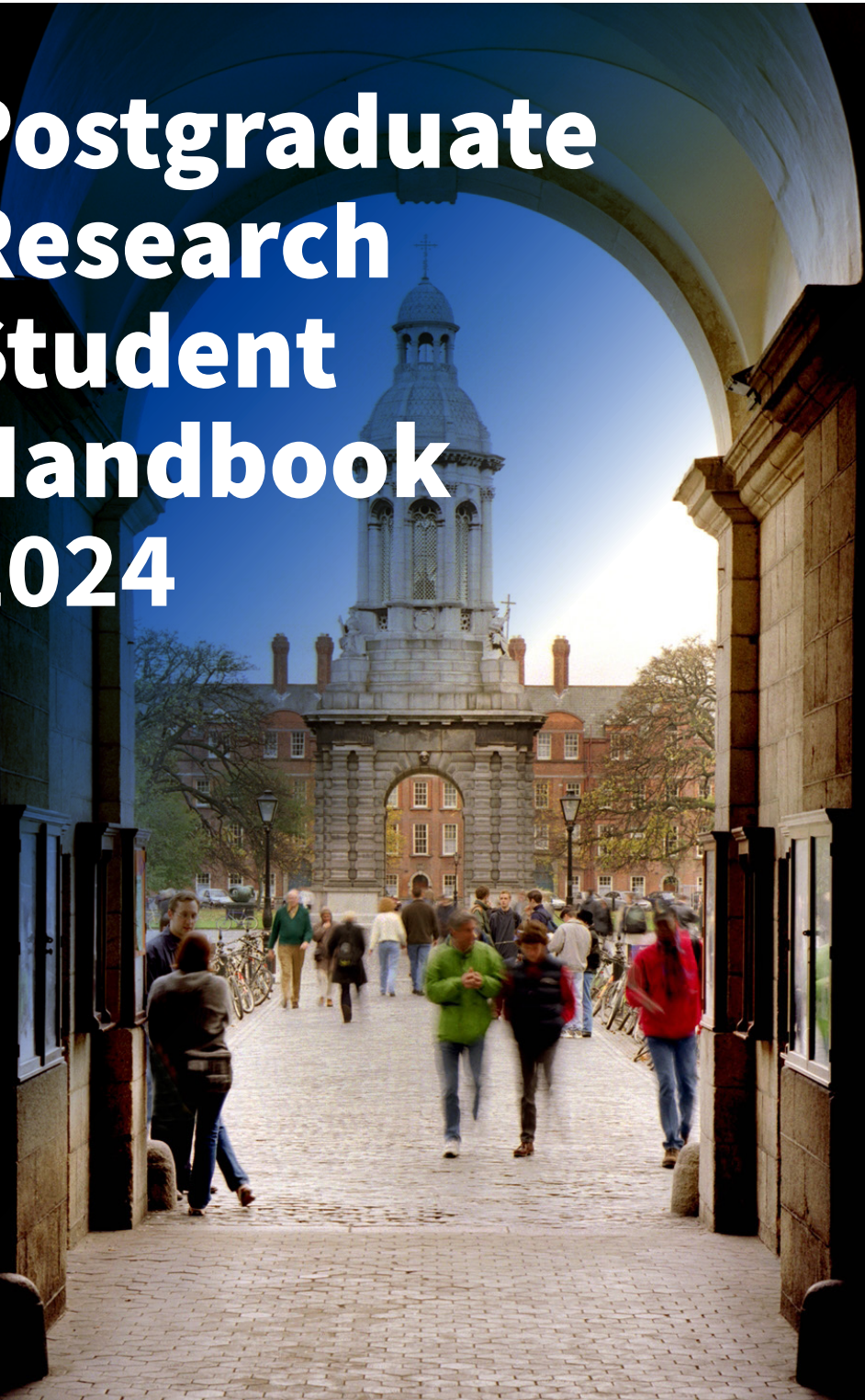




**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

# Postgraduate Research Student Handbook 2024





# Trinity College

## Postgraduate Research Student Handbook

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**European universities have been awarding degrees since the 12th century, when ‘Doctor’ was the title given to people whose knowledge, increased by study and tested by practice, gave them the authority to teach others.**

While there is no reason to stick to traditions just because they are time-honoured, ask yourself if there can be anything more fundamental than knowledge – the freedom to pursue it, the wisdom to use it – to individual and collective well-being.

Ask yourself if you are the kind of person who has an important question in mind, which no one has yet addressed or answered satisfactorily; who has the ability to explain what inspired it and why it matters; who will not be deterred from advancing that knowledge through genuine professional work.

*That is original research.*

*That is what a PhD is about: making a difference.*

**Professor Anna Chahoud,  
Chair of Latin, Trinity College Dublin**

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*Alone of all mankind, the scholar is no stranger in foreign lands; he is a citizen in every state, and fearlessly despises the awkward chances of fortune; on the other hand, the person who thinks himself fortified and guarded by good fortune rather than by education, steps along slippery paths and struggles with a life unstable and insecure.*

(Theophrastus, cited by Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, VI Praef. 2)

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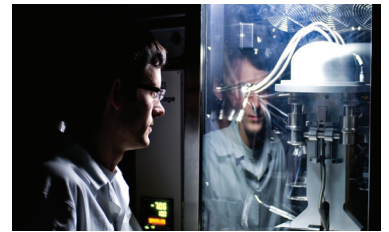
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Ireland's leading university, steeped in history with a reputation for excellence in education and research.

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# Provost's Welcome

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**It is my privilege to welcome our postgraduate researchers to Trinity College Dublin, and to introduce the 2024/25 Postgraduate Research Student Handbook. You should be immensely proud of all you have achieved to date and I am excited for what you will do next.**

At Trinity we understand the vital importance of basic and fundamental research in breaking new ground. We value the ability to apply our research for the benefit of society and the world. Our vision is to engage in research with the quality, intensity, depth, diversity, and openness that leads to fundamental breakthroughs, new understandings, key insights, and that can make translational and transformative advances – or, to build a world in which we want to live.

We take pride in being research active across all three faculties (Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; and Health Sciences). Respecting the diversity of scholarship that flows from that, and using all our varied talents to achieve excellence, allows everyone to play to their strengths in a way that can ultimately benefit Trinity, and have a positive impact globally.

In joining the Trinity community, I would like to assure you that we are a supportive community and during your time here we will be with you to enable you unleash your full talent and exploit possibilities. You have so much to contribute to the life and fabric of this university and its diverse research community.



Professor Linda Doyle  
Provost & President

01

# Dean's Welcome

**As Trinity College's Dean of Graduate Studies, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to our university, which is now well into its fifth century of bringing together students and researchers of the highest calibre to further our knowledge and understanding and to contribute to the well-being of society. This handbook offers a guide to how you can make the most of your time with us, engaged in the work which we hope will ultimately lead to you obtaining the degree for which you are registered.**





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Whether you are here studying for a PhD or for a Research Master's degree, it is my sincere hope that these years will be highly fulfilling for you in both academic and personal terms, as you become an indelible part of the history of this university, which is ancient and steeped in history, but which also constantly seeks to be forward-looking and innovative. Your story now becomes part of Trinity's story as we seek, as a community of students, faculty, and alumni, to work to the betterment of national and global society in the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

Our visit for postgraduate education in Trinity is that we are a stimulating, inclusive, and sustainable research and learning environment, where curious minds and creative thinkers thrive.

I hope that this handbook is helpful for you in navigating your studies. It contains information in relation to matters as diverse as the nature of the Structured PhD here in Trinity, the library, Trinity's sports facilities, and the various support services that operate for you across the university. It also contains some guidance on the nature of postgraduate research and suggestions for maintaining a successful student-supervisor relationship from the perspectives of both students and staff.

All PhD students need to ensure that they study the section on the Structured PhD, including the mandatory taught elements and information on progression and submission requirements. There is also a useful 'Timelines and Targets' section and a guide to regulations. This information will be invaluable in ensuring that you understand regulations and processes and that you have good notice about upcoming progress checks.

It's important to remember that the full regulations governing your registration are contained in Part III of the College Calendar (<https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/complete-part-III.pdf>) and specific information relevant to your particular situation may be contained in school or discipline handbooks. Other useful information can be found on our website (<https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies>).

Finally, do remember that if you have concerns at any stage during your course of study, there are many systems and processes in place to support you. Key contacts are your supervisor or the designated Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in your School. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate has responsibility for all research students in the School where you are registered and is an invaluable source of guidance and information. In addition, my office is always available to deal with particular concerns and questions, so please feel free to contact us if necessary. We are always happy to hear from our postgraduate research community.

For now, I wish you every success as you embark on this exciting stage in your research career!



Professor Martine Smith  
Dean of Graduate Studies

# Introducing the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

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**The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies is situated in West Theatre, near the Office of the Vice Provost/ Chief Academic Officer, in Front Square. The Dean's office links closely with the Academic Registry in relation to all matters pertaining to the registration, progression, assessment and graduation of postgraduate students, both taught and research.**

**The Dean of Graduate Studies** is the college office with responsibility (under the College Statutes and College Calendar) for graduate students. The current Dean, Martine Smith, is a Professor in the School of Linguistic Speech and Communication Sciences. Her email is [dngrstd@tcd.ie](mailto:dngrstd@tcd.ie)

**The Administrative Officer, Frances Leogue,** provides advice and assistance on issues pertaining to graduate studies generally, as well as on the Trinity Travel Awards for research students. The email to contact the Administrative Officer is [genadgso@tcd.ie](mailto:genadgso@tcd.ie)

In addition, there are various communication points within the Academic Registry that may be useful to you during the course of your study. In almost all instances, it is best to link directly with your supervisor and/or the school Director of Teaching

and Learning Postgraduate about any queries that you have. Your supervisor can guide you on making queries and will usually also act as an advocate on your behalf if you are requesting some special consideration. If it is not possible or appropriate to link with your supervisor or Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate, you can also link directly with the Academic Registry as outlined below.

If issues arise in relation to your studies that may mean that you need extensions for submission, time off-books or some other concession, then you or more appropriately, your supervisor should contact the PG Cases team at [pgcases@tcd.ie](mailto:pgcases@tcd.ie)

For issues in relation to registration or admission onto the PhD register you should contact [research.admissions@tcd.ie](mailto:research.admissions@tcd.ie)

Finally, for issues in relation to the submission of your thesis (or indeed in relation to any matters when the thesis has been submitted, e.g. revisions) contact [gsothese@tcd.ie](mailto:gsothese@tcd.ie)



# Postgraduate Research in Trinity College Dublin

**Trinity College is proud of the fact that both historically and in the present, it is dedicated to and famous for the production of top quality, cutting-edge research.**

In this regard we fully recognise and acknowledge the remarkable work being undertaken by our Research Students in all disciplines and we are keenly aware of the extent to which our status as a research-led university is dependent on and heightened by the research of our students. This plays out in a number of ways. Whereas no doubt their capacity to attract grant funding is one example of how research students contribute to the university's research productivity, of far greater importance is the fruit of their research – in terms of submitted dissertations, conference presentations and peer-reviewed published work. At its best, any university is a community dedicated to the enhancement of knowledge and understanding and for the betterment of humanity. It is a matter of celebration for us that you have joined our research community and we look forward to Trinity's reputation for research and your burgeoning reputation as scholars becoming interlinked.

In so far as the work of a Trinity College research student is concerned, the primary academic support and focus comes from within their school.

- At the heart of this is the student's supervisor(s) (see the section on supervision below).
- Each student is assigned a thesis committee to provide further support and to help monitor progress across the PhD cycle.
- Depending on the specific supervisor and the nature of the student's project, they will be supported by the supervisor's research group or lab, and, potentially, the postdoctoral students working there.
- All schools also have a Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate (DTLP) with responsibility for all graduate students in that school.

## **The Hallmarks of Successful Postgraduate Research**

On this basis, what are the hallmarks of a successful Trinity postgraduate thesis at either Masters or PhD level? Precise criteria in this regard are laid down in Part III of the college Calendar (<https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/>) and these should be consulted by you as you determine the standards which you must hit. The standards that are required of a PhD thesis are of course higher than those required of a Masters, but in principle all successful theses will have certain key characteristics.

They will demonstrate a deep and systematic understanding of the field of research and an awareness of existing scholarship in the area – in the context of which scholarship the submitted thesis will be situated.

They will demonstrate a clear and appropriate research methodology and, more generally, they will show evidence of rigorous, clear and effective research in the relevant area.

They will demonstrate significant skills of critical analysis and capacity to synthesise new and complex ideas.

They will represent an effective communication of the ideas contained in the thesis, which, especially at PhD level, must represent an appreciable contribution to knowledge through originality and innovation.

Very often the finished product will, either in whole or in part be accepted for peer-reviewed publication.



This is what you should be aiming for and it is our ambition that you will achieve this and our hope that we can help you to do so.

### **Trinity College – a Proud Member of the League of European Research Universities**

It is a mark of Trinity's international status as a Research-Led University that, in 2016 it was invited to join the 23-member League of European Research Universities (LERU). Membership of LERU, apart from being a recognition of our status, will generate any number of benefits for the research profile of Trinity. It will certainly galvanise research collaborations and the pursuit of best practice and it will heighten our already excellent reputation for research.

