



Key Principles for University-awarded Funded Scholarships for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs)

Background and Rationale

This document sets out high level principles to guide all parties involved in university-awarded funded scholarships as opposed to externally funded scholarships awarded by agencies such as Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland. The relevant parties include postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in receipt of internally funded scholarships, supervisors as well as departments/faculties who provide the funding. The set of principles listed below are not intended or devised as academic regulation. Rather, they build on existing relevant guiding documentation (e.g. Postgraduate Student Charter and Postgraduate Student Agreement) and are developed to support transparency and equity across faculties in terms of standardising practices surrounding PhD scholarships and protecting all relevant parties.

Within each faculty of UL, a range of departmental and/or school level scholarships is offered to help fund PhD and Masters by research programmes. These generally involve fee waivers and/or a stipend. There are however some variances across faculties/departments in relation to the terms and conditions surrounding these scholarships including differences in policies and practices in regard to how scholarships are allocated, recognition of responsibilities of parties involved, level of paid and unpaid hours/work provided by PGRs, alignment between work provided and level of scholarship funding, the use of a postgraduate agreement/contract as well as the resolution of disputes/complaints.

In relation to externally funded scholarships awarded by agencies (e.g. Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland) all parties including PGRs, supervisors and departments/faculties should adhere to the terms and conditions of the scholarship as specified by the funding agency.

Key Principles

- **Responsibility of Each Party**

Each party, including the university, its faculties and departments, the supervisor(s) and the PGR should be aware of and adhere to the specific set of responsibilities outlined in the Postgraduate Student Charter (See Appendix 1 and link).

<https://ulsites.ul.ie/executive/sites/default/files/AC Postgraduate Student Charter October 2017.pdf>

- **Open and Transparent Scholarship Competition**

All UL funded scholarships/bursaries offered should adhere to the principles of openness and fairness, employing a transparent and objective evaluation system and selection process.

- **Uniformity of Policies and Practices within each Faculty**

While variances in relation to terms and conditions of various scholarship offerings between faculties may justifiably exist, there should be agreement and uniformity within faculties in relation to the policies and practices associated with university-awarded funded scholarships.

- **Paid / Unpaid Work /Contact Hours in line with Student Charter**

In line with the Postgraduate Student Charter, each PGR in receipt of UL scholarship funding is to provide a maximum of six unpaid contact hours per week for the duration of the teaching semesters for academic support (grading, laboratory demonstrating, teaching, tutoring or other academic work (i.e. contributing to the departmental website or similar) as agreed by his/her supervisors and Head of Department/School provided that this does not conflict with any terms and conditions associated with their funding from an external funding agency.

As outlined in the Postgraduate Student Charter, each PGRs should seek agreement and sign-off by his/her supervisor(s) and Head of Department/School to provide a maximum of six paid contact hours per week if available within the University. This applies to PGRs in receipt of internal funding who take on paid work in addition to undertaking the unpaid academic support contact hours.

Allocation of paid work/contact hours should be fair and transparent and allow equal opportunities to all PGRs, whether funded or self-funded, to gain teaching experience and enhance their CV.

If a student is carrying out teaching or tutoring, they should liaise with their Head of School or Department regarding appropriate training available, and relevant policies relating to teaching within their department and/or faculty.

- **Unpaid Work/Contact Hours to be Commensurate with Level of Scholarship/Funding**

In cases where PGRs are in receipt of a partial scholarship in the form of reduced stipend and/or partial fee waiver, the number of unpaid work/contact hours should be commensurate to the scholarship and adhere to faculty level guidelines.

- **Signing the Postgraduate Student Agreement & Contract Offer Letter**

Each party i.e. Head of Department, Supervisor(s) and PGR should review and sign the Postgraduate Student Agreement which includes a contract offer letter. This outlines the key terms and conditions of the scholarship including the level of funding, scholarship start/end date, modules to be taken and the level of paid/unpaid work (See Appendix 2 and link).

https://www.ul.ie/gps/sites/gps/files/user_media/documents/Research%20Postgraduate%20Agreement_0.pdf

- **Disputes/Complaints**

Should disputes or complaints in relation to the scholarship arise for the PGR, supervisor or department/faculty, they should be appropriately handled through the relevant Head of Department/School and/or PGR student representative.

