

# Procedures and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Degrees at Carlow College



*Carlow College*



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### **I. Introduction.**

This document is intended to provide a common point of reference for all staff and current and prospective postgraduate research students in Carlow College. <sup>1</sup>

## **II. Mission Statement**

Drawing on its long tradition of education since 1793, Carlow College serves the educational needs of contemporary society through the provision of quality courses leading to internationally recognized awards. While conscious of its national and international role, the college is committed - in collaboration with the local authorities and the other education providers in the area – to advancing the educational, cultural, social and economic development of the South Leinster and South-East Midlands regions. It is within this context that high-quality research at postgraduate level is seen as central to the overall mission of the college.

## **III. Postgraduate Research degrees: Registration Procedures**

The M.A. by Research at Carlow College is awarded by HETAC and is therefore subject to the regulations, standards, and policies of that body as set out in the document ‘Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria 2010’ which is available on the HETAC website: [www.hetac.ie](http://www.hetac.ie).

The following are the internal procedures to be followed for registration through Carlow College:

1. **Application.** Applicants should first discuss informally their interest and possible topic with two lecturers in the relevant discipline in which they would like to conduct the research. The normal entry requirement is a first class honours or high second class honours grade one in the undergraduate degree and tangible evidence of ability to undertake research work as manifested in the student’s undergraduate Dissertation. Candidates must have studied the discipline they wish to pursue as a major part of their undergraduate degree. The lecturers consulted must be of the opinion that the student is capable of pursuing postgraduate research work and that the proposed topic is feasible within the allowed timeframe and that the student has access to relevant manuscript or library materials to enable completion. Two suitably qualified academics should endorse the candidate.  
If the student is encouraged to pursue the research project, then the HETAC application form should be completed in full by the candidate and his or her supervisor and submitted to the Postgraduate Research Programme Board of the college.
2. **Postgraduate Research Programme Board.** This Programme Board acts as the internal regulatory body which will assess the submission. It can accept, require

- revisions, or reject the submission. It will nominate the supervisor(s). Applicants who come from a non-standard background may be required to do a Master's Qualifying Examination as a condition for admission to the M.A. programme. This takes the following form: a chapter of the proposed thesis will be submitted to the approved Carlow College HETAC external examiner for the relevant College discipline. The application will be furthered only if the research chapter is deemed worthy in the written opinion of the external examiner.
3. Supervision. The Masters thesis is written under the supervision of a full-time member of staff in every case with the approval of the Postgraduate Research Programme Board. The nominated internal supervisor will be of doctoral status and a specialist in the subject area concerned. Additional suitably qualified supervisor(s) may be appointed where this is thought necessary to cover adequately the field of study.
  4. If the submission is accepted the Postgraduate Research Programme Board will forward the application documents to HETAC for registration.
  5. Duration. The normal duration of the MA by research is two academic years from the date of admission.
  6. Role of Research Student. Students will be required to work closely with their appointed supervisor, who will in turn be required, following HETAC regulations, to submit progress reports on the research being conducted.
  7. Monitoring role of the Postgraduate Research Programme Board. The Board, through the Registrar as Chair, will monitor the entire process and may arrange meetings with supervisors/students if necessary.
  8. Staff/Postgraduate Research Colloquia. Postgraduate students are required to present a paper on their research at Staff/Postgraduate Research colloquia to be held during the academic year.
  9. Postgraduate Grants. Students are strongly encouraged (and can apply for college postgraduate conference grants) to attend and participate in relevant conferences. Application forms for this purpose are available.
  10. Thesis Submission. Submission of the thesis is subject to the guidelines and format required by HETAC.
  11. External Examiner. The College's HETAC approved external examiner at undergraduate level in the discipline of the thesis will normally act as external examiner for the thesis. The nomination of the undergraduate external examiner depends on the normal criteria for approval by HETAC: a specialist of doctoral status, significant research activity, standing in the field, seniority in another institution of higher learning, and independent of the college.

