

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH GRADUATE SCHOOL

**2009 POSTGRADUATE
RESEARCH STUDENT GUIDE**

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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, for 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 (please see Faculty specific information at http://www.ulster.ac.uk/staffdev/Research_Training/controller.php?function=view_document&id=57).

- 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.
- The Research Graduate School arranges two sets of progress seminars each academic year (usually in January and June) at which students present their work. These conferences allow students from the different campuses, full-time and part-time, to meet and experience the diversity of projects being undertaken at any one time within the Faculty.
- 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 will be notified of forthcoming internal seminars and lectures on topics of interest to social science researchers. Attendance at such events is highly recommended.

Important

- 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 4 month 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 Research Graduate School. 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) 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:

- (1) the project background;
- (2) the overall aim of the investigation;
- (3) the methods to be employed and associated ethical issues ;
- (4) the objectives to be achieved within the first year of studies.
- (5) work completed to date including amount of written work submitted
- (6) 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:

- (1) the project background;
- (2) the overall aim of the investigation;
- (3) the methods employed and associated ethical issues;
- (4) data obtained to date and amount of written work submitted since last seminar
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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

- (1) Is the project clearly defined?
- (2) 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)?
- (3) Have ethical issues been appropriately addressed?
- (4) Will the project provide adequate research training for the student to at least M.Phil. standard?
- (5) Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for (potential) Ph.D. study?
- (6) 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?
- (7) Are the proposed supervisor/advisor arrangements satisfactory?
- (8) Has the student submitted an appropriate quantity of written work for comment and was the quality of this work adequate?
- (9) Has the student completed the appropriate research training activities?

Progress Seminar 2

- (1) Have the objectives of the first 12-month period of work been achieved?
- (2) Is the proposed programme of work a logical extension of the completed studies?
- (3) Are the defined objectives likely to be achieved with the available resources?
- (4) 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?
- (5) Is the work likely to provide adequate research training to doctorate (or masters, where appropriate) level for the student?
- (6) Is the work sufficiently well-defined potentially to provide publishable data within a 12-18 month period?
- (7) Can the practical studies be completed within an 18-month period (or 6 months for M.Phil.)?
- (8) Does the student show evidence of ability critically to evaluate the work and place it within the context of related studies?
- (9) 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?
- (10) Is the student satisfied with the current supervisory arrangements?
- (11) Has the student completed the appropriate research training activities?

Progress Seminar 3

- (1) Has the work made, or is it likely in the near future to make, a measurable and worthwhile contribution to the field of study?
- (2) Is the practical component of the work completed, or almost completed?
- (3) Do ethical issues require review in the light of changes to the research plan since the second progress seminar?
- (4) Has an outline of the thesis been finalised?
- (5) Has the work been (or will it be in the near future) subject to external review through conference presentation or full papers?
- (6) 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?
- (7) 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: Dr Jackie Reilly
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21C03 Dalriada
Jordanstown

Secretary/
Administrator Adam Henshaw
Tel: (028) 90368001
e-mail: a.henshaw@ulster.ac.uk
21C13 Dalriada
Jordanstown

FACULTY RESEARCH CO-ORDINATORS

Prof. Alison Henry (Linguistics) Tel: (028) 90366544 e-mail: AM.Henry@ulster.ac.uk ;	TBC (Law) Prof. Fionnuala Ni Aolain (TJI) Tel: (028) 9036 e-mail: f.niaolain@ulster.ac.uk
Prof. Owen Hargie (Communication) Tel: (028) 90366230 e-mail odw.hargie@ulster.ac.uk ;	Prof. Bob Osborne (SPRI & Policy Studies) Tel: (028) 90366159 e-mail: rd.osborne@ulster.ac.uk ;
Dr. Cathy Gormley-Heenan (Politics) Tel: (028) 90366132 e-mail: c.gormley@ulster.ac.uk ;	Prof. Bill Rolston (Sociology) Tel: (028) 90 366182 e-mail: wj.rolston@ulster.ac.uk ;
Dr. Alan McCully (Education) Tel: (028) 70324975 e-mail: aw.mccully@ulster.ac.uk	Dr Brian Taylor (Social Work) Tel: (028) 90366142 e-mail: bj.taylor@ulster.ac.uk ;

Appendix 2

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

1. 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.

