



Handbook for PhD and MLitt Students 2024-25

This handbook has been written to give practical information for research students at NCAD as well as laying out some tasks and activities required for successful completion of a research degree. It should be read in conjunction with UCD's Academic Regulations which govern the policies and practices at NCAD.

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1 Types of research degrees

Research students at NCAD undertake the following types of degrees:

MLitt by thesis

PhD by thesis

PhD by practice

Note: The MRes programme has a separate MRes Handbook.

1.1 Research by practice and Research by thesis

‘By practice’ describes a mode of research that is compatible with the kinds of creative practices undertaken at NCAD. Typically, an artist, designer, maker, curator, educator or a ‘practitioner’ of another kind will undertake to complete a body of work in their field of practice. This work will constitute research in the sense that it will be an investigation of a defined field or question identified at the outset of the studentship and, as such, aims to make ‘an original and scholarly contribution to knowledge.’ While this work will often have deep footings in the research student’s existing field of practice and many ‘by practice’ researchers will have already established significant careers, ‘by practice’ research is not simply a restatement of their professional interests and contributions to date. It will be a new endeavour. As such, a clear research proposal must be made at the outset of study; an agreed number of interdependent research tasks will be undertaken during the studentship; and a clearly defined and resolved body of work be delivered for assessment at the end.

‘By practice’ students will also submit an accompanying text which will be assessed alongside the other evidence of practice submitted for the award. The nature of this text will be negotiated with the supervisors. That said, it should not take the form of a ‘simple’ narrative report outlining the development of the project alone, and needs to achieve the standards of originality, creativity, contextual or disciplinary understanding and criticality required of the award.

‘By thesis’ students should also consider their work to be ‘a practice’. This means critical self-awareness of research methods and writing practice. As an institution seeking to stimulate and support creativity, we welcome creative experiments in these, and other, aspects of research. It may also be the case that ‘by thesis’ students will stage events and conduct ‘experiments’ that will generate ‘findings’ which will play a key part in the thesis submitted for assessment.

2 The Application Process

2.1 Transfer from MRes to PhD programme (by thesis or by practice)

Most students who wish to undertake doctoral research at NCAD will have the commence their registration as MRes students and then have the opportunity to apply to transfer to the PhD register after a year of study at the MRes level. The details of the transfer process are outlined in the Handbook for MRes students. Direct entry to the PhD programme is possible, particularly for those students who have already undertaken and successfully completed an MRes elsewhere.

2.2 Application Proposal

Applicants who seek direct entry into the MLitt or PhD programme are required to submit a full proposal to Student Services and Admissions (SS&A) via the online application process prior to being interviewed. The application form requires the following:

2.2.1 Field and/or research question

Applicants should provide a clear statement about the field/s to which they plan to contribute. This will usually take the form of a set of research questions or a set of research parameters.

2.2.2 Research methods

A statement indicating how the student will generate new knowledge. Here, primary sources ought to be listed and described. The proposal should also indicate the range of research methods as well as the critical orientation of the project (i.e. its relationship with / deployment of ideas and practices. If the application is to undertake research 'by practice', the applicant needs to make a clear statement about the kinds of resources that they may need to undertake this research. This may include access to space or technical resources. 'By practice' applicants are also encouraged to outline the likely scale of the work to be completed and ultimately presented for examination, but are advised that it is understood that research develops over the duration of the studentship and so what is outlined at application may change.

Applicants are also required to reflect on any ethical issues which arise from their proposed research. At this stage, the applicant is unlikely to have had the benefit of the critical reflection of others with expertise in research ethics. Nevertheless, it is important for them to consider how their work may or may not have an impact on others.

2.2.3 Claim on originality

The applicant needs to demonstrate understanding of the field/s in which they will be conducting their research as well as the nature of the contribution that they will make to that field. This may take the form of a critical assessment of the work of other researchers (e.g. a literature review).

Schools and departments are encouraged to support applicants prior to the submission of the proposal. This may take the form of providing comments on a draft application, etc.

2.2.4 Prior Qualifications

Typically, an applicant will have completed a taught postgraduate programme such as an MA. In exceptional circumstances, significant prior professional experiences and achievements can be taken as evidence of preparedness for a research degree.

