INTRODUCTION

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Overview of Postgraduate Research Degrees at RCSI

RCSI offers research degrees at level 9 and level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The award of MSc and MCh is made at level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ); this is equivalent to level 7 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and is Bologna second cycle compliant. The award of PhD and MD is made at level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ); this is equivalent to level 8 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and is Bologna third cycle compliant.

Research degrees are accredited jointly by RCSI and NUI and are awarded without classification.

The document that follows describes regulations for the conduct of research degrees at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 9 (MSc & MCh) and level 10 (MD & PhD) at RCSI.

The regulations apply to all research scholars registered at RCSI. These regulations apply whether the scholar is full time or part time and regardless of the regulations of any associated / collaborating institution involved in the project. PhD and MD scholars must be examined by thesis and by viva voce examination. Viva voce examinations must take place in RCSI Dublin Campus while all parts of the examination being present in the same physical location. These examinations must be conducted in the presence of an independent chairperson.

Any deviation from these regulations may only be considered in exceptional circumstances and must be agreed in writing by the Head of School of Postgraduate Studies, Dublin. This school is the RCSI facilitator for the examination processes for all PhD and MD awards and for all research MSc and MCh examinations.

All students, including students returning to their programme following a leave of absence or withdrawal, are governed by the Academic Regulations in place in the academic session they re-register.

1.2 Definition of Research Degree

A research degree is defined as a higher degree awarded following the completion and successful examination of a thesis that describes a substantial body of original research. The research must make a distinct contribution to the field of study, must be publishable in peer-reviewed journals and must have been conducted according to ethical guidelines. The thesis must be presented to a professional standard and according to published guidelines and must demonstrate the originality of the research, the scholar’s knowledge of the field and evidence of critical judgement. PhD/MD awards also require the successful examination of a scholar in a viva voce examination. Level 9 awards may, in certain circumstances, also require a viva voce examination.

A successful research award requires scholars to produce a large volume of work and acquire all appropriate skills as defined by the National Framework of Qualifications document. These skills and knowledge must be at the forefront of a field of learning and scholars should be sufficiently competent to provide leadership in their field of learning.

The following are essential elements in the definition of a research degree:

» Ethical research: if the thesis includes information relating to humans or animals, including biological samples or data, full Research Ethics Committee approval must have been obtained in order for the work to have been completed. A statement to this effect must be included in the thesis.

» Originality: the scholar must have demonstrated an ability to conduct an original research investigation and to test a hypothesis, preferably their own.

» Knowledge of the field: the scholar must be able to connect their research hypothesis and theme to wider knowledge of the subject and they must demonstrate their familiarity with relevant published work on the topic.

» Publication: the material in the thesis should be suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed, high impact journal relevant to the thesis topic. While it is preferable for the scholar to have published work from the thesis, it is not essential to do this in order to be successful in the examination; however, the work presented must be publishable.

» Presentation: the thesis must be written clearly and concisely and must follow standard scientific format. The normal length of an MSc/MCh thesis is 50,000 to 60,000 words excluding tables, figures, appendices and references, and the normal length of a PhD/MD thesis is 80,000 to 100,000 words excluding tables, figures, appendices and references.

» Examination: for an MSc/MCh award, the scholar must be examined by written thesis examination on the thesis topic and the examination outcome must be successful. For a PhD/MD award, the scholar must be examined by written thesis and in a viva voce examination on the thesis topic (and related subjects) and the examination outcome must be successful. The final award of the degree is dependent on success in the viva voce examination and submission of an approved written thesis.

1.3 Governance and Management of Research Degree Programmes leading to Major Awards

The school responsible for postgraduate research scholars is the School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). The SPGS manages the administration, training, mentorship, progress review, and examination of all research postgraduate scholars, including PhD, MD, MSc (Research) and MCh. (Research). Scholars will also be aligned with their host department, institute or school.

All issues associated with the approval of programme-related matters are first brought to the SPGS Committee. The SPGS Committee meets every 2 months and decides on all matters relating to scholar registration, the annual review process, scholar performance and progression, approval of nominated reviewers & examiners, and facilitates the development of new educational modules/workshops for postgraduate scholars.

There are two Committees that report to the SPGS Committee:

1. Academic Review Committee (ARC). The ARC meets every month to approve new scholars, nominated supervisors and annual reviewers. It is also responsible for ensuring quality in the Annual Review Reports.

2. Postgraduate Programmes Management Committee (PPMC). The PPCM is responsible for ensuring the effective day-to-day governance and consistency of quality of taught postgraduate programmes and awards aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) under the direction of the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences (FHMS).

The SPGS Committee reports to the RCSI Academic Council.

» Academic Council (AC). The Academic Council is responsible for the implementation of policy which is determined by the Medicine and Health Sciences Board (MHSB). It addresses all matters concerning the administration of RCSI’s Irish and International Schools. This includes student admissions, assessment, progression and welfare in all degree level programmes, curricula and learning technology, research activities, and academic staff appointments and promotions. The Academic Council meets monthly throughout the academic year and reports to the MHSB.

» Medicine and Health Sciences Board (MHSB). MHSB is the governing body responsible for all degree-awarding educational activities of RCSI. Its principal members are the CEO, the President of the College, the Dean of Medicine and Heads of various departments and schools.

See Appendix, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
See Reference 1: Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities
See Reference 4: European Qualifications Framework
See Reference 2: Standards for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in Europe
ENTRY

2. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

2.1 General overview

The recruitment/registration process for prospective scholars has three phases. Initially, the scholar finds a project of interest using the RCSI website, and submits an expression of interest by emailing the supervisor directly (Phase 1). Next, the supervisor interviews the scholar and if the supervisor agrees to undertake supervision of the scholar, at least one co-supervisor is appointed (Phase 2). The supervisor and co-supervisor will then assist the scholar to complete a project proposal (the forms can be found under the ‘register’ tab online). They must also nominate annual reviewers. The scholar submits the project proposal as part of the application procedure. This is reviewed by the Academic Review Committee (ARC) which looks at the planned depth of engagement with the research topic, the feasibility of the work, and the available resources to complete the work. To ensure the highest standards are set with all postgraduate research projects at RCSI, ARC may seek additional clarification or request that additional work packages are modified. Finally, the scholar uses the Apply Online portal to submit their project proposal plan and the programme application forms (Phase 3). After confirming that all required documentation has been received, and that the supervisor has agreed to supervise the scholar, this information is then reviewed by the ARC committee who approve the scholar’s registration. Finally, the scholar is able to ‘confirm place’ online using the student record information online system (Quercus).

2.2 Finding a project (Phase 1)

Postgraduate Research (PGR) scholars are expected to find suitable supervisors from the information available on the RCSI website, and should not contact the SPGS office directly. Only Scholars seeking to apply for the SPHeRE, Dilimun or StAR programmes should contact the SPGS office. Available sources of information include:
- RCSI website projects page (current projects)6.
- RCSI researcher list online8.

2.3 Expressing interest in a project (Phase 1)

PGR scholars must apply to the supervisors directly, unless specifically advised otherwise (e.g. SPHeRE).

2.4 Scholar selection by the supervisor (Phase 2)

Most PGR scholars will be selected by their potential supervisor, after an interview process. The exception is programme-funded PhDs/MDs where a selection panel shortlists and interviews the scholars.

2.5 Application using Apply Online (Phase 3)

To register as a scholar at RCSI, the scholar needs to register for a specific programme using Quercus’ ‘Apply Online’ System. Only PGR scholars who have already been selected by an RCSI supervisor (or admitted onto a specific PhD Programme) should use this system.

The application must include the details of the proposed research project. Applicants must complete a Research Project Proposal10 and upload it to their online application. Before accessing the Online Application system10 it is important that the scholar read the Privacy Statement12 and Terms of Use. Instructions for completing and submitting an online application are here10.

Once submitted, the Application is checked to ensure that all required documentation has been received. The Supervisor is contacted by the SPGS office to confirm that they have agreed to supervise the scholar. The scholar’s application then goes to the Academic Review Committee for approval. Once approved, the scholar is informed by email that they have been accepted onto their programme and that they must then register online.

» Documents needed:
- Research proposal (template found on the RCSI website, PDF)
- Passport-sized photograph (PNG/JPEG/TIFF)
- Evidence of qualifications (transcripts, PDF)
- Curriculum Vitae (recent, PDF)
- Evidence of competency in English (unless eligible for exemption - go here for details, PDF)

NOTE: please save all documents as PDF and upload PDF only (except portrait picture).

NOTE: all non-EU scholars will need a valid study visa before arriving in Ireland. It is the scholar’s responsibility to organise their own visa from the INIS.

The RCSI Quercus online application process uses dedicated URLs to direct scholars to the specific section they need. The scholar will need to choose between the April or October cohorts, based on the month in which they are applying.

April cohort May to October
October cohort November to April

2.6 Fees

Scholar fees policies are directed by the Fees Office, and thus supersede any policies described here11.

* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/research-courses/director-of-philosophy/register
* PGR scholar on-boarding workflow is on Moodle – SPGS section (Appendix)
* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/research-fees/
* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/postgraduate-fees-policy
* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/research-courses/director-of-philosophy/register
* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/postgraduate-research/doctor-of-philosophy/register
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* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/research-courses/director-of-philosophy/register
* https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/postgraduate-fees-policy
ENTRY

3. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOLARS

3.1 Academic requirements

» PhD: In order to apply to register for a PhD at RCSI, scholars must have obtained at least an upper second class (2:1) honours degree (NFQ level 8) in a relevant subject.
» MD/MCh: In order to apply to register for an MD at RCSI, scholars must have obtained the degree of MB BCh BAO and must be eligible for full registration as a medical doctor with the Irish Medical Council. For award of the degree, a period of at least three years must have elapsed from the time the scholar obtained the above degrees. Scholars must also have completed their internship.
» MSc: In order to apply to register for an MSc at RCSI, scholars must have obtained at least a lower second class (2:2) honours degree in a relevant subject.
» All PGR Courses: All Scholars must also have an RCSI supervisor(s) with whom they have agreed the topic for their thesis and the logistical details for their project, for example start date, location for initial research training, funding, and the remit of each supervisor. (See section 10 for PhD supervisor eligibility criteria. A co-supervisor (who may be outside RCSI) must be on the supervisory team.

3.2 English Language Requirements for all Research Degrees

» English language competency: There are English language requirements for international students who do not have English as their first language. All PGR scholars at RCSI are expected to be able to write, read and understand academic English. IELTS (Academic) or equivalent English language test scores, for both written and spoken English, are accepted (e.g. TOEFL, Cambridge, etc.). An IELTS score of 7.0 is desirable, but scores > 6.5 are acceptable. The test must be aimed at academic professionals (e.g. IELTS (Academic) or English Test for Academic and Professional Purposes (ETAPP)). We do not accept tests that enable completion of the thesis work).

