GOOD PRACTICE

IN THE ORGANISATION OF PhD PROGRAMMES
IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION

2ND EDITION

A series of booklets produced by
the Irish Universities Quality Board

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IUQB

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QUALITY BOARD

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Irish Universities Quality Board

The mission of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) is to support and promote a culture of quality in Irish higher education and independently evaluate the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish Universities. Since its foundation in 2002, it has established itself as an important voice both nationally and internationally in the area of quality assurance. IUQB has been delegated with the statutory responsibility for organising the periodic review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems in place in the seven Irish Universities, as required by the Universities Act (1997). IUQB is funded by subscriptions from the seven Irish Universities and an annual grant from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) through the National Development Plan (2007-2013).

National Guidelines of Good Practice

This booklet is one of a series produced by IUQB, the aim of which is to establish and publish good practice in the key areas of Teaching and Learning, Research, Strategic Planning/Management and Administration. This is in keeping with the IUQB aim to increase the level of inter-university and inter-institutional co-operation in developing quality assurance processes. Each booklet is the result of an inter-university/institutional project on a topic selected, organised and driven by the Board with the close collaboration of the universities and of other providers of higher education in Ireland. Projects are funded by the Higher Education Authority and the Universities. The selection of the projects is based on recommendations for improvement contained in the reviews of departments and faculties required by the Universities Act 1997, arising from recommendations from institutional reviews of the Universities, and from a need to update prior publications in the series to ensure they reflect the current environment.

Other Booklets in the Series:

No 1: Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities (2005)

No 2: Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services in Irish Universities (2006)

No 3: Good Practice for Institutional Research in Irish Higher Education (2008)

No 4: Good Practice in Strategic Planning for Academic Units in Irish Universities (2008)

Reprinted 2006

Acknowledgements

Contents

Abbreviations and definitions

Abbreviations

AHEAD	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
CDE	Council for Doctoral Education
DoES	Department of Education and Science
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
EUA	European Universities Association
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GREP	Graduate Research Education Programme
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institution(s)
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IoT(s)	Institute(s) of Technology
IP	Intellectual Property
IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
IRCSET	Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
NDP	National Development Plan
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NUI	National University of Ireland
PPS	Personal Public Service (number)
QA	Quality Assurance
RGAM	Recurrent Grant Allocation Model
SMS	Short Message Service

Definitions

Graduate School: An organisational entity which supports graduate students within an HEI, or within a college/faculty of an HEI.

Graduate Programme: A programme of study undertaken by graduate students which may involve inter-institutional collaboration.

Structured PhD Programme: A graduate programme of study undertaken by PhD students that maintains a research-based education, but one that is augmented by activities that support the acquisition of a range of relevant specialist and generic skills.

Introduction

"Ireland by 2013 will be internationally renowned for the excellence of its research, and will be to the forefront in generating and using knowledge for economic and social progress, within an innovation-driven culture." Vision statement.

"In striving to achieve world class research there are two overarching, interlinking goals. These are to build a sustainable system of world class research teams across all disciplines and to double our output of PhDs. [ ] Achievement of these goals will facilitate flows of researchers into and out of the country and from academia to enterprise." Page 8.

"There is also an emerging need for a more structured approach to postgraduate formation to ensure effective development of our researchers, shorter PhD duration and increased completion rates." Page 9.

Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006 – 2013[1].

Irish higher education underpinned the substantive aspects of the dramatic economic development that characterised the last 20 years. Now it must also contribute to sustaining society in these times of greater economic, energy and climatic challenges.

While a variety of rigorously-educated people are essential to facing the future with confidence, graduates trained in advanced research methods and by means of participation in advanced analysis, discovery and creative activities will have crucial roles to play in all sectors of society and of the economy. The invigorated infrastructure in support of research and scholarship created in recent years with substantial Government investment provides an invaluable environment to support the development and expansion of research-based education. However, the task facing Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) is all the greater because they must exhibit standards and performances equivalent to those found in the leading mature economies, but at levels of general investment and funding that are much lower.

As made explicit in the Government's Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation quoted above, expansion of the education of PhD graduates has a central role to play. Improved Government funding has already resulted in marked increases in the numbers of research students[2]. The greater numbers of students already in the system and plans for further expansion underline the importance of the continued development of related policies, regulations and guidelines, and the improvement of supports of all kinds, for research students and their supervisors.

These revised Guidelines were written with inputs from an intensive consultative process with 30 focus groups on 10 campuses, from repeated opportunities for feedback from a strong Expert Panel, and from other stakeholders (see Appendix 1). While they are situated in the Irish context, the Guidelines reflect evolving ideas here, in North America and in our partner countries in the European Higher

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1   Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2006), *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006-2013*.
    http://www.entemp.ie/science/technology/sciencestrategy.htm

2   In 2001/02, about 5000 students were enrolled for research degrees in the seven Irish universities (as reported in the 'Interim report on Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD programmes in Irish Universities' (2004) available at www.iuqb.ie). Preliminary figures released by the HEA for 2008/09 indicate an increase of over 50%, and, when the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and other HEIs are included, the total is 8600. From 2003 to 2006, the number of PhD graduations per annum in the universities increased nearly 40%, being 1050 for all HEIs (www.hea.ie/en/statistics).

Education Area and the European Research Area, particularly as enunciated in the Salzburg Principles (2005)[3]. This second edition also builds on the foundations of a first edition (2005)[4] that was widely praised and very influential, and on other documents such as the Irish Universities Association (IUA) 'PhD Graduates' Skills Statement' (2008)[5]. At all times, the underlying rationale was that good policies and procedures help to ameliorate lower levels of resources.

Purpose

The purpose of these Guidelines is to facilitate the continued revision and greater standardisation of policies, regulations, procedures and documentation governing the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish HEIs. The intention is that each HEI will see this document as containing statements of good practice that they should take into consideration as they continue to develop their own relevant systems.

The target readers are all of those interested in (and particularly those working to improve or facilitate) PhD-level education in Ireland, whether in the Universities, the Institutes of Technology or other relevant Colleges, including in particular:

1. Persons charged with the development of local institutional policies, regulations and guidelines related to doctoral level education.

2. Persons charged with the development of more discipline- or area-specific policies, regulations and guidelines related to doctoral level education.

3. Individual students, supervisors and others.

Finally, while certain basic characteristics of PhD programmes (particularly structured programmes) are determined institutionally and at the levels of faculties and disciplines, in a fundamental sense each student follows his/her own unique programme. This should always be the case in principle and in practice as PhD education is developed. Even more importantly, the objective of undertaking a PhD programme, which may be stated as "to carry out a scholarly activity involving original thought, novelty, and in-depth critical analysis", should be emphasised regularly, so that it is clearly understood by all concerned. These guidelines are intended to support these core principles.

3   European Universities Association (2005), Bologna Seminar on *Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society: Conclusions and Recommendations;* Salzburg. www.eua.be
4   Irish Universities Quality Board (2005), *Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities*. www.iuqb.ie
5   Irish Universities Association (2008), *Irish Universities' PhD Graduates' Skills*. www.iua.ie

Using these Guidelines

The Sections

Each guideline section starts with an introduction that discusses some of the main relevant issues. Where the guideline sections are longer than in the first edition, this is because of the increased sophistication, importance and scale of PhD education, and that related important issues were raised during the consultative phases of this project. To preserve readability and clarity, extra sub-sections were introduced, with sections and guideline statements numbered to facilitate cross-referencing.

Each guideline item is in the form of a non-prescriptive statement that represents a 'good practice'. In most cases, there are many ways in which a particular 'good practice' may be achieved and it is recognised that diversity in this respect may exist. However, every HEI should ensure that any policy, regulation or procedure that is ineffective in achieving or maintaining a 'good practice' is changed or replaced as soon as is practicable.

The interests of research students are served best when relevant general regulations and procedures (including those relating to 'Institutional organisation', 'Recruitment, admission and general arrangements', 'Induction and communication' and 'Supervision and supervisor(s)') have been established and implemented well in advance of students being recruited. Accordingly, these issues are considered before those relating directly to 'The Student' which are dealt with in Section 5.

The Guidelines and their Contexts

Policies, regulations and guidelines should arise from well-considered aims and objectives and should be informed by reflection on practice and experience. With respect to the education of research students to the doctoral level, such aims and objectives may be directly or indirectly related to, or should take into account, matters such as:

- The development and maintenance of the highest international standards of scholarship, research and creativity

- The broad educational development and well-being of the students

- Equality and fairness, with provisions for persons with special needs

- The fostering of a culture of inquisitiveness, curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, innovation, scholarship and research, and entrepreneurship in the students' environment

- Compatibility with the distinctive aspects of the missions of the relevant departments, schools, faculties, centres, institutes and universities

- The Bologna process in general and, in particular, the Salzburg Principles (2005)[6], and the Bergen (2005)[7] and London (2007)[8] Communiqués

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6   See footnote 3.
7   Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education (2005), *The European Higher Education Area- Achieving the Goals.* www.bologna.ie
8   London Communiqué (2007), *Towards the European Higher Education Area; responding to challenges in a globalised world* (2007). www.bologna.ie

- Policy statements and other material including:
  - » Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005)[9]
  - » Royal Irish Academy report 'Advancing Humanities and Social Sciences Research in Ireland' (2006)[10]
  - » European Universities Association (EUA) report 'Doctoral Programmes in Europe's Universities: Achievements and Challenges' (2007)[11]
  - » Irish Government Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (2006)[12] and the first report on the Strategy (2008)[13]
  - » 'Irish Universities' PhD Graduates' Skills' statement (2008)[14]
  - » National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)[15]

9 European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (2005), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. www.enqa.eu
10 Royal Irish Academy (2006), *Advancing Humanities and Social Sciences Research in Ireland*.
11 European Universities Association (2007), *Doctoral Programmes in Europe's Universities: Achievements and Challenges*. www.eua.be
12 See footnote 1.
13 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2008), *First report on the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006-2013*. http://www.entemp.ie/science/technology/
14 See footnote 5.
15 www.nqai.ie/framework.html

The Guidelines

1 Institutional organisation

Introduction

Since publication of the first edition of these Guidelines in 2005[16] (see also HETAC's policy documentation in this area in 2003[17], 2004[18] and 2005[19]) the Universities, Institutes of Technology and other providers of higher education (HE) in Ireland have made significant progress in the development of administrative structures, policies, guidelines and processes to oversee and support graduate studies. Variations in these developments are evident that reflect the different needs and/or sizes of the institutions. All the larger HEIs now have dedicated senior officers (commonly titled 'Deans') and ancillary staff to provide oversight, coordination and planning of graduate research. Many of the Institutes of Technology have heads of research with duties that include similar functions. Nationally, the University Deans of Graduate Studies meet regularly to discuss developments and proposals for new policies, while the relevant IoT officers also collaborate. Nevertheless, structures, procedures and practices are still in transition.

