

# Graduate Studies Regulations

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## **1. Purpose**

These policies set forth the mechanisms by which research Graduate Studies at the South-East Technological University, hereafter SETU, are governed. Further guidance and a framework for their implementation is set out in the SETU Graduate Studies Code of Practice, hereafter COP. While implementing these regulations no Learners admitted to the Masters or PhD register under legacy policies or procedures must be disadvantaged in the completion of their studies. Should clarification or further guidance be required please see the Graduate Studies Office, hereafter GSO.

## **2. Governance, Roles, and Responsibilities**

2.1. Under the Technological Universities Act (2018) the University's Academic Council oversees and controls the design, delivery, and implementation of the University's educational programmes through the regulations that govern the academic affairs of the University. In this context, the Academic Council approves the regulations and code of practice that sets forth the governance and conduct of Graduate Studies as it relates to Research Programmes leading to Level 9 or Level 10 awards, as it does for all programmes of education.

2.2. The Academic Council is responsible for the development and approval of policies and procedures related to the provision of Graduate Studies research degree programmes in SETU, for approval of admissions to and changes to the research postgraduate register, and for the appointment of examiners for research postgraduates. The Register of Learners admitted to the University shall be held and maintained by Academic Council. This shall contain details of the programme on which learners are registered, details of learners' progression, candidature and examination outcomes. Academic Council are required to approve any Masters by research or PhD programme that is proposed by an individual Research Programme Board and is supported by the Research Council.

2.3. Academic Council discharges its duties relating to, and has oversight of, Graduate Studies through two further committees, the Research Committee and individual School/Faculty Research Programme Boards. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

2.4. The Research Committee on behalf of, and with the oversight from, Academic Council is responsible for ensuring that Graduate Studies research programmes maintain the quality standards that underpin Level 9 and Level 10 awards. The Research Committee will support School/Faculty Research Programme Boards in creating an environment supportive of Graduate Studies research. The Research Committee will recommend the appointment of internal and external examiners, monitor and recommend decisions related to academic progress and candidature. Approve supervisory panels and research programmes.

2.5. Research Programme Boards are responsible for the design, development, and implementation of Graduate Studies research programmes on behalf of Academic Council and with Council's oversight. Programme Boards shall comprise of:

2.5.1. Chair: The Chair of the Research Programme Board, as nominated by the Head of School/Faculty, will direct the functions of the Research Programme Board as directed by Academic Council regulations and the accompanying code of practice. The Chair of the Research Programme Board will be supported in his/her role by the Graduate Studies Office.

2.5.2. Members: Active research supervisors within each School/Faculty shall act as members of Research Programme Boards. School/Faculty Research Programme Boards shall act to uphold the academic standard of research programmes leading to awards at NFQ Level 9 and Level 10.

2.6. In discharging their functions Research Programme Boards shall participate in the provision of the major stages of all Graduate research programmes as follows.

2.6.1. Research Programme Design: Research Programme Boards will facilitate the review of research programmes leading to Level 9 or Level 10 award and the proposed supervisory panel. Boards will present a recommendation to the Research Committee for consideration based on this review; all research programmes must receive approval from Academic Council. Research Programme Boards are not responsible for review of, or validation, of any taught element of a research programme.

2.6.2. Admissions: Research Programme Boards make recommendations to Research Committee and Academic Council regarding the admission of Learners to research programmes. Boards are directed by the Academic Council admissions regulations and recommendations take account of the available resources as determined by the Faculty/School. The Executive officer with ultimate responsibility for admissions and registration is the Registrar.

2.6.3. Progression, Candidature, and Examination: Research Examination Boards are convened from members of the Research Programme Board and function to assess the academic research progress and candidature of Learners, and receive the decision of examiners following assessment of a Learner's dissertation on behalf of Academic Council. Recommendations relating to progress and candidature are brought to the Research Committee for approval and in turn to Academic Council such that Learner Registers may be updated. Learner progress on taught modules are ratified by the Examination Boards of the host School/Faculty responsible for delivery of that module. The relationship between each committee and Academic Council as relates to the processes and procedures governing Graduate Studies is illustrated in Figure 2.

