



Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy

1. Context

Trinity College Dublin, herein after referred to as Trinity, is a research-led institution which aligns its provision of research supervision with international best practice, underpinned by robust quality assurance processes. Supervision of research is a defining feature of postgraduate education at Trinity.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out a framework for effective research supervision and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Supervisors and research students.

3. Benefits

The practices embedded in this policy promote integrity, accountability, and transparency in the University's provision of research supervision and reinforce the core values upon which research at Trinity is conducted.

4. Scope

4.1 This policy applies to the supervision of postgraduate research students.

4.2 It does not apply to essays or other written work submitted for assessment within the taught module component of a PGT course or to the supervision of undergraduate capstone projects. Elements of this policy may require adaptation where research supervision is associated with a joint research award between Trinity and a partner institution.



- 4.3 Off-site supervision of research students operates in accordance with Trinity's [Off Site Supervision of Research Students Policy](#).

5. Principles

- 5.1 Trinity is committed to providing effective research supervision for all its Postgraduate students in order that they can attain the skills expected of Masters and Doctoral students.
- 5.2 Research supervision reflects the University's founding values: freedom and independence of thought, respect for individual talents and commitment to critical scholarship and innovative research.
- 5.3 Effective supervision is integral to research at the highest levels of learning, innovation and enquiry, and should manifest distinctive and specialist pedagogical values and practices.
- 5.4 Positive collaborative interaction between students and Supervisors is based on mutual respect, accessibility, open communication, and ethical work which will benefit the research project and enhance the student experience.
- 5.5 There is no such thing as a single 'supervision model' which is applicable to all student/Supervisor relationships. Finding a model that works for both the student and Supervisor(s) is crucial in supporting a successful and enriching research experience.
- 5.6 Trinity's supervision policies, procedures and guidelines seek to ensure that there are procedural safeguards in place to enable the supervision relationship to operate effectively, regardless of the model adopted.
- 5.7 To this end, Trinity has clear, transparent and supportive systems and processes in place to minimise and resolve issues that may arise over the course of the research project.



- 5.8 Student data associated with the project (i.e., personal information, research reports, copies of theses) is subject to data protection legislation, specifically the Data Protection Act 2018 and the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (EU-GDPR), notwithstanding the physical location of the Supervisor/assessor.
- 5.9 Research being supervised should conform with Trinity's [Academic Integrity](#) and [research policies](#) and, where technology is being used, [College's Statement on the use of AI](#).

6. Policy

- 6.1 Research students are supervised by suitably qualified members of academic staff in line with the rules and criteria for appointment of a Supervisor set out in the Calendar Part 3, Section II, Research Supervision. It is normally not permitted for someone to be appointed as a Principal Supervisor of any research student unless they themselves are research active and have been awarded a research degree at least equivalent to that being pursued by the research student under their supervision.
- 6.2 In applying these rules (and in appointing a Supervisor) the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), Head of School or nominated delegate (as appropriate) must be satisfied that the proposed Supervisor or Supervisors will provide appropriate and effective supervision to the student having regard to the degree for which the research project is being undertaken.
- 6.3 Depending on the nature of the project and their individual needs, a student may work with one Principal Supervisor or with a team of more than one Supervisor. Joint supervision with the involvement of Co-Supervisors and/or External Co-Supervisors in the research process is strongly encouraged and is a necessity for interdisciplinary projects. In all cases of joint supervision one individual shall be the Principal



Supervisor and that person should be appointed in the School in which the student is registered.

