

# Draft Code of Practice in the Provision of Postgraduate Research Programmes by Practice in Irish Third Level Institutions

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# 1. Introduction.

## 1.1 The Working Group on Practice-based Research in the Arts.

This document is a consultation draft code of practice for the quality assurance of practice-based research postgraduate degree programmes in the arts. It has been generated by the Working Group on Practice-based Research in the Arts. The members of the Working Group are Mr Sean Larkin (Chairman) (IADT); Dr Mick Wilson (GradCAM); Mr Kieran Corcoran (DIT); Prof. Loughlin Kealy (UCD); Prof. Gerard Gillen (NUIM); Prof Ian Montgomery (UU); Drs Peter Cullen & Bryan Maguire (HETAC). The Working Group was established as an advisory group by HETAC ([www.hetac.ie](http://www.hetac.ie)) with support from the IUQB ([www.iuqb.ie](http://www.iuqb.ie)). The remit of the Working Group has been to contribute to the enhancement and development of research capacity in the arts by making recommendations towards the production of this draft code of practice that reflect the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

The Working Group has engaged in a consultation process to determine the views of key stakeholders on the core issues pertaining to the provision of arts practice-based research degree programmes under the following headings:

- Understanding practice-based research in the arts and contextualising it;
- Qualifications and programme structures;
- The challenges of supervision;
- The research environment;
- The presentation of the research and assessment;
- Towards a code of good practice;
- The economic dividend: current performance and future potential.

This consultation process entailed the generation of a detailed discussion document, a series of focus group consultations and a detailed online survey questionnaire. The draft code of practice is thus an interim outcome in this consultation process. The draft code is being launched as part of the international conference 'Arts Research: The State of Play' (Dublin, May 2008). National and international stakeholders are being consulted for their responses and feedback on the draft, through this international conference on creative arts research.

## 1.2 Context.

In the last two decades there has been an expansion of provision, nationally and internationally, in practice-based research degree programmes at both masters and doctoral award levels. It is indicative of the contemporary currency of practice-based research that there have been major national and international conferences on the topic: (*Re:search*, ELIA, Berlin, 2005; *Research Questions*, IADRN, Dublin, 2005; *ELIA Comhar*, Dublin, 2001). Accompanying these developments, there has been a significant growth in publication on the topic by academics, practitioners and various quality assurance agencies: (Balkema & Slager, 2004; Biggs 2000 & 2004; Elkins, 2005; Gray & Malins, 2004; Hannula et al, 2005; Jones, 2006; Kiljunen & Hannula, 2002; Macleod & Holdridge, 2005.)

This growth in national and international awareness and engagement with practice-based research in the arts coincides with a general expansion and enhancement of quality assurance frameworks, measures, provisions and supports across higher education as represented by:

- The National Framework of Qualifications (2004) and the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (2005) which for the first time provide accepted benchmarks for academic qualifications which are independent of the field of learning and the mode of learning.
- The 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' (2005) which establish internationally agreed principles of good practice for the quality assurance of higher education and training.

This has also been a period of development which has seen a sea change in the construction of the research mission of higher education and an expansion in national and international investment in research. Accompanying this expansion of the research mission there has been a renewal of policy and strategic development across the European higher education space. Against this backdrop, Irish higher education institutions are taking a more strategic view of research in the context of a drive to identify a fourth level and are looking for ways of consolidating existing and integrating new research degree programmes of world-class quality.

A key development in this regard has been the production of the *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* (first published by IUQB in February 2005; reprinted in October 2006). This particular document provides a robust, yet flexible, framework for the quality assurance of doctoral research programmes. The explicit purpose of Working Group in constructing a set of guidelines of good practice for practice-based research degrees has been to supplement these more general guidelines of good practice in research. Another key development has been the enhanced quality assurance of research within, and progressive delegation of authority to confer research degrees to, institutes of technology. Delegation is available on a discipline areas basis to Institutes which are research accredited under: HETAC's '*Validation Process, Policy and Criteria for the Accreditation of Providers to Maintain a Register for a specified research degree in a specified discipline area.*'(2003)

### **1.3 Relationship with existing provisions.**

The fundamental principle adopted has been that the existing volume - *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* - already establishes a general framework of quality assurance for research awards, and that what is required is to supplement these provisions with specific consideration of the particular requirements of practice-based research in the arts. This is the purpose of the current document.

Practice-based research in the arts is a relatively new activity. Compared to traditional academic research in the humanities and sciences, arts practice-based research may differ in its methods, in its research environment (conceptual and physical), in its context, in its engagement with the world of practice and in how new knowledge and understanding is presented and evaluated. The character of agreed programmes of learning and the specific outcomes of such programmes may also differ significantly.

Therefore approaches to the facilitation, development and management of traditional research degree programmes cannot simply be assumed to adequately cope with practice-based research programmes in the arts. However, it is clear that the existing 'National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities' have already achieved a level of generality – they are decidedly not discipline-specific and oriented towards supporting a plurality of academic cultures – and they thus provide a basis on which to construct specific provision for practice-based research degrees in the arts. There is a need to establish and articulate a shared understanding of, and vision for, practice-based research in the arts and bespoke principles of good practice for this activity, building upon the existing discipline-independent framework.

This draft code of practice in the provision of postgraduate research by practice in Irish third level institutions thus seeks to supplement the existing *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* and provides for both masters level and doctoral level research programmes. The ambition of this code of practice and the proposed guidelines it presents, as informed by consultation with key stakeholders, has been to provide a flexible code of practice which provides for a plurality of disciplinary and institutional ethos, culture and tradition.

