Part 6   Recommendations of the Panel

- **Overall recommendations of the Panel**

The panel commends the programme committee on the work undertaken to develop the programme. The panel is supportive of the key programme changes proposed. The panel is impressed by the energy and commitment of the programme team and module authors and the collegiality and teamwork across the University to develop this programme.

The panel notes that the University is going through major changes both at a structural organizational design level and in terms of the development of a revised Doctoral programme, which need to intertwine to be strategically fulfilling and operational.

The panel recommends continuing approval of the programme with the following awards, subject to the submission of updated documentation which addresses the panel's below recommendations.

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- Doctor of Music (DMus) at level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil) at level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- Postgraduate Diploma by Research (PgDip (Res)) at level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications

Recommendations

The Programme Committee should articulate how the PhD Programme is positioned in relation to the University Strategic Plan and National Frameworks and Plans. This should include an outline of what is important about this PhD programme and what is the complementary with the Irish Higher Education and Research road maps. This should include how Societal challenges (including UN SDGs) and Civic Life dimensions are going to be achieved and interwoven within the programme.

A Programme Development Plan has been developed, and includes a description of how research programmes at TU Dublin are aligned with the University Strategic Plan and also how the programmes are positioned Nationally (National Framework for Doctoral Education, IUA Skills Statement, National Policy on Ensuring Research Integrity) and Internationally (EUA CDE policy statements, Horizon Europe Challenges and UN SDGs).

The Programme Committee should develop a Programme Development Plan which shows clearly the analysis done and the actions (with action ownership and timelines) planned to enhance the programme. This plan should include key strategic performance metrics and consideration of how students will be supported for graduate employment in industry.

The Programme Development Plan has details of all analysis carried out, including, but not limited to, results and actions arising from e-surveys carried out in the third quarter of 2020 of current students, staff, graduates, external examiners and employers.

The Student Handbook should be updated to include the details (current and/or planned) discussed with the panel including:

- Indicative part-time routes for completion of the programme
- The accessibility of modules through remote delivery and arrangements for students who are unable to participate in the block delivery.
- Separate programme learning outcomes for the PhD, DMus, MPhil and PgDip awards.
- Details on how Graduate Attributes will be achieved
- Details on the provision of statistics, data management and data analysis support
- Details on the widening participation and equality, diversity and inclusivity strategy for the programme
- Details of the additional training workshops that are available to research students.
- Details on how students' well-being is being supported and the supports available to students.
- Details on the social activities available to enable research students to network with each other
- Details on the role of work-based learning
- Details on the mechanisms in place to address conflicts that may arise between students and supervisors and within the supervisory team
- Clearer reference to the Intellectual Property Policies, Procedures and Supports that are available

The Student Handbook has been updated to include the details above.

The panel notes that it is intended for Discipline Modules to continue to be a part of the programme, albeit as electives rather than as a mandatory requirement. The programme committee should develop a plan for how Discipline Modules will be integrated into the programme and how students will be supported to undertake these modules. The students with whom the panel met, were very keen for the discipline modules to continue and become more accessible. The programme committee needs to engage with the Schools to agree the mechanisms for the delivery and assessment of these modules.

The Graduate Research Regulations and the Student Handbook has been updated to include the details for management of Discipline Modules. Specifically the following has been included in section 2.2 and 3.2.1 respectively:

Individual students may require training in discipline specific skills, in order to implement their research work-programme. These training requirements are electives and are identified through the research planning process. The supervisor(s) will work with the graduate student to determine how best to address their training needs. This training may be formal modules provided by TU Dublin or other Universities or non-formal provided by the supervisors or other experts. Such training in discipline specific skills is unique to each individual student and their project and is an inherent part of any PhD. As such, this training is included in Element 1 of research programmes and is not accredited separately. If individual students wish for this training to be included in their record, they should complete the PGR 6 form, with the training details. The form should be returned to the Graduate Research School Office, well in advance of any training event and the Graduate Research School Office, will liaise with the module provider and ensure that all discipline specific training successfully completed by the student is noted on their record in the Student Information System.

Consideration should be given to how the professional development supports provided to staff can be made more widely available to research students.

In many instances professional development supports provided to staff are also available to research students. When research students are also employed as lecturers, including Hourly-Paid Assistant Lecturers, they can avail of all supports provided. In addition, the GRS works closely with Staff Training and Development in the development and provision of modules to research student. Any module delivered by Academic Affaris is available to research students following the normal registration process for those modules.

