



Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

PhD Researcher Subject Handbook
(2019/20)

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1. Welcome from Postgraduate Tutor

I am delighted to welcome you to the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment. Within the school, postgraduate researchers play a vital role in our innovative and world leading research activities.

We appreciate that undertaking a PhD can be challenging and a major commitment. Our aim is to provide you with the support needed to develop the necessary understanding of your subject area as well as excellent research and transferable skills.

This handbook aims to provide you with the necessary information to help guide you through the processes involved in your research training, supervision, monitoring of progress and submission of research thesis. We hope you find the contents helpful and we wish you every success with your research.

Dr Karen Davison
Postgraduate Tutor
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2. Introduction

This handbook has been prepared by the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment, to help postgraduate researchers and supervisors find information regarding administrative procedures and support arrangements. This handbook supplements the information provided by the doctoral college in relation to policies and procedures.

3. School Structure and Staff Responsibilities

The Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment is part of the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment. The faculty consists of four Schools; the School of Architecture and the Built Environment, School of Computing, School of Engineering and the School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems.

The Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment is Ulster University's principal focus for research activities relating to the sustainable design and development, management, regulation and conservation of the built environment. The quality of the research in the Built Environment was recognised as 100% world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of the research environment and research impact in REF2014.

The main areas of research activity are carried out within distinct research groups, which also collaborate in joint research activities. The recognised research groupings within the unit of assessment are:

- Fire Safety Engineering Research and Technology Centre (FireSERT)
- Centre for Sustainable Technologies (CST)
- Centre for Research on Property and Planning (RPP)
- Hydrogen Safety Engineering and Research (HySAFER)
- Studies Allied to Built Environment Research (SABER)

Postgraduate research opportunities are available within each research group and within the School, in the areas of Architecture, Built Environment, Energy, Civil Engineering, Fire Engineering, Highway Engineering, Hydrogen Safety Engineering, Construction, Property, Real Estate, Planning, Housing and Environmental Health.

The school has a number of academic and administrative staff who support the PhD researchers. These include the Research Director, Postgraduate Tutor and Academic Excellence Executive Assistant. The school management comprises of the Head of School, who oversees all teaching and research activities. The Research Director focuses on all research activities and the Associate Head of School oversees all activities related to teaching and learning.

The Postgraduate Tutor is responsible for the overall running of the schools PhD programme and for providing pastoral support for PhD researchers. They are available to meet with you in confidence to discuss any particular issues you may have. Contact details for key staff that can help you can be found below:

Clerical Assistant (CST)

Thelma Potsworth
26B16
02890366907
tm.potsworth@ulster.ac.uk

Research Director

Dr Jayanta Mondol
26B03
02890368037
jd.mondol@ulster.ac.uk

Postgraduate Tutor

Dr Karen Davison
04F13
02890368108
k.davison@ulster.ac.uk

**Academic Excellence
Executive Assistant**

Irene Moreland
04D04
02890366101
i.moreland@ulster.ac.uk

**Clerical Assistant
(FireSERT / HySAFER)**

Heather Griffiths
27B10
02890368701
h.griffiths@ulster.ac.uk

4. Roles: You and Your Supervisor

You are ultimately responsible for organising the direction, progression and completion of your research project. During your studies, you are expected to meet with your supervisory team regularly, with a schedule to be discussed and agreed. It is required that certain meetings (e.g. monthly) between supervisors and postgraduate researchers are designated as formal and that a record of these meetings are maintained via PhD Manager.

As researchers at Ulster, your main source of support will come from your team of supervisors. The role of the supervisor is to guide and support the development of your research. They will provide encouragement and monitor your progress in accordance with set assessments outlined in this handbook.

Staff involved in supervision are expected to be able to advise PhD researchers on aspects of their research projects including matters relating to University procedures. Supervisors are limited in the number of PhD Researchers they can supervise to twelve. A good working relationship with your supervisors will be a key factor in the success of your research project and the University provides guidance for both PhD researchers and supervisors to ensure this relationship is maximised.