From the perspective of Doctoral Students, however, there is also the potential and tangible benefit of participation in the annual LERU Doctoral Summer School. Details of how to apply to attend at this school are circulated in the Spring (and it is a highly competitive process which ultimately results in us sending perhaps only one student to the event). In Summer 2023 the LERU Summer School was hosted by Utrecht University and the theme was "The University of the Future: Rethinking the role of universities worldwide in the face of the challenges of the 21st century." Two Trinity students had a superb opportunity to participate in a wonderful educational experience with almost 60 students from almost 30 different universities in Europe.



Here's what one of them said:

### **Xi-Ning, Unforgettable Experience of LERU Doctoral Summer School in Heidelberg 2023**

The LERU Doctoral Summer School 2023 is held at Heidelberg University. I am very grateful that I was selected as a Ph.D. representative of Trinity College Dublin to attend this excellent academic event.

It was a week-long intensive immersion into the world of intervention science applied to global challenges. The program brought together leading academics, researchers, and doctoral students from the top European universities to explore the theoretical and practical aspects of intervention science.

The key themes of the summer school—climate change, pandemics, and societal injustice—were examined through the lens of intervention science. The discourse around these converging global challenges was insightful, drawing on the expertise of renowned faculty and the diverse perspectives of participants from various disciplines.



During LERU summer school, I shared my research topic with colleagues, which is at the intersection of immersive technology, psychology, and education. Specifically, I am investigating the potential of Extended Reality (XR) technology as an innovative intervention for enhancing educational experiences (e.g., social competence education and soft skills training). The summer school's focus on intervention science provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used to design and assess interventions. Moreover, during the poster exhibition, I gave a presentation of my research poster in relation to how Extended Reality (XR) technology can be used as a creative intervention for educational experiments and practices.

The opportunity to present to such a knowledgeable audience was remarkably valuable, providing me with constructive feedback and stimulating discussions about the potential opportunities of my research topics. By showing case research projects from my Ph.D. study, students from the Global Health Institute at Heidelberg University, also have a chance to learn something different from their research fields, and see more about creatively using technology to conduct interventions for certain groups of individuals. For example, an unexpected learning experience from summer school was the realization of the interconnectedness of different research fields. Although my research is grounded in technology and education, the event underscored that it intersects with disciplines. This understanding can help me broaden the impact of my research, potentially contributing to areas beyond my primary focus.

The summer school also emphasized the importance of intervention science in addressing global challenges. It brought to light the crucial role scientists and researchers like myself play in creating, implementing, and assessing interventions to ensure a better future for all.



The LERU sessions offered valuable insights into the complexities of real-world intervention design and deployment. Its emphasis on global challenges also broadened my perspective, highlighting the potential for my research to contribute to larger societal issues beyond my current research areas. I also actively participated in various workshops and discussions, contributing my insights on understanding a range of intervention science from other participants' research and experiences.

In conclusion, attending the LERU Doctoral Summer School 2023 was an intellectually enriching experience that significantly expanded my academic horizons. The comprehensive exploration of intervention science provided a robust theoretical framework and practical methodologies that I can integrate into my research on XR technology in education. The event was not only an academic learning journey but also a unique opportunity for professional growth. The connections and relationships I built with other attendees from top European universities are invaluable. These networks will not only enrich my current research but will also foster potential collaborations and opportunities in the future.

# Trinity's Structured PhD

**All Trinity PhDs are now 'structured doctorates' irrespective of how they are funded. In essence this means that they are four year full-time or six year part-time degrees (see the section on timelines and targets) where students are required to fulfill criteria at the end of each academic year.**

This does not mean that students cannot submit their PhD theses before four or six years - they can, but part-time students will be liable for the equivalent of six years part-time fees. Our structured doctorates are set up as four-year degrees and we make provision for incremental stages along the journey during this four-year time period.

Furthermore, as is discussed shortly, under our structured doctorate model, students are required to participate in taught modules and obtain between 10 and 30 ECTS in doing so during the lifespan of their PhD research. This is a University-wide requirement. Your School may have specific and bespoke requirements as to how these credits are obtained or which modules must be undertaken. It is important that you familiarise yourself with these requirements - your School postgraduate handbook should be helpful in this regard. Please be aware that all incoming students must successfully complete a 5-credit module in Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era.

## Stages of the Structured PhD

### Annual Review Report

All students on the Structured PhD route (full time and part time) must complete an annual review report. This report is shared with your supervisor, thesis committee and Director of Teaching and Learning. Students who register in September normally must complete this process by June of the following year, while March registrants complete by the end of January. A student who, without permission, fails to submit this report will not be permitted to register for the subsequent year. Annual review meetings are convened for each student, and involve discussions with supervisor(s), Thesis Committee and sometimes with the Director of Teaching and Learning. On the basis of the report and the discussions, Schools may refuse to allow a student to proceed to the next year on register if progress, as outlined in the report, has not been satisfactory.

Midway through the programme of study (Year 2 for full time students, Year 3 for part time students) students must complete a confirmation process. Students who started on the research Masters register, but wish to transfer to the PhD register undertake a similar process, termed the "transfer process". The confirmation and transfer processes are important decision points, the outcome of which will determine whether a student is confirmed or transferred to the PhD register. (<https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/staff/research/assessment-and-progression/>)



All confirmation processes will at minimum include submission of a piece of work and an oral interview (*Viva*) with your Thesis Committee. The procedure is aimed at ensuring that you are sufficiently on track and that it is appropriate that your registration as a PhD student should be maintained.

A student who fails their confirmation interview may (a) be discontinued on the register (b) be granted permission to submit a thesis for a lower degree (M.Litt/MSc) or (c) be permitted to re-submit work for a second and final confirmation interview within roughly six weeks. Where a student fails the second confirmation interview, then they cannot submit for a PhD but instead (depending on what the confirmation panel decides) may either be removed from the register or, alternatively may be given permission to write up and submit for a Master's degree. The confirmation interview, thus, is an extremely important part of the structured PhD, and it is by no means uncommon for students to fail to cross this hurdle.

In reality, however, the entire PhD process, from originally devising a research question right through to ultimate submission of the final thesis is a structured and incremental one. At all stages in the process, it is vital that you, along with your supervisor and your School have a clear sense of the direction in which it is headed, and reasonable confidence that the project that you are undertaking is capable of hitting the standards required of a successful PhD thesis. Furthermore, at all stages it is important that you grow intellectually in and through your work. In other words, every stage of the structured PhD process (like every book you read, every dataset you analyse and every supervision meeting you arrange) represents a learning process, so that, following completion of the degree you will not merely be an expert in the field of study covered by your thesis, but you will also have grown intellectually, to doctoral level, in a broader sense.



## Taught Elements within the Structured PhD

From the standpoint of the University, students must study a minimum of taught components equating to 10-ECTS credits. Having said that, you should be aware that your particular School may have specific requirements that require you to obtain more than 10-ECTS of credit or may specify modules that you must take to fulfil their requirements. As such it is hugely important that you familiarise yourself with the specific requirements within your individual School. Students will be registered on SITS to the modules that they undertake (including the mandatory module on 'Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era').

For students who are not constrained by the approach in their School, there is a wide array of options available to fulfil the taught components of the structured PhD. All of these options are identified on our website at: <https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/structured-phd-modules/>. Rather than refer to them all, it would, perhaps be helpful to highlight some key points:

- (a) There is a range of generic skills modules which are offered by the TCD Research Informatics, the Trinity Careers Service and Student Learning Development all of which should provide students with invaluable skills that will both assist them in their PhD work but will also be useful generally. Make sure you look at these carefully and see if one looks ideal for you – especially if you are in your first year of study. Each of these modules is outlined briefly below. In particular, please note that all incoming students are required to take the 5- ECTS module in ‘Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era’.
- (b) Provided that the module lecturer and your supervisor/ Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) agree and there is capacity, students can fulfil their taught requirements by studying any of the thousands of modules on any of our level 9 taught masters courses.
- (c) Many research students register for our Postgraduate Certificate in Statistics and Data Science to help them develop the skills required to analyse their data. Information on this course is available at <https://www.tcd.ie/scss/courses/postgraduate/pg-cert-dip--msc-in-statistics-and-data-science-online/>  
As this is a separate 30 ECTS course with its own award, where students successfully complete the certificate and are issued with the award, credits obtained in the process cannot count towards their structured PhD, but if students do not complete the certificate, then modules undertaken can count towards the structured PhD taught credit requirement. Note that the Certificate can be extended into a second year for a Postgraduate Diploma, and even a third year for an MSc.
- (d) Registered PhD students on particular, named thematic programmes can avail of modules delivered in any of our partner universities in Ireland under an inter-institutional agreement that is in place. Your supervisor will be able to advise if you can avail of this.
- (e) Finally, we are constantly seeking to increase and improve our offerings of structured PhD modules and we will be in touch with you throughout the year to let you know of any relevant developments in this regard.

Think carefully about the modules that you choose for ECTS credit purposes and study the options that are available to make the best possible choice for yourself. Even though the idea of a research student taking taught modules may seem odd or unnecessary at first glance, we have countless examples of students who say that the classes that they attended as part of the structured PhD – whether discipline led, generic, or a taught masters module – were profoundly enriching and meant that the entire PhD journey was an intellectually satisfying one. We are very aware that, for many of you, the PhD is both an end in itself but also a means to another end – career either inside or outside of the academy. We genuinely believe that the skills developed through the taught components of the structured PhD will stand to you both in the course of your PhD studies and beyond them.

Finally, please be aware that it is not possible for a student to be examined in relation to their PhD thesis unless their Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate indicates on the relevant form that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the structured PhD. Indeed, more generally, a student cannot be invited to register for the next year of their studies unless and until their School confirms that they have fulfilled all the structured PhD requirements of the previous year. In other words, it is vital that you do complete the taught modules and other structured components that are required.



## Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era (CA 7000) – MANDATORY MODULE

The concept of open scholarship has radically altered the way in which academic research operates in Europe and in the world generally, providing as it does both opportunities and challenges for research students. In addition, funders are increasingly demanding that researchers, including research students, must, as a pre-requisite to securing grant funding, have undertaken some training in research ethics. Finally, there are increasing pressures on students, as they conduct research, to be aware of and comply with obligations under intellectual property and data protection law and to ensure open access to their publication in compliance with institutional and funder mandates as well as the proper management of their research data. This course seeks to provide all Trinity PhD students with the tools necessary to navigate these issues as they proceed with their research. This module is mandatory for all incoming PhD students.

### Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Apply the highest standards of ethical integrity in their research
- Understand the basic principles of intellectual property law as they apply to their research
- Appreciate the application of Data Protection law in the context of postgraduate research
- Apply best practice standards in research data management and develop an effective Data Management Plan for their research
- Demonstrate awareness of the opportunities that open scholarship provides for them to ensure that their research has maximum impact

This module is delivered online and must be taken within the first five months following student enrollment. In order to accrue the 5 ECTS (125 student effort hours), participants will be expected to complete the various online components of the course and the prescribed assessments.

The module sessions are:

- Session 1: Research Integrity and Ethics
- Session 2: Copyright, Intellectual Property and Data protection
  - Part 1: Copyright and Intellectual Property
  - Part 2: Data Protection
- Session 3: Research Data Management and the Construction and Application of Data Management Plans
  - Part 1: Research Data Management
  - Part 2: The FAIR Principles
- Session 4: Open Access and Open Research
  - Part 1: Scholarly Communication and Publishing
  - Part 2: Open Access
- Session 5: Research Evaluation and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era
  - Part 1: Research Evaluation
  - Part 2: Your Research Impact

Each session contains a series of tasks which you must complete before moving on to the next session. The tasks are Introduction, Prepare, Study, Apply/Reflect, Test and Extend. The Test task is a quiz which forms the summative assessment for each session. A minimum Test grade of 80% is required for each session to pass this module and gain a Certificate of Completion. Formative assessment in this module takes the form of an optional learning journal with five short practical exercises that are self-assessed and result in a Certificate of Achievement.

For more information, please contact [Monica Sanchidrián \(sanchidm@tcd.ie\)](mailto:sanchidm@tcd.ie) or [Niamh Brennan \(nbrennan@tcd.ie\)](mailto:nbrennan@tcd.ie)

## Careers, Employability and Work-Based Learning Modules

The innovative 10 ECTS module on Careers, Employability and Work-Based Learning and the complementary shorter 5 ECTS module on Careers and Employability will support you, the PhD student, with career planning, critical reflection and decision-making and will equip you with the skills to develop a network to help support your future career.

These modules, which were developed in collaboration with industry partners, are led by the Trinity Careers Service and are offered in a blended learning format, which includes an online Skills Audit tool to help you to develop transferable skills that can be applied during and after your PhD. The 10 ECTS model involves the participant sourcing a 100 hour work-based learning experience, and submitting an assessment reflecting on that experience.