3.3 Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is defined as the process by which prior learning is given a value. It is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged (NQA, 2005).

RPL involves the assessment of knowledge, skills and competence previously acquired. Learning occurs in many contexts which include work, involvement in social and community activities, or learning through life experience generally. RPL does not give credit for experience as such; rather it considers the learning that was acquired as a result of the experience.

In RCSI, and in accordance with NUI guidance (2013), RPL may be used to gain:

Admission to courses/programmes where a person may not have obtained the standard entry requirements

Exemptions from course modules which duplicate the learning outcomes an individual has already demonstrably acquired through prior learning

Advanced entry into a programme of study (i.e. into Year 2 or Year 3) /transfer between programmes where normal entry would duplicate the learning outcomes an individual has already demonstrably acquired through prior learning

If you believe that you qualify for RPL, you must first contact the programme director or Head of School to discuss why you believe you qualify. If the programme director or Head of School agrees, you will need to submit an online application for your chosen programme.

Once you have applied, you will need to complete an RPL supplemental application form, details on this form will be sent to you after you submit an online application for your chosen programme. Additional RPL policies are available online (www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/recognition-of-prior-learning).

3.4 Transferring from another Third Level Institute

Occasionally scholars transfer into RCSI from other institutions. This could occur when a supervisor/principal investigator (PI) becomes employed by RCSI and transfers their research grant and scholars; or the scholar themselves may request a transfer.

In the case of PI employment and transfer of scholars into RCSI the scholar must:

a. Provide an Academic Transcript from the originating institute that includes details about the modules/programmes the scholar completed, and the respective grades. It should also include the start and end dates of the scholar’s registration, and thus the number of years the scholar was on the register.
b. Follow the standard ‘Apply Online’ application process which captures all their details.

c. In the case of a scholar spontaneously deciding to move their PhD to RCSI from another Higher Education Institute (HEI), the process is:

a. The scholar finds a supervisor from the researcher list. The scholar and supervisor decide on a project together, the scholar then writes a project plan. For recognition of time spent on the project in the previous university, the project must be a continuation of the initial thesis work. The previous institution’s supervisors must be in agreement that the project can move to RCSI, else a new project must be initiated with no compensation for previous registration time, in which case the scholar will register for year 1 of their programme.

b. The scholar uses the Apply Online system to register their details, which includes uploading their CV, a project plan, and certified proof of English competency (where necessary). In addition the scholar should also upload PDF copies of a letter from their new supervisor stating their willingness to supervise the scholar, two references, a transcript from the originating HEI showing registration start and end dates, and a letter confirming the funding that they are receiving.

c. The prospective scholar should also separately notify the School of Postgraduate Studies by email of their intention to transfer. The SPGS then organises a review panel which will comprise 2 independent RCSI researchers within the broad research area and a senior member of the SPGS. The panel will convene a meeting with the scholar to review their eligibility for the programme. Their recommendations will be submitted to the Academic Review Committee. d. ARC will then review the application and all supporting documentation. They can decide to approve the application, ask for additional documentation, or reject the application.

3.5 Registration to multiple awards concurrently

RCSI does not allow scholars to register for more than one major award simultaneously.

In some cases the research degree may include a taught component as part of the main award which may result in a final certificate/diploma being awarded in conjunction with the full Level 9/10 degree. However this is only valid if:

a. the certificate/diploma does not add an excessive workload for the scholar (i.e. < 30 ECTS credits over the duration of the Level 9/10 degree), or

b. the taught components are relevant to their current research work (i.e. capacity building to enable completion of the thesis work).

3.6 Retrospective registration

RCSI does not allow retrospective registration for any postgraduate research degrees.

3.7 Continued registration

All PGR students will need to successfully complete the Annual Progress Review (see section 9) for admission into the next years register. Consecutive registration is compulsory. Each year scholars will be invited to register online for the following year:

Students who are asked to repeat the review in 6 month’s time will remain on the previous years’ register, with fees charged accordingly. After a successful re-submission and repeated mini-viva, students will be transferred to the next years’ register, without additional fees being incurred.

Students who do not pass the second annual review will be asked to submit an MSc thesis before leaving at the end of the repeated registration of the first year.

https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements

https://www.rcsi.com/people

postgraduate.housing@rcsi.ie

10 https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements
ENTRY

3. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOLARS

- PhD students who do not have the support of their supervisors after the first year will be asked to either (i) find a new supervisor within RCSI who is willing to take over supervision, or (ii) write up an MSc thesis over the next year (provided the laboratory and supervisory support is in place), or (iii) asked to leave RCSI at the end of the first year. Students may appeal this decision using the standard appeals process as directed by the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Department (SARA), forms in moodle.

4. REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

4.1 PhD

- Scholars (scholars) must register online using the ‘Confirm Place’ function in Quercus, and pay fees each year until they submit their thesis.

- Full-time PhD scholars are allowed a minimum of three years and a maximum of six years from initial registration to complete their award. Part-time scholars are allowed a minimum of five years and a maximum of eight years from initial registration to complete their award. Scholars who exceed the maximum registration period must reapply for registration.

- All full-time scholars must submit annual written reports and present their work in an oral presentation and interview (mini-viva). Part-time scholars submit and present their work on a biennial basis (every two years). Progress is reviewed by two independent staff members who decide on the continued registration of each scholar. Scholars can only progress in their PhD after a satisfactory progress assessment. For full-time scholars this will be at the end of the probationary first year. For part-time scholars the first two years are probationary.

4.2 MD

- Scholars must register online and pay fees each year until they submit their thesis.

- Full-time MD scholars attend and carry out research under appropriate RCSI supervision for a minimum of two years full time and a maximum of four years from initial registration. Part-time scholars are allowed a minimum of four years and a maximum of eight years from initial registration to complete their degree. Scholars who exceed the maximum registration period must reapply for registration.

- All full-time scholars submit annual written reports and present their work in an oral presentation and interview (mini-viva). Part-time scholars submit and present their work on a biennial basis. Progress is reviewed by two independent staff members who decide whether the scholar can progress to the next year of their studies. Scholars can only progress in their MD if a satisfactory progress assessment at the end of the probationary first year. For part-time scholars the first two years are probationary.

4.3 MSc (Research) and MCh (Research)

- Scholars must register online and pay fees each year until they submit their thesis.

- Full-time MSc/MCh scholars attend and carry out research under appropriate RCSI supervision for a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years from initial registration. Part-time scholars are allowed a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years from initial registration to complete their award. Scholars who exceed the maximum registration period must reapply for registration.

4.4 Transferring between Research Degrees

Applications to transfer between research degrees can only be submitted after a scholar has been fully registered on their original programme for a minimum of one year. Scholars can only transfer once a year when they are due to register (either October or April).

- Scholars wishing to transfer from a level 9 to a level 10 degree must first meet the minimum entry requirements for the level 10 programme. For instance, a research MSc scholar with a 2:2 undergraduate degree will need to complete their MSc before they can apply for a PhD, as the minimum requirement for entry into the PhD programme is a 2:1 degree or a completed MSc degree (or equivalent). In addition, scholars wishing to transfer to a level ten programme or from the MD to the PhD programme must have a research publication complete at the time of the transfer request.

- Provided they meet the minimum entry requirements, they must then complete a Transfer Request Form and undergo an interview. The interview is usually at the end of the year and replaces the mini-viva. Both reviewers must be independent of the supervisory team and have been awarded a PhD, else an additional chairperson (who has been awarded a PhD) will need to be included in the interview panel. The Transfer Request must also be completed by the Supervisor and submitted to the SPGS. The Supervisor may also be asked to attend an interview.

- The Transfer Request will then be considered by the SPGS Committee. If the Transfer request is accepted by the SPGS Committee, when the scholar is due to register for their next academic session, they will be transferred to the appropriate programme, at the appropriate stage. Transfers cannot happen during an academic session, but the application/review/approval process needs to be completed before the end of the current academic session.

- Scholars are advised that they will be liable for any differences in fees between the programmes, backdated for the years that they claim towards their final degree (i.e. if an MD scholar who completes two years on the MD programme wishes to transfer to the 3rd year on the PhD programme, they will be liable for the difference in fees for the PhD programme for the first 2 years). PhD fees are not refunded if a scholar transfers to an MD, MSc or MCh. MD fees are not refunded if the scholar transfers to an MSc or MCh.

4.5 Leave of Absence

- All Research scholars are expected to maintain continuous registration for the duration of their studies. However, RCSI recognizes that unforeseen circumstances can arise which affect a scholar’s ability to complete their studies. In line with the College Leave of Absence policy, scholars may request a formal Leave of Absence.

- For Research scholars a formal Leave of Absence can only be granted where there are specific documented circumstances and will only be granted up to the end of the current academic year. A Leave of Absence means that scholars can return to their studies.

- Fees will not be charged for the months that the scholar is absent, if that Leave of Absence has been approved by the SPGS committee. Failure to seek and gain approval from the SPGS committee will result in fees being charged as per stated registration time.
All PhD and intercollated MSc scholars at RCSI must complete 4 core modules during their programme, while MD/MSc/MCh scholars need only complete the ethics module. These modules are designed to help scholars acquire the necessary skills to allow them to successfully complete their research projects. They are:

- **Postgraduate Essentials (2.5 ECTS, PC01)**
- **Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills (2.5 ECTS, PC03)**
- **Biostatistics for Research Postgraduates (5 ECTS, PC02)**
- **Research Ethics and Integrity (5 ECTS, PC04)**

These four core modules equate to a total of 15 ECTS credits. The ECTS credits are awarded upon successful completion of the modules and the associated assessment.

### 5.1 Module

A module is a self-contained unit of learning, teaching and assessment. It has a set of learning outcomes which are assessed. Assessment is based on both a final examination and engagement with either face-to-face lectures/workshops or online content and forums.

### 5.2 ECTS

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is a system for accumulating credit for learning so that the learning is transferrable. ECTS credits represent the volume of learning based on defined learning outcomes and associated workload. The ECTS was developed to facilitate educational mobility for students and inter-institutional co-operation amongst higher education institutions within the European Union. In RCSI, one ECTS credit represents 25-30 hours of total student effort. Student effort includes all lecture, tutorial, seminar and laboratory contact hours, all work required on assignments and projects, time spent in independent study or research, time spent revising for and completing assessments and any additional time and effort expected of a student enrolled to that module.

