

Thesis Committee Guidelines – FAQs

1) What is a Thesis Committee?

A Thesis Committee (TC) supports both the Student and Primary Supervisor during the course of a PhD. They provide the student with a wider intellectual input, access to broader expertise and an overview of the student's progress at prescribed points during the degree. The TC will provide feedback to students to discuss with their primary supervisors. The TC also has the primary responsibility of monitoring the overall skills training programme of the student. The TC can potentially identify concerns with research progress, supervision or training, and can raise these with the supervisor and/or DGT, as appropriate.

2) Who has responsibility for supervising the project?

The Primary Supervisor has responsibility for the overall project strategy and the day-to-day supervision of the project. The TC can report back to the primary supervisor if they feel that there are concerns with the Student's progress.

3) When are Thesis Committees going to be introduced?

All PhD students who register from September 2019 will have a TC. This will not be introduced retrospectively for existing students.

4) Who appoints the Thesis Committee members?

The Departmental Graduate Tutor (DGT) has responsibility for approving the members of the TC taking into account the views of the Student and Primary Supervisor.

5) Who are the members of a Thesis Committee?

The TC comprises the Subsidiary Supervisor and two other members with relevant academic experience. The Primary Supervisor is not generally a member of the TC but can be, if the DGT believes it would be beneficial to the student's supervisory arrangements and all parties, including the Student, agree.

6) Who Chairs the Thesis Committee?

The TC is chaired by one of the members of the TC who has previous supervisory experience. This could be the Subsidiary Supervisor.

7) What are the eligibility criteria for being a member of a Thesis Committee? Do all Thesis Committee members have to be approved on the UCL Electronic Record of Supervisors (EROS)?

Only the principal and subsidiary supervisors need to be approved on EROS as the other TC members are not officially supervisors and do not have to fulfil the criteria for supervisors at UCL.

8) Do Thesis Committee members have to be employed at UCL?

No, of the two members that are not supervisors, one should be a member of UCL research staff, the other could be external to UCL.

9) Can junior researchers be a member of a Thesis Committee?

More junior members of staff, such as post-doctoral researchers, can be members of the TCs, provided they are not from the same team, or supporting the student directly in their research. This is a good opportunity to give postdocs experience of supporting PhD students

and exposure to PhD supervision. The circumstances under which a postdoc is a member of a TC, will be determined by the DGT and Head of the Institute / Division.

10) Can Thesis Committee members change during the course of the PhD?

Yes, it may make sense to for a new member to join the TC, or replace one of the original members, e.g. if a change in the direction of the research would benefit from additional expertise, or a member leaves and needs to be replaced. Postdoctoral researchers may not be able to commit to TC membership for the entire PhD programme.

11) What happens in the event that the Primary Supervisor leaves?

The primary supervisor has responsibility to ensure the continuity of supervision and training of the PhD Student and the project.

12) Who has responsibility for uploading the Thesis Committee reports on to the Research Log?

The Chair of the TC as the responsibility for preparing the report, in consultation with the TC members. The report is then sent to the student, and once agreed the student has the responsibility for uploading the report on the Research Log. The primary supervisor still has the responsibility for signing off on key eLog meetings with their students.

13) How does the upgrade fit into this?

The upgrade can be conducted by the TC, or by an external examiner in accordance with the Doctoral School regulations. Whichever model is followed needs to be consistent at Institute / Divisional level.

14) What about the workload exercise?

The Head of the Research Department and the DGT have the responsibility for monitoring the workload.

15) Regulations for TCs and their enforcement.

The Head of Research Department and the DGT have the responsibility for ensuring that each student has a Thesis Committee, and that the guidelines are followed.

16) How many Thesis Committees should an academic be part of?

The expectation is that an academic should sit on one Thesis Committee for every student for whom they are a Primary Supervisor.