

## Regulations and Guidelines for Postgraduate Modularisation

(Ref Academic Council, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2008 and Academic Board, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2018)

### 1. Structure of Taught Postgraduate Programmes

- 1.1. For new courses full statements of Marks and Standards and Calendar details must be completed, along with individual Module descriptions for all taught and research modules included in the taught postgraduate Programme.
- 1.2. Descriptions of any new academic modules for postgraduate programmes must be processed in accordance with the module template on the DMIS On-Line Book of Modules System.
- 1.3. The total credit weighting for a full year (12 months, Oct-Sept, including examination time for taught programmes) of postgraduate study is 90 credits, or *pro rata* part-time. The total credit weighting for an academic year (9 months) of postgraduate study is 60 credits or *pro rata* part-time.
- 1.4. Both Higher Diploma (level 8) and Postgraduate Diploma (level 9) programmes should be one Academic Year in duration and have a total credit weighting of 60 ECTS credits, or *pro rata* part-time. Exit with a Postgraduate Certificate (minor award at Level 9, 30 credits) may also be provided for.
- 1.5. A taught Masters programme (e.g., MA, MBS, and MSc) will extend for duration of 12-18 months, with an equivalent credit weighting of 90 - 120 credits, or *pro rata* part-time.
- 1.6. The minimum credit weighting for individual taught modules in a postgraduate degree is 5 credits; the recommended maximum is 15 credits, excluding any research elements.
- 1.7. Higher Diploma programmes may contain any appropriate blend of undergraduate (the majority at final/pre-final level) and/or postgraduate-level coursework; however, in programmes where the majority of modules taken are at undergraduate level, exemptions from modules in subsequent Masters-level programmes taken by Higher Diploma graduates on the basis of the undergraduate-level modules taken will not be permitted. Higher Diploma programmes are generally of a vocational nature or involve a change of discipline or conversion objectives.
- 1.8. In line with maintaining Level 9 standards on the National Framework of Qualifications, Postgraduate Diplomas and Masters Programmes should **not** contain undergraduate-level modules. On the basis of a reasoned academic case, final/pre-final year undergraduate-level modules not previously taken by the student may be included provided they do not exceed 15 credits in total; all other credits must be in postgraduate-level courses. [See also 1.13 below].
- 1.9. The guidelines set out by the NQAI indicate that for major awards, at least 60 credits associated with a programme should have learning outcomes at the level at which the programme as a whole is included in the Framework.
- 1.10. Modules developed specifically for Higher Diploma programmes should be coded at level 5 (i.e., two-letter subject code followed by 5XXX). Modules developed for Masters or Postgraduate Diploma programmes should be coded at level 6 (i.e., two-letter subject code followed by 6XXX).
- 1.11. Masters-level programmes must include an element of independent enquiry by the student to the minimum value of 30 credits for a Masters award of 90 credits, or 40 credits in the case of a Masters award of 120 credits. The independent enquiry component must be fulfilled through

research dissertation, or industry/workplace/field practice related dissertation, or portfolio project or a combination thereof, to the total value of 30 credits or 40 credits as appropriate. The nature of this enquiry must be consistent with the knowledge outcomes expected at NFAQ Level 9 e.g. 'a systematic understanding of knowledge at or informed by the forefront of a field of learning'.<sup>1</sup> This must consist of enquiry where theory is applied to practice or where theory is generated from independent investigation. A module code and description must be provided via the module template on the DMIS On-Line Book of Modules System. The module description must indicate clearly whether the independent enquiry is achieved through research dissertation, or industry/workplace/field practice related dissertation, or portfolio project or a combination of same. If a number of modules contribute to the total credit value for independent enquiry, a statement must be included in the programme description in the Calendar describing the combination of modules that make up the credit value for the research. Separate module descriptions must be provided for all modules. (ref AB 7-02-18).

