UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Doctoral College

Doctoral College Handbook

A Guide for Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students and Supervisors



Doctoral College
Level 2, Foundation Building

Email: DoctoralCollege@ul.ie

ul.ie/research/**doctoral-college**

Disclaimer:
Please note that this Doctoral College Handbook is for information purposes only. The content of the handbook does not supersede the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

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Introduction

The Doctoral College at University of Limerick (UL) enables postgraduate research (PGR) students to pursue original research and develop transversal skills that will help maximise their contribution to academia, industry and society.

Central to the enactment of this is quality education (programmes and training), increasing infrastructural efficiencies, accommodating diversity of research and research needs, and providing networking opportunities as part of a community of researchers.

The Doctoral College will be directed in its work by the most important strategic priorities for doctoral education, which are funding for doctoral education, research ethics and integrity, quality of supervision, and internationalisation.

There is a need to centralise doctoral education (and associated populations) across UL and to heighten the experience by supporting a meaningful, relevant and worthwhile doctoral education ecosystem.

The Doctoral College will advocate for the provision of (i) feasible and relevant doctoral programmes, (ii) a quality experience for PGR students and supervisors, and (iii) regulations and guidelines that support diverse contexts to produce excellent original research.

Purpose of the Doctoral College Handbook

It is envisaged that this Doctoral College Handbook will act as an information resource for both PGR students and their supervisors while signposting where students and supervisors can access more detailed information in relation to the administration processes and procedures that underpin the students' academic journey.

It is not intended that this handbook will replicate the information given in related resources that are updated on an ongoing basis (available from the Doctoral College website and UL Policy Hub). In terms of the weblinks contained within this handbook, it should be noted that top-level links to the relevant host websites have been provided. We have not linked directly to the actual policies or procedures as most of these direct links are updated periodically. The specific policy or procedure can be accessed from the top-level webpage by scrolling down or using the search function.



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1 Doctoral College Committee Structure

1.1 Doctoral College Working Group

The UL Doctoral College Working Group (DCWG) was established to provide guidance and support to doctoral and research master's students, supervisors and doctoral programme directors throughout UL. The Doctoral College works to help provide PGR students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective researchers and scholars in their respective fields.

The DCWG plays a central role in the decision-making processes of UL's PGR offerings. The input of the DCWG is essential in the development of policies and strategies needed to achieve the objectives of the University in relation to PGR students. Members of the DCWG will work collaboratively with one another to bring about the best possible experience for UL PGR students, faculty, supervisors and administrative support staff.

The DCWG serves as an advisory body to the University's leadership, academic faculty and research institutes. The DCWG is responsible for providing advice and recommendations on academic policies, regulations and procedures as well as promoting communication and collaboration across UL's PGR programmes.

1.2 Postgraduate Research Committee

The Associate Vice President Doctoral College or alternate will be the chairperson of PGR Committee. The PGR Committee plays a significant role in ensuring that the University's academic regulations pertaining to PGR applications, external examiners and supervision are adhered to and are of a standard befitting UL. The PGR Committee may also be required to decide on the suitability of examination panels for research degrees and other matters, including amendments that may arise in relation to UL's PGR degree academic regulations and procedures.

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2 Postgraduate Research Degrees

UL offers postgraduate research awards at two levels: Master's by Research (Level 9) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (Level 10).

Both require the investigation of fact and communication to a wider audience in the form of conference and journal publication and a final thesis. In the case of PhD awards, the thesis may consist of either a monograph or a specified number of published journal papers, known as an article-based PhD. The method of examining the PhD thesis is the same in either case.

2.1 Master 's by Research

A Master's by Research degree (Level 9) is designed for students to develop advanced skills in carrying out independent and sustained research. However long the research takes, the thesis is capped at a maximum of 180 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits (90 credits = 1 year). The thesis demonstrates a critical application of specialist knowledge and makes an independent contribution to existing scholarship in research.

On the completion of the thesis, students should be able to:

- demonstrate advanced learning in research skills and mastery of appropriate techniques, such as the use of archival or primary evidence, analysis of data and judgment of conflicting evidence
- demonstrate specialist knowledge in their research
- present the results of their research in publishable quality or work towards incorporating their findings in further research
- demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to research ethics or codes of practice

The title awards are as follows:

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Laws (LLM)
- Master of Architecture (MArch)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business Studies (MBS)
- Master of Surgery (MChir)
- Master of Education (MEd)
- Master of Technology (MTech)
- Master of Engineering (MEng)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)

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2 Postgraduate Research Degrees

2.2 Doctor of Philosophy – Traditional and Structured PhD Programmes

While the PhD (Level 10) requires broadly the same attributes as a research master's, the PhD must contain original contributions to knowledge. Currently, PhDs in Ireland fall into the categories below:

'Traditional' Model:
However long the research takes, the thesis is capped at a maximum of 270 ECTS credits (90 credits = 1 year). The research thesis is the focus.

Structured PhD:
The structured PhD includes the taught elements being tailored to the individual researcher's needs as well as the research thesis.

The following are key characteristics of a structured PhD programme in Irish universities. Such programmes may involve inter-institutional collaboration.

- The core component of a structured PhD programme is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time, the structured PhD is designed to meet the needs of an employment market, which is wider than academia.
- The programme involves a high-quality research experience, training and outputs consistent with international norms and best practice.
- To support the original research activity, the following elements are included:
  - A formalised integrated programme of education, training, and personal and professional development activities
  - The development of discipline-specific knowledge, research skills and generic/ transferable skills
  - Declared outcomes and graduate attributes in line with national and international best practice
- The thesis is supervised by a primary supervisor, usually with a supporting panel approved by the institution.
- Progress to completion is formally monitored against published criteria and supported by formal institutional arrangements in line with national and international best practice.
- Successful completion and examination of the research thesis is the basis for the award of the PhD degree.
- Registration is normally for four years for a full-time student.

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2 Postgraduate Research Degrees

In addition to the academic skills acquired during their studies, a PhD student will acquire the following transferable skills:

- Research skills
- Ethics and social understanding skills
- Personal effectiveness transferable skills
- Team-working and leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Entrepreneurship and innovation skills

Further details on doctoral skills are available in the Irish Universities Doctoral Skills Statement, published by the Irish Universities Association (IUA).

For information on PGR degree marks and standards, refer to chapter 2 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures. Use the search function on the Policies webpage to find the handbook.

2.3 Professional Doctorate Programmes

A professional doctorate is a practice-based (or practitioner work-based) Level 10 specialist qualification that incorporates both a taught and research component. Designed to promote professional development in a specific academic discipline, the qualification is normally pursued on a part-time basis. For some professions, the qualification is an entry-level requirement.

The general aim of these higher degrees is to develop novel approaches to integrating academic and professional knowledge. Professional practice is a key tenet for the experienced professionals undertaking the qualification because the candidate taking the professional doctorate programme is expected to contribute to both theory and practice in their field.

Common to all professional doctorate qualifications is the completion by the candidate of an original piece of research presented as a thesis and examined by an expert in the relevant field. The research project usually relates to 'real-life' issues in a professional practice context. Professional doctorates include taught module elements, such as lectures, seminars, workshops and practice-based placement. Such elements are formally assessed through a combination of coursework, examinations, practical demonstrations and a thesis. Further specific programme information can be accessed from UL's Professional/flexible programmes list. Please use the search function to access the details of the relevant programme.