2.7. The Head of the Graduate Studies Office and Chairs of the Research Programme Boards will attend and report to the Research Committee as required and as directed within these regulations and code of practice. The Head of Graduate Studies will support Chairs of Research Programme Boards in discharging their duties as detailed within these regulations and accompanying code of practice.

2.8. Periodic Review within each School/Faculty shall present an opportunity for review of the quality and outcomes of Research Programmes provided at Level 9 and

Level 10. The report, and any recommendations, shall be presented to the Research Committee and Academic Council for approval.

Figure 1: Governance of Graduate Studies and QA Oversight

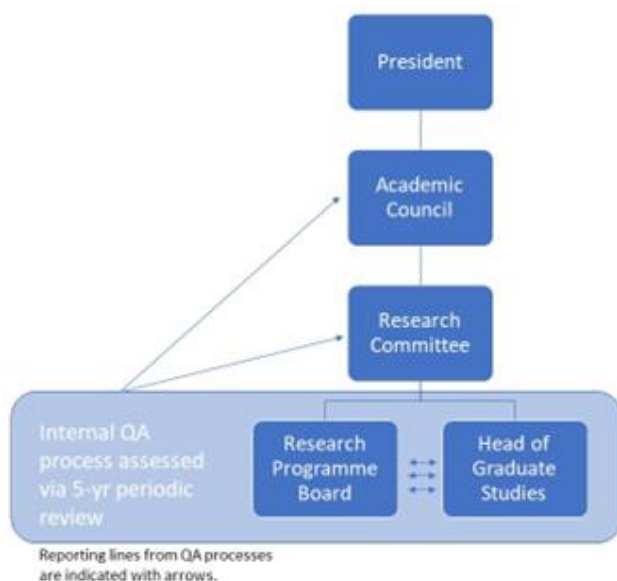
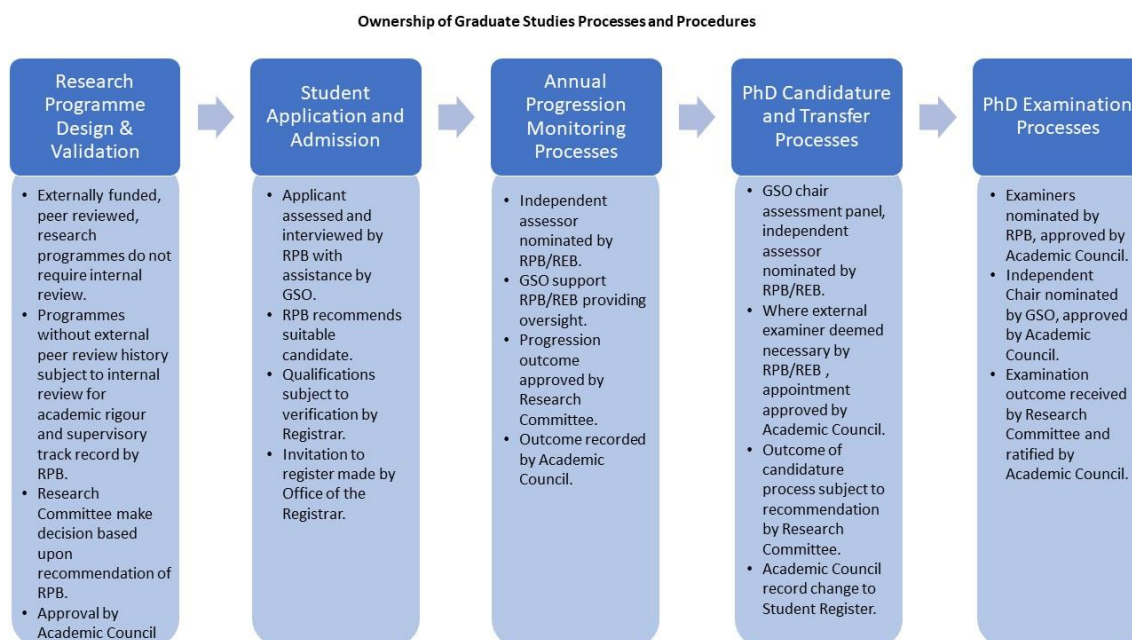


