

Position on Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions

This position paper should be read in conjunction with:

- DCU's Collaborative Provision Framework
- Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions: Implementation Plan
- Collaborative Provision Approval Protocols

It replaces the document entitled "Joint Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions Policy", which was last updated in 2014.

1. Context

A key strategic focus in the [DCU Research Strategy \(2023-2028\)](#) is to significantly grow our doctoral community, while ensuring the quality of the next generation of research talent. DCU also aims to increase the scale of high quality peer-reviewed publications arising from doctoral work. These ambitions sit in a context of an institutional vision statement which references becoming "a leading innovative European University distinguished by the quality of the DCU experience, and the impact of our teaching and research on our stakeholders and on issues of global concern".

International collaboration in doctoral supervision and, where appropriate, being in a position to award internationalised research degrees with good quality partners are key elements in attaining these strategic aims. They will underpin success in attracting increased funding to grow the number of research student fellowships, will be an important element of a strategy to attract strong student researchers to DCU, and will enhance opportunities for international co-authorship¹. At the European level, there is a strong emphasis on collaboration leading to a "European Degree"², including at the doctoral level, and strong funding commitments for joint doctoral programmes.³


Agreements with other institutions in relation to research supervision are mooted in a variety of ways ranging from those reflecting personal collaboration, to those developed in the context of a funding proposal, or of an existing or new strategic relationship. Agreements can be initiated through a formal approach to or from another institution, or at School/Unit, Faculty or individual DCU supervisor level.

This position paper outlines a framework of categories of collaboration in Doctoral education, and guides colleagues to the most appropriate type of collaboration and

¹With adherence to DCU's [Code of Practice on Authorship](#).

²See <https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-presents-a-blueprint-for-a-european-degree>

³<https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/news/doctoral-networks-2023-call-results>



associated institutional priorities and requirements to reflect their particular circumstance and the type of agreement or approval required, when appropriate. Collaboration in research student support and supervision can fall under two categories: (i) where there is a single awarding body, with informal or formal arrangements and (ii) where there are two or more awarding bodies with formal arrangements. Each of these are discussed in more detail below.

Existing Arrangements and Supports

DCU has a track record of successful collaborative provision arrangements with other organisations, both in taught and research programmes and these are defined and accommodated under [DCU's Collaborative Provision Framework](#). In the case of collaborative research degrees, arrangements are governed by the Collaborative Provision Framework, the Collaborative Provision Approval Protocols and the [Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis](#), approved by Academic Council, and its associated policies and procedures addressing admission / registration / enrolment to progression, examination and award. When due diligence is needed on a partner (rather than on the specific arrangements with a partner) DCU's Global Partnership's Team, under the Office of the Executive Director of Engagement, is the unit with responsibility.

2. Types of Collaboration

Collaboration can generally be divided into those where there is a single awarding body, with 'informal' or 'formal' collaboration, and those where there are more than one awarding body. The former is dealt with in Section 2.1 and the latter in 2.2.

2.1 Single-Awarding Body

Informal Collaborations

Informal collaborations refer to collaborations where researchers engage in *informal* discussion with students and their supervisors in another institution, provide feedback, or comment on aspects of a student's work, but the interactions are not so extensive as to justify appointment to the role of supervisor.

If such interaction is not extensive (approximately below 10 hours of work in any year) then no formal arrangement is necessary. If the interaction is likely to amount to more than this, the informal collaboration should be approved in advance by the Head of School, taking workload and career development opportunities into consideration for the DCU Supervisor.

In respect of a DCU research student engaging informally with an external collaborator, the agreement of the DCU supervisor should first be sought. The informal basis upon which the interaction is taking place shall be made clear to external colleagues so that

misplaced expectations regarding publications, IP ownership, registration or fees are avoided.

Formalised Collaborations (Single-Awarding Body)

Formal collaborations normally take the form of either (i) official appointment of a supervisor external to the awarding institution, but no other agreement or (ii) contexts where a Joint Supervisory Agreement is put in place.

Co-Supervision by a Supervisor External to DCU

DCU's "Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis" allow for an external supervisor to be appointed to the supervisory panel for a DCU-registered PhD student pursuing a DCU only award. This can be done upon registration of a student or at a later stage in the research cycle, if deemed appropriate and signed off by the Faculty Research Committee. The external supervisor may be based in industry (broadly understood) or in another academic organisation. The requirements for such arrangements are governed by DCU's regulations. . Guidelines on implementing such arrangements are available in the document "Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions: Implementation Plan" available from the Graduate Studies Office.

Co-Supervision by a DCU-based Supervisor for an External Student

DCU academic staff can accept invitations to act as external supervisors where they have extensive engagement on a project with a research student pursuing a research award in another institution. However, it is recognised that this represents a non-trivial workload for the academic, and should only be undertaken with the support of the Head of School/Unit, cognisant of the overall workload of the individual, and a desire to ensure that DCU students are not disadvantaged as a result of the arrangement.

There are instances where it is not appropriate that co-supervision arrangements across institutions be established without an underpinning agreement, and those include where the student spends lengths of time (>1 month/year) in the collaborator's institution, or there are legal, financial or strategic implications.