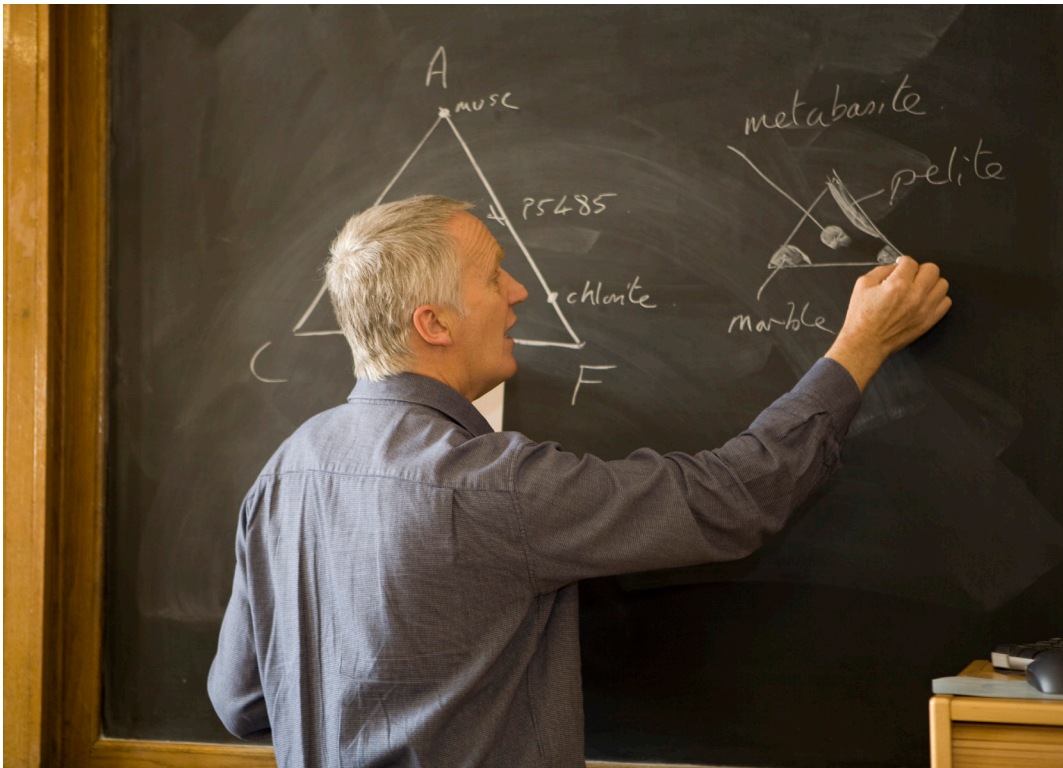
Both modules comprise a suite of workshops in two streams (Careers and Skills) with students undertaking face-to-face and online sessions. The 10 ECTS module includes an additional Work-based Learning (WBL) stream. Both modules are open to students in all years of a full and part-time PhD across all disciplines and students also have the option to audit the module if they want to engage with some or all module elements without submitting assessments.

By the end of these modules, you should be able to:

- Critically reflect on, develop, and articulate your skills in relation to your PhD and for the workplace.
- Create a career path that reflects your beliefs, values, interests and potential.
- Apply tools to proactively manage your own career.
- Create meaningful connections with PhD students from other disciplines and industry partners/alumni.
- Critically evaluate a work-based learning experience in terms of your future career direction (10 ECTS module only).

The modules are assessed through written critical reflection, a group poster project, completion of a CV and cover letter review, and a WBL self-assessment (10 ECTS module only). Students will have the option to transfer between the two modules on successful completion of the required components.

For further information, please contact the Careers Service ([postgrad.careers@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.careers@tcd.ie)) or <http://www.tcd.ie/careers>.



## Planning and Managing your Research Process (PMRP)

This module provides doctoral candidates with opportunities to develop and enhance their research practice and reflect on the process. The module focuses on self-management, academic and communication skills as well as personal effectiveness and wellbeing.

The module takes an active, blended learning approach. It employs in-person workshops or live webinars as well as online self-directed sessions with opportunities to demonstrate self-reflection and the practice of new skills. The module is designed to maximise flexibility and enable students to tailor their learning to their own developmental priorities and circumstances (e.g. non-resident or part-time) by allowing students to choose from a variety of sessions and topics provided by Student Learning Development, Student Counselling, Postgraduate Advisory Service and The Library.

To complete the module students must undertake 12 topics from 3 themed areas: Self-Management and Self-Care Skills, Interpersonal and Leadership Skills and Academic Skills.

For further information, please visit <https://student-learning.tcd.ie/> or contact the Student Learning Development Team ([student.learning@tcd.ie](mailto:student.learning@tcd.ie)).

## Teaching and Supporting Learning as a Graduate Teaching Assistant

This 5-ECTS module offered by [Academic Practice](#) is targeted towards PhD students with roles in teaching or supporting learning, e.g. those working as teaching assistants or demonstrators, and is particularly appropriate for students aiming towards a career as a lecturer. Module participants join a supportive peer group who share practice, insights, and pedagogical concerns and are supported to reflect critically on and take a scholarly approach to their own educational practice.

Grounded in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SofTL), the module is intended to enable participants to participate in educational discourses around teaching and learning in higher education. The programme provides an opportunity for postgraduate tutors, demonstrators and graduate teaching assistants from across the disciplines to come together in a Community of Practice to develop their understanding of teaching and learning. Participants are supported to explore the praxis of their teaching, using theory and reflection to develop an individual teaching philosophy informed through engagement with the evidence base.

Teaching and Supporting Learning as a Graduate Teaching Assistant module seeks to enable Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to:

- Develop a conceptual understanding of the norms and expectations of being a TA;
- Examine your assumptions, values, beliefs, and practices;
- Employ effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning;
- Develop a student-centred approach to teaching;
- Promote inquiry and student engagement;
- Evaluate your teaching and their impact on student learning.

The module is designed for fully online delivery. Teaching is mostly asynchronous with the intention of providing GTAs/demonstrators maximum flexibility around their existing commitments. Materials and activities are released on a highly structured weekly basis and supported by three live tutorials, which all participants must attend. The module covers 7 key areas of practice relevant to students expanding their understanding of teaching and learning in higher education:

1. Role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant
2. Communications and Coping Strategies
3. How Students Learn
4. Session Planning
5. Designing an Online Activity
6. Assessment and Feedback
7. Reflecting on and Evaluating your Teaching

For further information, please visit:

Website: [www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/professional-development/graduate-teaching/](http://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/professional-development/graduate-teaching/)  
Email: [jade.concannon@tcd.ie](mailto:jade.concannon@tcd.ie)

## Targets and Timelines for the Structured PhD

All PhDs (and all PhD students) are different and therefore it is probably impossible to suggest a definitive timeline for work that applies to all students. The suggested timelines and targets below are, therefore, indicative.

These should normally be agreed between the supervisor (s) and the student and there will be certain things (e.g., seeking ethics approval, risk assessment of field-based activities and

even data collection) which may apply earlier in some discipline areas than in others. In other words, do not feel constrained by these timelines – they are intended merely for guidance. Time management is an important part of successful completion of a PhD. If you have any concerns about your overall progress, it is always better to seek advice and guidance as soon as possible, as there are many supports that can be put in place to ensure that the impact of any delays is minimized.

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TIME	TASK
<b>Before commencement of study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare a statement of research subject.</li><li>• Assignment of supervisor(s) and approval of application by School and Dean of Graduate Studies.</li><li>• Ensure that funding (where applicable) is in place.</li><li>• Attend PG Students orientation events.</li><li>• Relax and have fun.</li></ul>
<b>During the first months of doctoral study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with supervisor(s) to ensure a clear understanding of your research question.</li><li>• Consider using the Supervisor - Research Student Agreement (<a href="https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/">https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/</a>) to set parameters of the working relationship with your supervisor and clarify your expectations of one another. Negotiate and adapt the Agreements template to fit your specific needs.</li><li>• Familiarise yourself with what is expected of you in so far as the taught element of the structured PhD is concerned.</li><li>• Familiarise yourself with available library and/or lab resources and avail of any opportunities to upskill in terms of bibliography management or other scientific literacy skills that will underpin your research.</li><li>• Ensure that there is a clear agreement between you and your supervisor(s) in terms of what is expected of you and how your supervision relationship will proceed. The Supervisor - Research Student Agreement (<a href="https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/">https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/</a>) may be a useful tool to manage your mutual expectations.</li><li>• Actively engage with your supervisor in selection of Thesis Committee members.</li><li>• Ensure that you have a suitable data management plan in place, and more generally, that you are aware of College rules pertaining to use, ownership and management of data.</li><li>• Ensure that you are aware of any requirement to obtain ethical approval for any element of your work.</li><li>• Relax and have fun and avail of opportunities to engage with students outside of your discipline area.</li></ul>

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TIME	TASK
<b>During the first semester of doctoral study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop your thesis research schedule (specified for first year, comprehensive outline for subsequent years).</li> <li>• Ensure that you are aware of the members of your Thesis Committee and that you have familiarised yourself with the requirements of the annual review process.</li> <li>• Try to ensure that you have completed a sufficient body of work (whether in the form of data collection or writing) that you have confidence proceeding to the next semester.</li> <li>• Consider whether to apply to be an exam invigilator.</li> <li>• Relax and have fun.</li> </ul>
<b>During the first year of doctoral study (first two years for part-time students)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take part in transferable and discipline-specific modules including ‘Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era’ and trainings to develop a multidimensional skillset.</li> <li>• Prepare a specification of research plan for second year.</li> <li>• Take stock to ensure that you are ‘on track’ in so far as your initial plans are concerned.</li> <li>• Engage in professional development planning and avail of professional development opportunities available in the University. A Personal Development Plan (PDP) <a href="http://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/assets/doc/pdp-template-doctoral-students.docx">www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/assets/doc/pdp-template-doctoral-students.docx</a> may be a useful tool to reflect about your professional goals and set development priorities.</li> <li>• Complete your annual review report and submit to your supervisor(s) and thesis committee for their input.</li> <li>• As your research progresses, consider revisiting the Agreement with your supervisor (<a href="http://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/">www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/supervision/</a>) at the start of each academic year and, if needed, adapt it to the evolving requirements of your research project.</li> </ul>
<b>During the second year of study (3rd year for part-time students)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete your confirmation process (including submission of confirmation report and attendance at confirmation interview).</li> <li>• Prepare for the confirmation process (if on the full-time register). Familiarise yourself with the requirements of the process and make sure you are aware of deadlines. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in your School may provide guidance on the content of the confirmation report.</li> <li>• Prepare a detailed research plan for remaining year(s).</li> <li>• Ensure that your research has really started to take shape and that you are not falling behind in so far as the timelines that you and your supervisor have set are concerned.</li> <li>• Relax and have fun.</li> </ul>
<b>During the third/ fourth year of study (fifth/sixth year for part time students)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete your research.</li> <li>• Write up your thesis.</li> <li>• Submit your thesis.</li> <li>• Nomination of examiners.</li> <li>• Prepare for your <i>Viva Voce</i> exam.</li> </ul>

Note: Timelines for these activities may in part be discipline dependent.

Finally, there may be various other challenges that will arise in the course of particular research projects. Amongst these, the following (in alphabetical order) tend to be prominent:

Agreement of schedule for and preparation of annual review reports to funders

Agreement on approaches for ensuring appropriate data security and record keeping

Career planning and job search activities

Commencement of fieldwork

Ethical review/Ethical approval (as and if required)

Field trip planning

Health & Safety instructions/certifications

Negotiation of access to field sites/samples

Pilot study

Preparation of conference papers

Preparation of journal submissions

Pre-test of instruments/experimental manipulations etc.

Professional registration and formal clearances (e.g., Garda clearance if research is planned with children or vulnerable adults; etc.) if this has not been required as part of the registration process

## Submission and Examination

The final piece of the jigsaw for postgraduate students relates to submission and examination (and this may well seem a very long way off to those of you entering into your first year!). But it is a critical final piece and so it is worth focusing on in some detail.

All theses (PhD or Research Masters) are submitted electronically, through the Academic Registry. Before you submit, students must complete and submit an [Intention to Submit form](#) to the Academic Registry (via [gsothese@tcd.ie](mailto:gsothese@tcd.ie)). This allows Academic Registry to set up and receive the electronic copy, and triggers all the subsequent steps in the examination process. The form should be submitted one month in advance of your intended date for submitting your thesis. For further guidance refer to our website: [www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/thesis-submission/](http://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/thesis-submission/)

As you will read in the Calendar, there is a maximum word count (**100,000** for a PhD, **60,000** for a research Masters which excludes bibliography, footnotes and appendices). Theses that exceed this word count will be returned to the student for resubmission. Part III of the College Calendar includes details of what must be included with the thesis (e.g. declaration, abstract and so on) as well as details of requirements in terms of spacing, font size etc. Finally, in the eThesis Submission and Open Access section of this handbook, you will find details of our open access policy. Students must submit their final approved thesis electronically as well as in hard copy. Students may request permission to delay release of a thesis to open access (a Stay of Deposition request

[www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/staff/research/thesis-submission/](http://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/staff/research/thesis-submission/)) if there is a commercial or intellectual reason to retain confidentiality. Normally, such a stay of deposition is for a maximum of two years.

Theses must be submitted by the end of the month preceding that on which you registered (i.e., if your registration was in September then you must submit by end of August). On the other hand, there is a convention that students are entitled to **Dean's Grace** which is, in effect, an additional month to submit and it is automatically added to a student's record. In reality, this grace period means that someone who registers in September will, some years later, submit by end of September. In exceptional circumstances and on the application of their supervisor, a student may be granted an extended Dean's Grace. Such requests will only be considered when submitted by a supervisor on behalf of a student, with clear and convincing evidence of the basis for the request.