Graduate Schools and Programmes

Graduate Schools are organisational entities supporting all graduate students within an HEI, or within a college/faculty of an HEI. Graduate Schools represent a governance structure and operate under a Board with devolved authority from an academic council or equivalent body. School Boards or Committees approve student admission, progression and reviews, and approve and monitor the design, delivery, assessment and quality of the educational programmes within their remits.

Structured PhD programmes are specified programmes of education and training that are research-based like traditional PhD programmes, but include activities that support the acquisition of a range of relevant specialist and generic skills. Structured programmes may be provided solely within a single institution or may span a number of institutions, and their development has been stimulated by funding agencies.

Data

The 2008 IUQB publication 'Good Practice Guidelines for Institutional Research in Irish Higher Education'[20], described why 'data and information' is a valuable resource for HEIs. Accurate and complete data are essential to provide objective measures of performance. Clear definitions that accord with national agreements and sufficient categories with respect to student data are necessary to ensure fully informative records. (See Section 12 'Data records and reporting on PhD Programmes' for a comprehensive list of data requirements.)

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16 See footnote 4.
17 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2003), *Validation process, policy and criteria for the accreditation of providers to maintain a register for a specified research degree in a specified discipline area.* www.hetac.ie
18 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2004), *Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to Make Awards.* www.hetac.ie
19 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2005), *Taught and Research Programme Accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes.* www.hetac.ie
20 Irish Universities Quality Board (2008), *Good Practice in the Organisation of Institutional Research in Irish Higher Education.* www.iuqb.ie

Quality Mechanisms

There are two basic aspects to the quality of the organisation of PhD programmes. The first is related to the quality of the programmes themselves and may be assessed largely with respect to the effectiveness of the education of the students and research output. The second relates to organisational efficiency and effectiveness, which can minimise wasted time etc. by students, supervisors and administrators.

National Issues

During the consultation phase of the project to prepare the second edition of these guidelines, important issues arose that are outside the power of any individual institution to resolve. Some of these issues are related to the policies of the national research funding bodies and others are to do with immigration regulations and procedures.

GUIDELINES

1.1 Bodies and Officers, Regulations and Procedures

1. HEIs with significant commitments to the education of PhD graduates are committed to high quality research programmes and to the provision of the necessary resources to support PhD students.

2. The HEIs' strategic objectives include an explicit commitment to the high quality education of research students (including associated high quality research outputs), and to the provision of the necessary supports and resources to achieve this.

3. There is a senior officer (for example, the Dean of Graduate Studies) with overall responsibility for PhD programmes, and with sufficient reserved time and resources allocated for this role. Where responsibilities are shared between a central officer and officers in individual sections or graduate schools, coherence and effectiveness are assured.

4. Where justified by numbers of students, responsible officers are also appointed at the levels of colleges/faculties and schools/departments.

5. Each body and officer with roles directly related to PhD programmes or students has a formal job description that covers these roles, and all relevant procedures are supported by up-to-date regulations and documentation.

6. All research students (and supervisors) can easily obtain informed advice and help at the appropriate level with respect to all relevant procedures and common issues.

1.2 The Dean and Office for Graduate Studies

1. In HEIs with larger numbers of PhD students, the senior officer with overall responsibility for PhD programmes (e.g. the Dean) is normally full-time and supported by a sufficient complement of staff. Where numbers are lower, there is an equivalent part-time officer and appropriate support.

2. The Dean oversees all relevant institutional and local policies, regulations and quality assessment procedures and, through monitoring the overall effectiveness of research degree programmes, acts to ensure that they are coherent, consistent and up-do-date. (See also under Sub-section 1.7 below.)

3. All policies, regulations, guidelines, appointment criteria and lists of responsibilities relevant to matters dealt with in these Guidelines are published by the HEI and are readily accessible via the website of the 'Graduate Studies' Office' or an equivalent unit's website.

4. The Dean and other relevant officers work under terms of reference that facilitate and oblige effective co-operation in support of all research students, candidate students and supervisors.

5. When necessary, the Dean acts on behalf of research students and supervisors to ensure that institutional, college/faculty and service-related procedures are adjusted to serve better their common needs.

1.3 Graduate Schools

1. Each HEI has regulations that define the purpose and functions of the Graduate School(s) and its (their) relationship with the relevant internal academic (schools/departments, colleges/faculties) and administrative (Graduate Studies Office, Research Office) units, and with the institution as a whole.

2. Unless otherwise allowed for in the statutes and regulations of an institution, every research student is registered with an academic school/department and his/her association with a graduate school takes that into account.

1.4 Structured Programmes

1. A structured PhD programme provides for the identification and provision of a suitable set of required and optional courses and other appropriate educational and training activities for a specified group of students.

2. Where structured programmes span a number of institutions, there are appropriate arrangements to facilitate students mobility and the recognition, credit assignment and the assessment of modules. Systems exist to facilitate the updating of the students' records with information from the different contributing institutions (See also guideline 1.6.1).

1.5 Student Representation

1. Research students are represented on important policy making and administrative committees, and on other committees with direct relevance to graduate research programmes.

2. Where the Dean is advised and supported by a 'graduate studies' board or committee, this includes research student representatives as full members.

1.6 Data

1. Data related to research students and related degree programmes are systematically collected and analysed in support of the effective organisation of the programme.

2. All decisions on policies, regulations and procedures are informed by requirements for the systematic collection of relevant data.

3. Candidates for research degrees, students (including early leavers and transfers), graduates and supervisors are surveyed to obtain information that complements organisational data.

4. Institutional performance is benchmarked against national and international performance (See also guideline 1.7.1).

1.7 Quality Mechanisms

1. Data that measures outputs and outcomes are used to assess the quality of PhD education and supervision. These are defined in accordance with national and international practice and include:
    *   Research output
    *   Student experience
    *   Completion rate and time to completion

2. The standard and quality of all PhD programmes are assured by agreed regular procedures, including:
    *   Periodic reviews (at least every five years)
    *   Periodic satisfaction surveys aimed at improving relevant issues that may be identified
    *   The compilation of completion times and rates, employment and career statistics and other general data that can be broken down to show performance by any relevant academic unit, from the institution as a whole down to generic discipline areas, individual research groups and supervisors

3. In conjunction with heads of college/faculty and heads of school/department, the Dean or affiliate officer monitors the effectiveness of supervisors by logging issues that arise, completion times and rates, and research outputs.

1.8 Institutional Partnerships

1. Policies, regulations, processes and inter-institutional agreements exist to manage cross-institutional provision of research education and training, related quality assurance measures, and the award of any joint research degrees (See also guideline 1.4.2.).

1.9 National Issues

1. Every relevant HEI is committed to co-ordinated and concerted action at a national level to ensure that the policies of Government and of national bodies are coherent and support the education of all research students. Relevant issues include:

    •   Funding for research students

    •   National projects and surveys that inform PhD-level education

    •   Visas, and permissions to travel abroad for non EU research students

2 Recruitment, admission and general arrangements

Introduction

This section is intended to cover procedures and documentation that are operational when a research student is being recruited and before they are registered. These include general and specific information, data collection mechanisms, and core procedures relating to recruitment, admissions and registration.

Recruitment

The recruitment and admission of research students is different in many fundamental ways from undergraduate students. Research students must be dealt with individually, as each will have a particular supervisor (and supervisory panel or committee), a specific research project, individual intermediate progress evaluations and a personal examination process. All of these, particularly if they are to operate smoothly, require co-ordinated procedures involving a number of decision makers. Data capture must always differentiate individual students and record essential histories.

Efficient recruitment processes are important to supervisors and administrators as well as to students. Delays and problems can be avoided by accurate, clear and complete information, by guidelines for all interactions with potential students, and by fundamental requirements (available supervisor, funding, resources and space) being in place before offers are made.

Procedures and Documentation

Efficient administration needs to be supported by written procedures and simple forms that clarify, simplify and facilitate the multiple steps and stages of a student's progress from application to graduation, with every student being treated individually at all stages. Adequate regulations and cross-institutional agreements can avoid difficulties in the management of joint degrees.

The importance of the communication of information to and from students, supervisors and administrators cannot be over-stated (see also Section 3: Induction and Communication). The range of documentation, guidelines, codes of practice and procedures needed for PhD Programmes is now quite wide. Effective communication of such a range of information is facilitated when all elements are short, clear and simple, collectively complete and compatible, and readily available in 'soft' and 'hard' formats.

GUIDELINES

2.1 Recruitment

1. The Careers Office and the Graduate Studies Office of the HEI and all appropriate academic units act to ensure that information on what it means to undertake a research degree programme (whether internally or elsewhere), the challenges of research and the wide range of possible career paths, is communicated to all relevant undergraduate students.

2. To help applicant research students become fully informed, documentation that they can access readily includes:

   • All of the institution's relevant regulations and guidelines, including brief guidelines on recruitment

   • Requirements for registration on a research degree programme and processes for progression, including possible outcomes at each stage

   • Sample research graduates' biographies that include accounts of the commitment needed for success

   • FAQs with complete answers

   • Lists of 'questions' that could be put to potential supervisors in different discipline areas

   • Fees and other charges and whether they are covered by the financial support for the specific project

   • Information on the research and publication records of all relevant academic staff

3. The HEI and potential supervisors welcome candidates who wish to visit in advance of a decision, to explore the proposed project and facilities and to talk to appropriate established students. Students who cannot visit are facilitated in all possible ways to gain a similar understanding of what they may commit to.