#### **1.4 Definition: First principles.**

It is indicative of the emergence of 'practice-based' research degrees in recent decades that there has been a diverse terminology proposed to capture the specificity of these innovations in arts research. The lexicon proposed includes: 'practice based research'; 'practice-led research'; 'practice-driven research'; 'research-through-practice'; and 'artistic research'. The recent AHRC review report on 'practice-led' research across the broad domain of art, design and architecture identifies the difficulties in proposing a finalized definition of practice-research given the 'wide scope of the topic' (AHRC, 2008, p.11) and proposes a 'basic definition ... which is inclusive and does set a boundary albeit a wide one': 'Research in which the professional and/or creative practices of art, design or architecture play an instrumental part in an inquiry.' Other authors have proposed an equally inclusive construct 'artistic research' whereby 'the accumulation of knowledge in the artistic field is a form of research [...] Artistic research means that the artist produces an art work and researches the creative process, thus adding to the accumulation of knowledge.' (Hannula et al, 2005. p. 5.) These authors qualify their construction of 'artistic

research' by asserting that: 'each artistic field – from music to theatre and dance to design – has its own specialties that are not fully compatible with those in other fields. However, while respecting these differences ... there is fruitful and meaningful common ground to be shaped and articulated.'

While the consultation process has identified a strong commitment on the part of key stakeholders to the proposition that practice-based research is definable, there was an equally strong commitment on the part of respondents to the proposition that practice-based research would be more usefully apprehended through highlighting and studying national and international exemplars. By way of synthesizing the various approaches to the question of definition the working group has adopted an inclusive definition which provides for a multiplicity of methodological and conceptual approaches while retaining a specificity in terms of locating practice based research within the arts.

The terminology adopted – 'practice based research' – designates the broad domain of research in and through arts practice, while acknowledging that a diversity of approaches is possible within this broad domain. The different terminologies cited above demonstrate a plurality of approaches within a single overarching enterprise which is the pursuit of **research which is centrally predicated on realizing actual practice within the arts**. Understood in this way practice-based research is constructed as sub-domain of research in general, and therefore **not** to be construed *sui generis*.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition of research is very widely used and is an example of a discipline independent and generalised conception of research which comprehends practice-based research in the arts. An extract from this definition reads: 'Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.' (*Frascati Manual* 1997 and 2002.) The consultation process identified that the OECD (above) definition of research was understood to comprehend practice-based research in the arts provided that the constituent terms 'systematic' and 'applications' are interpreted inclusively.

An alternative formulation of the OECD definition presents research as comprising 'creative work, undertaken on a systematic and rigorous basis in order to contribute to and enhance knowledge and understanding in the pursuit of new concepts and applications.' (*Frascati Manual* 1997 and 2002.) A majority of respondents identified this general definition of research as also comprehending practice-based research. Thus there is a widely perceived inclusion of arts practice-based research within the larger category of research in general. While recognizing that it is important to articulate what practice-based research has in common with other fields (by way of participating in a general definition of research) the consultation process also identified a need to posit what differentiates it from them.

The first principle adopted here then is that: **practice-based research in the arts is research which is centrally predicated on realising actual practice within the arts, and as such, is consistent with the existence of a discipline independent and generalised conception of research exists which comprehends practice-based research in the arts.**

## 1.5 Building upon the definition.

Identifying practice-based research in this way enables a range of ancillary distinctions and qualifications to be constructed. In the first instance the designation practice-based research is consistent with the associated use of terms such as 'scholarship' and other terminological categories used to differentiate a range of academic and professional practice activities.

The term 'scholarship' often arises in discussions about the meaning of research. While sometimes the term is employed as synonymous with research, it also allows of a broader application to include a range of professional activities which are not primarily or directly concerned with the generation of 'new knowledge' but rather with the consolidation or maintenance of a discipline, field or knowledge domain. Thus the preparatory documentation for the 2008 UK Research Assessment Exercise states: 'Scholarship [...] is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases'. (Humes & Bryce, 2001, p. 329-330.)

Boyer (1990) in his book *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* identified four modes of scholarship. The scholarship of discovery which is what we normally consider research; the scholarship of integration which is eclectic in nature, the scholarship of engagement which involves the application of academic expertise to "consequential problems" and the scholarship of teaching (and learning). The consultation process established that Boyer's understanding of scholarship comprehends the understanding of the term that prevails in the practice-based research community.

The foregoing construction of practice-based research also allows the specification of practice-based research in a non-restrictive and flexible but nonetheless clear manner. This is consistent with the need for individual institutions to foster practice-based research in a manner consistent with, and integral to, their own specific overarching research ethos and culture. Adopting the fundamental specification of practice-based research in the arts as research which is centrally predicated on realising actual practice within the arts, it is possible to further elaborate this specification of practice-based research in a number of ways. One such refinement is the NACHTMUS definition of research (1995: see Strand, 1998) which received very wide endorsement in the consultation process:

**Research involves reflective and reflexive activity which probes both the process and product, and is directed towards the advancement of scholarship and creativity. Thus research requires:**

- **scholarly location within the discipline(s)**
- **critical reflection to identify the research niche**
- **cogent reflexive analysis of process and practice**
- **retrospective reflection to determine future research directions**

Importantly, there is widespread recognition that while realising actual practice within the arts may be centrally pursued as a research activity, arts practice in and of itself – art *qua* art - is not necessarily a research activity. In constructing a given instance of arts practice as a research activity one is positing more than 'original production' or 'novelty', one is proposing an activity that is comprehended by an overarching definition of research, such as the OECD/Frascati definition. (Furthermore, constructing a specific instance of arts practice as 'research' does not exhaustively specify the artistic significance, value or reception of that instance of arts practice.)

A corollary of this is the recognition that not all postgraduate degrees in respect of arts practices are necessarily 'research' programmes, some may be oriented towards professional practice in a manner which does not give primary importance to research as such. The consultation process made clear that there was a widespread recognition among stakeholders that the masters award level allowed of multiple constructions of masters programmes and that achieving a diversity of programme modes - including research trajectory and non-academic professional career trajectory orientations - was desirable. This code of practice is concerned with those postgraduate degree programmes that are primarily defined as research awards. Within this later category of postgraduate research programmes, there is a variety of possible programme models and structures.