Once you have submitted your thesis, your School will be sent an 'Examiner Nomination Form'. This form is returned by the School Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) directly to the Academic Registry for approval by the Dean and you do not need to do anything about this part of the process. In many cases, supervisors discuss potential examiners with students, but it is important to note that this does not mean that a student has any right to be involved in the appointment of their examiners. The thesis is then sent out for examination, with the process taking

a minimum of eight weeks and sometimes taking much longer due to the availability of appropriate examiners!

For a research master's thesis, the examiners may award the degree as it stands, or with minor corrections, may return it for major revisions and re-examination (with no guarantee that the revised thesis will be awarded the degree) or may fail it. If either of the latter two options are possible, the examiners must schedule a *Viva Voce* (oral exam) giving the student an opportunity to defend the thesis.

For a PhD thesis, there is always a *Viva Voce* exam, a rigorous and robust oral defence of the thesis by its author. Thereafter the examiners may (i) award the degree as it stands, or (ii) with minor corrections, (iii) return it for major revisions and re-examination (with no guarantee that the revised thesis will be awarded the degree) or (iv) award a lower degree (that is, a masters) or may fail it. In the case of both a master's degree and a PhD, where the thesis is referred for major revisions and re-examination, there is no second *Viva Voce* exam. The revised work is re-examined by both examiners, and both must submit new examination reports.

Students are encouraged to work with supervisors in preparation for their *Viva* exams and, should their thesis be referred for revision and re-examination, it is very important that they work with their supervisor/s in relation to the revision process.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, you should receive a copy of our Trinity PhD *Viva* Guide for Postgraduate Research Students from your supervisor or Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), but it is also available on our website (<https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/assets/pdf/PhD-Viva-Guide-Digital.pdf>). Although for incoming students, the *Viva* may seem a very long way off, I hope that this guide will be of some use to you when the time comes around.

In either case, when the degree is eventually awarded the student must submit the thesis electronically and (at present) must also submit a hard copy. Thereafter, the award of the degree is approved by the Higher Degrees Sub Committee of University Board and Council and the student may proceed to graduation.



<sup>1</sup> Details in relation to the fee implications of a thesis being referred for revision and re-examination are available from the Academic Registry under 'What will my fees be?' at [www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/fees-payments/](http://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/fees-payments/)

# Supervision and the Student/Supervisor Relationship

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**At the heart of a really fulfilling PhD experience is the concept of quality supervision. In Trinity we are committed to ensuring that all PhD students are supervised effectively. On the other hand, it is recognised that there is no such thing as a ‘one size fits all’ approach to supervision.**

Rather, the definition of quality supervision in any context depends on a range of factors, including the student, their needs, the supervisor, and the project. Many of you will be jointly supervised by two or even a panel of supervisors whereas others will have a single supervisor, with a Thesis Committee. Some of you will meet your supervisors every week whereas others will meet less frequently. Some supervisors will provide more detailed comments on thesis drafts than will others. The point is that it is not the case that one model is better than another. Rather what is important is that the model that applies in your case is one that works for you and your supervisor and one that ultimately leads to your final thesis, as well as your overall ‘PhD journey’ being as fulfilling as possible. To facilitate the development of a productive and positive relationship between you and your supervisor, we have recently introduced the [Supervisor – Research Student Agreement](#). Developed as one of the initiatives of the Postgraduate Renewal Programme, the Agreement fosters a shared understanding of goals and promotes open communication between you and your supervisor, providing a platform for addressing concerns.

The Agreement clarifies the roles and responsibilities of both parties in the supervisor relationship and outlines your academic, research, professional and personal expectations of one another.

In the case of all PhD students who registered from September 2019 onwards, a Thesis Committee should be in place, comprising at least two members independent of your supervisor and co-supervisors. One member must be an independent academic member of Trinity staff from within your School familiar with the your research area. The second may be an additional academic member of staff from within the university or a recognised external expert in your field of study. Different schools may operate different variants of what this entails, but in most schools the thesis committee will be involved in the progression stages of the structured PhD (that is, in the completion of annual reviews of progress or the confirmation process).

Finally, if you have concerns with the supervision that you are receiving (or any other real and pressing concerns with your supervisor) this is something that you can raise with your Thesis Committee and of course with the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in your School. For further guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the members of your Thesis Committee, (including your own), I encourage you to familiarise yourself with the [Thesis Committee Guidelines](#). They have been developed to supplement [Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees](#) approved by College Council in January 2024.

It is important, however, to remember that ultimate responsibility for your thesis rests with you. Supervisors are there to guide you, to help you to develop your ideas and to review your draft chapters so that their quality can be improved, but they are not there to write your thesis, to be the innovative force behind it or indeed to improve the standard of written English in it! Occasionally we have had situations where students whose thesis was referred for revision, or who failed the *Viva Voce* examination process, subsequently seek to blame their supervisors for this outcome. Inevitably the response is that it is the student and only the student who takes responsibility for the final submission of a thesis (thus under our rules, no complaints against supervisors can be entertained following submission of the thesis).

Having said that, and even though there is no singular prescriptive mode for 'good supervision' it is important that you do receive effective supervision (and this is a two-way street with input from both you and your supervisor). If you feel that the supervision you are receiving is of poor quality or that, for whatever reason, there is some breakdown in the supervision relationship between you and your supervisor (even if there is no breakdown in your personal relationship), it is vital that this is dealt with as soon as possible by communicating either with your Thesis Committee or with the Director of Teaching and Learning in your school or, in unusual cases, with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Thankfully, such breakdowns in relationship happen very, very rarely! For most of you, the focus will not be how to maintain a problematic relationship but instead how to get the most out of an already effective one. That being the case, what follows are the views of one experienced supervisor and three PhD students, with tips for how to get the most out of a supervision relationship.

<sup>2</sup> For stylistic reasons I will talk about individual supervisors only but all points made also apply to students with co-supervisors.

## Tips on developing and maintaining a constructive working relationship with your supervisor (from a supervisor's perspective)

Martin Fellenz,  
Trinity Business School

Over the years I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with many talented and highly motivated doctoral students. In fact, when I think of my best experiences working with doctoral students, the task of writing down tips on how to develop and maintain good working relationships appears unnecessary. However, relationships don't always work out well, and there is both effort and goodwill required from both sides to avoid and/or overcome problems that may - and often do - arise.

For any doctoral student, your supervisor<sup>2</sup> will be the most important person in your progress through the Ph.D. programme. And while good interpersonal relationships are helpful and do often develop, supervisor-student relationships are first and foremost working relationships designed to support the students in their research as well as in their learning and development.

In my view these are two related but separate goals. The only good Ph.D. thesis is a completed one, so the focus on research progress in the relationship is paramount. However, if you come out of your doctoral studies with a successfully defended thesis and nothing else, you have missed a lot of important opportunities. Developing research skills and research-related knowledge is crucial, but developing yourself as a person and preparing for your further career by developing a broader skillset is also a priority. The quality of supervision, and the nature of the student-supervisor relationship is central for all these outcomes to be fully achieved. And while it ultimately takes two to make this work, there are many ways in which you as the student can facilitate a good working relationships.

The short version of what I will talk about could be summarised with two points: To develop and maintain a constructive working relationship between research student and supervisor it is crucial to (a) make your mutual expectations clear to each other, and (b) base your interactions on mutual respect. I will discuss some relevant thoughts under these two general headings below.

### **Clarifying mutual expectations and responsibilities**

To many the idea of clarifying mutual expectations will seem obvious, and to others it will appear unnecessary. However, I am often amazed with what remains unspoken and even unknown about the respective expectations and responsibilities of supervisor and research student. Many of the formal responsibilities for both are clarified in official rules and regulations (see for example the College Calendar and the published “Best Practice Guidelines on Research Supervision”), but in every student-supervisor relationship some aspects benefit from discussion and clarification. They include:

- Research topic and approach  
In some disciplines students know exactly what their research topic, and possibly even what their research questions and methodology are when they register for their Ph.D. In other areas the initial topic choice is simply a point of departure that leads to often substantial change and development of the topic. It is imperative that both parties are clear about what level of commitment they have to the initial topic and proposal, and how they will work on the development of the topic (if any) and how unforeseen problems will be resolved (if they arise).
- Publications, Authorship, Collaborations with others  
If you are just starting out as a research student, you may not be thinking about publications just yet, but there is no better time to discuss both your plans and potentially thorny issues such as authorship and potential collaborations with researchers other than your supervisor at the

beginning of your work together. For most academics authorship and the personal and professional recognition that goes with it are very important. Decisions about such issues can quickly become emotional and even conflictual, and it is much easier to agree on a joint approach before there are actual decisions to be made. Explicit discussion and an agreement that is formally recorded (even if just in an email to confirm what was discussed and agreed in a meeting) can prevent such problems from arising later.

- Different disciplines have different approaches to authorship, so whatever you agree should reflect values and customs in your discipline(s).  
In many areas in the social sciences, for example, it would be seen as unethical for anyone but the student to be first author on publications arising out of the thesis research (with some rare exceptions). Similarly, providing research funding, access for data collection, or any form of hierarchical relationship would not provide acceptable grounds for recognition through authorship. In any case, the respective roles and the resulting authorship arrangement of any collaborative research should be discussed as early as possible – this is the best way to avoid later difficulties.

Collaborative research with third parties should also be discussed with your supervisor. If they are compatible with your workload they may offer great learning, publication and networking opportunities, but it is something you should bring up, discuss and mutually agree.

- Communication, meetings and documentation of agreements  
The formal College regulations and guidelines specify minimum requirements here, but it is useful to agree on how you want to work together. How often, where and when do you meet; how do you communicate with each other; when are drafts submitted; when, in what format, and how often is feedback provided; and similar aspects should be discussed and agreed. And any agreements (as well as other aspects

of such meetings) should be documented to provide clarity for both parties. An easy way to do this is by keeping minutes of the meetings. That can be quite informal, and I often send a quick email with notes, agreements and next steps/expectations to my students (or ask them to prepare them and send them to me). This creates clarity and any misunderstandings can be clarified before they turn into something bigger.

- Schedules, work progress, deadlines  
Some supervisors insist on specific and detailed plans with exact deadlines and deliverables, others are less concerned about this. But at any stage both student and supervisor should know what the next step(s) are, and have at the very least a rough idea and agreement on when these steps should be completed. This is useful for students because of the direction and structure such work plans provide, and for supervisors because they can best support the student's work and evaluate the progress made which helps to alert them to any potential problems early.

Given the multitude of demands and responsibilities most supervisors are dealing with, adherence to agreed deadlines and submission dates is crucial to enable them to provide timely feedback. In case of delays it is always useful to alert the supervisor as early as possible and to consider a renegotiation of the relevant deadlines. If this becomes a repeated or even regular occurrence, however, there may be an underlying problem that needs to be addressed.



Both parties are better off if overly ambitious schedules, unforeseen problems with data collection or other research elements, or inefficient work approaches are identified and jointly resolved.

- Mentoring, networking and career development  
Different supervisors will have different approaches to this, but for me an active interest in and support for the career plans of my students is an integral part of the working relationship. This includes discussions of what and how much teaching may be useful for developing a teaching portfolio and skills; which conferences may offer the best opportunities for professional networking; and similar aspects that help students prepare for their intended career. For students, having the chance to start building their own professional network, and for potentially leveraging the professional contacts of their supervisor is immensely valuable. This is a privilege that many supervisors will not necessarily extend automatically, so it is good to understand if and under what conditions supervisors will offer such opportunities.

### **Exercising mutual respect**

Compared to many other institutions - especially foreign ones - the Trinity approach provides little formal authority to the supervisors. In other academic institutions and traditions supervisors often have a central part in the examination of the doctoral thesis, or must sign off on the thesis before it can be submitted for examination. The only similar power that supervisors here in Trinity have is their ability to comment on their students' progress in the annual progress report, or possibly to comment on their students' performance as part of the process of confirmation on the doctoral register. Nevertheless, by its very nature the supervisor-student relationship is unequal.

How this unequal relationship is enacted, however, depends very much on the people involved. To make this work, mutual respect between student and supervisor is crucial. This includes the recognition that, ultimately, students must be active and self-responsible

decision makers - in fact, the Trinity approach to doctoral education requires that students must develop the ability to decide themselves if their work is of acceptable standard for a doctorate.

To facilitate mutual respect, some of the most important ingredients are courtesy and appropriate interpersonal conduct (including active listening; appropriate body language; etc.) which helps to elicit reciprocal behaviour from the supervisor. While this sounds easy in theory, the nature of the work often makes this harder. One of the central roles of supervisors is to evaluate and comment on student work and progress to provide both formative (aimed at identifying strengths and weakness in students' performance to aid their learning and development) and *summative* (aimed at comparative assessment of students' performance to enable them to develop relevant quality evaluation skills) feedback to students. And even the most constructive and learning-oriented students will find it often hard to receive feedback that paints their efforts in a less favourable light than they may expect (or hope). Many supervisors inadvertently or deliberately gloss over the difficulty this creates for students, and many students find it difficult not to take negative feedback personally.