Appendix 1

Extract from Postgraduate Student Charter

Responsibilities of the University, Faculties and Departments/Schools

The University through its Faculties and Departments/Schools, in addition to the academic regulations and procedures, will seek to provide:

1. Appropriate supervision during the registration period of the research student; this may include joint and/or panel supervision where applicable;
2. Immediate notice of any alterations to the research environment and/or supervisory team especially where the primary supervisors are on sabbatical or extended absence;
3. Supervisors with opportunities to actively develop and enhance their supervisory competencies and skills through training programmes and mentoring;
4. Information and advice to research students in relation to the annual progression process as outlined in the academic regulations and administered by his/her Department/Schools, and if necessary, the requirement for any subsequent Research Confirmation, and Research Progression Appeal Panel(s);
5. Access to a handbook or equivalent documentation (hard copy or online) with details of key information and academic processes, including academic progression requirements and outcomes, as well as academic guidance and support;
6. Appropriate facilities for research students, including an adequate study space and access to appropriate equipment and support facilities;
7. Access to learning activities and professional advice that will support the fundamental requirements of research education, and career development, in line with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Skills Statement (2015);
8. Information to funded research students with respect to undertaking unpaid academic support (laboratory demonstrating, tutoring or other academic work) up to a maximum of six hours per week, provided that this does not conflict with any terms and conditions associated with their funding from external agencies;
9. Where appropriate, information to research students pertaining to paid academic support opportunities up to a maximum of six hours per week that may exist from time to time in UL Departments/Schools. The availability of these opportunities is subject to the agreement and sign-off by the Supervisor and Head of Department/School;
10. Information in regard to additional financial support available to: undertake field research, present papers at academic conferences, disseminate research results, join academic/professional networks;
11. Within each Department/School, research postgraduate academic support, training and development, and feedback for these activities; including any formal recognition for the research student's teaching contribution;
12. Safety training in manual handling, chemical handling and basic first aid where deemed necessary at the beginning of their studies;
13. Advice on both formal and informal mechanisms to resolve issues pertaining to: appeals, complaints, disciplinary matters, student-supervisor academic relationship and support services;

14. Advice on the University's Intellectual Property (IP) Policy. Responsibilities of Supervisors to Research Students

Responsibilities of Supervisors to Students

Supervisors to undertake to:

1. Have an academic track record that is aligned to the research interest of the student and that complements the other members of the supervisory team;
2. As appropriate avail of supervisor training offered by the University;
3. Maintain a professional working relationship with the research student;
4. Arrange a schedule of formalised meetings, to agree in writing deadlines for submission of written work together with a plan to progress the research and timelines for feedback on the research progress or written submissions.
5. Have a working knowledge of academic regulations and procedures, including codes of conduct;
6. Agree alternate supervision during their extended absence from the University in line with section 1.1 above;
7. Support the research student in preparing for the annual progression process as outlined in the academic regulations and administered by his/her Department/School, and if necessary, any subsequent Research Confirmation, and Research Progression Appeal Panel(s);
8. Advise students on how to disseminate their research findings, and where applicable acknowledge formally the student's role in the development and dissemination of research outcomes (including co-authorship);
9. Recommend a programme of taught elements of study for their supervisees who are registered on generic structured PhD programmes;
10. Advise students who encounter difficulties about the academic and pastoral support(s) available to them.