4. The recruitment process and all relevant subsequent processes allow for applicants who are self-funded or who bring their own funding and research proposal.

5. There are procedures for unsuccessful applicants that can supply reasons for failure and allow for appeals.

2.2 Procedures

1. There is a written administrative operational procedure and minimum standards for information supplied for each major step in a research student's progress, from application to the offer of a

position (or refusal of a position), through to graduation. All procedures provide for good notice being given to students, supervisors etc. at all stages.

2. An easily identifiable office operates these procedures for all applicants and students for each major stage. Where there are ancillary procedures (such as for non-EU students or related to joint research degrees), these link to the standard procedures. A senior officer is explicitly responsible for the admission of research graduate students and for ensuring institutional standards and compatibility.

3. There are clear, concise and easily understood forms which facilitate the student, the supervisor and administrators at each major stage. Forms and appropriate procedures may be completed on-line where appropriate.

4. Since the admission or examination of a research student may be required at most times throughout the academic year, the appropriate procedures are flexible in this respect.

5. There are clear definitions that differentiate between full-time and part-time students and there is a specific timetable with respect to expected completion time etc. for each part-time student. Allowance is made for formally-recognised periods of absence such as prolonged illness, compassionate leave and other defined circumstances.

2.3 Documentation

1. An up-to-date general handbook for research students ensures transparency in relation to the expectations and the duties of all parties in the PhD programmes and covers all matters relevant to research students, supervisors, institution officers and the examination process. Also included [or readily available elsewhere] are information and advice on the realities of a life of research and scholarship and general advice on career prospects for research degree graduates.

2. An officer/group has responsibility for ensuring that:

    *   Regulations, calendars and procedures related to PhD programmes are up-to-date, effective and are applied consistently across the HEI

    *   The full range of relevant public documents and forms are collectively and individually clear, comprehensive and user-friendly

3. The needs of students, supervisors and staff with disabilities are taken into account at all stages as documentation and forms are designed and made available.

4. The existence of the IUQB *National Guidelines on Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education* is made clear in institutional documents, and copies are made available to students, supervisors and staff via the website of the HEI, and in printed form on request.

3 Induction and communication

Introduction

Effective initial induction and orientation programmes can have quite varied modes of delivery and timetables. Ideally, induction covers all relevant aspects of students' lives, is delivered as soon as possible after the arrival of the student and is provided through institution-wide activities, sessions for particular groups (e.g. international students), and college/faculty and/or school/department activities. (See also Section 5 'The Student'- Student diversity.)

In the context of these guidelines, communication is understood to involve students, supervisors, managers, administrators and institutional officers *in two-way processes*. (See also Section 2 'Recruitment, admission and general arrangements'- Documentation).

GUIDELINES

3.1 Induction

1. There is a structured programme of induction for all research students, overseen by the Dean and a group of the relevant officers who ensure its effectiveness and cohesiveness and act on feedback. The proportion of new students participating in induction activities is monitored.

2. There is an initial, obligatory process/course for all students that introduces them to the central facilities and services of the HEI and makes them aware of all aspects of PhD programmes, including as appropriate:

    *   Research student's general rights and responsibilities
    *   Rights and responsibilities of research supervisors
    *   Research plans
    *   Professional development programmes
    *   Performance monitoring and examination procedures.
    *   What may constitute a 'reasonable workload'
    *   Arrangements for annual leave
    *   Students' teaching duties and associated training
    *   Intellectual property issues including conventions on joint authorship
    *   Plagiarism, ethical considerations and definitions of research misconduct
    *   Basic work conditions

- Safety
- Supports available from careers and other student services

3. There are also formal college/faculty/school/department induction programmes (or equivalent measures) that cover all issues specific to each college/faculty/school/department or specific disciplines, as well as supplementary programmes for non-standard students (See also guideline 5.2.2.).

4. Provision for induction is made for students who enter PhD programmes at various times during the academic year.

5. Every supervisor at the end of the induction-related advisory meeting with a new student completes a checklist indicating that the student has participated in specific induction activities (or has acquired relevant information under set headings), and that a range of basic topics have been discussed. The student and supervisor each retain a copy of the completed checklist.

6. Strong and responsive feedback mechanisms (involving students, relevant sub-groups of students, and supervisors) ensure that induction is constantly improved and that less effective elements and courses are improved or discontinued.

3.2 Communication

1. The institution and its officers use both modern technology and traditional means to ensure that research students, supervisors, advisors/mentors and relevant staff are fully informed or have easy access to all relevant information. The importance of being able to communicate emergency or transient information by a range of media (including e-mail and SMS) to specific groups of students and staff is recognised.

2. Information on matters such as training, deadlines for annual reviews, and submission targets is communicated in a timely manner to students, supervisors and administrators responsible for their co-ordination and management.

3. Information on general organisational structures, process and options within the HEI are readily available.

4. A range of mechanisms is used to ensure effective, ongoing, *two-way* communication between the institution and its constituent units, research students and research supervisors.

4 Supervision and supervisor(s)

Introduction

The supervision of each research student is the collective responsibility of the supervisor(s), the department/school and the institution. The PhD student's supervisor is an essential partner in the student's education and development, advising during the long process of mastering concepts, specialised topics and methodologies, and conducting original research. Consistently high standards depend on all graduate research supervisors being active scholars and researchers with good records of publication. Co-supervisory arrangements can ensure that qualified and promising potential supervisors are facilitated in gaining experience of supervision.

Supervisory Committees/Panels

It is of fundamental importance that every student has one supervisor (the principal supervisor) who takes full responsibility for the overall management and supervision of the student's work and progress. The terms 'supervisory panel' or 'committee' are used here loosely to describe arrangements by which the student and supervisor are supported by other qualified people who participate in the monitoring of progress and the making of important decisions. Two models have developed in Irish institutions:

a   A committee (e.g. at the level of a school/department/group) consisting of three or more experienced and qualified academic staff acts along with the principal supervisor (and co-supervisor) as the supervisory panel for each student assigned to it. Each student is also assigned an advisor, who can be a member of the committee.

b   The roles of the principal supervisor (and co-supervisor[s]) are supported by the formal appointment for each student of an advisor/mentor who provides advice, and additional support and pastoral care, and who participates in formal decision-making with respect to the student's progress. When a supervisor is 'first time', or in need of support, one or more members are added to ensure that the total experience and expertise on the panel is sufficient. In principle, every student may have a different supervisory panel.

Section 8 'Monitoring Progress' discusses and gives guidelines related to formal meetings and reviews on the progress of students and projects.

Workloads and Supports

Numbers of students are increasing, average student-to-supervisor ratios are growing, research has become very complex in many disciplines, and public interest in outcomes is higher than ever. Therefore, efficient administrative environments and comprehensive supports for research supervisors are increasingly important.

Clearly, good research supervision involves regular direct contacts between students and supervisors. However, the most frequent specific issues raised by research students in general are (i) insufficient contact with a supervisor and (ii) long delays before tasks to be undertaken by a supervisor are completed. These are probably largely due to excessive workloads or over-commitment by supervisors. As well as time management, there are many challenges in the setting up and running of an active and productive research group and all of these indicate the growing importance of training in research leadership and of the need for a range of supports for research supervisors.

Guidelines

4.1 Suitability and Standards

1. Every student has one supervisor (the principal supervisor) who is a member of staff of the HEI (or is formally recognised by the HEI as being suitable) and an active and successful scholar in the relevant area. The principal supervisor takes full responsibility for the overall supervision and management of the student and an appropriate level of responsibility for the project.

2. There are defined criteria on the suitability of persons acting as principal supervisors of PhD students.

3. Conditions requiring co-supervision are defined and there are criteria on the suitability of persons to act as co-supervisors.

4. The HEI recognises formally the contributions of senior (contract) research staff to the supervision of research students, and has a mechanism which allows qualified and experienced research staff to act as principal supervisors where appropriate.

5. Procedures exist which ensure that high standards and adequate levels of supervision are maintained. Arising from the conclusions of complaints procedures and in support of these high standards, a supervisor may have extra conditions imposed.

6. With respect to their acting as supervisors, there are policies and procedures related to academic staff being absent for significant periods, taking sabbatical leave and approaching retirement.

4.2 Supervisory Committees/Panels

1. 'Student/project/supervisor' combinations are supported by a supervisory panel or committee, criteria for which are approved at the level of the HEI. The supervisory panel monitors the student's progress and makes the important decisions concerning progression etc.

2.   The institution has formal lists of responsibilities for primary supervisors, co-supervisors and advisors to students. All principal supervisors, co-supervisors and advisors are aware of their own responsibilities and rights with respect to the students they work with, of the responsibilities and entitlements of their students, and of the regulations governing the operation of research programmes and examinations.

3.   There are defined criteria on the eligibility of persons to act as advisors to research students.

4.3 Change of Supervisor

1.   There is a formal procedure, available to students and to supervisors, which facilitates changes in supervision (See also Sub-section 8.1).

4.4 Workloads

1.   Workloads associated with the supervision of research students are determined and interpreted in the context of overall workloads for academic staff.

2.   For each discipline area, realistic 'FTE' weights are agreed for each main supervisory role for each research student

3.   Evaluations of the total supervisory loads of academic staff take into account:
     • Experience and past reputation as a supervisor, including completion times and rates
     • On-going performance
     • Composition of the research group (number and stages of existing research students, numbers of post-doctoral researchers and other support staff)
     • Support available from co-supervisors
     • Maximum FTE student-to-supervisor ratios agreed for specific disciplines and circumstances
     • Available resources.

4.   Supervisors and students in each general discipline area are aware of ranges of frequency and durations of contact with research supervisors that are regarded as reasonable.

4.5 Research Leadership and Supports

1.   The institution provides resources for the support of research supervisors as a matter of high priority. The institution also participates actively in any relevant national and cross-institutional programmes which support supervisors, including appropriate modules and short courses, live and on-line.

2. Structured development activities are available to enhance and support student supervision and project management by first time, on-going, and re-start-up supervisors.

3. Methods of providing support and training on research supervision for new supervisors include, as appropriate:

   • Obligatory structured training courses with a range of activities (where possible, these are modules in larger programmes leading to a formal qualification in higher education practice.)