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**Core Modules per Course**

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**Notes:**
- PhD
- MD
- MSc
- MCh
- iMSc

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PROGRESSION

6. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH PRACTICES (TAUGHT COMPONENT)
PhD Scholars who are withdrawing from their research programme before completion, who wish to exit with the Professional Certificate in Research Practices qualification will need to complete a further 5 ECTS credits worth of optional taught modules. Scholars who wish to receive the Professional Certificate in Research Practices as well as their research award will have to complete the four core modules plus a further 20 ECTS. MD/MSc/MCh scholars must complete the four core modules and 1-2 additional modules the equate to at least 5 etcs credits. The list of optional modules is available on the SPGS Moodle page.

7. ALLOCATED RESEARCH TIME
It is imperative that sufficient dedicated research time is allocated to the scholar to complete their research in a timely manner. This involves reduced workload (e.g. demonstrating), and a limit being set on non-theis related clinical work.
7.1 Programme Duration (years)

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<th>PT Min</th>
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<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>3 (or 4)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>MCh</td>
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- Additional employment should not disrupt the scholars’ ability to perform their research. Full-time PGR scholars should not, therefore, be employed by RCSI for more than an average of 6 hours per week over the course of the year.

7.2 Annual Leave
- As a general rule, research scholars should be allowed 25 days of annual leave. Most scholars are ‘employed’ on state funded scholarships, and thus have an obligation to commit to their research. Annual leave needs to be negotiated directly with the supervisor(s).
- Exceptions include contractual agreements between scholars and the hospital/institute that employs them. Those contractual agreements supersede these guidelines.

8. GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE
RCSI aspires to the highest standard of research and does its utmost to foster a dynamic, ethical and healthy research environment. In turn, RCSI demands equally high standards of conduct from its scholars. It has therefore produced a set of guidelines to which scholars must adhere.
8.1 Guidelines on Good Research Practice
The “Guidelines on Good Research Practice” can be found on the college website and scholars should familiarise themselves with it. Areas outlined in the “Guidelines on Good Research Practice” include:
  - Integrity in the workplace
  - Openness and dissemination of results
  - Legal requirements
  - Research standards
  - Supervision and training
  - Maintenance of records and disposal of data
  - Ethical practice
  - Publication

8.2 Research Misconduct
Breaches of the “Guidelines on Good Research Practice” may be considered “Research Misconduct.” To this end, the college has produced a document, “RCSI Statement on the Handling of Allegations of Research Misconduct,” and scholars should familiarise themselves with it. Procedures have been put in place to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they transpire.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS
9.1 Purpose
The purpose of the annual review is to prove that the scholar is making sufficient progress in their research and is receiving adequate support to complete their research. The review involves a report that documents the hypothesis being tested, the approach planned, the work carried out to date, relevant results and discussion, plus a vision for future direction of the project. Learning to write concisely and clearly is a critical part of research training, therefore there is a page limit for this report.

9.2 Annual Review Process
The process takes the form of a mini-viva that mirrors PhD/MD/viva voce examinations.
  - Each scholar writes a substantial report on their research project in compliance with the guidelines.
  - Numerous formats are now available to scholars. In the penultimate year, scholars are asked to submit a Thesis Completion Plan to the School of Postgraduate Studies (postgraduateschool@rcsi.ie) instead of the report.
  - Supervisors nominate two appropriate reviewers (one of these reviewers could potentially become the internal examiner for the thesis).
  - The criteria for an Annual Reviewer is:
    - Must be RCSI academic staff (including honorary).
    - Must be qualified to at least the level of the award the scholar is completing.
    - Must be independent of the scholar’s project.
    - Must be sufficiently knowledgeable of the field, but independent of the supervisors.
    - After reading the report, the review panel meets the scholar to conduct a mini-viva voce.
  - Format of the mini-viva voce:
    - The scholar presents a brief PowerPoint presentation summary of their work (10 minutes max).
    - This is followed by questions from the review panel on various aspects of their project and future plans for the project.

8.3 Acknowledge RCSI in Publications
While a registered research scholar in RCSI you must acknowledge RCSI in any publications arising from your research.
  - The words “Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland” must always be listed in your address and in the contact details of your research publications.

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES
PROGRESSION

9. ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS (CONT’).

9.3 Deadlines.

Deadlines for the annual review process are set to take account of registration requirements for the next Academic Year, and are thus divided by the April or October registration cohorts.

- April registered scholars.
  - Supervisors submit reviewer nominations by the last Friday in January by completing the online form. While both reviewers can be from RCSI, a second reviewer may be selected from another Irish university depending on the collaborative nature of the project and/or expertise required to review progress. Any expenses incurred in inviting external reviewers must be paid by the supervisor. Annual reviews may be conducted via Skype where necessary.
  - Scholars upload their report (one single PDF file with the scholar’s full name as the filename) using the moodle based annual review process by the 3rd Friday in March.
  - Supervisors convene the progress review meeting using the Moodle based Annual Review Process and reviewers submit their written reports within the Moodle plugin by 4th Friday in April.

- October registered scholars.
  - Supervisors submit reviewer nominations by the 1st Friday in June, using the online form. While both reviewers can be from RCSI, a second reviewer may be selected from another Irish university depending on the collaborative nature of the project and/or expertise required to review progress. Any expenses incurred in inviting external reviewers must be paid by the supervisor. Annual reviews may be conducted via Skype where necessary.
  - Scholars submit the report (one single PDF file with scholar’s full name as the filename) using the moodle based annual review process by the last Wednesday in July.
  - Supervisors convene the progress review meeting and reviewers submit their written reports using the moodle based annual review process by the 2nd Wednesday in September.
  - Reviewers are asked to come to a unanimous decision regarding the progression of the scholar to the next academic session. The reviewers have three options:
    - “Progress” – the scholar is pre-registered to the next academic session of the programme and is eligible to submit their thesis after the minimum registration time.
    - “Do not progress – repeat in 6 months” – the scholar is asked to repeat the annual progress review report and mini-viva in up to 6 months time. They are not eligible to submit their thesis for examination until after at least one successful review.
    - “Do not progress – exit” – the scholar is not eligible to submit their thesis for examination and is not given an opportunity to repeat the annual review. For scholars on a level 10 NFQ programme, there may be the option to write a report and mini-viva and so on.

10. SUPERVISOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1 Supervisor eligibility criteria

The Irish quality assurance body QQI have issued a guideline document that sets out the key criteria for quality assurance in postgraduate research degrees. This states that scholars should be supervised by: “…by a researcher/s, qualified at least at the level of the award, with demonstrated ability to make original contributions to the relevant field”.

SPGS have thus been charged with implementing the national guidelines for quality assurance in postgraduate research education at RCSI, which includes the approval of PGR supervisors. Therefore the supervisor team must:

- Hold a postgraduate research degree of the same or higher qualification than the one the scholar is studying for, or an appropriate professional qualification.
- Hold an academic position within RCSI for at least the duration of the scholar’s programme. This can be at an honorary or associate professor level when the SPGS Committee has approved such an appointment
- Exceptions are made for postdoctoral researchers who have a contract that exceeds the duration of the scholar’s programme.
- Be able to demonstrate a record of research excellence and achievement and have recently published in their field of expertise as a senior author.
- The scholar’s last membership within the last 5 years. Exceptions can be made where a technique or technology used in one field will be used in a different field.
- Have completed their PhD degree at least 12 months prior to the scholar’s first registration.
- Attend the Supervisor Forum sessions offered by SPGS that explain changes to the regulations, and have accessed the online supervisor training module.

10.2 SPGS authority regarding supervisor eligibility

The SPGS committee may consider special cases from time to time on a case-by-case basis.

10.3 Quality supervision

Supervisors must ensure that they have read and signed the RCSI Supervisor Charter that sets out the key roles and responsibilities of supervisors at RCSI (see Appendix).

- Researchers who have not had experience supervising level 10 Doctoral scholars must attend the supervisor training session delivered by SPGS. Alternatively, they can attend a training session delivered by HR.
- All supervisors are encouraged to complete the online Supervisor Training module available on Moodle. This contains important information about how PGR programmes are managed at RCSI, internal deadlines, and useful links to further information and resources.

- To ensure quality supervision for all our PGR scholars, supervisors should not supervise more than 6 PGR scholars (FTE) simultaneously.

10.4 Continuity of supervision

There are many reasons why supervision of a scholar for a higher degree by research may change. These may relate to a supervisor moving to another institution in Ireland or abroad; a supervisor retiring before a thesis is completed; a supervisor changing their research focus to another area; the research project developing in an unforeseen direction necessitating the inclusion of additional expertise in the supervision team; the death of a supervisor; a supervisor becoming incapacitated through ill health and so on.

In the event that a change of supervisor becomes necessary, the supervisory team should engage with the SPGS to ensure a smooth transition to a new arrangement in a manner which minimises potential distress to the scholar.
10. SUPERVISOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.5 Primary supervisor’s specific responsibilities
In addition to the in-depth research supervision role, the primary supervisor is responsible for ensuring that certain administrative tasks are completed during the scholar’s time on the register. These tasks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring that scholars meet their deadlines.
- Supervising the nominations of appropriate reviewers for the supervision of the scholar, having first ascertained that the proposed reviewers agreed to act in this capacity in the allotted time.
- Submitting the nominations of appropriate thesis examiners (one RCSI examiner and one external examiner) for the scholar, having first ascertained that the proposed examiners meet the criteria and have agreed to act in this capacity within the allotted time frame.

10.6 Collective responsibilities of the supervisory team
To advise the scholar on the selection of the research topic and the nature and quality of the programme of research to be undertaken.

- To ensure that the scholar acquires training in the methodology of research and in the skills necessary for sustained, independent effort, by advising on their training needs and giving permission to register for structured training where appropriate.

- To implement RCSI’s codes of practice for the conduct of research and employment of the working policies of the ethics committee.

- To provide contact and guidance through regular and systematic meetings; to request regular written submissions as appropriate and to provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time.

- To ensure that the scholar is made aware of any shortfalls of progress or standards relative to the standard expected and, where necessary, to advise on withdrawal from the programme.

- To complete an annual progress report with the scholar. Supervisors must nominate reviewers using the moodle based annual review process.

- To appoint suitable internal and external examiners as required.

10.7 Supervisor responsibilities regarding examinations
To ensure smooth organisation of the examination process, supervisors should:

- Nominate examiners at least 6 months before the scholar is due to submit their thesis. This is to ensure sufficient time for recommendation for approval by the SPGS Committee to Academic Council (AC) and thereafter to Medicine and Health Sciences Board (MHSB). When this process is completed, appointment of external examiners is made by the National University of Ireland (NU). Please note that MHSB does not meet between May and September each year.