Applications can be received at any time but there is a 'target' closing date of the end of March to allow for Departments and Schools to plan for the academic year ahead. Students can commence their studies at the beginning of either the autumn or the spring trimester, subject to the approval of the schools and the availability of staff.

2.2.5 The Interview

Applicants will be interviewed by at least two members of staff, one or more of whom is likely to take on the role of supervisor. The other members of the panel will include the Head of School, Head of Department and / or the Head of Academic Affairs and Research and /or the Head of Doctoral Studies.

After the interview, the panel will complete and submit a PhD and Research Master's Degree Nomination Form (available on Workvivo) to NCAD's Academic Council which is empowered to offer places to research students.

The interview panel is looking for evidence of the following kinds:

Applicant

That the applicant is qualified to undertake the research proposed and that, in the case of PT applicants, the project is viable in terms of other professional obligations. It is particularly important to outline research skills and expertise if the applicant has not completed a taught MA, MLitt or MPhil in a related field. Evidence of managing and completing substantial projects may be particularly important.

Research

That the research being proposed has the potential to reach the standards of originality and significance for the award being source; that the applicant has

considered any ethical concerns that are raised by their proposed research (see below).

Relevance

That the proposed research matches the research interests and priorities of the School.

Resources

That the School can meet the technical / intellectual resources required for successful completion.

3 Registration

3.1 Duration and modes of study

PhD and MLitt can be registered as Full Time (FT) or Part Time (PT).

One year of registration is calculated as three trimesters.

At NCAD, the trimesters run as follows:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Autumn Trimester | September to January |
| Spring Trimester | January to June |
| Summer Trimester | June to September |

FT MLitt students will complete their work and present it for examination in a period of no less than three trimesters and no more than six trimesters from the start of their registration.

PT MLitt students will complete their work and present it for examination in a period of no less than six trimesters and no more than twelve trimesters from the start of their registration.

FT PhD students will complete their work and present it for examination in a period of no less than nine trimesters and no more than twelve trimesters from the start of their registration.

PT PhD students will complete their work and present it for examination in a period of no less than fifteen trimesters and no more than eighteen trimesters from the start of their registration.

If an MLitt or PhD student changes from PT registration to FT or vice versa, a calculation will be made about the remaining minimum and maximum period of registration.

For example, if a PhD student transfers from FT to PT registration after nine trimesters (i.e., the equivalent of three years), they will be required to undertake a minimum of a further six trimesters (the equivalent of two years) as a PT student and a maximum of a further nine trimesters (the equivalent of three years).

Periods where a student suspends registration are not included in any calculation of duration.

In certain exceptional circumstances, a student may be permitted to present for the degree of MLitt PhD following a shorter period of registration, subject to the recommendation of the appropriate School Board and approval by the Academic Council. Such circumstances may include instances where a supervisor from another third level institution joins NCAD and a Research Masters or PhD student under their supervision follows them. In this case, the student must be registered at NCAD within a year of the supervisor's appointment.

A formal request must be made to extend the submission deadline beyond the maximum period. Programmes Board, one of the key college committees, decides whether or not an extension can be granted. The grounds for extension will typically be prolonged serious illness, etc. Students who wish to apply for an extension need to complete the Research Students Extension to Submission Deadline Request Form [here](#).

Students can change their mode of study (FT to PT or vice versa) at the start of either the autumn or the spring trimesters. To change registration, students should talk to their supervisors in the first instance and then contact Admissions and Student Services at NCAD [here](#). Students who have external funding should also check with their funder to understand the implication of this decision on the support that they receive.

3.2 Return to study after a leave of absence

Typically, a student who takes a leave of absence for one year or more will be invited to meet their supervisors prior to renewing their registration at the College. It is important that any issues which may have made study difficult such as ill health are resolved.

4 Supervision and study

4.1 Supervisors

Typically, a research student at NCAD will be supported by two supervisors.

Supervisory teams can be formed by staff from different schools.

The supervision team may be distinguished by a principal and a secondary supervisor. The principal supervisor will have prior experience of supervision. They are likely to be located in the School to which the student is registered. Distinguishing the members of the

supervision team in this way does not mean that one supervisor will offer greater support or that his or her advice is more authoritative than another supervisor.

