

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH GRADUATE SCHOOL

2011 POSTGRADUATE
RESEARCH STUDENT GUIDE

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CONTENTS

Page

1.	Introduction and General Notes	3
2.	Postgraduate Study	
(a)	Key processes for MPhil and PhD students	5
(b)	Progress Seminars	6
3.	Appendices	
I	Contact Staff	
II	Aim, Structure and Relationship to Current Faculty/ University Structures	
III	Terms of References	

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL NOTES

All research students within the Faculty are affiliated to the Faculty's Research Graduate School, which has responsibility for all aspects of research graduate student education and training from first application through to final examination. The stated aim of the School is to: facilitate and professionalise the training of research students within the Faculty, formalise monitoring and management of progress, improve the quality of research training provision, promote research excellence and increase research volume by increasing student numbers, and generally champion graduate education. The School's structure and terms of reference are outlined in Appendix III.

The School has well-developed procedures for the approval and monitoring of postgraduate research projects (including approval of Ph.D. confirmation seminars), and is fully involved in the provision of appropriate formalised skills training programmes. Generic skills training (http://www.ulster.ac.uk/staffdev/Research_Training/) is provided by the Research Development Programme, in areas such as written and oral communication, time management and preparation for oral examination, and a range of short courses on specific aspects of research are available. Faculty of Social Sciences requirements in terms of Research Training Credits, which are awarded for compulsory 'Block training' and 100day and confirmation progress seminars, as well as for attending short courses, conference presentations, submitting articles to peer-reviewed journals, can also be found on the Research Development Programme website.

The School has agreed a structured timetable for research studies for all full-time postgraduate students within the Faculty. This plan has been designed to help ensure successful completion of the doctorate within the prescribed period. It is stressed that problems in meeting the required deadlines should immediately be brought to the attention of both the relevant supervisors and the Head of Research Graduate School.

During the student's period of registration, progress is assessed on the basis of written reports and at least three compulsory progress seminars (two for M.Phil.). A number of experienced academic staff are present at each of these seminars to report on progress to the Head of Research Graduate School.

It is also expected that all students will make at least one presentation on their research to an external group (e.g. a learned society) during their period of registration, and that their work will result in at least one full paper in a refereed journal.

Students are also affiliated to the Research Institute(s) to which their supervisors belong. The Research Graduate School will ensure that students will be notified of forthcoming internal seminars and lectures on topics of interest to social science researchers. Attendance at such events is highly recommended as it promotes engagement with the relevant research communities.

Important information

All information provided in this Guide may be subject to change, please check the University's Research Studies Handbook (<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rps/handbook/>) for confirmation of details provided here.

Under the University's Research Ethics and Governance requirements, proposed research projects should be submitted to the appropriate committee for ethical approval before the research is conducted. The process of gaining ethical approval can be a lengthy one and you should apply at the earliest opportunity to avoid any delay in conducting your research. Your supervisor will advise you on this and further information may be found at <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rg/>. Please note that any changes to the research plan may have ethical implications and if so ethical approval for the modified plan will be required before the research can proceed.

Research students intending to study away from the University for a period of more than three months are required to seek approval for this in advance. Please remember that full-time students must be available for registration in September each year so any periods of study away from the University should be planned with this in mind.

All written work submitted to the RGS in respect of Initial and Confirmation assessments will be processed through the University's plagiarism detection software, and must be submitted in an industry standard electronic format.

All candidates submitting theses for examination for a research degree should present to the Research Office four temporarily bound hard copies (five for staff members) together with a CD containing the thesis in an industry standard electronic format, in a single file, again for processing through plagiarism detection software.

Under the University's Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research (<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rps/policy/cop.pdf>) you should deposit all research data and samples with your supervisor before submission of your thesis, and submit the Deposit of Samples & Data form <http://research.ulster.ac.uk/rps/forms/RS16doc> - to the Research Office at the same time as or before submission of the final bound copies of the thesis.