- Nominate for appointment as examiners only persons who are likely to examine within a reasonable timeframe. The judgment of the supervisor in this regard is very important, as taking an excessive period of time to conclude the examination is unfair to the scholar.

- Obtain the prior agreement of the recommended examiners that they are prepared to act in their respective capacities within an agreed timeframe.

- Ensure that the SPGS is informed of any change in address or circumstances of either examiner.

- Arrange for the external examiner to sign relevant confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements where this is essential to the protection of intellectual property rights contained in the thesis.

- Ensure, as far as possible, that scholars are not unduly delayed in the submission of their theses and be aware of any fees implications for scholars who are delayed in submitting their theses.

- Ensure that the thesis meets standard scientific format and is of the required quality.

- Ensure that the thesis is written according to SPGS regulation guidelines including RCSI Thesis Presentation Regulations Guidelines and conforms to ethical standards and good research practice.

- Not recommend for appointment as external examiner a person who has acted in this capacity in RCSI within the preceding three calendar years. This is to avoid a situation where familiarity could, or could be perceived, to prejudice objective judgement. Exceptional circumstances that may justify re-appointment of the same person as external examiner within this timeframe must be clearly outlined to the Head of SPGS.
10. SUPERVISOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (CONT.)

» Not contact either examiner about the thesis examination once their appointments have been approved.
» Ensure that all necessary approval(s) from Research Ethics Committee(s) and animal licensing are clearly described in the thesis.
» Ensure that the scholar includes in their Thesis Acknowledgement Section the source of funding for their research and refer scholars to any specific acknowledgement required by the funding agency.
» Ensure that any IP/patent/commercialisation potential in the thesis is protected by informing the SPGS in advance of submission and ensure that the following paragraph is included in the request to potential external examiners to examine a thesis:

“The contents of the thesis under examination are confidential and should not be disclosed, or disseminated in any way, to any third party other than to staff of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland or an external examiner appointed for the purpose of examining the thesis. If you agree to examine the proposed thesis, please respond to this request (by email) indicating that you agree to maintain confidentiality of its contents.”

» If not present at the viva voce examination (where applicable), be available to address any questions that may arise before, during or after the viva voce examination.
» If present at the viva voce examination (where applicable), take notes as required to assist with corrections later and provide clarification if required by the examiners. Supervisors must remain silent throughout the viva voce examination unless specifically requested to respond to a question by the examiners.
» Liaise with the internal examiner, if required, in seeking clarification of any required corrections after the viva voce/thesis examination.
» Assist the scholar in completing any required corrections after the viva voce/thesis examination.
» Confirm in writing to the SPGS that the scholar has implemented any corrections required by the examiners.
» Co-sign, with the scholar, the Copyright and Thesis Distribution Form to indicate approval of any embargo (up to 24 months) on the final, approved hard-bound and PDF versions of the thesis.
EXAMINATION

11. THESIS SUBMISSION

All research scholars must submit a written thesis for examination. The format for the thesis is the ‘Classical’ (monograph) format except for scholars wishing to be examined for a PhD by Publication. This thesis will take the format of a ‘Thesis-by-Publication’ (see details in Section 21 below).

In their penultimate year each scholar must submit a Thesis Completion Plan (see Appendix) outlining their completion targets. After the scholar has completed their thesis, and checked the text through TurnItIn, they submit two soft bound copies to the SPGS accompanied by the appropriate Examination Entry form. A PDF copy must also be emailed to postgraduateschool@rnc.ie. A scholar must be at a fully registered status in Quercus when the thesis is submitted. The SPGS, having checked that registration requirements have been met, necessary core modules have been completed, fees have been paid in full and examiners have been approved, sends one copy of the thesis to each examiner with a letter outlining the process for the examination. The examiners are allowed up to four weeks for an MSc/MCh or up to eight weeks for PhD/MD in which to examine the thesis and submit independent reports on the Thesis Report form. PhD/MD examiners must submit their reports on the Thesis Report form seven days before the viva voce exam. If either examiner requests an electronic copy of the thesis in order to examine it, they may request it through the SPGS.

If either examiner requests significant modifications to the thesis, the pending viva voce examination may be postponed. The decision to postpone the viva voce will be made in consultation with the Head of SPGS, who will liaise with the supervisor. The supervisor in turn will manage the necessary corrections and resubmission of the thesis by the scholar.

On rare occasions a scholar may not be able to meet the thesis submission deadline. If this happens, the scholar will need to submit an Exceptional Circumstances Form (Postgraduate Scholar) signed by their supervisor.

11.1 Viva voce Examination

All level 10 awards (PhD, MD) are examined by written thesis and a viva voce. On occasion, a scholar completing a level 9 award (MSc, MCh) may be asked to complete a viva voce examination, usually at the discretion of the examiners. The persons present at the viva voce examination are the scholar, the external examiner, at least one internal examiner and an independent chairperson.

The supervisor may attend as an observer but their attendance is at the scholar’s discretion. However, if the supervisor does not attend they must be available by phone or in person before, during and immediately after the viva voce examination. If the supervisor is present for the viva voce examination, they act as an observer only and cannot contribute unless the examiners specifically seek their clarification on a question.

From time to time, the Head of SPGS may wish to appoint an observer. This may include attendance by a completely independent PhD or MD supervisor as part of their own training. No more than one such person can attend any particular viva voce examination. After the SPGS has sent the copies of the thesis to the examiners, arrangements are made by SPGS for the viva voce examination and the SPGS appoints an independent chairperson. The scholar and supervisor must not be involved in the travel arrangements for the External Examiner.

The viva voce examination consists of a presentation by the scholar on the project, for example by PowerPoint, of no longer than 20 minutes duration. The presentation is followed by the questioning of the scholar by both examiners, on the content of the presentation, the thesis and related matters. Scholars must take a copy of their thesis into the oral examination and refer to it as appropriate. It is recommended that the viva voce examination, including the presentation, should last no longer than three hours. The chairperson should allow opportunities for breaks as necessary.

On the mutually agreed date of the viva voce examination, the examiners and the chairperson meet in the designated Examination Room before the viva voce examination starts. The examiners identify issues to be raised in the viva voce examination, agree the broad strategy (eg who will ask which questions and in what order) and confer with the chairperson on points of procedure.

When all parties are prepared, the chairperson invites the scholar into the room and completes the introductions. The chairperson asks the scholar to commence their presentation. The examiners do not normally ask questions during the presentation, it is after the presentation that the examiners’ questions begin. After completion of the questioning, the chairperson asks the supervisor, if present, to leave the room and gives the scholar an opportunity to mention anything additional in their thesis defence. After this, the chairperson asks the scholar to leave the room and the examiners deliberate and agree on their recommendation. The chairperson calls the scholar back into the room and tells them what the examiners recommend. The supervisor may be present for this recommendation, but this is at the discretion of the scholar.

Neither the scholar nor the supervisor may be present for the examiners’ deliberations prior to the viva voce examination, nor after the questioning when examiners are deliberating on the result, nor when the joint examiners report is being written.

The viva voce examination must take place in RCSI Dublin, in a neutral setting and location considered to be appropriate. The scholar should be in the supervisor’s office or a public area such as a coffee station. The viva voce examination may not proceed without all the examiners being present. In the event of an examiner’s or the scholar’s unexpected absence, for example due to illness, the examination must be postponed to another date.

On completion of the viva voce examination, the examiners complete a Joint Examiners Report form giving their recommendation on the outcome of the examination and their comments on the thesis and the scholar’s performance at the viva voce examination. Examiners must select one of the categories of award on the form (see details in Section 15: Categories of Decision). The examiners usually write their joint report after the scholar has been advised of the result and before exiting the examination room. If a detailed report is required, this can be submitted by email to SPGS after the viva voce examination but must be within four working days. The Chairperson of the viva voce also submits a Report.

11.2 Late submission of final thesis documents

If there are no corrections required to the thesis then the scholar must print 1 hardbound copy of the final corrected version of the thesis and submit this to the SPGS office within 2 weeks of the examiners’ approval of the final thesis. The PDF version of the final version of the thesis must also be submitted to the library for inclusion in the institutional repository portal within 2 weeks of the examiners’ approval of the final thesis.

Where there are minor or major corrections to the thesis required, the examiners will agree on an acceptable deadline for the corrections to be submitted to the SPGS for review by them. It is the scholar’s responsibility to ensure that all corrections are completed in this timeframe, and approved by their primary supervisor, before submission to the SPGS office, which will then forward the revised thesis to the examiners.

Once the revised thesis has been approved by the examiners, the scholar will need to print 1 hardbound copy of the final corrected version of the thesis and submit this to the SPGS office within 2 weeks of the examiners’ approval of the final thesis.

The PDF version of the final version of the thesis must also be submitted to the library for inclusion in the institutional repository portal within 2 weeks of the examiners’ approval of the final thesis.

Registration is paused once the scholar submits their soft-bound thesis for examination; no further fees are incurred by the scholar. However, once the agreed deadline for corrections has been exceeded and/or the scholar fails to submit both the hardbound and PDF versions of the final thesis to the SPGS office within 2 weeks of the examiners’ approval, an additional administrative fee of €500 may be levied. Scholars are reminded that they cannot graduate unless they are in good standing with the College’s fees office.
EXAMINATION

12. APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

In order to set and maintain the highest standards for our higher degrees it is imperative that suitably qualified external and internal examiners are nominated and appointed. In combination, the internal and external examiners must have sufficient expertise, knowledge and understanding of the relevant fields; this is particularly important where the thesis topic is interdisciplinary. For viva voce examinations, the role of the chairperson is to ensure that regulations are followed and that the examination operates smoothly and fairly.

- Each PhD and MD scholar is examined by written thesis and viva voce examination by one external examiner and one internal examiner. At the discretion of the external examiner, a scholar may be required to attend a viva voce examination.
- Each PhD and MD scholar is examined by written thesis and viva voce examination by one external examiner and one internal examiner. Each PhD and MD scholar is examined by written thesis and viva voce examination by one external examiner and one internal examiner. Each PhD and MD scholar is examined by written thesis and viva voce examination by one external examiner and one internal examiner.
- The relevant Examiner Nomination form must be used when submitting nominations for review. Supervisors must provide a brief up-to-date CV of the external and internal examiners using the approved template as part of the nomination submission. Paper submissions are not acceptable. For the MCh, the combined experience of the examination panel should include, where possible, relevant clinical expertise.