The responses to the online survey questionnaire developed by the Working Group indicate a strong recognition that the National Framework of Qualifications descriptors of Level 9 and Level 10 awards are consistent with both practice-based and theory-based research degrees. Furthermore, it is evident in the survey responses that the level descriptors are translatable into the terms of creative arts practice in general, and creative arts practice-based research in particular. This is consistent with the construction of practice-based arts research as being comprehended within a generalized non-discipline-specific definition of research.

## **1.6 Structure of the document.**

This code of practice seeks to supplement the existing *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* with specific reference to provision for practice-based research degrees in the arts. For this reason the organization of material in the *National Guidelines* has been retained and the emphasis has been placed on identifying the specific considerations that practice-based research programmes warrant. The material is thus organized under the following headings:

- Institutional organisation
- Preliminary arrangements
- The Supervisor(s)
- The Student

- The Project
- Induction and professional development
- Monitoring progress
- The Dissertation
- The Examination
- The Graduation
- Monitoring PhD programmes

In each of the sections, the relevant provisions from *The National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* are cited. There then follows a discussion that summarily outlines the main relevant issues and refers to points raised during the consultation process. Where appropriate supplementary provisions are presented that take specific account of postgraduate practice based research awards. The purpose of the discussion is to place in context the specific supplementary guidelines developed. Each guideline represents a 'good practice' which it is recommended may be appropriately implemented within the specific context of the individual ethos and culture of a particular institution. These draft guidelines specifically apply to postgraduate research awards: they are not intended to cover other types of higher degree award programmes such as professional doctorates.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of professional doctorates see the NQAI (2006) *Review of Professional Doctorates*.

## **2. The Guidelines**

## 2.1 Institutional Organisation.

### **Guidelines – Bodies and Officers**

- Institutional structures in support of PhD programmes cover all sectors of the university, are effective and are suited to planned expansion and developments.
- There is a university officer with overall responsibility for PhD programmes.
- Each relevant body and officer has defined terms of reference or a job description covering all aspects of their roles with respect to PhD programmes. All levels are taken into account:
- University, Faculty, and as appropriate Department, school, institute, centre
- Research students are represented on all committees and other groups with direct relevance to postgraduate research programmes.
- Procedures are in place for the assurance of standards and quality with respect to all PhD programmes, including:
  - Periodic reviews that focus on one aspect or another of PhD programmes.
  - Periodic satisfaction surveys of research students.
  - An exit survey of every graduating research student.
  - The compilation and publication of completion times and rates, and other general data that can be broken down to show performance by any relevant academic unit.

*The National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* provide a comprehensive quality assurance model for organizational measures with respect to PhD programmes in general. In supplementing these with specific consideration of practice-based research programmes in the arts (at both masters and doctoral level) the following issues are of relevance: **(i)** interacting with domains of practice beyond the institution; **(ii)** organizational enabling of multi-disciplinary approaches; and **(iii)** organizational strategies for inter-institutional collaboration.

Practice-based arts research entails activity within broad professional domains which overlap with higher education institutions but which are not identical with these. Such broad domains of practice (historically) have not had higher education institutions as their primary locus of production, innovation, reception and validation, but rather a heterogeneous field comprising an aggregation of diverse professional and institutional structures. It is therefore necessary to interact with the domain expertise that is located in multiple sites beyond the traditional edges of higher education institutions, and thus with a range of non-academic institutional arrangements. This requires organizational provision to enable systematic interaction with external domain expertise. Specific measures are required – to organize the strategic coordination of such relationships and interactions with other non-academic institutions and players – rather than solely depending on *ad hoc* interactions which, though essential, do not of themselves allow full integration of domain expertise into organizational strategy.

The legacy features of current organizational practices within creative arts education such as craft-based or technique-based departmental divisions do not necessarily always map onto the contemporary landscape of creative practice. Furthermore, the nature of practice-based research as an innovative arena of practical and academic enquiry necessarily eludes the fixity of established departmental or disciplinary divisions. There is an inherent multi-disciplinarity demonstrated across this domain of research. The individual practice-based researcher is very often likely to be in the position of requiring diverse supports, inputs and supervisory expertise. This places new and multiple demands on the flexible management of departmental (or other such organisational units: school, faculty, section etc.) resources and personnel. Addressing this requires specific organizational planning and innovation.

There is a growing acceptance across all disciplines that doctoral learners need to be trained and supported in their study and not just in their direct research: this may be facilitated by structured doctoral programmes (comprising research apprenticeship, advanced study and generic skills training). Structured programmes will require the integrated provision of diverse disciplinary expertise and resources; this is likely to be only feasible for many arts disciplines in the context of some kind of inter-institutional collaborative framework. More generally, practice-based research across the arts faces specific issues in achieving critical mass within a research environment. In terms of the availability of qualified supervisors, access to a concentration of high level research expertise, and construction of research groupings, it seems very probable that inter-institutional collaborations through shared programmes or collaborative graduate schools will prove important strategies for developing a critical mass of researchers and a rich research environment. Again this was a finding strongly expressed in the survey responses. Such inter-institutional initiatives will require flexible and innovative organizational structures, inter-institutional agreement frameworks and work practices.

#### **Supplementary Guidelines – Organisational Measures**

- There are organizational mechanisms and/or organizational measures, both formal and informal, whereby the bearers of expertise from the domain of practice beyond the academy are integrated into the organizational units responsible for development, design, delivery and quality enhancement of practice-based research programmes.
- There is a well-defined and flexible enabling mechanism for accessing expertise and resources across organizational units which is provided for within the organization's resource allocation model
- The research student has mobility, across the organizational units of the institution, appropriate to the research undertaking.
- There are, where inter-institutional programmes are constructed, established template agreement frameworks for inter-institutional collaboration such as joint supervision, and where appropriate, joint delivery, joint accreditation and/or joint registration as necessary for achieving critical mass in a research area.