Responsibilities of Research Students

Research students undertake to:

1. Understand before accepting an offer, the scope of and plan for the research, the terms and conditions pertaining to any scholarship funding offered during the period of the research, and the academic support (including grading, laboratory demonstrating, tutoring etc.) and administrative requirements of the Department/Schools;
2. Understand the expectations of the level of award they are seeking, and responsibility for their research;
3. Sign, if they are in receipt of a scholarship, a Scholarship Exemption Declaration Form, in order for the scholarship to be tax exempt and a postgraduate agreement;
4. Follow the academic regulations and procedures of the University, and attend the University Research Induction Workshops;
5. Maintain a professional working relationship with their supervisor(s); follow the guidance provided by their supervisor and attend any arranged meetings, to agree in writing deadlines for submission of written work together with a plan to progress the research;

6. Conduct the research within the Ethical Standards of the academic discipline(s) and in accordance with the standards detailed by the University. Students must adhere to all relevant policies of the University; including Research Integrity ;
7. Complete the requisite taught element of their programme to the required standard;
8. Develop a personal portfolio for training to be submitted as part of their annual progression;
9. Develop and implement a plan for the dissemination of research findings;
10. Utilise facilities supplied to them, in the form of access to telephones, printing, photocopying, publications on line, specialist research equipment, or any other service supplied by the University, only for the purpose of their research;
11. Adhere to the terms and conditions of any scholarship they are in receipt of, and provide if required a maximum of six unpaid contact hours per week for academic support (grading, laboratory demonstrating, tutoring or other academic work) provided that this does not conflict with any terms and conditions associated with their funding from an external funding agency;
12. Seek agreement and sign-off by the supervisor and Head of Department/School, for a maximum of six paid contact hours per week if available within the University; this is in addition to undertaking the unpaid academic support contact hours, where the student is in receipt of funding as set out in section 1.8 above;
13. Seek approval from their supervisor/Head of Department/School to carry out duties in the University that are outside their Department's/School's remit (e.g. invigilating, laboratory demonstrating/ tutoring for other UL Faculties Departments/Schools);
14. Inform their supervisor, Department/School, or Student Administration as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days after the event of anything which might affect their research progress, for example, extended absence, illness etc.

Appendix 2

Postgraduate Agreement

Research and Graduate Studies Office

Contract offer letters for Student Scholarships, Stipends or Bursaries

Purpose

Research postgraduate students in receipt of a scholarship/bursary from the University of Limerick, for the purpose of carrying out research, should be asked to agree to conditions attached to such funding which are additional to academic regulations. This enables the University to meet its contractual obligations related to funding arrangements (confidentiality, intellectual property, etc). It also sets out clear agreement on the value of the award as well as any additional duties being asked of the student. By having clear understanding at the outset disputes will be minimised.

Scope

Scholarship offer letters to full-time research postgraduate students being awarded scholarship/ stipends or bursaries.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to issue an appropriate **Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer** letter prior to and or at the time of academic enrolment. In practice it is expected that the supervisor will prepare the documents to be signed by the Head of Department based on the template available from the Graduate School.

The supervisor shall ensure that there is written acceptance of a **Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer** letter before commencement of the research.

Procedure

A **Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer** is completed for the relevant scholarship and issued by the Head of Department to the applicant. The signed Deed of Acceptance together with the **Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer** letter are retained at Departmental or Supervisor level.

Records

Postgraduate Agreement/Letter of Acceptance

DEPARTMENT OF [NAME]

Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer:

[Date]

DEPARTMENT OF [NAME]

Postgraduate Research Scholarship Offer:

[Date]

[Student Name]

[Address]

Dear [xxx]

The above scholarship is awarded to you starting [**start date**] for [**period of scholarship**], {**Optional clause** –renewable for a further [**period**]}, subject to satisfactory academic progress.

The scholarship is valued at [**Annual stip-end in Euro**] per annum inclusive of all grants. Exemption from income tax in respect of scholarship income is on a self-assessment basis and will require submission to the University of a completed Scholarship Exemption Declaration form. Please note that on receipt of a completed form the University can apply income tax exemption with immediate effect but the exemption will require subsequent approval by the Revenue when the form is forwarded by the University.

The scholarship is subject to a number of terms and conditions that are listed below.

