

Code of Practice Research Progression Appeal Panel

As per Academic Regulation 5.6.9 and arising from the outcome of the Research Confirmation (RC) Panel; where the candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of the Research Confirmation Panel review, s/he may appeal the matter to the Head of Department. The appeal must be made within two weeks of the publication of the Research Confirmation Panel grade. The student may appeal on the basis of the process or the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel.

In a manner similar to the way the Research Confirmation Panel operates, the Research Progression Appeal Panel will assess the candidate's performance to date and decide whether to reject or uphold the appeal. If the appeal is rejected, the original decision of the Research Confirmation Panel is confirmed. If the appeal is upheld, the Research Progression Appeal Panel's recommendation shall follow the guidelines indicated in Section 4 below.

1. Composition and Role of the Research Progression Appeal Panel:

The Research Progression Appeal Panel (initiated via a PGR-3b form) will consist of the Dean of Graduate School or his/her nominee, who will act as chairperson, and two independent panel members, one nominated by the Head of Department and the other nominated by the Dean of Graduate School. All members of the panel should satisfy the criteria for appointment as a supervisor (as per academic regulations section 5.5). The chairperson or independent panel members are not precluded from acting as an internal examiner at the examination stage.

Chairperson: The chairperson (where nominated by the Dean Graduate School) will normally be a senior faculty member who has supervised a PhD candidate to completion. Their role is to manage the research progression appeal panel, ensuring that the candidate is treated fairly, to provide guidance on the University's academic regulations and practices and communicate the outcome of the examination to the candidate. The chairperson will make sure that all the required documentation is completed and communicate the outcome to the relevant parties.

Examiners: The examiners' role is to ensure that the candidate has demonstrated the capability to undertake a doctoral programme of research successfully.

2. Research Progression Appeal Report: The members of the board should receive the report at least two weeks in advance of an oral viva. The report should not exceed 8,000 words, including references/bibliography and should:

- (a) Clearly define the research objectives;
- (b) Include a critical literature review of the subject area(s) relating to the proposed research;
- (c) Demonstrate the originality of the proposed research work, by referring to published material;
- (d) Demonstrate an ability to write a report, in accordance with UL thesis specifications;
- (e) Report on the research work carried out to date by the candidate; which demonstrates: (i) feasibility of the proposed research work; (ii) the ability of the candidate to carry out the proposed research work;
- (f) Contain a work-plan showing the main steps required to complete the research objectives. This does not need to be detailed, but should demonstrate that the candidate understands the steps and risks involved in working towards his/her research objectives.

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3. Research Progression Appeal Presentation: The research must be presented to the examination board. The process will take the following structure:

- (a) The candidate will make a presentation for up to thirty minutes of the work described in the confirmation report.
- (b) After the presentation, an oral examination of the candidate for up to sixty minutes; will be undertaken by the two examiners. The Research Progression Appeal Panel should last no longer than one hour and thirty minutes.

4. Recommendations: The Research Progression Appeal Panel may recommend one of the following options based on their determination of whether the candidate's research has the potential to make an original research contribution:

- a. The student's research progress is of a sufficiently high standard to warrant continuation on the masters or PhD register, as applicable. (G)
- b. The student's research progress is of a sufficiently high standard to warrant continuation on the masters or PhD register, as applicable, and an extension to the period of registration within the limits described in section 5.8 is recommended. (G)
- c. The student's research progress on the PhD register is unsatisfactory, and the student's enrolment should revert to the masters register. (T)
- d. The student's research progress is unsatisfactory and the student's enrolment on the masters or PhD register, as applicable, is terminated. (W)

5. Outcome: Candidate's will be informed of the outcome of the examination by the chairperson of the board on completion of the appeal process. Prior to submitting the progression appeal panel outcome on the research progression appeal form (PGR3b form) to Academic Registry (pgrprogression@ul.ie), the chairperson must confirm using aforementioned (PGR-3b) form that a separate research progression appeal report (PGR-3b.1) has been issued to both the candidate and supervisor(s). The panel report (PGR-3a.1) providing feedback on both the strengths and areas for consideration within the research must be distributed immediately following the progression appeal panel to both the candidate and supervisor(s).

If successful, the candidate will be informed by the chairperson that the appeal process is not a guarantee that the candidate will be awarded a PhD. Similarly; continuation on the Masters' register is not a guarantee that the candidate will be awarded a Master's.

In relation to recommendation 4d. above, as per the academic regulations; the Research Progression Appeal Panel will determine, in consultation with the course director, whether or not the student meets the requirements for entry to an appropriate taught postgraduate programme. In addition, the Research Progression Appeal Panel may recommend to the Postgraduate Research Committee a change in the supervisory arrangements for the student.

In the event of a disagreement between the examiners as to the outcome of the Research Progression Appeal Panel, the chairperson will record that a disagreement has occurred, summarise the nature of the disagreement and suspend the Research Progression Appeal Panel. The case will be forwarded to the head of department for further action.

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6. Research Progression Appeal Panel Checklist:

Role of the Appellant (Student)

The student may appeal in writing to the Head of Department (within two weeks) the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel on the basis of the process or the outcome. It is the responsibility of the appellant to demonstrate that progress has been made since the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel was made or that the process was not adhered to. The appellant will give a presentation of their research. In addition, it must be described within an academic research report or separately within an additional document (in total not exceeding 8000 words), how the concerns of both the Research Review and the Research Confirmation Panels have been addressed. The report(s) must not replace the content of the academic report; and must be submitted to the Graduate School a minimum of two weeks prior to the Research Progression Appeal Panel.

Role of the Head of Department

As soon as possible after receiving the appeal letter emanating from the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel, the Head of Department must submit to the Dean Graduate School copies of the following documents:

- The letter of appeal from the Appellant
- 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 Dean Graduate & Professional Studies will forward the aforementioned documentation to the Independent Examiners.

Role of the Independent Examiners

The independent examiners should review the previous panel reports, assess whether the appellant has addressed the concerns of both the Research Review and the Research Confirmation Panels satisfactorily and make an academic judgement on whether the decision of the previous panels is now valid based on the appellant's presentation and submission.