## 2.2 Preliminary Arrangements.

### Guidelines – Procedures

- There is a written administrative operational procedure for each major step in a research student's progress from application, to the offer of a position, to graduation. All procedures provide for good notice being given to students, supervisors etc. at all stages.
- There are clear, concise and easily completed forms that facilitate the student, the supervisor and administrators at each major stage. All of these forms are available in softcopy on the university website, and are widely publicised.
- There are clear definitions that differentiate between full-time and less than full-time students and there is a specific timetable with respect to expected completion time etc. for each category.
- "Time out' for periods longer than a set minimum, that are associated with long term sickness, compassionate leave and other defined circumstances, can be granted to a student who makes a formal application which is supported by his/her supervisor/'supervisory team'.

### Guidelines – Documentation

- There are clear and logical regulations governing minimum and maximum completions times and re-admission procedures.
- For supervisors and students there are simple and well-designed forms and written formal procedures that clarify and simplify all important stages of the PhD programme, and allow for reasonable flexibility and intra-disciplinary variations.
- There is a comprehensive, flexible, and widely used 'Code of practice/Guidelines' booklet that ensures transparency in relation to the expectations and the duties of all parties in the PhD programme and covers all matters relevant to research students, supervisors, university officers and examiners. Matters included should cover the full range of main issues relevant to research students, among which are:
  - The realities of a life of research and scholarship.
  - Conventions regarding single authorship, priorities in jointly authored published work and the acknowledgement of contributions.
  - Issues related to ethics and intellectual property.
  - General advice on career prospects for research graduates.
- All basic documentation is routinely and readily available in (a) printed booklet(s) and on the university website.

'Preliminary arrangements' refers to all procedures and documentation that are completed, in place or operational before a research student is recruited and registered. These include the core procedures relating to admission, registration, final submission and examination, but also other elements that can contribute to what is considered internationally to be good practice. The basic good practice measure here is to ensure that there is explicit documentation in place, preferably in the public domain and therefore available to potential researchers, which covers all

the salient features of the research programme in relation to admission, progression and completion.

The specific considerations that practice-based research presents, in terms of 'preliminary arrangements,' pertain to the emergent nature of the area and its relatively recent arrival on the academic scene. The relative novelty of practice-based research allows for the potential for confusion on the part of programme applicants with respect to the basic remit, function, and meaning of a practice-based research degree and its relationship with both professional academic life and professional practice beyond the academy. A further set of considerations is also established on the basis that the emergence of practice-based research degree programmes will have a bearing on the remit, function, and meaning of existing undergraduate programmes, professional masters programmes and cognate postgraduate theoretical research programmes. Furthermore, the emergence of practice-based research degree programmes will have implications for research funders and other stakeholders in the research enterprise and therefore special care needs to be taken to ensure institutional and programme legitimacy to all stakeholders.

Given the richness of the practice-based research paradigm, its potential for different methodologies, approaches, and epistemic constructions – as evidenced in the rich and diverse lexicon of practice-based research – it would seem especially important that providers make explicit at the outset, the locally selected research paradigm and relate this to recognised the practice-based research paradigm that is being adopted in a given programme. In doing so it would be especially important to locate the practice-based research culture being realized by the programme within the terms of the relevant institutional research strategies and the national research policy context.

Finally, it is clear that a potential source of confusion for researchers embarking upon a practice-based research project is the question of the nature of the final major research deliverable – variously construed as 'thesis', 'dissertation', 'exhibition' or 'final submission.' Historically, and routinely, the PhD submission in the sciences and the humanities was summarily indicated by an indicative word count – e.g., '100,000 words' or whatever particular institutional dispensation held sway – such a summary indicative 'measure' of the final research deliverable in practice-based research is not available. Such a handy shorthand specification, for all its crudity and imprecision, does serve to establish some contours on the task-load that a researcher is signing up to when initiating a research project. The absence of such a ready shorthand can give rise to confusion and ambiguity about the nature and remit of a research programme and about the research goal. On the other hand, for some, there is a perceived risk that, in summarily specifying the final research deliverable in advance, the inherent 'openness' (the not-fully-specified-in-advance quality) of both creative artistic practice and creative research, is overwritten by a narrow prescription of outputs. However, it is desirable that the prospective or early stage researcher should be given some indicative 'measures' in respect of the final research deliverable required by the programme. Clarity in this regard needs to be

established in advance of programme delivery, but should be done in a way that does not undermine the potential for discovery including the discovery of new research questions en route.

#### **Supplementary Guidelines – Advance Preparation**

- The role of the research programme in relation to academic and professional formation is published.
- There is a clear explanation and description of the practice-based research ethos and culture of the provider and of the particular programme.
- There is an indication of the typical task load and/or parameters of the final submission by suitable means which can include indicative examples, metrics or other specification.
- There is a clear outline specification of the relevant resources available to support the research project.
- Given the emergent nature of practice-based research, there are specific supports for both supervisors and research students in respect of maintaining currency with the broader epistemic debates that characterize this developing field, especially with reference to the European Research Area.
- Supervisor enhancement and support measures take specific account of the practice-based research paradigm and are informed by the particularities of creative practice supervision.

## 2.3 The Supervisor(s).

### Guidelines – Training and Support

- Every student has one supervisor (the primary supervisor), who is a member of staff of the university and an active and successful scholar in the relevant area, who takes full responsibility for the overall management and supervision of the student's training and research project, for the monitoring of progress and for administrative matters.
- There are defined criteria on the suitability of persons in the university as primary supervisors of PhD students.
- Adequate training and other provisions are available to enhance and support student supervision and project management. They are obligatory for first-time supervisors.
- There is a procedure that ensures that a primary supervisor is capable of taking on a proposed number of new students. This procedure takes into consideration the experience and reputation of the supervisor, the composition of his/her research group (number of research students and the stage of their training, number of postdoctoral workers and number of support staff), and the support available from co-supervisory arrangements.
- Arising from the conclusions of complaints procedures and in support of high standards of supervision, a prospective supervisor may have extra conditions imposed. Another procedure exists that can lead to annulment of this requirement.
- The making of all important decisions concerning a research student's progress involves, in addition to the student's primary supervisor (and cosupervisor if one is required), at least one other experienced and qualified person. This may be the head of department or school, or his/her nominee, or, where there is a supervisory team, the associate supervisor.
- There are policies and procedures related to academic staff taking sabbatical leave or approaching retirement with respect to their acting as supervisors.

