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## **Remote Supervision of Postgraduate (Doctoral) Students**

### **1. Context**

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, herein referred to as Trinity, is a global university with strategic goals to increase international engagement and enhance global recognition of the University's strengths, capacity and reputation in research.

Trinity receives a number of enquiries from students regarding PhD enrolment where research necessitates access to specific data or field experience that could not be undertaken in Dublin and which requires the student to be overseas for the majority of their registration.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set the parameters upon which requests for remote supervision will be considered; to clarify the roles and responsibilities of student and supervisor(s) involved in the implementation and oversight of remote supervision arrangement; and to highlight specific regulations pertaining to research students supervised remotely.

### **3. Benefits**

- 3.1 The policy provides a formal process to facilitate informed decision making for requests for remote supervision, on the basis of academic merit.
- 3.2. Potential difficulties and risks faced by students who work remotely from their supervisors are addressed prior to entering a remote supervision arrangement and managed proactively.

### **4. Scope**

- 4.1 This policy will only consider Trinity students undertaking research abroad on the basis of academic merit.
- 4.2. This policy does not consider remote supervision arrangements in relation to dual/joint programmes. Remote supervision as relevant to partnerships will be organised separately and within the specific agreements.
- 4.3 This policy does not consider remote supervision arrangements in relation to students registered on the Non-Resident PhD pathway. Remote supervision arrangements as relevant to such students are set out within the Non-Resident PhD guidance.



## **5. Principles**

- 5.1 Trinity is committed to maintaining a consistently high standard of supervision for all its research students.

## **6. Definitions**

### **6.1 Local Advisor**

The local advisor (where such an appointment is appropriate) facilitates the work that is set out in the supervision plan. This plan will set out the roles and responsibilities of the local advisor, which are therefore defined on a case by case basis. The role of local advisor is an honorary position which typically will not incur payment.

## **7. Policy Eligibility**

- 7.1.1. Remote supervision is an arrangement which is granted in extraordinary circumstances on the particular academic merit of the proposed research project requiring the students to be in residence outside of Dublin for more than 50% of their time on register. There must be an academic requirement, as opposed to a preference, to undertake the research abroad.
- 7.1.2. Where permission for a remote supervision arrangement is granted based on access to specific data/research subject(s) which is not accessible from Dublin, and where this access arrangement changes prior to or during the student's time on register, the remote supervision arrangement will immediately be declared invalid. Options that may be available to the student are to engage, in Dublin, in the Trinity Structured PhD, or to withdraw (or be removed) from the register.
- 7.1.3. In all circumstances, students will be required to be based at Trinity for a time in order to successfully complete the structured and other (including Health and Safety) elements of the Doctoral programme based on the requirements of the Schools (such structured elements may be different for students under remote supervision). If the structured elements are online or are not provided in year 1 of the programme, students must still come to Trinity in the first year for at least a period of two weeks. Subsequently, the student will attend annually for completion of annual reports, confirmation process and meet in person with supervisor(s). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their visa and travel documents are in order, to enable them attend mandatory components including *viva voce* examinations.



## **7.2. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.2.1. Approval process**

To apply for permission to supervise a PhD student remotely, the proposed supervisor will nominate an applicant/student who is seeking remote supervision and submit an application form and a supervision plan to the Director of Teaching and Learning PG (DTLPG) and the relevant Head of School. The Head of School must nominate a co-supervisor also located at Trinity, to take the place of principal supervisor should the need arise. All current regulations with respect to “Eligibility to Supervise” (Calendar Part III) must be adhered to. Where appropriate a “local advisor” will also be appointed by the supervisor in conjunction with the DTLPG. The application form will include a statement that a risk assessment is complete and local health and safety standards have been met. Following approval by DTLPG and Head of School, the complete application should be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies for final approval. The decision of the Dean of Graduate Studies is final. If rejected, the decision cannot be appealed.

### **7.2.2. Remote supervision plan**

A detailed supervision plan will form part of the application from a potential supervisor to the Dean of Graduate Studies to permit remote supervision. The plan should be signed by student, supervisor, co-supervisor and approved by the DTLPG and Head of School prior to submission to Dean of Graduate Studies. This supervision plan must be finalised and approved before the remote research takes place. The plan will include the following:

- Details of when, and for how long, the prospective student will be present at Trinity.
- Plan of how the student will complete structured elements of PhD.
- Demonstration (by student and/or supervisor where applicable) that the remote location where the proposed research will be carried out is suitable and that resources required to carry out the research are in place. This includes risk assessment, health and safety and taking cultural elements into account.
- Schedule of meetings/interactions (minimum of 1 per month – skype, video conference where facilities are available, in addition to emails/phone calls);
- Schedule of visits to be undertaken by supervisor and/or co-supervisor to remote location (where applicable);
- Ethical approval(s) where applicable;
- Statement re access to data; and Intellectual property considerations.
- Statement regarding the secure transfer and storage of student data (ref 7.5.3)



7.2.3. The remote supervision plan should be reviewed and signed off twice yearly (including before the next registration of the student) by the student, supervisor and the co-supervisor. The plan may be amended, if appropriate, at these points. Amendments must be validated by DTLPG, Head of School and Dean of Graduate Studies as above.

7.3. **Reporting/Monitoring of remote supervision**

7.3.1. Six-monthly supervisory reports (including progress of research), in the same format as the Annual Report must be sent to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. This must be accompanied by verification by the DTLPG in consultation with the Head of School that student, supervisor and co-supervisor have adhered to the supervision plan. Student-Supervisor/Co-supervisor interaction will be recorded as a log. Confirmation that the log book is complete and up-to-date will form part of the supervisory report.

7.4. **Access to services**

7.4.1. When students are attending Trinity and resident in Ireland, they will have access to all services available to registered research students. However, when resident at a remote location, level of access will be necessarily different.

7.5. **Regulations**

7.5.1. Students working remotely are subject to all regulations pertaining to research students as per The University of Dublin Calendar Parts I, II and III. Financial arrangements (including project costs) must be worked out with the School. All students that have been supervised remotely are required to attend for their *viva voce* examination in Dublin (at a location organised by the DTLPG). Travel and other costs will be borne by the student, unless there is a prior agreement with the School. Students working remotely will not normally be eligible for College Studentships (under Irish tax regulations).

7.5.2. Intellectual property associated with the project complies with Trinity regulations unless a prior agreement between Trinity and the Institution where the remote supervision is taking place has been set up.

7.5.3. Student data associated with the project (i.e. personal information, research reports, copies of thesis) is subject to data protection legislation, specifically the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), notwithstanding the physical location of the supervisor/assessor.



## **8. Responsibility**

- 8.1 The responsibility for this policy lies with the Dean of Graduate Studies

## **9. Related Documents**

- 9.1 Research Supervision Policy  
9.2 [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#)

## **10. Document Control**

- 10.1 Date approved: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016 by Council  
10.2 Revised Policy approved by Council in October 2019, and 1 November 2023  
10.3 Version 3.0 approved by Council 1 November 2023  
10.4 Date of next review: Academic Year 2028/29