In a strong, respectful and explicitly developmental relationship such difficulties can usually be openly acknowledged and discussed, but due to the lack of awareness, lack of motivation, lack of skill, or for a variety of other reasons this is sometimes not the case. In such circumstances it is important for students to control their emotional reaction and remain focused on maintaining a positive and open mind and a courteous and appropriate interpersonal style of interaction (of course it is just as important for supervisors to maintain a supportive and respectful demeanour). One of the most useful approaches to achieve this is to adopt an explicit focus on learning and improvement. Negative summative feedback is most acceptable if it is offered as an improvement tool. If supervisors do not offer feedback in this format (“... here is how this could be further improved; ... here is what is missing to

reach the required standard; ... here are some options for how this problem can be addressed ...”), students can ask deliberately for feedback in this format. Not all supervisors are willing or able to provide it, but even asking for feedback in this format can help students feel more in control and help buffer the negative impact of such feedback.

Balanced with courtesy and mutual respect an appropriate dose of assertiveness is also useful. Assertiveness is about recognising and addressing both one's own and the other's objectives, needs and interests in the relationship or interaction. If supervisors do not treat students with respect, if they do not adhere to mutual agreements, or if they do not deliver on their formal responsibilities, students should take note and consider how to address these issues. If they are rare or isolated instances it may be an option to tolerate them, but if they occur more often it is better to address them before such patterns become established and form the bedrock of the student-supervisor relationship.

I am sure that there are many other useful and important tips that could be of help to you. Talk to other experienced doctoral students and academic staff, to learn from their experiences and to explore how you may be able to further improve your relationship with your supervisor. Also, note the assistance and supports offered by College that you may be able to draw on to address any difficulties that you might experience. And lastly: Best of luck with your studies!

## Tips for Maintaining the Student Supervisor Relationship – the Student's Perspective

Annie C. Humphrey, PhD Candidate, Medieval History Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin

1. Even if you are fully funded, your supervisor is ultimately working for you. It is their job to direct you through your doctoral thesis project and help lay the groundwork for your future career. They are not a boss to look busy for. Be honest and forthcoming about your difficulties and setbacks.



2. That said, start formal: use titles until told otherwise and don't socialise casually at first. Gradually let your student-supervisor relationship become more familiar to both of your comfort levels. Your supervisor will only be as such for a few years, and then you will be colleagues for the rest of your career.
3. It is a privilege to have the attention of a renowned scholar in your field for the years of your PhD, so make regular appointments, be on time, and enjoy the conversation!

Kevin Mercurio, PhD Candidate, Department of Microbiology, Trinity College Dublin

There is nothing more important than a positive student/supervisor relationship. Without one, producing a thesis and extracting knowledge from your studies at an institution will never be truly effective. I have been honoured with opportunities to develop several of these professional relationships throughout my academic career, and thus have three key pieces of advice for students wishing to develop their own:

### 1. Understand respectful and honest communication

The cliché for these discussions is that communication between the student and the supervisor are paramount to an effective working relationship. But what does that really mean? In my view, this embodies two important values: respect and honesty. Students need to respect the experience and goals of the supervisor, while supervisors need to respect the motivations and aspirations of the student. This respect goes hand-in-hand with being completely honest with one another from the beginning. Supervisors need to provide realistic constructive feedback to students' work in a timely manner, and students need to demonstrate their needs regarding mentorship and professional development. With these values of respect and honesty, strong communication will naturally flow.

### 2. Establish supervisor expectations and student boundaries

At the very start of a working relationship, it's essential that both parties define relevant formalities. The idea of this might scare anxious students away and may also be outright abandoned by the supervisor due to its air of finality. However, it is through this initial meeting that two important aspects of the student/supervisor relationship could be established: supervisor expectations and student boundaries. Supervisors need to properly convey their expectations to the students from the beginning, whether that be designated working hours, achievement of publications or other academic milestones, and work ethic. Students also need to express realistic boundaries for a professional setting, whether that be due to family matters, pay and other essential workplace aspects. Without this formal all-encompassing discussion, it would be impossible to know what is required and how it will be acquired.

### 3. Learning goes both ways

Students may think that supervisors are exceptional beings and that knowledge extraction is unidirectional. I can assure you that this is not the case. Trinity College Dublin is rich with diversity, and these perspectives matter in all areas of study. Every student is different and has unique values that can support the supervisor and their team. Students come from various cultures, professional backgrounds, extracurricular hobbies, and just general life experiences that supervisors can learn from. Additionally, it is often the case that students define their worth based on the goals of their supervisors; if aspects of the project fail, it may seem to fall on the responsibility of the student. This is not always the case, and often it leads to a remarkable learning opportunity for both the student and the supervisor. Bottom line: students must embrace their unique characteristics, and both must acknowledge that students are learning how to become experts in their field, while supervisors are learning how to best accomplish this.

So much depends on the relationship you develop with your supervisor. Your PhD colleagues can make the three or four years more enjoyable and more stimulating, as can the faculty and the wider community of your department and the university. But aside from you yourself, only your supervisor will have a direct influence on how your project develops and on your progress. Everyone will tell you that good communication is key to a successful supervisor-supervisee relationship, and everyone says it because it is true. All three of my 'tips' in some way relate back to the importance of good communication.

So, the first piece of advice I have is, during your first meeting with your supervisor, ask them candidly what their preferred style of communicating is, and the frequency with which they expect to meet with you over the course of the PhD, whether in person or over the phone. Some people prefer to give feedback in written form, via email, while others may give their best input in conversing and discussing things with you during meetings. If you establish a routine that works for both of you from the very beginning, it will make both of your lives easier. And do not be afraid to be open about what your preferences are, and what you need. I think most supervisors have their supervisee's best interests at heart, and it is also in their interest that you successfully make it through the programme, but they will have little sense of how you work best unless you tell them.

My second piece of advice is to think as early on as possible about your plans for publication (if that is something you are interested in doing, or need to do for your prospective career) and to discuss this with your supervisor. While some level of standardisation does exist in terms of co-authorship, people have varying ideas and preferences about what constitutes a substantial contribution, and so on, and while some supervisors will expect to co-author with you, others may be happy for you to aim for single author publications. It very much depends, and again, it is useful to have a sense of your

supervisor's views on this from the beginning.

Lastly, if you experience difficulties at any point during the PhD, whether professional or personal, that are affecting your work and your progress, do not keep it to yourself. Tell your supervisor as soon as possible. If the reasons are personal, you do not have to go into detail, but do be straightforward about the fact that something has come up, and if you need to take some time away from work, say so. This is to both your benefits, and in my experience and in colleagues' experiences that I've witnessed, people are understanding and supportive, not to mention helpful, in getting you through these challenges.

# Conflict Resolution Guidance

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**Many instances of conflict arise from unmet or unmanaged expectations by one or both parties. To minimise opportunities for misunderstandings (and thus avoid conflict further downstream) it is a good idea for both student and supervisor to be clear about what their expectations might be, what milestones or other deliverables might be required over the course of the degree generally, and more specifically in the upcoming 6-9 months.**

It is also good practice to ‘model’ behaviours and work/workplace practices which we wish to see in others—this includes discussing concerns openly as they arise, but also encouraging open dialogue generally, treating people with respect, acting in an inclusive way, and demonstrating appropriate work-life balance.

## **Supervisor – Research Student Agreement as a useful tool to manage mutual expectations**

A Supervisor – Research Student Agreement provides a good basis for understanding the roles and responsibilities of both student and supervisor and provides prompts for discussing matters relating to learning, research, wellbeing, training and administrative requirements. The agreement template includes open fields for students and supervisors to mutually agree on the type and frequency of communications, and how they propose to raise and resolve matters as they arise within the relationship.

We encourage students to use the agreement; bring it to your first (or an early) meeting with your supervisor, and explore how your supervisor would like to engage with a discussion about mutual expectations. This document should be treated as ‘live’ and revisited annually, or more often as needs arise. The agreement template may be adapted, if required, for individual research projects to suit the requirements of the project, student and supervisor(s). Completing the agreement is not mandatory and there may be other ways of documenting and agreeing mutual expectations that work better for you and your supervisor. It is intended as a guide and a prompt to facilitate discussions and should remain confidential to the supervision dyad, unless issues arise that need to be addressed.

## Setting the groundwork

Whether or not you are using the agreement, it is good practice in the early stages of a supervisory relationship, in the interest of avoiding conflict at a later stage, to have a conversation that includes:

- Roles of both student and supervisor,
- General expectations around working hours, annual leave etc. (full-time PhD students may take up to 30 days annual leave each academic year), should plan to take approximately 30 days' annual leave each academic year. The timing of leave should always be discussed and agreed with your supervisor,
- The style of supervision that is envisaged and how this might develop as the student's experience and autonomy grows,
- The frequency of meetings,
- Where and in what format (in-person, online, etc.) these will take place,
- Who will be responsible for setting the agenda for meetings (student, supervisor, or both),
- Who will be responsible for recording notes of the meetings (very often this is the student),
- Mode of contact outside meetings (usually this is by @tcd email),
- Training requirements,
- Consumables, technology requirements, access to machinery, etc.,
- Any specific access requirements or accommodations (including for disability, ongoing conditions, caring responsibilities, etc.)
- Academic and administrative milestones and expectations in the upcoming weeks, months and overall year looking at both the project and the requirements for annual review reports and confirmation/transfers,
- How queries or concerns can be raised by either party and how they will be addressed.

## When a conflict arises

'Conflict' can sound quite serious, but many 'conflicts' are simple misunderstandings and can be resolved between both parties early on and in an informal way. Including this in the agreement prior to any conflicts arising will help to normalise frank conversations when the need arises.

It is important to refer to how both parties agreed to raise and resolve disagreements and follow this process.

## Informal conflict resolution

In general, the best advice is to raise any concerns with the other party directly and as soon as feasible—typically this is at a meeting which will allow the other party to better gauge the issue from tone of voice, body language—tone is often difficult to correctly infer over email or text.

When a concern arises, place it on the agenda for the next scheduled supervisory meeting, or, where this is not appropriate, schedule an additional meeting to have a discussion about this. At the end of the meeting, it is a good idea to agree which one of the parties will follow up with everyone by email with a short summary of the agreed actions or next steps. The email should not include a summary of the discussion (which may inadvertently reopen the matter again), and should confine itself to what actions or next steps are to be taken.

It is important, when raising a concern, to be **specific, diplomatic, curious, and action-orientated**:

- **Specific:**  
Use specific examples of behaviours or practices which are causing concern, or specific instances where responsibilities are not being fulfilled. Avoid generalities, even in cases where you feel the concern relates to more general ways of being or day-to-day behaviour.

- **Diplomatic:**  
Give the other person the benefit of the doubt that they may not realise there is a concern: use the personal pronoun (“I feel that ...” “for me this feels like ...” etc.). It is important to offer space for someone to understand where they have transgressed and to offer them a change to apologise and/ or alter their behaviour or expectations.
- **Curious:**  
Allow the person an opportunity to explain their position and to outline any factors which may be feeding into their behaviour or their missed milestones.
- **Action-orientated:**  
Focus on how to move forward: what would you like to see change? What can be done differently? How might they need to be more responsive/ communicative? How might you need to match these changes with changes in your own behaviour? If you agree next steps, make sure to note them and that each side understands what the actions will be.

## When a conflict cannot be resolved in the context of normal supervisory meetings

Where a conflict escalates or becomes fractious, it may be possible for both parties to agree to meet in the presence of a third party (such as a Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate, a Head of Discipline, someone from outside the School, a nominee of the Dean of Graduate Studies).

This third party may act as a chairperson, a facilitator, or an observer. Often the presence of a third party who can be a ‘witness’ to the meeting can be a reassurance to either or both the student and the supervisor. Equally, having a facilitated conversation with someone else present can act as a deterrent for any anticipated unwanted behaviour such as aggression. The role that the third party will play in the particular instance should be clarified at the start of the meeting.

Where a third party is present, the process may be the same as above: specific, diplomatic, curious and action-orientated.

## Accompaniment and emotional support

Where an informal meeting to resolve a conflict is specially convened or where a meeting with the third party, mentioned above, is to take place, it is useful for both student and supervisor to know that they may bring a person to the meeting as a support. Where the meeting may involve a number of staff members meeting with a lone student, the student may feel particular need for an additional person in the room whose role is specifically to support them.

For students this support person may be a fellow student, a TCDSU rep, a member of the Postgraduate Advisory Service or another support service in the university. For a supervisor this is most often a colleague. Generally, the accompaniment is there to provide a ‘friendly face’ and does not have a formal role in the discussion.

Emotional support for students is available from the Student Counselling Service, and for staff via the Employee Assistance Programme.

## Conflict resolution styles

It is also important to note that not everyone approaches conflicts in the same way. In general supervisors should be aware that their students will perceive a power imbalance in the dynamic which may inhibit students’ coming forward with issues.

Nevertheless, it is incumbent on both students and supervisors to raise issues in a direct way, as soon as possible—it is unlikely anything will change if either party adopts a ‘wait and see’ approach.

The most frequently cited conflict management/conflict resolution styles are:

- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Avoid
- Accommodate and
- Compete



Examining past conflicts/ disputes you have been involved with may help you predict how you will respond to perceived conflict situations into the future. It is worth noting however that your style may not be the same as the other party's; while you may be prone to compromise, the other party may be more instinctively drawn to avoiding raising issues.