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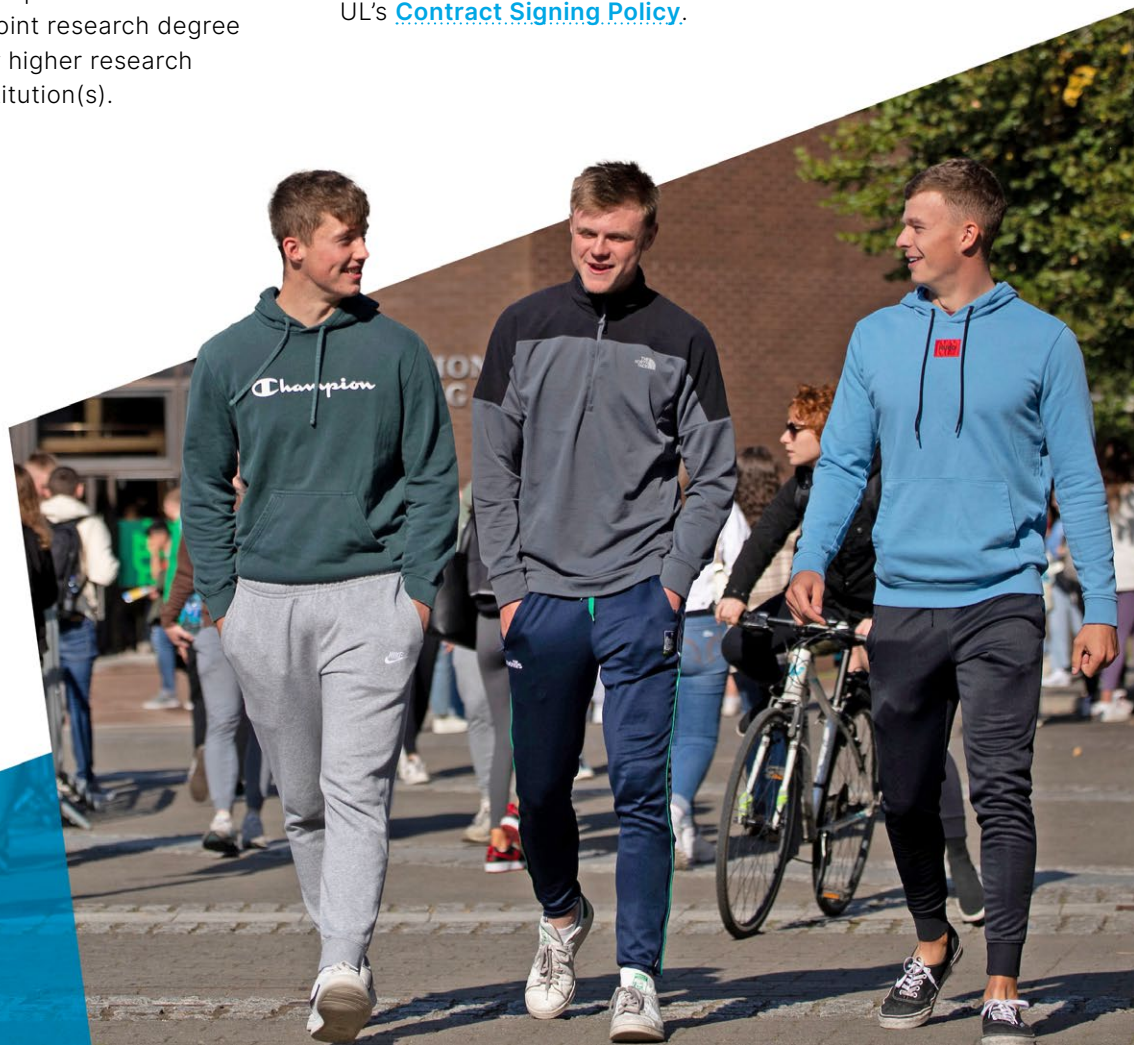
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2 Postgraduate Research Degrees

2.4 Joint Research Degrees

UL supports links and collaborations with other relevant partners, including higher education institutions and industry partners. Where appropriate and in line with UL's strategic goals, the University will enter into agreement, on an individual-case or cohort basis, with such higher education partner institutions for accrediting and awarding a joint research degree to students who undertake their higher research degree at UL and at partner institution(s).

As per the Policy on Collaborative and Transnational Education Provision, applications to engage in joint research degrees must be approved by the Standing Panel on Collaborations (SPC) by way of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and/or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the partner institutions and signed in accordance with UL's Contract Signing Policy.



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3 Admission and Early Stages

How you apply for your PGR programme will depend on whether you have identified a supervisor and agreed on a draft research proposal with your proposed supervisor.

Prospective PGR students may apply for admission to a PGR programme at any time throughout the year. The PGR Committee normally meets on the first Tuesday of every month to approve new applications.

3.1 Application Forms and Admissions Procedures

A prospective applicant who has not identified a supervisor should complete an expression of interest form available from the Doctoral College (How to Apply) and include a CV and a two-to-three-page research project proposal.

These documents need to be returned to Doctoral.College@ul.ie, which will circulate them to the appropriate faculty/department/school and seek the availability of a potential supervisor.

A prospective PGR applicant who has identified a supervisor and has agreed to a research project with their supervisor should complete the PGR application form. Application forms and detailed information on the PGR application, admission and enrolment process are available on the How to Apply webpage.

You will need to ensure that your PGR application form is fully completed. Include a copy of your official transcript of results (non-UL applicants), your research proposal and, where relevant, confirmation of English Language certificate accepted by UL. Please refer to the How to Apply webpage.

Your completed PGR application form and required documents can be submitted to your faculty administrator or to Doctoral.College@ul.ie for approval. If you are a funded PGR student, you will need to complete the Payroll – Financial Aid Scheme – Post-Graduate Students form or the Scholarship Exemption Declaration Form. When the completed application form is received by the Doctoral College, your qualifications are verified and the form is returned to your faculty administrator for approval by the Faculty PGR Committee (or equivalent).

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3 Admission and Early Stages

3.2 Entry Requirements

PGR entry requirements are as follows:

- An appropriate master's or equivalent qualification from a university or other institution that is recognised by UL following a period of study similar to that required in UL

  or

- A bachelor (honour's) degree with a minimum award of 2nd Class Honours, Grade 1 or equivalent.

  or

- Students with a minimum of four years' acceptable professional experience may be considered for entry as per chapter 5, section 5.4 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

3.3 Writing a Research Proposal

All PGR students must prepare a short research proposal in consultation with their supervisor. This is to ensure that you have a clear sense of what the research question(s) might be when you enter your first year as a research student.

The research proposal should be a topic in which you are interested. The proposal should be between 1,000 and 2,000 words and should include:

- A description of the topic (with suggested title), indicating the general aims of the research and how these differ from previous published work in the field
- An explanation of the main concepts and theories relevant to the research and the proposed methods of investigation
- A justification of choice of objectives from an academic viewpoint
- A list of the main questions or hypotheses to be addressed by your research
- The proposed research methodology, indicating what is to be studied and how data will be collected
- An indication of any practical applications that the research might have
- A research plan, indicating the main tasks and timescales
- Your reasons for wishing to undertake the research at UL
- A short bibliography citing the main works of reference (refer to the library's referencing guidelines)

Please note:
Faculties may have additional or more specific guidelines in relation to the preparation of a research proposal within the relevant disciplinary area.

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3.4 Part-Time Research Study

UL may permit registration for part-time research if students can attend the University for such periods as are necessary for adequate supervision. Permission for such part-time registration must be sought before registration, and all circumstances relating to the part-time study must be set out during this process.

PGR students on the full-time register who obtain other full-time employment after two years on the master's register or three years on the PhD register may apply in writing to Academic Registry. Such applications must have the written support of the supervisor.

3.5 PGR Student Email Account

When you submit your completed and signed enrolment form and associated documents by email, you will be sent details on how to activate your student email account.

After you have enrolled, all formal communications from the University will be sent to your UL email address, which is a merged email account: student email (studentidno@studentmail.ul.ie) and PGR email (Surname.Firstname@ul.ie). Please ensure you monitor this merged email account on a regular basis and action communications relating to your studies, as required.

3.6 PGR Student ID Card

Details on how to request your student ID card online will be emailed to you by the Doctoral College when you have completed the process of enrolling onto your PGR programme.

3.7 Information Technology Division

The Information Technology Division (ITD) is the central IT services function at UL. ITD is responsible for supporting, maintaining and developing UL's information and communications technology. Go to Student IT Services for more information.

PGR students who have issues with their login credentials, accessing their student account, the Brightspace virtual learning environment (VLE) or printing need to contact the ITD Service Desk. PGR students can also use Student IT Services for various resources and software, such as Matlab, SPSS, Minitab, Endnote and NVivo.

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3.8 Student Tuition Fees

There are two student fee classifications: European Union (EU) and Non-EU. EU fee status applies to domestic or EU students or students who have been resident as a taxpayer in the EU, European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss State for three of the last five years. Non-EU fee status applies to all other students. Refer to the Student Fees Documents section of the Finance Documents webpage for more details.

All PGR students are liable for two years of full fees for a Master's by Research and four years of full fees for a PhD. Furthermore, continuation fees apply for a master's from Year 3 onwards and for a PhD from Year 5 onwards. In terms of your potential liability for continuation fees, the Fees Office assesses the ongoing fee liability on a case-by-case basis.

In terms of paying continuation fees, there is a six-month grace period allowed for PGR students to write up their final thesis. Fees will not be charged during this time. This six-month credit may be retrospectively applied once the final thesis has been submitted and approved by a University Examination Board.

3.9 Postgraduate Research Funding

Many research students are supported from external sources of funding such as:

- Research Ireland (Taighde Éireann), constituted after a merger between the Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)
- Various research grants from industry, government departments and agencies, Enterprise Ireland and the EU.

The level of external postgraduate funding will vary in accordance with the funding source and the terms and conditions specified by the funding body.

The main UL-funded scholarships are listed on www.ul.ie/research/doctoral-college. In addition, the faculties, departments and schools may have information relating to funding.

