Academic Regulations for Masters (Taught and Structured) Research Projects

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Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
1	30/04/2021	Academic Council	• Regulations approved for the first time with amendments.

Contents

Purpose of Regulations

- This document describes Dundalk Institute of Technology's (DkIT's) quality assurance regulations in relation to the Research Project module of a Master's degree award, Taught and Structured.

Application and Scope

- The regulations set out in this document apply to all DkIT staff and students involved with Master's degrees (Taught or Structured). Separate regulations apply to Masters Degrees by Research (*see Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis (DCU Awards*), https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html).

- These regulations should be read in conjunction with the Research Project module descriptor contained in the relevant validated programme documentation.

Principles of Master's Degree (Taught and Structured) Research Projects

- A Master's degree (Taught) award is at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In accordance with DkIT's Awarding Policy an award of this type has 75-90 ECTS credits with 15-30 ECTS credits being allocated to the Research Project module and the remaining credits being allocated to discipline-specific modules.

- A Master's degree (Structured) award is at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In accordance with DkIT's Awarding Policy an award of this type has 90 ECTS credits with 60 ECTS credits being allocated to the Research Project module and 30 ECTS credits being allocated to discipline-specific modules. The volume of ECTS credits allocated to the Research Project module is in line with the defined credit volume in the Technological Universities (TU) Act 2018 Part 2, Section 28, 2(a) as "*training where not less than 60 percent of the available credits are assigned in respect of a thesis or theses prepared by the student based on research conducted by him or her.*"

- The Research Project module presented as part of the Master's Degree (Taught or Structured) can take a number of forms, including thesis or monograph, artefact or creative or performance practice.

Master's Degree (Taught)

- These regulations apply to the research project element of a taught Master's degree of 75-90 ECTS credits, where the Research Project module accounts for 15-30 credits.

Supervision

- Each student will have one supervisor from the academic staff within the relevant academic school in which the student is registered. The supervisor will be appointed by the Head of Department.

- In certain cases, due to the nature of the research project, there may be a need to have more than one supervisor. The supervisors in this instance are referred to as joint supervisors and have equal rights and undertake equal responsibilities in relation to supervising the student.

- The supervisor(s) must have a minimum of a Master's degree (or relevant professional qualification) in the relevant discipline. They must have some research/professional experience in the broad discipline area.

- The supervisor(s) must have been formally trained in research supervision prior to undertaking their role as supervisor or have committed to undertaking the training in the near future. This training should be provided by the Graduate Research Office.

- The supervisor(s) should meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss the progress of their project. The project module descriptor provides guidance on the frequency and duration of contact between student and the supervisor with due regard to the specific discipline.

- The responsibilities of the **supervisor(s)** include the following:

  o To advise the student on the selection of the research topic and scope of the project;

  o To provide direction and guidance through regular and systematic meetings, keeping records as appropriate;

  o To request periodic written submissions as appropriate and provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time;

  o To ensure that the student is made aware, in a timely manner, of any inadequacies of progress or standards relative to the standard expected;

  o To advise on the methodology and format of presentation of the research project;

  o To assess the project elements submitted, in accordance with a rubric agreed by the Programme Board;

  o To participate in a Viva Voce examination where required;

  o To attend Examination Board(s) meeting(s) at which the candidate is being considered;

  o To acknowledge a student's contribution in any publication, exhibition, presentation, performance or meeting which includes the student's research work;

  o To ensure that any Intellectual Property issues have been discussed with the Institute's Technology Transfer Office prior to project commencement, where relevant.

- Members of academic staff should normally act as supervisor to a maximum of six students on a Master's programme (taught and/or structured) at any one time.

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to appoint a new supervisor where:

  o A supervisor retires or resigns from the Institute during the programme of study of one or more students;

  o A supervisor is absent (e.g. on sabbatical or sick leave) for part of the duration of the student's research project. It will be the responsibility of the relevant Head of Department to determine whether or not a replacement supervisor is needed for the period in question.

- It is the responsibility of the original supervisor to ensure a smooth and timely transition where a change of supervisor takes place.

- Students and supervisors should have access to policies and procedures of the Institute. Significant difficulties which arise within a supervisor/student relationship are dealt with in this context.

- In the first instance, a student and/or supervisor(s) should seek a resolution to the issues at School level. This process will normally involve the student, supervisor(s) and the Head of Department. The Head of Department may wish to seek advice on policy or procedure (without prejudicing any possible subsequent formal procedures) and/or consult with other colleagues on context and background. The resolution to the issues will be captured in writing and circulated to the student and supervisor(s) by the Head of Department to ensure clarity for both student and supervisor(s).