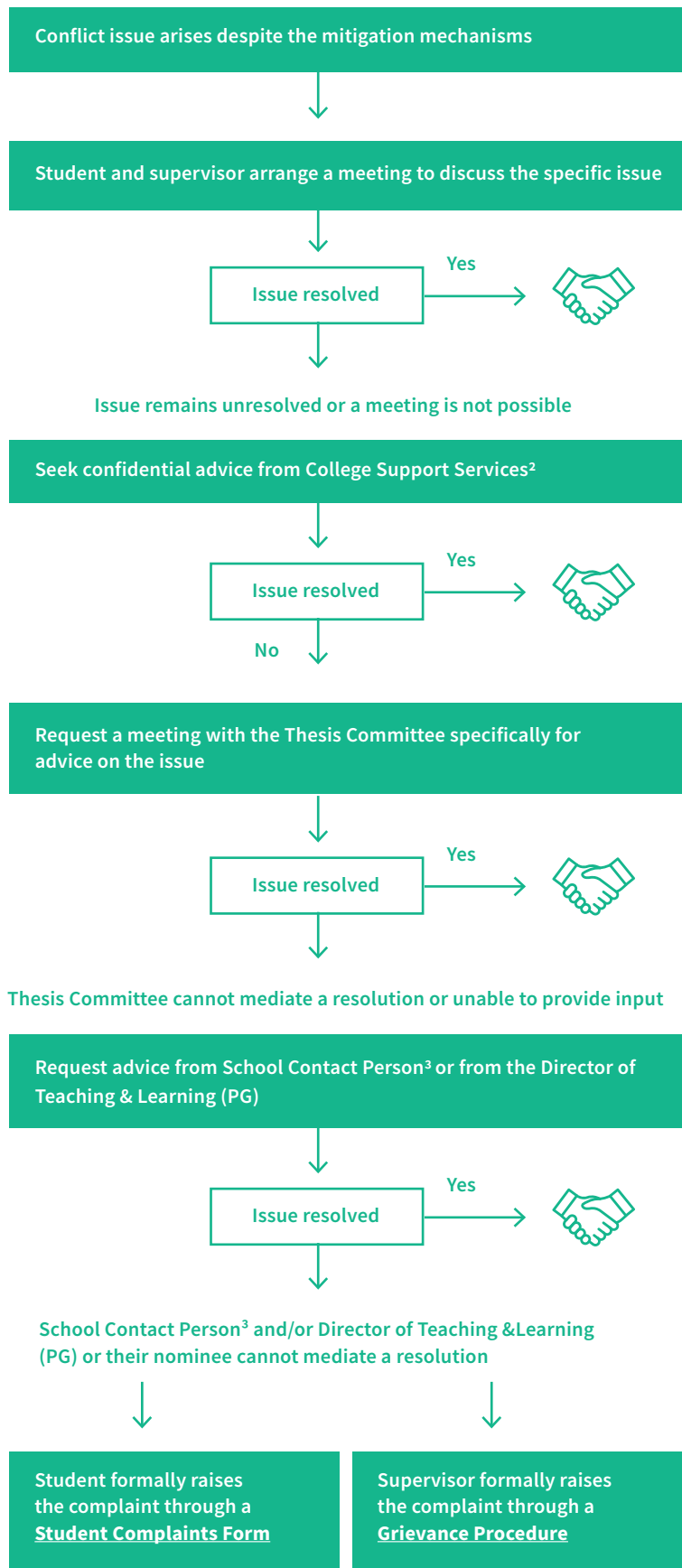
At all points during a conflict resolution process, informal support and advice may be sought from the Office of the Dean Graduate Studies, the Postgraduate Advisory Service (student) and Human Resources (staff).

### **Conflict resolution flowchart**

The conflict resolution flowchart outlines a series of steps and decision points that help research students and supervisors in identifying the nature of the conflict, determining appropriate strategies for resolution, and implementing solutions to resolve issues.

1. Complete a Supervisor-Research Student Agreement<sup>1</sup> and review it regularly during supervision.

2. Use time in normal meetings of the Thesis Committee to discuss factors affecting the research process.



1. A formal Supervisor-Research Student Agreement is recommended practice but is not mandatory. If an agreement is not in place, it is advisable that normal supervisory meetings include time to review and clarify responsibilities and expectations in the supervisor-student relationship.

2. College support services that can be contacted for confidential advice include:

- [Postgraduate Advisory Service](#)
- [Student Counselling](#)
- [S2S Student Peer Support](#)
- [TCDSU Welfare and Equality](#)

Employee Assistance Programme (for supervisors)

Additional services for students are available on the College website. Additional services for staff are available on the College website.

If conflict arises in a relationship based primarily at a site external to the College (e.g., in a hospital setting), it might be more appropriate to contact the School Contact Person for advice (see No. 3 below).

3. The School Contact Person varies by School. It can be the Dignity and Respect Officer, and, in many cases, it is the Director or Associate Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). The details of the School Contact Person can be obtained from your School Manager.

## Escalating to a formal process

Where a conflict cannot be resolved in the informal way outlined in the Student-Supervisor Agreement, or where the matter requires more formal intervention/ escalation, a process under a relevant policy may be required.

Depending on the issue this may proceed under:

- [The Dignity & Respect Policy](#) (for instances of bullying, harassment—for all members of the College community)
- [The Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) (for cases of sexual harassment, sexual assault, etc.)
- [The Fitness to Study Policy](#) (where there is serious concern for a student's wellbeing)
- [The College's disciplinary procedures for students or staff](#), or
- The Supervisor Complaints Process outlined in [Calendar Part III](#), Section II, § 24, p. 41

To view the relevant Policies, Guidelines and Resources, visit: <https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/conflict-resolution/>



# Academic Integrity

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**The concept of research integrity is a multi-faceted one that will mean different things for different students as they work on different projects. Some of you may need to obtain ethical approval for your work.**

In many cases it will be necessary for you to construct a detailed Data Management Plan and to fulfil obligations in relation to data ownership and data curation. The critical nature of these obligations is the reason why we require all structured PhD students to undertake the taught module in Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era. For the purposes of this handbook, however, and while recognising that there is an obligation on all students as they conduct research and write their thesis, to behave ethically and with integrity in all that they do, it is appropriate to focus on one particular aspect of research integrity, namely the rules in relation to academic integrity and plagiarism.

[www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-affairs/academic-integrity/](http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-affairs/academic-integrity/)

## Plagiarism

From the perspective of the University, plagiarism is one of the most serious of all disciplinary offences that can be committed by a postgraduate research student both because it very seriously strikes at the concept of research integrity and also because, in many cases, it implies that there are deficiencies in the research practice of the relevant student. Inevitably where any breach of academic integrity is suspected, the process that follows is a deeply unpleasant one for the relevant student – and not least because, in Trinity any plagiarism, however unintentional, when committed by a postgraduate research student is deemed to constitute ‘level four’ penalty, and hence cannot be dealt with locally within a School, but rather must be dealt with by the Junior Dean – the University Officer with designated responsibility for student discipline. For all these reasons, it is vital that students familiarise themselves with the college rules in relation to academic integrity.

Students should note that any unauthorised use of **GenAI** tools may constitute a breach of academic integrity.

Regulations on Academic Integrity can be found in [Part III of the College Calendar](#). It is very important that you familiarise yourself with these rules and with the policy on [Academic Integrity](#). In addition, very helpful information and resources to support academic integrity can be found at <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity>, including a link to the mandatory Ready, Steady, Write tutorial.

All of the rules in relation to plagiarism are very important, but the following points are especially worth noting.

(a) Plagiarism does not necessarily involve deliberate cheating. Very often it can occur as a result of sloppy research methodology where a student uses someone else's ideas without properly identifying the author of these ideas. It can also arise where a student directly quotes the words of an original author but does not make it clear that the author is being directly quoted. In other words, it is very important that your research methodology including your referencing style, is precise and effective.

(b) Plagiarism can arise not merely when a student uses the work of an established author but also, for example, when they have been working as part of a project or in collaboration with they have supervisor or a fellow student, includes the results of that study in their thesis but does not identify the part of the study for which they are responsible or the fact that it represented a joint collaboration.

(c) Plagiarism can arise where a student submits work for a degree having already submitted the same work or any part thereof for an award in any academic institution. On the other hand, it is not plagiarism for a student to include, as part of their thesis, work that has previously been published.

(d) Plagiarism can also occur where students avail of any kind of professional copy-editing or proof-reading service for their work, or when they avail of GenAI tools and submit the work as their own.

Finally, as with so many matters connected with the business of being a research student, if you have any doubts about whether there may be plagiarism issues connected with your research work, please link with your supervisor(s) for guidance.



# E-thesis Submission and Open Access

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**Niamh Brennan from the Trinity Library describes the exciting developments in relation to the electronic submission of Theses and the consequent ‘open access’ nature of research theses, now that the Access All Areas: Trinity’s eThesis Submission System is live.**

The traditional printed thesis has been described as the single most under-utilised research output. If that was ever true in Trinity, it is certainly no longer the case. College’s Electronic Thesis (eThesis) Submission System is a system for all research students whose theses have been examined and approved for the award of a PhD or a Masters by research degree. Trinity’s eTheses will be available on Open Access by default, but can have restricted access if necessary. Eligible students will upload the electronic version of their theses which will be archived and made available via TARA (Trinity’s Access to Research Archive). The process integrates up to five College systems including the RSS, TARA and SITS and is the result of a collaborative effort between the Library and Enovation Solutions, the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Registry and IT Services.

The system is designed to benefit the student by automating, streamlining and accelerating many aspects of the thesis deposit process. It benefits TCD Library by reducing duplication, improving data quality and saving time, and it benefits the student and the University by maximising the scholarly, reputational and societal impact of the student’s work. The initiative complements the Library’s successful theses digitisation programme which retrospectively made over 3,000 TCD theses available online.

**‘As open as possible, as restricted as necessary’.**

Open Access to research theses ensures their increased visibility and recognition along with that of the thesis author. When theses are made available on open access, their use increases exponentially. Trinity’s eTheses will be automatically harvested by search engines, included in national and international portals (such as the DART- Europe eTheses Portal and the European Commission’s OpenAIRE Explore, indexed by databases and listed at the top of Google search pages. The likelihood of other scholars citing theses increases as a result of this visibility.

Thesis citations can be tracked in Google Scholar. Open Access eTheses are available to everybody, including policy-makers, professional practitioners, cultural leaders and citizen scientists and can add to the societal and reputational impact of their authors and of the University. Of course, access to eTheses can also be restricted via the Application for a Stay process (with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies).

## How to submit your eThesis

Postgraduate students who have submitted their thesis for examination will receive a letter informing them of their results and of the next steps they must take. The letter will include information on the process and it will provide links and contact details for support. After all corrections have been approved, and as a 'last step' before the degree can be awarded, it is necessary to submit your eThesis for deposit and archiving in [TARA \(Trinity's Access to Research Archive\)](#). In addition, submission of one hardbound copy is required. The latter requirement is under review and may change, so be sure to check the letter informing you that your thesis has been approved for the degree. It will contain information on exactly what is required!

One important thing to remember is that, as long as a hardbound copy is required, the eThesis has to be deposited first before any hardbound copies are printed, and these must be printed from that deposited eThesis. This is to ensure that all of the additional information

created by the system is printed along with the Thesis. Instructions and files for printing are sent directly to The Thesis Centre from the eThesis Submission System – or the files can be downloaded and/or emailed to the printer of choice. Full information on eThesis submission is available via this link: <https://www.tcd.ie/library/support/submitting-theses.php>

There you'll find a video describing the process from beginning to end along with a printable step-by-step guide and instructions on how to apply for a stay (should this be required).

For more information and support please contact Niamh Brennan ([niamh.brennan@tcd.ie](mailto:niamh.brennan@tcd.ie)) or Monica Sanchidrián ([sanchidm@tcd.ie](mailto:sanchidm@tcd.ie)).

### Thanks

The eThesis System would not have been possible without the drive and initiative of Professor Neville Cox, former Dean of Graduate Studies, along with the ongoing support of the Dean of Graduate Studies and that of previous Deans of Graduate Studies, of Shane Collins and the former TCD Graduate Students Union plus past GSU presidents and vice presidents, Helen Thornbury and Ewa Sadowska (both previously of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies) and the Graduate Studies Committee. The system and process were developed by the Trinity's Research Informatics team with Enovation Solutions, in liaison with Academic Registry and IT Services.



# Extra-Curricular Life and the Research Postgraduate Student

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**Trinity College is home to a very large number of student societies and other activities dedicated to ensuring that students have not merely an academically fulfilling time in College, but also enjoy themselves!**

There is a tendency to regard these societies as the possession of undergraduates (such that when one operates at a postgraduate research level – especially, perhaps, at a PhD level – one should be ‘beyond’ such frivolities!).

In fact, nothing could be further from the case! In the first place these societies and facilities are fully available for graduate students. In the second, given the often very specific fields of study upon which many of you will be working, it is vitally important to maintain other interests! Finally, there is no context in which life within a university is not a ‘learning process’ and a journey of self-discovery, and your extra-curricular activities can be a vital component part of this process.

What follows is a brief introduction to three important contexts in which the ‘non-academic’ interests of Postgraduate Students are enhanced, namely through the work of the **Students Union, Student Societies and Trinity Sport**.





## STUDENTS' UNION AONTAS NA N-IARCHÉIMITHE

The Students' Union is your place in Trinity. It's where your voice can be heard, and where you can turn for help when you need it. The SU is an independent, autonomous body which has a long history of fighting for student rights, and we want to continue that this year. But the SU only works if you come to us and tell us what you need! We're based in House 6 in Front Square, and our contact details are all in here. Whatever you need, we're here for you. Whether it's accommodation, help with exams, a chat about anything worrying you, wristbands for a night out, or fighting for higher education funding, the SU can help.

