



Department of English Studies

PhD Research Guidelines

Overview

The Department's PhD Guidelines cover the following points:

1. Admission
 2. Initial Period
 3. Comprehensive examination
 4. Procedures for the Development and Submission of the Dissertation
 5. Submission of the Dissertation
 6. Role and responsibilities of the Supervisor
 7. Role and responsibilities of the student
 8. Role and responsibilities of the Research Committee
 9. Representation and complaints
 10. Training and facilities
- APPENDIX: Timetable

ECTS breakdown:

60	MA / MSc
30	Research Stages I-IV
15	Comprehensive Exams
5	Thesis Proposal
10	Research Stages V-VI
20	Thesis Defence

Total: 240

1. Admission

Admission to the PhD programme is based on:

1. The formal application (application sheets can be obtained from the Department)
2. Certified copies of the BA and MA Degrees (or an official document certifying that the student will have graduated before the start of the Programme), plus a certified copy of the BA Degree script
3. Full CV in English,
4. The student's initial statement of purpose (3-4 pages),
5. Writing samples (which may include the Master's thesis), and
6. Three letters of recommendation.

An interview may follow, which should give emphasis to the student's ability to cope with the demands of postgraduate research. In the case of students who are residents abroad and cannot attend an interview, special arrangements should be made. The interview panel should consist of at least three members of the Department from the relevant area(s) of proposed study. Upon the student's admission to the program, the interview panel:

- a) Specifies a provisional Supervisor and
- b) sets course requirements, if any.

The interview panel submits a written report to the departmental Postgraduate Committee, stating the reasons for its decisions.

2. Initial Period

The initial period of PhD study should be considered as a period of training and assessment of the student's ability to conduct doctoral research. By the end of the second semester, the members of the student's Research Committee are finalised. The Research Committee and the student set the requirements for maintaining standards throughout the course of study and clarify their respective responsibilities. The Supervisor and the student define the topic of research and plan the timetable for the completion of the programme.

3. Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination should take place no later than the end of the fifth semester of the programme. It may either consist of a) three invigilated in-class exams of three hours each or b) three take-home research papers of 10-15 pages (approximately 3,500 words) each, due on a date to be specified by the Research Committee, or c) a combination of papers and in-class exams.

The comprehensive examination is based on an extended bibliography of primary and secondary materials related to the proposed topic of research and on areas set by the Research Committee. The bibliography supplied must be of a breadth, but also of a depth and a quality, that will ensure that the student not engage into a narrow-scoped and/or highly prescribed study. The Research Committee must provide the student with reading lists on the subjects to be examined 3 to 6 months before the deadline. In the event that the comprehensive examination is carried out in the form of take-home research papers, two paths are possible:

1. At the beginning of the said period of 3 to 6 months, the Research Committee formally meet and set the topics for the papers: thus, the bibliography is supplied together with the topics. These topics can be set either collectively or one by each member of the Committee.
2. For the said period of 3 to 6 months, the student studies the bibliography and attends tutorial meetings with members of her/his Research Committee. The Research Committee formally meet 2 weeks before the deadline and set the topics for the papers. These topics can be set either collectively or one by each member of the Committee.

Finally, in the event of one or more of the comprehensive examinations being carried out in the form of invigilated 3-hour in-class exams, the student receives the topic(s) of the exam(s) on the day of the exam.

The following criteria must be considered in assessing the comprehensive examination papers:

- a) Whether the candidate is familiar with the bibliography supplied (and, ideally, references beyond it)
- b) Whether the candidate provides evidence in the papers that she/he can selectively cite and critically discuss the bibliography
- c) Whether the candidate provides evidence in the papers of her/his ability to ingest and synthesise the bibliography
- d) Whether the candidate provides clear evidence of critical thinking, of setting the correct questions, of reflective discourse on these questions and of successfully applying the bibliography on the treatment of essay topics

If the student fails the comprehensive exam, she/he should take the exam again. If the student fails again, she/he will be asked to withdraw. If the student fails the exam partially, she/he should take that part of the exam again. In this case, the student is required to have completed the exam by the end of the fifth semester at the latest. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, the student is admitted to the research stage of the PhD programme.

4. Procedures for the Development and Submission of the Dissertation.

The student is required to submit a thesis proposal of up to 3,000 words by the end of the 7th semester to the Research Committee. This proposal should be accompanied by an abstract of around 300 words and a summary of the thesis. The summary should consist of:

1. The research questions,
2. The methods and the expected / proposed results,
3. The thesis' theoretical contribution,
4. A detailed chapter-by-chapter layout of the thesis' structure, with summaries of the individual chapters.

The proposal will then be evaluated by the Research Committee:

- a) If the proposal is deemed satisfactory by the Research Committee, then (and only then) the student may proceed and henceforth represent herself/himself as a “Doctoral Candidate at the Department of English Studies”.
- b) If the proposal is deemed unsatisfactory, but narrowly so, it may be resubmitted within 8 weeks.
- c) If the proposal is deemed completely unsatisfactory, then the student will be asked to discontinue her/his doctoral studies.

5. Submission of the Dissertation

The PhD dissertation is of an expected length between 80,000 and 100,000 words – although the particulars of this matter are to be agreed upon between the student and the Research Committee. The student submits her/his thesis after agreement with the Supervisor. However, a student can submit a dissertation after she/he has completed six semesters from the day of admission to the PhD programme. The maximum period of enrollment in a PhD programme is 16 semesters.