In exceptional circumstances, one of the supervisors may be employed by another institution or be an independent researcher. In this case, the NCAD member of staff will usually be designated as the primary supervisor and will be responsible for ensuring that you are aware of deadlines and other aspects of progression at NCAD. We also have an arrangement which allows for joint registration with UCD. In this arrangement the division of supervision roles will be agreed at the time of registration.

Occasionally, the supervision team may identify – in discussion with you - a need for specialist support which is not available at the College. In this case, the supervision team may approach a qualified person to be an external advisor. The role of the academic advisor will be to provide specialist insights and guidance into subjects and techniques needed for successful completion of the research. In such cases, the academic advisor will be invited to offer an agreed number of tutorials within an agreed timeframe (usually one academic year). They may also be invited to join the Research Studies Panel for the duration of your studies or for a shorter period.

4.2 Tutorials

FT students should meet their supervisors at least twice a trimester for a ‘formal’ tutorial.

PT students should meet their supervisors at least once a trimester for a ‘formal’ tutorial.

A ‘formal’ tutorial is distinguished from other forms of exchange and advice given to research students because it is recorded in a Tutorial Report Form ([here](#)). Other forms of contact with the supervisory team will take place but don’t need to be recorded in this way.

It is your responsibility to complete the Tutorial Report Form ([here](#)) after the tutorial and return it to your supervisors within 7 days. Both supervisors will then confirm the accuracy of this report. If they identify some part of the tutorial which has not been noted in your summary, they will ask you to add that material.

Copies of the forms relating to all formal tutorials will be kept on file and submitted by the supervisors along with the Research and Professional Development Plan (Report) prior to a meeting of the Research Studies Panel.

4.3 Changing supervisors

The process of application and interview is designed not only to test whether you have the right expertise and skills to undertake the project that you have proposed: it also confirms that NCAD has the right expertise to supervise you. Changes in supervision arrangements usually only occur when a member of staff leaves the College’s employment or in the case

of long-term illness. Nevertheless, if the research project changes focus over the life of the studentship, it can be appropriate to request a change of supervisor. In that instance, you should contact the Head of Department to discuss this matter.

The vast majority of research students have a productive and positive working relationship with their supervisors. But when significant disagreement or difficulty arises, you should also bring this matter to the attention to the Head of Department and/or the Head of School in which you are registered. If your supervisor is also the Head of Department or School, you should contact the Head of Academic Affairs and Research. We will endeavour to resolve any such issues promptly and fairly, ideally keeping the supervision team intact.

The complaints procedure is mapped out in NCAD's POSTGRADUATE POLICY & PROCEDURES [HERE](#).

4.4 Accredited learning

While a research degree is an independent programme of study, research students are required undertake taught accredited modules. These modules support the development of research and professional skills as well as understanding of themes and issues relating to the subject of their research.

- PhD students should undertake 30 credits of credited learning the first two years of registration (or equivalent in the case of PT students). Any credits already successfully achieved as an MRes student at NCAD can be counted towards the 30 credits;
- MLitt students should undertake 15 credits of credited learning in the first two years of registration (or equivalent in the case of PT students).

Successful completion of the research degree is not dependent on successful completion of these modules.

Specialist credit-bearing modules include:

- *Introduction to Research Methods* module (5 credits) offered to all postgraduate students.
- *Research Methods for Art and Design Research* (5 credits) offered to postgraduate learners via the Creative Futures Academy. In 2024-25 this module will be offered in the second half of the autumn trimester.
- *Art and Design Research Ethics* (5 credits) offered to postgraduate learners via the Creative Futures Academy. In 2024-25 this module will be offered in the first half of the spring trimester.

- *Creative Approaches to Archives* (5 credits) offered to postgraduate learners via the Creative Futures Academy. In 2024-25 this module will be offered in the first half of the spring trimester.
- *Writing For and As Research* (5 credits) offered to postgraduate learners via the Creative Futures Academy. In 2024-25 this module will be offered in the first half of the summer trimester.
- *Making Research Public- Event Organisation* (5 credits) – available when required and supported by mentoring.
- *Making Research Public- By Publication* (5 credits) – available when required and supported by mentoring.
- *Making Research Public- By Presentation* (5 credits) – available when required and supported by mentoring.
- *Proposal Writing* (5 credits) – available when required and supported by mentoring.
- Accredited ‘intensive’ courses offered in partnership with external bodies such as the CFA and IMMA summer school.