   • A mentoring system with experienced members of staff

   • An experienced co-supervisor

4. All supervisors participate as specified in local guidelines in all support and refresher activities that are relevant to their previous experience, the backgrounds of students to be recruited, the stages of their careers and their research fields. These may include:

   • Understanding the Irish fourth level education system

   • Good professional practice, ethics and performance norms in research supervision

   • Internal guidelines, regulations, structures and procedures for research degree programmes

   • The challenge of supporting students while promoting their independence

   • The skills needs of students, and preparing appropriate training programmes (see also footnote 5)

   • Student diversity, including awareness of the cultures of specific nationalities or groups.

   • Research leadership and conflict resolution skills.

   • Workshop sessions to share experiences and discuss solutions to issues

   • Guest lectures/seminars on issues related to research supervision and research management

5 The Student

Introduction

Requirements for Registration and Progression

Normally, the minimum entry requirement for entering a PhD-level programme at an Irish HEI is an upper second class honours grade (a '2.1' or typically at least 60%) in a suitable honours bachelors degree (level 8 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications[21]), or equivalent. Holders of first cycle European Qualifications Framework[22] (EQF) awards (level 6 or higher) may be registered for Irish Masters degrees. Candidates with other qualifications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

In some HEIs, initial registration is on a Masters programme and transfer to a PhD programme occurs after a satisfactory evaluation of progress to date and the suitability of both the student and the research project, after about one year. A registration status of 'PhD-track student' (or explicit equivalent) allows such students to be differentiated in their first year from those aiming for a Masters degree. Some HEIs allow initial direct registration on a PhD programme and include a confirmation process at the end of the first year or eighteen months. Requirement of a Masters' qualification before PhD registration "is a matter for institutional and academic autonomy" (EUA Trends Report 2007 to London Bologna Ministerial Conference[23]).

Student Diversity

Post-entry supports and services (both academic and non-academic) are particularly important to 'non-standard' students in helping them fulfill their potential through successful participation and progression. These include international students and many part-time students. In addition, the National Access Office of the HEA estimates that at least one in four students enter higher education through a 'non-standard' route of admission, including mature students, school-leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, or FETAC Level 5 and 6 award holders. (See also Sub-sections 1.2 and 1.9 of 'Institutional Organisation' – 'The Dean and Office for Graduate Studies' and – 'National Issues' respectively; Sub-section 2.2 of 'Recruitment, admission and general arrangements' – 'Procedures'; and Sub-section 3.1 of 'Induction and communication' – 'Induction'.)

Responsibilities and Duties

Success in graduate research requires commitment, dedication and a willingness to engage fully with research projects and with supervisors. Therefore, each research student must commit wholeheartedly to the project and participate fully in the other activities associated with his/her programme.

Contributing to teaching has long been a standard part of the 'PhD experience'. It leads to the acquisition of important skills through regular practice and is a major link between research and

21 See footnote 15.
22 www.nqai.ie/interdev_eqf.html
23 European Universities Association (2007), *Trends V: Universities Shaping the European Higher Education Area*. www.eua.be

undergraduate learning. It is essential that all student applicants are made fully aware of all such duties, their associated supports and conditions, *and of the value of the experience to be gained*, before they commit to a specific programme. Training relevant to allocated duties is also important.

Entitlements, Facilities and Resources

Fairness and parity with respect to entitlements, benefits and workloads, and awareness by applicants and students of how their conditions compare to others in equivalent situations (and the reasons for differences where they exist) are very relevant to student morale.

Students should be made fully aware of the importance and the implications of the tax-free status of their stipends and of the regulations governing this status (Revenue Commissioners Scholarship Exemption under section 193 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997[24]). In essence, their tax-free status depends on their not being employees but being in receipt of training. Commonly worldwide, Universities and other HEIs require funded research students to contribute to teaching and some internal fellowships may require larger pre-defined contributions. For students who are not benefiting from a tax-free exemption, payments for tutoring, demonstration and supervision duties are usually only limited by institutional rules, and by availability.

It is reasonable for every research student to expect minimum provisions with respect to facilities to support their research, and that managers and responsible officers should recognise this fully. Essential pieces of equipment should be in place and tested before students who depend on them are in place.

Support

Students benefit greatly when departmental/faculty seminar series include seminars given by research students, as this encourages full engagement and instills a sense of belonging to a community of researchers. Networking by PhD students and a positive and supportive graduate research community are also beneficial. Where active graduate student societies exist, they are greatly appreciated.

Support for the student is particularly important when things go wrong. Difficulties are minimised when adequate sources of advice and counselling are always available, and when graduate complaints procedures are independent and unbiased, and facilitate conflict resolution at an early stage.

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24 See under http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1997/en/act/pub/0039/index.html and under www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it.

GUIDELINES

5.1 Requirements for Registration and Progression

1. A formal mechanism (i) decides on the acceptance of a new student (including the suitability of the student, the suitability of the project and the adequacy of facilities and resources) and (ii) approves the make-up and membership of the student's supervisory panel, as appropriate (See also Section 2, Sub-sections 4.2 and 5.2, and Section 6).

2. There are clear and logical regulations in place governing the relations between research Masters and PhD degree programmes, transfers between them and terminations of registration. These regulations cover:

    I.   Criteria for the transfer of registration from research Masters to PhD

    II.   Criteria for continued registration for a PhD

    III. Criteria for the transfer of registration from PhD to a research Masters

    IV.   Criteria for when a research student's registration may be discontinued

5.2 Student Diversity

1. Institutional procedures as applied to all categories of applicant student take their needs into account, including:

    *   Supplementary documentation with key passages repeated, if appropriate, in a number of languages

    *   Deadlines that take special processes into account, e.g. immigration processes etc.

    *   Clear information on funding, tailored to take account of the needs of diverse students

2. Provisions are made to ensure that 'non-standard' applicant students are not disadvantaged and that supervisors of such students are supported fully at all stages during recruitment, registration, induction and throughout their studies. Practical information on living as a student in the relevant part of Ireland, (including advice from established students) is made available on-line, and supplementary support measures and training (including advanced English language training) are provided (See also guideline 3.1.3).

3. All relevant institutional regulations and procedures and supporting documentation explicitly allow for part-time research students. There are formal guidelines which facilitate the definition of part-time students that are taken into account in the calculation of fees, all project timetables, work plans, estimations of progress and target completion times. Provision is made to ensure that all supports and facilities are available to part-time students.

4. Applicants with special needs are encouraged to disclose those needs in advance to ensure that a research project is suitable to them and that necessary supports are available. Such information is handled in accordance with good practice[25] and without prejudice to decisions on admission. General supports for students with disabilities within the HEI explicitly take the needs of graduate research students into account.

5.3 Responsibilities and Duties

1. The general responsibilities, duties and entitlements relevant to a graduate research programme are communicated clearly to each applicant who agrees that he/she understands them fully. Normally, the timing of duties throughout the year is reasonable and, when necessary to accommodate certain kinds of research projects, it is also flexible.

2. The institution has a formal list of responsibilities of research students which states explicitly that every student is responsible for all aspects of his/her education that are within his/her full control, and may include other explicit statements that refer to:

    -   Working sufficiently and effectively on the research project and keeping — in so far as it is feasible — to agreed deadlines
    -   Keeping accurate and adequate records on all relevant aspects of the project, and preparing reports on progress as required and on time
    -   Participating and contributing to seminar series, journal clubs etc.
    -   Being an active contributing member to a larger research group, if appropriate
    -   Communicating frankly on successes and difficulties with his/her supervisor and supervisory panel
    -   Becoming familiar with the institution's regulations and guidelines on research degrees and any relevant college/faculty guidelines
    -   Acquiring necessary specialist and generic skills as agreed with the supervisor and supervisory panel, and as required for the project and for preparation of the thesis
    -   Becoming familiar with norms and guidelines on professionalism, ethics, plagiarism and the correct usage of quotations, and the importance of the explicit acknowledgment of others' work
    -   Following relevant codes of behaviour and practice

3. The duties of every student are limited by agreed institutional and local norms which take preparation times into account. Their timing is influenced by project- and coursework-related constraints, they are supported by training given to the student, and they have been communicated clearly in general terms to applicants. They may include:

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25 Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) (2008), *Good Practice Guidelines for the Providers of Supports and Services for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education.*

- Academic tutoring and mentoring, and demonstrating at practical classes
- Co-supervising undergraduate projects
- Correcting and marking undergraduate student work
- Participation in relevant management and consultative meetings and acting as a representative if selected

5.4 Entitlements

1. Ideally, PhD grants and fellowships are for four years.

2. Clarity with respect to the entitlements of research students is prioritised by the HEI, including in particular:
   - The conditions for the tax-free status of grants. (These are explicitly respected by the institution, its staff and students)
   - Financial entitlements, holiday entitlements and arrangements for fees and other charges
   - Funding schemes that can be applied to for conference attendance etc.
   - Ongoing expenditure, with information on budgets available to students, where there are provisions within a student's grant/scholarship to finance specified items

3. 'Leave of absence' for reasons of ill health etc. is defined formally and granted according to an agreed procedure. Only formally granted 'leaves of absence' are subtracted when completion times are being calculated.

4. The objective of the institution is that studentships funded internally (taking into account the associated duties) are at least at levels equivalent to minimum nationally-funded grants.

5.5 Facilities and Resources

1. Research students are not recruited unless certain minimum common and individual facilities are available for their use.

2. The institution has a policy that specifies overall minima for all general facilities used by research students, including special library access, book borrowing facilities, inter-library loans and access rights to certain staff facilities. The needs of part-time students and students with disability are taken into account. Minimum physical facilities might include the following:
   - A dedicated writing space and sufficient access to computer hardware and the internet laboratory, fieldwork support and library facilities
   - Adequate funding and support for inter-library loans service and other library resources

3. Each school/department plans for the recruitment of research students to ensure that local facilities are appropriate to a high quality education. If, due to unforeseeable circumstances, essential equipment is not in place, a student is given the option of a change of project.

5.6 Support

1. There is a dynamic culture of creativity/scholarship/research in the institution and in each research group in which research students participate actively.

