

Postgraduate (Research and Thesis) Fees & Supports Strategy September 1st 2017- August 31st 2021

Items covered in this strategy include the following:

- a. Regular fees for all postgraduate research students
- b. Continuance fees
- c. Duration of support schemes involving -
 - i. Doctoral Award (merit)
 - ii. Doctoral Studentships (merit)
 - iii. Postgraduate Studentships (merit)
 - iv. Departmental Assistantships
- d. Non-EU Fees
- e. Service Hours
- f. Facilities for Postgraduate Award Holders
 - i. Staff Car Parking Areas
 - ii. Postgraduate Common Room

The arrangements set out below apply to all students on postgraduate research programmes.

Background

At its meeting of 29th September 2016 (ET 2016#09) the College Executive Team agreed that ‘a comprehensive review of the fees and support funding for postgraduate research students would be completed no later than Christmas 2016’ (2016#09 5.2.3.1). It was further agreed a high-level group including the VP Academic Affairs and the VPs Administration & Finance would participate in the review, and that this review would be coordinated and facilitated by the AVP Research on behalf of the Executive Team.

The AVP Research initiated the review on October 10th 2016. Position papers were requested from the MISU/Postgraduates (through the MISU President and Postgraduate Representative), the ARTS Faculty (through the Dean), the Education Faculty (through the Dean), Research Committee Members & Staff Representatives, and the Graduate School (through the Head of School) for a deadline of Nov. 1st 2016.

Position papers were supplied to the AVP Research by all groups by Nov. 16th. The views of the respondents were compiled and collated into a matrix representing the critical issues arising. These issues formed the basis for an ‘ET Green Paper’ that was circulated to stakeholders on December 22nd 2016 for consultation purposes with a deadline of February 1st 2017. The ET met in a Special Session on March 2nd 2017 to finalise a strategy for fees and supports for postgraduate research

students taking into account feedback from stakeholders on the ET Green Paper. The decisions of the ET are set out in this document.

The numbers used in this document are accurate at the time of writing, but all fees and stipends are subject to annual review by the ET.

Budgetary Landscape

The College has provided support for postgraduate Assistantships, Studentships and Doctoral Awards to a level of c. €700,000 per annum over the past eight years. During this period both MIC and the third level sector in general has suffered year-on-year cutbacks in Exchequer Funding. While these cutbacks have been reflected in cuts across all Departments at MIC, the level of postgraduate support awards have been protected and maintained.

The College does not have the capacity to increase funding in this area further, as doing so would negatively impact other areas of College operations.

Awards & College Profile

MIC Postgraduate Awards Schemes were generally recognised by all stakeholders as having value and worth, and furthermore that they can play an important role in attracting, recruiting and retaining high calibre research students.

The College fully recognises and appreciates the non-pecuniary value of Research & Thesis postgraduate students to the College, and in this context the College affords the highest financial priority possible toward continuing and deepening the supports available to them.

Indeed, according to a review of postgraduate financial support schemes nationally and internationally conducted by the Research & Graduate School, the MIC Postgraduate Support Schemes compare favourably in comparison to what is available in comparable HEIs in the sector.

The legitimate point has been raised that there is a real and measurable workload associated with postgraduate supervision for members of the academic staff. The original intention of introducing Departmental Assistantships was, in large part, to offset this workload to some extent. The College has no objection in principle to allowing an increased number of Assistantships to academic departments. However, at present, costs are prohibitive in the context of the ratio of fee-paying PGRs to PGRs in receipt of fee waivers/stipends. For example, the cost of one Departmental Assistantship to the College is currently €11,905, while the current PGR fee is €4,418. To offset this, the College would require 2.7 FTE fee-paying students (ratio of 2.7:1); however, at present this ratio is not achieved (current ratio is 1.17:1).