Other postgraduate scholarships, which are usually advertised annually (May), include:

- Plassey Centre scholarships
- A limited number of faculty EU and non-EU fee scholarships

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3.10 Financial Aid Form and Scholarship Exemption Declaration Form

To activate a PGR scholarship stipend, a postgraduate financial aid form must be fully completed and signed. The form can be accessed from the Finance Forms webpage (scroll down to P to find the Payroll – Financial Aid Scheme – Post-Graduate Students form). Additionally, funded PGR students who receive their stipend payment via the UL postgraduate payroll are required to complete a Revenue Scholarship Exemption Declaration form (accessible under R on the Finance Forms webpage). Any queries relating to postgraduate scholarship payments and the Scholarship Exemption Declaration form should be submitted to salaries@ul.ie. The Salaries section is located in the Main Building, Block A, Level 2.

3.11 UL Global Office: Visa and Immigration Supports

The following visa and immigration supports and services are offered by UL Global:

- Visa application support
- Immigration first-time registration appointments and support
- Immigration renewal support
- Immigration extension support with the Domestic Residence Department, Dublin
- Third-level graduate scheme

In addition, UL Global delivers monthly visa and immigration information clinics to non-EU students. For queries relating to visas or immigration, please contact ULGlobal@ul.ie.

3.12 PGR and Structured PhD Module Registration

Structured PhD and research students should ensure that the relevant generic and transferable skills module(s) and research skills module(s) are recorded on their student transcript. All the module requirements for the Structured PhD programme should be agreed with your supervisor. PGR students who undertake modules should receive ECTS credits for the modules they successfully complete during their studies. You should also contact your programme coordinator to discuss any queries that you may have in relation to module registration.

The number of ECTS credits awarded depends on the Structured PhD programme being undertaken. The appropriate number of ECTS credits awarded, normally, on a pass/fail basis should be signed off by the supervisor or the chair of the Research Review Panel and the Director of the Structured PhD programme. Please note that there may be a minimum and/or a maximum ECTS credits requirement associated with individual Structured PhD programmes. Registration forms for a Structured PhD programme and research student module(s) must be completed and returned to Academic Registry via the Student Hub for processing.

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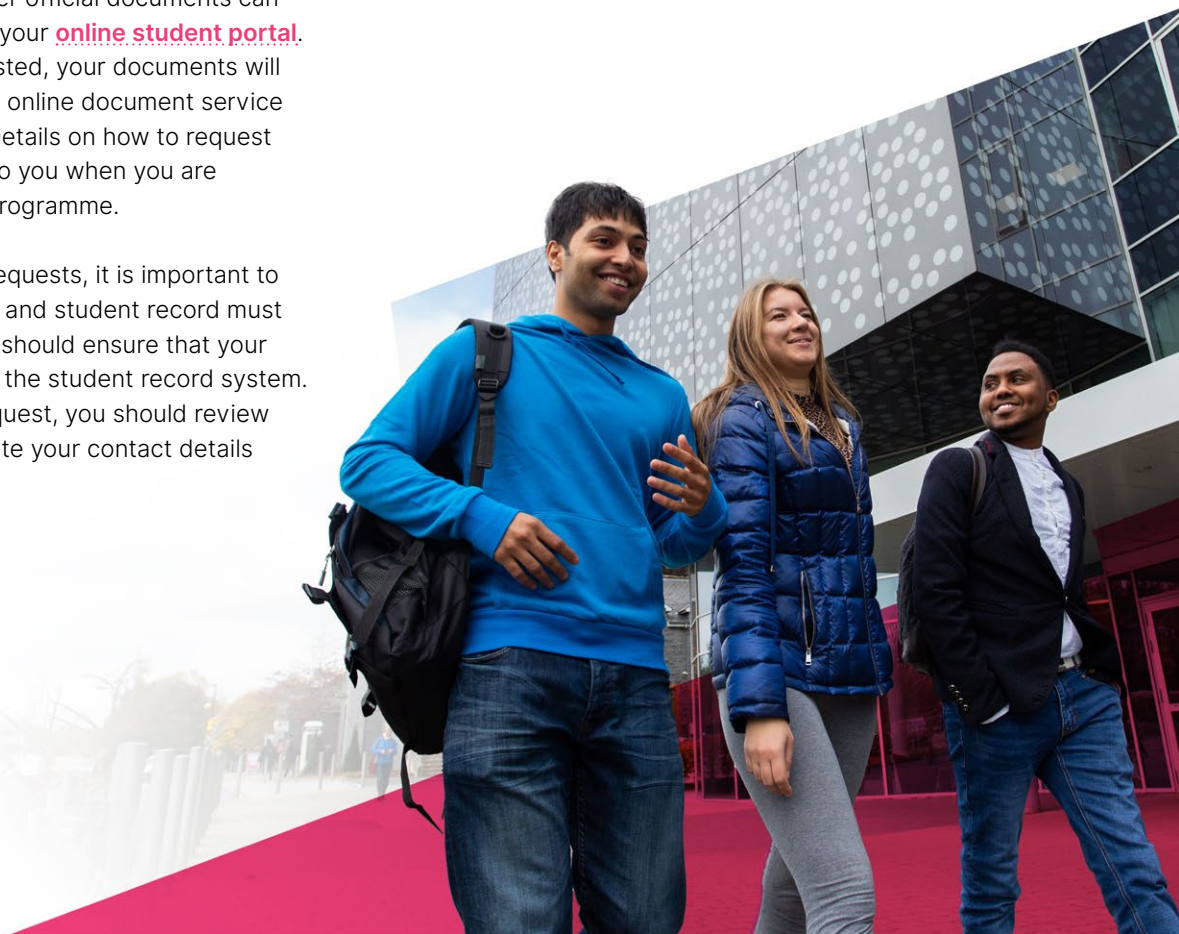
3.13 Official Letter Requests: Visa/Immigration/Confirmation of Registration

PGR students who are currently registered can, if required, request a Confirmation of Registration and Attendance letter. The letter can be used to support a PGR student when they are applying for a visa renewal or interacting with the Immigration Services.

Your Confirmation of Registration and Attendance letter, visa support letter and all other official documents can be requested by you through your online student portal. Once a letter has been requested, your documents will be sent to you by Digitary, an online document service for students and graduates. Details on how to request your documents will be sent to you when you are registered on your research programme.

In terms of the official letter requests, it is important to note that your student details and student record must be up to date. Therefore, you should ensure that your contact details are correct on the student record system. Prior to submitting a letter request, you should review your student details and update your contact details using the student portal.

If your registration end date is incorrect or has expired, you should initially contact the Doctoral College via email (DoctoralCollege@ul.ie), which will advise in relation to the matter. If you need to extend the duration of your studies, please refer to section 4.11 of this handbook. Please note that you will not be able to access your student portal while exam grading is taking place. If you require a confirmation of registration letter during this time, contact a member of the Doctoral College team (DoctoralCollege@ul.ie).



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4 Postgraduate Research Student

4.1 UL Student Charter

UL's mission is to build on the expertise of its scholars in creating, harnessing and imparting knowledge for the benefit of its students and the enrichment of its community.

UL's goal is to foster a student-centred learning and research environment to enable students to develop as independent, creative and critical thinkers, which will help them to become engaged citizens, professionals and potential future leaders.

The UL Student Charter describes what students can expect from the University and what the University expects of its students. The Charter, which can be accessed from the UL Policy Hub, is guided by the principles of quality service as set out in the HEA's Code of Governance for Irish Universities.

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4 Postgraduate Research Student

4.2 PGR Academic Support: Postgraduate Tutor Demonstrator

A registered PGR student may be engaged by UL to provide teaching support as a Postgraduate Tutor Demonstrator (PTD) under the direction and guidance of a supervising member of staff. Teaching support involves working as a tutor and/or demonstrator. As well as being an important teaching support function, the position enables the PGR student to gain valuable teaching experience in their discipline of interest.

In undertaking the duties of a PTD, an appropriate balance must be achieved between study and work commitments. Any issues in relation to such matters should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the relevant supervisor, Head of School/Department and/or Module Coordinator.

UL limits the number of teaching hours completed by the PTD to an average of six per week. This figure is subject to a maximum of 72 teaching hours per semester and should be agreed in advance with the Head of School/ Department and supervisor.

A PGR may be in receipt of a grant that specifically precludes them from engaging in teaching-related work, which makes them ineligible to work as a PTD. The PTD is paid an hourly rate and works the hours mutually agreed with the Head of School/Department and supervisor. The hourly rate is set by UL and is non-negotiable.

Any agreement in place regarding PTD allocation of duties ends automatically when the PGR student ceases to be registered in UL. It may be prudent to set a maximum number of semesters to undertake such duties, with the continuation of PTD work being optional in the final year of study.

4.3 Employment During Your Studies

Full-time EEA and non-EEA students holding a valid immigration visa (stamp 2 permission) may work up to 20 hours per week during term time. During the summer holidays (June to September inclusive), students may work up to 40 hours per week. Non-EEA students with stamp 2A permission are not allowed to work.