Further details of many of these modules can be found on the Programme Information page of the NCAD website [HERE](#).

Research students can also undertake credit-bearing modules offered as part of NCAD’s taught masters programmes (Art in the Contemporary World MA/MFA; Design History and Material Culture MA; Fine Art MFA; Communication Design MA; Design for Body & Environment MA; Medical Device Design MSc; Interaction Design MA; Product Design MA; Service Design MA; Professional Masters of Education and Design).

Students are not encouraged to take credit-bearing modules after the second year of registration (or the PT equivalent).

All doctoral and MLitt students are expected to achieve these credits. Students who do not wish to undertake credited modules can request exemption, typically through Recognised Prior Learning (RPL).

FT work conducted in the pursuit of research degrees is considered equivalent to 90 credits per year (1800 study hours). If you take a credit-bearing module, your core activity should be reduced accordingly. Modules should, ideally, only be undertaken which have a clear bearing on and value to your research.

Credits achieved will appear on transcripts provided by the College after the completion of your degree.

Students wishing to take any of the modules above should discuss their needs with their supervisors at the start of each academic year. Places are not guaranteed on particular modules. Modules can be taken outside the school in which the student is registered.

4.5 Research Integrity Training

All students are required to complete Epigeum Online Research Integrity Training. This is a free course adapted from a UK version to match the needs of Irish researchers. All NCAD students and staff have access to the online course. We strongly recommend that you take this course at the outset of your studies. Details of how to register and access the content are [here](#).

5 Progression

5.1 Work in progress presentations

Each spring, FT and PT research students at NCAD will make a formal presentation of recent work in a Work in Progress seminar. The audience for this event will be formed of peers (other research students) and your supervisors. NCAD will announce the date of this event in the autumn so that all research students can participate. It is a major point in the postgraduate year at NCAD.

An opportunity to present work in progress, students are encouraged to use this event to secure feedback from peers and staff prior to the completion of a body of work (such as a chapter or a design or art works). Ideally, this work will be completed prior to a meeting of the Research Studies Panel, so that a clear evaluation of the development of your work can be made at this meeting.

Students in the final year of study are not required to make a work in progress presentation, though you will be given the opportunity to do so should you wish.

5.2 Your Research Studies Panel

In addition to your supervisor/s (see above), you will also be supported by a Research Studies Panel.

The Research Studies Panel will be made up of

- The principal supervisor
- The co-supervisor (if relevant)
- A number of advisors (at least two but no more than four). These may include external members when the student is engaged in an inter-institutional programme of study. These external members will need to be approved by Academic Council.

The membership of this panel is agreed by the Academic Council of NCAD and cannot be changed without its agreement.

The role of the panel is to monitor the progress of your research and to support the tutor-student relationship. The members of the panel will be familiar with University regulations and policies pertaining to graduate research and its supervision: they may not necessarily have deep subject expertise your field of study. In the event of any difficulties in your studies that cannot be resolved by your supervisor/s, the Research Studies Panel may play an important supporting role.

The Research Studies Panel will support and advise you and your supervisor/s throughout the MRes. members may not necessarily have subject expertise in your field of study but will be experienced supervisors. It also is responsible for ensuring that your work is meeting the standards required for successful completion of your award.

The Research Studies Panel will meet at least once soon after the student begins their programme of study. The Research Studies Panel should meet to review progress on a regular basis: at least twice in the year in the case of a FT student and once every year in the case of PT student. Your supervisor will make the arrangements to schedule these meetings. Typically, the second meeting of the panel for PT and FT students will take place in the third trimester of the year.

Prior to meeting the Research Studies Panel, you are required to provide an update of work to date, as well as plans for the next phase of your studies. You will do this by completing / updating your Research and Professional Development Plan (Report) ([link here](#)) at least one week in advance of this event. Supervisors will be required to confirm the accuracy of your report and/or to note any discrepancies or missing information. They will then submit the report and tutorial report forms to the Research Studies Panel prior to the meeting.

Where the work undertaken in the previous year is insufficient or does not meet the standards required, the Research Studies Panel may set additional work to be completed and then reviewed by your supervisors before progression into the next phase of study is permitted. For instance, an Research Studies Panel meeting that takes place in June may set a deadline in September for this additional work.