- If any party does not accept the resolution, or a resolution is not possible within a reasonable timeframe (one month) consideration should be given by all parties as to how the issues fall under specific Institute policies.

- The responsibilities of the **student** include the following:

  - To comply with relevant DkIT regulations (including Academic Integrity Policy);

  - To conduct the research within the ethical standards of the discipline(s) and in accordance with the standards detailed by DkIT;

  - To engage with and maintain adequate formal contact with the supervisor, including attendance at meetings when requested;

  - Keep accurate and adequate records on all relevant aspects of the project and prepare reports on progress as required and on time;

  - Work sufficiently and effectively on the research project and keep – in so far as it is feasible – to agreed deadlines;

  - To acknowledge the supervisor's role in their research including in any publication, presentation, performance, exhibition, or meeting to which the supervisor has made a contribution.

Format of Submission

- The exact format of the submission will depend on the discipline area and will be specified in the module descriptor. The submission should fulfil the following criteria:

  - Be a candidate's own work;

  - Demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to the field;

  - Include a critical analysis of related work;

  - Contribute to the existing academic and/or practical knowledge in the field

  - Be based on work conducted while the candidate was a registered student on the programme.

Three broad categories of submission are available:

Thesis or Monograph

- The candidate will submit a written thesis normally of 15,000-25,000 words (including bibliography but excluding appendices). The thesis can be supported with a variety of media including websites, photographs, videos or other technologies. In some cases, the monograph submission may be in the form of a paper suitable for publication in an academic journal. In such cases the submission will be shorter, typically of 7,000-8,000 words.

Artefact

- The candidate will submit a research output appropriate to the discipline, such as a music composition, installation, portfolio of evidence, archive, film or multimedia production. This is usually accompanied by a written commentary of no less than 8,000-10,000 words.

Creative or Performance Practice

- The candidate will submit a research output which is practical in nature, such as a music or theatre performance or mediated performance. This is usually accompanied by a written commentary of 8,000-10,000 words.

Examination

- Each student will be assessed on the research element of their degree on the basis of a submission in the format appropriate for the relevant discipline.

- Each student will be examined by their project supervisor(s) and one other Internal Examiner ('Second Reader') selected by the Head of Department or nominee. Normally the second Internal Examiner will be a project supervisor on the same programme. The final student mark for consideration by the Examination Board is normally the average of marks from the Supervisor and Second Reader.

- An External Examiner will be appointed for the module and approved by the DkIT Academic Council (in accordance with DkIT's External Examiner's Duties and Procedures). The Programme Board is responsible for recommending the appointment.

- The External Examiner must have at least a Master's degree or equivalent professional qualification/experience, with direct and recent knowledge of the broad area of the programme and appropriate experience of student research supervision at Masters level.

- Each of the programme external examiners can be used for multiple research projects.

- The External Examiner will normally review a selection of research projects from the programme, within the full marks range (including top, bottom and middle marks). They will also review and advise on any individual projects for which there is a differential of 10% or more in the marks awarded by the Supervisor and Second Reader.

- Where agreement is not reached between supervisors or where the mark assigned is on a grade boundary, the Supervisor, Second Reader or External Examiner may suggest that the candidate attends a Viva Voce examination prior to recommending the research project mark.

- The student is required to present hard and/or electronic copies of the research project submission, as indicated in the module descriptor.

- The supervisor is responsible for submitting to the School Office the project materials selected for review by the External Examiner.

- Supervisors, Second Readers and External Examiners should assess the submissions in accordance with a rubric agreed by the Programme Board.

- All recommended grades are subject to the agreement and approval of the Examination Board and Academic Council (see DkIT's Assessment and Standards (https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html).

Library Submission

- A copy of the research project will be lodged with the DkIT library.

Master's Degree (Structured)

- These regulations apply to the research project element of a Structured Master's degree of 90 ECTS credits, where the Research Project module accounts for 60 ECTS credits and 30 ECTS credits are allocated to discipline-specific modules.

Supervision

- Each student will have one supervisor from the academic staff within the relevant academic school in which the student is registered. The supervisor will be appointed by the Head of Department.

- The supervisor should:

  o have a qualification at the level of the award or higher **and**

  o have relevant experience in an area cognate to the proposed area of research usually reflected by publications relating to the <u>direct</u> area of research being undertaken by the candidate.

- In certain cases, due to the nature of the research project, there may be a need to have more than one supervisor. The supervisors in this instance are referred to as joint supervisors and have equal rights and undertake equal responsibilities in relation to supervising the student. The additional supervisor must have some research/professional experience in the broad discipline area.