### Students' Union Front Office Opening Hours:

Mon - Fri: 9:30am-5:30pm

### Contact info:

Website: [www.tcdsu.org](http://www.tcdsu.org)

Email: [frontoffice@tcdsu.org](mailto:frontoffice@tcdsu.org)

Phone: 01 646 8431

### Accommodation Advisory Service

The AAS is a free-to-use service run by the SU which assists students in finding suitable accommodation around Dublin. Visit the AAS website to check out our 'How to Find a Gaff Guide' and 'Digs' portal, with listings exclusively for Trinity students. If you're having any problems with finding accommodation, or with your current tenancy, please do get in touch! ([accommodation@tcdsu.org](mailto:accommodation@tcdsu.org))

### Get involved!

TCDSU run loads of campaigns during the year, focusing on issues that affect our students. We'd love to have you involved in any or all of the work we do!

Some of the issues we campaign on are:

- Fees and Higher Education Funding,
- Access to Education,
- Accommodation,

- Consent,
- Gender Equality,
- Mental Health,
- LGBTQIA+ Rights,
- Refugee Rights,
- International Student Support,
- Student Poverty, as well as any campaigns you'd like to run!

### Trinity Ents:

Trinity Ents is the entertainment branch of the Students' Union. It exists to provide you with the biggest nights out, the most memorable events, and an overall unforgettable time in Trinity. Starting in PG Orientation Week and continuing through Trinity Ball, right up to the end-of-exam parties, Trinity Ents will be hard at work providing opportunities for you to enjoy a well-deserved break from the grind!

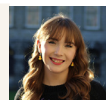
### Your TCDSU/AMLCT Officers:

The SU is run by students, acting on behalf of all of you. There are 6 full-time SU Officers who work for you and represent you in university and beyond: the President, Education Officer, Welfare and Equality Officer, Communications and Marketing Officer, Oifigeach na Gaeilge, and Ents Officer. TCDSU is also comprised of a number of Part-Time Officers who work in specific areas, from LGBTQIA+ rights to off-campus issues. Each class in Trinity has an elected SU Class Representative, and Schools and Faculties are represented by Conveners. For our PG Researchers, we are electing four representatives for each School in Trinity. So, there are two representatives for years 1 and 2, and two representatives for years 3 and 4+.

### President - Jenny Maguire

I'm Jenny, your Students' Union President. I lead the SU's campaigns, both in College and beyond. We fight for student rights and better student services. We want to make your college experience as good as it can be - if you ever need anything at all, we're here to help!

Email: [president@tcdsu.org](mailto:president@tcdsu.org)



### Education Officer – Eoghan Gilroy

Hi! My name is Eoghan and I'm your Education Officer and Deputy President. I'm here for any academic issues you may have – from failing an exam to ensuring the quality of your education. I also organise and train our Class Reps, who are there to make sure your views are heard. As Deputy President, I also assist in leading the Union. If you've any questions at all, please don't hesitate to get in touch by email or by dropping into Teach 6!

Email: [education@tcdsu.org](mailto:education@tcdsu.org)



### Ents Officer – Peadar Walsh

Hey there! I'm Peadar, your Ents Officer! My job is to run Trinity Ents - the official College entertainment body. We design the most creative and memorable events in the College calendar, including the annual Trinity Ball. If you need any help or advice on running an event, or have any suggestions for future Ents activities, fire me an email or call into my office in House 6.

Email: [ents@tcdsu.org](mailto:ents@tcdsu.org)



### Welfare and Equality Officer – Hamza Bana

Hi! I'm Hamza and I am your Welfare and Equality Officer. My job is to look after your welfare throughout the College year. You can come to me at any time to talk through problems you're facing. I can also help you with small loans and information about college services (like our on-campus day nursery and health centre). I want you to enjoy your time studying here, and I am here for any issues you're facing – no matter how big or how small.

Email: [welfare@tcdsu.org](mailto:welfare@tcdsu.org)



### Oifigeach Gaeilge – Pádraig Mac Brádaigh

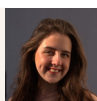
Dia daoibh ar fad! Pádraig Mac Brádaigh is ainm dom agus is mé bhur nOifigeach Gaeilge in AMLCT i mbliana. Is é is cúis le mo ról cearta na nGaeilgeoirí a fheabhsú agus a chosaint sa Choláiste chomh maith leis an teanga a chur chun cinn i gcoitinne. Is eagraíocht dhátheangach é an tAontas, mar sin ná bíodh drogall ar bith oraibh bhur gcuid gnó a dhéanamh linn trí mheán na Gaeilge. Táim tiomanta athrú córasach i leith na Gaeilge a spreagadh sa Choláiste agus cé acu an bhfuil tú dúchasach líofa nó ag foghlaim an chúpla focal, tá fáilte is fiche romhat. Bígí ag faire amach do na feachtais a bheidh ar siúl agam i mbliana agus tagaigí i dteagmháil liom, le bhur dtoil, má tá ceist ar bith agaibh faoin teanga sa Choláiste nó muna bhfuil uaibh ach comhrá agus cupán tae! Tá gluaiseacht na Gaeilge faoi bhláth: bígí páirteach inti!

Email: [gaeilge@tcdsu.org](mailto:gaeilge@tcdsu.org)

### Communications and Marketing Officer – Beth Strahan

Hi! I'm Beth and I'm the Communications and Marketing Officer. My job is to make sure that you're all kept in the loop with the Students' Union. I'll send you an email every week with information about the campaigns we're running, the services we have, and ongoing events. I also secure deals for all of us with businesses across the city to help make College life more affordable, to allow you to treat yourself from time-to-time, and to help fund our work. If you have any ideas about how your SU can communicate more effectively, please do get in contact with me! And, do check us out on Instagram and X.

Email: [communications@tcdsu.org](mailto:communications@tcdsu.org)



## Student Societies in TCD

As you begin your studies or research at Trinity, your initial thoughts may be focussed around the practicalities of this work. However, aside from academics, the campus has a vibrant and diverse society culture, with over 120 active groups in which staff and students alike can participate. The variety of societies on offer means there is truly something for everyone.

If you are interested in pursuing your chosen discipline in a social setting, societies like Werner Chemical, DU History, or Joly Geographical are veritable melting pots. Staff, postgraduates and undergraduates alike, connected to the discipline academically or otherwise, engage in a wide range of discipline-specific talks, debates, quizzes and social events. These societies are numerous, covering almost all disciplines in the College.

If enjoying world class speakers from politics and popular culture, or developing your debating skills is more your thing, Trinity's oldest societies, the Hist and Phil have much to offer.

You can also learn or practice languages with our litany of language and cultural societies, help out at Vincent de Paul's 'Soup Run' or with the Voluntary Tuition Programme. If all of this leaves you in need of some down-time, you can try de-stressing at KnitSoc's celebrated 'Stitch and Bitch', or read a good book with the Literary Society. These are just some of the litany of events occurring across campus each week.

The Central Societies Committee (CSC) is the student-led governing body tasked with representing, supporting and funding student societies on campus.

### How to get involved

Once you've paid your membership online, you'll receive weekly emails from your chosen societies outlining the events planned for the week ahead.

Getting involved in societies not only allows you to experience another side of College, but can also teach you many useful skills which are sure to benefit you in your chosen field. What are you waiting for?

### Contact details

Website: [trinitysocietiesthub.com](http://trinitysocietiesthub.com)

Email: [info@csc.tcd.ie](mailto:info@csc.tcd.ie)

## Trinity Sport

Trinity Sport's vision is to have sport at the heart of the Trinity experience, and our mission is to inspire, engage and connect people in a suitable, inclusive and supportive environment. Whether you want to perform at a high level, be part of a team, learn a new sport or simply improve your fitness, Trinity Sport has a wide variety of sporting opportunities to enhance your college experience.

On campus, the central hub is the Sport Centre, which is located at Westland Row end of college. The sport centre facilities include a fitness theatre, 25m swimming pool, 11m climbing wall, wellness studio, spin studio, functional training area, and main hall which caters for 5-a-side, basketball, volleyball, handball, and badminton.

All fitness levels are catered for with more than 50 classes and fitness courses on offer per week. Over 10,000 students activate their access to the Sports Centre facilities on an annual basis. All registered postgrads are automatic members of the sport centre's facilities, to get access you just need to activate your student card on your first visit to the Sports Centre. As a student member, you can also avail of preferential rates for all classes, courses, and sport services.

State of the art indoor sport facilities recently opened at Printing House Square, and have been designed to cater to a range of sports and activities including squash, GAA handball, racquet ball, and Olympic target shooting. At Printing House Square, you'll find three dynamic squash courts, each boasting an impressive 63 square meters of playing space. These courts are not only dedicated to squash but are also adaptable to host a variety of other events and activities, making them a hub for Trinity's community. For GAA Handball enthusiasts, Printing House Square offers a 40 x 20 handball alley – the only one of its kind in Dublin City Centre. The cutting-edge Olympic Target range which features ten lanes and two range distances. In keeping with our commitment to inclusivity, the sporting facilities at Printing House Square are fully accessible. We offer male, female, and universal changing rooms, complete with showers and toilets, ensuring everyone can take part in sport and physical activity at Printing House Square.

Trinity has 49 sports clubs ranging from team sports, adventure sports, water sports to martial arts, there is something for everyone. Getting involved in a sports club is an ideal way to keep fit, learn a new skill, and build



new friendships. Joining a Trinity Sport club also gives you an opportunity to represent Trinity and compete at a high level against other universities.

For those who like their sport to be a little more fun, there is a full programme of social sports and leagues on campus for students including 3 v 3 basketball, 5-a-side soccer, soccer league, social running, touch rugby and 'learn to play' programmes. The participation side of Trinity Sport activities include the Swim for a Mile training programme and event, the Reindeer Run and Campus 5K.

We offer a wide range of student leadership, coaching and volunteering opportunities to enable students to develop their skills and enhance the sporting experience for others. Coaching bursaries are available to students to gain qualifications in a range of sports.

The Trinity Sport team takes pride in providing you with the very best university sporting experience. Our dedicated, passionate, and friendly team look forward to welcoming you!

### Contact details

Website: [www.tcd.ie/sport](http://www.tcd.ie/sport)

Email: [sport@tcd.ie](mailto:sport@tcd.ie)

Phone: 01 896 1812

Instagram: @tcdsport

TikTok: @tcdsport

X: @tcdsports

Facebook: Trinity Sport Dublin

YouTube: Trinity College Dublin Sport

LinkedIn: Trinity College Dublin Sport

### Sports Centre opening hours

Mon – Fri: 7am-10.30pm

Sat-Sun: 9am-6pm

### Additional on-campus facilities

Three Synthetic tennis courts

Futsal pitch

Natural grass floodlit rugby pitch

Cricket

Outdoor athletics track (April-October)

### Additional off-campus facilities

Santry Sports Grounds

Iveagh Sports Grounds

Dartry Hall

Islandbridge Boat House



# Support Services for Postgraduate Research Students

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**In some cases, students come on to the postgraduate research register and, a few years later, complete their research and graduate, with the whole process being a smooth one and the pressures that are faced being ‘normal’ and bearable!**

In others, however, the process is a rocky one and students face very significant difficulties – academic, personal, health based, financial and so on. Trinity, rightly, has a reputation for being profoundly interested in the well-being of all students and for seeking to assist students in difficulties. There is, of course, a humanitarian underpinning to this (in that we are genuinely interested in the dignity of every single student who comes through our gates). But in addition we believe in you and in the work you are doing – and the more that we can help students to overcome difficulties the more likely it is that they will produce the quality scholarship of which they are capable and which will enhance the scholarship of our academic community.

That being the case there are a range of **supports** available to postgraduate research students. Most of which are free and all operate confidentially. Some are generic to all students whereas others, like the **Postgraduate Advisory Service** are specific to postgraduates. The **Disability Service** provides invaluable support for students with any kind of disability who might need some accommodation in order to ensure that their studies proceed effectively. **Student Learning Development** offer support and training on academic and research skills. **Academic Practice** provides many courses which are of huge benefit to graduate students – and especially those working as teaching assistants and demonstrators. The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies operates a **Travel Grant Scheme** for those students seeking to go abroad for research purposes. Finally, the **Trinity Careers Service** provides advice and guidance in relation to the ‘next step’ for students. These services, and others, are outlined now.

## Student Counselling Services (SCS)

The Student Counselling Service aims to provide a free, compassionate, inclusive and student-centred mental health service, delivering high quality counselling, preventative supports, and online services in line with the University strategy.

The SCS offers workshops on coping with the challenges of university, online SilverCloud self-help programmes, solutions-focused one-to-one counselling, and a range of regular group supports.

Student counselling services are available to all registered Trinity students. These services are free, professional, and confidential.

To book an appointment, students can email the service and request a SNAP (Support & Needs Assessment Planning) session, or an urgent appointment if required.

**Note:** the SCS front office is operational during work hours (Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm); emails sent outside of this timeframe will be received the next working day.

