be completed within six months of notification. A re-examination of the revised thesis is required, but a second *viva voce* examination will not be held.

A student may appeal the decision of the examiners.

5. **Graduation**

All degrees are publicly conferred under the student’s registered name by the Chancellor, or a Pro-Chancellor, at the ceremony known as Commencements. Commencements are meetings of the Senate of Dublin University for the conferring of
degrees; the ceremonies are conducted in Latin recalling the oldest traditions of European universities.

Commencements are organised by the Academic Registry and take place in the Public Theatre in Front Square. Students are required to complete a Notice of Candidature form and submit it to the Academic Registry (graduation@tcd.ie) by the specified closing date set out in Commencement Schedule. See: https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/graduation/apply/

Conditional application may be made in advance of the publication of final degree results, but must be confirmed fourteen days prior to the beginning of the relevant commencement session.

6. Plagiarism

In the academic world, the principal currency is ideas. As a consequence, you can see that plagiarism – i.e. passing off other people’s ideas as your own – is tantamount to theft. It is important to be aware the plagiarism can occur knowingly or unknowingly, and the offence is in the action not the intent.

Plagiarism is a serious offence within College and the College’s policy on plagiarism is set out in a central online repository hosted by the Library which is located at http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism. This repository contains information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, the College Calendar entry on plagiarism and a matrix explaining the different levels of plagiarism outlined in the Calendar entry and the sanctions applied.

Undergraduate and postgraduate new entrants and existing students, are required to complete the online tutorial ‘Ready, Steady, Write’. Linked to this requirement, all cover sheets which students must complete when submitting assessed work, must contain the following declaration:

I have read and I understand the plagiarism provisions in the General Regulations of the University Calendar for the current year, found at: http://www.tcd.ie/calendar

I have also completed the Online Tutorial on avoiding plagiarism ‘Ready, Steady, Write’, located at http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/ready-steady-write

Plagiarism detection software such as “Turnitin” and Blackboard’s “SafeAssign” may be used to assist in automatic plagiarism detection. Students are encouraged to assess their own work for plagiarism prior to submission using this or other software.
7. **Research ethics**

All researchers are required to conduct their research to the highest ethical standards and each individual researcher is responsible for ensuring good ethical practice. The School of Engineering Research Ethics Committee (REC) has been set up to assist and provide guidance in this process. Please visit the School of Engineering website for information on when ethical approval is required and how to apply: [https://www.tcd.ie/Engineering/research/Research_Ethics.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Engineering/research/Research_Ethics.php).

College’s policy on good research practice is available [here](#).

8. **Information on academic resources**

8.1 **Library**

Trinity College Library is the largest library in Ireland and one of the largest in the world. Its collections of manuscripts and printed books have been built up since the end of the sixteenth century. In addition to the purchases and donations of almost four centuries, since 1801 the Library has had the right to claim all British and Irish publications under the terms of successive Copyright Acts. The book-stock is now over six million volumes and there are extensive collections of manuscripts, maps and music.

The most important section of the Library for Engineering students is located in the Hamilton Building. In addition, postgraduate students have access to the 1937 Reading Room, which is reserved for their use and is equipped with computers.

Higher degree postgraduate students may borrow 10 books for one month from the open shelves and closed access areas. They may also borrow, for one week, 4 books from the undergraduate lending collection if no other copies are available.

Subject Librarians are the key links between Trinity’s academic activities and the Library and the subject librarian for Engineering is David MacNaughton ([david.macnaughton@tcd.ie](mailto:david.macnaughton@tcd.ie)).

8.2 **IT Services**

IT Services is responsible for the provision and support of computer systems, networking, and audio-visual services in College. The central point of contact for all services is the IT Services Helpdesk. To report a problem or seek advice, students can send an email to [itservicesdesk@tcd.ie](mailto:itservicesdesk@tcd.ie), phone the Helpdesk at (01) 896 2000 or call in person to the ground floor of Áras an Phiarsaigh.
Information about IT facilities in College (for example, how to get started with a TCD email account, using the printing system and how to save work in College Computer Rooms) is available on the IT Services website: www.tcd.ie/itservices

8.3 Group study facilities

Locations
Berkeley Library
Location: Basement Area
Booking: In person at the Library Service Counter

Hamilton Library
Location: Lower Level, adjacent to Photocopying Room
Booking: In person at the Library Service Counter

John Stearne Medical Library
Location: To right of library entrance
Booking: In person, by telephone (8962109) or e-mail (stearne@tcd.ie)
Three rooms are available - Room 2 is equipped with Assistive Technology PC, and priority will be given to those registered with the Disability Service.

