Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology

M.Litt/Ph.D. Course Handbook

2017-2018
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1. Overview of the School

The Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology, Trinity College Dublin is composed of three parts: the Department of Religions and Theology, the Irish School of Ecumenics and the Loyola Institute.

The Department of Religions and Theology offers undergraduate degrees and postgraduate research supervision on the history, contemporary manifestations, texts, self-understandings and ethics of the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, early Christianity and late Antiquity, method and theory in the academic study of religion, European religious pluralism, religious change in modernity, religion in the public Sphere and aesthetic and embodiment approaches to religion. The Department is currently developing programmes in World Religions and is based in the Arts Building on the TCD campus.

The Irish School of Ecumenics offers taught Masters courses and research student supervision in the fields of Intercultural Theology and Inter-religious Studies, International Peace Studies, Reconciliation Studies and Conflict Resolution. As such it provides research supervision across disciplinary fields which include the ethics and theology of conflict and peace; reconciliation; human rights and ethics in international affairs; interreligious dialogue and intercultural theology; ecumenical theology; gender issues; development and globalisation; the interplay of politics and religion. The ISE is TCD’s only cross-border institution with the Intercultural Theology and Inter-religious Studies and International Peace Studies courses based in Trinity College Dublin and the Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation course operates from Antrim Road in Belfast.

The Loyola Institute is dedicated to education and research in theology in the broad Catholic tradition. We offer undergraduate degrees, a taught Masters and research student supervision (MLitt and PhD). Our purpose as an Institute is to reflect academically on Christian faith, social justice and contemporary culture in the context of the Catholic tradition. Our central concern is the creative intersection of theology, Church and society. Through our research and teaching we equip students to respond to the challenges facing the Catholic Church and other Christian traditions and to address the emerging needs of these faith communities in a manner that is informed, relevant, reasoned and pastoral. In an increasingly diverse and complex society one of our main priorities is to foster religious understanding through ecumenical dialogue and through dialogue between faith and culture. We are also committed to promoting social justice and to fostering ethical values in society. We provide research supervision across the multiple disciplinary fields which theology encompasses.
You can learn more about the School and its constituent parts at:

https://www.tcd.ie/religions-peacetudies-theology/
www.tcd.ie/Religions_Theology
www.tcd.ie/ise
http://www.tcd.ie/loyola-institute

1.1 Graduate Studies in Trinity College Dublin

Regulations concerning graduate students are to be found in the University of Dublin, Trinity College, Calendar Part 3 ¹ (http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/), which contains all information concerning graduate studies in TCD. The College Calendar is updated annually.

This M.Litt/Ph.D. Handbook for the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology is intended to introduce students to the provisions the School makes for graduate education and does not supersede any of the information and regulations found in the University College Calendar Part 3.

1.2 Other Resources for Research Students in TCD

The following offices are useful contact points for Trinity research students:

Graduate Studies Office – www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies

The Graduate Studies Office administers applications to read for higher degrees by research (M.Sc., M.Litt., and Ph.D.) as well as Diploma, Masters and Doctorate programmes. The GSO is also the place for submission of research theses.

Careers Advisory Service – www.tcd.ie/Careers

Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning – www.tcd.ie/CAPSL

CAPSL assists the College in developing a strong and integrated framework for supporting best academic practice and the highest quality of student learning. It also offers a development programme for postgraduate teaching assistants.

Disability Service - https://www.tcd.ie/disability/

IT Services – http://www.tcd.ie/itservices/

IT Services is the provider of e-mail and other computer services to the College community. It has a help desk which can be e-mailed to report problems or seek advice.

International Office - http://www.tcd.ie/international/

¹ Hereafter referred to as the College Calendar Part 3.
GRADUATE STUDENTS’ UNION/AONTAS NA N-IARCHÉIMITHE

Trinity’s Graduate Students’ Union (GSU) established in 1973 is the representative body for all postgraduate students in Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin. The two sabbatical officers of the GSU work full-time and represent postgraduate students on all major committees of the College including Board, Council, Student Life, Graduate Studies Committee and Research Committee. The Union’s executive committee, which includes representatives from all faculties, convenes on a monthly basis and more often when required. The objective of the Union is to effectively represent postgraduate students within the University, advocate on behalf of Union members on issues that impact their education internally and nationally; and to protect the interests of our union members during their studies.