The programme should proactively carry out graduate monitoring and collate further information on the career destinations of graduates on an ongoing basis.

The Graduate Research School Office maintains a research student database which allows us to monitor the progress of each student through key stages of their research degree, and is currently being updated to facilitate calculation of completion rates and times to completion. We maintain a similar database of graduates of research programmes which is also currently being updated to ensure we have the most up to date information on each graduate.

The programme committee should develop a plan to provide more career development support for research students. This could be supported by external stakeholder engagement (government, NGOs, industry etc) in the improvement of career development supports.

Career planning is included in Module 4 of the Professional Skills Development Element 2 of the programme and is delivered to all graduate research student in year 3. This module is developed in collaboration with the TU Dublin Career Development Centre.

The Graduate Research School should provide further opportunities to support researcher networks and sharing of practice between supervisors in addition to existing training.

Together with Staff Training and Development, the Graduate Research School Office will continue to develop and deliver the License to Supervise training workshop. Additional training is provided on Ensuring Research Integrity, Preparing Funding Applications eg to IRC, Fullbright etc,, Thesis Preparation and Viva Voce Examination. Proposals to develop a Postgraduate Diploma in Graduate Research Practice and Supervision are under consideration

The Graduate Research School need to oversee that there is consistency between campuses in relation the operation of the research programme and the conditions under which research students are required to undertake teaching and demonstrating.

The Graduate Research Regulations will be applied consistently across all campus locations of TU Dublin, once approved by Academic Council. Workshops will be delivered by the Graduate Research School Office on operationalizing these regulations, including clarity on the role of research students in teaching and demonstrating.

The Graduate Research School should encourage the development of a Postgraduate Research Society.

The Executive Council of the TU Dublin Student's Union is made up of sabbatical officers from each campus and an elected Post Graduate Officer, who is a student studying at level 9 or 10. The Post Graduate Officer works part time for TU Dublin SU and is the direct link between post graduate students, TU Dublin and TU Dublin SU. The Post Graduate Officer is a member of the Graduate Research School Board. In addition, research students from each Faculty are elected as members of the Research Programme Committee and Graduate Research School Board. The Graduate Research School will encourage the development of a Postgraduate Research Society in liaison with the Post Graduate Officer.

There is a need for the provision of further professional administrative support for supervisors and students with appropriate distribution of responsibilities. The correct contact points for support and guidance must be clear to students and supervisors.

Details on support, including contact points, for supervisors and research students is provided on the web site at and in the Student Handbooks. Clarity is also provided at Induction.

A continuous conflict resolution map should be developed for the programme that facilitates the early detection of resolution of issues that may arise between students and supervisors and within supervisory teams (as well as external parties).

Full details of the Student Grievance Procedure are included in the Graduate Research Regulations (Chapter 7) and the procedures for Re-Check, Re-Mark and Appeals are given in Appendix 2 of the same document.

These procedures will be kept under review and will align with any relevant TU Dublin policies as they are developed.

The University's Annual Programme Monitoring report should be tailored for the Research Programmes, to reflect the key performance indicators for the Research Programme and the implementation of the new module structure and performance.

The Graduate Research School Office will work with the Quality Assurance office to tailor annual reports for the Research Programmes and will include key performance indicators, new module structure and performance.

The supervisors with whom the panel met, confirmed the importance and usefulness of the annual evaluation process. Supervisors have also made suggestions on how the annual evaluation process may be improved. The Programme Committee should engage further with Supervisors, Heads of School and Heads of Research with a view to further improving the annual evaluation process.

The Programme Committee will consider the annual evaluation process at its meetings in Semester 1 2022.

The title of Professional Skills Modules is not reflective of the proposed content of the 4-modules and a more appropriate title would be beneficial so it is clear what the purpose and role of these modules is. The use of Problem Based Learning is suggested to be made more explicit in the modules. More details are required in relation to the proposed content

and assessments. Details on the streams within the modules to allow for specialization in certain topics e.g research methods, statistics needs to be included. Intellectual Property considerations could be brought into the Research Integrity Module or Progressing Your Research Module. This should be highlighted as part of the approval of the initial research plan. Training on intellectual property considerations should be provided to new researchers and supervisors.