5. Attendance and Absences

It is expected that you attend University on a daily basis, except by mutual agreement of your supervisor or Research Director. Typically PhD researchers work 35-40 hours per week between the hours of 9.00am - 5.00pm. Holidays must be approved by your supervisor and must not exceed a total of eight week including public holidays (40 days) per year.

If you need to take some leave due to poor health or family problems, you firstly need to inform your supervisor. If the leave is for more than two weeks, you must notify your supervisors, who will then notify the Doctoral College in writing of the dates of absence, accompanied by a medical certificate.

If you require a prolonged period of leave (exceeding 28 days) then you may need to consider taking a Leave of Absence. Funded PhD researchers should be aware that they may normally be allowed a Leave of Absence for a maximum of one year. It is important to note that your maintenance grant will be suspended during a Leave of Absence. You are not permitted to take up paid employment during a Leave of Absence. Please read the terms and conditions of your funding if applicable. If you decide to request a Leave of Absence please submit your request on PhD Manager once you have spoken with your supervisor.

If you need any further information or advice regarding attendance and absence regulations, please contact your supervisor or Postgraduate Tutor.

6. Working Environment

Office Space

A desk in a shared office will be provided for you to work whilst on campus. This will be arranged for you with the support of the administration team and supervisors. This space consists of a desk, computing chair and a set of lockable drawers. It is your responsibility to keep these spaces tidy and to clear the space at the end of your PhD journey.

Computing Equipment

A desktop or laptop will be provided for you if needed. This should be discussed with your supervisors. Money may be used from your research training grant to support essential equipment which can include a new desktop or laptop.

Photocopying and Printing

The Information Services Department (ISD) provide information and support on printing and photocopying services on each campus. Postgraduate Researchers have access to multi-function devices (MFD) that will allow you to print, copy and scan documents. The system is accessed using your ID card (or you can logon manually if you have forgotten your card) and the device will retrieve your prints and automatically input your email address for the scanning service.

The service also offers a secure cashless payment system that is linked to your ID card (manual logon) that will allow you to add funds from credit/debit cards to your UniFlow account. These can then be used to pay for printing, copying and scanning at any MFD. Mobile printing is also operational. You can send work from any device that can access your University email account, allowing you to attach a file to an email from a mobile phone, laptop, tablet or your home computer.

The ISD Service Desk provides support via telephone and email. In addition to core working hours, extended support is available from 5pm to 9am Weekdays, 24-hour Weekends, Bank Holidays and all year round. Telephone: 028 9036 6777 or ext: 66777. Email: servicedesk@ulster.ac.uk

In some cases, funds from your research training grant (if funds are available) can be used for printing. Please consult your supervisor and assigned administrator for further information about this if needed.

Lunch Facilities

Kitchen and dining facilities are available in CST (Block 26), HySAFER / FireSERT (Block 27) and available in the main building at the Doc in the Commercial block.

7. Research Integrity and Ethics

Ulster University requires the highest standards of professionalism in research conducted by all staff and researchers in all disciplines. The University encourages and supports research integrity through a framework of policies, procedures and guidance, summarised and illustrated in the **Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research** which is updated regularly at Ulster to reflect changing sector-wide requirements.

Research Integrity

Research integrity means conducting research in a way which allows others to have trust and confidence in the methods used and the findings generated. The University expects the highest standards of integrity to be adhered to by its researchers. All researchers (and others involved in the research process) are required to undertake and pass the University's **Research Integrity Course** which is available through Blackboard. The course takes approximately one hour to complete and provides grounding in the essentials of good research conduct, and guidance on how to avoid bad practice. It is expected that all postgraduate researchers complete this course successfully prior to undertaking the initial assessment.

Research Ethics

Research ethics is about ensuring that research, especially research involving human participants or subjects, is conducted appropriately. It is university policy that all research involving human participants must be reviewed through the filter and ethics committee process as appropriate. Studies covered by the University's policy include interview, questionnaire and focus group research as well as research involving interventions of any kind.

Details of the University's policies and procedures in this area are currently available through the portal. Please click on the Research Governance and Ethics tab. Early in your project you should discuss the ethical implications of your work with your supervisors. If required, you should then make an ethical application. Filter committees have been established in all of the areas in which significant levels of human research are likely to take place. For information on the filter committee for the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment please contact Nicola Dunbar – nc.dunbar@ulster.ac.uk.