### Guidelines – Supervisory Teams

- In defined areas or circumstances (or normally), the overall supervision of a research student's progress involves, in addition to the student's primary supervisor (and co-supervisor(s) if required), an associate supervisor who is officially assigned this duty for the whole of the student's project.
- All primary, associate and co-supervisors are aware of their responsibilities and rights with respect to the students they supervise, of the responsibilities and rights of their students, and of the regulations governing the operation of research programmes and examinations. In specific cases, the roles of an associate supervisor may be limited to generic and pastoral issues.
- Conditions requiring co-supervision are defined.
- There are defined criteria on the suitability of persons to act as cosupervisors, when they are and when they are not members of staff of the university.
- There are defined criteria on the suitability of persons to act as associate supervisors.
- There are procedures that protect the interests of students and supervisors in cases where a supervisor must be absent for periods of time longer than a few weeks, and when a student spends a period elsewhere doing relevant work.
- There are formal procedures that facilitate changes of primary supervisor, cosupervisor and associate supervisor.

The *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* provide a detailed series of good practice guidelines which are applicable to practice based research. In supplementing these, it is worth noting that the consultation process established that stakeholders strongly agreed with the need for integrated and cohesive supervisory teams, rather than single supervisors working in isolation. It is also apparent, from the responses to the online questionnaire, that the particular mix of supervisory inputs required draws on both traditional 'academic' research experience and experience in the field of practice. At the same time there was strong agreement from stakeholders with the proposition that there should be an integrated and holistic approach to the total research project by means of a cohesive supervision team.

In providing supplementary guidelines in this regard, particular consideration has been given to the special challenges that stakeholders identified with respect to supervision of practice-based research. Among the challenges identified are those presented by the transient products that practice-based research can often generate at different points in the research process (e.g., performances, exhibitions, one-off events.)

#### **Supplementary Guidelines – Practice-based Supervision Teams**

- Membership of the supervisory team includes, but is not necessarily restricted to, bearers of the appropriate award, e.g. PhD bearers for doctoral research supervision.
- There is a project-specific and well-defined process for the recognition of prior learning and research achievement in respect of non-PhD-bearers who are proposed for inclusion on a supervisory team.
- There is provision for the delivery of a customised induction process and continuing support for all non-PhD-bearers working as part of a supervisory team.
- Members of the supervisory team have regular opportunities to review the progress of the research project as a cohesive team. Each supervisor being afforded the opportunity of reviewing all aspects of the student's research outputs.
- The supervisory team establishes an understanding with the student on the archival strategies around the documenting and disclosure of the transient products of the research process at an early stage in the research project.
- All members of the supervisory team have ready access to the archive of the research project and have advance notice of key events in the research process (e.g., performances, exhibitions, one-off events.)

## 2.4 The Student.

### **Guidelines – Recruitment**

- The university careers service and all appropriate academic units act to ensure that documents and workshops on what it means to undertake a research degree programme (whether internally or elsewhere), the uncertain nature of research and the wide range of possible career paths, are available to all interested students (at undergraduate and postgraduate level).
- Suitability criteria are defined for students applying to enter a research degree programme, criteria that take into account the needs of all faculties/colleges and are sufficiently flexible.
- Provisions are made to ensure that applicant students from abroad are not disadvantaged and that supervisors of foreign students are supported at all stages during recruitment, registration and throughout their studies.
- Direct registration on a PhD programme is possible.
- There are clear and logical regulations in place governing the relations between research masters and PhD degree programmes, and transfers between them. These regulations cover:
  - I. Categorisation of ‘masters’ programmes as ‘taught’, ‘preparatory for PhD training’ (e.g. MRes), ‘research’ and ‘PhD track’.
  - II. Criteria for obligatory initial registration for master’s degrees for students considered by supervisors to be on a PhD track. (The registration process and records differentiate between ‘PhD track’ and other research masters students.)
  - III. Criteria for students permitted to register immediately for a PhD degree.
  - IV. Criteria for the transfer of registration from research masters to PhD.
  - V. Criteria for the transfer of registration from PhD to a research masters, including for when a student wishes to continue to a PhD.

### **Guidelines – Part-time Students**

- There are formal definitions of full-time and part-time students that are taken into account in the calculation of fees, all project timetables, work plans and estimations of progress and completion times.

### **Guidelines – Entitlements, Duties, Responsibilities and Stipends**

- The entitlements, duties and responsibilities of the research student considering commencing a postgraduate research programme are defined and communicated clearly to the candidate. These include general matters as well as matters specific to the studentship in question, and may cover:
  - Fees and other charges and whether they are covered by the financial support on offer,
  - Attendance and reporting requirements,
  - Relevant codes of behaviour and practice,
  - Teaching, supervision and mentoring duties.
- The objective of the university is that studentships funded internally (taking into account the associated duties) are at least at levels equivalent to minimum nationally funded grants

### **Guidelines – Support**

- There is a dynamic culture of creativity/scholarship/research in the university and in each research group, in which research students participate actively.
- There are guidelines that specify normal and minimum degrees and frequencies of consultations between a student and his/her supervisors, and give options when these cannot be maintained due to unusual circumstances.
- There is a mechanism that identifies students who work outside research groups, or whose project is unique in the faculty/college or institution with respect to its subject or methodology, and that facilitates the provision of appropriate supports.
- Supplementary support measures and training are provided for students from abroad who need such supports.
- The university publishes annually a list of PhD students, titles of projects and supervisors to encourage the development of national networks for PhD students and researchers.

### **Guidelines – Facilities**

- Research students are not recruited unless certain minimum common and individual facilities will be available for their use.
- The university has a policy that specifies overall minima for all general facilities used by research students, including special library access, book borrowing facilities, inter-library loans and access rights to certain staff facilities.
- Each school/department plans for the recruitment of research students to ensure that local facilities are sufficient to ensure them a high-quality education.