- The supervisor(s) must have been formally trained in research supervision prior to undertaking their role as supervisor. This training should be provided by the Graduate Research Office.

- The supervisor(s) should meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss the progress of their project. The project module descriptor provides guidance on the frequency and duration of contact between student and the supervisor with due regard to the specific discipline.

- The responsibilities of the **supervisor(s)** include the following:

  o To advise the student on the selection of the research topic and scope of the project;

- o To ensure that an appropriate agreement is in place where the research involves an external organisation;

- o To ensure that the student acquires/has acquired training in the methodology of research and scholarship and in the skills necessary for sustained independent effort;

- o To provide direction and guidance through regular and systematic meetings, keeping records as appropriate;

- o To request periodic written submissions as appropriate and provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time;

- o To ensure that the student is made aware, in a timely manner, of any inadequacies of progress or standards relative to the standard expected;

- o To advise on the methodology and format of presentation of the research project;

- o To assess the Research Project elements submitted, in accordance with a rubric agreed with the External Examiner;

- o To participate in a Viva Voce examination where required;

- o To attend Examination Board(s) meeting(s) at which the candidate is being considered;

- o To acknowledge a student's contribution in any publication, exhibition, presentation, performance or meeting which includes the student's research work;

- o To ensure that any Intellectual Property issues have been discussed with the Institute's Technology Transfer Office prior to project commencement, where relevant.

- Members of academic staff should normally act as supervisor to a maximum of six students on a Master's programme (Taught or Structured) at any one time.

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to appoint a new supervisor where:

  - o A supervisor retires or resigns from the Institute during the programme of study of one or more students;

  - o A supervisor is absent (e.g. on sabbatical or sick leave) for part of the duration of the student's research project. It will be the responsibility of the relevant Head of Department to determine whether or not a replacement supervisor is needed for the period in question.

- It is the responsibility of the original supervisor to ensure a smooth and timely transition where a change of supervisor takes place.

- Students and supervisors should have access to policies and procedures of the Institute. Significant difficulties which arise within a supervisor/student relationship are dealt with in this context.

- In the first instance, a student and/or supervisor(s) should seek a resolution to the issues at School level. This process will normally involve the student, supervisor(s) and the Head of

Department. The Head of Department may wish to seek advice on policy or procedure (without prejudicing any possible subsequent formal procedures) and/or consult with other colleagues on context and background. The resolution to the issues will be captured in writing and circulated to the student and supervisor(s) by the Head of Department to ensure clarity for both student and supervisor(s).

- If any party does not accept the resolution, or a resolution is not possible within a reasonable timeframe (one month) consideration should be given by all parties as to how the issues fall under specific Institute policies.

- The responsibilities of the **student** include the following:

  o To comply with relevant DkIT regulations (including Academic Integrity Policy);

  o To conduct the research within the ethical standards of the discipline(s) and in accordance with the standards detailed by DkIT;

  o To engage with and maintain adequate formal contact with the supervisor, including attendance at meetings when requested;

  o Keep accurate and adequate records on all relevant aspects of the project and prepare reports on progress as required and on time;

  o Work sufficiently and effectively on the research project and keep, in so far as it is feasible, to agreed deadlines;

  o To acknowledge the supervisor(s) role in their research including in any publication, presentation, performance, exhibition, or meeting to which the supervisor has made a contribution.

Format of Submission

- The exact format of the submission will depend on the discipline area and will be specified in the module descriptor. The submission should fulfil the following criteria:

  o Be a candidate's own work;

  o Demonstrate <u>significant</u> knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to the field;

  o Include a critical analysis of related work;

  o Contribute to the existing academic knowledge in the field.

  o Be based on work conducted while the candidate was a registered student on the programme.

Three broad categories of submission are available:

Thesis or Monograph

- The candidate will submit a written thesis normally of 25,000-45,000 words (including bibliography but excluding appendices). The thesis can be supported with a variety of media including websites, photographs, videos or other technologies. In some cases the monograph submission may be in the form of a paper suitable for publication in an academic journal. In such cases the submission will be shorter, typically of 8,000-10,000 words.

Artefact

- The candidate will submit a research output appropriate to the discipline, such as a music composition, installation, portfolio of evidence, archive, film or multimedia production. This is usually accompanied by a written commentary of no less than 10,000-15,000 words.

Creative or Performance Practice

- The candidate will submit a research output which is practical in nature, such as a music or theatre performance or mediated performance. This is usually accompanied by a written commentary of 10,000-15,000 words.