The title for training element 2 has been reconsidered by the Programme Committee and the Committee supports maintaining the title Professional Skills Development for element 2 of the programme. This title reflects the evolution across Ireland towards structured provision of research programmes which are designed to ensure candidates graduate *'with the transferable skills necessary to advance their careers across a broad range of employment sectors and to make significant contributions in any field. The institutions have also embraced an increasing diversity of academic and **professional** routes…including collaborative and inter-sectoral approaches, as well as provision for student mobility'* (NFDE) Specifically element 2 of the programme addresses Principle 3 of the NFDE, *'[This education] provides a high-quality research experience, training (including a formalised integrated programme of personal and **professional development**) and output consistent with international norms and best practice.'* The Programme Committee will keep the title of element 2 under consideration. More detail on content, assessment and delivery, including problem-based learning and streams has been included in the Student Handbook. Intellectual Property considerations are already included in Module 3 Progressing Your Research Module, but will also be included in the initial training plan. Training on intellectual property considerations is already provided to new researchers at Induction and supervisors in the License to Supervise.

A Communications plan needs to be put in place to improve communications and improve the knowledge of supervisors and students in relation to the forms that need to be completed at each stage.

Information on the Graduate Research Regulations, including its associated forms, is provided at Induction which is delivered in January, June and October each year and also at the License to Supervise training. An online course on Quality Assurance and the Graduate Research Regulations, is also in development. The communications plan is included in the programme development plan.

A transitions plan should be developed which outlines the arrangements and programme regulations which will apply to each cohort of currently registered students.

The Programme Committee is currently developing the implementation plan for the revised programme and is included in the Programme Development Plan. Our fundamental principle is that no student is negatively impacted by changes to their programme.

The Programme Committee should remove the ECTS limit for the application of RLP for exemptions and extend the timeframe for students to apply for RPL.

The Programme Committee will keep the issue of credits and specifically RPL under constant review.

These procedures will be kept under review and will align with any relevant TU Dublin policies as they are developed.

The Programme Committee should give consideration to how the programme can continue to implement some of the aspects of the programme that were designed on a temporary basis during the Covid-19 crisis, and more generally, how the programme will respond to work practice changes in a post-Covid-19 world.

Obviously campus access, including access to laboratories, is vital for some students to successfully complete their programme. However the Programme Committee has already considered how some aspects that were designed on a temporary basis during the Covid-19 crisis can be continued. Meetings with students and supervisors, meetings of the Committee and Graduate Research School Board may continue using the VLE or MS Teams. Delivery of training and induction will use a hybrid model and will be delivered face-to-face to ensure an on-campus experience but will also be broadcast by video to part-time and international students who may not be able to travel to the campus. Other aspects of the programme will be discussed in the coming months.

Observations

Clarity is required on the workload model and the timetabled hours assigned to supervise different types (full-time / part-time) of students and whether there should be a cap on the maximum number of timetable hours for research supervision. Further consideration in the workload model is required to encourage and facilitate staff to further engage in research and to consider the time requirements for applying for funding, administration of research projects, examining research students, chairing viva voce examinations and hosting visiting students. This could include, for example, the provision of opportunities to apply for sabbaticals and hosting visiting students. This could include the provision of more sabbaticals to facilitate supervisors.

Adequate structures, resources, training and expertise should be provided for ethical approval with a view to improving the efficiency of the process. Respecting the constraints, consideration should be given to different mechanisms and modes for ethical approval. The Graduate Research School should highlight this within the current Organisational Design Process.

Arrangements for supervision when the primary supervisor is on a leave of absence (e.g. maternity, paternity, parental leave, illness) need to be put in place.

Appendix 1– Editorial Inconsistencies

Student Handbook: P51 onwards - Module descriptors - 15/20 hours (it was 30 hours earlier). Where do the additional hours come in if the assessment is all continuous during the module? Same applies to other modules. [Remember that in section 3.2.5 the following is stated: "Professional development skills training for each group is delivered over five 6 hour days (30 hours), with additional online training and self-directed learning (70 hours) and therefore each week is approved for 5 ECTS."]

The Module Descriptors in the Student Handbook has been corrected.

The presentation and student handbook provided different details of the module requirements for PgDip and MPhil students

The Student Handbook has been corrected.

Appendix 2 - Feedback in relation to the draft Regulations

RPL Process for admission is not described

RPL for entry is described in section 1.4 of the Graduate Research Regulations (GRR).

These procedures will be kept under review and will align with any relevant TU Dublin policies as they are developed.