The *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* provide a robust framework of effective practice measures in respect of student recruitment, student support and student facilities. There are a small number of supplementary considerations which pertain to students pursuing higher awards through practice-based research. These considerations are premised on recognition that creative arts disciplines do not have academic settings as their sole or primary locus. While in some disciplines advanced research training at doctoral level is central to a career path within the discipline (e.g., research science) this is not normally the case with creative arts disciplines. Providers will therefore have different perspectives on the role of higher research degrees in enabling diverse career pathways for creative arts practitioners. In the recruitment process it would seem reasonable that students would be required to have clarity on these issues. Practice-based researchers at postgraduate level will normally require access to professional level facilities appropriate to their discipline. Such facilities may require collaboration with non-academic institutions and agencies thus creating requirements on research students to operate in multiple professional contexts

### **Supplementary Guidelines – The Practice-based Research Student**

- Criteria for student suitability in respect of postgraduate practice-based research awards make consideration of competency demonstrated in the relevant discipline(s) in extra-academic contexts as appropriate to the research proposed.
- Recruitment literature indicates distinctions between professional postgraduate programmes and postgraduate research programmes as appropriate to the programmes of study offered.
- Recruitment literature identifies the particular practice-based research culture orientation that underpins a given programme.
- Expectations concerning the interaction between the student's normal professional activity undertaken as a creative practitioner and the student's programme of postgraduate research are agreed between the student and supervisory team and are communicated clearly in general terms in the provider's regulations and guidelines.
- Facilities for the support of the students enable the documentation and archiving of the research project taking account of the specific conditions of the given research practice (e.g., recording and documenting live performance to audience).
- Where professional facilities are accessed through arrangements with an external agency, the student's entitlements, roles and responsibilities are specified in advance.
- In recruiting postgraduate practice based researchers the research environment required by the research project is identified and provided for in advance of the commencement of studies.

## 2.5 The Project.

### **Guidelines – the Project**

- Ethical approval is obtained for relevant projects and there is a mechanism to ensure that such projects are identified and receive approval.
- The safety aspects of projects are considered and taken into account.
- There are regulations governing 'extra mural' research students and projects.
- Projects that involve experience and training in another institution are facilitated.
- The student and supervisor(s) are aware of university policy on intellectual property (IP) and all stakeholders are made aware of potential IP issues as soon as such issues become apparent.
- Where part or all of a thesis requires protection of IP (for a formally defined period), there is a mechanism for resolution of potential conflicts between this and requirements for publications to satisfy criteria for work worthy of the award of a PhD degree.

*The National Guidelines* in respect of the research project identify measures pertaining to ethical approval and intellectual property. These equally apply with respect to postgraduate practice based research. There are a further range of considerations that are appropriate in the context of practice based research which are driven by taking account of both the recentness of the developing research culture across creative arts and the extensive domain of creative arts practices beyond higher education.

### **Supplementary Guidelines – Project Specification**

The particular research focus and nature of the postgraduate research project is specified by the student in consultation with the supervisory team within the first phase of studies.

There is a support mechanism which enables the research project to be well specified within the first phase of studies.

The means of documenting and archiving the research project process, outcomes, and findings are outlined as part of the project specification.

Where the project demonstrates a significant multi- or cross-disciplinary character, these disciplinary dimensions of the project are given due consideration in the project specification - in terms of saliency to research topic, viability within research process and required supports.

The specific epistemic and methodological orientation of the research project is disclosed as part of the research project development.

The proposed relationship between the research project and the broader domain of practice beyond the academic setting is outlined as part of the research specification.

## 2.6 Induction and professional development.

### **Guidelines – Induction**

- There is a structured programme of induction for all research students.
- There is an initial, obligatory process/course for all students that introduces them to the central facilities and services of the university and makes them aware of all aspects of the research masters and PhD programmes, including research plans, performance monitoring and examination procedures. What may constitute a 'reasonable workload' and standard annual leave entitlements are also discussed. In addition, students' teaching duties, their rights and responsibilities, potential intellectual property issues, the rights and responsibilities of their supervisors, plagiarism, safety and ethical considerations, definitions of research misconduct, basic work conditions and regulations, and the supports available from careers and other student services are explained and discussed.
- There are also formal faculty/school induction programmes (or equivalent measures) that cover all issues specific to each faculty/school or specific discipline.
- Strong and responsive feedback mechanisms ensure that ineffectual elements and courses are discontinued or improved.

### **Guidelines – Professional development**

- There is a structured programme of professional development and opportunities for skills acquisition for research students with all elements available in any year, or, if feasible, in any semester or term. As appropriate, attendance and learning are monitored, and certificates issued.
- The University and its constituent units cooperate internally and with others to ensure that all such training provided is of a high international standard. The quality of such training is reviewed regularly through formal assessments and student feedback.
- Each student is able to access adequate training in all appropriate, basic skills including, as necessary, writing, document processing, data processing, presentation, statistics, safety procedures etc.
- Training in research methodologies, good research practices and safety procedures relevant to specific broad disciplines is provided in ways appropriate to the numbers of students concerned. The quality, consistency and relevance of such training is reviewed regularly through formal assessment and student feedback.
- Students who are to undertake fieldwork are given the necessary training in the appropriate skills related to their discipline and project.
- As students progress through their research projects, they are (formally or informally) given training on (and/or supervised experience of) applying for grants and writing articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals etc.
- When research students are also to be employed as tutors or demonstrators, basic training in appropriate teaching and supervisory skills is provided, with a sufficiency of such training given in advance of the commencement of teaching.
- Provided it does not impinge on progress with the PhD project, and with the agreement of the supervisor(s), it is possible for students planning an academic career to acquire a formal teaching qualification, such as a certificate in higher education.

### **Guidelines – Conference attendance and Publications**

- Research students present their work at local, national and international conferences.
- Supervisors ensure that research student's participate substantially, or play a leading role, in the preparation of research papers and articles.

