



Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees

1. Purpose

The Thesis Committee model has been adopted in Trinity to enhance the supervisor – research student relationship and to ensure quality supervision practice in line with international best practice. A Thesis Committee shall be formed no later than six months from the first registration of a PhD student to monitor and advise in relation to the progress of the student throughout the lifespan of the structured PhD.

2. Membership of Thesis Committees

- 2.1. All Thesis Committees must comprise at least two members independent of the supervisor and co-supervisors. One member must be an independent academic member of Trinity staff from within the School familiar with the student's research area. The second may be an additional academic member of staff from within the university or a recognized external expert in the student's field of study. Such external experts may be affiliated with external universities, but this is not a requirement for the role.
- 2.2. Committee membership should be nominated by the supervisor in consultation with the student for approval by the Director of Teaching & Learning (Postgraduate).
- 2.3. Supervisors and co-supervisors cannot be formal members of a Thesis Committee.
- 2.4. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) has authority to approve membership of Thesis Committee and any necessary changes ensuring that there is at least one independent academic member from within the School represented at all times.

3. Scope and function

Thesis Committees perform three key functions:

- 3.1. support the academic progress of the student and provide guidance on their development as PhD researchers.
- 3.2. assess and monitor research progress through formal review processes (i.e., annual review and confirmation / transfer interview) and agree an appropriate recommendation.
- 3.3. support the student-supervisor relationship and enhance the overall quality and rigour of the supervision process.

4. Functions outside of the remit

- 4.1. Thesis Committee members do not have a direct supervisory role.
- 4.2. While Thesis Committees may guide students to appropriate support services and provide informal support, the Committee does not have a direct responsibility for the provision of pastoral care.



5. Meeting arrangements

- 5.1. Formal meetings of the Thesis Committee will be chaired by a member of the Trinity academic staff.
- 5.2. The Chair should ensure that a meeting agenda is issued prior to each formal progress review meeting.
- 5.3. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee to ensure the student has access to the completed annual review report prior to the scheduled meeting.
- 5.4. The following can be in attendance at meetings of the Thesis Committee:
 - a. Supervisor
 - b. Co-Supervisors including adjunct supervisors
 - c. Director of Teaching & Learning (Postgraduate) or designate
- 5.5. The supervisor and/or co-supervisor may be in attendance as observers at the **confirmation interview** conducted by the Thesis Committee as appropriate to local and discipline norms. The Chair should ensure that time is allocated for the student to speak with the Thesis Committee without the supervisor(s) present.
- 5.6. The supervisor and/or co-supervisor(s) may be present at formal **annual review meetings** with students as appropriate to local and discipline norms. The Chair should ensure that time is allocated for the student to speak with the Thesis Committee without the supervisor(s) present.
- 5.7. Schedule of review meetings: the figure below (page 4) presents the timing of review meetings in the student lifecycle of postgraduate research students.
 - Annual Review meetings should be completed no later than the end of June for students on the September register, and the end of January for students on the March register.
 - Confirmation interviews should be completed no later than **22 months** after initial registration for full-time PhD students, and **34 months** after initial registration for part-time PhD students.
- 5.8. Students may request an informal meeting with the Thesis Committee outside of the above formal review meetings, and independent of their supervisor.

6. Outcomes of formal review meetings

Thesis Committee members should agree a recommendation following each formal review meeting:

- 6.1. Student to progress;
- 6.2. Student to progress after some minor changes have been made to the annual review or confirmation reports;
- 6.3. Student to present for re-assessment or re-interview;
- 6.4. Student to transfer to a lower degree register;
- 6.5. Student does not progress;
- 6.6. A change in supervision should be made.



Where a recommendation is made for a student to present for re-assessment or re-interview, clear and specific written guidance must be given to the student detailing the additional work to be completed prior to the reassessment or re-interview, including the timeline for same.