Joint Supervisory Agreements

Co-supervision arrangements with a partner university and student are entered into in cases where the research programme is shared by the supervisors, where there may be financial, ethics or Intellectual Property (IP) implications and/or where the student spends more than 1 month in an academic year in the partner university (in the case of a DCU student), or in DCU (in the case of an external student). The agreement provides clarity to the student as to planned arrangements and shall be drawn up at the time of registration, or at the beginning of the collaboration. The programme agreement shall cover the subject of the research, a schedule of time at each institution, supervisory

arrangements, material costs, administration of funding, fees, and insurance. This agreement shall be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and Head of School, approved at the Graduate Research Studies Board, and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A template for this type of agreement is available from the Graduate Studies Office website. IP ownership shall be covered by a separate agreement, approved by DCU Invent and signed by DCU's IP Operations Manager⁴. Under such agreements, visiting students should be recorded as research student visitors in DCU. The application form for the visiting student is available on Registry's website in the section on postgraduate research forms.

2. 2 Joint and Double (Multiple) Awards⁵

It is expected that the vast majority of DCU research students will be registered as DCU-only students. However, DCU recognises legitimate drivers for engagement with other institutions in the collaborative awarding of research degrees and therefore joint registrations. For instance, the expectations of the EU's MSCA Doctoral Networks instrument is one such key driver, focussing as it does on joint or double awards for international and intersectoral mobility to build new and sustainable knowledge-transfer networks.⁶ DCU's ambition is to grow our Joint and Double Award doctoral community to approximately 10% of our doctoral student body, but within the prioritised framework set out below.

It is important that we set criteria for such degrees, as it is recognised that joint degrees tend to involve a very heavy administrative overhead, and have associated risks for both students and the University. As stated in DCU's Collaborative Provision Policy, and in the [IUA Guidelines for Establishing Collaborative Research Programmes](#), Joint Awards and Double Awards present different types of challenges for the institutions involved and different benefits and challenges for the students. The steps toward establishing such awards are elaborated in the document "Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions: Implementation Plan". Colleagues who are promoting such collaborations should familiarise themselves with the requirements and timelines set out in the latter document and ensure that they have considered them in advance of entering into any discussions.

Guiding Principles on the Establishment of Joint or Double(Multiple) Research Awards

1. DCU supports Collaborative Research Degree Programmes resulting in joint or double award where they reflect international collaboration, based on clear principles as laid out in the University's policy statement on [Collaborative](#)

⁴ Please refer to the DCU [Intellectual Property Policy](#)

⁵ The terminology on collaborative doctoral supervision and awards is inconsistent and sometimes leads to confusion. For doctoral research, the two terms that apply are Joint Award and Double (Multiple) Award. These terms are defined in DCU's Collaborative Provision Framework and used in this paper in accordance with those definitions. Although a common term, "co-tutelle", is avoided here as it can have multiple and unclear meanings.

⁶ For further information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

[Provision](#), whilst maintaining quality of programme provision and alignment with the DCU Strategy 2023-2028.


2. DCU will only agree to Collaborative PhD Degree Programmes with universities outside the Republic of Ireland. This relates to the emphasis on internationalisation and the complexities around registration and HEA funding.
3. For PhD students who are recruited by another university under the Collaborative Programme, it is expected that they will spend a minimum of 12 months at DCU⁷.
4. A number of criteria will be used for prioritisation and selection of Joint or Double Award initiatives:
 - a. Due Diligence - Due Diligence on proposed partners must be carried out in advance of any agreement in accordance with [DCU's Principles of International Partnership](#) and should include an aspect of academic due diligence, as would be appropriate for a research degree collaboration
 - b. Strategic Priority - Priority will be given to existing consortia that strongly align with DCU's current strategy and with proven collaborative track records with DCU partners (i.e., ECIU partners, partners with whom there is already a substantial record of research collaboration and/or joint supervision).
 - c. Funding – Proposals where joint or double (multiple) awarding is a requirement to attract funding for doctoral students will be prioritised.
 - d. Joint award arrangements for students recruited by DCU will only be considered where reciprocal arrangements with the other institution can also be put in place.
 - e. Efficiencies of scale will be prioritised.⁸

Further details on the practical aspects of establishing Joint and Double(multiple) Awards are provided in the document "Research Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions: Implementation Plan". Colleagues are encouraged to read that document carefully in advance of proceeding with a proposal.

⁷ While attendance in DCU is expected for a 12 month period for Joint or Dual Award candidates recruited by partner organisations, the actual structure of the time in DCU will be agreed during negotiations for setting up the Joint or Double Award. Full-time and part-time registration will be taken into consideration at this point. Additionally, for MSCN Industrial Doctorates (or similar schemes) where it is required that 50% of the fellowship duration is spent at the industry/non-academic partner, the time spent at DCU as a partner organisation will be not less than 4 months over the period of study.

⁸ For example, in a MSCA Doctoral Network with five university partners, one of which is DCU, a Joint Award between DCU and *one* of the university partners for 3-4 students is more efficient than a Joint Award between DCU and *four* other university partners for *one* student each.

Position on Research Student Supervision and Awards in Collaboration with Other Institutions

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Approved by:	Date:	
Graduate Research Studies Board	8 November 2024	