FEES AND SUPPORT FUNDING FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

a. 'Regular' Fees for all postgraduate research students

The MIC Schedule of Fees & Charges for Postgraduate Students (Research & Thesis) is reviewed and approved by the ET on an annual basis and it is published on the Finance Office web page <http://www.mic.ul.ie/studentcharges/charges.htm>. Postgraduate students should refer to this web page, the Finance Office and/or the Research & Graduate School for updates or clarifications regarding fees. It is the responsibility of the students to ensure that they understand the fee schedule as it applies to them individually.

For PhD students, full fees will apply for Years 1, 2 and 3 of their studies, as this is the minimum registration period for a PhD student under the regulations of the University of Limerick. Thereafter, fees will be calculated with reference to receipt of the 'soft-bound' or examination copy of their thesis. Students are required to pay fees before enrolment in their programme at MIC. Fees may be paid annually in full at the beginning of each academic year. Alternatively, fees may be paid in two equal tranches, the first before the October 1st and the second before February 1st each year. Students may not register or participate in their programme unless course fees have been paid in full. Once registered/enrolled, students must pay their fees regardless of whether they are in attendance or availing of supervision.

Table 1. Postgraduate fees liability and cut-off points up to the time the 'soft-bound' thesis is submitted

| Research Programme | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 (& each subsequent year) |
|---|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| PhD (Research & Thesis) PhD (Structured) | Full Fees Apply | Full Fees Apply | Full Fees Apply | Full Fees Apply (unless 'soft-bound' thesis is submitted before end of year 3)* | Continuance Fees Apply | Continuance Fees Apply |
| MA Research & Thesis | Full Fees Apply | Full Fees Apply (unless 'soft-bound' thesis is submitted before end of year 1)* | Continuance Fees Apply | Continuance Fees Apply | Continuance Fees Apply | Continuance Fees Apply |

*The effective annual date for fees liability is October 1st. Theses must therefore be submitted on September 30th or earlier if the postgraduate is not to incur full fees liability for Year 2 (Masters) or Year 4 (PhD). Liability will be calculated on the basis of each additional semester up to the time the thesis is submitted.

Students' fees liabilities should end on submission of a 'soft-bound' examination copy of their thesis (See Table 1). If the 'soft-bound' examination copy of the thesis is submitted for examination within the three-year period, no further fees should apply. If the PGR enters Year 4 without having submitted the 'soft-bound' examination copy of their thesis, then full fees for Year 4 will apply. If the 'soft-bound' examination copy of the thesis is submitted for examination within Year 4, no further fees should apply. If the PGR enters a 5th or subsequent year without having submitted the 'soft-bound' examination copy of their thesis, 'Continuance Fees' will apply in each of these years.

b. Continuance Fees

Across the HEI sector in Ireland and elsewhere, Continuance Fees are commonly applied where postgraduate students exceed the minimum registration period for their programme. At MIC, Continuance Fees apply as follows:

If a student enters a 5th or subsequent year without having submitted the 'soft-bound' examination copy of their thesis, 'Continuance Fees' will apply in each of these years up to the point where a student submits the 'soft-bound' examination copy of their thesis.

Where a student proceeds to examination (see Table 2) and is required to make amendments as set out in the *Viva Voce* Examiners' Report, amendments must be completed and a 'hard-bound' thesis must be submitted by a Deadline Date set by the Head of Graduate School in line with the regulations ('Up to 3 months'; 'Up to 6 months').

Fees will not be payable for the period allowed to make the amendments set out in the Examiners' Report. This is the period between the *Viva Voce* and the Deadline Date.

However, if the student fails to complete amendments and submit a 'hard-bound' thesis by the Deadline Date, then the examination process will be deemed to be concluded. Thus, the candidate's enrolment will continue on the relevant register in line with Section 5.14 of the UL Handbook of Academic Regulations. In such cases the student will be required to pay either full fees (if in their 4th registered year) or Continuance Fees if they are in a fifth or subsequent registered year. The amount of fees payable will be determined by the MIC Fees Office on a *pro rata* basis in each individual case where these circumstances arise.