12.1 Conflict of Interest

- Thesis examiners must examine, and be seen to examine, the scholar and the thesis without prejudice or conflict from any direction.
- If a reasonable person not involved in the examination process would consider that the presence of a particular examiner could cause concern regarding bias either to the scholar's advantage or disadvantage, such an examiner is deemed unsuitable. Supervisors must take all reasonable steps to avoid recommending examiners whose relationship with the supervisor, scholar or RCSI Department, whether personal or professional, could be viewed as preventing an impartial judgement of the thesis and the scholar.
- It is the responsibility of examiners to declare any potential conflict of interest when asked to examine a thesis.
- If the SPGS Committee perceives a potential conflict of interest in an examiner nomination the supervisor will be asked to nominate an alternative examiner, or SPGS will nominate an alternative examiner, or seek expert guidance in the selection of an alternative examiner.

12.2 Nomination

- The Primary Supervisor (or nominee) needs to nominate the Examiners at least 6 months prior to the expected thesis completion date, using the online form (see Appendix for links).

- All research examiners are appointed following:
  - (a) nomination by the supervisor.
  - (b) recommendation by the SPGS Committee.
  - (c) recommendation by Academic Council.
  - (d) approval by RCSI Medicine and Health Sciences Board.
  - (e) approval by the Senate of the National University of Ireland.

- External examiners are subject to approval by the Senate of the National University of Ireland (NUI), which makes the official appointments on behalf of RCSI.

- In order to allow sufficient time for this process the supervisor must nominate examiners at least six months prior to thesis submission. In the event of the supervisor being unable to recommend a suitable examiner, the SPGS Committee may suggest an appropriate person who fulfills the required criteria.

- Conversely, supervisors must ensure that examiner nominations are not made too far in advance of thesis submission. This is to ensure that examiners approved to examine a thesis and scholar continue to meet the criteria for their appointment at the time of the examination. RCSI approved examiner nominations are valid for 18 months, after which time, alternative examiner nominations will be required.

- The relevant Examiner Nomination form must be used when submitting nominations for review. Supervisors must provide a brief up-to-date CV of the external and internal examiners using the approved template as part of the nomination submission. Paper submissions are not acceptable. For the MCh, the combined experience of the examination panel should include, where possible, relevant clinical expertise.

12.3 Criteria for Appointment

- The selection of the research examination team reflects on the reputation and credibility of the specific examination; RCSI's standards in delivering research degrees; and of the reputation more generally of the academic community in delivering and impartially examining those primary research degrees. Thus every appointment must be made to ensure and protect this credibility – potential appointees who might otherwise be very suitable should be considered with the wider reputation of the examination process as the priority.

- Internal Examiners

  - Internal examiners must be members of academic staff at RCSI and should normally hold a PhD or MD degree or equivalent. Honorary lecturers or Emeritus professors can act as examiners on condition they have recent (<3 years) relevant publications.
  - Hold at least the position of Lecturer or its equivalent.
  - Have expertise in the research area of the thesis.
  - Be experienced in research in the general area of the scholar’s thesis.
  - Be sufficiently independent of the supervisor.
  - Be independent of the scholar and the external examiner.
  - Be familiar with RCSI higher degree regulations and have attended thesis examiner training.
  - Not be the scholar’s thesis supervisor.
  - Not have a conflict of interest - this includes but is not restricted to the following:
    - (a) Having published with the scholar within the three years preceding the examination.
    - (b) Having a personal relationship with the scholar, supervisor or external examiner.
    - (c) Not be acting as a personal research fellow.
  - Not have acted in this capacity more than once previously in the same academic year.
  - Not be registered for a higher degree by research at RCSI or elsewhere.
  - Not be a visiting member of staff at RCSI.
  - For PhD and MSc, examiners must be chosen from outside HEIs in the Republic of Ireland and any associated teaching hospitals.
  - For MCh and MCh, examiners should be chosen from outside the island of Ireland, ideally from the UK, in view of the compatibility between our MCh and MD structures and regulations.
  - Must be experienced in research in the general area of the scholar’s thesis, be specialists in the topics to be examined, and have recent peer-reviewed publications in that area.
  - Should hold the position of at least Senior Lecturer at University level and normally hold a PhD or MD degree or an equivalent or higher degree.
  - Must hold a current university academic appointment. Honorary lecturers or Emeritus professors can act as examiners on condition they have recent (<3 years) relevant publications.
  - Must have previous experience of acting in this capacity for the relevant award.
  - Must not have acted as an external examiner in RCSI within the preceding three academic years.

- External Examiners

  For level 10 awards external examiners are usually appointed from the UK or mainland Europe to examine RCSI PhD and MD theses and scholars. Preference should be given to examiners who are familiar with the general procedure pertaining to this examination in Ireland i.e. required corrections are not provided to the scholar in advance of the viva voce examination; a scholar can pass or fail at the viva voce examination regardless of the quality of the written thesis. Supervisors considering making a case for the nomination of examiners outside Europe must take account of the financial and logistical challenges that this may present. In circumstances where a supervisor may be required to make a financial contribution to cover costs of the viva voce examination, the examiner must not be made aware of this in order to protect the integrity of the examination.

  - For PhD and MSc, examiners must be chosen from outside HEIs in the Republic of Ireland and any associated teaching hospitals.
  - For MCh and MCh, examiners should be chosen from outside the island of Ireland, ideally from the UK, in view of the compatibility between our MCh and MD structures and regulations.
  - Must be experienced in research in the general area of the scholar’s thesis, be specialists in the topics to be examined, and have recent peer-reviewed publications in that area.
  - Should hold the position of at least Senior Lecturer at University level and normally hold a PhD or MD degree or an equivalent or higher degree.
  - Must hold a current university academic appointment. Honorary lecturers or Emeritus professors can act as examiners on condition they have recent (<3 years) relevant publications.
  - Must have previous experience of acting in this capacity for the relevant award.
  - Must not have acted as an external examiner in RCSI within the preceding three academic years.
EXAMINATION

12. APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS CONT.

External Examiners must not have a conflict of interest - this includes (but is not restricted to) the following:
• Having published with the scholar or the scholar’s supervisor within the three years preceding the examination.
• Holding or having held a grant or financial links’ arrangement with the scholar or the scholar’s supervisor within the three years preceding the examination.
• Having the supervisor act as external examiner for any member of their research group, including themselves within the three years preceding the examination.
• Currently serving as a member of staff at RCSI in any capacity having been a member of staff at RCSI within the three years preceding the examination.
• Having been a higher degree graduate of RCSI within the three years preceding the examination.
• Being related to the scholar, supervisor or internal examiner.
• Having any involvement with the research project.

• Independent Chairpersons
Where a viva voce is required, Chairpersons are nominated by the SPGS and should
• Be members of academic staff at RCSI who hold a higher degree by research. Honorary lecturers or Emeritus professors in continuous condition they have recent (<3 years) relevant publications.
• Hold at least the position of Lecturer or its equivalent.
• Be familiar with regulations and procedures governing the PhD/MD viva voce examination.
• Not be a supervisor of the scholar.
• Not have a conflict of interest relating to the project, the scholar under examination or either examiner.
• Where possible, the independent chairperson should be based in an academic department other than that of the scholar and supervisor.
• Where appropriate, due consideration should be given to achieving a gender balance in the panel involved in the viva voce examination.

13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXAMINERS

13.1 Internal Examiners
The role of the internal examiner is to examine the thesis in an objective and timely manner, to liaise with the SPGS on points of procedure, and to ensure that consistently high academic standards are maintained. This is particularly important with respect to generic aspects such as quality of the writing and layout of the thesis as well as the general approach adopted. For MSc and MCh awards the internal examiner should only liaise with the external examiner when completely necessary. When a viva voce examination is required, the internal examiner must examine the scholar in a viva voce examination and liaise with the external examiner around the marking process.

Once an internal examiner has agreed to act in this capacity, in cooperation with the external examiner where appropriate, they should:
• Acknowledge receipt of the thesis.
• Where a viva voce is required, agree on a suitable date for the viva voce examination when contacted by the SPGS.
• Direct any questions about the examination process to the SPGS, postgraduate@rcsi.ie
• Read the thesis in its entirety within the required timeframe and assess the work presented in the thesis by the scholar.
• Prepare a written report on the thesis using the appropriate Internal Examiner Report Thesis form and return it to the SPGS. Where a viva voce examination is required, the internal examiner should contact the student in advance of the viva voce examination and liaise with the external examiner if necessary, when preparing the pre-viva voce examination thesis report. The internal examiner should retain a record of all such interactions with the external examiner.
• Write a joint report with the external examiner of MD and PhD awards on the thesis and the performance of the scholar at the viva voce examination, using the appropriate Joint Examiners’ Viva Voce Examination Report form. Return this, via the independent chairperson, to the SPGS as soon as possible after the viva voce examination.
• Not share any thesis examination reports with the supervisor or the scholar in advance of the viva voce examination.
• Not contact the supervisor in relation to the thesis examination.
• Note contact the supervisor in relation to the thesis examination.
• Ensure that the scholar demonstrates an adequate depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of the field of study.
• Ensure that the scholar has gained expertise in basic and advanced methodologies and techniques.
• Ensure that the scholar can demonstrate that the work presented is their own.
• Conduct the thesis/viva voce examination in a rigorous manner. In a viva voce examination the internal examiner should conduct the viva voce examination in a non-aggressive manner, giving the scholar the opportunity to fully defend their thesis.
• Determine if the appropriate standard has been reached to merit the award of a Research degree and recommend a single category of award.

13.2 External Examiners
The role of the external examiner is to examine the thesis, and where applicable the scholar in a viva voce examination, in an objective and timely manner, to liaise with the SPGS, the internal examiner and the chairperson where relevant, to ensure that RCSI regulations are followed and that the work is of the required standard. The sole purpose of an external examiner’s visit to RCSI is to conduct the viva voce examination when required. A person is not allowed to act as external examiner more than once in a three-year academic period. Exceptional circumstances that may justify contravention of this regulation may be presented to the Head of SPGS for consideration by the SPGS Committee.

