



## **Postgraduate Research Students: Taught Module Academic Progression Requirement Process.**

### **1. Introduction and Scope:**

The University of Limerick where feasible is committed to providing postgraduate research students with access to disciplinary specific taught modules, generic and transferable skills and research skills modules. Research students registered on a Structured PhD or Structured Master's programmes are normally required to undertake and successfully complete certain core and elective modules. Additionally, traditional PhD and research master's students, in order to broaden their knowledge base in a disciplinary specific area, may decide in conjunction with supervisor(s) to register for additional taught modules. The process detailed below in section 3, refers specifically to postgraduate research students only.

As per academic regulations, for research student undertaking a Structured PhD, the total ECTS credits from a combination of the taught and research elements of a Structured PhD will not be fewer than 300 and not more than 360 ECTS credits. The specific taught requirements for either a Structured PhD and/or Structured Master's programme which are agreed during the academic programme approval process, must be communicated in writing at faculty or department level to the relevant cohort of students. Documented, demonstrated and relevant prior learning may be accommodated within the full complement of credits required for the programme of study.

It is important to note, for structured, traditional PhD and research master's programmes, the nominal ECTS credit value for thesis is 270 and 180 credits respectively, with an exception being the Structured Master's within the faculty of Education and Health Sciences (EHS) where the thesis nominal ECTS credit value is 150.

Some Structured Research Programmes that have been approved via Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC) include an obligatory taught module component. For example:

- The International PhD Arts and Humanities, the credits value attached to the thesis 270 credits and the taught module credit value is 75 credits?
- The Structured Master's in EHS, the credits value attached to research thesis is 150 credits and the taught modules credit value is 30 credits.

### **2. Contextual Overview:**

Research students who decide to register for taught modules which are not a progression requirement of their programme, but, do not subsequently complete the associated assessment requirements of the module(s) create administrative difficulties whereby students and/or supervisors request retrospective approval to de-register from modules recorded on their transcript. This misrepresents the student record as the student previously registered for a taught component module(s) and received a valid grade via the University examination and grading process.

Registration with Academic Registry for the relevant taught modules (which may be on a normal graded basis or pass/fail basis), is undertaken each semester. Where a research student registers for a module(s), in order to attain the relevant credits, the student is required to successfully complete all the module assessment requirements.

A research student should only register for modules that are a requirement for their structured PhD or structured master's programme. In the case of a traditional PhD student or research master's student, some within these cohorts may decide to undertake elective modules which are not a progression requirement. In this instance a student following consultation with their Supervisor(s) should register for the relevant modules. Research students should only register for modules where they are confident that they can successfully complete all the associated module assessment requirements.

Where a research student registered on either traditional or Structured PhD programme does not successfully complete the assessment requirements associated with the module(s) they will receive one of the following, (F, I, N, NG). While there is an overarching principle that research students may be allowed to progress from one year to another while carrying non-requisite deficient grades or where the student's Cumulative QCA is less than 2.00. Research students must at the next available opportunity or during the annual repeats clear any deficient grades (F, I, N, NG) and where relevant ensure that their Cumulative QCA is 2.00 or greater. Research students who accumulate a deficient grade in a non-requisite module during particular semester may be precluded from registering for elective modules in the subsequent semesters pending the clearance of the aforementioned deficient grades, while also ensuring that, where relevant, their Cumulative QCA is 2.00 or greater.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned overarching principle, where the requisite taught elements of a research programme have not been successfully completed by Structured PhD or Structured Master's students, the progression requirements of the programme, may be preclude from progression to the next year.

Aligned with the academic regulations pertaining to other student cohorts undertaking either an undergraduate or taught master's degree programme, research students will only be allowed to clear a maximum of four deficient grades during each academic year. In the occasional situation where a research student accumulates five or more deficient grades during an academic year, the student will be subject to an automatic progression review.

In accordance with the academic regulations, all postgraduate research students are required to complete the annual research student progression process. Integral to this process are the research review panels which are convened by academic departments/schools in conjunction with the supervisor(s) and structured PhD programme directors during the Autumn Semester.

As part annual research student progression process, the research review panels convened within the departments and schools must identify instances where research students have deficient grades on their transcripts and indicate to the students that any deficient grades must be cleared. Where relevant, postgraduate research students must ensure that an up to-date copy of their transcript is available for review by the research review panel during the panel's deliberations. In terms of Structured PhD Programmes and Structured Master's Programmes, where students have a deficient grade in core or elective modules, these grades must be cleared in line with the progression requirements of the programme.

In an instance where a research student progresses with a deficient grade, where the deficient grade is not subsequently 'cleared' the student will be precluded from submitting their thesis for

examination until the deficient grade(s) is remedied. Where research students' register to 'clear' a deficient grade as part of the annual repeat examination process research students will be required to pay the appropriate repeat examination fee.

### **3: Progression Process:**

In instances during each semester, where a research student either structured or traditional, registers with Academic Registry for an elective module which is not a progression requirement associated with their programme, the following process shall apply:

- a. Each semester, during week 6, Academic Registry will contact via email all research students who have registered for non-requisite taught modules, supervisor(s) will be copied. Research students will be required to confirm in writing by the end of week 7 that they have decided to deregister from the relevant module(s). Research students will only be allowed to deregister from taught modules that are not a progression requirement for their research programme.
- b. Where the student does not confirm in writing by the aforementioned deadline their intention to deregister from the relevant module, and subsequent does not successfully complete the assessments associated with the module the deficient grade(s) (F, I, N, NG) will remain on the student transcript, (until the student clears the deficient grade). In exceptional circumstances a holding grade may be applied to the module to enable the student to complete the module requirements.
- c. Each semester, following to the grading cycle, Academic Registry distribute Progression Decision Entry (PDE) information to each faculty. This information includes research students who have accumulated deficient grades. Faculty Examination Boards will review the deficient grades. In advance of the meeting of the Academic Council Grading Committee, the head of department/school or school after consultation with the Supervisor(s) and Structured PhD Programme Director will submit the appropriate progression decision to Academic Registry.
- d. The progression decision is submitted via the student portal by the head of department. The alignment of research students with the PDE process ensures that there will be audit of the progression decision.
- e. Where the progression decision identifies research students with deficient grade(s), these students must be reviewed each semester at the relevant Academic Council Grading Committee (ACGC) meeting.
- f. In terms of the Autumn Semester Examinations and the resultant grading cycle, research students with deficient grades will receive a formal progression decision in writing from Academic Registry and copy of same will be sent to the Supervisor(s). It is important to note that any additional deficient grade(s) arising from the Spring Semester Examinations and ensuing grading cycle will require a progression decision. This progression decision will be communicated in writing to both the student and the supervisor. The Spring Semester progression decision will supersede any previously communicated progression decision.
- g. Where a research student undertakes to clear a module(s) with deficient grades during the Annual Repeats cycle, subsequently, research students with a deficient grade arising from the Annual Repeats cycle will receive a formal progression decision in writing from Academic Registry and copy of will be sent to the Supervisor(s).