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4.4 Annual Leave and Study Hours

Annual leave should be agreed in advance between the PGR student and their supervisor, having regard to the PGR student's funding terms, academic support and research commitments. In terms of international PGR students, subject to prior agreement with the supervisor, the annual leave entitlement may be taken to facilitate travel to their home country. Regarding other forms of leave for PGR students, such as maternity, carers and paternity leave, a leave of absence form should be completed.

PGR students are not normally employed by UL to undertake their research degree and thus are not subject to contractual hours of attendance. Full-time PGR students are ordinarily expected to dedicate 37 hours per week to their studies. Part-time PGR students normally undertake a two-thirds weekly equivalent to that of a full-time PGR student. Annual leave (excluding public holidays) for full-time PGR students is 20 working days per calendar year.

During your PGR programme, the research may be carried out at UL or remotely from time to time at another location with agreement from your supervisory team. PGR students must be available to attend UL for such periods as are necessary for the adequate supervision of their research as well as annual PGR student progression. Therefore, satisfactory arrangements must be in place.



4.5 Copyright and Intellectual Property

The candidate retains the copyright to the thesis. All other intellectual property (including inventions, discoveries, copyright in computer software (e.g. source and object codes) and other types of copyright, semiconductor maskworks, trade secrets, know-how, research data, tangible research property and similar property/rights) conceived, invented or reduced to practice by the candidate during, or as a result of, research undertaken at UL shall be owned in accordance with UL's Intellectual Property Policy, to which the attention of the candidate is drawn generally. Benefits accruing to UL from the subsequent commercialisation of the intellectual property referred shall be allocated in accordance with that policy.

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4.6 Research Ethics

Students applying for admission must consult the University Research Ethics Committee about any research proposal that involves the following:

- Direct experimentation on individuals
- Surveys or questionnaires administered to individuals
- Use of data derived from individual records where individuals might be identified
- Experimentation on animals, military and genetic modification

Each faculty has an ethics sub-committee with additional information relating to the faculty's disciplinary area. Guideline documents and an application form relating to each disciplinary area can be accessed by using the faculty sub-committee guidelines, which are accessible through the following links: Faculty of Education & Health Sciences, Faculty of Science & Engineering, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences and Faculty of Business.

Research on patients (i.e. people who are receiving treatment because of an illness) is not within the remit of the UL Research Ethics Committee and should be referred to the HSE Mid-Western Area Research Ethics Committee. For guidance relating to indemnity cover and related insurance matters, refer to the Insurance page of the Buildings and Estates Department. See the UL Research Ethics Committee website for more information.

4.7 Research Integrity

UL is committed to ensuring that all research carried out under its auspices meets the highest standards of integrity and that an environment of research integrity prevails through the promotion of good research practices and the use of fair, effective and transparent procedures to address research misconduct.

It is advisable for all PGR students to complete research integrity training during the initial stages of their research. In many instances, research integrity training is a requirement for PGR students who receive financial support from funding agencies.

Research integrity relates to the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere. Refer to the Research Policies and Procedures webpage for more information and to the Research Integrity webpage for guidance on training.

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4.8 Dignity and Respect Policy

UL is committed to developing and maintaining a positive learning environment in which employees and students are treated with dignity and respect. In pursuit of this, it is the policy of the University to provide all employees and students with an environment that is free from any form of bullying.

All members of the campus community have a responsibility to themselves and to their fellow students and colleagues to help make UL a place where everybody is treated with dignity and respect.

UL will take appropriate disciplinary action, with penalties up to and including expulsion or dismissal, against those who are found to contravene this policy. Additional detailed information can be found in the Policy and Procedures for Student Dignity and Respect.

4.9 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures

Your experience as a student at UL is of paramount importance to us, and we are committed to always providing a high-quality experience in all areas and activities. However, if you ever feel that the quality of academic or service delivery falls short of what may be expected, the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures details how best to raise and resolve issues. Please ensure you read the document in full and seek independent advice before commencing the student complaints process.

It is important to note that UL distinguishes between complaints and academic appeals (including annual postgraduate research progression for PGR students). There are separate procedures attached to each. For information on academic appeals, refer to chapter 5 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures. If you are unclear what this means for your situation, please seek advice from the Associate Vice President Academic Affairs or email DoctoralCollege@ul.ie.

4.10 Leave of Absence

In special circumstances, a student may be granted a period of leave of absence (including for sick leave or maternity leave). Leave of absence application forms are reviewed by the PGR Committee monthly. The duration of leave of absence is up to one year. However, in exceptional circumstances, this period may be extended for another year with the agreement of the Vice President Research or their nominee. A completed leave of absence form must be submitted to Academic Registry via Top Desk.

Prior to applying for readmission, the student must review their work to date with their supervisor. In instances where the candidate's research or data has been superseded or any required facilities or resources are no longer available, the supervisor and Head of School/ Department will review the revised research proposal. As per academic regulations, students may be required to present to a Research Confirmation Panel.

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The following are reasons why a leave could be granted: certified illness; financial hardship; family bereavement; psychological, emotional or social problems; or vocational uncertainty.

No tuition fees are payable during a leave of absence. To take more than one year's leave of absence, you will need to apply for an extension. Where a student does not apply for an extension to their leave of absence, they will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies.

A student who is on leave of absence is not a registered student of UL and must forfeit any grant, scholarship or funding for the period of the leave. Such grants or scholarships may be renewed when the student resumes their studies provided the student is still eligible.

A leave of absence from UL may have an impact on your funding (if applicable), and it is your responsibility to assess such impact (if any).

UL will inform all relevant grant/scholarship authorities if a student is granted leave and will request renewal of the award when the student resumes their studies.

During your leave of absence:

- Your participation in your programme is suspended, and any 'minimum period of research' or 'thesis submission date' is extended by a corresponding period.
- You will not be entitled to supervision or to use UL facilities, including the library.

After your leave of absence:

- Readmission/recommencement requests should be made through the relevant form available from the Current / Returning UL Students section of the Contact Us page of the Academic Registry website.
- The Postgraduate Research Readmission/ Recommencement form must be completed and signed by the candidate, supervisor and Head of School/Department and forwarded to Academic Registry.
- Upon resumption of your studies, you must complete registration and pay the appropriate fee.

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4.11 Extending the Duration of Your Studies

Requests for extensions must be submitted before the period on the higher degrees register has expired. A request for an extension should be completed before the normal registration time on the postgraduate research register has expired. You will pay the appropriate continuation fee if an extension is granted. You must complete the relevant PGR form (Extension to the Duration of a Postgraduate Research Degree) and return it to Academic Registry via the Student Hub Top Desk.

4.12 Withdrawing from Your Studies

Occasionally and after consultation with their supervisory team, a student may decide to withdraw from their studies prior to completing their research. In this instance, the student completes an exit form, which is available from Academic Registry via the Student Hub Top Desk.

4.13 Discontinuing a PGR Scholarship (Stipend)

Payment to a research student in the form of a scholarship/stipend concludes where:

- A PGR student decides to withdraw from the programme
- A PGR student completes and graduates from their programme
- The funding agency discontinues payment of the scholarship/stipend
- The student's primary supervisor contacts the Finance Office directly to request that the scholarship payment be discontinued

The process for discontinuing a PGR student's scholarship/stipend can be found on the Doctoral College website at Codes of Practice and Regulations.

4.14 PGR Forms

PGR forms are a central part of the administrative processes for PGR students. The most up-to-date versions of the PGR forms are available on the Postgraduate Research Forms page of the Doctoral College website. If you have any difficulties accessing these forms, please email DoctoralCollege@ul.ie. The forms include:

- Nomination of Examiners for a Research Degree (PGR-1)
- Master's Qualifer-MQ5000 (PGR-2)
- Research Confirmation Panel (PGR-3a)
- Research Confirmation Panel Report Form (PGR-3a.1)
- Research Progression Appeal Panel (PGR-3b)
- Research Progression Appeal Panel Report (PGR-3b.1)
- Submission of Thesis for a Higher Degree by Research (PGR-4)
- Postgraduate Research Thesis Embargo Declaration Form (PGR-4a)

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- Postgraduate Research Thesis Embargo Renewal Form (PGR-4b)
- Examiners' Report- Master's Degree by Research (PGR-5)
- Examiners' Report- Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PGR-6)
- Alteration to Research Degree Supervisor (PGR-7)
- Extension to the Duration of a Postgraduate Research Degree (PGR-8)
- Postgraduate Research Progression Form (PGR-9)
- Leave of Absence Application Form (Academic Registry)
- Leave of Absence Recommencement Form (Academic Registry)
- Structured PhD Module Registration Form



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5 Supervision/ Supervisor

5.1 Appointment of Supervisors

As per chapter 5, section 5.5 of the Handbook of Academic Regulation and Procedures, each PGR student pursuing a research degree is assigned a primary supervisor and, in many instances, a joint supervisor, who are approved by the Head of School/ Department and the PGR Committee. Two supervisors (primary and joint) are appointed where the research is interdisciplinary or if all or part of it is carried out in a location outside UL or at a centre that is attached to UL but not part of the academic structures of UL.