The thesis will have to be presented and defended in front of a five-member Examination Committee. The Committee is appointed by the departmental Postgraduate Committee and is composed of:

1. three (3) members of the departmental academic staff, one of whom is, in all cases, the student’s Research Supervisor;
2. one (1) member from another department of the University in a related discipline or from another university or research centre and
3. one (1) member from another university or research centre.

The Chair of the Examination Committee is a member of the academic staff of the department, but not the Research Supervisor.

The thesis defence procedure consists of:

- a) A presentation of the thesis in a public lecture of 30-45 minute
- b) The discussion of the thesis with the members of the Examination Committee
- c) The Examination Committee deliberating in order to come up with a final recommendation.

If the Examination Committee cannot recommend awarding a degree, the student may be allowed to resubmit the dissertation, after due modifications have been made in accordance with the Examination Committee’s recommendations, and repeat the entire process of defence once more.

If the student fails and is interested in applying for the award of an MA degree, she/he must have completed 60 ECTS of assessment plus the equivalent of an MA thesis.

6. Role and responsibilities of the Supervisor

The Supervisor:

- a) gives guidance about the nature of research and the standards expected, the planning of research, primary texts and bibliography, attendance of classes, the issue of plagiarism and other appropriate training;
- b) convenes and chairs the student’s Research Committee and keeps a record of the student’s progress;
- c) meets regularly with the student, according to a schedule drawn up beforehand in agreement with the student. Ideally, meetings should take place at least once a month;
- d) submits a progress report to the departmental Postgraduate Committee either annually or after a stage in the student’s studies has been completed;
- e) is available for consultation at other appropriate times, normally within one working week of the student’s request;
- f) requests written work as appropriate, and returns such work with constructive criticism, normally within a month. It should be clear that the Supervisor advises on the manuscript of the thesis in general (content, presentation, organisation) and does not act as a proof-reader for the student;
- g) advises the student on carrying out research within and beyond the framework of her/his thesis topic, provides guidance with respect to the dissemination of this research, and encourages the student to participate in workshops, seminars, conferences etc. and publish his/her work accordingly;
- h) ensures that the student is kept updated of her/his progress.

7. Role and responsibilities of the student

The student:

- a) discusses with the Supervisor her/his work and arranges a schedule of meetings and submission of work;
- b) initiates supervision sessions and sets an agenda;
- c) takes the initiative in raising problems and difficulties, however elementary they may seem;
- d) ensures the progress of her/his work is in accordance with the stages agreed with the Supervisor;
- e) produces work as decided in advance by the members of the Research Committee. In addition, the student should submit a brief report to the Supervisor every six months, on which the Supervisor's report to the Research Committee is based;
- f) decides when to submit the thesis, after agreement with the Supervisor. It should be clear that it is the responsibility of the student to revise the manuscript to its final form and make the decision to submit.
- g) meets with her/his committee members at least once per semester. It is also highly recommended that students attend one course taught by these faculty members in order to develop a better understanding of the field and prepare for their comprehensive exam bibliography.

8. Role and responsibilities of the Research Committee

The Research Committee:

- a) specifies the work necessary for the initial period and reviews the student's progress at the end of the initial period, making the appropriate recommendation;
- b) meets at least once every semester, to discuss the annual progress reports submitted and submits a report to the Graduate Committee;
- c) ensures that proper supervision and training is maintained throughout the research period and that the appropriate resources are available to the student;
- d) reads drafts of the student's work and returns the work with constructive criticism, normally within a month;
- e) ensures that the work is completed to a satisfactory standard within a prescribed time limit.

9. Representation and complaints

To ensure that the student is fairly treated and his/her progress and welfare are monitored at each stage of his/her research, it is suggested that an Advisor be appointed at the formation of the Research Committee. The Advisor should not be a member of the Research Committee.

The Advisor may be invited and be present at the meetings of the Research Committee. The role of the Advisor is facilitatory and discussions with the student should remain confidential. Students must meet with their advisors, even if briefly, at least once per semester. Students should be given copies of the reports concerning their progress submitted by the Research Committee.

10. Training and facilities

The Department must make sure that each PhD student has appropriate training opportunities in areas such as advanced study skills (including theoretical, statistical, computational techniques and other relevant methodology), computing skills, presentation skills, and information about plagiarism and legal/ethical issues pertaining to research and career development. The Department must also provide all PhD students with a minimum of academic facilities, such as:

- computing facilities (including shared or dedicated PC and printer in a shared office);
- access to photocopying for thesis-related work;
- access to telephone and fax facilities;
- appropriate access to stationery etc.;
- appropriate use of the Inter-Library loan system;
- a doctoral research budget.

The departmental Postgraduate Committee:

- a) is responsible for arranging the above – in the case of training opportunities, arrangements with other Departments or University Services can be made;
- b) should encourage students to participate in departmental events and organize seminars, a postgraduate forum or a one-day mini-conference for postgraduate students.

APPENDIX

Below are some important milestones. In case of conflict between the table below and the guidelines, the guidelines take precedence.

Semester

2 nd	Finalisation of the Research Committee's composition
3 rd	Progress Report (10-15 pages) Research Committee's recommendation Research Committee sets bibliography for the comprehensive examination
4 th	Preparation for the comprehensive examination
5 th	(beginning of) Deadline for sitting the comprehensive examination (end of) Deadline for resitting the Comprehensive examination
6 th	Thesis Proposal (2,000-3,000 words)