8. Health and Safety

It is everyone's duty to ensure a safe working environment. Your first point of contact if you have a health and safety query should be your supervisor. The Schools Health and Safety Co-Ordinator is Richard Young. Mark Wilson is the School's 'Control of Substances Hazardous to Health' (COSHH) Co-ordinator. Risk assessments are carried out and updated annually. A First Aid/ Defibrillator is available from Jordanstown Security- 22222 (DDI 02870123456).

In event of an emergency requiring Police, Fire or Ambulance dial (9)999 directly then contact security immediately on extension 22222 (DDI 02870123456). If working late you should make security aware and let them know when you leave.

Fire Safety

If you discover a fire, activate the alarm immediately using nearest break glass point. IF YOU HEAR THE FIRE ALARM.

- You must leave the building using the nearest available route by following the emergency exit signs.
- You must go directly to the assembly point.
- You must not re-enter the building until told it is safe.

Fire marshals sweep each floor in the event of an evacuation. The alarm is tested in Jordanstown and Belfast at 1:10pm and 6:10pm every Wednesday.

9. Training and Research Community

The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) at Ulster is an integral part of your doctoral programme. The RDP is a suite of workshops, specialist skills sessions, online courses and personal development planning activities which will provide you with opportunities to gain the experience and skills required to be a competent and professional researcher. The purpose is two-fold: to help you gain the skills to complete your PhD and to become a professional researcher with transferable skills that will be valued by both academic and non-academic employers in an increasingly interdisciplinary and international context.

As a research focused institution, we expect all doctoral researchers to acquire the necessary skills and training to become world-class researchers. This is why we require all PhD researchers to take part in the Researcher Development Programme.

The School of Architecture and the Built Environment also provides a number of seminars to engage and immerse yourself in the vibrant research community. School level activities will be communicated to you throughout the year and we encourage active engagement from all researchers.

10. Travel and Procurement Procedures

As a postgraduate researcher you are expected to attend and present your work to at least one academic conference. Funded PhD's have research training grants that can be used to support relevant travel. Agreement for travel and accommodation must be sought from your supervisor prior to proceeding with any booking. Once confirmed, the school office can provide you with a prior approval and expenses form. We will notify you at induction as to which administrator you are to contact when processing claims and requesting balance queries.

Travel Procedures

Prior to Travel

- Check with your Supervisors
- Complete a Prior Approval (PA) Form, available from the school office.
- Have this form signed by your supervisor.
- Take the signed form to the school office for approval from the Research Director or Head of school.
- Once approved a Prior Approval number will be returned. This can be used to book travel through Key Travel following the University's [travel policy](#).

After Travel

- Receipts for expenses incurred whilst travelling can be claimed back (This includes: food and transport - no alcohol).
- Complete a Travel Subsistence claim form.
- Attach original receipts formatted appropriately.
- Have this signed by Supervisor.
- Take the completed form, along with receipts to the school office for approval by the Research Director or Head of School.

11. Demonstration and Teaching Opportunities

Many PhD researchers help support teaching and assessment within the school. PhD Researchers can provide support for a maximum of 6 hours per week in demonstration.

Demonstration and tutorial duties may include:

- Demonstration and assistance with practical classes
- Delivery and co-ordination of small group activities, e.g. tutorials
- Participation in student-led activities
- Participation in student-led seminars
- Assessment of coursework

These opportunities are useful for your CV. If you are interested, please discuss with your supervisor.

The Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP) also provide a number of academic development courses that will benefit postgraduate researchers. These include an 'Introduction to Teaching and Learning for Post-Graduate Teaching Assistants and P/T Tutors' as well as an award in 'First Steps to Supporting Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (FST). More information on these can be found via the [CHERP website](#).

12. Milestones

During your research journey, there are a number of key milestones which you will be expected to achieve within specific timeframes. This table provides you with an overview of what is expected of you. General information about these milestones can be viewed on the doctoral college website.