KEY PROCESSES FOR POSTGRADUATE M. Phil and Ph.D. STUDENTS

Event	Full Time	Part time
(Re) Enrolment	Mid- September annually	Electronically, every summer
Initial assessment (Progress Seminar 1)	Within four months of first registration	Within ten months of first registration
Annual report	First week in May, annually	First week in May, annually
Confirmation/formal assessment (Progress Seminar 2)	Between ten and twelve months of first registration	Between 12 and 24 months of first registration
Final assessment (Progress Seminar 3)	Within 30 months of first registration	Within 60 months (PhD) or 36 months (MPhil) of first registration
Intention to Submit notified	Three months before proposed submission date	Three months before proposed submission date
Submission of thesis	Within 36 months (PhD) or 24 Months (MPhil) of first registration	Within 72 months (PhD) or 48 Months (MPhil) of first registration

It should be noted that supervisors and students are required to submit, on an annual basis, and independently, a written report on progress to the University's Research Office. The progress of students will be additionally monitored through these annual reports by the Faculty Research Student Annual Progress Review Board. Each written report must address ethical issues related to the research and also must provide information on the quantity of written work that has been submitted to the supervisor(s) for feedback during the period to which the progress seminar applies.

It should also be noted that students can expect to receive an invitation to present the various seminars at least six weeks before the date of the seminar. Students are expected to make themselves available for the proposed date and must submit the required written work at least two weeks in advance of that date. Only in exceptional circumstances will a deferment be granted.

N.B.

Where appropriate, and subsequent to initial discussions with appointed supervisors, the Research Graduate School should be the first point of contact for all research students with queries/problems.

PROGRESS SEMINARS

Progress Seminar 1

This is held approximately three/four months post-registration (normally January for full-time students) and must be organised in close co-operation with the student's supervisor(s). It is concerned with a precise description of the proposed programme of work, which has been submitted in written and electronic formats (1 page abstract plus maximum of four A4 pages) at least two weeks in advance of the seminar date for circulation to panel members. The presentation must be illustrated with Powerpoint slides and/or overhead projection, and must include information on:

the project background;
the overall aim of the investigation;
the methods to be employed and associated ethical issues ;
the objectives to be achieved within the first year of studies.
work completed to date including amount of written work submitted
research training activity completed during the assessment period

Selected staff are designated to form the seminar panel, which provides a report on the research plans; this panel may recommend changes to the programme of work and re-consideration of the proposals after an agreed period of time. ***The total length of this seminar is 30 minutes: a presentation of 15 minutes followed by questions from the panel.***

Progress Seminar 2

This is held approximately 10- 12 months post-registration (for full-time students) or 15 months post-registration (for part-time students) and normally forms the basis for Ph.D. confirmation. A written report on progress (not exceeding six A4 pages, excluding diagrams and figures where appropriate) is to be submitted to the Research Graduate School at least two weeks in advance of the seminar date, together with an abstract (no more than one A4 page). Both the written report and the oral presentation (which must in all cases be illustrated with Powerpoint slides and/or overhead projections) must include information on the following:

the project background;
the overall aim of the investigation;
the methods employed and associated ethical issues;
data obtained to date and amount of written work submitted since last seminar
proposed programme for future Ph.D. work;
 or, where appropriate
 proposed programme to complete practical and written work
 within the following 12-month period to submit for M.Phil.
an outline of the thesis in the form of intended chapter headings
research training activity completed during the assessment period

This seminar is given to a designated panel of experienced, research active academic staff who are required to provide a written report on students' progress, and make recommendation concerning progress to date and suitability for Ph.D. confirmation (or, where appropriate, continuation to complete an M.Phil.).

The examining panel is empowered to make recommendations concerning the direction of the work and/or re-assessment after an agreed period if progress is deemed unsatisfactory.

The total length of this seminar is 45 minutes: a 20-minute presentation, followed by questions from the panel.

Progress Seminar 3

This is given approximately 24 months post-registration (for full-time Ph.D. students) or 60 months (part-time Ph.D students) or 18 months (full-time MPhil students) or 36 months (part-time MPhil students) post-registration. A written report on progress (not exceeding six A4 pages, excluding diagrams and figures where appropriate) is to be submitted to the Research Graduate School at least two weeks in advance of the seminar date, accompanied by an abstract (no more than one A4 page). This should include consideration of research training activity and written work submitted since the last seminar. Designated experienced academic staff are present to review progress, offer advice and highlight any problems which may hinder completion with the relevant period.

The total length of this seminar is up to 45 minutes: a 20-minute presentation followed by questions from the panel.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR PROGRESS SEMINARS

Examining staff are advised to pay particular attention to the following in relation to M.Phil. and Ph.D. Progress Seminars and written reports.