2. There is a mechanism that identifies students who work outside research groups, or whose project is unique in the faculty/college or institution with respect to its subject or methodology, and that facilitates the provision of appropriate supports (e.g. see guideline 6.1.5)

3. The general student support and advice centres within the HEI make themselves aware of the needs of research graduate students and take them into account when planning and delivering their services.

4. The institution facilitates student-initiated societies and peer-mediated supports for research students, and publishes annually a list of PhD students, titles of projects and supervisors to facilitate the development of local, institutional and national networks for PhD students and researchers.

5. Complaint and appeal procedures exist for students (see also Sub-sections 4.3 and 8.4).

6 The Project

Introduction

According to standard practice in many discipline areas (particularly in the arts and humanities), students are encouraged to explore their interests and to make choices once they engage fully with the research topic. Although the planning of projects and the prediction of their outcomes can be difficult, experienced researchers can usually identify projects that are unsuitable or where no provisions are made for the unexpected.

As for all large research programmes, individual projects for research students should be managed professionally, with matters concerning safety, ethical approval and intellectual property taken into account in advance of commencement and throughout the duration of the project.

GUIDELINES

6.1 Development, Ownership and Support

1. When PhD research projects are pre-defined, they are subjected to an approval process involving an expert 'second opinion' at the department/school level (See also guidelines 5.1.1 and 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 below).

2. Supervisor(s) actively support students in taking ownership of their projects, including cases where they are pre-defined.

3. As in the humanities, the needs of students when defining projects are anticipated through the availability of standard books and journals and access to collections.

4. There are regulations governing externally-located research projects and students.

5. Projects that involve experience and training at suitable external locations are facilitated.

6.2 Ethics, Safety and Intellectual Property

1. All projects are examined for ethical implications and ethical approval is obtained for all relevant projects.

2. Safety aspects of all projects are considered and taken into account.

3. The student and supervisor(s) are aware of policy on intellectual property (IP). All stakeholders are made aware of potential IP issues as soon as such issues become apparent.

4. Where part or all of a project requires protection of IP (for a formally-defined period), there is a mechanism for resolution of potential conflicts between this and requirements for publications to satisfy criteria for the award of a PhD degree.

5. Where the needs of a funding body and student success are in conflict, the agreement of the funding body is sought in a timely manner to resolve the conflict, taking account of the student's welfare.

6. The recording by the student of information and data related to his/her research is undertaken according to good practice in the relevant discipline(s) (See also guideline 7.1.6).

7 Professional development

Introduction

The core strength of a PhD programme is that it facilitates, by means of an original contribution to knowledge in a specific area, the development by the student of a critical/analytical/creative approach to tasks and the acquisition of skills related to understanding fully a topic or series of interrelated topics. However, even highly specialised areas of study require generic skills, and some general competencies and skills are to be expected of all persons who attain the distinction of a PhD. The IUA skills statement *Irish Universities' PhD Graduates' Skills*[26] provides a detailed account of the desired learning outcomes and skills that PhD students develop before graduation. As throughout this document, PhD programmes which incorporate measures to ensure that all graduates have a suitable range of specialist and generic skills and knowledge are often termed 'structured PhD programmes'.

Facilitating Professional Development

Ideally, all training and opportunities for the acquisition of generic and specialist skills relevant to the students' discipline and project are provided in such a way that students can avail of them with the least disruption to their primary work programme.

It is also important that national agreement and coherence on courses related to professional development and on their grading be achieved as a brief set of general national guidelines. In any case, course completions and grades need to be monitored and recorded on each student's file. For example, there is already an understanding that 1 ECTS credit equates to 20-25 hours of total student time.

An adequate mix of seminar and conference attendance and presentation and researcher mobility, and experience of preparing articles for publications and grant applications is an essential part of PhD training and development.

GUIDELINES

7.1 Professional Development

1. The HEI provides or facilitates the provision of structured programmes of professional development for research students (with, where possible, all elements available in any year or semester when appropriate) and makes all relevant regulations, curricula and timetables available to all applicants, students and supervisors.

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26 See footnote 5.

2. The HEI and its constituent units co-operate internally and with others to ensure that all courses provided are of a high international standard and are balanced with respect to the number of credit units assigned to them. The IUA '*PhD Graduates' Skills Statement*' (2008)[27] is taken into account when new courses are being developed.

3. Participation on professional development programmes is:

    •   Recorded (to include courses undertaken in other HEIs)

    •   Recognised (formally or informally)

    •   Balanced, with time required for research and other duties and responsibilities taken into consideration

    •   Acknowledged for registration and for funding purposes

4. The professional development of students is overseen by an appropriate body in the institution. Supervisor(s) and supervisory panels have access to reports from the associated recording system (See also Sub-section 8.1.2).

5. A list of the generic and specialist training needs of each student is agreed by the student and supervisor(s), with the total programme of courses to be taken designed to:

    •   Meet the general, specialist and, if feasible, future professional needs of the student

    •   Take account of the student's research commitments and interests, and

    •   Facilitate the acquisition of particular skills at appropriate times

6. Students are able to access training courses in appropriate, basic and specialist skills, including:

    •   Project management, writing, document processing, data processing, presentation, statistics, appropriate safety procedures

    •   Research methodologies, good research practices including the recording of data/ information

    •   Ethics, professionalism and safety, as appropriate

    •   Appropriate fieldwork-related skills, if necessary

    •   Teaching and supervisory skills, with a sufficiency of such training given in advance of the commencement of teaching

7. Where particular courses have the potential to contribute towards students qualifying for membership of a professional organisation for example 'Engineers Ireland', the possibility of achieving this is pursued.

8. Students are provided with opportunities to gain insights into knowledge transfer, innovation and entrepreneurship.

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27 See footnote 5.

9. Presentation skill training, regular presentations and activities involving the defence of evidence and conclusions are facilitated throughout every student's time on a PhD programme. These also ensure that he/she is prepared well for the examination process.

10. All students are alerted to the importance of career preparation and planning and informed of relevant courses and sources of information.

11. The quality, consistency and relevance of professional development programmes are reviewed regularly through formal assessment procedures and student/supervisor feedback. Programmes are revised accordingly.

7.2 Conference Attendance, Grant Applications and Publications

1. As students progress through their research projects, they are (formally or informally) given training on (and/or supervised experience of) applying for grants and writing articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals etc.

2. Research students present their work at local, national and international conferences.

3. Supervisors ensure that research students participate substantially, in the preparation of research papers and articles.

4. Publication *before* the PhD examination of at least some of the findings of the research project is strongly encouraged and may be required.

8 Monitoring progress

Introduction

In practice, for PhD students to fail at the final examination and not graduate with a PhD is relatively rare. To date, standards have been maintained partly by extending the time allowed for completion, sometimes to six or more years. As the number of research students rises, careful and formal monitoring of progress is essential to ensure high standards, good completion rates and times and to maintain high examination success rates.

Formal Meetings and Decision-making Reviews

Formal meetings of students with their supervisors (see Section 4 'Supervision and Supervisor(s)'), and formal reviews are key elements in motivating progress, identifying problems early and avoiding indecision. Such processes help to promote motivation and focus, and when well conducted, minimise unnecessary stress. *Most importantly, they need not undermine the frequent meetings and discussions that underlie the essential trust and bond with the supervisor(s) that is characteristic of good PhD-level education.* It is very useful if each student has an advisor (or a member of his/her supervisory panel other than the principal supervisor) to whom he/she can go to discuss issues that arise (see Section 4 'Supervision and Supervisor(s)').

Agreed work plans and written reports are necessary because they:

- Reduce ambiguity when subsequent progress is being assessed
- Help ensure student motivation and focus
- Give students and supervisors confidence that a due process is being followed
- Provide protection to supervisors and to students should difficulties arise

Careful management of the timing and the number of reviews and formal meetings over the whole of each student project is important to avoid the process becoming over-stressful, over-burdensome, or a meaningless paper exercise. However, a sufficiency of formal processes is necessary to ensure timely action.

Possible components for reviews include:

- Written reports by the student and by the supervisor(s)
- Presentations by the student
- Formal interviews with the student and supervisor(s) separately and together

In some countries (France, for example), students obtain formal permission to submit a thesis for final examination. In others, the responsibility for the decision to submit rests more clearly with the student. Both of these practices are found in Irish HEIs. In the first, the decision process should not compromise the examination outcome; in the second, students are strongly advised not to submit against the

advice of their supervisor. In such cases, it is important that the supervisor's advice to the student is formally recorded.

Conflict Resolution

Supervisory teams, advisors, defined procedures and defined responsibilities for both student and supervisors help to ensure open discussions and clarity with respect to expectations and realities. However, complaint procedures (starting locally and only escalating when necessary) are essential to deal with issues that may arise and that facilitate early resolution of problems. Clearly, serious complaints of misconduct, concerning harassment, bullying or discrimination, for example, should be dealt with through separate relevant institutional procedures.

GUIDELINES

8.1 Reviews and Decision-making

1. Institutional and local regulations/guidelines specify:
    *   Acceptable ranges of frequencies for *informal* meetings between students and supervisors
    *   Periodic formal meetings of students with their supervisors and their normal frequency
    *   Formal reviews related to progression and their normal times
    *   A mechanism that allows earlier than specified formal meetings or reviews at the request of the supervisor(s) or the student
    *   That all formal monitoring processes are conducted in a manner that provides an opportunity for students (and supervisors) to report on and discuss their work and to receive feedback and encouragement

2. Every formal meeting of students and supervisors has an associated written record of recent progress, important decisions made and an updated work plan for the next period. Students' 'professional development' and overall commitments are also considered.

3. When decisions on progression are to be made <u>and</u> where local expertise is limited <u>or</u> there may be a conflict of interest:
    *   An external expert is included in the process, <u>or</u>
    *   Account is taken of (an) external report(s) on the progress of a project

4. The procedures used for reviews ensure clarity and transparency for students and supervisors. For PhD students, outcomes (each of which is supported by written criteria) may include:

- Progression to the next scheduled review
- A caution to student and/or supervisor(s), with advice on adjustments to be made and another review after a specified time e.g. in three months
- Continued registration on a research Master's programme
- Transfer to PhD registration
- Transfer (back) to a research Masters programme.
- A change in supervision
- Write up and submission for a PhD degree

5. Each relevant academic unit reports annually on its research degree programmes to the appropriate body in the HEI. These reports include information and data on performance, progression and completion and are used in regular assessments of the effectiveness of PhD programmes (see also Sub-section 1.7).