Process	When (full time)	When (part time)
Re-enrolment	Around 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 Assessment	Between eight and twelve months of first registration	Between twelve and twenty-four months of first registration
Final Assessment	Within thirty months of first registration	Within sixty months (PhD) or thirty-six months (MPhil) of first registration
Intention to Submit	Three months before proposed submission date	Three months before proposed submission date
Submission of thesis	Within thirty-six months (PhD) or twenty-four months (MPhil) of first registration	Within seventy-two months (PhD) or forty-eight months (MPhil) of first registration

Following your initial enrolment and registration, you will be required to re-enrol annually in mid-September on your home campus. If you are a part time researcher, you will be required to re-enrol electronically. The Doctoral College will advise you in advance each year, of how and when you are expected to re-enrol.

13. Assessments

The following section provides school specific guidance for the Initial, Confirmation and Final assessment. Specific dates and times will be communicated to you by the school when necessary.

Initial Assessment

This assessment comprises a written and oral element and is held approximately 3-4 months post-registration for full-time PhD researchers and approximately 8-10 months post-registration for part-time. It is PhD researchers organised in close co-operation with the project supervisors, and is concerned with a precise description of the proposed programme of work.

Requirements

The initial assessment consists of an oral presentation and written report.

Written Report

The oral presentation should be accompanied with a concise written report. The report should not exceed four A4 pages plus Gantt chart, with any relevant additional information contained in appendices. Suggested contents for the report include:

- Abstract / Introduction
- An overview of key research areas
- Research plan: including aims and objectives
- Summary / conclusion
- References

An electronic version of the written report should be uploaded through PhD Manager **at least two weeks prior to the presentation date**. The submission date will be confirmed by PhD Manager. This should also include a copy of your Turnitin similarity report from blackboard.

Oral Presentation

The researcher is expected to also give an oral presentation, using appropriate presentation materials such as PowerPoint, to an audience of academic staff, including an audience of PhD researchers, supervisors and an assessment panel. This presentation should last between 10-15 minutes and will be followed by 10 minutes of questions. It must include information on the:

- Project background.
- Overall aim of the investigation.
- Objectives to be achieved within the first 8-9 months (full-time) or 20 months (part-time) and the activities that will achieve those objectives, as well as an outline for the research methodology.
- Training needs (completed and planned) and risk assessment (if applicable).

Procedure

The school will make the necessary arrangements for the assessment. The room and data projector will be booked by the school, but the researcher and or supervisor should arrange any other additional equipment required and check that everything in the room is satisfactory before the assessment commences.

In advance of the viva the researcher will be responsible for initiating the initial assessment form through PhD manager. Once submitted the system will alert the schools Academic Excellence Executive Assistant, who will then organise the assessment meeting. You will be able to track the progress of your application via the initial assessment button on your main project dashboard.

An electronic version of the written report and presentation slides should be uploaded via PhD manager **at least 2 weeks prior to the presentation date**. You can initiate this process on PhD Manager.

For the assessment, a panel will be organised. The assessment panel will provide a report on your progress via PhD manager and they are empowered to make recommendations concerning your advancement and suitability for confirmation registration. They are reviewing the following:

- Is the project clearly defined?
- Are the objectives realistic and achievable in the time available?
- Will there be adequate research training for the researcher to at least MPhil level?
- Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for PhD study?
- Does the researcher show evidence of at least a basic understanding of the problem, nature of the approach being taken to investigate it and the relationship of the work to other research in the field?
- Are the supervisory arrangements satisfactory?

As part of this process, you will be asked to consider whether ethical approval is necessary for the project and to make arrangements to apply for such approval, where appropriate.

Your supervisory team, in consultation with you, is required to review progress to date, identify any issues to be addressed and ensure that ongoing training needs are identified prior to this assessment taking place.

As part of this process, you will be required to submit a Turnitin Originality Report along with your submission into PhD Manager.

Note: you must complete the research integrity course prior to completing your initial assessment application.

Confirmation Viva

All PhD and MPhil researchers will undergo a formal assessment of progress, known as the confirmation assessment, usually towards the end of your first year (8-12 months) for full time researchers or before the end of the second year (20 months) for part time researchers.