Once an external examiner has agreed to examine a thesis, they should:
• Acknowledge receipt of the thesis.
• Agree to be bound by confidentiality agreements, where protecting intellectual property merits it.
• When contacted by the SPGS, agree on a suitable date for the viva voce examination.
• Direct any questions about the examination process to the SPGS, postgraduate@rcsi.ie.
• Read the thesis in its entirety within the required timeframe and assess the work presented in the thesis by the scholar.
• Prepare a written report on the thesis using the appropriate External Examiner Report Thesis form and return it to the SPGS. Where a viva voce is required the form must be returned at least 7 days prior to the date of the viva voce examination. In these circumstances, the external examiner is allowed 8 weeks for the examination of a thesis. Where a viva voce is not required the external examiner has up to 4 weeks to return the form.
• Liaise with the internal examiner, only if necessary, when preparing the thesis report.
• Not share any thesis examination reports with the supervisor or the scholar in advance of the viva voce examination where a viva voce is required.
• Not contact the supervisor in relation to the thesis examination.
• Where a viva voce examination is required, the external examiner must attend the viva voce in person, and agree with the internal examiner, in the presence of the chairperson and in the absence of the scholar or supervisor, about the manner in which it is to be conducted.
• Assess the performance of the scholar in the viva voce examination, where applicable, during the viva voce examination.
• Ensure that the scholar demonstrates an adequate depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of the field of study.
• Ensure that the scholar has gained expertise in basic and advanced methodologies and techniques.
• Ensure that the scholar can demonstrate that the work presented is their own.
EXAMINATION

13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXAMINERS CONT.

- Where a viva voce is required, the external examiner must conduct the viva voce examination in a rigorous, but non-aggressive manner, giving the scholar the opportunity to fully defend their thesis.
- Determine if the appropriate standard has been reached to merit the award of the relevant research degree and agree findings and category of award with the internal examiner.
- Inform the scholar of the recommended outcome on completion of the viva voce examination where a viva voce is required.
- Make clear in the report which examiner corrections, if any, the scholar is required to make in order to have their thesis approved. Return this to the SPGS as soon as possible.
- Not share any thesis examination reports with the supervisor or inform the scholar in advance of the recommended outcome on completion of the thesis examination.
- Not contact the supervisor in relation to the thesis examination.
- Write a joint report with the internal examiner on the thesis and the performance of the scholar at the viva voce examination using the appropriate Joint Examiners’ Report. Make clear which examiner corrections, if any, the scholar is required to make in order to have their thesis approved. Return this, via the internal examiner, to the SPGS as soon as possible after the viva voce examination.
- Where major corrections are required, confirm in writing to the SPGS that any required corrections to the thesis, as a result of examination, are implemented.
- Submit required bank account information to the SPGS as soon as possible after the thesis examination.
- Inform the scholar of the recommended outcome on completion of the thesis examination.
- Attend the viva voce examination in person on the agreed date, chair it according to RCSI procedures and record observations if necessary.
- Introduce the scholar to each examiner and explain the status and role of the independent chairperson and the reason for reason taking.
- Introduce any other person present in the viva voce examination for the purposes of training or observing procedure.
- Outline clearly the role of a supervisor, if present, as an observer.
- Advise the scholar that the outcome will not be communicated until after the viva voce examination and that they should not infer any decision of the examiners on the basis of the discussion during the viva voce examination.
- Return all relevant notes and completed forms to the SPGS after the viva voce examination.
- Advise the scholar to graduate at the next available RCSI conferring meeting, which is generally 3 weeks before the next NUI conferring meeting.
- The SPGS makes the necessary arrangements for inclusion in the RCSI repository (e-publications@RCSI).
- A timely manner, will result in the degree not being awarded.
- Whenever applicable, provide any further information in the event of a viva voce examination decision being inconclusive or in dispute.
- After the viva voce examination, obtain the views of the scholar and the examiners on the process and submit these to the SPGS.

14. EXAMINATION BOARDS AND GRADUATION

When all reports have been submitted by the chairperson to the SPGS, the scholar is informed of the recommendation and given copies of all three examiner reports (External, Internal and Joint reports) and an email outlining the next steps including the deadline for submission of a revised thesis.

When the scholar completes the corrections, and submits a revised thesis, the supervisor must email the SPGS to confirm that they have overseen the implementation of the corrections and they are ready for the examiner(s) to review. If minor corrections are required, the internal examiner must approve these (with prior agreement from the external examiner), in the case of major corrections both examiners must approve them. Examiners submit their approval in writing (by email) to the SPGS. If one of the examiners is unable to review the final thesis (e.g. due to exceptional circumstances, illness, etc.), then when appropriate the final review and decision rests with the remaining examiner(s).

Regardless of the level of corrections required, each scholar has one opportunity to implement all required corrections in the revised thesis. Failure to implement corrections to the satisfaction of the examiner(s), in a timely manner, will result in the degree not being awarded.

When the thesis has been approved, the scholar submits one hard bound copy to the SPGS and one PDF version for inclusion in the RCSI repository (e-publications@RCSI). It is customary for scholars to make two extra hard-bound copies, one for themselves and one for their supervisor.

The SPGS makes the necessary arrangements for approval of the examiners’ recommendation at the relevant Examination Boards meeting and for the scholar to graduate at the next available RCSI conferring ceremony. The hardbound thesis must be submitted to SPGS at least one week prior to the NUI Exam board meeting, which is generally 3 weeks before the next graduation. The degree conferred is awarded by RCSI and NUI.
EXAMINATION

15. CATEGORIES OF THESIS EXAMINATION

DECISION

15.1 PhD/MD

Listed below are the possible outcomes of the PhD or MD examination. One of these must be selected by the panel of examiners. Scholars must complete all required corrections before submitting their revised thesis for examiner and Examination Board approval. Scholars must make all required corrections; if corrections are not completed to the satisfaction of the examiner(s) and Examination Board, the scholar's name cannot be brought forward to the Examination Boards and therefore the scholar will not be able to graduate.

I. Award without corrections

II. Award pending minor corrections

III. Award pending major corrections without a second viva voce examination

IV. Reject but permit submission of a revised thesis for repeat viva voce examination

V. Reject but award a lower degree

VI. Reject but award a lower degree subject to minor corrections

VII. Reject with no recommendation for re-submission

Pointers for arriving at the above decisions are given below.

I. Award without corrections – examiners select this category if the thesis is satisfactory in every way and there are no corrections to be made.

II. Award pending minor corrections – examiners select this category if they are satisfied that the thesis meets the criteria for the degree but some minor corrections are necessary.

Minor corrections include, but are not limited to, typographical errors, minor amendments to text, references or diagrams and/or minor re-interpretation of the content. The scholar will receive both examiners' pre-viva reports, as well as the post-viva joint examiners report. In addition, one or both of the examiners may, as specified in the joint-examiners report, submit additional corrections at a later date.

The scholar must return the corrected thesis within 4-8 weeks of receiving official notification of the outcome OR the final list of corrections from the examiners, whichever is later. The internal examiner checks the revised thesis for implementation of the corrections, and approves the final document.

III. Award pending major corrections to be verified by both examiners – examiners select this category if the thesis contains typographical or other errors so numerous as to interfere with the smooth reading of the thesis, is defective in presentation or detail, or requires further research.

A list of corrections implemented and the revised thesis must be approved by both examiners within six months of the scholar receiving official notification of the outcome. If the scholar has performed to the required standard at the viva voce examination, a second viva voce examination is not required.

IV. Reject but permit submission of a revised thesis for repeat viva voce examination – examiners select this category if the deficiences in presentation, research detail, interpretation or analysis are sufficiently serious to prohibit an award being recommended and a second viva voce examination is required.

The revised thesis must be submitted for re-examination by both examiners within twelve months of the scholar receiving official notification of the original outcome.

V. Award without corrections – examiners select this category if the thesis meets the criteria for the degree.

The revised thesis must be approved by the internal examiner within 4-8 weeks of the scholar receiving official notification of the original outcome. A list of corrections implemented and the revised thesis must be approved by the internal examiner within 4-8 weeks of the scholar receiving official notification of the outcome.

VI. Reject and permit submission of a revised thesis – this category is recommended in the case of work which is insufficient for a PhD, MD or for a level 9 award.

Examiners should only select this option when they are aware that the scholar has been given sufficient opportunity and supervisory support to enable them to submit a quality thesis for examination.

This decision should not be selected unless a scholar has been afforded a second opportunity to defend their thesis.

15.2 MSC/MCh

Listed below are the possible outcomes of the MSC/MCh examination. One of these must be selected by the panel of examiners. At the discretion of the external examiner, a scholar may be required to attend a viva voce examination.

I. Award without corrections

II. Award pending minor corrections

III. Award pending major corrections to be verified by both examiners

IV. Reject without recommendation for re-submission

V. Reject and permit submission of a revised thesis – this category is recommended in the case of work which is insufficient for an MSc/MCh.

Examiners should only select this final option when they are aware that the scholar has been given sufficient opportunity and supervisory support to enable them to submit a quality thesis for examination. This decision should not be selected unless a scholar has been afforded a second opportunity to defend their thesis.

To text, references or diagrams and/or minor re-interpretation of the content. A list of corrections and the revised thesis must be approved by the internal examiner within 4-8 weeks of the scholar receiving official notification of the outcome.

III. Award pending major corrections to be verified by both examiners – examiners select this category if the thesis contains typographical or other errors so numerous as to interfere with the smooth reading of the thesis, is defective in presentation or detail, or requires further research. A list of corrections implemented and the revised thesis must be approved by both examiners within six months of the scholar receiving official notification of the outcome.
EXAMINATION

16. REACHING A UNANIMOUS DECISION BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

16.1 PhD/MD

In the event of the internal and external examiners not immediately agreeing on the outcome of the examination, they should try to resolve issues by reasoned, detailed discussion. The external examiner’s view normally carries greater weight in such discussions. The role of the independent chairperson in facilitating an agreed decision on the day of the viva voce examination is very important. Concerns about practical issues such as travel plans of the external examiner and additional time required may need to be taken into account as early as possible.

If it is not possible for the examiners to reach a mutually agreed decision, they must submit separate reports to the Head of the SPGS who will bring the matter to the attention of the SPGS Committee. This committee will suggest an appropriate way forward, taking account of the individual circumstances of the case. Options may include the appointment of a second, RCSI and NUI-approved external examiner to assist in resolving the disagreement. However, this should be considered as a last resort option only and every effort should be made to reach a resolution as quickly as possible in order to minimise the impact of non-resolution on the scholar.

16.2 MSc/MCh

In the event of the internal and external examiners not immediately agreeing on the outcome of the examination, they should try to resolve issues by reasoned, detailed discussion. The external examiner’s view normally carries greater weight in such discussions. If it is not possible for the examiners to reach an agreed decision, their separate reports will be considered by the Head of the SPGS who will bring the matter to the attention of the SPGS Committee. This committee will suggest an appropriate way forward, taking account of the individual circumstances of the case. Options may include the appointment of a suitable, alternative examiner to assist in resolving the disagreement. However, this should be considered as a last resort option only and every effort should be made to reach a resolution as quickly as possible in order to minimise the impact of non-resolution on the scholar.