Activities of the Union include: providing social and recreational facilities for postgraduate students; monitoring and developing the study and recreational facilities of the 1937 Postgraduate Reading Room; providing a Graduate Common Room for postgraduate students (located in house 7) and to provide and manage lockers for students in the 1937 Reading Room (rental is organised through the front office in house 6).

The GSU produces an academic and peer reviewed journal on an annual basis, the Trinity Postgraduate Review (http://trinitypostgradrev.wixsite.com/tcd-ie), and a literary magazine, College Green (www.collegegreenmagazine.com/). It also produces a postgraduate handbook for students with information on supports and services available to postgraduate students.

The GSU President works in the area of policy and strategy. The GSU Vice-President acts as the Welfare and Education Officer for postgraduates in TCD and provides confidential one-to-one advice, advocacy and support in areas such as student supervisor relationships and financial hardship. The GSU Communications Officer informs students on a weekly basis of information, postgraduate events and updates from the university and the wider metropolitan community through the medium of a digital newsletter titled Postgrad News.

The GSU website www.tcdgsu.ie provides the latest updates from the Union, information on elections, campaigns and connections to the Union’s social media platforms. Students can arrange meetings with the sabbatical officers via emailing either the GSU President Shane Collins at president@tcdgsu.ie or the GSU Vice-President Madhav Bhargav at vicepresident@tcdgsu.ie or by contacting the office landline at (01) 896 1169.
1.3 Key people for research students in the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology

Head of School – Prof Siobhán Garrigan: garrigs@tcd.ie

Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate – Prof David Shepherd: shepherd@tcd.ie

Director of Research – Prof Jacob Erikson: ericksoj@tcd.ie

Executive officer of Research Degrees Programme ISE – Ms Christine Houlahan: ressec@tcd.ie

Executive Officer of Research Degree Programme Religions and Theology – Ms Jane Welch: welchj@tcd.ie

Executive Officer of research Degree Programme at the Loyola Institute – Ms Helen McMahon: loyal@tcd.ie

School Administrator - Aideen Woods - isedir@tcd.ie

1.4 Funding Information

Information about research funding available within TCD, (for example the Ussher Awards and Postgraduate Awards) can be found at: https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/students/prospective/awards/

Travel Grants - the Executive Committee of the Trinity Trust makes funds available to the Graduate Studies Committee for allocation to graduate research students for attendance at conferences related to their research or for students who wish to carry out research abroad to supplement research already undertaken at TCD. Information and an application form are found at: https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/students/funding/travel-grants/

If a member of staff receives research funding from an outside source, scholarships may be available within the Confederal School. News about any such awards is carried on the Schools’ websites.

Further information on postgraduate prizes awarded by the School of Religions and Theology can be found on the School’s Graduate Students’ web page (www.tcd.ie/Religions_Theology/postgraduate/).

The Irish Research Council awards Ph.D. scholarships annually. See http://www.research.ie/
2. Programme Overview

2.1: M.Litt. (Masters by Research)

Master in Letters (M.Litt.)

The minimum period of research before which an M.Litt. thesis can be submitted is one year from the date of registration, and the maximum period two years. In the case of part-time registration the minimum period of research before a thesis can be submitted is two years from the date of registration and the maximum period three years.

A thesis submitted for an M.Litt. degree must show evidence of rigor and discrimination, appreciation of the relationship of the subject to a wider field of knowledge, and make some contribution to knowledge/scholarship (but it is not necessary that it be worthy of publication); it must be clear, concise, well written and orderly and must be a candidate’s own work.

The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in consultation with the Supervisor nominates an external examiner and an internal examiner to the Dean of Graduate Studies (a standard nomination form is issued by the Graduate Studies Office). A viva is not held as a matter of course for an M.Litt., unless at the request of the examiners or the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate).

2.2: PhD

According to the TCD College Calendar, a person who gains a Ph.D. will demonstrate:

- a systematic comprehension of a field of study and mastery of the skills and research methods associated with that field;
- that they have the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of scholarly research with integrity rigour and discrimination, which may involve the development of new skills, techniques, tools or methods;
- that they are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- that they have made a significant contribution through original research which extends the frontiers of knowledge by producing a body of work some of which deserves publication in national and international refereed journals;
• that they can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and society in general about their areas of expertise in a sustained and exact manner;
• that they can be expected to be able to promote, with due regard to ethical considerations, within academic contexts, scientific, technological, social or cultural advancement.