The assessment includes a written submission along with a presentation. You will not normally be permitted to re-enrol into your second year (for full time, funded PhD Researchers) until the Doctoral College has received notification from the Faculty of successful completion of your Confirmation, so you should take this into account as it may impact on progression and payment of your stipend.

Requirements

The assessment comprises a written and oral element and should be organised in close co-operation with the project supervisors.

Written Report

The written element comprises two components; a literature review and a draft journal paper.

1. A literature review, including project plan, in the form of a Gantt chart, and thesis outline must be produced in font Arial 12. It should not exceed 30 A4 pages including, references, and any relevant additional information contained in appendices. Please note that the internal reviewer is not required to read beyond the 30 pages, and you may be requested to resubmit should you exceed this limit.

The literature review should:

- Identify the broad problem area in which the research is being undertaken.
- Identify the specific problem being addressed by the research.
- Summarise relevant work in that area.
- Conclude with a summary evaluation of previous work (possibly in tabular form) showing its strengths and weaknesses. This should reveal the knowledge gap(s) that the research is attempting to fill.
- Identify the primary aim of the research project including research questions to be addressed.
- Outline the plan of activity for the remaining period of study (including a Gantt chart).
- Provide a thesis outline emphasising its structure and how it meets the research aims.

2. A draft Journal, Conference or Review Paper in scientific notation, in the style of a journal relevant to the discipline, as identified by the supervisors.

An electronic version of the written report and paper should be uploaded through PhD Manager **at least two weeks prior to the presentation date**. The submission date

will be confirmed by PhD Manager. This should also include a copy of your Turnitin similarity report from blackboard.

Oral Presentation

The postgraduate researcher is expected to give an oral presentation to the assessment panel, using appropriate materials, e.g. PowerPoint, summarising the information contained in the written components. This is a closed session so only your assessment panel and supervisors will be present.

The following points are suggested as guidelines (not requirements) for the presentation content:

- Aims of the research and planned contribution to knowledge.
- Main points of the research so far, with a plan of activity for the remaining period.
- Thesis outline, emphasising its logical structure and how it meets the aims of the research.
- Conferences/journal publications/presentations to date or in hand.
- Summary of training to date and any training planned.
- Summary slide.

A maximum of one hour is set aside for each viva. The presentation will last no longer than 20 minutes, followed by (up to) 30 minutes for the panel to question the postgraduate researcher and supervisors (s). The final 10-15 minutes will be a private discussion between the panel and the supervisor(s).

Procedure

The school will make the necessary arrangement for the assessment. The room and data projector will be booked by the school, but the researcher and or supervisor should arrange any other additional equipment required and check that everything in the room is satisfactory before the assessment commences.

In advance of the viva the researcher will be responsible for initiating the initial assessment form through PhD manager. Once submitted the system will alert the schools Academic Excellence Executive Assistant, who will then organise the assessment meeting. You will be able to track the progress of your application via the confirmation assessment button on your main project dashboard.

An electronic version of the written report and presentation slides should be uploaded via PhD manager **at least 2 weeks prior to the presentation date**. You can initiate this process on PhD Manager.