Figure 2: Ownership of Graduate Studies Processes and Procedures



### **3. Applications and Admissions**

- 3.1. All applicants seeking admission to a funded, or self-funded, postgraduate research programme must satisfy the same minimum SETU criteria.
- 3.2. Funded postgraduate applicants: Applicants applying for funded postgraduate positions must do so through the appropriate Research Support Office procedure(s).
- 3.3. Self-Funded postgraduate applicants: Self-funded applicants must in the first instance contact prospective Supervisors
- 3.4. The minimum academic entry requirement for admission to a Masters by Research or PhD degree is a 2.1 award in an Honours Bachelor Degree in a field of related study.
- 3.5. The University will also consider applications for Masters by Research and PhD programmes in respect of individual candidates who normally meet one of the following alternative entry qualifications, subject to the approval of Academic Council:
  - 3.5.1. hold a post-graduate Diploma from a recognised institution at least at Second Class Honours level, in an area of study cognate to the proposed study area;
  - 3.5.2. hold other qualifications and/or recognised experience as may be acceptable to Academic Council for the purposes of entry to the programme;
  - 3.5.3. have passed, with not less than Second Class Honours, an approved postgraduate degree qualifying examination conducted by SETU, prior to the registration and commencement of the Masters by Research or PhD degree programme.
- 3.6. Applicants whose degree was awarded outside Ireland must satisfy the same criteria and their qualifications will be reviewed to ensure equivalence.
- 3.7. Applicants wishing to apply for admission to a postgraduate Masters by Research programme on the basis of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), must satisfy the criteria set out in §3.
- 3.8. Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to demonstrate their competence in both spoken and written English through formal examination. The minimum requirements in accepted examinations are detailed within the COP §1.
- 3.9. For the purposes of admissions an applicant's degree(s), or qualifications, awarded outside of Ireland will be subject to verification to ensure equivalence by a suitably qualified body, e.g. National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC).
- 3.10. Applicant suitability will be assessed by the School/Faculty Research Programme Board with assistance from the Graduate Studies Office, via interview and other processes necessary to assess suitability for the postgraduate research within the chosen field.

3.11. Applicants can only be admitted onto programmes that have been approved as in §2 of the Graduate Studies regulations and code of practice.

3.12. The Graduate Studies office, on behalf of the School/Faculty Research Programme Board, can notify successful applicants that they are being recommended to Academic Council for approval to register.

3.13. Details of successful applicants will be presented to the Research Committee for approval before being forwarded to Academic Council.

3.14 Thereafter, successful applicants will receive a formal invitation to register by the Office of the Registrar.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 1 “Applications and Admissions.” for further details of the process.*



#### **4. Research Programme Design, Approval, and Periodic Review**

4.1. Where a proposed programme of postgraduate research is supported through funding that has been obtained following a competitive peer-review process; evidence of this will serve in place of internal review, §2.3, and indicate acceptance of the research programme.

4.2. Schools or Faculties, and their constituent research programme boards, have the authority to design individual programmes of research leading to award of either Masters by Research or PhD degree where there is a satisfactory Periodic Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes on record §2.6.

4.3. Schools or Faculties exercising this authority will notify the Graduate Studies Office when a new postgraduate programme of research is designed. Schools or Faculties must also notify, and receive support from the Research Committee, before obtaining final approval from Academic Council.

4.4. Schools or Faculties who have not satisfactorily completed a Periodic Review of Postgraduate Research must seek approval via internal assessment, as per code of practice §2, for a new postgraduate research programme prior to admission and registration of new learners into a programme of postgraduate research. This process must involve submission and review of the following details:

4.4.1. Proposal of an appropriate supervisory panel;

4.4.2. Description of a programme of postgraduate research suitable for the proposed Masters or PhD qualification;

4.4.3. Identification of SETU staff suitably qualified to conduct annual progression, and if required, confirmation or transfer assessments.

4.5. The Graduate Studies Office will facilitate an internal review and assessment of the collated application documents, presenting a recommendation to the Research Committee for approval.

4.6. Schools or Faculties hosting and awarding learners registered for Level 9 and Level 10 programmes must complete a periodic review of postgraduate research every 5-years.