7. Reporting

Thesis Committees should complete the relevant template following completion of the formal annual review / interview meetings recording the agreed recommendation:

- a. [Annual Review Report Template](#)
- b. [Confirmation Report Template](#)

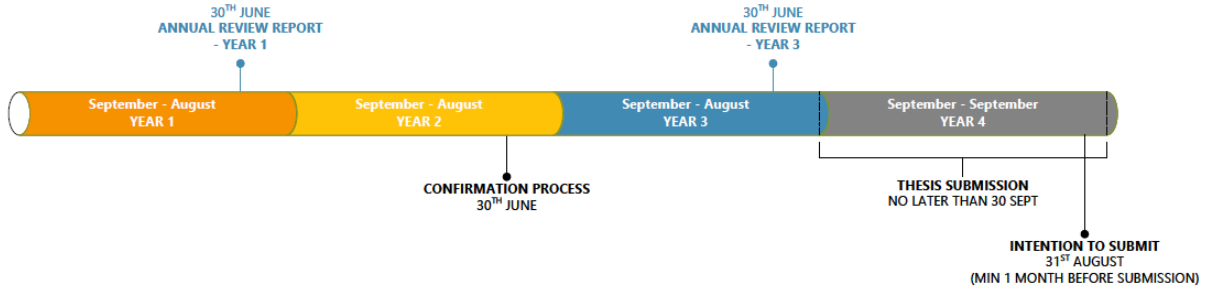
Final reports should be sent to the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), the student and supervisor(s) within five working days.



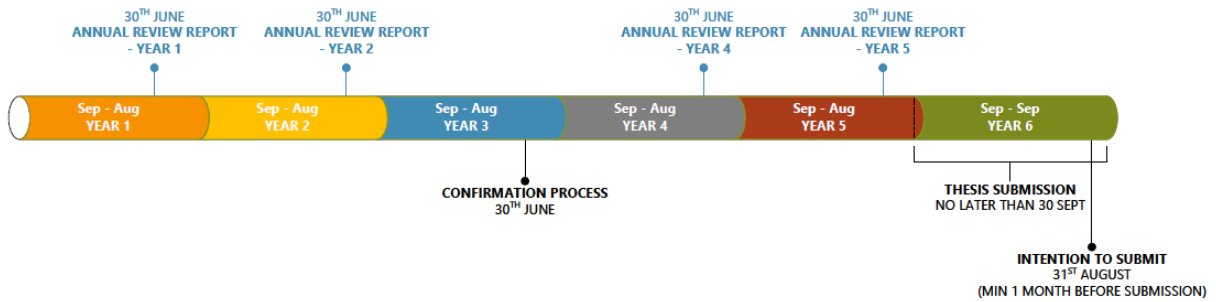
Figure: Timing of Review Meetings

Postgraduate Research Progression Deadlines (Sept Intake)

Full-time PhD students

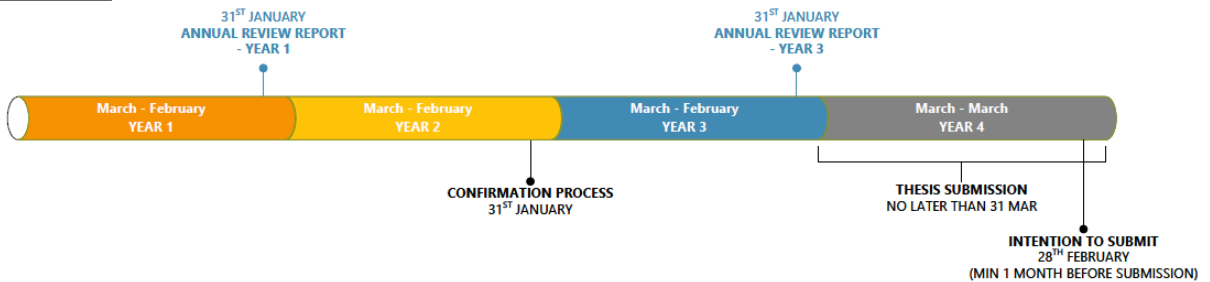


Part-time PhD students



Postgraduate Research Progression Deadlines (March Intake)

Full-time PhD students



Part-time PhD students