#### **IV. The Duties and Responsibilities of the Postgraduate Research Programme Board at Carlow College.**

1. The Postgraduate Research Programme Board at Carlow College is responsible for all issues pertaining to postgraduate studies. It reports to the Academic Council. The Board will give particular consideration to ensuring that postgraduate students are embraced academically and pastorally as part of the College community.
2. The Postgraduate Research Programme Board is comprised of the following College personnel: President and Vice-President ex officio, the Registrar who normally chairs the Board, all academic staff who are supervising research theses, the chairs of all College Programme Boards, Cluster Convenors, the Chair of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee, and two research student representatives.
3. The Postgraduate Research Programme Board is responsible for the maintenance of quality standards appropriate to postgraduate level study.
4. Carlow College currently has approval for Postgraduate research theses at Level 9 in the following areas: Theology, Philosophy, English and History. Students can qualify for Department of Education and Science maintenance grants in these subject areas. Since 2004, a taught Masters in Therapeutic Child Care has been available in Carlow College to professionals in the field.
5. The Postgraduate Research Programme Board meets at least twice per term and on other occasions as required. It reports twice a term to the Academic Council.
6. Staff/Postgraduate Research Colloquia under the chairmanship of the Registrar and the aegis of the Postgraduate Research Programme Board take place every three weeks during term. Postgraduate students and the academic staff are expected and encouraged to attend and to read papers at the Colloquia. Postgraduate students should see these meetings as opportunities to test their scholarship in the company of research-active staff. Staff should see these occasions as a form of on-going academic development before a paper is taken on the scholarly conference circuit. The Colloquia should bring students into a community of learning so that the research student never feels academically isolated.
7. The Postgraduate Research Programme Board has a duty to ensure that there is a satisfactory research environment at Carlow College. Research facilities at Carlow College include the Brophy Memorial Library which is the main college library, the O’Keeffe Research Library which is the old library, the Wall Manuscripts Room and the new Delany Archive. Between them these four repositories contain works in Philosophy, Theology, History, English, and many other subjects, which have been built up and added to the collections of the college since its foundation in the eighteenth century. The college also has four electronic, aggregated data bases, with access to over 2,000 serial titles. These resources are accessible from any computer terminal on the college campus and

also from any remote site world-wide. Students are allowed access to any college or university library throughout the country by virtue of a consortium agreement of which Carlow College is a part. All college libraries are involved in inter-library loan of which any student can take advantage free of charge. The college is an active supporter of the Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland (COLICO).

8. Research environment. Research students are also supported in the following ways: with tutorials in research methodologies and research ethics, in IT and data sourcing. Postgraduate research students are offered, where possible, limited teaching work (tutorials) in their field to help with their professional development.

9. External support may be available to research students through the institutional relationship Carlow College has with Trinity College, Dublin and internationally with Carlow University, Pittsburgh, St Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa, and the thirty-six colleges and universities of the Illinois Consortium for International Student Programmes (ICISP).

## **V. The Duties and Responsibilities of the Postgraduate Supervisor at Carlow College**

1. Research postgraduate degrees are to be monitored informally through regular monthly meetings between the supervisor and the student and formally through status reports submitted quarterly by the student to the supervisor and forwarded to the Registrar's office for the Postgraduate Research Programme Board.

2. For the duration of the postgraduate research degree the supervisor is responsible for providing academic guidance and support to the research student. The supervisor must brief the research student on the responsibilities of the supervisor and the research student, and explain the procedure to be followed if communication difficulties arise.

3. The supervisor must ensure that the student is appropriately guided in research methodology and requisite techniques and has the necessary skills for sustained independent effort.

4. The supervisor, in consultation with the student, will draft a framework with indicative deadlines for the completion of distinct stages of the research programme and the completion of written work.

5. The supervisor has a responsibility to maintain regular and frequent contact with the research student and will endeavour to keep the student focused on the research.

