



RCSI

Supervision of candidates for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine

School of Postgraduate Studies

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

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1. Introduction

The M.D. Degree (Doctor of Medicine) is one of the oldest postgraduate degrees of RCSI and holds a major place among the higher doctorates at level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (IUA, 2005). The M.D. Degree by dissertation is a substantial body of work representing a minimum of two calendar years of research activity. The M.D. Degree is understood in RCSI as a key element in the professional training of clinicians, and in order to qualify for the Degree, a candidate is required to provide evidence of an original contribution to any area of medicine, surgery or medical science. The School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS) is the deciding authority on registration, progress of candidates, and the appointment of thesis examiners.

2. Purpose

RCSI is committed to supporting an effective supervisory system for students registered for the M.D. Degree. High-quality active supervision facilitates students in fulfilling their potential and enables them to develop skills and processes in a timely manner (Wisker 2005, Lee 2008).

These regulations for the supervision of M.D. Degree candidates have been devised on the basis of current best practice including guidance from the IUQB (2009), and will be subject to regular refinement and review.

3. Nomination of Principal and Subsidiary Supervisors for each RCSI student registered for the M.D. Degree.

3.1 A Principal and Subsidiary Supervisor (Co-Supervisor) shall be appointed by the SPGS for each RCSI student registered for the M.D. Degree. Appointment of Joint Principal Supervisors is possible if both accept all responsibilities equally. The primary aim of nominating two supervisors is to maximise formal decision-making with respect to the student's progress, and to provide advice, additional support and pastoral care. The respective responsibilities of each supervisor must be clearly designated and understood by both supervisors and the candidate.

3.2 A Principal Supervisor is normally employed on a permanent contract with RCSI or one which extends beyond the normal expected registration period of the candidate. The Principal Supervisor is required to hold a Ph.D. or M.D., or professorship, and have extensive expertise in the area of the proposed research usually reflected by publications and grants related to the general area of research being undertaken by the candidate.

There is no requirement for the Subsidiary Supervisor to have the same level of expertise as the Principal Supervisor. Senior Postdoctoral Research Staff with experience of research in a similar or related discipline, who can provide evidence of good quality research for which he/she has had a substantial degree of responsibility, can be nominated as Subsidiary Supervisors. Subsidiary Supervisors must have a contract of employment lasting 2 years from the time a student commences the M.D. programme. Supervisors (Principal and Subsidiary) who have no supervisory experience must undertake an appropriate RCSI supervisor's workshop during, or prior to, the first year of supervising.

3.3 If the Principal Supervisor is not a medically qualified individual, the Subsidiary Supervisor should be medically qualified and have an active research interest in the study area proposed.

3.4 If the Principal Supervisor is not proficient in the required methodological procedures, the Subsidiary Supervisor should possess the level of technical expertise required by the project.

3.5 Honorary members of RCSI academic staff may be appointed as either Principal or Subsidiary Supervisors. The appointment of an honorary member of staff as a Principal Supervisor will be subject to consideration of adequate research activity, including publications and secured grant funding. In this instance a Subsidiary Supervisor, who shall be a permanent member of academic/research staff of RCSI will be appointed.

3.6 Where a Principal Supervisor is a member of staff of an institute with an approved agreement with RCSI, the academic, research and supervisory experience must be accepted by the SPGS as being appropriate to the research proposed. In this instance a Subsidiary Supervisor, who shall be a permanent member of academic/research staff of RCSI will be appointed.

3.7 Where a Supervisor retires or resigns from the staff of RCSI, or for any other reason is unable to continue to supervise the research, temporarily or permanently, the SPGS shall make appropriate arrangements for the supervision of the student, including where required, the appointment of a new supervisor.

3.8 Where a Principal Supervisor or Subsidiary Supervisor is absent (e.g. on sabbatical leave) for part of the duration of the student's research, it will be the responsibility of the supervisors to ensure a smooth and timely transition where a change of supervisor takes place. Changes in supervisory arrangements must be made on the basis of agreement between the supervisors, the student, the proposed supervisor and the Head of the SPGS or nominee.

4.0 Collective responsibilities of Principle and Subsidiary supervisors.

- 4.1 To advise the student on the selection of the research topic and the nature and quality of the M.D. programme of research to be undertaken
- 4.2 To ensure that the student acquires training in the methodology of research and in the skills necessary for sustained independent effort by advising on their training needs and giving permission for registration for structured training where appropriate.
- 4.3 To implement RCSI's codes of practice for the conduct of research and employment of the working policies of the ethics committee.
- 4.4 To provide protected time for completion of research study-related activities, with at least 80% full time equivalent time made available.
- 4.5 To provide contact and guidance through regular and systematic meetings; to request regular written submissions as appropriate and to provide constructive evaluation and criticism in reasonable time
- 4.6 To ensure that the student is made aware of any inadequacies of progress or standards relative to the standard expected and, where necessary, to advise on withdrawal from the programme
- 4.7 To complete an annual progress report with the candidate. The Annual Progress Review Form must be officially signed by both supervisors and the result formally conveyed to the SPGS.
- 4.8 To appoint suitable internal and external examiners in a timely manner at least 6 months before the expected thesis submission date. To advise on the methodology and form of presentation of the thesis and to approve the thesis before submission by signing the M.D. Thesis Approval Form. This ensures that no thesis can be submitted without the explicit approval of the supervisor.
- 4.9 To acknowledge a student's contribution in any presentation, publication or meeting which involves the student's research work.

REFERENCES

- Irish Universities Association (IUA). (2005) The Universities and National Framework of Qualifications.
- Wisker, G. (2005) The Good Supervisor: Supervising Postgraduate and Undergraduate Research for Doctoral Theses and Dissertation, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lee, A. (2008) Supervision Teams: Making them work, London. SRHE.
- Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). (2009) Supervision and Supervisors: In the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education. 2nd Edition. Chapter 4, 25-28.

BENCHMARKS

The following documents are acknowledged as benchmarks in the preparation of these regulations:

- Dublin City University. (2013) Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis
- Cambridge University Reporter. (2011) Report of the Faculty Board of Clinical Medicine on the M.D. Degree.
- University of Edinburgh (2010) Proposed Revisions to the MD degree.
- Trinity College Dublin. (2012) Supervision of Research Students. Best Practice Guidelines.
- University College Dublin. (2014) Academic Regulations
- University College London. (2014) Academic Regulations for Students Research Degree Programmes.