A Ph.D. within the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology will correspond to these criteria. As we are a School within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the hallmarks of a Ph.D. are likely to be the mastery of a field, critical analysis of ideas and concepts, effective engagement with empirical and/or philosophical, theological or hermeneutical research methods, rigorous argument and, crucially, originality.
3. Ph.D. Programme Details

3.1. Admission

Details of admission criteria can be found in the TCD College Calendar and at https://www.tcd.ie/study/.

Candidates are normally required to possess a good honours degree (2.1 or 1st) or equivalent. Candidates with appropriate qualifications are normally admitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies directly to year 1 of the Ph.D. register on the recommendation of the applicant’s potential supervisor and the School’s Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate. It is also possible for candidates to be admitted, on academic grounds, to the M.Litt. register in year 1 with a view to transferring to the Ph.D. register within 18 months (procedures for this transfer are outlined below, see 3.5). Candidates may also apply to do a research Masters (M.Litt.).

Graduate students can register in September or March of the academic year.

**Prior to submitting a formal application students are advised to discuss their research proposal with a relevant member of academic staff.** Such a person can be approached directly or the Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate will be happy to advise you on whom to contact.

An M.Litt. or PhD proposal should be approximately 1500 words long incorporating:

- A statement of the research question/hypothesis
- A description of the proposed research and its relationship to existing research in the field
- A note on research methodology
- A preliminary structured bibliography
- A work plan

The application, proposal and supporting documentation should be submitted electronically through www.my.tcd.ie

An academic committee within the departments takes decisions on the admissibility of applicants and the allocation of supervision. Most often successful candidates will be admitted straight on to the Ph.D. register, although in some cases an initial admission to the M.Litt. register will be suggested. Possible transfer to the Ph.D. register will be decided after 18 months at a transfer viva voce examination (see 3.5 below). After the decision to admit an applicant is taken, students will be informed via their my.tcd portal. Successful applicants then inform the Dean of Graduate Studies as to whether or not they intend to accept the offer.

It should be noted that the Dean of Graduate Studies has the final decision on Ph.D. and M.Litt. admission.
3.2 Attendance and Residency

Normally, all graduate students should enter into residence in or near Dublin. In exceptional circumstances the Dean of Graduate Studies, after consultation with the graduate student’s Supervisor and/or appropriate Course Co-ordinators/Directors, may permit a graduate student to undertake a significant portion of the work for their degree or postgraduate diploma outside Dublin.

Remote supervision is an arrangement which is granted in extraordinary circumstances on the particular academic merit of the proposed research project requiring the students to be in residence outside of Dublin for more than 50% of their time on register. There must be an academic requirement, as opposed to a preference, to undertake the research abroad.

TCD’s policy on remote supervision of research students can be found at http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/assets/pdf/Remote_Supervision_Policy_14-07-2016.pdf

3.3 Induction and Orientation

All students must register annually at TCD (in September or March corresponding to the month of first registration). Full information on registration procedures will be sent by TCD.

In September and March each of the three departments host orientation sessions to welcome all incoming graduate students. This provides students with an opportunity to meet with staff and other research students. Further details will be provided by each department.

Trinity College holds an Orientation to the University for all incoming postgraduate students on the Friday afternoon before the first term and at the beginning of March on the TCD campus.

The Graduate Students Union organises a Postgraduate Orientation Week in mid-September, see https://www.tcdgsu.ie/orientationtimetable/

Induction sessions are offered in the library on the main TCD campus. See the library website for details.
3.4 Supervision

College regulations concerning the role of supervisors and the provision of supervision can be found in the College Calendar at http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/1415-2/part-3/2-regulations-for-higher-degrees-by-research-only/research-supervision/.

Students are assigned a principal supervisor from within the staff of Loyola, ISE or Religions and Theology, respectively. In some cases co-supervision will be arranged involving a second member of the School’s staff. It is possible for a co-supervisor to be appointed from another School within TCD, although the member of staff in Loyola, Religions and Theology or ISE will be the principal supervisor.

Students are expected to arrange to meet with their supervisors regularly to discuss research plans, conduct needs analyses, gain feedback on work in progress and devise a timetable for completion. At the end of each supervision session the supervisor writes a short report on the meeting which is agreed and co-signed by the student. Copies for the records are kept by the supervisor, student and executive officer.