The primary supervisor will be the holder of an award equivalent to or higher than that being pursued or will have supervised to the level of the award being pursued. The joint supervisor will be the holder of an award equivalent to or higher than that being pursued. In exceptional circumstances, the PGR Committee may approve a primary or joint supervisor who does not meet these requirements. It is important in the initial stages of the supervisory relationship that the supervisor and student agree on the research project, a research plan and timescale, and deadlines for the submission of completed work.

Please note:
Throughout this handbook, where reference is made to a student's supervisor, this can be taken to mean 'supervisors' in the plural to cover instances where the student has more than one supervisor.

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5 Supervision/Supervisor

5.2 The Supervisory Relationship

The supervisory relationship is a multifaceted one. PGR students and faculty usually work together, both in research laboratories and classroom settings, as well as in many other work settings. It is important that a good working (professional) relationship is established and always maintained.

5.2.1 PGR Student Expectations of the Supervisor

PGR students can expect a supervisor to hold an award equivalent to or higher than that being pursued, be qualified in their area of research and be professional in the way they carry out their research, maintaining high academic and ethical standards of work. The supervisor needs to be able to assess the student's research topic and determine whether or not it has sufficient merit and scope to be researchable. Supervisors need to be accessible to their PGR students; in addition, PGR students need to understand that faculty members cannot always be available at short notice and that regular meetings need to be scheduled.

At the start of the research process, the supervisor needs to explain to the student what is involved in undertaking a research degree. The supervisor and student need to agree a programme of work and period (two years for a master's, three to four years for a PhD) and agree the ground rules (i.e. explain their mutual expectations to each other). They should also agree on a schedule of meetings and deadlines and a series of milestones and deliverables, including a strategy for publishing the work.

Supervisors should familiarise themselves with the PGR academic regulations in chapter 5 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures, the Student Charter, and documents and procedures relating to PGR study on the Doctoral College website. Supervisors should ensure that their students are aware of these regulations. Finally, supervisors need to be adaptable, observant and resourceful in their supervision and mentoring of PGR students. It is important to identify training needs and opportunities that may help the PGR student during the initial stages of their career development.

5.2.2 Supervisor Expectations of the PGR Student

PGR students are expected to undertake independent and original research and be responsible for their own research activity and for managing their personal development. In conjunction with their supervisor, it is important to develop a research plan with agreed timelines and progression points (including submitting the thesis within an agreed period).

PGR students must ensure that their research is conducted in accordance with the policies, procedures and guidelines relating to research ethics and research integrity. Further detailed information is available on the Research Integrity webpage. Students are expected to maintain regular formal contact with their supervisor, agree to and meet deadlines, report on progress, and keep an agreed written record (email) of the action items discussed at formal meetings. Students also need to be aware of the academic regulations in chapter 5 of the

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Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures, the Student Charter, and documents and procedures relating to PGR study on the Doctoral College website.

Students are expected to participate in training courses and should be aware of the professional requirements and expectations in their area of research. It is important to recognise that many employers expect students to have acquired a range of skills while undertaking research and that these skills add to a student's overall employability. UL offers a range of training and professional development programmes – refer to section 7 of this handbook for further information.

UL actively encourages students to publish their work, acknowledging the role of the supervisor and, in some instances, co-publishing with the supervisor and other faculty members. In cases where students are required to sign confidentiality agreements, such as in the case of an externally funded research project, it is necessary to ensure that the supervisor and the funding body approve the disclosure of any such research findings prior to publication or to making such changes in content as may be required to safeguard any intellectual property involved.

5.2.3 Supervisory Meetings

Assuming the (full-time) student is present on campus, the supervisor usually formally meets the student on a regular basis agreed between them, although it is likely that there will also be many informal day-to-day meetings. The student should progress the project during the remainder of the time. In most cases, a student's progress depends on their work ethic – the student must accept ownership and responsibility for their academic progression.

A schedule of regular and formal meetings should be agreed in writing at the outset of the research to ensure that progression is monitored and that there is sufficient opportunity for feedback. The supervisor and student should agree on meeting objectives and items for discussion. Written work should be submitted well in advance of a meeting to give the supervisor time to read and comment on the work at the meeting.

During each meeting, feedback should be given, future actions agreed and the date of the next meeting fixed. The supervisor should give both written and verbal feedback and should ensure that the PGR student understands and internalises the substantive feedback and acts on the supervisor's comments and suggestions. Feedback should be positive, and the supervisor should suggest how issues arising should be addressed by the student. Both supervisor and student should keep a written record of the agreed and key action items. One way of ensuring that this is done efficiently is for the student to email a bulleted list of agreed actions, dates and deliverables to the supervisor after the meeting.

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5.3 Guidelines for Good Practice between Student and Supervisor

Communication:
It is essential that the supervisor and student maintain a clear and open channel of communication at all times. The student should ensure that their supervisor is aware of any barriers or issues that may adversely affect the progress of their research.

Deal with issues early:
If difficulties do arise, then early intervention is always advisable. The supervisor and student should not allow a problem to continue or escalate in the hope that the issue will eventually resolve itself.

Clarity:
It is essential that both supervisor and student reach a clear and agreed understanding about the nature of any issue that might affect progress and of the steps to be taken to resolve the issue.

Avoid misinterpretation:
It may be beneficial for the supervisor and student to exchange written summaries of their respective views of the outcomes of their discussions on any difficulty so that they are clear where they both stand.

Constructive feedback:
Constructive feedback, which the supervisor is obliged to give to the student, is a key aspect of a PGR degree and underpins the professional relationship. However, in some instances, the feedback can be perceived as criticism, which can create conflict between student and supervisor. Therefore, a discussion about the nature and purpose of constructive feedback in the initial stages of the research may help to resolve matters.

Maintain records:
The supervisor and student may find it worthwhile to keep a written record of their meetings. Where a student or supervisor feels that the other party is unresponsive to requests for a meeting, a record of their attempts to raise this issue with the other party should be kept. Subsequently, they may have to contact their Head of School/Department for advice in resolving the situation.

Academic progression:
If after discussions and meetings, the supervisor or student believes that progress has been consistently unsatisfactory, the other party should be notified in writing about the reasons for this view and be given an opportunity to respond. All academic progress should be reported and recorded during the annual progress meeting.

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5.4 Alteration of Supervisor

Where a primary or joint supervisor retires or resigns from the academic staff of UL or is unable to continue to supervise the research for any other reason, an Alteration to Postgraduate Research Degree Supervisor form must be completed and the revised arrangements for the supervision must be approved by the Associate Vice President Doctoral College on behalf of the PGR Committee.



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6 Researching and Writing the Thesis

This section is intended to help PGR students plan, write and complete the master's or PhD thesis.

6.1 Planning the Research

The key to completing a research project on time and without compromising quality is to carefully manage your time and undertake the research in a rigorous and professional manner. Planning your research involves identifying the tasks that need to be undertaken as part of the research and planning where and when to work on specific aspects of the project. Such tasks include reading, research and writing. It is important to be able to work on parallel tasks at the same time.

For example, at the early stage, you may be reading secondary source materials and revising your ideas as well as working on research in the laboratory or an archive and undertaking some writing tasks. As the project progresses, it is likely that it will become more research-intensive and increasingly focused on writing tasks. Writing at an early stage ensures that you get used to the routine of writing; this can help you to complete your thesis in a timely manner. Set realistic and achievable deadlines.

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It is important to see any research plan as an organic entity and iterative process that will need to be revised as the research progresses. On a practical level, one way to plan the research is to use a Gantt chart and to plan each year out, using a one- to two-year plan for a master's thesis or a three- to four-year plan for a PhD thesis.

What Do Master's and PhD Theses Look Like?

There is no simple answer to this question as research disciplines and areas of study differ. There are also differences between continental European universities, American institutions, and Irish and British universities. The distinction between a master's and a PhD thesis can sometimes be difficult to define. A PhD thesis usually seeks to make an independent original contribution to the field of study by generating new knowledge, involves more in-depth research than a master's thesis and is often of publishable standard. The maximum length permitted for a master's thesis is 60,000 words whereas the limit for a PhD thesis is 100,000 words.

In some cases where a student is making substantial progress on a master's thesis, they may be encouraged by their supervisor to upgrade, by means of a transfer examination, to the PhD register. This process can be undertaken by convening a research confirmation panel.

Most master's and PhD theses usually adhere to the following format:

- **An introduction**, which includes background on the research topic, the justification for the research and what gap in the literature the research seeks to fill, the main research questions and hypotheses, and the organisation of the study.
- **An up-to-date review of the literature in the subject area**, including a discussion on the most relevant theories and concepts that are likely to be used in the research. The review of literature and theoretical discussion may form one or more chapters depending on the nature of the thesis, but it usually ends with the research question.
- **A methodology chapter**, which outlines the proposed research approach and method, justifies the choice of method, considers the limitations and strengths of that approach, and demonstrates how the method will be applied to answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses of the thesis.
- **A few substantive chapters**, which may be case studies, particular descriptions of experimental research undertaken in the laboratory or discussions of field research.
- **An analysis of the results and main findings of the study** (often called the discussion), which may form either a separate chapter or be included as part of the substantive chapters. It is important to relate your findings to those indicated in the literature review.