17. SCHOLAR’S RIGHT OF APPEAL

A scholar has the right to appeal the decision of the examiners. To do so they should follow the RCSI Appeals Procedure, available on Moodle.

18. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPGS

The SPGS is the RCSI facilitator of the research awards and examination processes. It liaises with scholars, supervisors, examiners and, in the case of viva voce examinations, the independent chairpersons to ensure that RCSI thesis examination regulations are fit for purpose and followed for each thesis examination including viva voce examinations. The SPGS facilitates the smooth operation of the administration surrounding the examination procedures, including the following:

» Advertising examiner nomination deadlines in ample time.
» Reviewing examiner nominations and seeking their approval at the SPGS Committee, Academic Council, Medicine and Health Sciences Board and NUI.
» Informing supervisors of the outcome of examiner nominations after approval by the above governance.
» Informing the internal examiner of approval of their appointment.
» Advising scholars of deadlines for thesis submission.
» Sending theses to the approved examiners within a reasonable time.
» Informing examiners of the RCSI regulations and deadlines for submission of reports.
» Arranging the examination after a thesis has been distributed to the examiners.
» Arranging the viva voce examination, when required, after a thesis has been distributed to the examiners, including booking an appropriate room on campus.
» Nominating the independent chairperson for the viva voce examination when required.
» Advising scholars of procedures for the thesis examination including viva voce procedures when required.
» Informing the scholar of the examiners’ recommendation and outlining the next steps.
» Assisting external examiners with travel and accommodation requirements according to RCSI Travel Policy.
» Processing examiner payments and expense claims and forwarding them to the RCSI Finance Department after receipt of all necessary documentation from the external examiner.

» Arranging examiner payments through the NUI after receipt of all necessary documentation from the external examiner.
» Arranging RCSI and NUI examination board approval of successful scholars.
» Forwarding scholar details to the RCSI Registry for preparation of parchments.
» Forwarding scholar details to the RCSI Communications Department for graduation.
» Ensuring that internal examiners, chairpersons of viva voce examinations and supervisors know and are encouraged to avail of training in relation to their respective roles.
» Collecting the views of all stakeholders on the examination process.

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» Informing the scholar of the examiners’ recommendation and outlining the next steps.
» Assisting external examiners with travel and accommodation requirements according to RCSI Travel Policy.
» Processing examiner payments and expense claims and forwarding them to the RCSI Finance Department after receipt of all necessary documentation from the external examiner.

» Arranging examiner payments through the NUI after receipt of all necessary documentation from the external examiner.
» Arranging RCSI and NUI examination board approval of successful scholars.
» Forwarding scholar details to the RCSI Registry for preparation of parchments.
» Forwarding scholar details to the RCSI Communications Department for graduation.
» Ensuring that internal examiners, chairpersons of viva voce examinations and supervisors know and are encouraged to avail of training in relation to their respective roles.
» Collecting the views of all stakeholders on the examination process.
EXAMINATION

19. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOLARS

Scholars must take ownership of their studies. This includes responsibility for their annual review(s) where applicable, as well as the preparation, submission and defence of their final thesis.

- A scholar must be a registered RCSI scholar and must have been on the register for the minimum length of time specified for their research degree.
- Scholars must maintain continuous registration or follow official College procedure for requesting a Leave of Absence.
- All fees must have been paid for each year of registration.
- The scholar must use their RCSI scholar email for all official communication with the College.
- The scholar must respond to official communication from the College in a timely fashion.
- The scholar must be compliant with the Postgraduate Scholar Code of Conduct and all RCSI policies and procedures.
- The research must have been completed under RCSI supervision.
- The scholar must obtain the agreement of the supervisor that the thesis be submitted for examination.
- The research described in the thesis must be the scholar’s own personal effort.
- The research must not have been used to obtain a degree in RCSI or elsewhere by the scholar or anyone else.
- Where content presented in the thesis is the result of collaborative research this must be duly acknowledged in the text, clearly indicating how much of the work is the scholar’s own work.
- The scholar must take reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and, to the best of their knowledge, does not breach copyright law, and has not been taken from other sources except where these have been cited and acknowledged within the text.
- Where content presented in the thesis is the result of collaborative research this must be duly acknowledged in the text, clearly indicating how much of the work is the scholar’s own work.
- The scholar must include in their Thesis Acknowledgement Section any source of funding for their research and refer to the funding agency for specific wording that may be required.
- The scholar must include in the relevant section, details of any Research Ethics Committee(s) approval and/or animal license required for the research.
- The scholar must ensure that the thesis follows the Thesis Presentation Regulations accurately.
- The scholar must submit three soft bound copies of the thesis plus one completed Examination Entry form to the SPGS, RCSI.
- The scholar must include a Scholar Thesis Declaration in each copy of their soft bound thesis and sign it on submission.
- The scholar may not contact either examiner at any stage during the examination process.
- Where a viva voce is required, the scholar must attend the viva voce examination in person and defend their thesis to the best of their ability.
- Where a viva voce is required, the scholar must deliver a 20 minute presentation, for example by PowerPoint, on the work of their thesis at the beginning of their viva voce examination, adhering to the Guidelines for viva voce Presentation.
- The scholar must complete any required corrections to the satisfaction of the examiner(s) within the allotted time frame. They must first allow sufficient time for their supervisors to check the changes and sign the copy on submission.
- The scholar must address all required corrections in a revised thesis, failure to do so will result in the degree not being awarded.
- The scholar may contact the internal examiner only when submitting a revised thesis. If there is uncertainty about thesis corrections, the supervisor should liaise with the internal examiner, but not the external examiner, to seek clarification.
- The scholar is responsible for ensuring that the thesis is submitted in the appropriate format. Submit a single soft bound copy and an electronic copy (PDF) of the revised thesis (after final approval by their supervisor).
- These should clearly highlight all changes made and be accompanied by a cover letter addressing each individual examiner’s recommendation and identifying page numbers where changes have been implemented. All changes should be highlighted or tracked throughout the revised thesis submission.
- Examiners will then be asked to submit their final recommendation (either Award or Reject) to the School of Postgraduate Studies. Generally, the internal examiner is tasked with the final examination and approval of the corrections, but this needs to be explicitly agreed by both examiners at the viva voce examination.
- The scholar must insert the RCSI standard IP Declaration on only one page at the beginning of each soft bound copy of the thesis.
- The scholar must remove the RCSI standard IP Declaration from the final, approved version of the thesis, which becomes the public record of the thesis.
- The scholar must submit a hard bound copy and an electronic copy ONLY when approved to do so.
- The scholar must include a Scholar Thesis Declaration in their hard bound copy of the approved thesis and sign it on submission.
- The scholar must complete the Copyright and Thesis Distribution Request when submitting the approved, hard bound version of their thesis. This thesis copy should be bound in RCSI maroon, pantone 208.
- The scholar must submit a PDF version of the approved thesis for inclusion in the RCSI repository. This version must include an electronic signature on the scholar thesis declaration.

20. THESIS AVAILABILITY POLICY

It is RCSI policy that a thesis or dissertation produced in the pursuit of a higher degree by research should be made available publicly for the purposes of research or study subject to IP protection. In addition, reasonable quotation from such a thesis or dissertation may be made provided that the source of the information is properly acknowledged. This policy applies to all forms in which the thesis or dissertation is made available, including electronic format.

20.1 Restrictions on Thesis Availability

RCSI recognises that scholars or their collaborators in the research project may not wish to make the thesis or dissertation immediately available publicly. Circumstances that merit a restriction or embargo on the public availability of a thesis or dissertation include the following:

- Access will endanger protection of future intellectual property rights (including opportunity to publish or make patent application).
- The research uses personal sources and/or contains sensitive information that was obtained on condition that the information not be disclosed or would violate General Data Protection Legislation (including the Health Research Regulation).
- It contains commercially sensitive material that will breach prior contractual arrangements with an outside organisation.
- Restriction on availability is necessary to ensure compliance with the law or protection of national interests or public safety.
- Where the embargo of a thesis or dissertation is due to requirements from a collaborating partner in the research, the length of time of the embargo should be determined and agreed between all relevant parties at the beginning of the research project.

The requirement for an embargo must be taken into consideration when recommending and appointing external examiners for the thesis or dissertation. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to obtain the external examiner’s agreement to maintain strict confidentiality regarding the contents of the thesis or dissertation.
20.2 Making a Thesis Publicly Available
A thesis or dissertation must be made available publicly after successful completion of the appropriate examination and graduation. The candidate is required to sign a Copyright and Thesis Distribution Request. The supervisor must counter-sign the restriction on distribution of thesis request. The candidate deposits a hard-bound copy to the School of Postgraduate Studies, RCSI in advance of graduation. Any request for restriction on thesis distribution must be attached to the title page of all hard-bound copies of the thesis. Simultaneously, the candidate is advised to upload a PDF version of the final approved thesis in the RCSI Library site.
PROGRAMME OVERVIEWS

21. PhD SUMMARY

21.1 Scholar Eligibility Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOLAR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>English language</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Bachelor Hons (&gt; 2.1)</td>
<td>IELTS &gt;= 6.5 (<a href="https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements">https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements</a>)</td>
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21.2 Minimum Registration

- 2 or 4 years (full time) / 5 years (part time)

21.3 Thesis Length

- 80,000 to 100,000 words

21.4 Year 1

- Compulsory core modules [15 ECTS]
  - Postgraduate Essentials
  - Research Ethics and Integrity
  - Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills
  - Biostatistics for Research Postgraduates
- Reviewer nomination
- Project Proposal
- Confirm place

21.5 Year 2

- Confirm place
- Reviewer nomination
- Annual progress review
- Mini-viva

21.6 Year 3

- Confirm place
- Examiner nomination
- Soft-bound thesis
- Viva voce
- Hard-bound copy

21.7 Year 4+

- Graduation

21.2.1 Classical thesis format
Both the ‘Classical’ and ‘PhD by Publication’ thesis formats follow the same formatting guidelines. See the Moodle SPGS section (Thesis tab) for detailed instructions.

21.2.2 PhD by Publication
For the PhD by Publication, the guidelines for preparation of the thesis will differ from above, but all other elements of student registration, progression and examination will remain the same.

21.3 Guide for Eligibility
Candidates who are in their third or subsequent year on the RCSI PhD register are eligible to apply to be examined by this route. A guide for eligibility is that candidates should have published papers or have papers accepted for publication during their time on the RCSI PhD register, in journals ranked in the first or second quartiles (Q1 or Q2) in their respective fields. Journal Quartile rankings are obtained from the Scopus journal rank tool: http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php.