The importance of induction processes with regard to postgraduate research education is widely acknowledged. The induction process is especially important with regard to creative practitioners operating within a research context. Thus while access to generic research methods courses is important, there is a further need to address the specificity of practice based research approaches. This may best be met by providing surveys which include treatments of actual practice based research projects recently completed drawn from across a range of disciplines, institutions and different national contexts.

#### **Supplementary Guidelines – Induction and Professional Development**

- There is an element within the programme of induction which outlines the broad landscape of practice based research with reference to specific exemplars.
- Within the induction process specific consideration is given to documentation, archiving and dissemination appropriate to the relevant creative arts discipline(s) and local institutional practice.
- Programmes of professional development and opportunities for specialist and generic skills acquisition are constructed with reference to both the programme provider's practice and professional practice outside academic settings.
- Opportunities for interaction with specialists from outside the domain of creative arts practice are provided as part of professional development.
- Supports are provided in enabling students to develop specific competency in communicating their research to multiple and diverse audiences, including non-specialists.

## 2.7 Monitoring Progress.

### **Guidelines – Early-stage**

- There is an initial formal meeting between the student, the primary supervisor and all other members of any defined 'supervisory team', at which there is opportunity for clarification of procedures (including significant hurdles and criteria).
- At an early meeting also, the proposed programme of research (or of the process leading to definition of the student's research project) is explained and discussed in detail.
- There is a requirement, and a procedure involving the student, for the development of a research plan and its revision at appropriate intervals.
- There is a formal early review of the student's progress (within the first year for full time students) with defined options depending on rate of progress and particular circumstances. The procedures for such a review ensure clarity and transparency for the student.
- Where 'PhD track' students must register initially for a research masters' degree and where research masters' students may apply to register for a PhD, procedures and criteria for such transfers are defined and are clear.
- The regulations allow for, and support, the early exit of unsuitable students from research-based degree programmes.

### **Guidelines – Mid- and late-stage**

- Regular research group/departmental or more public presentations of interim results and findings are required of students.
- There are formal reviews of progress at regular intervals with defined options depending on rate of progress and particular circumstances. A brief written record is maintained for each review and the procedures for such reviews ensure clarity and transparency for the student.
- The defined options above allow for transfer of registration from masters to PhD or vice versa, and for exit from research training.
- The supervisor / 'supervisory team' must agree that sufficient progress has been made by a student before s/he may proceed to final write up and submission for examination:  
OR
- The formal decision to proceed to final write up and submit a thesis for examination rests with the student, but the student must show that s/he has obtained the advice of his/her supervisor / 'supervisory team' before a thesis may be submitted for examination.

### **Guidelines – Appeals and Complaints**

- There is a clearly understood procedure whereby at any time a student may make a complaint related to the project or its supervision, initially relatively informally but continuing to a formal process in appropriate instances.
- There is a clearly understood procedure whereby a student can appeal any formal decision made by his/her primary supervisor/'supervisory team' or progress review board.

In considering the need to supplement the existing guidelines with regard to monitoring student progress, it is deemed especially important to establish the student's engagement with the research orientation of the programme at an early stage.

**Supplementary Guideline – Monitoring Progress**

- Within the context of a formal early review of the student's progress, the student is required to demonstrate competency in framing the research orientation of their particular practice.

## 2.8 The Dissertation.

### Guidelines – the Dissertation

- The format, maximum length and other attributes of a PhD thesis are specified in the university guidelines, with allowance made for reasonable variation and the different formats that are traditional for specific disciplines.
- University guidelines on thesis preparation cover issues such as plagiarism and the correct usage of quotations, and make clear the importance of the explicit acknowledgment at all relevant places in the thesis of all contributions of others to the project.
- Supports etc. are available to aid students in quick and efficient thesis writing. These include:
  - Systematic work planning including scheduled consultations with primary supervisor(s).
  - Additional or refresher training on work planning, appropriate writing styles, information technologies and document processing.
  - Provision of writing-up facilities.
  - Incentives to complete and submit.
- There are guidelines that indicate preferred deadline dates for thesis submission and give estimates of the normal time allowances for examination, implementation of required corrections and the processing of the reports of the examiners, leading (if there are no excessive delays) to graduation at a particular time.

There has been significant discussion across the practice-based research community internationally about the nature of the dissertation and the final body of work submitted for examination in postgraduate awards. The discussion has tended on occasion to focus on the relationship between, on the one hand, a lengthy, formal treatise, or written thesis and, on the other hand, a body of practical works or project deliverables (performances, exhibitions, scores, artworks etc.) Part of the discussion has been driven by a proposed distinction between 'dissertation' and 'thesis': the 'dissertation,' for some, refers to the written element of the final award-seeking submission, while the 'thesis' is taken to refer to the overall submission constituted by the text and whatever practical outputs are integrated into the final examination submission. There is ample latitude across the domain for different provisions in this regard however, some general measures apply.

### Supplementary Guidelines – The Practice-based Research Thesis

- The key functions of the written element of a practice-based research submission - such as: (i) to contextualise the research undertaken; (ii) describe how the research was executed; and (iii) to characterise the significance of the contribution made by the research to the field of enquiry – are communicated to the student at the commencement of the programme of studies.
- The institution provides guidelines, analogous to those for the written dissertation, for practical components of the final examination submission to be made available in an archivable form appropriate to the relevant creative arts discipline(s).

- The integration of the various components of the final award-seeking submission is provided for within such guidelines through a standard instrument such as a thesis abstract and/or thesis summary.

## 2.9 The Examination.

### **Guidelines – the Examiners**

- There are procedures for the selection, approval (with respect to agreed criteria as to suitability) and appointment of the external examiner(s) and internal examiners.
- The student is informed when potential external and internal examiners and the overall make-up of the examination board are being considered.
- Provision in the make up of the examination board is made for where the 'student' is a member of staff of the university granting the degree.
- Where at all possible, PhD candidates are examined orally with all examiners physically present.
- In each broad academic area, records of the employment and the frequency of employment of external examiners are maintained and are available for consultation when new examiners are being appointed.

