English Language and Literature

PhD Researcher Subject Handbook (2019/20)

Ulster University

ulster.ac.uk

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

FACULTY of ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Guidelines for the Assessments.

The Panels

It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to find the panel members and arrange the dates of the assessments. The supervisors will be in attendance.

In both the Initial and the Confirmation assessment there will be a chairperson and two examiners, one internal and one external. The purpose of the internal examiner is to test the candidate's performance, the written submission and the overall project from the perspective of the subject specialism. The role of the external examiner is to test more general aspects such as the clarity and focus of the candidate's presentation, its coherence and persuasiveness, the structure and scale of the project, especially in light of the candidate's report on progress to date and envisaged time-line to completion, with a view to confirming its appropriateness as a PhD project, its viability in terms of scope and the likelihood of successful completion.

The Assessment Process

- Each assessment will last for about one hour. It will consist of:
- The PhD researcher will give a presentation using Powerpoint or equivalent for 15 mins.
- A period of questions from the panel on the presentation and the submitted written material. This normally lasts around 25 mins.
- The PhD researcher will step outside and the panel will deliberate on your performance and make their recommendations. This normally takes around 10 mins.
- The PhD researcher returns and is given the feedback; there is opportunity for some further discussion. This normally takes around 10 mins.

Initial assessment

This will usually take place within four months of registration (i.e. January) for full-time Researchers and within ten months for part-time Researchers, (depending upon the time of registration this could vary).

The PhD researcher must provide a short report (no more than 4 pages) including a statement on how the research proposal has advanced since registration and make a presentation on progress to date. You must also provide reference to further development of the research. This material should be provided no later than one week prior to the assessment.
The Doctoral College will send reminder, it is up to the Researcher to start the process on PhD Manager for uploading the required documents (TurnitIn report etc.)

https://phdmanager.ulster.ac.uk/
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/submitting-your-thesis/submitting-work-through-turnitin

At the Initial assessment the panel are asked to reach a decision on the basis of the following aspects:
- The viability of the project
- Ability to understand the research degree process
- Evidence of sufficient early progress
- Evidence that the PhD researcher has shown an ability to identify relevant information sources and gather information effectively
- A statement of how the research has advanced since registration and an indication of future development
- Consideration in some depth of training needs and how to fulfil them
- Effective presentation skills
- Confirmation of whether ethical approval is required or not for the study
- Evidence that the supervisory arrangements are satisfactory

It would be useful for PhD researchers to consider these questions carefully and tailor their presentation and their submitted material so that the panel will be in a position to make an adequate appraisal.

PhD researchers should be aware that while the Initial assessment is largely intended to be constructive and orientative, examiners do consider decisions such as reassessment (i.e. repeat the assessment at a later date) or 'continuation for MPhil only or withdrawal from the programme'. The latter two decisions are extremely rare but are a sign of the importance of the Initial assessment and the need to address its purpose in a serious way.
The report of the Initial assessment will be taken into account at the Confirmation Assessment with a view to assessing how the PhD researcher took on board suggestions or recommendations made at that assessment.

Confirmation assessment
This normally takes place within eight and twelve months for full-time Researchers and between twelve and twenty four months for Part-time Researchers

The main purpose of the Confirmation assessment is to provide assurance that the topic of the PhD is now clearly defined and appropriate, that the scope of the study is appropriate to PhD level (i.e. not more suitable for MPhil or too ambitious and therefore unlikely to be completed in time), that the PhD researcher has developed a suitable methodology that is appropriate to the project and will ensure its successful completion (evidence of this should be present in the sample chapter submitted) and finally that the outline of the envisaged progress over the next two years is convincing as to its viability and appropriateness.

Once Doctoral college send reminder, it is up to the Researcher to start the process on PhD Manager for uploading the required documents (TurnitIn report etc.)

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The format is as indicated above and PhD researchers should calculate on the following as an approximate guide:

Presentation 15 mins
Discussion 25 mins
Panel deliberation 10 mins
Feedback 10 mins

Preparatory work and submission of material:
For the Confirmation assessment it is important that one substantial piece of work from the thesis is provided (usually a draft chapter).
In addition:
A report on progress made to date
The further development of the research as the basis of a submission of PhD
Including a detailed timetable for the submission of the thesis
The presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes and should NOT be a summary of the submitted chapter. Nor should it be in the form of a mini paper delivered on some other aspect/chapter of the thesis. Rather the presentation should try to fully address as far as time permits the assessment criteria of the assessment to allow the panel to take a successful decision. Reference should be made to the submitted chapter but only to contextualize it in the framework of the overall plan of the PhD. As with all presentations, candidates should avoid either reading out the material on the slides (the panel can read) and avoid repeating the material that has been provided in written form prior to the assessment. Essentially, the presentation should demonstrate a command of the research in a clear and persuasive fashion, and to convince the panel of the research questions; the originality and importance of the research; the feasibility of the research – that questions can be answered and within the remaining time.

Conduct of the Assessment
After the presentation, questions will be asked by the internal and the external examiners. Supervisors will be in attendance but will normally not intervene in this part of the discussion.

Outcome of the Assessment
After some deliberation, the panel will give its decision and, usually, some points to bear in mind. These can be in the form of suggestions or recommendations, to discuss subsequently with your supervisor.
Decisions can range from straightforward confirmation or confirmation with recommendations, to deferral (i.e. repeat the assessment within a month or two) to recommendations of transfer to an MPhil or withdrawal. The latter two are most unusual but possible. So again, this is an indication of the seriousness with which the Confirmation assessment should be approached.

Final Assessment
The final assessment can be flexible and negotiated between Researcher and supervisor(s). It can be a mock viva, or a near final draft of chapter(s), or a seminar or conference presentation. The aim of the final assessment is to confirm that the work is at or approaching the standards required for an original contribution to knowledge. It should reassure Researcher and supervisor(s) that submission is appropriate and timely.

Research Development Training
An important part of the assessment is to check that the PhD researcher has attained the basic RDT skills and are able to display them during the assessment. These are listed as:
Demonstrate an appreciation of various practical and methodological
approaches to research;
Draw up a comprehensive research plan and produce a feasible timetable
for a particular topic;
Display an understanding of problem-solving and creative thinking;
Devise and communicate a coherent research presentation using a
recommended IT application;
Demonstrate an ability to present their argument clearly and coherently
using the language of their discipline.

KEY PROCESSES FOR POSTGRADUATE MPhil and PhD. STUDENTS

Summary Table

Event	Full Time	Part time
(Re) Enrolment	Mid- September annually	Electronically, every summer
Initial assessment	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	Between ten and twelve months of first registration	Between 12 and 24 months of first registration
Final assessment	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

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/current-phd-researchers/handbooks-and-policies/research-studies-handbook/the-phd-journey-key-milestones

Annual Reports

Supervisors and students are required to submit, on an annual basis, and independently, a written report on progress via PhD manager. 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 assessments applies.

Financial support

The School of History receives a recurrent budget from the Doctoral College and also Research Training Support Grants (RTSG) for funded full-time students. It is important that you discuss this with your supervisors at an early stage what funding you will require during your Research.   Once approval in principle has been agreed with supervisors, the Admin support (Mrs Elaine Kane) will assist in completion of a Prior Approval (PA) form. Once approved, a PA number is issued, expenditure can go ahead. Please remember that travel must be booked via the university's travel agent, 'Key Travel'. **All expenditure must have prior approval**. In order to reclaim approved expenditure and you must produce **receipts** (bank or credit card statements are not accepted by finance).

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Other Useful contacts

Doctoral College

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