1. You agree to be bound by the Academic Regulations and Procedures of the University of Limerick, a copy of which is available from the Graduate Studies Office, University of Limerick, Limerick. www.graduatestudies.ul.ie. It is particularly important that you note the regulations dealing with performance assessment and the circumstances in which the scholarship will be terminated.
2. The research programme is for a minimum of [**X/Y years/semesters**]. You will be expected to give a full-time commitment to your designated research project and to be fully involved in the various elements that comprise the research programme.
3. Your research programme will be under the general advice and supervision of your nominated supervisor(s) who will specify study times, research times, vacation periods and other operational requirements.
4. As part of the general educational programme for full-time postgraduate research students the University usually requires students to undertake academic support as part of the scholarship award. You will be required to give a maximum of [**X – complete as appropriate**] hours per week support for laboratory and/or tutorial work.
5. It is important that the University protects and gains maximum benefit from its research activities. Accordingly, you undertake that you will not, unless authorised in writing by your nominated supervisor(s), reveal to any third party any of the trade secrets, know-how

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or confidential operations, processes or dealings of the University or any of the intellectual property owned or used by it (including the intellectual property referred to in paragraph 10 below) or any information concerning the organisation, business, finance, transactions or affairs of the University of Limerick, or any of the companies, firms or individuals engaged in business with the University of Limerick, that the University regards, or could reasonably be expected to regard, as confidential. This restriction continues to apply without limit in point of time but shall cease to apply to information or knowledge that either may reasonably be said to have come into the public domain (through no fault on your part) or that you are authorised to publish or disseminate under paragraph 8 below.

6. It is a condition of the scholarship that you do not take on any office of profit or employment during the normal working hours of the University, without the written approval of the Head of Department and supervisor.

7. Upon commencement of your research you should agree with your supervisor, in writing, the title, the description and terms of reference of your research project. These may be subject to review during the project and where there is a change it is important that you agree the changes in accordance with Academic Regulations and Procedures.

8. Publications and dissemination of information are an important part of University research. To protect the University, you, and your supervisor, it is required that prior to publication or dissemination of information relating to your research at the University of Limerick, you must obtain approval in writing from your supervisor. Where appropriate, such publications should include your supervisor's name as co-author. These conditions apply during your period of study at the University and continue to apply to research conducted at the University.

9. Attendance at the following is compulsory:

***[Detail any compulsory modules, or course work
(Note: Optional clause, delete as appropriate)]***.

10. The level of funding available to the University to support the scholarship may be decreased or withdrawn. Accordingly, the University reserves the right at any time to decrease the amount of the scholarship or to terminate the scholarship.

11. Subject always to the provisions of the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures, all intellectual property (including inventions, discoveries, copyright in computer software (including source and object codes) and other kinds of copyright, semiconductor maskworks, trade secrets, know how, research data, tangible research property and similar property/rights) conceived, invented or reduced to practice by you during, or as a result of, your research programme shall be the property of the University. Accordingly, you assign and agree to assign all of your right, title and interest in such intellectual property to the University and you waive any and all moral rights and rights of a similar nature in respect thereof. You further undertake to do all such acts (including the execution of all appropriate documents) which the University, at its cost and at its

absolute discretion, considers necessary or desirable for the purposes of giving effect to the foregoing and you appoint any officer of the University as your attorney in your name and on your behalf for the purposes of doing all such acts as may be required of you in this regard. University policy with respect to ownership and exploitation of intellectual property generally is set out in the prevailing University IPR policy (as determined by the University), copies of which are available from the Office of Vice President Research. Any benefits accruing to the University from the subsequent commercialisation of the intellectual property referred to in this paragraph shall be allocated in accordance with such policy.

Every question or dispute that may arise in relation to this scholarship will be determined by the University of Limerick in accordance with academic regulations.

If you are prepared to accept the offer upon the terms and conditions stated, please execute the Deed of Acceptance below and return the form, together with one copy of this letter incorporating the executed Deed to [**Head of Department, Department Name**], University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.

Signed for and on behalf of the University of Limerick

[Head of Department],
[Department Name],
[Faculty Name],
University of Limerick,
Plassey,
Limerick.

DEED OF ACCEPTANCE

I _____ being the person referred to in the foregoing Letter of Offer, hereby concur in and accept the said offer upon the terms and conditions stated herein.

SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED:

[Student Name]

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