4.6.1. Schools or Faculties must complete the self-evaluation element no more than 4-months prior to the end of the 5-year period.

4.6.2. The Graduate Studies Office will compile and supply a data report.

4.6.3. The Graduate Studies Office will nominate, a panel of reviewers composed of SETU academics and an external reviewer. The panel must also consist of the Registrar, and VP for Research or their nominees, the Head of Graduate Studies (acting as Chair), and one postgraduate researcher learner.

4.6.4. The Graduate Studies Office will nominate an external reviewer, as per COP §2, with subject matter expertise and a demonstrable track record of successful postgraduate research supervision.

4.6.5. The Graduate Studies Office will facilitate feedback sessions between the review panel and current postgraduate research learners and School or Faculty staff with supervision duties. The review panel will document their findings in a report that details their recommendations to the Research Committee for actioning.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 2 “Research Programme Design, Approval and Periodic Review” for further details of the process.*

## **5. Recognition of Prior Learning**

- 5.1. Applicants may apply for admission to a postgraduate Masters by Research Programme on the basis of recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- 5.2. Where RPL is sought for PhD pathways modules it must not be applied to more than 50% of the Universal or Project Pathway modules in a Research Degree Programme.
- 5.3. Applicants must complete and submit the SETU Research Postgraduate Programme Utilising Recognition of Prior Learning Form.
- 5.4. The RPL application process may require applicants to attend for interview or submit for supplementary evaluation activities.
- 5.5. Any RPL assessment is independent of the admissions process to determine suitability for entry into a postgraduate research programme.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 3 "Recognition of Prior Learning" for further details of the process.*

## 6. Registration

6.1. Learners registered full-time for a postgraduate programme leading to a PhD award must be registered for a minimum of 36 months. In normal circumstances, learners registered for a PhD award can be registered for no longer than 48 months.

6.2. Learners registered full-time for a postgraduate Masters by Research Programme must be registered for a minimum of 12 months before completion and are allowed no longer than 24 months to complete their programme under normal circumstances.

6.3 After expiration of their initial registration period all learners are permitted period of three months, or the part-time equivalent, during which they must submit their dissertation. Learners must apply in writing to the Research Committee for consideration of this time period providing evidence to support their application and details of a timeframe and action plan to support their submission. Applications considered by the Research Committee will be forwarded to the Academic Council for ratification.

6.4. For learners that successfully transfer from the Masters to PhD register during their programme the minimum and maximum registration periods allowed shall be calculated from the date of initial learner registration on the Masters by Research programme.

6.5. Learners registered part-time for a postgraduate programme are nominally expected to be registered for twice the periods expected of full-time learners.

6.6. Learners may apply for a single period of deferral of at least one semester lasting up to three consecutive semesters. Where a deferral is granted the date at which the minimum period of registration occurs is adjusted accordingly. Both the minimum and maximum registration periods are not reduced or extended, respectively, where a learner is granted a deferral.

6.7. The total cumulative period for which a learner may defer is not allowed to exceed 3 semesters. This excludes periods of statutory leave as detailed within the *Code of Practice*.

6.8. Learners may not apply for a retrospective deferral unless in exceptional cases where extenuating circumstances can be evidenced.

6.9. Where a learner's application for a deferral is approved their access to SETU facilities, e.g. library resources, is suspended.

6.10. Where a learner has deferred their research programme, they must apply, with supporting evidence, for a fee deferral to avoid liability for fees due for the affected semester using the SETU fee deferral procedures.

6.11. Learners who initially registered for their research programme with either, ITC or WIT, are required to complete the mandatory elements of their programme as described by their Research Programme Board at the time of registration.

6.12. Learners registered from September 2022 are required to complete mandatory training in research ethics and integrity but also to enrol on credit-bearing modules that are both discipline specific and ensure that individual professional development goals are met.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 4 “Registration and Structure of Postgraduate Research Programmes” for further details of the processes and required structure of research programmes.*

## **7. Supervision**

7.1. Each postgraduate research learner will have a supervisory panel. The principal aim of the supervisory panel is to participate in formal decision-making with respect to the learner’s academic studies, their progress, providing advice, support, and pastoral care as appropriate.