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— **The main conclusions**, including a reiteration of the main research questions and what was found as recommendations and further avenues for research.

— **References:** Correct citation references (refer to the library's referencing guidelines).

— **Appendices:** Relevant information that would detract from the main text.

Remember that all figures, tables, photographs, etc. should be referenced and numbered in the text, e.g. "the graph (Fig 1), which complements the table (Table 1)". Further information in relation to the requirements for the preparation and submission of master's and doctoral theses is given in chapter 5, appendix 2 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

6.2 Stages of the Research

Whether it be a master's, traditional or structured PhD, a PGR programme is different from a primary degree or taught master's programme. Whilst primary degrees have given you grounding in the subject area, they tend to direct the style of learning, the subject matter and the deadlines. Postgraduate research is unique and individual and, as such, the subject matter, deadlines and learning styles are influenced by the researcher with input from the supervisor.

The four stages that broadly encompass the expected four years of research towards a PhD, albeit in an American model, are similar in the Irish system, with similar problems or mistakes arising. For more information on this, refer to Successfully Navigating the Stages of Doctoral Study by Varun Grover, which was published in the *International Journal of Doctoral Studies* Volume 2, 2007. Figure 1 in that paper indicates the four stages of doctoral study.

The four stages as set out by Grover are as follows:

Stage of Exploration (Year 1)

This is the start of the journey and, as such, will be the most important period. Whilst a general outline of the project has been developed, it is now necessary to develop a full literature review that will lead to the research question, i.e. the reason the research needs to be carried out. The literature review and research question will influence both the research methodology and the direction the research takes, leading to the final thesis, which answers the research question.

For most PGR students, the literature review is an integral part of the first year. One key role of the literature survey is to find out what the main lines of current thinking on your chosen subject are by identifying and studying what has already been written on it. A literature review can be defined in terms of process and product.

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"The process involves the researcher in exploring the literature to explore the status quo, formulate a problem or research enquiry, to defend the value of pursuing the line of enquiry established and compare the findings and ideas of others with his or her own. The product involves the synthesis of the work of others in a form that demonstrates the accomplishment of the exploratory process." (Cited in Murray, R. (2002) How to Write a Thesis, Buckingham: Open University Press, p. 102).

Stage of Engagement (Year 2)

The engagement stage is the development of the research question and the methods that will help you move towards answering the important research question. It is very important for you to understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and research ethics. To help you develop your ability to carry out research, numerous research methods programmes and generic and transferable skills training are offered by individual faculties.

In developing your research, you will need to be able to communicate your findings in research seminars and learned papers. This will move the research from the lab and the office of your supervisor to a wider audience.

The main mistake that can be made in Year 2 relates to prioritising and synergising. It is important to develop your research and balance it with the workload that is allocated to you, together with generic and transferable skills and, of course, your personal life, which could include working to sustain and fund your studies. Whilst you may be a competent researcher, prioritising individual elements is difficult and a balance must be maintained.

Stage of Consolidation (Year 3)

By this stage you understand the research methods and are comfortable and known in the lab area or library. You have a few partially written, partially researched areas. This stage can be a challenge for some researchers. It is important that you keep your expectations realistic, that you do not lose momentum or interest and that the research takes priority.



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Stage of Entry (Year 4)

This stage may, in some circumstances, be combined with Year 3, but the timeline is just a guide. The entry stage can be the most challenging stage as it is often the time when the career decisions must be made. For example, you may ask yourself, "Do I wish to pursue a career in academia or industry, and when do I complete my research study?" At this stage, you and your supervisor need to discuss the timelines for submitting for examination.

If you have been writing throughout, you might now have a few chapters ready – your literature review, your research methods, your results – and your thesis might now need only a discussion, a conclusion and some tweaking. Hopefully, there are publications that will back up your hypothesis and conclusions.

As the end is in sight, there is a tendency to put effort into exploring career prospects rather than writing up the thesis (the most demanding aspect), and a common mistake at this point is focusing on a career opportunity that you may have secured. Many PGR theses either lie dormant or are never completed when all that is needed is a few extra months to complete the write-up and submit the work for examination.

6.3 Plagiarism

Of all the academic issues, plagiarism (using someone else's work without acknowledgement or, worse still, passing it off as your own) is the most serious. The penalties in cases where plagiarism, collusion or other forms of academic cheating have been found to have taken place are severe. Further details are available in UL's Student Code of Conduct (chapter 6 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures) and in the Research Integrity Policy.

6.4 Problems with Writing

Many PGR students (and sometimes even their supervisors!) face problems when it comes to writing. At times, these problems may appear to be insurmountable. Research suggests that the most common problems include a slowness in formulating what to write; difficulty with bringing ideas into a coherent shape; having neither writing skills nor instruction on how to write; not knowing the sub-routines of writing, behaviours and practices; and not having psychological support (isolation from peers).

Even the most established academics have encountered some of these problems during their careers and may well understand the difficulties students face. Issues of this nature need to be addressed at an early stage to prevent them from developing into serious difficulties. There are some practicable solutions that can be tried.

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6 Planning the Research and Writing a Thesis

It is advisable to do more writing tasks, not just chapters, at an early stage. The types of task may vary, such as reviewing the literature (or conducting a critique of a particular article) and taking notes on research findings, but the common aim of these tasks is to increase confidence and writing skills. Supervisors can help by providing guidelines on writing tasks, including the length, scope, content, structure and aims of each task. In relation to the research plan, it is important to be able to visualise each stage of the research and to plan out the writing tasks. It is important to give and receive feedback on what has been written.

There are different strategies for encouraging and improving academic writing, such as free writing and generative writing, all of which help us to get into the routine of writing. The Writing Centre at UL offers a free and friendly place where staff and students (undergraduate and postgraduate, from arts to science) can come to address any aspect of their writing. The centre offers one-to-one peer tutoring, workshops, online resources, writers' groups for postgraduates and consultations for staff members.

Students are encouraged to help and support each other by developing their own self-help groups (e.g. discuss and critique an article, share writing experiences, etc.) as well as presenting their research at departmental and centre seminars.



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7 Training and Professional Development

7.1 PGR Annual Induction

Focusing on academic, professional and personal development, the Doctoral College's annual induction (October) provides comprehensive training for PGR students.

Programme Overview:

- **Ethics and Integrity in Research:**
  The UL Research Governance Officer discusses research integrity and ethical considerations.
- **Health and Safety:**
  The UL Health and Safety Office ensures a safe research environment for PGR students.
- **PGR Professional Development and International Dimensions:**
  This section focuses on the professional and international dimensions of PGR students' professional development.
- **Wellbeing:**
  The Healthy UL Office emphasises work-life balance and stress management.
- **Postgraduate Students' Union (PSU):**
  UL PSU representatives speak about the resources and advocacy available to PGR students, promoting a sense of community and solidarity among postgraduate students.

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— **Career Options:**
The Postgraduate Careers Advisor explores career paths within and beyond academia.

— **Networks:**
PGR students learn about available networks and communities that help create collaboration, interdisciplinary connections and a supportive community throughout the students' studies.

— **Academic Regulations:**
The Doctoral College outlines relevant academic regulations to PGR students, ensuring that the students understand and adhere to the relevant guidelines.

— **Key Information for PGR Students:**
This section covers key processes, milestones and resources that are available to support UL PGR students on their academic journey.

— **Library and Information Services:**
The UL Library and Information Services team offers practical guidance on maximising the use of library resources to help PGR students in their research activities.

— **Interactive Session:**
An interactive Q&A session gives PGR students the opportunity to seek clarification and engage with presenters on any queries related to the topics covered during the day. Visit the Postgraduate Research Induction webpage for further details.

7.2 PGR Training and Professional Development

The Doctoral College is committed to providing PGR students with a rich array of professional and career development opportunities to enhance their academic, research and employability skills. A summary of such opportunities is given below.

— **Skills Training on Research Methods and Methodologies**
The Doctoral College offers targeted training sessions to equip PGR students with advanced skills on research methods and methodologies to ensure the students are well-prepared for the rigours of their research projects. Throughout this training, PGR students gain specialised expertise, enhancing the quality and efficiency of their research activities.

— **Doctoral College Summer School in Generic and Transferable Skills**
This blended (in-person and online) Doctoral College Summer School (May to August each year) focuses on generic and transferable skills, offering PGR students the chance to develop critical skills in areas such as data management, networking, academic writing and research ethics.