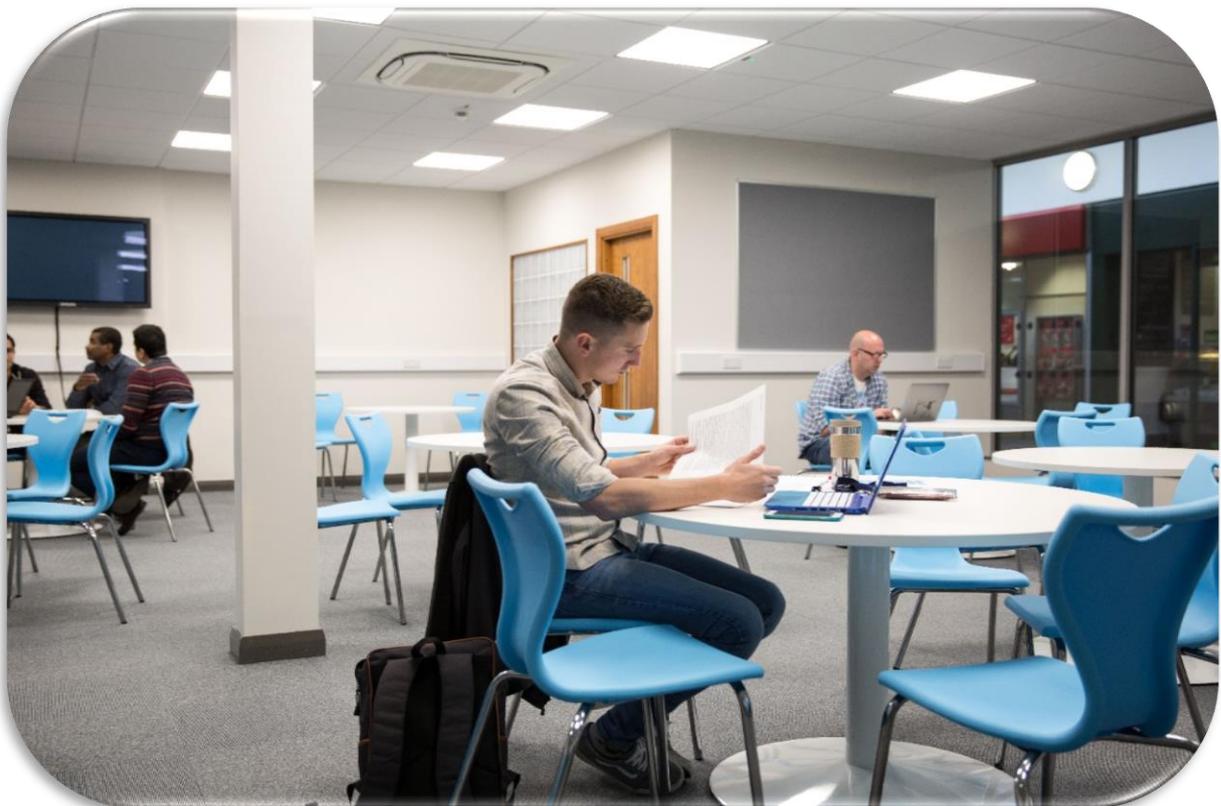
For the assessment, a panel will be organised. The assessment panel will provide a report on your progress via PhD manager and they are empowered to make recommendations concerning your advancement and suitability for confirmation of registration status. They are reviewing the following:

1. Have the objectives of the first 10 (20) months period of work been achieved?
2. Was the presentation clear and informative?

3. Is the written report appropriate to the expected standard?
4. Is a provisional timeline for completion of the project in place?
5. Is completion of the project likely in three to four years, in light of early review and/or refinement of the original proposal?
6. Is the methodology appropriate and clearly explained?
7. Has the researcher demonstrated adequate development of problem solving and organisational skills?
8. Has the researcher attended relevant training and has the training needs been updated?
9. Has essential training e.g. Research Integrity Course and project related training been either completed or scheduled?
10. Is the practice component(s) where appropriate adequately developed or planned?
11. Are all permissions granted to authorise the PhD researcher to carry out the project (e.g. ethical approval(s), AccessNI check, risk assessment)?
12. Does the supervisory arrangement remain appropriate?

Your supervisory team, in consultation with you, is required to review progress to date, identify any issues to be addressed and ensure that ongoing training needs are identified prior to this assessment taking place.

Again, as part of this process, you will be required to submit a Turnitin Originality Report along with your submission into PhD Manager.



Final Assessment

To help prepare for the final submission of your thesis and the examination, the final assessment of progress will take place within thirty months (full-time) and sixty months (part-time) of initial registration.

Requirements

The final assessment will take the form of a report and two structured meetings about thesis progression. The first meeting will be initiated by you with your supervisors and the second will be organised by the school and will be overseen by the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor. You should prepare the following for discussion with your supervisors around the 28 month mark. The report will be completed via the provided template. The required draft paper also needs to be attached.