Progress Seminar 1

Is the project clearly defined?
Are the objectives to be achieved within the first 12-month period realistic and achievable within available resources (e.g. consumable or financial support, access, etc)?
Have ethical issues been appropriately addressed ?
Will the project provide adequate research training for the student to at least M.Phil. standard?
Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for (potential) Ph.D. study?
Does the student show evidence of at least a basic understanding of the problem, the limitations of the techniques to be employed and the significance of the work within the broader context?
Are the proposed supervisor/advisor arrangements satisfactory?
Has the student submitted an appropriate quantity of written work for comment and was the quality of this work adequate?
Has the student completed the appropriate research training activities?

Progress Seminar 2

Have the objectives of the first 12-month period of work been achieved?
Is the proposed programme of work a logical extension of the completed studies?
Are the defined objectives likely to be achieved with the available resources?
Have ethical issues been appropriately addressed , or do they require review in the light of changes to the research plan since the first progress seminar?
Is the work likely to provide adequate research training to doctorate (or masters, where appropriate) level for the student?
Is the work sufficiently well-defined potentially to provide publishable data within a 12-18 month period?
Can the practical studies be completed within an 18-month period (or 6 months for M.Phil.)?
Does the student show evidence of ability critically to evaluate the work and place it within the context of related studies?
Is (are) the supervisor(s) satisfied with the student's progress to date, including an assessment of the amount and quality of written work submitted since the last progress seminar?
Is the student satisfied with the current supervisory arrangements?
Has the student completed the appropriate research training activities?

Progress Seminar 3

Has the work made, or is it likely in the near future to make, a measurable and worthwhile contribution to the field of study?
Is the practical component of the work completed, or almost completed?
Do ethical issues require review in the light of changes to the research plan since the second progress seminar?
Has an outline of the thesis been finalised?
Has the work been (or will it be in the near future) subject to external review through conference presentation or full papers?
Are the student and supervisor(s) satisfied that the written thesis will be submitted on time in the light of the amount and quality of written work submitted to date? If not, are the assessors convinced that the thesis will be submitted within 4 years of enrolment and would they support an extension on this basis?
Has the student completed the appropriate research training activities?

Written reports will be required from panels at each of these seminars, and problems in relation to any of the above should be detailed and recommendations for action included: this may include a recommendation for re-assessment within a specified time period. Reports must be submitted by the Chair of the examining board to the Head of Research Graduate School within one week of the seminar date.

N.B. Panels should ensure that any extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness etc.) which may have hindered a student's progress, have been recorded and brought to the attention of the Head of Research Graduate School and the University's Research Office. Recommendations regarding action in respect of this should be included in written reports.

Appendix I

CONTACT DETAILS

Research Graduate School

Head of School: Dr Jackie Reilly
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Secretary/
Administrator Mrs Carol Boyd
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FACULTY RESEARCH CO-ORDINATORS

Linguistics	Dr Raffaella Folli Tel: (028) 90366615 e-mail: r.folli@ulster.ac.uk ;
Communication	Prof. Owen Hargie Tel: (028) 90366230 e-mail odw.hargie@ulster.ac.uk ;
Politics	Dr. Fidelma Ashe Tel: (028) 90366456 e-mail: f.ashe@ulster.ac.uk ;
Education	Dr Alan McCully Tel: (028) 70124975 e-mail: aw.mccully@ulster.ac.uk
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Social Work, Social Policy and Administration	Prof. John Offer (Social Policy and Administration) Tel: 028 70124619 e-mail: j.offer@ulster.ac.uk ; Dr Brian Taylor (Social Work) Tel: (028) 90366142 e-mail: bj.taylor@ulster.ac.uk

Appendix II

AIM, STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIP TO CURRENT FACULTY/UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES

Aim

To facilitate and professionalise the training of research students within the Faculty, to formalise monitoring and management of progress, to improve the quality of research training provision, to promote research excellence and increase research volume by increasing research student number, and generally to champion research education.

Structure/Relationship to Current Faculty/University Structures

The Faculty Research Graduate School operates in support of current Faculty structures where the Faculty Schools form the sub-structure of the Faculty's core activities, complemented by the Research Units of Assessment and Research Institutes.

The operation of the Research Graduate School is the responsibility of the Head of School who is directly responsible to the Dean of the Faculty. The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day management of all the School's activities including the formation and implementation of policy and practice appropriate to meeting the objectives of the School as described in its Terms of Reference.

The Faculty Research and Research Degrees Forum discusses issues of concern to research students, and supervisors.

Appendix 3 – Faculty Research and Research Degrees Forum

Terms of reference and membership TBC