Information about ‘Good Research Practice’ and ‘Best Practice Guidelines on Research Supervision’ can be found on the Graduate Studies Office website at https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/students/current/graduate-supervision/

Once a year the student and supervisor should submit a progress report to the Graduate Studies Office. The template for this report is found at https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/students/current/administration/progress-reports/

Some texts which may be of use to you in planning and executing your research include:


3.5 Research Seminars

Each constituent part of the School holds research seminars which are intended to help research students develop their work through peer review, academic discussion and research skills development. In academic year 2017-18 at least one joint PhD research workshop day will be held for research students in all three constituent departments.

Students may also find to be of interest the seminars offered within TCD by the Centre for Biblical Studies, the Post-Conflict Justice Centre, the Trinity International Development Initiative, the Trinity Immigration Initiative and the Long Room Hub (details on respective websites and the weekly TCD Newsheet).

Graduate Students conducting research in the School of Religions and Theology are encouraged to gain some experience of teaching by giving occasional lectures to the Department’s undergraduate students. The opportunity to give occasional lectures or facilitate seminars with M.Phil. students may also arise in ISE and the Loyola Institute.

3.6 Structured PhD and Credit Bearing Modules

TCD PhD students are required to take Modules bearing at least 10ECTS over the course of their studies. Modules appropriate to a student’s field of study, research skills or career development should be identified by the student in consultation with their supervisor. These might be modules taken for assessment which are offered at MPhil level within the confederal School or modules offered elsewhere in the University. Some of these are listed below:

TCD-UCD Innovation Academy

The Innovation Academy offers a unique Graduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship to research students registered in TCD. This modular certificate aims to foster a new genre of PhD graduate, expert in their discipline, but with the additional skills, networks and confidence to rapidly convert their specialist knowledge and novel ideas into value for commercial and/or societal benefit. The Innovation Academy considers innovation in its broadest sense to include the development of a new product, service or policy, social entrepreneurship and cultural innovation.

The course is delivered by experiential learning in a small group environment and provides students with the opportunity to develop their creativity, communication skills, team work, digital media skills and business awareness - all in the context of their own disciplinary area. The Innovation Academy connects our PhD students to a network of other research students, external organizations from the private and public sectors, and entrepreneurs. In partnership with UCD and QUB, the Innovation
Academy offers additional opportunities for our PhD students, including participation in international entrepreneurship summer schools, innovation & entrepreneurship conferences and relevant national and international workshops and events.

The course is **free** to registered research students and has been designed to cater for students from across all disciplines. The modules in innovation & entrepreneurship fulfil the generic skills requirements of a structured PhD and should be considered for inclusion in research grant applications when evidence of training in this area will enhance the quality of your grant application.

Please visit the website [www.innovationacademy.ie](http://www.innovationacademy.ie) and for detailed information on specific modules visit: [http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/InnovationAcademy/index.php](http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/InnovationAcademy/index.php)

**Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL)**

CAPSL offers several workshops and resources to support PG Teaching Assistants, including the Module on (5 ECTS) which exposes postgraduates to the educational discourses on teaching and learning at university level. See [https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/professional-development/graduate-teaching/](https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/professional-development/graduate-teaching/)
4. Probation, Progress and Continuation on the Ph.D. register

As outlined in the College Calendar, continuing registration is dependent upon satisfactory progress. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate is responsible for ensuring through annual consultation with supervisors that students are progressing satisfactorily according to the required standard and norms of their particular degree.

Not later than 18 months after first registration, students on the Ph.D. register are required to undertake an internal viva within the School to confirm their position on the Ph.D. register. Students wishing to transfer from the M.Litt. to the Ph.D. register must also undertake a transfer viva.

The DTLPG has the role of appointing at least one reader and a chair for this viva. The student’s supervisor(s) may attend as an observer. The student prepares a written submission for the viva incorporating at least one chapter from the thesis and an overview of the thesis as a whole (including the proposed chapter structure). At the exam the student presents her or his work to the panel and is questioned on it. If the candidate’s work is judged to meet the criteria for a Ph.D. described above (point 2) the DTLPG submits a form to GSO requesting the student’s confirmation on the register. If unsuccessful, a student is (1) given the opportunity to resubmit work to the panel (2) advised to submit a thesis for an M.Litt. or (3) advised not to continue postgraduate study. Students wishing to appeal the outcome of the viva may do so using the Appeals process outlined below (3.9).