7.2. The supervisory panel must have a nominated principal supervisor who should be an expert in the field of study as demonstrated by published work or comparable outputs deemed acceptable to the discipline.

7.3. The principal supervisor shall be member of SETU academic staff, with a contract of employment extends beyond the normal expected registration period of the candidate.

7.4. The principal supervisor shall be qualified to a level at least equivalent to that of the award being sought.

7.5. SETU staff members should not accept a role on a supervisory panel where a conflict of interest involving the postgraduate research learner exists.

7.6. Academic members of staff not having supervised a postgraduate learner to completion must include an experienced member of academic staff on the proposed supervisory panel who will act in an advisory role to the principal supervisor.

7.7. Where a non-SETU staff member is appointed to a supervisory panel they cannot act as a principal supervisor, this includes honorary staff members.

7.8. It is the responsibility of the relevant Chair of the Research Programme Board, assisted by the Graduate Studies Office, to ensure that appropriate supervision remains in place in situations where a member of the supervisory panel leaves SETU.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 5 “Supervision” for further details.*

## **8. Annual Progression Monitoring**

- 8.1. All Learners registered on a research programme must participate in the annual progression monitoring process to ensure good academic progress is being made.
- 8.2. Learners must submit a report no later than eight weeks from the end of the final semester of their academic year for review.
- 8.3. Learners who have completed the confirmation or transfer process will not be subject to the annual progression monitoring process within the same academic year.
- 8.4. Supervision teams must submit a report of the learner's progress to the Research Examination Board in advance of the Research Examination Board Meeting.
- 8.5. An independent member of the Research Examination Board, nominated by the Chair, will review these reports and submit their findings to the Research Examination Board.
- 8.6. The Graduate Studies Office will present the learner's progress in terms of completion of Universal Pathway Modules to the Research Examination Board.
- 8.7. The Research Examination Board will provide an assessment of progression as satisfactory, requires improvement, or unsatisfactory to the Research Committee for approval. This outcome is notified to Academic Council and the Registrar's Office to update/maintain the register.
- 8.8. Satisfactory completion of the annual progression monitoring process is required for all Learners to ensure they remain registered on either the Masters Research Register or the PhD Register.
- 8.9. Where an assessment of unsatisfactory is provided to the Registrar's Office the learner's registration for their current research award will be terminated.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 6 "Progression Monitoring of Postgraduate Research Students" for further details of the process.*

## 9. Confirmation and Transfer

9.1. Learners admitted to a PhD track or Structured PhD research programme should complete an application to confirm their, or transfer to a, PhD candidature not less than 12 months after initial registration and not later than one year before the expected date of submission for examination of the thesis under the proposed Level 10 programme.

9.2. Learners registered on a structured PhD programme may be required to have completed at least 15 ECTS before applying for confirmation, subject to the requirements of their Research Programme Board.

9.3. Learners registered part-time should normally apply to undertake confirmation or transfer no earlier than after 24 months of study.

9.4. The candidature panel shall assess the learner's application, their defence of the application, and the accompanying supervisor report.

9.5. The candidature panel will recommend to the Research Programme Board that the learner: is confirmed in their PhD candidature or is recommended for a transfer to the PhD register; that the learner be permitted to resubmit their confirmation or transfer proposal; that the learner remain on, or be transferred to, the Level 9 Masters by Research register; or that the learner be removed from their current register and no degree awarded.

9.6. Where the Chair of the Research Programme Board deems it necessary, an external reviewer may be appointed to the candidature panel.

9.7. The Research Programme Board will submit their decision to the Academic Council for ratification.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 7 "Confirmation and Transfer for PhD Candidature" for further details of the process.*

## 10. Examination

10.1. Learners must submit, with the approval of their supervision panel, for examination their dissertation, and accompanying work, at least two months in advance of their School/Faculty Research Examination Board meeting in the final academic year of the research programme on which they are registered.

10.2. Learners may submit for examination their dissertation without the approval of their supervision team, once this is noted and recorded by the Graduate Studies Office.