Table 2. *Viva Voce* Outcome Scenarios & Fees Liability

| <i>Viva Voce</i> Outcome | Result (cf. UL Regulations) | MIC Fees Liability |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Viva Voce</i> Outcome 'A'. | The degree of Doctor of Philosophy be awarded. | No further fees will apply. |
| <i>Viva Voce</i> Outcome 'B'. | The candidate be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy subject to the correction of any minor errors within a period of three months for reconsideration by the internal examiner. | Fees will not be payable for the period allowed to make amendments as set out in the Examiners' Report. If the student fails to complete amendments and submit a 'hard-bound' thesis by the Deadline Date, then the student will return to the register (see above). In such cases the student will be required to pay either full fees (if in their 4 th registered year) or Continuance Fees if they are in a fifth or subsequent registered year. Fees will apply from the Deadline Date set by the Head of Graduate School (see text in Section b above). There will be no retrospective fees obligations for any period between the <i>Viva Voce</i> and the Deadline Date. |
| <i>Viva Voce</i> Outcome 'C'. | The candidate be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy subject to the completion of any prescribed amendments within a period of six months for reconsideration by the internal and/or external examiner. | Fees will not be payable for the period allowed to make amendments as set out in the Examiners' Report. If the student fails to complete amendments and submit a 'hard-bound' thesis by the Deadline Date (see above), then the student will return to the register. In such cases the student will be required to pay either full fees (if in their 4 th registered year) or Continuance Fees if they are in a fifth or subsequent registered year. Fees will apply from the Deadline Date set by the Head of Graduate School (see text in Section b above). There will be no retrospective fees obligations for any period between the <i>Viva Voce</i> and the Deadline Date. |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Viva Voce Outcome 'D'. | No degree be awarded and the candidate continue on the PhD register. | The student will continue on the PhD register and will be obliged to pay either full fees (if in their 4 th registered year) or Continuance Fees if they are in a fifth or subsequent registered year. |
| Viva Voce Outcome 'E'. | The candidate be awarded the degree of Master of _____ subject to the completion of any prescribed amendments within a period of six months for reconsideration by the internal examiner. | <p>Fees will not be payable for the period allowed to make amendments as set out in the Examiners' Report.</p> <p>If the student fails to complete amendments and / or submit a 'hard-bound' thesis in time for approval at the next relevant Examination Board (see above), then the student will return to the register and will be obliged to pay either full fees (if in their 4th registered year) or Continuance Fees if they are in a fifth or subsequent registered year.</p> <p>Fees will apply from the date of the Examination Board nominated by the Head of Graduate School.</p> |
| Viva Voce Outcome 'F'. | No degree be awarded. | The students exits. No further fees will apply. |

c. Structure and Duration of Awards for Postgraduate Research Students

Mary Immaculate College has in place a number of financial instruments (Support Schemes) for the support of postgraduate research students (see Table 3). These are:

- The MIC Doctoral Award consists of an annual stipend of €12,600 and a full fee waiver. Awards are annually renewable for a maximum of three years. Doctoral Awards are merit based and are awarded by the College (through a HR-approved competitive process operated by the Head of Graduate School) to PhD candidates in Arts or Education. MIC Doctoral Award holders are not required to perform any duties to their department, faculty or the College in general. However, should they wish to gain the experience, they may elect to perform some duties (e.g. tutorial hours) for their academic department. This may not exceed 48 hours per academic year (an average of 2 hours per week per semester) and may not exceed 4 hours in any given week. Approval of the relevant Dean will be required in these cases.
- MIC Studentship Awards (two offered annually – the Doctoral Studentship and the Postgraduate Studentship) consist of an annual stipend of €6,900 and a full fee waiver. One studentship is reserved for PhD candidates; the second can be awarded to MA or PhD candidates. Awards are annually renewable for a maximum of three years. Studentship Awards are merit based and are awarded by the College (through a HR-approved competitive process operated by the Head of Graduate School) to PhD/MA candidates in Arts or Education. MIC Studentship Award holders are not required to perform any duties to their department, faculty or the College in general. However, should they wish to wish to gain the experience, they may elect to perform some duties (e.g. tutorial hours) for their academic department. This may not exceed 48 hours per academic year (an average of 2 hours per week per semester) and may not exceed 4 hours in any given week. Approval of the relevant Dean will be required in these cases.
- MIC Assistantships consist of an annual stipend of €7,487 and a full fee waiver. Awards are annually renewable for a maximum of three years. Holders of Assistantships are obliged to provide up to a maximum of 120 hours of assistance to their home academic department across the academic year (an average of 5 hours per week per semester) and may not exceed 10 hours

in any given week. Assistantship Awards are made by the College according to a HR-approved process implemented within academic departments.