8.2 Early Stage

1. At the first formal meeting of students and supervisors:
   - A schedule of 'formal' meetings with the supervisors is agreed for at least the first year. (See also guideline 3.1.5.) If relevant, the process leading to definition of the student's research project is discussed
   - There is an opportunity for clarification of the procedures for decision-making reviews and their associated criteria

2. As soon as is practical, work-plans are drafted by students and revised with input from the supervisors.

3. Procedures for monitoring the students' progress respect the students' principal responsibility for the project and its success, and also respect the roles of the supervisors.

8.3 Mid- and Late-Stage

1. As the student moves into a second and subsequent years, the future schedule of reviews and formal meetings is confirmed or revised to meet ongoing circumstances, but is always in compliance with local guidelines.

2. Formal and informal processes for monitoring progress are supplemented by regular presentations by all research students on their research and interim findings in a range of different settings, such as to research groups and to school/centre/departmental colloquia (see also guidelines 7.1.9 and 7.2.2).

3. Institutionally, and in specific discipline areas, there are clear guidelines as to how the readiness of a student to write up and submit a dissertation for examination is decided.

4. There is a procedure (with locally or institutionally-defined time limits) and relevant supports for students and supervisors which ensure that prolonged research degree projects are brought to timely, and if possible, successful conclusions.

5. Every non-completing student is asked for feedback and his/her case is examined with a view to identifying measures that may ensure higher rates of and shorter times to completion.

8.4 Conflict Resolution

1. There is a clearly understood procedure whereby, at any time, a student may make a complaint related to the project or its supervision, initially relatively informally but continuing to a formal process in appropriate instances.

2. There is a clearly understood procedure whereby a student can appeal any significant decision made by his/her principal supervisor, supervisor(s) or supervisory panel.

3. There are also complaints and appeals procedures linked to research degree programmes that can be used by supervisors.

4. There are institutional guidelines for conflict resolution in general.

9 The Dissertation

Introduction

Norms as to the format of a PhD dissertation vary from country to country and within discipline areas. An integral dissertation is a common format, and there are many published books in the humanities and social sciences that originated in this way. Alternatively, in many countries, PhD dissertations are collections of previously published articles bound together, sometimes with a print run of a hundred or more. Practice-based PhD 'dissertations' require additional options with respect to formats and media (see HETAC Guidelines)[28].

The efficient writing of a standard doctoral dissertation requires forward planning, advance preparation, guidance and models, early feedback, a wide range of specific skills, attention to detail, and a determination to complete the task. The following may help significantly:

- Becoming expert by regular practice with word and document processing
- Constant forward planning based on early decisions on format and general content
- Writing all proposals, interim reports and conceptual explorations with the final dissertation in mind
- Early decisions on bibliographic descriptors
- Ongoing tabulation, analysis and graphical representation of results in accord with formats decided on as early as possible with expert advice.

It is very important that all dissertations presented for examination correspond to the highest general standards.

GUIDELINES

9.1 The Dissertation

1. Acceptable formats (including article-based and multimedia-based) and other attributes of PhD dissertations are specified in the institution's guidelines, with allowance made for reasonable variations that are traditional for specific disciplines. The preparation of electronic copies of the dissertation that meet defined standards is also required.

2. Institutional guidelines on thesis preparation cover issues such as plagiarism and the correct usage of quotations, and make clear the importance of the explicit acknowledgment, at all relevant places in the thesis, of the contributions of others to the project. Timely training and supports are available to aid students in quick and efficient thesis writing. These may include:

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28 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2009), National Quality Assurance Guidelines for Postgraduate Arts Research Programmes by Practice. www.hetac.ie

- Additional or refresher training on work planning, appropriate writing styles, information technologies and document processing
- Supplementary writing-up facilities
- Incentives to complete and submit

3. There are guidelines that indicate preferred deadline dates for thesis submission and give estimates of the normal time allowances for examination, implementation of required (minor) corrections and the processing of the reports of the examiners, leading (if there are no excessive delays) to graduation at a particular time.

4. All supervisors recognise that timely feedback on drafts of dissertations is a basic duty.

10 The Examination

Introduction

The examination of a student applicant for a PhD degree needs to be a substantial and carefully considered process. A PhD is normally awarded on the basis that a body of work carried out by the student makes "a contribution to knowledge" or is "suitable for publication in whole or in part"[29]. Other aspects are also very important, including:

- The depth and breadth of understanding of the relevant field(s) of study displayed by the student, and
- The expertise gained with respect to basic and advanced methodologies and techniques.

Evidence as to whether or not such criteria are met will be found in the dissertation, but the oral examination is critical to a full evaluation of a student's competence and of the standards that have been achieved. Depending on traditions in a country and an HEI, the format of the oral examination varies from 'private', with just the student and examiners present, to 'a public defence'. In Irish HEIs, where the examination is private, students in many areas may also give a 'thesis seminar' to his/her school. It is also now common for candidates to make a presentation at the start of the oral examination.

The Examiners

In Irish HEIs, all major examinations involve the active participation of external examiners. An external examiner for a PhD candidate is chosen for his/her expertise in the field of study relevant to the project, with current publication activity an important criterion. Effective internal examiners have at least broad relevant expertise in the discipline in question, and are sufficiently senior with adequate experience of relevant examining and supportive exercises. Although, because of their specific expertise, external examiners have a critical role, the internal examiner can act to maintain consistently high internal standards. Collectively, competent examination boards have substantial experience of PhD examinations, have sufficient expertise of the relevant fields for inter-disciplinary projects, and, where feasible, are not composed entirely of one sex.

Oral Examination

While traditionally, the external examiner often steered the oral examination and therefore, acted as de facto chair, many HEIs appoint an independent chair, who is not an examiner, to manage at least the final stages of the examination process. All HEIs are encouraged to consider enabling this option in disciplinary areas where it is considered appropriate. It may also help in facilitating more balanced gender representation at examinations. Preliminary reports on dissertations by examiners serve to facilitate the operation of the examination and normally do not form part of the official record of the examination.

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29 The level indicator (knowledge-kind) for higher doctorates/level 10 awards of the National Framework of Qualifications describes this as 'the creation and interpretation of seminal knowledge through original research, or other advanced creative scholarship that is of a quality to satisfy a review by peers' . www.nqai.ie/framework.html

GUIDELINES

10.1 The Examiners

1. Where the candidate is a member of staff of the HEI, or the research is multi-disciplinary or local expertise is limited, adding an extra (external) examiner to ensure a fully competent examination board is provided for.

2. The external examiner(s) is (are) (an) active publishing expert(s) in the field(s) of study relevant to the candidate's project. The opinions of the external examiner(s) are given particular weight when the outcome of the examination is being decided.

3. The internal examiner has at least broad relevant expertise in the discipline in question, is an experienced senior person, and acts to maintain consistently high internal standards.

4. There are procedures for the selection, approval (with respect to agreed criteria as to suitability) and appointment of external examiner(s) and internal examiners, and to ensure that examiners are impartial and have no conflicts of interest.

5. The candidate is informed when potential external and internal examiners and the overall make-up of the examination board are being considered.

6. Where at all possible, all examiners are physically present when PhD candidates are examined orally. When used, videoconference facilities are of an assured high quality.

7. In each broad academic area, records of the involvement of individuals as external examiners are maintained and are available for consultation when new examiners are being considered for appointment.

10.2 General Arrangements

1. Safeguards exist to avoid substantial administrative delays (e.g. more than two months) between submission of a thesis for examination and the examination itself. A maximum period for the fixing of the oral examination date is specified, beyond which action is taken to ensure quick completion of the examination, including activation of a fast procedure for appointment of (an) alternative examiner(s).

2. The oral examination is organised to ensure that it runs smoothly and all reasonable precautions are taken against incidents that might reasonably be expected to occur occasionally:

    •   There is a clear description of the examination process that is made is available to all concerned

- Formal responsibilities for organising the oral examination and all associated arrangements are assigned in good time and are clear
- Candidates and examiners are given good notice of the (confirmed) date and time of oral examinations
- There is a procedure that ensures that the student is kept informed of arrangements and, as soon as possible, of any unavoidable changes
- The examination takes place in a good environment, in a suitable location and with all standard facilities readily available
- Reasonable accommodation is made available when necessary for students with disabilities

3. Candidate and examiner feedback on the examination process is sought routinely, the times taken for different stages of each examination process are recorded and these and other relevant information are summarised by the HEI in an annual report in which the analyses are broken down by 'academic unit'.

10.3 Oral Examination

1. There is a defined but flexible procedure that guides the oral examination process, including designation of the chair of the board.

2. There are defined criteria for the award of the PhD degrees that take into account the wide variety of disciplines in which the PhD is awarded.

3. A preliminary short report on the dissertation is prepared independently by each examiner and exchanged before the oral examination.

4. If local regulations permit the principal supervisor to attend the oral examination, he/she contributes to the process only on request from the chair or with his/her permission. In all such cases, the candidate is consulted as to the presence of the supervisor and may choose to be examined in the supervisor's absence. If absent from the examination room, the principal supervisor is always available at short notice for consultation by the examiners.

5. Clear and adequate procedures are defined for all stages of the examination, including:
- A simple, standard operating procedure for the examination process
- Definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the chair, internal examiners, external examiners, and (when present and when not present) the supervisor(s)
- There are guidelines for the oral examination process that provide for:
  - » Format and timetable

» Normal minimum (e.g. one to two hours) and maximum lengths (e.g. four hours) of the examination

» Feedback to the student at the end of the examination

10.4 Outcomes

1. There is a defined list of clearly worded outcomes to the PhD examination that provides sufficient options and supports the maintenance of standards, which could include:

   • That the degree be awarded

   • That the degree be awarded subject to clearly specified textual amendments

   • That the degree be awarded subject to clearly specified revisions to content

   • That no degree be awarded but that the candidate be allowed to submit a revised thesis, or re-sit the oral examination or both, normally within one year

   • That the thesis be considered for the award of a Master's degree[30]

   • That no degree be awarded

2. The characteristics of the report required in the case of examiner unanimity on the examination outcome are defined. There is also a procedure that can be implemented in the case of examiner disagreement as to the examination outcome.