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— **Doctoral College Webinar Series on Research Skills for PGR Students**
Webinars provide accessible and up-to-date information for PGR students. The Doctoral College Webinar Series covers a range of diverse topics, such project management, critical thinking, preparing for the *viva voce*, research career planning, and how to become a successful researcher.

— **Networking Events and Collaboration Opportunities**
The Doctoral College organises networking events and collaboration opportunities to foster connections among PGR students, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange.

— **3-Minute Thesis Competition**
Held during UL Research Week each year, the dynamic 3-Minute Thesis Competition helps PGR students to hone their presentation and communication skills by challenging them to communicate their research to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes with one slide only.

— **UN Sustainable Development Goals Seminar Series**
Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this seminar series sees PGR students using three slides to demonstrate in just seven minutes how their research relates to the SDGs.

— **Access to Specialised Software and Tools**
To enable them to conduct advanced analyses and enhance the quality of their work, PGR students are provided with access to relevant innovative software and tools, such as NVivo.

— **Picture This! Competition**
The unique Picture This! Competition invites PGR students to visually represent their research in a photo with an accompanying caption. This challenge helps PGR students refine their ability to communicate research visually, thereby further developing their skills in conveying complex concepts to diverse audiences.



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— **PGR Testimonial Series**
The PGR Testimonial Series (YouTube) centres around real-life stories and experiences shared by PGR students. In the stories, students share insights into the challenges and successes of their doctoral journey. The series provides PGR students with inspiration and guidance from their research peers and can help to foster a sense of community and resilience among the students as they learn from each other's experiences.

— **Research Podcast Series**
The Research Podcast Series (YouTube and Spotify) features discussions with UL PGR students on research topics, methodologies and academic experiences. Covering a wide range of perspectives and insights, the episodes aim to enhance students' understanding of various research approaches and methodologies.

— **Postgraduate Research Showcase Conference for PhD Students**
This conference provides PGR students with an opportunity to present their research findings thus far, refine their presentation skills, receive feedback, and expand their professional network by engaging with the broader UL research community.

— **Summer School on Enhancing Negotiation and Communication Skills**
Focusing on enhancing PhD students' negotiation and communication skills, this specialised summer school aims to help participants engage effectively with peers, professionals and the wider community. Participant PGR students interact with their contemporaries from other universities and develop crucial interpersonal skills, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively. You can register for the summer school through the DocEnhance platform.

— **PhD Supervisor Training Series**
To help create a supportive environment for PGR students at UL, the Doctoral College offers a series of workshops and training sessions to PhD supervisors. By enhancing the supervisors' mentoring and guidance skills, the PhD Supervisor Training Series benefits PGR students by providing them with more effective supervision, thereby facilitating a positive and productive research experience at UL.

— **Odessey Programme for Career Development**
The specialised, career development HEA Odyssey Programme focuses on transitioning PGR students into successful careers. As well as offering workshops, mentorship and networking opportunities, the programme provides PGR students with paid placement opportunities in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) under Enterprise Ireland's Gateways to SMEs programme.

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— **Talent Management Centre for PhD Students**
Forming part of the Doc Talent4EU project on PhD Employability, the Talent Management Centre is a centralised hub that offers resources, mentorship and support to PGR students and helps them navigate the complexities of career development and progression.

— **Hackathon with Industry Partners**
This initiative, which forms part of the Horizon Europe-funded Doc Talent4EU project on PhD Employability, is a hands-on collaboration with industry partners. It exposes PGR students to real-world challenges and fosters industry-academia connections.



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8 Annual Postgraduate Research Progression

There are potentially three stages in the annual PGR progression process: Research Review Panel, Research Confirmation Panel and Research Progression Appeal Panel. These are summarised below, and links to additional information are given.

The annual review process does not need to be undertaken by PGR students who have submitted a copy of their thesis for examination by the internal and external examiner. All other PGR students must undergo a review.

8.1 Research Review Panel

PGR student progression is set out in chapter 5, section 5.6 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

The objectives of the annual postgraduate research student progression are:

- To formalise the monitoring and management of student progression
- To facilitate the academic support of PGR students
- To provide an opportunity to reflect on how the supervision process is progressing
- To promote research excellence and postgraduate research
- To help ensure the PGR degree is successfully completed within the prescribed period

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— To review that research students successfully complete any required core or elective taught modules

Arising from these objectives, the annual PGR student progression process assesses if the student has:

— Acquired the appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to the stage of the research programme

— Completed their research to a satisfactory standard to warrant continuation on the research programme and to ensure that the research methods and methodology are appropriate and practical to the academic discipline

— Documented a realistic and time-limited plan for progression and eventual completion of their research

8.2 Research Confirmation Panel

In cases where the Research Review Panel is not satisfied that the student is making satisfactory progress, it refers the student to the Research Confirmation Panel, where the student will be required to present and defend their work.

The Research Confirmation Panel considers the following:

a) The report from the Research Review Panel

b) A transcript of the student's results in the taught element of the programme, where applicable

c) A written presentation of the research

d) A *viva voce* examination following presentation by the candidate of their research to an open forum attended by a board of members of faculty

There must be clear evidence that the candidate has the innate ability to understand their topic deeply enough and has shown the ability to successfully undertake independent research work appropriate to doctoral level. For more information, refer to the Research Confirmation Panel Code of Practice, which is accessible from the Codes of Practice and Regulations page of the Doctoral College website.

8.3 Research Progression Appeal Panel

PGR students have the right to appeal the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel to the Research Progression Appeal Panel. The appeal must be made within two weeks of receiving formal notification of the outcome of the Research Confirmation Panel. For more information, refer to the Research Progression Appeal Panel Code of Practice, which is accessible from the Codes of Practice and Regulations page of the Doctoral College website.

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Similar to the way the Research Confirmation Panel operates, the Research Progression Appeal Panel reviews the following:

- The Research Review Panel progression report
- The Research Confirmation Panel report
- Where relevant, Structured PhD modules undertaken
- If required, a statement from the student's supervisor

The Research Progression Appeal Panel assesses the candidate's performance to date and decides whether to reject or uphold the appeal. If the appeal is rejected, the original decision of the Research Confirmation Panel is confirmed. This is the final stage of the annual PGR progression process.



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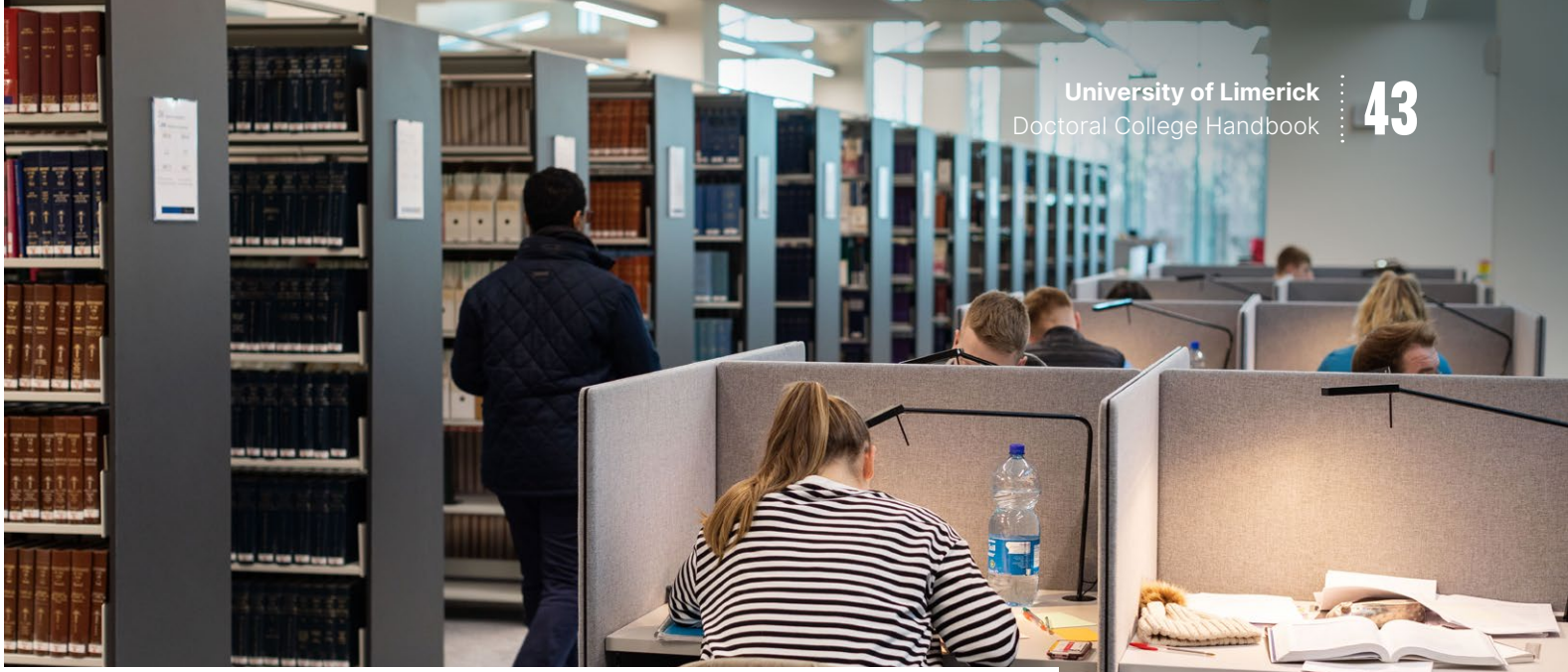
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9 Completing and Submitting the Thesis for Examination

PGR students who intend to submit their thesis for examination should review the detailed information and up-to-date processes accessible from the Research Thesis Submission page of the Doctoral College website. Note in particular the Submission and Final Examination of a Research Thesis document, which specifies the timeline relating to each step of the process.