10.3. Examination must include an assessment of the written dissertation, and accompanying work. A *viva voce* is mandatory for all PhD awards and for Masters by research awards at the request of the external examiner.

10.4. Assessment will be conducted by a suitable qualified internal and external examiner.

10.5. Both examiners will present independent assessments of the dissertation before conducting the *viva voce*.

10.6. The *viva voce* will be presided over by an Independent Chair nominated by the RPB.

10.7. The Examiners and Chair will be nominated via the Intention to Submit form and approved by Academic Council. Learners may submit their dissertation for examination without the approval of their supervision team, once this is noted and recorded by the Graduate Studies Office.

10.8. Following completion of the *viva voce* the examiners will provide a single recommendation for award without modification, with minor correction, with referral for modification, with referral for modification and examination, recommend award at level 9, or recommendation of no award. Should re-examination be required, candidates may present for re-examination on one further occasion only.

10.9. The examiner recommendation will be submitted to the Research Examination Board for consideration alongside the learners record of completion of ECTS, if appropriate.

10.10. The Research Examination Board shall forward the examination outcome to the Research Council for approval and to the Academic Council.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 8 "Assessment of Dissertation and Research Output(s)" for further details of the process.*



## **11. Professional Doctorate Admissions, Structure, and Examination**

11.1. SETU currently delivers a Professional Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) composed of taught module elements, a cumulative paper series (CPS), and a research dissertation.

11.2. Admission to the DBA programme is subject to a minimum requirement of an MBA, or equivalent Master's degree, plus at least five years' management experience, ideally at senior level.

11.3. Admission to the DBA is administered by the University's Admission Office, in conjunction with the School of Business.

11.4. DBA candidates are allocated two Research Supervisors in Phase 1 after completion of Workshop 3.

11.5. The examination of the DBA programme operates on the basis of accumulation of credits over the entire programme. Credits are accumulated in Phase 1 for the workshop assessments, in Phase 2 for the panel-examined papers and in Phase 3 for the DBA thesis and viva voce.

11.6. Candidates must successfully undertake a transfer process from Phase 1 to Phase 2, the doctoral colloquium.

11.7. Candidates who are unsuccessful at the Phase 1 to Phase 2 transfer or who do not wish to complete Phases 2 and 3 may apply for the exit award of the Post Graduate Diploma in Business Research Methods.

11.8. Examinations and examiners are bound by the policies and procedures set out in the "Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes" for all elements of the DBA, except the dissertation element that is governed by §8 of the Graduate Studies Regulations.

11.9. The Degree of Doctor of Business Administration is awarded without classification.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 9 "Professional Doctorate of Business Administration" and the "School of Business DBA Programme Handbook" for further details of the process.*

## **12. Complaints, Grievances, Mitigations, and Appeals**

- 12.1. Learners have the right to appeal academic decisions that arise during the annual progression, confirmation or transfer, and viva processes.
- 12.2. Applications must be made to the Office of the Registrar who will convene a Research Degree Appeal (RDA) Board.
- 12.3. The RDA Board will in the first instance establish whether there are valid grounds for appeal. This decision will be communicated to the Learner within seven working days.
- 12.4. If there are valid grounds for appeal the outcome will be notified to the Learner within a further twenty-one working days.
- 12.5. Learners may file an informal or formal complaint regarding their supervision, or aspects of their research programme.
- 12.6. Learners may utilise SETU's Learner Complaints Policy and its Respect and Dignity at Work Policy where appropriate.
- 12.7. Learners are permitted to apply for mitigations circumstances, and receive accommodations, in relation to their viva voce examination.

*Please see the Graduate Studies Code of Practice Section 10 "Complaints, Grievances, Mitigations and Appeals" for further details of the process.*

### **13. Research Ethics and Research Integrity**

13.1. All postgraduate research learners must complete training in research ethics and integrity during the first 12 months of their initial registration.

13.2. All research must be conducted in line with policies, procedures and guidance of the SETU Research Ethics Committee.

13.3. All research is subject to the SETU Research Integrity Policy.

*Please see SETU Research Ethics and Integrity Policies and Procedures for further details, see also the SETU GSO Training Catalogue for details of training opportunities.*