### **Guidelines – General Arrangements**

- Safeguards exist to avoid substantial administrative delays between submission of a thesis for examination and the examination itself.
- A clear description of the whole examination process from start to final approval of the examiners' report(s) is available to all concerned.
- There are written operating procedures and clear, simple forms to be completed, that facilitate the administration of the examination process.
- Formal responsibilities for organising the oral examination and all associated arrangements are assigned in good time and are clear.
- There is a procedure that ensures that the student is kept informed of arrangements and, as soon as possible, of any unavoidable changes.
- Oral examinations take place in a good environment, in a suitable location and with all standard facilities readily available.
- Student and examiner feedback on the examination process are sought routinely and summarised in an annual report.

### **Guidelines – Examination, including Oral Examination**

- There are defined criteria for the award of the PhD that take into account the variety of disciplines in which the PhD is awarded.
- A preliminary short written report is prepared independently before the oral examination by each examiner.
- There is a defined list of outcomes to the examination that provides sufficient options, and supports the maintenance of standards.
- The student has a say as to the role of the supervisor(s) at the time of the oral examination.
- Simple, clear and adequate procedures are defined for all stages of the examination process. These include:
  - A simple, standard operating procedure for the examination process.
  - Definitions of the roles and responsibilities of internal examiners, external examiners and the supervisor(s).
- There are guidelines for the oral examination process that provide for:
  - Format and timetable.
  - Length of the overall examination.
  - Feedback to the student at the end of the examination.
- The characteristics of the report required in the case of examiner unanimity on the examination outcome are defined.

- There is a procedure that can be implemented in the case of examiner disagreement as to the examination outcome.
- There is a defined appeal procedure that can be used by a student or a supervisor in cases of disagreement with the examination outcome.

#### **Guidelines – Revision**

- The format, attributes and number of copies to be lodged of the final thesis are specified, with provisions made for variations between disciplines.
- A particular internal examiner, with the support of the principal supervisor, is responsible for monitoring and assuring the implementation of corrections to the thesis that were prescribed by the examiners.
- As appropriate, any other relevant regulations, e.g. governing lodgement of the thesis to the university library, are defined clearly.

The particular difference that practice-based research may introduce with respect to the process of examination is the contingent availability of individual creative arts works and practices for examination: particular restrictions on access to live works, site-specific works, audience-specific works may apply in certain instances. One means of addressing this is to ensure a robust protocol on documentation and archiving of the research project throughout the whole research cycle from project initiation to project conclusion. Another consideration then arises with reference to the time necessary for examiners to review such documentation, particularly in the case of time-based works, where the specific temporality of the work has a bearing on the research topic addressed. In the responses to the online survey there was evidence of broad support for greater public dimension to the examination process. This is an aspect of postgraduate examination in other countries in Northern Europe for example. The value of a public dimension to the examination process is seen by some to reside in assuring the authenticity and ownership of research presented for higher degrees.

#### **Supplementary Guidelines – Examination**

- Where performance, live event, exhibition or site-visit forms the central component of the final submission consideration is given to facilitating examiner direct access to this component, while meeting the normal requirement to archive the research appropriately.
- All examiners are afforded equal access to all aspects of the examination submission.
- Provision is made for examiners who are not PhD-bearers but who are domain experts of international standing. In such instances the examination board has a majority of external examiners who are PhD-bearers.
- The time allocated to the examination process takes account of the nature of the examination submission.
- The student is provided with guidelines on the duration of time-based components in the examination submission (e.g., recordings).
- Where feasible public presentation of the research is integral to the examination

process, and the examination process itself is given public form where appropriate, e.g. *viva voce*.

## 2.10 The Graduation

### Guidelines – the Graduation

- There is a special procedure for the awarding of a PhD degree that recognises its importance and special role.

The *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* do not require supplementary material in this regard.

## 2.11 Monitoring PhD programmes

### Guidelines – Registration Data

The **STUDENT REGISTER**:

For each student the following information is required:

- Name
- Supervisor(s)
  - Primary Supervisor
  - Co-supervisor (if applicable)
  - Associate supervisor (if applicable)
- Registration Time\*
  - Date of initial registration
  - Year of study
  - Date of completion (see definition of completion time)
- Registration status
  - Taught Masters degree
  - Masters degree (by research)
  - 'PhD track'
  - PhD degree
  - Other doctoral degree (DBA, MD, EdD)
- Registration mode
  - Full-time
  - Part-time
  - 'write-up' status
- Affiliation
  - Faculty/College
  - School
  - Department

The **GRADUATE REGISTER** (updated annually):

For each student record the following information is included:

- Name
- Gender
- Research Degree Awarded
- Graduation date
- Title of thesis
- Department, School and Faculty affiliation
- Supervisor(s)
- Completion time

### Guidelines – Completion Data

**ANNUAL STATISTICS** are calculated and recorded in relation to:

- Completion rates and completion times for PhD degrees (see definitions)
  - By Faculty (or College) and for the university overall
  - For full-time and part-time students
- Completion rates and completion times:
  - Are calculated separately for full-time and part-time students
  - Take into account unusual circumstances such as

- the formal deregistration of the students (for maternity or family leave, for instance)
- the mid-project transfer of a student from another university

The *National Guidelines of Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities* do not require supplementary material in this regard.

## **3. Feedback.**

### **3.1 The Conference.**

The Working Group in collaboration with the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media have organised an international conference in Dublin – Arts Research: The State of Play – in May 2008 as a mechanism to publicise the draft guidelines and as a forum to provide feedback from local and international experts in respect of these. The conference proceedings will be recorded and an edited volume will be prepared for peer review publication. It is intended by this process to engage a diverse range of disciplinary and international perspectives in helping to refine and evolve the draft guidelines in advance of finalisation.

### **3.2 Written Responses.**

All interested parties are invited to submit written responses to the draft guidelines – observations, comments, suggestions and other feedback - by email to the Working Group on Practice-Based Research. These may be sent to: [khenry@hetac.ie](mailto:khenry@hetac.ie)

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