The outcome of this event will be one of the following:

- i. You pass into the next phase of study.
- ii. You are set a piece of work which must be completed by a set date to be able to progress into the next phase of study. This referral must be completed to the satisfaction of the supervisors.
- iii. You do not progress.

Failure to progress will usually result from:

- i. Substantial underperformance in the course of the previous year.
- ii. Substantial failure to engage with the advice and direction supplied by supervisors.
- iii. Failure to engage with the referral task set following a meeting of the Research Studies Panel.

You will receive the decision of the panel and written feedback within 10 days of the meeting of the Research Studies Panel. The feedback will indicate clearly strengths, weaknesses, and recommended development tasks or strategies.

If progress in the final year of study is unsatisfactory, you will be advised not to proceed to final examination at that stage.

5.3 Stage Transfer Assessment (for PhD students only)

In the case of students who did not transfer from MRes to PhD studies but registered as PhD students from the outset of their studies at NCAD, the college operates a 'Stage Transfer Assessment' process within 5 trimesters of the date of registration for a full-time student and 7 trimesters for a part-time student.

This event is designed to provide an expert and detailed review of your studies to date and to instil confidence in the likely success of your doctoral studies.

The stage transfer involves a review of a detailed outline and samples of the student's work to date by an expert panel.

The Transfer Assessment Panel will be made up by three members of the academic staff who have the experience and disciplinary expertise to conduct this assessment. Typically, the panel will be chaired by the Head of Doctoral Studies at NCAD. Where NCAD does not have sufficient expertise, a suitably qualified external panel member can be appointed.

The Transfer Assessment Panel does not include your supervisors, though they will play a key role in supporting you to prepare the material required to transfer to doctoral studies. They will also provide a written progress report for the Transfer Assessment Panel to review.

The material required for Stage Transfer Assessment is.

- i. **A Research and Professional Development Plan (Stage Transfer / Transfer to PhD)** form ([here](#)) which makes clear and credible outline of the doctoral research to be undertaken (including a timeline of key stages in the path to completion).

The Research and Professional Development Plan will also need to make credible claims on originality and significance

- ii. Records of formal tutorials
- iii. A written progress report from the student's Principal Supervisor.
- iv. Examples of outputs which demonstrates the candidate's ability to work at the standard required for PhD.

In addition to this documentation, transfer involves a formal event at which the student presents their work to date and maps future research plans before the Transfer Assessment Panel. The Transfer Assessment Panel has a different make-up to the Research Studies Panel. The Transfer Assessment Panel will ask questions of the student. This event allows the Panel to test the potential of the topic and approach being proposed, as well as the readiness of the candidate.

The responsibility for scheduling this event lies with the Principal Supervisor.

6 Authorship and Research Ethics

6.1 Your profile on the College website

The College will promote your work through the research student pages on the www.ncad.ie website in the form of an abstract and a title. At meetings with your Research Studies Panel, you will be asked to confirm that your abstract and title are up-to-date.

Appearing on the College website in this way has various benefits: it can be used as evidence of your credentials as a researcher (for instance when requesting access to an archive) and it makes your work discoverable to other researchers. You can decide whether or not you would like your email contact details to appear on these pages.

6.2 Research Ethics

It is of utmost importance that researchers consider the potential impact of their proposed research.

When conducting research involving human participants, animals or using personal data, you may need to secure approval from NCAD's Research Ethics Committee.

NCAD's Research Ethics Committee is responsible for ensuring that all research conducted by staff and students during the course of their work and studies meets the highest ethical standards.

Your research should respect others by:

- Providing participants with sufficient information to make an informed decision as to whether to take part in research (informed consent). Informed consent is required of all research with human participants. Particular care needs to be taken with research involving children, young and other vulnerable persons.
- Ensuring that participants are not subject to coercion to take part and ensuring that they are, and are aware that they are, free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving an explanation or suffering any kind of penalty.
- Protecting and respecting personal data provided by participants through well designed and carefully employed procedures for confidentiality and anonymisation.

Your research should *avoid harm* by

- considering all possible risks that might be posed by your research, keeping in mind that certain harms, such as embarrassment or anxiety, can be subjective and difficult to anticipate.