3. In cases where the conclusions arising from an examination associated with a re-submitted dissertation are not entirely satisfactory, the examiners are aware of which examination outcomes are still available to them.

4. There is a defined appeal procedure for PhD examinations that can be used by a student or a supervisor in cases of disagreement with the examination outcome.

10.5 Revision

1. The format, attributes and number of copies (and electronic copy) of the final dissertation to be lodged to the HEI's library are specified, with provisions made for variations between disciplines.

2. The internal examiner, with the support of the principal supervisor, monitors and assures the implementation of corrections to the dissertation that were prescribed by the examiners.

3. There is a procedure for when required improvements are not carried out satisfactorily or within a reasonable time, with defined options that may be initiated by the internal examiner. The consequences of non-completion of revisions are made clear to the candidate from the outset.

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30 A PhD Examination Board may be regarded as competent to decide on the award of a Master's degree. Local regulations define the procedure to be followed.

11　The Graduation

Introduction

Arrangements and procedures for graduation ceremonies are of practical and of great personal importance to all concerned, particularly to the successful candidates and to their partners, family and friends. The PhD is a special degree that is awarded for original individual work of a high standard. This may be made clear to those present by an officer, or the relevant Dean, reading a brief synopsis of the achievements of each PhD graduand.

GUIDELINES

11.1 The Graduation

1. Students, supervisors, examiners and administrators are aware that quick and timely responses and adherence to guideline timings is necessary in order that maximum notice of graduation dates is given to all concerned.

2. Lists of students to graduate at particular ceremonies are prepared as early as possible and updated continuously, and are accessible on the institution's website.

3. The frequency and timing as well as the organisation of relevant graduation ceremonies takes into account the needs of diverse PhD graduands.

4. There is a special procedure used when PhD degrees are awarded that recognises the importance and special roles of these qualifications.

12 Data records and reporting on PhD programmes

Introduction

The first edition of this booklet published in 2005[31] highlighted the fact that the availability of data in relation to PhD programmes was variable and that there was little sector-wide agreement on common definitions or on what data to record. There also appeared to be limited analysis of existing data. It was recognised that in order to facilitate greater understanding and planning, there needed to be sector-wide agreement on definitions used and on the data to be calculated and retained. The first edition of this publication proposed a suite of data as the minimum that should be collected, and provided definitions for key data items — but most especially for data pertaining to completion rates and times.

It would appear that although much has happened in the arena of PhD programmes in the intervening years, there is still some way to go with the implementation of the 2005 recommendations regarding the systematic collection of data and the use of definitions as the accepted norm. If the definitions are to be applied consistently, funding bodies and authorities must also use them for their data collection exercises. This use of common definitions and comparable data sets will ensure that HEIs and the sector as a whole can plan wisely and make good reliable decisions at the national level.

The primary public source of quantitative data on research students in Irish institutions is the statistics available on the Higher Education Authority (HEA) website[32]. These data are derived from annual returns made by individual institutions. Progress has been made in the presentation of HEA data and Masters' enrolments are now disaggregated between research and taught programmes. It is anticipated that data collected from HEIs on the graduates of these programmes and the production of disaggregated data that distinguishes between research PhD students and those enrolled on professional doctorate programmes should be available in the near future once agreement has been reached on the categorisation of these students. The collection and presentation of separate data for the growing number of students registered on structured PhD programmes would also be useful as a measure of change in PhD education.

Registers and Completion Data

Some of the disparities in the published numbers of students registered for a PhD across the HEIs are directly attributable to variations in procedures and practices between the institutions. In some, the regulations require most students to register initially for a Master's degree and then permit transfer to the PhD register only after a formal transfer process has been completed. This can take between 12 and 18 months. Other institutions routinely permit initial registration for the degree of PhD directly. In general, students are registered according to the following:

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31 See footnote 4.
32 www.hea.ie/en/statistics

- Students who were permitted to register initially for the degree of PhD, having met defined criteria
- Students who are registered for a PhD having successfully completed a formal process to change their registration status from a research Master's degree
- Students (in first or second year) who are registered for a research Master's degree but who are effectively following a PhD programme and will apply to a formal process to change their status to a PhD degree. (This is commonly referred to as 'PhD Track').

Each PhD student is registered in a faculty (or college), and also in an appropriate constituent department or school. The field of registration is also categorised according to those used for the HEA annual returns which are based on the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) standards and RGAM (Recurrent Grant Allocation Model) subject areas.

It is desirable that each institution maintains separate research student and graduate registers. If sufficient information is contained on these registers, this will enable each institution to monitor and analyse completion rates and completion times broken down by department, school and faculty.

Registers should distinguish clearly between full-time, part-time and 'write-up' students. In addition, students should be formally removed from the student register and placed onto the graduate register as soon as they have graduated.

Registration records which distinguish between full-time and part-time students, and completion times for each category of student, should be calculated separately. The historical registration status of students who change their registration status following a review or a transfer process should also be recorded. Finally, where appropriate registration records should show that a student has transferred onto the PhD register from a PhD programme in another institution.

GUIDELINES

12.1 Registers

1.   ***STUDENT REGISTER**: For each *enrolled* student, the following information is recorded:

- General Information
    - » Name
    - » Date of birth
    - » Citizenship or domicile
    - » PPS (Personal Public Service) number
    - » Prior education (Institution, programme, award type and grade)
    - » Gender
    - » Residence
- Supervisor(s)
    - » Primary supervisor
    - » Co-supervisor(s) (if applicable)
- Registration Time*
    - » Date of initial registration
    - » Year of study
    - » Date of completion (see definition of completion time)
- Registration status
    - » Master's degree (by research)
    - » 'PhD track'
    - » PhD degree
    - » 'Structured' PhD degree
    - » Other doctoral degree (e.g. DBA, EdD)
- Registration mode
    - » Full-time
    - » Part-time
    - » 'Write-up' status

- Affiliation(s)
  - » Institute(s)
  - » Faculty/College
  - » School
  - » Department
  - » Academic discipline of study (ISCED and RGAM category)
  - » Source of funding
- Training provided
  - » Modules taken
  - » Credits awarded

* The register should also facilitate the recording of unusual circumstances such as: the formal de-registration of the students (for maternity or family leave, for instance); or the mid-project transfer of a student from another institute.

2. The **GRADUATE REGISTER** is updated annually; For each *graduand* record, the following information is included:

- Name
- Gender
- Date of birth
- PPS number
- Citizenship or domicile
- Research degree awarded
- Academic discipline of study
- Graduation date
- Title of thesis
- Department, school and faculty affiliation
- Supervisor(s)
- Completion time

12.2 Completion data

1. The following definitions are used when compiling completion data:

   Completion rate: In the case of PhD students, completion rate is defined as the percentage of those students who having, at any stage, been registered in a higher educational institute as a PhD student (including the category of 'PhD track' student), are subsequently awarded a PhD.

   Completion time: The completion time for a PhD degree is:

   The time between initial registration of the student for a PhD degree or a research Master's degree (where the student transferred to the PhD register subsequently) to;

   The time when the final corrected thesis has been accepted by the Institute, less;

   Any period of formal de-registration (such as, for example, certified illness, maternity leave etc.) where such de-registration is permitted by specified institutional regulations.

2. Annual statistics are calculated and recorded in relation to:

   - Completion rates and completion times for PhD degrees (see definitions)
     - » By faculty (or college) and for the institution overall
     - » For full-time and part-time students
   - Completion rates and completion times:
     - » Are calculated separately for full-time and part-time students
     - » Take into account unusual circumstances such as
       - ~ the formal de-registration of the students (for maternity or family leave, for instance)
       - ~ the mid-project transfer of a student from another institution

Appendix 1

Background to the project

The Irish Universities Quality Board's (IUQB's) vision recognises the need for a commitment to a culture of quality in Irish higher education. IUQB's mission is to support and promote this culture of quality in Irish higher education and to independently evaluate the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish Universities.

In accordance with its vision and mission, IUQB published *National guidelines on good practice in the organisation of PhD programmes in Irish universities* (the national PhD guidelines) in 2005[33] (reprinted in 2006). These guidelines were the result of extensive consultation, including University workshops and an experts' conference with international input. The aim of the guidelines is to improve the organisation and efficiency of PhD programmes in all Irish Universities.

Since 2005, a number of HEIs have actively considered the organisation and quality assurance procedures for PhD programmes against the guidelines and adopted or adapted the guidelines. The HEA has also used the guidelines to help assess applications for funding under Cycle I of the Strategic Innovation Fund.

In 2006, IUQB proposed a review of the organisation of PhD programmes at institutional level following consultation with Universities through the Irish Universities Association Quality Committee. Later that year, the IUQB Board agreed to such a review and the Chief Executive of IUQB wrote to the chief officers of the Universities advising that the review would be conducted in 2008. The review is a commitment under the joint IUA and IUQB publication '*A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities: concerted action for institutional improvement' (2007)*[34]. In recognition that the 'PhD Guidelines' were informing practices in HEIs other than the Universities, it was decided to invite participation and input in the revision exercise from other HEIs. By this means, the updated guidelines would have greater applicability in the wider HEI community.

There are several reasons why a review of the organisation of PhD programmes, particularly an update of the national guidelines, is timely.

Firstly, a number of major policy developments and publications have occurred, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005)[35], the Salzburg Principles (2005)[36], the Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities (2005)[37],[38] the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (2006)[39], the International Postgraduate Students' Mirror (2006)[40], the European University Association Report on Doctoral Programmes in European Universities (2007)[41]

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33 See footnote 4.
34 Irish Universities Association/Irish Universities Quality Board (2007), *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities; Concerted Action for Institutional Improvement (2nd Edition)*. www.iua.ie or www.iuqb.ie
35 See footnote 9.
36 See footnote 3.
37 European Universities Association Institutional Evaluation Programme/Irish Universities Quality Board (2005), *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities: Review of the Effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Procedures in Irish Universities: University Reports*.
38 European Universities Association Institutional Evaluation Programme/Higher Education Authority (2005), *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities: Sectoral Report*.
39 See footnote 1.
40 Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (2006), *International Postgraduate Students' Mirror; Catalonia, Finland, Ireland and Sweden*.
41 See footnote 11.

and the Irish Government's Strategic Innovation Fund and its Programmes for Research in Third Level Institutions (which provide significant ongoing investment in Irish higher education institutions).