- 6.4 The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), Head of School or nominated delegate (as appropriate) must ensure the appointment of an Acting Principal Supervisor to supervise the student if the Principal Supervisor is unavailable to supervise for a period of three months or more. An Acting Principal Supervisor assumes the role and fulfils the responsibilities of a Principal Supervisor.
- 6.5 A [Thesis Committee](#) is appointed for all PhD students to monitor and advise in relation to the progress of the student throughout the lifespan of the structured PhD. They play a pivotal role in the formal annual review of progress and the Confirmation Process. The Thesis Committee should be formed no later than six months from the first registration of a PhD student. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) has authority to approve membership of the Thesis Committee and any necessary changes ensuring that there is at least one independent academic member from within the School represented at all times. Supervisors and Co-Supervisors cannot be formal members of a Thesis Committee.
- 6.6 The role of the research Supervisor is to provide effective supervision to the student in their field of study, commensurate with the nature of the degree for which the research is being undertaken and the particular circumstances of the individual supervision relationship. These responsibilities apply, regardless of the funding model supporting the research. The Supervisor encourages, challenges and supports the student in their research and in the development of the skills and attributes required of a research student. Along with the roles and responsibilities of a Supervisor outlined in the [Supervision of Research Students Best Practice Guide](#), Supervisors must ensure that students are aware of Calendar regulations as they pertain to the academic progress and should annually contribute to and sign the [Annual Review Report](#) for each student under their supervision.



- 6.7 Research Supervisors (especially in the early years of their careers as Supervisors) are encouraged to engage in formal or informal professional development to develop and support their practice of supervision.
- 6.8 Effective supervision requires regular contact. It is expected that Supervisor(s) (including Principal and Co-Supervisors) will meet with research students on a regular basis and normally no less than once per month.
- 6.9 A successful supervision process is a shared duty between the Supervisor and the student, even though the hierarchical dependency of the supervisee puts a higher level of responsibility on the Supervisor. For a successful student-Supervisor relationship, the student must play an active role in the relationship. The role of the student includes regular and timely engagement with their Supervisor(s) regarding issues relating to their research, completion of any relevant taught modules and familiarisation with relevant College policies. The [Supervisor-Research Student Agreement](#) has been developed to serve as a foundation for a positive and productive relationship between the Supervisor and their student.
- 6.10 All postgraduate research students are required to complete the module 'Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era (CA 7000)' prior to undertaking their confirmation process. The Supervisor should facilitate the student in undertaking this module and be aware of their responsibility to know whether the student has completed the module before proceeding to the confirmation process.
- 6.11 Effective feedback is supplied by the Supervisor(s). While the definition of 'effective feedback' will vary from student to student and from project to project, feedback should be provided in a timely and accessible manner. The timing and accessibility of feedback should be agreed between both parties at the outset using the [Supervisor-Research Student Agreement](#) and should be in line with disciplinary norms.
- 6.12 Beyond the supervision of the thesis *simpliciter* a Supervisor may assist their research student in several ways including (a) in completing funding and/or grant applications (b) in obtaining ethical approval for their research (where appropriate)



(c) facilitating engagement with the taught modules of the Structured PhD to develop their [professional development](#) planning skills and (d) in the submission of the thesis. Finally, where examiners of a Research Masters or PhD thesis refer the thesis back for revisions and re-examination, the Supervisor will engage with the student in completing the revisions required by the examiners.

7. Policy Owner

The Dean of Graduate Studies is the owner of this policy.

8. Responsibility and Implementation

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

9. Related Documents

- 9.1 [The University of Dublin Calendar, Part III](#)
- 9.2 [Dignity and Respect Policy](#)
- 9.3 [Good Research Practice Policy](#)
- 9.4 [Research Ethics Policy](#)
- 9.5 [Off-site Supervision of Research Students Policy](#)
- 9.6 [Supervision of Research Students: Best Practice Guidelines](#)
- 9.7 [Postgraduate Research Handbook \(2025\)](#)
- 9.8 [Supervisor-Research Student Agreement](#)
- 9.9 [Irish Universities Doctoral Skills Statement](#)
- 9.10 Existing School Supervision Guidelines



- 9.11 [Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees](#)
- 9.12 [Thesis Committee Guidelines](#)
- 9.13 [Generative AI Statement](#)
- 9.14 [Professional Development Plan for Research Students](#)

10. Document Control

- 10.1 Date of initial approval: May 2017
 - 10.2 Revised policy approved by Council in October 2019
 - 10.3 Version 2.1 approved by Council in October 2021
 - 10.4 Version 3.0 approved by Council: 8 April 2026
 - 11.0 Date of next review: Academic Year 2029/30
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