



# UCL Academic Manual 2023-24

## Chapter 5: Research Degrees Framework

# Thesis Committees

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*Good practice*

### 1 Benefits of the Thesis Committee model

1.1 It is recognised that many departments/divisions have introduced procedures at a local level to ensure in the supervision and monitoring of MPhil/PhD Doctoral Researchers. One such procedure is Thesis Committees (TCs); the Doctoral School is strongly supportive of their use and encourages this best practice to be applied wherever possible. In their simplest

1.2 The chief benefits of operating the Thesis Committee model are:

- A TC can provide a more rounded and objective measure of a Doctoral Researcher performance, because at least one or two (depending on the specific TC format, see below) of its members will not be directly involved in the Doctoral Researcher
- Regular meetings with a TC can give the Doctoral Researcher valuable experience of explaining their work to an audience.
- A TC provides the Doctoral Researcher with additional and potentially more diverse people whom they know and from whom they can seek advice, independently from their Principal Supervisor. This lessens the highly interdependent master-apprentice culture and can ameliorate many issues arising from difficult supervisory experiences, from both the supervisor and Doctoral Researcher perspectives.

### 2 Thesis Committees in the departmental context

2.1 The decision as to whether or not TCs are introduced into a particular department rests with the Head of Department (HoD). The following model should be used when introducing new TCs, which should be applied in a consistent manner for all Doctoral Researchers in the department and not on a piecemeal basis.

### **3 Composition**

3.1 A TC should consist of a minimum of two, but preferably three, academics. External members can be co-opted if required. Ideally, the Subsidiary Supervisor (SS) should be a member, possibly the Chair. The Principal Supervisor (PS) should not normally be a member unless all parties, including the Doctoral Researcher, agree. In any case, the Doctoral Researcher should have the right to ask for the PS not to be present should he/she wish to discuss something with the TC that would be difficult if the PS were present. Some smaller