Major issues arising from these developments include: significantly increasing the number and quality of PhDs, achieving critical mass, creating structured programmes, enhancing private sector linkages, supporting mobility, inter-institutional delivery, developing career/transferable skills, internationalising PhD students, the development of supervisory skills, transparency in processes and responsibilities and improving the introduction to graduate study.

Secondly, the need to update the national PhD guidelines is supported by feedback provided through the self-evaluation component of the recent quality review of IUQB, commissioned by the HEA at the request of IUQB (which reported in 2008). The feedback indicated that:

- the national guidelines are being used both within and outside of the University sector;
- the national guidelines should be reviewed in light of rapidly changing 4th level structures; and
- students consider the national guidelines to be widely distributed, but not fully implemented.

The development of updated national PhD guidelines is complemented by the Irish Universities Association 4th level network and the appointment of Deans of Graduate Studies across all of the Universities, with similar positions or designated functions provided for in many of the Institutes of Technology.

Aim

The aim of this process is to produce a revised version of the *National guidelines on good practice in the organisation of PhD programmes in Irish universities* (the national PhD guidelines) (2005), which has buy-in from all the Universities and the Institutes of Technology, and which can be used by all providers of PhD education across the Irish sector.

Driving Principles

In achieving its aim, the process of updating the national PhD guidelines was guided by the following principles:

- The updated national PhD guidelines will be re-drafted, based on input from agreed constituencies in the higher education sector and from selected international experts, in such a manner as to promote and maximise institutional ownership
- The style and substance of the revised guidelines will ensure the attainment and maintenance of high standards in the administration and operation of PhD programmes, while facilitating discipline-specific requirements, as well as any reasonable institution-specific requirements that may arise

- Each contributing Dean/institution will participate in the process to a degree that is sufficient to ensure smooth development of the revised guidelines and (in line with best international practice) their suitability for the disciplines within their institution

- Each contributing Dean/institution recognises the importance of their institution having policies, regulations and procedures that are fully in accord with (the revised) national guidelines, and will use and promote them within their own institutions.

- The organisation of doctoral programmes will naturally be a part of any subsequent institutional review processes and will include consideration of the level of engagement of an institution with relevant national and international benchmarks.

Relationship with other Initiatives

The HEA conducted a PhD Education Review, completed in January 2009, that considered:

- structures in place in higher education institutions in support of PhD programmes and how these structures are embedded and developed in the context of institutions' strategies

- details of the number of PhD students in each institution and how many are in 'structured' programmes

- details of PhD models in existence including their aims and objectives and funding of same

- quality assurance procedures in place with respect to PhD programmes, and

- student skills and career structure.

Rather than duplicate this work, the IUQB process built on the HEA review outputs for understanding best practice in the sector.

This initiative also complements the work of HETAC[42] which, building on the first edition of the IUQB *National Guidelines in the Organisation of PhD Programme in Irish Universities (*2005)[43], drafted guidelines for the provision of graduate research programmes by practice in Irish third level institutions.

Methodology

The methodology used in this initiative centred on consultation with experts and key stakeholders with a view to establishing current good practices in Ireland and elsewhere. A range of activities were undertaken to achieve this objective.

1. Project Chair and Secretariat Appointed

Professor Jim Gosling was appointed to chair the Expert Panel meetings, facilitate focus groups' discussions in institutions, analyse the information received, and to produce successive drafts of the updated guidelines for consideration by the Expert Panel and other stakeholders, and for the final open

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42 See footnote 28.
43 See footnote 4.

consultation process. Dr Teresa Lee (IUQB Quality Enhancement Manager) and Ms Rachel Crossland (IUQB Project Co-ordinator) provided Secretariat services, analytical expertise and editorial support to the chair and to the Expert Panel.

2. Expert Panel Established

An expert panel was established whose responsibilities were to:

- provide advice on the process in updating the guidelines, including the development of an institutional questionnaire
- consider the fitness-for-purpose of the current national PhD guidelines, and to
- provide input and advice on updating the national PhD guidelines.

The Expert Panel met several times during the course of this initiative, provided input into its design, organised local institutional activities, considered drafts of the publication and provided necessary comments.

Membership of the Expert Panel was as follows:

Chair
Prof Jim Gosling

Secretariat (IUQB)
Dr Teresa Lee (Quality Enhancement Manager)
and **Ms Rachel Crossland** (Project Co-ordinator).

International Experts
Prof Jean Chambaz: Vice-President for Research, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris;
Chair of the Steering Committee of the EUA-CDE.
Prof Susan Ernst: Professor of Biology; Formerly Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences;
Formerly Dean for Research, Arts, Sciences & Engineering; Tufts University, MA, USA.
Prof Bernard Morley: Professor of Molecular Genetics; Director of the Graduate School of Life
Sciences & Medicine; Imperial College London.

Dublin City University
Prof Gary Murphy: Director of Graduate Research

NUI Galway
Dr Pat Morgan: Dean of Graduate Studies
Deputy- Mr Keith Warnock: Vice-President for Physical Resources

NUI Maynooth
Dr Honor Fagan: Dean of Graduate Studies
Deputy - Prof Ray O'Neill: Vice-President for Research

Trinity College Dublin
Prof Carol O'Sullivan: Dean of Graduate Studies
Deputy -Ms Helen Thornbury: Administrative Officer

University College Cork
Prof Alan Kelly: Dean of Graduate Studies
Deputy - Prof John O'Halloran: Chair of the Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee

University College Dublin
Prof Michael Ryan: Dean of Graduate Studies & Post-doctoral Training
Deputy - Mr Roy Ferguson: Director of Quality

University of Limerick
Prof John Breen: Dean of Graduate School
Deputy - Prof Tom Lodge: Professor of Peace & Conflict Studies and Assistant Dean Research,
Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Union of Students of Ireland
Mr Enda Duffy: Postgraduate Officer
Deputies-Mr Shane Kelly (President) & Mr Bartley Rock (Education Officer)

Irish Universities Association
Dr Westley Forsythe: 4th Level Network Co-ordinator
Deputy -Dr Conor O'Carroll: Research Director

HETAC
Dr Peter Cullen: Head of Research and Policy Analysis

HEA
Dr Eucharia Meehan: Head of Research & Capital Programmes.
Deputy - Ms Jane Sweetman

3. Institutional Questionnaire Administered

IUQB developed an institutional questionnaire to help identify best practice that could be incorporated into the national PhD guidelines. The questionnaire covered the lifecycle of the student – including institutional organisation, preliminary arrangements, the supervisor(s), the courses, the student, the project, induction and professional development, monitoring progress and feedback, the dissertation and the examination.

All Institutes of Technology, Universities and affiliated Colleges were invited to complete the questionnaire. Responses were received from the following:

Cork Institute of Technology

Dublin City University

Dublin Institute of Technology

Dundalk Institute of Technology

*Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

Milltown Institute

National University of Ireland, Galway

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

University College Dublin

University College Cork

University of Limerick

University of Dublin, Trinity College

Waterford Institute of Technology

Input provided took the form of a draft of the Institute's 'Academic Code of Practice - Research Policies' which provided much of the information required in the questionnaire.

4. Institutional Focus Group Discussions Conducted

Seven Universities, two Institutes of Technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology hosted focus group discussions with their students, supervisors and administrators and support staff. From November- December 2009, over 300 stakeholders were met during the course of 30 discussion groups with numbers equally distributed between the three stakeholder groups. The Project Chair facilitated the discussions. The IUQB Quality Enhancement Manager acted as secretariat for each session and produced an overarching digest of findings. These findings were used to supplement the institutional questionnaire responses.

The HEIs who participated in focus group discussions were:

Cork Institute of Technology

Dublin City University

Dublin Institute of Technology

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

National University of Ireland, Galway

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

University College Dublin

University College Cork

University of Limerick

University of Dublin, Trinity College

Each institution was asked to include participants that would ensure representation from as wide a stakeholder profile as possible. During the course of the 30 focus groups' discussions that took place, the following stakeholder groups were represented:

Students

- From a traditional model - (1 supervisor to student)
- On a GREP (Graduate Research Education Programme)
- From a graduate school
- Student(s) who were part of a supervisory team
- International student(s)
- Student(s) with a Disability
- Student(s) from a disadvantaged socio economic group (SEG)
- Mature students
- Part-time students

Students ranged from 1st year to final year and came from a broad range of disciplines.

Supervisors

- From traditional model - (1 supervisor to student)
- Supervisor(s) with student on a GREP programme
- Supervisor(s) with student from graduate school

- Supervisor(s) on a supervisory team
- Supervisor(s) with international student
- Experienced supervisor(s)
- Newly established supervisor(s)

Supervisors had a range of experience (from few to many years of experience; small to large groups of students); many had international experience.

Administrative and Support Staff

- Faculty/school/department postgraduate committee representative(s)
- Institutional graduate committee representative(s)
- Heads of Research and Graduate Research
- Admissions office staff
- Registrars/Registration and records staff
- (PhD) Examination officers
- School/ department front of house support staff
- Training programme staff (administrative and/or lecturing staff)
- (Post)Graduate Studies front of office support and development staff member(s)
- International Office members
- Institutional Research Officers
- Quality Officer/committee representative
- Careers Officers
- Research Office staff
- Access and disability office staff
- Other student support service staff

Staff came from a range of departments and were drawn from all levels (senior management to executive staff).

5. Drafting of the Updated PhD Guidelines

Several drafts of the updated PhD guidelines were presented for consideration to the Expert Panel. Feedback and comments from the Panel were used to inform the drafting process.

6. Pre-publication Consultation Exercise Undertaken

A pre-publication draft of the national guidelines of good practice was presented in an open consultation exercise with the draft also distributed to key stakeholders for feedback. Feedback received was used to inform the publication.

7. Publication of Booklet

National guidelines of good practice were published.

Funded by