

Irish Universities Association
**Guidelines for Establishing
Collaborative Research
Degree Programmes**

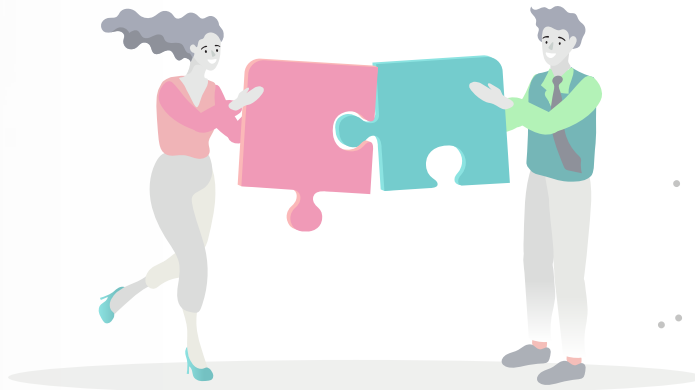
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ASSOCIATION

Irish universities actively support the strategic importance of establishing Collaborative Research Degree Programmes to enable international collaboration and to build research capacity in Ireland. This is in line with international and national policies (Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020 & Innovation 2020). Collaborative agreements can lead to new and enhanced partnerships with Irish and international institutions, which will develop research expertise and facilitate research mobility.

There are clear principles, both nationally and internationally, regarding the use of Collaborative Research Degree Programmes as a means of enhancing quality, strengthening international cooperation and achieving greater mobility. A set of clear guidelines and

a database detailing existing Collaborative Research Degree Programmes and the political and legal frameworks required by EU partners will enhance the sharing of expertise and minimise the risks associated with joint programmes. Risks include reputational risk, legal risk (regulation for credit transfer, award recognition) and financial risk (implicit extra costs, staff workload, management of funds across institutions, sustainability).

These guidelines aim to provide clarity for all stakeholders considering embarking on a collaborative programme between an Irish Universities Association (IUA) University and an international Higher Education Institution (HEI) that leads to a Joint Degree or Double Degrees.



1. CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES WITH IUA UNIVERSITIES

IUA Universities will only develop Collaborative Research Degree Programmes with reputable HEIs. Normally, Collaborative Research Degree Programmes are developed only when at least one of the following criteria has been met:

- The proposed Collaborative Research Degree Programme is in line with the strategic plan of the university;
- The proposed Collaborative Research Degree Programme is linked to a funding call;
- A department/school/institute provides evidence that collaboration with the partner institution will be linked to a cohort of no fewer than five students and is likely to lead to additional integrated programmes (i.e. there is a clear strategic benefit for the department/school/institute). Each institution may impose a higher threshold of students required to develop a Collaborative Research Degree Programme.

The proposed guidelines do not apply to the following:

- Inter-institutional co-supervision arrangements for a single research student, whether this is a stand-alone cotutelle agreement or an arrangement under a specific overarching collaborative agreement such as the Marie Skłodowska Curie European Joint Doctorate Programme;
- Co-supervisory arrangements where the research student has their principal supervisor in their home university and has a co-supervisor in another HEI. In this case, the student will be conferred with a single award from the home university and the external co-supervision can be captured on the student record.

2. COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

In Ireland and Europe there are several different definitions for the term “Collaborative Research Programme”. These guidelines build on the definition as indicated in the University Act, 1997; QA Act, 2001; QQI and IHEQN guidelines; and the Universities Norway (UHR) recommended guidelines for Joint Degrees at the PhD Level.

IUA Universities define a Collaborative Research Degree Programme as:

A collaboration between two or more institutions in which the cooperating institutions as a group are responsible for admission, academic supervision, the conferral of the degree and other elements as described in these recommended guidelines. The collaboration is normally organised in the form of a consortium and is regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement between the consortium members.

Collaborative Research Degree Programmes are usually developed and agreed under an initial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that describes a broad concept of mutual understanding, goals and plans shared by the partner institutions. Then, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) can be developed describing in detail the specific responsibilities of each of the parties and will include a statement of Due Diligence in relation to legal, financial and academic capacity.

In some cases, a MOA for an individual programme may be drawn up without an MOU. MOUs and MOAs should be finalised prior to the commencement of the Collaborative Research Degree Programme.

All proposals for a Collaborative Research Degree Programme must be approved and signed by the relevant parties in the individual HEI.

3. TYPES OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

These Guidelines refer to the following Collaborative Research Degree Programmes:

- Collaborative Research Programme leading to a Joint Degree (one parchment);
- Collaborative Research Programme leading to a Dual/ Double Degree (two parchments).

3.1 Collaborative Research Programme leading to a Joint Degree

A Collaborative Research Programme leading to a Joint Degree is defined as:

The process by which two or more awarding institutions collectively contribute to a programme leading to a joint degree. A Joint Degree is issued in the form of a single parchment issued by the awarding institutions.

In Ireland, Collaborative Research Programmes leading to a Joint Degree is the sector's preferred model. In cases where there are legal reasons mandating Double Degrees, IUA Universities may award them.



3.2 Collaborative Research Programme leading to a Double Degree

A Collaborative Research Programmes leading to a Double Degree is defined as:

The process by which two or more awarding institutions collectively contribute to a programme leading to two separate awards, in instances where there are legal barriers for a partner institution to be able to fully participate in a joint degree.