A booking folder is kept at the relevant Library Service Counter. To make a booking, one signature and ID number is required. Bookings are in one-hour slots; maximum of two hours may be booked at a time. However, a group may extend their booking if the room is still free after their session.

9. Student support services

9.1 Careers Support

The TCD Careers Advisory Service (CAS) is available to students (www.tcd.ie/careers). Included in the many services provided by CAS are an extensive Careers Information Centre and an award-winning website. Both contain information on all aspects of the career-planning process, employment search, as well as details of ongoing career and graduate recruitment events, and job vacancies. CAS also offers TCD students exclusive access to Vault Career Insider.

9.2 Graduate Students’ Union

Situated on the second floor of House Six, the Graduate Students’ Union (GSU) is
an independent body within College that represents postgraduate students throughout College. Upon registration, all postgraduate students automatically become members. The GSU has two full-time sabbatical officers, the President and the Vice President, who together manage the operation of the Union. See the GSU website for more information: www.tcdgsu.ie.

The GSU Common Room is located in Front Square, on the first floor of House 7. It is equipped with a kitchen area, and stocked with tea and coffee, as well as a “take a book, leave a book” library. All registered postgrads are entitled to purchase a key which is available from the Students’ Union Front Office on the ground floor of House 6. The key is €40 and is yours for the entirety of your time at Trinity.

9.3 Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling website (http://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling) provides information on the support options available to students who are experiencing either personal and/or academic/study concerns. The services are free and confidential to registered Trinity College students.

9.4 TCD Health Service

The TCD Health Service aims to take a holistic approach to Student Health and in addition to providing on campus, primary health care for students it focuses on the psychological and occupational aspects of student health and health education. Student consultations are free of charge with modest charges for additional services. The Health Service website (www.tcd.ie/College_Health) provides facts and information about the healthcare facilities available on campus, as well as information on staying healthy at Trinity.

9.5 Disabilities Service

The Disability Service aims to provide appropriate advice, support and information to help students with disabilities. Students who require assistance for a disability or specific learning difficulty, should register with the Disability Service (www.tcd.ie/disability). The service is located in Room 2054, Arts Building. Students will then be assigned a Disability Officer who will work with them to assess the level of support required.

9.6 Student Societies

The Central Societies Committee (CSC) is the body responsible for student societies in Trinity College. There are currently 98 societies in College, covering a huge variety of interests. Students interested in joining a society can do so during Freshers Week or throughout the year by emailing them – email addresses for all societies are available on the CSC website: http://trinitysocieties.ie/. An online event guide is also available on the CSC website.
9.7 Postgraduate Advisory Service

The Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS) is a 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 Service is led by the Postgraduate Support Officer who provides frontline support for all Postgraduate students in Trinity. The Postgrad Support Officer will act as your first point of contact and a source of support and guidance regardless of what stage of your Postgrad you’re at. In addition each Faculty has three members of Academic staff appointed as Postgraduate Advisors who you can be referred to by the Postgrad Support Officer for extra assistance if needed. Contact details of the Postgrad Support Officer and the Advisory Panel are available on the PAS website: http://www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate/

The PAS is located on the second floor of House 27 and is open from 8.30 – 4.30, Monday to Friday. Appointments are available from 9am to 4pm. Phone: 8961417; Email: pgsupp@tcd.ie.

10. General information

10.1 Data protection
Trinity College Dublin uses personal data relating to students for a variety of purposes. We are careful to comply with our obligations under data protection laws. The following link provides information on how we obtain, use and disclose student data in the course of performing University functions and services.