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

Appendix 3

FACULTY RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE Terms of Reference

COMMITTEE	MEMBERSHIP CONSTITUENCY	MEMBERSHIP 2009/10
Faculty Research and Research Degrees Committee	Chair	Professor Arthur Aughey
	Dean	Professor Anne Moran
	Heads of School (or nominee)	Dr Diane Hazlett (Communication) Professor Paul Carmichael (CPSP) Mr Michael Smyth (Economics) Dr Linda Clarke (Education) Dr Thomas Murphy (Law) Mrs Mary McColgan (SASS) Dr Jackie Reilly (RGS) Mr Paul Mageean (GSPLE)
	Associate Heads of School (or nominee)	Mr Barry Burgess (Education)
	Representative from INCORE	Dr Kenneth Bush
	Directors of Research Institutes	Professor Bob Osborne (SPRI) Professor Christine Bell / Professor Colm Campbell / Professor Fionnuala Ni Aolian (TJI)
	Faculty Coordinator of Academic Enterprise	Mr Fred Morrison
	One member of the professorial staff from each Research Institute (nominated by the Institute)	To be confirmed
	One representative of research active academic staff from each School	Dr Raffi Folli (Communication) Professor Bill Rolston (SASS) (for 2009/10 only; Dr Patricia Lundy from 2010/11) Dr Linda Moore & Dr Cathy Gormley-Heenan (CPPS)
	One representative of the Contract Research Staff from each Research Institute (nominated by the RI Director)	To be confirmed
	One research student representative from each campus	To be confirmed
	Co-opted members as appropriate	
	Secretary	Ms Julie Pattison
	In attendance	Mr Colm Crean

DATES OF MEETINGS OF FACULTY RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE 2009/10

DATE	TIME	ROOM
Wed 14 October 2009	10.15am	MF121 at ME; H219 at CE; 8M12 at JN
Wed 20 January 2010	10.15am	MF121 at ME; H219 at CE; 8M12 at JN
Wed 24 March 2010	10.15am	MF121 at ME; H219 at CE; 8M12 at JN

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF FACULTY RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE 2009/10

In the context of the University's Vision, Strategy, Corporate Plan and Core Values, the Committee will exercise the following functions:

- 1 To keep under review, advise and make recommendations to Faculty Board on the operation of Research and Innovation (excluding those areas covered by Academic Affairs) in relation to activities conducted within the Faculty and with partner organisations within the UK and overseas.
 - a) The organisation of, and support services for, research and innovation.
 - b) Internal and external funding of research and innovation and related matters.
 - c) Intellectual property, including patents, discoveries and inventions; technology transfer; consultancy and related matters; incubator units and spin-out companies; science park development; and the commercial exploitation of research generally.
 - d) Assessment of performance including the reporting and monitoring of outreach activities and initiatives associated with regional development, including economic, social and cultural aspects and other internal and external requirements.
 - e) National/international collaboration on research and innovation.
 - f) The governance of research and innovation within the Faculty.
 - g) The monitoring and assessment of research and innovation performance against targets within the Faculty.

- 2 To keep under review, advise and make recommendations to Faculty Board on:
 - a) The admission, supervision, training, reporting of performance and progress and examination of research students in accordance with University guidelines.
 - b) The range of research programmes and qualifications, and means of support for research students.
 - c) Appropriate education and training opportunities for research students including the provision of taught coursework for such students and its quality assurance.
 - d) The provision and effectiveness of support for research students, including students with special educational needs.
 - e) Nominations for the appointment of Boards of Examiners for research students.

- f) Postgraduate studentships and similar awards and any other matters relating to research degrees and research students which the Board may require.
 - g) Continuing professional development, short course development, conferences and training initiatives relating to research and innovation.
 - h) Library and Information Services, and other resource issues relating to Research and Innovation.
 - i) The monitoring and evaluation of research student feedback.
- 3 To take decisions in areas where authority has been delegated by Faculty Board.
 - 4 To oversee the implementation of the Faculty's Research and Innovation strategy and to keep it under review.
 - 5 To monitor Faculty Performance and activities in Research and Innovation in the context of the University and Faculty Risk Registers.
 - 6 To monitor and advise Faculty Board on equality matters which affect the research student learning experience.
 - 7 To prepare reports for Faculty Board on research and innovation activities within the Faculty.
 - 8 To consider internal and external entrepreneurship initiatives and links with government, business and community relating to research and innovation.
 - 9 To consider the provision and development of electronic media based materials in relation to Research and Innovation.
 - 10 To receive reports from, and to communicate with, other committees or bodies and external bodies in relation to any of the above matters.
 - 11 To establish/disestablish, from its own membership or otherwise, such working groups and project teams as appropriate to advise and report on any of the above matters.

In reaching decisions the Committee will have due regard to their impact on, and implications for, the University's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and good relations as outlined in its Equality Scheme, and associated policies, and where possible and practicable the Committee will ensure that its actions are proactive in this respect.