4.1 Requests for Extensions

The College Calendar outlines the extenuating circumstances in which a student’s supervisor can apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for an extension on a student’s behalf - http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/2016-17/complete-part-iii.pdf

Doctoral students should aim to complete their studies within 4 years and M.Litt. students within 2 years. Six months prior to the end of the final year the student should liaise with their supervisor about a timetable for completion. The School’s DTLP should be kept informed as to the intended timetable for completion.
4.2 Procedure for examination

Procedures governing the submission and examination of theses are found in the College Calendar at http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/2016-17/complete-part-lll.pdf

The thesis produced by a Ph.D. candidate is wholly their own work, which they are prepared to defend in all integrity. Therefore submission of a thesis is done entirely at the discretion of the student.

Students lodge two soft-bound copies of their thesis with the Graduate Studies Office by the required date.

The GSO sends a form for the nomination of external and internal examiners to the DTLPG. It is possible for this form to be completed in advance of submission or on submission. The DTLPG liaises with the student’s supervisor to nominate the examiners. The nominations are then sent to the Dean for approval. The viva is normally held within 8 weeks of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. The Chair for the viva is the DTLPG or her/his nominee. Supervisor(s) may attend as observers.

During the viva students have the opportunity to present their work to the examiners before taking questions. The examiners will then come to a decision.

The possible outcomes of a Ph.D. viva are recommendations for:

- award of the degree of Ph.D.
- award of the degree subject to minor revisions
- award of the degree subject to major revisions
- award of a lower degree
- fail

An M.Litt is also examined by an external and internal examiner. A viva is not held as a matter of course, unless at the request of the examiners or the DTLPG.
5.0 Appeals

Postgraduate Appeals Processes

The entire Postgraduate Appeals Process is outlined in the TCD College Calendar Part 3 at [http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/2016-17/complete-part-III.pdf](http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/2016-17/complete-part-III.pdf).

According to the regulations as outlined in the College Calendar, all appeals (except for appeals against the outcome of a PhD examination), should be heard first at School level. The following information concerns that first level of appeal.

**Postgraduate Appeals at School level: Research Students**

Where a transfer/confirmation viva has been held and has determined that a student may not transfer to, or be confirmed on, the PhD register, the student may appeal to the School Appeals Committee (Research Students). The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence.

The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate will convene and chair this committee composed of one Head of Discipline (not the student’s Discipline) and one other academic staff member. At the Appeal’s Committee the student concerned should have representation appropriate to the formality of the process, for example, a supervisor, course co-ordinator or other appropriate staff member.

No one is appointed to an Appeals Committee where a conflict of interest might arise. Should the DTLPG experience a conflict of interest, she or he will be substituted by the Head of School.

Appeals against the decision of a School Appeals Committee (Research Students) may be made in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. Appeals against the decision of the Dean of Graduate Studies may be brought to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances.

**Appeals against the decision of the examiners of a research thesis**

Where a viva voce of a thesis has been held and the thesis referred back for extensive revision, or the award of a lower degree, or outright failure is recommended, the Dean of Graduate Studies informs the candidate of the verdict.

If the candidate wishes to appeal the examiners’ decision, she or he must apply in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence. If the Dean of Graduate Studies denies the
appeal, the student may appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances.

6.0 Plagiarism

All students should familiarise themselves with TCD’s regulations and procedures concerning plagiarism.

In order to support students in understanding what plagiarism is and how they can avoid it, TCD has created an **online central repository** to consolidate all information and resources on plagiarism. The central repository is being hosted by the Library and is located at [http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism](http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism).

It includes the following:

(i) The 2015-16 Calendar entry on plagiarism for undergraduate and postgraduate students;

(ii) The matrix explaining the different levels of plagiarism outlined in the Calendar entry and the sanctions applied;

(iii) Information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it;

(iv) ‘Ready, Steady, Write’, an online tutorial on plagiarism which must be completed by all students;


(v) The text of a declaration which must be inserted into all cover sheets accompanying all assessed course work;

(vi) Details of software packages that can detect plagiarism, e.g. Turnitin.

All students will be required to complete the online tutorial ‘Ready, Steady, Write’. 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](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](http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/ready-steady-write)