6. The supervisor will schedule regular meetings with the postgraduate student at least once a month during term. Meetings will be more frequent at the beginning and end of the project. During vacation periods meetings will also take place by agreement.
7. The supervisor will provide careful and regular monitoring of the progress of the work of the research student on a formal basis by setting appropriate academic standards and milestones to be attained by the candidate, reading written work produced by the student and providing constructive criticism within a reasonable specified time.
8. The supervisor will provide regular and formal feedback, including written feedback, to the research student on whether progress and standards of work, including written or oral presentations, are meeting expected levels.
9. The supervisor will identify, at as early a stage as possible, insufficient progress by the student, in order to allow adequate time for re-orientation and correction.
10. The supervisor will take an active role in introducing the student to other workers in the field, advise attendance at academic conferences and research seminars, and provide guidance, counselling and encouragement regarding the future career plans of the research student.
11. The supervisor will forward status reports to the Registrar's office for the Postgraduate Research Programme Board. Such a report will include issues addressed by the student in his/her report (see below) and could also include comment on the training in research skills and techniques required by the student; summary of feedback received from the student to date; any serious problem encountered with the research to date; indication of supervisor satisfaction with the general progress of the work to date; indication of likely date for submission of the thesis.

## **VI. The Duties and Responsibilities of the Postgraduate Research Student at Carlow College.**

1. The Postgraduate research student must accept ultimate responsibility for his/her own research activity and candidacy for a postgraduate degree and allow sufficient work time to complete the research in a two-year time-frame.
2. The student will, with the supervisor, agree in advance the programme of work, and the aims, objectives and timeframe for the proposed programme, and the nature and extent of the guidance expected.

3. The student must attend agreed scheduled monthly meetings with the supervisor and maintain regular and frequent contact with his/her supervisor especially at the initiation and completion stages of the thesis.
4. It is the responsibility of the postgraduate student to submit written work in a specified time and format as agreed with the supervisor.
5. The student must inform the supervisor as early as possible of any significant problems and difficulties encountered. The student must ensure that any problems regarding the project are drawn to the attention of his/her supervisor and provide adequate explanation of any failure to attend meetings or to meet other commitments, so that appropriate guidance may be offered.
6. As part of quality assurance procedures the student will submit a quarterly progress report to the supervisor who will forward it with comment to the Registrar's office for the Postgraduate Research Programme Board. The report is to include the agreed research plan with the supervisor; a structured work schedule and indication of compliance with that schedule; an indication of the level of student satisfaction with supervision and general progress to date; frequency of meetings with supervisor and target date for submission of completed thesis.
7. The student is further expected to be in regular attendance at the Staff/Postgraduate Research Colloquia.
8. The student is expected to make at least one presentation on his/her research thesis to the Staff/Postgraduate Research Colloquium.
9. The student must ensure that any circumstances that might require his/her mode of study to be modified or his/her institutional registration to be extended, suspended or withdrawn, are brought to the attention of his/her supervisor
10. If the student is dissatisfied with the supervisory process he or she may refer the matter in writing to the Postgraduate Research Programme Board. In the first instance, however, a student should attempt to resolve any difference informally with the supervisor. Failing this, both parties should consult the Postgraduate Research Programme Board which will attempt to arbitrate.
11. The student is expected to behave with academic integrity at all times in accord with the 'Carlow College – Code of Good Practice in Research'. Where instances of dishonesty or plagiarism are discovered the student will be called before the Postgraduate Research Programme Board which will review the matter in accordance with the college Policy on Plagiarism.
12. Where ethical considerations are raised because of the nature of the postgraduate student's proposed research topic those considerations must be submitted for approval to the Research Ethics Advisory Committee of Carlow College.

## **VII. Publication.**

These rules and regulations are to be made available to all staff and research students and are published on the Carlow College website: [www.carlowcollege.ie](http://www.carlowcollege.ie)

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<sup>1</sup> This document is an updated version of the Carlow College 'Procedures...' policy document approved by HETAC's Postgraduate Review Panel in 2007.