Table 3. Structure of postgraduate awards

| | Doctoral Award (1 per annum) | Studentship Awards (2 per annum) | Assistantships (16 avg. per annum) |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Stipend / Fee Waiver | €12,600 and a full fee waiver | €6,900 and a full fee waiver | €6,900 (+ revenue charges = €7,487) and a full fee waiver |
| | Fee Waiver Year 4 No Year 4 Stipend No Departmental duties in Year 4 | Fee Waiver Year 4 No Year 4 Stipend No Departmental duties in Year 4 | Fee Waiver Year 4 No Year 4 Stipend No Departmental duties in Year 4 |
| Duration | 3 years, renewable annually | 3 years, renewable annually | 3 years, renewable annually |
| Required Departmental Hours | None (but may elect to provide up to 48 hours maximum) | None (but may elect to provide up to 48 hours maximum) | Up to 120 hours maximum |
| Means of Award | Awarded by the College through HR-approved merit competition | Awarded by the College through a HR-approved merit competition | Awarded by the College through a HR-approved competition within academic departments |
| Eligibility | PhD by research & thesis | 1 PhD & 1 PhD or MA by research & thesis | PhD or MA by research & thesis |

Table 3 includes amendments to awards arising from the review of fees and support funding for postgraduate research students conducted by the ET in 2016/17. These changes will become operational in the academic year 2017/18.

d. Non-EU Fees

Across the HEI sector in Ireland and elsewhere in the EU, fees chargeable to non-EU students are determined separately from the fee schedule that applies to EU students. A fees schedule for non-EU students at MIC is made available on the College website at the following link: (<http://www.mic.ul.ie/adminservices/finance/Documents/International%2016-17%20for%20Publication.pdf>).

For MIC Doctoral Award holders, Studentship holders and Assistantship holders, non-EU postgraduates are granted a full fee waiver up to the non-EU fee level.

Continuance fees, where these apply, will be charged at the non-EU rate.

These changes will become operational in the academic year 2017/18.

e. Service Hours

‘Service Hours’ were introduced as a new feature of all postgraduate support schemes in 2013 in an effort to improve the affordability of the schemes for the College. This initiative came at a time when external economic conditions placed pressure on the budgets available for postgraduate support. This led to the introduction of a requirement on every postgraduate student who was supported by

a Doctoral Award, a Studentship or an Assistantship, as well as those on similar externally sponsored awards, to provide up to 40 mandatory service hours to the College.

Under the terms of the 2016/17 ET review, mandatory unpaid service hours will be discontinued.

f. Access to Staff Facilities for Award Holders

Access to Staff Parking Areas

Postgraduate students who hold a Doctoral Award, a Studentship or an Assistantship, and who have verifiable, timetabled teaching duties in the College, will be provided with parking facilities within the student car parking area. Postgraduates meeting these criteria may avail of parking free of charge beginning in the academic year 2017/18.

Access to the Staff Common Room

With the opening of the John Henry Newman Campus, a dedicated postgraduate Common Room will be provided for postgraduate research students who are in receipt of a Doctoral Award, a Studentship or an Assistantship, as well as all other research postgraduates. It is intended that this facility will become a thriving hub where all research postgraduates, both award holders and non-award holders, can meet and interact. From the commencement of the academic year 2017/18 access to the Staff Common Room will be discontinued for all postgraduate students.

Sundry

Grant Aid

Students should be aware that from Academic Year 2017/18 onwards, maintenance grants have been reintroduced for qualifying students in addition to fees being covered by SUSI. Students should see the SUSI website for details.