21.3.1 Guide for Eligibility
Candidates should have published papers or have papers accepted for publication during their time on the RCSI PhD register, in journals ranked in the first or second quartiles (Q1 or Q2) in their respective fields. Journal Quartile rankings are obtained from the Scopus journal rank tool: http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php.

21.3.2 Application for Examination
Candidates who are in their third or subsequent year on the RCSI PhD register are eligible to apply to be examined by this route. A guide for eligibility is that candidates should have published papers or have papers accepted for publication during their time on the RCSI PhD register, in journals ranked in the first or second quartiles (Q1 or Q2) in their respective fields. Journal Quartile rankings are obtained from the Scopus journal rank tool: http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php.

21.3.3 Consideration Process
Following receipt of the completed RCSI PhD Thesis Completion Plan, the PhD by Publication Dissertation Committee, after due consultation, informs candidates whether the calibre of their research publications is sufficient for consideration for the PhD by publication route. They then recommend for appointment a suitably qualified PhD External Examiner; a suitably qualified PhD internal Examiner and a suitably Chairperson, according to the RCSI Guidelines for these appointments.

21.3.4 Thesis Format and Eligibility
Candidates are required to submit 2 soft-bound copies of the work to be assessed and a PDF copy must be emailed to postgraduateschool@rcsi.ie.

The published papers cannot alone constitute the thesis; there must be a narrative description of the work that connects the publications, producing a cohesive, unitary work.
INTRODUCTION
1. General Information

ENTRY
2. Application Procedure
3. Entry Requirements for Scholars
4. Registration Procedures
5. Core Modules

PROGRESSION
6. Professional Certificate in Research Practices (Taught Component)
7. Allocated Research Time
8. Good Research Practice
9. Annual Review Process
10. Supervisor roles and responsibilities

EXAMINATION
11. Thesis Submission
12. Appointment of Examiners
13. Roles and Responsibilities of Examiners
14. Examination Boards and Graduation
15. Categories of Thesis Examination Decision
16. Reaching a unanimous decision between Internal and External Examiners

17. Scholar’s Right of Appeal
18. Responsibilities of SPGS
19. Scholarly Rights of Appeals
20. Directors of Graduation

PROGRAMME OVERVIEWS
21. PhD SUMMARY

dissertation, documenting a single program of research, completed by the candidate while registered for a PhD degree.

A doctoral candidate must indicate their department at RCSI as their address on each scientific article they publish.

b. Supplementary Appendices:

 Appendices describing useful information not covered in the publications e.g. data collection and analysis, experimental work etc. must be included.

These are intended to help future researchers in the field.

c. Thesis Presentation

Just as in the classical PhD thesis format, the thesis must be presented as a unified whole with respect to font size, line spacing, margin sizes, section headings, index and page numbers. However, the bibliography contained in the published papers does not need to be reproduced in the final thesis bibliography unless the citations are mentioned in the narrative part of the thesis. The thesis must conform to all other requirements (and in line with RCSI Thesis Guidelines).

The PhD by published work thesis will be judged by the examiners as a unified, logically-coherent document in the same way a traditional thesis is judged. Publication or acceptance for publication of research results before presentation of the thesis is in no way supersedes RCSI evaluation and judgment of the work during the thesis examination process (i.e. it does not guarantee that the thesis will be found acceptable for the degree).

d. Third-Party Copyright

Candidates must identify all material in their theses that is subject to third-party copyright. Material subject to third-party copyright includes, for example, diagrams, tables, figures created by another author and inserted in the thesis to illustrate an argument. Candidates will need to obtain permission from the copyright owner to include this material in their thesis before it is published online. Candidates should seek such permissions in good time, and well in advance of final submission. A copy of the final, approved thesis must be uploaded to the RCSI Institutional Repository. A version of the published papers should be uploaded to the Repository as they are published, subject to publisher copyright policies. Within the thesis upload, to avoid a breach of third party copyright, the published papers will be provided as a web link.

This can be a reference to the e-publications@RCSI record, the DOI, or the published journal web address for the article. All other components of the thesis, title, acknowledgments, abstract, introduction, written statements for each publication, discussion, bibliography, supplementary appendices must be submitted within the upload. Help and advice on publisher permissions and uploading is available from spgs@rcsi.ie and the library.

22. MD SUMMARY

SCHOLAR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

ACADEMIC

Primary language: English language

IELTS ≥ 6.5 (www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements)

MINIMUM REGISTRATION YEAR 1

2 years (full time) / 4 years (part time)

MAXIMUM REGISTRATION YEAR 1

4 years (full time) / 8 years (part time)

THESIS LENGTH

60,000 to 100,000 words

YEAR 1

Project Proposal

www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/postgraduate-research/doctor-of-medicine/apply

Confirm place

After offer from SPGS, registration complete

YEAR 1

Compulsory modules

Research Ethics and Integrity

Optional modules

Postgraduate Essentials

Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills

Biostatistics for Research Postgraduates

Reviewer nomination

Supervisor submits it in Moodle (month 9)

Annual progress review

Scholar submits it in Moodle (month 10)

Thesis Completion Plan also recommended

mini-viva

Scholar presents to review panel (month 11)

YEAR 2

Confirm place

After SPGS ‘roll-over’, this completes registration for year 2

Examiner nomination

Supervisor submits to SPGS (month 6)

Soft-bound thesis

Scholar submits thesis to SPGS at year end

viva voce

Scholar presents to examination panel

Hard-bound copy

Final thesis, 1 week prior to NUI exam board (~3 weeks prior to Graduation)

YEAR 3+

Graduation

June or November

IELTS ≥ 6.5 (www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements)
SCHOLAR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Academic
BSc Hons (>= 2.2) | or equivalent

English language
IELTS >= 6.5 (www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements)

MINIMUM REGISTRATION
1 years (full time) | 2 years (part time)

MAXIMUM REGISTRATION
2 years (full time) | 4 years (part time)

THESIS LENGTH
50,000 to 60,000 words

YEAR -1 Find supervisor
www.rcsi.com/dublin/research-and-innovation/research

Project Proposal
www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/postgraduate-research/master-of-surgery/apply

Confirm place
After offer from SPGS, registration complete

YEAR 1 Compulsory modules
Research Ethics and Integrity

Optional modules
Postgraduate Essentials
Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills
Biostatistics for Research Postgraduates

Examiner nomination
Supervisor submits to SPGS (month 6)

Soft-bound thesis
Scholar submits thesis to SPGS at year end

Hard-bound copy
Final thesis, 1 week prior to NUI exam board (~3 weeks prior to Graduation)

YEAR 2+ Graduation
June or November

SCHOLAR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Academic
MB BCh BAO plus 1 year internship

English language
IELTS >= 6.5 (www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines/english-language-requirements)

MINIMUM REGISTRATION
1 years (full time) | 2 years (part time)

MAXIMUM REGISTRATION
2 years (full time) | 4 years (part time)

THESIS LENGTH
50,000 to 60,000 words

YEAR -1 Find supervisor
www.rcsi.com/dublin/research-and-innovation/research

Project Proposal
www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/postgraduate-research/master-of-surgery/apply

Confirm place
After offer from SPGS, registration complete

YEAR 1 Compulsory modules
Research Ethics and Integrity

Optional modules
Postgraduate Essentials
Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills
Biostatistics for Research Postgraduates

Examiner nomination
Supervisor submits to SPGS (month 6)

Soft-bound thesis
Scholar submits thesis to SPGS at year end

Hard-bound copy
Final thesis, 1 week prior to NUI exam board (~3 weeks prior to Graduation)

YEAR 2+ Graduation
June or November
APPENDICES

25. REFERENCES


26. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS COMPARISON TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NFQ</th>
<th>LEVEL 8</th>
<th>LEVEL 9</th>
<th>LEVEL 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUALIFICATIONS</td>
<td>Honours Bachelor (BSc/BA)</td>
<td>Masters Degree (MSc/MCh)</td>
<td>Doctoral Degree (PhD/MEd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning</td>
<td>A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning</td>
<td>A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)</td>
<td>A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning</td>
<td>The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOW-HOW &amp; SKILL</td>
<td>Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; Use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity</td>
<td>Demonstrate a range of standard and specialized research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry</td>
<td>Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning. Develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOW-HOW &amp; SKILL</td>
<td>Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning. Develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETENCE</td>
<td>Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts</td>
<td>Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts</td>
<td>Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; Lead and initiate activity</td>
<td>Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; Engage in critical dialogue; Lead and originate complex social processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETENCE</td>
<td>Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically</td>
<td>Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development</td>
<td>Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETENCE</td>
<td>Express a comprehensive, eternalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others</td>
<td>Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them</td>
<td>Scrutinize and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES 22
### APPENDICES

**27. LINKS TO SPGS FORMS AND POLICIES QUALIFICATIONS LEVEL 10 AWARD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Form name</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>On-boarding new scholars workflow</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/hvp/view.php?id=191060">SPGS Moodle / Supervisor Information / Roadmap to Onboard PGR Scholars in RCSI</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TWIC (To Whom It may Concern) letters</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=5">SPGS Moodle / Forms &amp; Policies</a></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tax free scholarship declaration form</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=5">SPGS Moodle / Forms &amp; Policies</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Transfer Justification form</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=5">SPGS Moodle / Forms &amp; Policies</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Withdrawal From Studies Policy</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Withdrawal from Studies Form Research Scholars</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Guidelines on Good Research Practice</td>
<td><a href="https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/postgraduate/policies-and-guidelines">SPGS website</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Investigation into Allegations of Research Misconduct policy</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Plagiarism Policy</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Appeal Regulations &amp; Appeal Scholar Form</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Annual Progress Review guidelines</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=3">SPGS Moodle / Annual Review</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Examination Entry Form</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=4">SPGS Moodle / Thesis</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>PGR Examiner Nomination form</td>
<td><a href="https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=50FwYBKocEa9MDOS2yEP8yl8gelz2Hn4SgDl0CIUJq0hM8D3fTVBqQ1M3QDFaVTVnJX5DRZSS4u">Office 365 form</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Examiners Thesis Report</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/course/view.php?id=316&amp;section=4">Word DOCX file in SPGS Thesis section in Moodle. Email this as attachment to postgraduateschool@rcsi.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Exceptional Circumstances policy and form (Postgraduate Scholars)</td>
<td><a href="https://vle.rcsi.ie/mod/folder/view.php?id=30506">SARA Moodle site</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>