Graduate Mentor system is not described. How this be mandatory, how will mentors be selected and trained, what will their role be?

It is the role of supervisors to mentor the graduate student in their work and section 1.7 of the GRR describes this role and also the training which is provided through the License to Supervisor. Additional Good Practice Guidelines and Responsibilities are provided in appendix 1 of the GRR

P8 - Where's the code of conduct?

The Code of Conduct and its web link are described in section 1.1 of the GRR.

P15 – Should be stated as electives: "Such training in discipline specific skills is unique to each individual student and their project and is an inherent part of any PhD. As such, this training is included in Element 1 of research programmes and is not accredited separately. However, the Graduate Research School Office, if notified, will ensure that all discipline specific training successfully completed by the student will be noted on their record in the Student Information System."

Training in discipline specific skills is stated as electives in section 2.2 of the Graduate Research Regulations (GRR).

P18 – Further details required on module boards: "The Graduate Research School Office is responsible for organising the module board meetings to consider the assessment results for each student. Module boards will take place in February, July and November each year. Module Boards will be chaired by the Head of the Graduate Research School and all lecturers."

Full details of the module boards are provided in section 2.3.3.

P22. Feedback from students and supervisors. Who will this information be made available to?

As stated in section 3.7 of the Graduate Research Regulations (GRR), feedback from students and supervisors is considered first by the Faculty Head of Research who will compile a report to the Graduate Research School Office. From the Faculty Report feedback, the Head of the Graduate Research School drafts the Annual Programme Enhancement report for consideration and approval by the Research Programme Committee.

P23. *Former postdoctoral researchers and/or former employees of TU Dublin may act as external examiners 3 years after leaving the university.*
What about former PhD graduates?

There is no embargo on PhD graduates, who meet the criteria, acting as examiners.

P26. *The Graduate Research School Board shall then consider the recommendation taking account of the views of the examination panel and the Graduate Research School Office will provide written notification of the decision to the student.*
Can the GRSB override the decision of the Examination Panel?

Yes, the GRSB can override the decision of the Examination Panel, with documented justification. Ultimately, only Academic Council and not the GRSB or the Examination Panel, can approve an award.

P42 It states that if a student submits without the consent of the supervisor and then has major corrections, the Head of School has to appoint a new supervisor? What is there isn't anybody available and how does this section tie into Section 6.6.2.5 and 6.2.4
What is there isn't anybody available

The Head of School has no choice but to appoint a new supervisor. The GRR clearly state that Academic supervision is central to the successful completion of graduate research work. If a supervisor is not available within the same academic school then the Head of School can look to other schools in the University and also to another University to provide assistance.

P47/48. IP consideration must be given for PhDs by Prior Publication for research conducted in non-TU Dublin facilities.
What process is there for a PhD by Prior Publication for research conducted in another 3rd/4th Level Institution?

Generally all applications for registration for a PhD by Prior Publication is for research conducted outside of TU Dublin. Since the work is already published, it is not envisaged that there are any intellectual property issues. The process, including the submission of a statement certified by all joint authors concerned and confirming that there are no intellectual property issues, is described in section 5.5 of the GRR.

P50 Maximum leave periods do not match current legislation

Current legislation applies to staff with an employment contract and if they are also registered on any programme, employment law will take precedence, over the GRR. There is no legislation regarding leave for students.

P51. What is the procedure if a supervisor leaves the University and goes to another academic position in a different University? If the research funding was acquired by the supervisor, research overheads, etc.?

The procedure is described by individual funders and is implemented by the Graduate Research School.

P51. **6.2.4 Replacement Supervision**
Bullet point 3: How does the student make this known – what is the process and procedure?
Bullet point 4: How/Who assesses whether the supervisor has neglected their obligations?
Responsibility of the GRS or supervisor's Academic School. Procedure needed.

The processes and procedures are described in section 6.2.4 of the regulations.

P67. Not clear what the difference is between the **Head** of the GRS, and **Dean** of the GRS?

This is to be clarified in the Organisational Design project.

Please note that all sections of the Graduate Research Regulations will be kept under review and will align with any relevant TU Dublin policies as they are developed. This includes but is not limited to policies relating to:

Recognition of Prier Learning

Assessment Regulations

Appeals processes

Grievance processes

On behalf of the Programme Committee.

Mary Mc Namara

Prof Mary McNamara