- 1.12. Marks and Standards policies regarding pass and progression, award of honours, possibility of compensation, and repeat examination arrangements (e.g., for resubmission of theses, requirement to pass exams first time in some programmes, assessment of generic training modules) must be explicitly clarified for all taught postgraduate programmes and modules. Guidelines for these are presented in Appendix 1 of this document.
- 1.13. Possibilities to exit from Masters programmes with a lower-level qualification on attainment of an appropriate level of relevant credits (e.g., 60 credits for Postgraduate Diploma, 30 credits for Postgraduate Certificate) should be considered and specified in the University Calendar and Marks and Standards, where appropriate.
- 1.14. **Additional Regulation Approved by Academic Board on 27 February 2013:** In exceptional circumstances, students on a taught MA programme may be permitted to replace up to 15 credits of modules on the programme with alternative undergraduate or postgraduate taught modules. The alternative modules chosen must be deemed to be academically meritorious and still remain within the context of the programme learning outcomes. The alternative modules must be approved by the Programme Co-ordinator, the Head(s) of the relevant School(s)/Department(s) and the module co-ordinator of the proposed alternative module(s). Students should note that existing regulations require that the total number of undergraduate modules must not exceed 15 credits, and will normally come from final or penultimate year modules, except in the case of language modules

## **2. Modularisation of Research Degrees -**

### **Masters Degrees**

- 2.1. Masters degrees primarily being taken by research may have a total academic workload of 90-180 credits, to a maximum of two years full-time study or *pro rata* for part-time programmes.
- 2.2. The total credit weighting for a year (12 months) of postgraduate study is an academic workload equivalent to 90 credits. For a Research Masters degree, a candidate must complete a minimum workload equivalent to 90 credits.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Determinations for the outline National Framework of Qualifications.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Determinations%20for%20the%20outline%20National%20Framework%20of%20Qualifications.pdf)

2.3. The Research Masters degree award is based wholly on the thesis i.e., the recommendation of the Examiners that the required standard has been attained. A module code and description is not required for theses within Research Masters degrees.

2.4. A record of all successfully completed taught modules, where appropriate, will be included on a research student's final academic transcript, with credit weighting where appropriate; the thesis is not awarded a credit weighting on the student's transcript.

### **3 Modularisation of Research Degrees**

#### **Doctoral Degrees**

- 3.1. The total credit allocation for PhD degrees is 270/360 credits for 3 or 4 years, respectively, of which a minimum of 240-270 credits, respectively, must be provided for research thesis work itself.
- 3.2. Practitioner Doctorate programmes should be of 270-360 credits and 3-4 years full-time in duration or *pro rata* part-time, and should include a significant thesis describing original research, to a minimum of 120 credits. Module codes and descriptions are required for all taught modules on a Practitioner Doctorate Programme. Module code and description not required for the research thesis but credit allocation for research elements should be explicitly stated.
- 3.3. In the PhD degree, taught coursework and generic modules are modularised and enumerated in terms of ECTS credits, to a maximum of 30 credits over a 3-year PhD programme. In the case of a 4 year PhD, a maximum number of 90 credits of taught coursework and generic modules may be taken.
- 3.4. Modules developed specifically for PhD programmes should be coded at level 7 (i.e., two-letter subject code followed by 7XXX). The PhD degree award is based on the thesis alone, i.e., the recommendation of the Examiners that the required standard has been attained.
- 3.5. Training and coursework may be assessed on a pass/fail basis, or on allocation of specific marks; modules taken at PhD level should preferably not be recommended for audit.
- 3.6. The coursework and training elements within a PhD degree may, where appropriate, be allocated on a *Programme* or *Individual* basis.
- 3.7. In the case of thematic PhD *Programmes* within which students will be required to undertake a set 'cluster of modules', where passing or attaining a stated grade in modular elements is a requirement for progression through the Programme, this must be stated explicitly in Marks and Standards. In addition, arrangements for repeating failed elements, if appropriate, must be made in terms of Supplemental examinations at appropriate times of the year. Similarly, the possibility of exemptions in modules passed must be specified. Compensation should not be allowed in taught elements within PhD programmes.

- 3.8. In the case of *Individual* allocation of credits, students are recommended a set of coursework and generic modules by their Supervisory Team. Allocation of such taught elements should be on the basis of the training needs of the individual student and reflect the student's prior experience.
- 3.9. The process for recognition of External Modules is outlined on the [below](#).
- 3.10. Marks for coursework for taught elements of research degrees should be considered by the appropriate local Examination Board.
- 3.11. A record of all successfully completed modules will be included on a research student's final academic transcript; the thesis is not awarded a credit weighting on the student's transcript.