Your research should be conducted with integrity and transparency by:

- declaring any conflict of interests to participants and to NCAD.
- sharing full information about the longer term uses and application of any research to participants and to NCAD.

You were asked at the time of the application to consider whether your research raises ethical concerns and whether your approach to these matters requires the scrutiny and approval of the College. It is important that you continue to reflect on your approach as your research develops. The Research and Professional Development Plan (Report) ([here](#)) prepared prior to meeting your Research Studies Panel requires that you announce and reflect on any ethical issues which may arise from any changes in research practice or new research plans.

When your supervisor advises that agreement must be sought from NCAD's Research Ethics Committee, you should complete the Research Ethics Declaration form (please contact Ally D'Astolfo in the Research Office for a copy - dastolfoa@staff.ncad.ie). This document should be given to your supervisor who will complete it and forward it to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research who will then convene a meeting of the Committee in as short a time as possible, preferably within two weeks, to consider the proposal. You should not undertake any of the research outlined on the form until you have been given formal approval.

6.3 Intellectual Property

Intellectual property rights (IP) are a matter of concern to NCAD because it is an educational institution that is fostering those who will develop into inventors, designers and creative artists, and employs persons who are already inventors, designers and creative artists. The purpose of the [NCAD Intellectual Policy and Procedures](#) documentation is to set out the principles relating to the ownership and exploitation of all Intellectual Property arising from the intellectual, design and artistic academic activities conducted within NCAD. The policy is intended to support the protection and exploitation of NCAD IP for the benefit of society whilst at the same time recognising and rewarding the originator(s) of the IP, NCAD itself and any sponsor to the work which led to the creation of the IP.

7 The Examination Process

7.1 Notification of Intention to submit

All research students need to notify the College that they are ready to present their work for examination. You should have completed your work (research, design and art practice, texts) and received final feedback from your supervisors at the time of notification.

The formal decision to proceed to submit for examination rests with the student, but you need to obtain the advice and support of your supervisor/supervisory team. A statement from the supervisor in support must be included with the [Intention to Submit Form](#).

MLitt / PhD students who wish to submit for examination in a given academic year must submit an [Intention to Submit Form](#) to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research by 1st March. This should allow sufficient time for the work to be assessed and, if successful, meet the autumn graduation schedule. Those failing to submit by this date will not be considered for examination until the following year.

If a student subsequently decides not to submit for examination, it is the responsibility of the Head of their Department/School to notify the Head of Academic Affairs & Research by 1st May for the June Exam Board or by 1st August for the September Exam Board.

PhD students who wish to submit for examination in a given academic year must submit and [Intention to Submit Form](#) to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research by 1st March for examination ahead of the September Exam Board, or by 1st September for examination ahead of the January Exam Board.

If a student subsequently decides not to submit for examination, this must be notified to the Head of Academic Affairs & Research by their Head of Department/School by 1st July for the September Exam Board, and by 1st December for the January Exam Board. There is an

exam board convened at the end of October for students of the MA Design History and Material Culture and the MA Art in the Contemporary World

Students who fail to submit their [Intention to Submit Form](#) by the closing date will not be able to submit until the following year and will be liable to pay fees as a continuing student.

7.2 Submission of work for assessment

Typically, work submitted for assessment will take these forms:

- MLitt – 35,000-40,000 word thesis
- PhD by thesis – 80,000-100,000 word thesis
- PhD by practice – body of agreed work plus 35,000-40,000 word textual component

All word counts above include the main body of the text and footnotes but not acknowledgements, captions, bibliographies, appendices etc. Students should not exceed or fall below the specified word counts. Work which exceeds or falls below these word counts will not be presented for examination.

In the case of 'by practice' research, students should discuss carefully and agree on the nature of the 'body of work' that they plan to submit for assessment with their supervisors in advance. This may take the form of artworks, designs, prototypes, documentation of process and techniques, exhibition documentation, and other forms of research. It may be important to demonstrate the progression and development of your research and so you may wish, for instance, to present a portfolio of captioned images. In this case, a 'portfolio' should not be regarded as the textual component and will not contribute to the word count specified above. In the case of 'by practice' research, the textual component should not take the form of a 'simple' narrative report outlining the development of the project, and needs to achieve the standards of originality, creativity and criticality required of the award. The format and ambition of the text should be discussed with the supervisors.