Each parchment will refer to the other HEI (including their logo).

4. GENERAL REGULATIONS

In general, the following regulations apply to IUA Universities developing collaborative agreements.

4.1 Structured PhD Programmes

All IUA Universities have structured PhD programmes. These programmes may have mandatory credit requirements as indicated in Appendix A.

Mechanisms pertaining to accreditation for modules should be agreed by the partner institutions in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA should also include a statement on obtaining credit for the same piece

of work, either research or taught credits (to avoid double counting). In the case of Collaborative Research Degree Programmes within Ireland, the agreement should state the process of reporting registrations to the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

4.2 Decision on Lead Institution

In all cases, a lead institution must be identified. Where an IUA University assumes this role, the rules and regulations of that University will apply. The Dean of Graduate Studies ensures the Memorandum of Agreement complies with their institutions' individual rules and regulations.

Where the partner institution is the lead institution, its rules and regulations will apply notwithstanding the right of the IUA University (Dean of Graduate Studies) to approve the admission, progression, examination procedures and intellectual property policies, data and record sharing and all other rights; including student rights e.g. the right to avail of student complaints procedures etc.

Any discrepancies between the partner's rules and regulations needs to be identified and agreed in the MOA.

4.3 Admission, Duration and Progression

Students must meet the admission requirements, including language competency for both institutions.

In Ireland, to be eligible to enter a course of study and research for the degree of PhD in a university, an applicant must have reached a high honours standard in their primary degree (normally an overall 2.1 honours award at bachelor's or master's level) or, present other evidence that satisfies the Head of Department/School/Institute and the relevant governing board of his/her suitability for doctoral studies.

In Ireland, the normal duration for a Structured PhD programme is four years for full-time study. A student is normally required to spend a minimum of twelve months in each institution and the remaining time can be spent in either institution for the remainder of the programme.

Students will be registered students in both the IUA University and the partner institution for all years of their Collaborative Research Degree Programme. Students will be entitled to reasonable use of the support services of all institutions involved.

In Ireland, each IUA University has a clear outline for student evaluation and progression. Appendix B indicates the progression regulations for IUA Universities.

4.4 Fees/Funding

Fees are open to negotiation, but each institution should receive, at minimum, fees for one year. Fee arrangements, bench fees and consumables must be explicit in the Memorandum of Agreement.

4.5 Supervision

At least one eligible supervisor from each institution is required. At each partner institution, the level of supervision arrangements should be considered in the context of the supervisory experience and resources available at the partner institution.

As a minimum, the following meetings should take place in each academic year:

- A face-to-face meeting between the two supervisors and the student
- A face-to-face or virtual meeting between the supervisors
- Regular contact between a supervisor and the student during term time/semester.

All parties should maintain regular e-mail contact.



4.6 Intellectual Property (IP)

The Memorandum of Agreement shall set out the rules governing ownership of any Intellectual Property created by the student in the course of their Collaborative Research Degree Programme (foreground IP). The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) should, where necessary, provide for the use of any pre-existing intellectual property (background IP) owned or controlled by either partner and which a partner agrees, in the MOA, to make available to the student for the purpose of their studies. The terms shall include provisions that the student shall have a right to use both foreground and, where made available, background IP for the purpose of completing their studies. The partners should also provide that any commercial use of foreground IP shall be identified and agreed in the MOA.

4.7 Viva Voce Examination

In IUA Universities, a Viva Voce examination is held in private and is a mandatory requirement for the award of PhD. The examination board is jointly agreed by the institutions and shall normally include one external examiner. Each institution should designate one internal examiner, who shall not be a supervisor. Where established practices in the partner institution require the presence of the supervisor at the Viva Voce, such practices will be respected.

The examination must satisfy the requirements of each institution and will normally be administered by the lead institution. Where the partner institution has a different language of instruction, the student will normally be required to write the thesis in the language of the lead institution and provide an abstract in both languages. The student will be required to defend the thesis in person in the language used in the thesis.

Regardless of where the PhD thesis is defended, a copy of the agreed examination report(s) and recommendation of examiners must be submitted by the partner institution for approval by each institution's examination board. The number of copies of the thesis will be specified in the MOA. In addition, an electronic version of the thesis should be lodged in both institutions.

4.8 Graduation

Students pursuing Collaborative Research Programmes leading to a Joint Degree (one parchment) and a Double Degree (two parchments) will normally be able to graduate at one ceremony only. This is usually at the lead institution.

Appendices

Appendix A. Minimum ECTS credits (if applicable) required by IUA Universities

	DCU	MU	NUIG	UCC	UCD	UL	TCD
Credits Required	0-15	30	30	15	30	30	10-30

Appendix B. Progression regulations for IUA Universities

DCU	MU	NUIG	UCC	UCD	UL	TCD
Annual Review	Annual Progress Review Substantive Review in Year 2	Annual Review	Annual Review	Formal Stage 1 to Stage 2 assessment to be carried out within five trimesters of registration for full-time students and seven trimesters for part-time students	Annual Progression Review	Annual Progress report year 1 and 3 (and year 4 and any subsequent years if candidate remains on register beyond end year 4), Confirmation on register panel interview in year 2

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