### Contact Details

Email: [student-counselling@tcd.ie](mailto:student-counselling@tcd.ie)

Phone: (01) 896 1407

Website: [www.tcd.ie/student-counselling](http://www.tcd.ie/student-counselling)

Location: 3rd floor of 7-9 South Leinster Street

## Trinity Health Service

We take a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to Student Health, working closely with the other Student Services, in the knowledge that Health matters can have a significant impact on the Academic progress of students.

All full-time registered students are eligible to use the Trinity Health Service throughout the year. The service offers on-campus primary health and psychiatric care. To arrange an appointment, either drop into reception or ring the office. As well as the free general practice (including sports medicine) and nurse-run clinics, there are specialised clinics in physiotherapy, psychiatry, travel health, sexual health, eating disorders and minor surgery.

For emergency visits, the Trinity Health Service sees patients on a first-come, first-served basis in the mornings beginning at 9:30 and after lunch, beginning at 14:00. There are often queues for these emergency clinics, so students hoping to speak to a physician are advised to arrive early.

### Contact Details

Phone: (01) 896 1591/1556

Website: <https://www.tcd.ie/collegehealth>

Or Pre- booked appointments are available from: 9.00 - 16.30 and an Emergency (Sit and Wait) clinic is provided twice a day, at 9.30 and 14.00  
Location: Trinity Campus, House 47





## Nursery

The TCD Day nursery provides full time care for children aged 3 months up to 4.5 years of age. Children who attend the nursery and meet the criteria as set out by Department of Children and Youth Affairs, are eligible to apply for the following childcare grants:

- The Early Childhood Care and Education programme (ECCE)
- The National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

Further information on childcare funding can be found on:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/>  
<https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/>

The Day Nursery can be accessed by staff and students of Trinity College Dublin.

The application for the waiting list is available on the Day Nursery webpage. If one parent is a staff member and their partner is a student the application may be placed on the student waiting list but will be charged the staff member rate.

### Contact Details

Phone: (01) 896 2277

Website: <https://www.tcd.ie/daynursery/>

Location: College Day Nursery, House No. 49/50, Trinity College Dublin

## Student Learning Development (SLD)

SLD is available for all registered students. We offer a range of services to help you improve your learning and academic skills.

You can attend workshops on writing skills, time management, procrastination, study skills, critical thinking, thesis writing, presentation skills, Viva practice and many more.

You can make one-to-one appointments with a learning advisor to discuss your individual academic concerns via our online booking system.

SLD also runs the Trinity Academic Writing Centre (AWC). The AWC offers a variety of writing services to help you develop your academic writing skills. Supports include one-to-one appointments to discuss your academic writing, writing skills, workshops, writing groups and online resources. Visit <https://student-learning.tcd.ie/services/awc/> for more details.

Additionally SLD has a Blackboard module which offers extensive learning resources, recorded webinars and handouts to help you develop your academic skills. You can easily self enrol. Instructions are on the [SLD website](#).

Contact us at [student.learning@tcd.ie](mailto:student.learning@tcd.ie) or visit our website for more information on our services, upcoming workshops, how to make an appointment: [student-learning.tcd.ie](https://student-learning.tcd.ie)

### Contact Details

Location: 7-9 South Leinster Street

Email: [student.learning@tcd.ie](mailto:student.learning@tcd.ie)

Phone: (01) 896 1407

Website: [student-learning.tcd.ie](https://student-learning.tcd.ie)

## STUDENT 2 STUDENT (S2S)

If anything is on your mind and you'd like to share it with a good listener, then a Peer Supporter would love to help. The Peer Support service will be re-launching this year, and volunteers will soon be available for any student in the College. You don't need to be in distress or crisis to talk to a Peer Supporter, but they can help with the larger problems as well as the smaller things. Our volunteers are highly trained, confidential and professional, but they're also fellow students who can offer some genuine empathy and a friendly ear. You can email us directly at [student2student.tcd.ie](mailto:student2student.tcd.ie) to find out more about the Peer Support service, or to volunteer!

Phone: (01) 896 2438

Email: [student2student@tcd.ie](mailto:student2student@tcd.ie)

Website: [student2student.tcd.ie](http://student2student.tcd.ie)

## The Postgraduate Advisory Service

The Postgraduate Advisory Service, commonly referred to as PAS, is the frontline support for postgraduate students at Trinity. PAS is coordinated by the Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Martin McAndrew, who acts as a first point of contact for research students needing support or guidance.

### How we can help

We are here to provide support on any matter that may impact upon your time as a postgraduate student at Trinity. Some of the most common issues students come to PAS to discuss include:

- study-related stress or worry;
- concerns about academic progress;
- supervisor-relationship concerns;
- extensions and going off-books queries;
- queries about regulations and academic appeals;
- bullying;
- plagiarism and disciplinary cases
- financial hardship.

### We support students by:

- Providing frontline confidential and free support, information, and referral via the Postgraduate Student Support Officer
- Providing complementary supports including workshops and training to postgraduates
- Administering the Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund and other financial assistance to postgraduate students.

PAS also provides representation for postgraduates in the event of disciplinary and/or academic appeals.

Appointments are available from 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday and can be arranged by emailing [postgrad.support@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.support@tcd.ie)

If in doubt get in touch!

### Financial Assistance

The Postgraduate Advisory Service administers the Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund.

This fund is intended to tackle disadvantage by providing small amounts of financial assistance to students requiring additional support to enable them to fully benefit from their third-level studies and to assist with unexpected additional costs. It is co-funded by the Irish Government For more information visit the PAS website.

### Contact info:

Phone: +353 896 1417

E-mail: [postgrad.support@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.support@tcd.ie)

Website: <https://www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate/>



## Disability Service

The Disability Service provides confidential, professional supports for postgraduate students with disabilities in Trinity and the university is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in education and to ensuring that students with a disability have as complete and equitable access to all facets of College life as can reasonably be provided.

Disabilities can be visible or invisible, but regardless of the nature of yours, the Disability Service is here to help you identify and support your needs during your postgraduate study. These supports are tailored and may differ in form or scope from what was needed at undergraduate level.

Working within the service are a team of professionals with expertise in the field of disability, including disability officers, occupational therapists and an assistive technology officer. As a student registered with the service, a number of resources and supports are available to you that will assist you throughout your research and study. Students requiring disability supports at PG research level are required to apply for reasonable accommodations with the Disability Service; to learn more please visit: <https://www.tcd.ie/disability/current/RAApplication.php>

After applying for disability support, students will be invited to meet with a Disability Officer on a one-to-one basis to discuss additional disability supports. The student decides on the level of support that they require. Disability supports available are linked here <https://www.tcd.ie/disability/>

Additionally, postgraduates can avail of individual sessions with an occupational therapist who will assist you to develop practical skills and strategies to help you manage your university student life (including balancing wellbeing, research load, and the supervisor-relationship).

If you have a disability and need additional support in Trinity, please contact the Disability Service by:

### Contact info:

Email: [askds@tcd.ie](mailto:askds@tcd.ie)

Phone: 01-896 3111

Website: [www.tcd.ie/disability](http://www.tcd.ie/disability)

## Trinity Trust Travel Grants

For many of you, the process of completing a PhD will not be simply a matter of working in a library or laboratory and producing a document that will only be reviewed by examiners! Rather it will involve travel abroad possibly for fieldwork, or to study in a venue that has particular resonance for your research and, in many cases, it will involve travel to participate in and ideally present at significant international conferences. It goes without saying that this can be a huge driver for and enhancement of your research and the university strongly encourages this.

Thanks in part to the very significant generosity of the Trinity Trust, we offer a Travel Grant support scheme for PhD students.. Details of how to apply for a travel grant (as well as important regulations in relation to application dates and so on) are available at <https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/travel-grant/>

Please note that, if you wish to apply for a grant, it is necessary both to obtain a recommendation from your Head of School, and also that the School agrees to fund 20% of the costs of the trip. Please note also, that, whereas the travel grant scheme covers costs such as transport/conference registration and attendance costs, it does not cover subsistence/food etc. Furthermore, given the volume of applications, the scheme can typically support only a portion of costs for students - it is intended as an additional support rather than the main source of funding. The Trinity Trust Travel Grant is administered on a quarterly basis, please see our webpage for further details.

### Contact info:

Email: [genadgso@tcd.ie](mailto:genadgso@tcd.ie)

Website: <https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/students/research/travel-grant/>

## Careers Support For Postgraduate Students

During your time as a Trinity postgraduate research student, you'll get the chance to develop skills and attributes to enable you to reach your potential your career and prepare you for the workplace of the future. The Careers Service is here to support your development and help prepare you for your career journey ahead. Employers are interested in the high-level skills acquired from a postgraduate research degree: we can help you to articulate your unique skillset and to proactively manage your career.

We can also support you to explore your career options and ambitions, both within and beyond academia, and help you to plan how to achieve them by:

- working with you on CV and interview preparation
- providing one-to-one guidance with our experienced careers consultants
- working with you through specialist careers workshops on the career planning and job search process
- linking you with alumni mentors and companies looking to hire Trinity graduates through our Careers Fairs and events which we hold throughout the year, and
- making sure you have the right careers information and resources available to you when you need them.

Our online careers system **MyCareer** lets you book appointments with us and keeps you up-to-date with careers events and job vacancies. We know what's going on in the labour market and can help you find the opportunities that are there for you. You can also meet and be inspired by our Trinity alumni, many of whom have gone on to do great things in their careers.

PhD students in all years and from across all disciplines can apply for our Careers, Employability and Work-based learning modules (5 and 10 ECTS options available). See p. 20-21 for further information.

Whether you are working towards a research Masters or embarking on a PhD it is never too early to consider your future so find out more about your Careers Service at [www.tcd.ie/careers](http://www.tcd.ie/careers).

For further information, please contact the Careers Service at [postgrad.careers@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.careers@tcd.ie) or [www.tcd.ie/careers](http://www.tcd.ie/careers)

# And in Conclusion...

**What then should one be seeking to achieve as a research student in a university like Trinity (apart from simply the degree for which you are registered)? No doubt there are as many answers to this question as there are research students! But some answers to this are contained in the reflection of Professor Richard Reilly, Professor of Neural Engineering in the School of Engineering and School of Medicine.**

Carrying out a PhD is about passion, curiosity, and commitment. You need to have a passion for the theme of the PhD and be excited by the potential outcomes. This is fundamental. At the initial stages, a PhD can often involve considerable reading trying to understand but also review the research topic. This is why passion and curiosity are so important. Your supervisor may have a number of key articles or publications for you to start reading but then expect you to expand around the topic. As your critical analytical skills improve a series of research questions will emerge about an unexplored or underdeveloped area. These questions are the core of your PhD and around which a set of hypotheses and experiments can be developed. You will refine these questions many times throughout the years of dedicated research. A PhD is all about the research questions.

You need to make a commitment to these research questions in terms of time and energy. The depth of thinking requires a commitment to self-discipline. There will be times when all is clear and going at pace, but equally there will be times when nothing seems to make sense and progress slows. This is where the self-discipline is important: to review the questions again, refine the hypotheses, approach analysis of the experimental results in different ways etc. Also important in terms of commitment is reading of the scientific literature. If there is one universal piece of advice to offer: read more to stay on top of the subject matter! Read as many articles as you can and make notes. All the online reference systems allow you to do this. Reading without synthesising what you are reading is not going to result in making progress. Keep your notes ordered in a specific format, a format that works for you. Some use online notepads but I recommend hardback notebooks (I have filled 100's).



Besides reading and addressing your research questions, you will need to communicate your ideas to others. This will be in the form of weekly lab meetings, journal clubs or research seminars. It may also involve symposia and conferences here in Ireland but also internationally. Being able to articulate your ideas and your thoughts is just as important as defining and addressing the research questions. Being able to present clearly and concisely to a group of peers takes practice. Learn this skill. Similarly, being able to communicate clearly and concisely in written form is also crucial. Writing well still matters in an age of instant communication! There are numerous excellent style guides to scientific writing. Learn this skill also.

Attending symposia and conferences is an excellent way to network with other researchers in your area. They will have similar questions and may even have better answers! Building a network of colleagues working in your area is important not just to share ideas and concepts but also to provide critique on your work. Join the international society in your topic. The society will typically be hosting the annual international conference. Student membership is often at a reduced rate and sometime can be free. You will receive monthly news and it will keep you up to date on the wider field. Science tends to be a very open and sharing community. You will make friends, many of whom will be friends for life. All labs have webpages, many have blogs and also tweet regularly. Follow them, keep in touch and be part of the community.

As you progress with your research you will notice how quickly the time is passing. You need to keep in your mind some idea of where you are going in your career. What will you do afterwards? Will you be seeking a postdoctoral position in another university, a position in a company or starting your own? Your network of colleagues, and those who you have met at conferences, will be important here to help plan your next position. Follow also the large national and international funding agencies. Who is receiving grant funding? They will often be seeking to hire postdoctoral and other researchers.

Your supervisor is there to advise and provide mentorship. They will know your research interests, get to know your skills and talents, and help shape your future career thoughts. They will also be able to offer advice, support and restore confidence when things get confusing (which invariably happens at some time or another for most students).

Carrying out a PhD is about passion, curiosity, and commitment. Together with depth of thinking and excellent communication skills you will make an impact in your topic. Do the work and learn some lifelong skills.

Carrying out a PhD is also a luxury. You may not often have the time to dedicate to one defined topic in your career. So make this one count and enjoy it.

**Professor Richard Reilly**



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