In the case of 'by practice' research, it is likely that students will need to present their work 'in situ' for examination. In that case, the student will be supported by the School/department to find a suitable setting for the display of their work. This may be on site at NCAD or, by agreement, elsewhere. Consideration must be given to the ease of access of the examination panel.

7.3 Presentation

Unless agreed with the supervisors, all text submissions must conform to the College's style guide. The Harvard System is employed across the College for all written submissions. Further details are provided by the Edward Murphy Library team [here](#).

The format of any artworks or designs presented for examination will be agreed with the supervisors in advance. These may include preparatory materials and prototypes as well as completed works. Please note that your examiners will need to access your work prior to visiting the college for the purposes of examination and so careful thought should be given to the nature of the documentation that they will receive. On the day of the viva it may be appropriate that the examiners experience the artworks or designs on site – further details of these arrangements are outlined below.

7.4 Submitting material for examination

Three ‘hard’ copies of all materials that will be sent to your examiners should be submitted to the School office. These should take the form of soft-bound hard copies (spiral bound print outs). In addition, digital copies of this material should be submitted to the School Secretary at the same time. These materials must be submitted by the student to the School on or before a date agreed with supervisor(s).

7.5 The Role of Examiners

The assessment of your work will be undertaken by an external examiner (i.e. an academic with subject expertise and experience of examining elsewhere) and an internal examiner (i.e. a member of the teaching staff at NCAD). Academic staff at University College Dublin (UCD) can act as internal examiners. In exceptional cases, two external examiners may be appointed. Such circumstances may include assessment of research undertaken by a member of staff at NCAD or in the case of interdisciplinary research where different fields are being investigated.

Your supervisors are not involved in the assessment of your work.

The selection of the external examiner/s is made by your supervisors in conjunction with the Head of Academic Affairs and Research. The appointment is made by the College on the recommendation of your supervisors.

You will be invited to offer opinions of suitable examiners and to confirm that you do not have any prior relationship with the person/s being proposed. It is important that you have not had a working or personal relationship with your examiners. They should not be someone that you have interviewed or sought advice from during the course of your studies, for instance. By contrast, speaking alongside a proposed examiner at a conference does not constitute a conflict of interest.

The external examiner should not be someone with recent and/or close professional relations with NCAD, for instance as a result of teaching on one of our programmes.

The external examiner/s will have subject expertise, demonstrable experience of research and, in most cases, prior experience of examination of work by other research students in

other institutions. When an external examiner lacks the latter, the internal examiner will need to have considerable experience as an examiner.

The examiners will be sent copies of your work in advance. This may take the form of a thesis and, in the case of 'by practice' research, other forms of documentation. If your work needs to be experienced in situ (in the case of art works or designs for instance), you will be asked to prepare a display of your work for the examiners to review in person prior to the start of a viva voce examination - usually on the same day.

In the case of research projects which are 'site specific' such as an exhibition, examiners can be invited to review the work in advance of and on a separate day from the viva voce examination. This invitation must be made by a representative of the institution and not the student.

Students are not allowed to contact their examiners prior to or after the examination of their work while corrections / revisions are still being made (see below).

8 Examination

Research submitted for examination is assessed by Viva Voce examination in which the examiners question the student, after having had the opportunity to review the work being assessed independently.

8.1 Viva Voce Examination - Preparation

Prior to the Viva Voce Examination, your supervisor will organise a 'mock viva'. This is a chance to rehearse the kinds of questions you may be asked and your answers. This event is not recorded and plays no formal role in the assessment process.

Prior to the examination proper, you should review your work thoroughly so that you can answer the examiners' questions with confidence. You should not conduct new research – your work is being examined, not you.

8.2 The Viva Voce Examination

The viva will typically take place on site at NCAD. In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Head of Academic Affairs and Research, it can be conducted remotely through Skype / Zoom or at another venue.

Prior to the viva voce examination, each examiner is required to write a short report in which s/he expresses the merits of the work presented for examination against what they understand to be the standard of achievement of comparable works. The purpose of this prior report is to ensure that each examiner has come to a clear understanding and opinion of the work being examined independently. These reports are not shared with the student.