Examination

- Each student will be assessed on the research element of their degree on the basis of a submission in the format appropriate for the relevant discipline (see Section: Format of Submission).

- Each student will be examined by at one Internal Examiner who is not the supervisor(s), and one External Examiner. Normally the Internal Examiner(s) will be a Research Project supervisor on the same programme.

Internal Examiner

- The Internal Examiner should normally be a member of academic staff at DkIT, retired DkIT academic or a senior researcher, with a formal academic qualification and/or professional qualification which is recognised within the particular discipline as forming a suitable background to allow the individual to act in the role of Internal Examiner. The Internal Examiner is selected by the Head of Department.

- In cases where the relevant expertise does not exist within DkIT an Internal Examiner may be appointed from another Higher Education Institution (HEI).

- The Internal Examiner must be independent of the Research Project, the student and the other examiner(s) and not be conflicted in any way in terms of his/her relationship to the supervisor(s). The Internal Examiner may not be the supervisor, but should be experienced in supervising taught/structured Master's Research Projects.

External Examiner

- For Master's Degree (Structured), External Examiners are appointed for specific students to align with the project subject matter. Each External Examiner can assess multiple Research Projects (i.e. appointed on an individual Research Project basis). There should be more than one Research Project External Examiner appointed to a programme student cohort.

- External Examiners should not be appointed more than twice in a four-year period. Appointments may be made irrespective of External Examiners' duties with regard to taught programmes. The Programme Board is responsible for recommending the appointment of the External Examiners.

- The External Examiner(s) should be contacted informally by the supervisor(s) to ascertain availability and willingness to undertake the External Examiner role within the timescale envisaged.

- All nominations of External Examiners are submitted for approval to the DkIT Academic Council by the Head of Department.

- External Examiners should normally have the following qualities and competencies:

  - recognised expertise in the area which is the subject matter of the thesis being examined;

  - experience of supervision and examination at Master's degree level;

  - formal academic qualification and/or professional qualification which is recognised within the particular discipline as forming a suitable background to allow the individual to act in the role of External Examiner (minimum of a Master's degree).

- It must be ensured that all External Examiners should:

  - not have been in the employ of DkIT, in any capacity, in the five years prior to appointment;

  - not have been a student of DkIT in the five years prior to appointment;

  - not be a beneficiary of any bursary or remuneration from DkIT (other than from the post of External Examiner, membership of an Accreditation Board, quality review panel or recruitment/promotions panel);

  - not have advised the student on the work underpinning the preparation of his/her Research Project;

  - have no close personal relationship with the student, supervisor(s) or other;

  - have no professional relationship with the student, supervisor(s) or other Examiner(s) such that, in the opinion of the Head of Department, there is a risk of a conflict of interest.

- The student is required to submit hard and/or electronic copies of the Research Project in accordance with the requirements in the Research Project module descriptor(See *Section: Format of Submission* above).

- Examiners are normally expected to complete the assessment of the Research Project within two weeks of receipt of the submission. The School Office should be notified immediately if there is any difficulty in adhering to this time requirement.

- The Internal and External examiners should assess the submissions independently in accordance with rubric agreed by the Programme Board.

- A record of how the Research Project was marked should be submitted to the supervisor by the Internal and External Examiners. The final student mark for consideration by the Examination Board is the average of the Internal and External Examiners marks.

- If there is a difference of 10% or more in the marks allocated by the Internal and the External Examiner following independent assessment, then the Research Project will need to be assessed by an additional External Examiner that has been appointed to the programme. The final student mark for consideration by the Examination Board is the average of marks from the Internal Examiner, External Examiner and additional External Examiner.

- Where the mark assigned is on a grade boundary or where there is not agreement between examiners, the Supervisor, Internal Examiner or External Examiner may recommend that the student attends a Viva Voce examination with the Internal and External Examiners.

- If a Viva Voce examination is required, it shall be held at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) unless prior approval has been obtained from the Head of Department. Where absolutely necessary, consideration may be given to using the Institute's web-conferencing facilities (or equivalent) for the Viva Voce examination.

- The proceedings of the Viva Voce examination shall be chaired by an Independent Chairperson which will normally be the Head of Department.

- Following the Viva Voce, the Internal and External Examiners will provide a final mark for the student to the supervisor(s).

- All recommended grades are subject to the agreement and approval of the Examination Board and Academic Council (see DkIT's Assessment and Standards, https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html).

Library Submission

- A copy of the research project will be lodged with the DkIT library.