These processes apply to all four Examination Boards, which are held annually in February, June, September and November/December. General queries relating to PGR thesis submission can be submitted to PGRThesisSubmission@ul.ie.

9.1 Presentation and Thesis Specifications

The thesis must be presented and produced in accordance with UL's requirements for the preparation and submission of master's and doctoral theses (as specified in chapter 5, appendix 2 of the Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures). The maximum permitted length is 60,000 words for a master's degree thesis and 100,000 words for a PhD thesis.

The University of Limerick logo, which conforms to UL's corporate specifications, must be used at the top of the title page of the thesis.

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9 Thesis Completion and Submission for Examination

9.2 Thesis Embargo

An embargo means that your final thesis will not be available for public consultation or on open access via the University of Limerick Research Repository. The default position is not to apply an embargo on a postgraduate research thesis. Following the Examination Board, a final hardbound copy of the thesis is lodged in the Glucksman Library and the thesis is available for public consultation in accordance with normal academic practice. In addition, an electronic copy is made accessible in the Research Repository and made available on open access.

However, in specific circumstances, a thesis embargo can be requested. If you decide in conjunction with your supervisor that an embargo is needed on the thesis, it is important that you fill in the appropriate forms when you submit the electronic copy of the thesis for examination by the external and internal examiners. It is imperative that these forms be signed by you, your supervisor and the faculty's Assistant Dean Research. The requirements for requesting an embargo are specified in the Postgraduate Research Thesis Embargo Declaration Form (PGR-4a), which is accessible from the Postgraduate Research Forms page of the Doctoral College website.

9.3 The *Viva Voce* Examination

PhD students are required to defend their thesis in response to issues raised and will be examined by the examiners. Please refer to A Guide for the *Viva Voce* (Oral) Examination for Doctoral Students, which is accessible from the Research Thesis Submission page of the Doctoral College website. Please discuss any queries or concerns with your supervisor before the *viva voce* examination.

9.4 After the *Viva Voce* Examination

At the *viva voce* examination, it is agreed by the examination panel which examiner(s) will sign off on requested corrections, and this is communicated to both the candidate and the Doctoral College.

Following on from the *viva voce* examination and after receiving the examiners' final report, the candidate is advised by their supervisor on how best to make the corrections and about the timeline for submitting the amended thesis to the upcoming Examination Board.

Once all corrections emanating from the *viva voce* are complete and signed off by the examiner(s), the candidate is directed by the supervisor to forward a final, corrected PDF of their thesis to PGRThesisSubmission@ul.ie.

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9.5 Submitting the Thesis to the Library

All PGR students must submit a final, corrected electronic copy of their thesis as per the deadline outlined on the website for the relevant Examination Board. The submission of the final hardbound copies will be advised by the Doctoral College at this time. Further details on the submission of the thesis are given in the Submission and Examination of a Postgraduate Research Thesis Process document, which is accessible from the Research Thesis Submission page of the Doctoral College website. The Doctoral College then forwards this final PDF to the library.

Please note:
If an approved embargo is associated with the PGR thesis, the thesis will not be available within the public domain.

9.6 Conferring

There are three conferring ceremonies during the year (January, June and August). After each University Examination Board, the Ceremonies Office informs all graduates in writing (via their student email accounts) about the forthcoming graduation ceremony. Further information in relation to conferring ceremonies is available on the Conferrings page of the Ceremonies Office website.



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10.1 Academic Registry

As well as helping students and staff to manage the academic life cycle, Academic Registry is responsible for the official student record for all students, including PGR students. During your studies, you may need to interact with Academic Registry in relation to updating your student record, registering for modules or extending the duration of your studies. In addition, the outcomes of the annual progression for PGR students are processed by Academic Registry. Information regarding your registration can be found in your online student portal.

In terms of the administrative processes that support your academic journey, it is important to note any that any updates to your student record are processed through the Academic Registry Top Desk.

10.2 Library

The Glucksman Library supports UL's teaching, learning and research activities by providing quality information resources, education, support and facilities to staff and students, including PGR students.

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The library provides access to a wide range of collections in all formats and offers a pleasant and comfortable study environment. The library offers research assistance, workshops and guides to enable students, lecturers and researchers to find, evaluate, manage and use relevant academic information.

10.3 Writing Centre

The Regional Writing Centre offers a free and friendly place where students can address any aspect of their writing. This resource is dedicated to helping students develop strategies to become more confident, critical and autonomous writers.

The centre takes a non-invasive, inductive approach to writing development. To assess and improve students' strategic effectiveness, peer tutors and experts work with students to identify the students' writing practices. Visit the Regional Writing Centre for more details on its services.

10.4 Careers Services

The Careers Service offers a varied programme of activities to help students and recent graduates develop and implement successful career plans. The Careers Service also facilitates the recruitment process for students and employers.

10.5 Chaplaincy and Sacred Spaces

The Chaplaincy offers students and staff a listening service, a welcoming space and a supportive presence. The chaplains promote an open and caring environment where diversity is respected. The key activities of the Chaplaincy fall into three categories:

- Support
- Worship/Spirituality
- Outreach/Volunteering

Staff and students are encouraged to avail of the Contemplative Centre, which is an oasis of peace and tranquillity. This is a sacred space for quiet meditation, prayer or reflection. In addition, there is a mosque located on campus. Both these facilities are in the Stables courtyard area.

10.6 Student Health Centre

The Student Health Centre seeks to provide services that target illnesses and problems that occur among the UL student population. The centre provides a range of services, including primary care for acute and chronic illnesses, both physical and mental. Services include access to a doctor or nurse, a contraceptive clinic, a sexual health clinic and physiotherapy. The Student Health Centre website provides more information and the facility to book an appointment.

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10.7 Student Counselling and Wellbeing

The Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service provides support during normal working hours (9am to 5pm) throughout the semester. The free and confidential service is the first point of contact for wellbeing issues. Further details are available on the service's website.

10.8 Postgraduate Students' Union

The UL Postgraduate Students' Union (PSU) is the chief representative body for postgraduate students at UL. The main functions of the PSU are to provide academic assistance to postgraduate students, offer support to students in need, lobby UL and the Government on issues affecting postgraduate students, and promote social and cultural inclusion.

The PSU is your link to other helpful services on campus. It supports students with:

- Academic and research issues: Student-supervisor issues, equality across faculties and student complaints
- Welfare: Financial aid, childcare bursary, immigration and visa support, job opportunities
- Student experience: Social and cultural events, Clubs & Societies, accommodation



10.9 UL Sport

The multi-purpose UL Arena is home to Ireland's first Olympic-sized (50m) swimming pool, the National Strength and Conditioning Centre, a fitness studio, a multi-purpose sports halls, indoor jogging tracks and a sprint track. Outdoor sports facilities include synthetic, all-weather pitches and a natural turf pitch. Visit UL Sport for more details.

10.10 Clubs & Societies

UL has over 80 Clubs & Societies from which students can choose to try exciting new activities to complement their busy academic lives or compete in the top sporting intercollegiate competitions in Ireland and overseas. Clubs & Societies are run voluntarily by students, and all students are welcome to join.

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10.11 Health and Safety Procedures

UL's Safety Statement provides a framework for the organisation of safety throughout the University. The statement includes guidelines on delegated safety duties for personnel who will, by their actions and encouragement to others, ensure that UL continues to be a safe place to work.

UL welcomes the safety provisions outlined under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and will continue to make every effort to ensure that the provisions of the Act are enforced now and in the future.

10.12 Campus Facilites and Map

UL is recognised as having one of the most spectacular and environmentally sympathetic third-level campuses in the world. The UL campus has unrivalled sports and cultural facilities, including a 50m-swimming pool, an indoor sports arena, a boathouse with a state-of-the-art indoor rowing tank, the 1,100-seat University Concert Hall, the Irish Chamber Orchestra Building and the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. You may wish to take a Virtual Tour of the campus and view the Campus Map. In addition, details including building location and room capacity can be found online at Lecture and Seminar Room Location.





UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Doctoral College

Doctoral College
Level 2, Foundation Building

Email: DoctoralCollege@ul.ie

ul.ie/research/**doctoral-college**

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