Prior to the start of the viva voce examination, the examiners will share reports with each other (but not with the candidate) and decide on the areas of your work that they wish to discuss with you. These are likely to involve the following:

- the 'design' and / or parameters of your project;
- your methodology / approach to research;
- the originality of your work in relation to other research in the field;
- its likely application or publication.

The viva voce examination panel will be formed by two examiners and a Chair. The role of the Chair is to ensure that the questions are clear and fair, that the event runs to time, and that the result is clearly communicated at the end of the examination. The Chair will not ask questions to test you or your work. Usually, one of the examiners will be an employee of NCAD or UCD and the other will be 'external' to these institutions.

Your supervisor/s may attend but cannot participate in the discussion. Very occasionally, supervisor/s may be asked to clarify an issue raised by the examiners. They will also sit out of your sightline. Usually, they will take notes – a useful function if you are set any revisions.

Typically, a viva voce examination will last between 1 and 2 hours. If the examination runs for more than 90 mins, the chair will offer a short break.

The purpose of the viva voce examination is to test the work that you have presented for examination and not to test your knowledge of other fields or matters. 'Poor' performance in a viva cannot affect the result of the examination negatively. But 'good' performance can confirm the quality of your research or the nature of the contribution to knowledge that you've made.

8.3 The Viva Voce Examination – the option to make a presentation

You may elect to use the first 10 minutes of the event to introduce your work. This can be particularly helpful in the case of 'by practice' research where the work being assessed may not be immediately evident. A 10-minute introduction can, for instance, be an opportunity to explain the sequence of development of various projects. It is important that you don't exceed 10 mins and the chair will ask you to end if you overrun.

An introduction of this kind is not mandatory and in fact, may not benefit 'by thesis' research where a brief summary may seem like an unnecessarily reduced version of a rich and complex text.

If you wish to introduce your work, it is important that your supervisors know in advance so that this can be communicated to the chair of the examination.

8.4 The Viva Voce Examination – the result

After the examiners have asked their questions, you will typically be given a chance to draw attention to themes which you feel have not been addressed. After that, you – and your supervisor/s - will be asked to leave the room.

The examiners will then decide on the result. Their deliberations may take up to an hour. After that, you will be invited to return to the room in which the viva has taken place to hear the result. Typically, the result will be delivered orally and a written summary will be supplied by the chair after the event.

When the examination is complete, the examiners shall recommend one of the following outcomes:

- That you are awarded the degree.
- That the degree should be awarded subject to minor corrections being made, or to an additional assignment being completed to the satisfaction of the internal examiner within three months of the oral examination.
- That the candidate should revise and resubmit the thesis and/or other elements of the work, under supervision, within the period of one year. This is sometimes called major revisions.
- That the degree should not be awarded and no resubmission permitted.

Following the announcement of the result, the examiners complete a report which indicates the reasons for their assessment. You are entitled to a copy.

In the case of major revisions, the examiners are likely to set conditions and recommendations. Conditions are requirements for improvements, revisions or additions to be made to the work being submitted for the award in order to pass. Recommendations are changes that the panel believe will significantly improve the work but are not mandatory.

In the event of being uncertain about what is required to make the corrections / revisions, you should consult your supervisors. You should not contact the chair or the examiners directly.

In the event of being required to undertake minor corrections or major revisions, you should supply two copies of the revised work by date set by the panel.

If you are set major revisions, you will be registered as a non-fee paying student and will have access - by agreement - to NCAD resources needed in order to complete the work including The Edward Murphy Library.

On successful completion, a copy of the work will be kept by your School and another kept by The Edward Murphy Library where it will be available to all researchers. The work can be read there but not copied. An embargo can also be placed on public access if, for instance, the research is likely to be exploited commercially or if a publisher has requested an exclusive right of publication or if the thesis contains material which is of a sensitive nature. Nevertheless, it will be assumed that the work is available for public access in the library unless agreed otherwise by the Research Committee at the request of the student.

9 Key Contacts at NCAD

Dr Declan Long, Head of Doctoral Studies – longd@staff.ncad.ie

Dr Siún Hanrahan, Head of Academic Affairs and Research – hanrahans@staff.ncad.ie

[The Edward Murphy Library](#)

[Learning Support](#)

[IT Support Helpdesk](#)

[Academic and Student Affairs](#)