Procedure

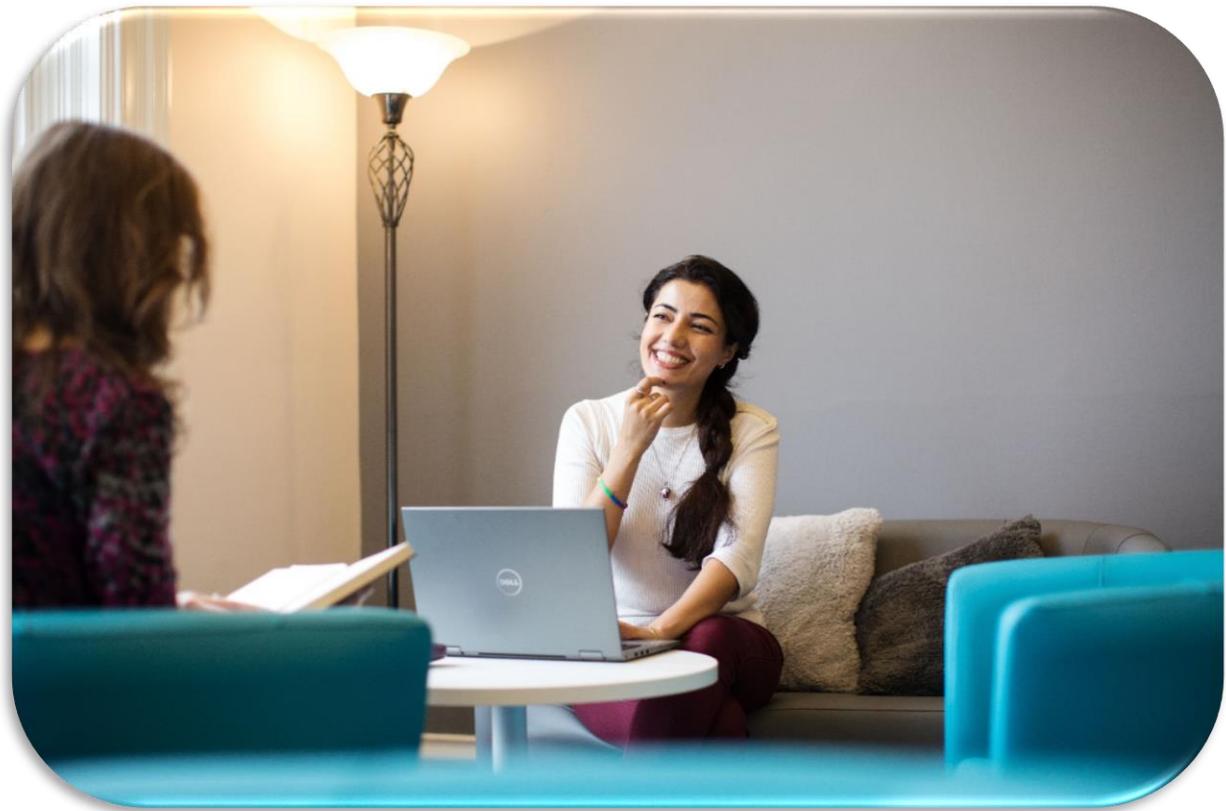
1. You should first talk to your supervisors to set up a meeting for the Final Assessment. We would advise this takes place around 28 months from your start date.
2. Once identified, you should begin the Final Assessment process through PhD Manager. This will allow for the school to organise the formal meeting with the Research Director and Postgraduate Tutor.
3. When meeting with your supervisors, you should agree what materials are needed for the assessment. A template has been created to help with this and should include:
 1. A Review of the original research plan outlined in Confirmation Assessment. Including a discussion of whether or not this has been completed, to what extent and why this is the case.
 2. A thesis structure- highlighting key headings and knowledge contributions for each section.
 3. A submission timeline- planning what work still needs to be completed, when you will begin writing of your thesis, when your supervisors will receive a first draft and when you should receive feedback. This should also include a realistic submission date for the final thesis.
 4. Identification of External Examiner for your thesis defence.
 5. A draft journal publication written in accordance with the specific journal guidelines.
4. You should aim to submit these materials via PhD manager **at least two weeks in advance of your meeting** to allow your supervisors to review the information.
5. Following the assessment of these materials, the Supervisor will provide some comments/ feedback through PhD Manager. This should include:
 - A description on the current state of the writing-up.
 - Comment on how far is the postgraduate researchers from completion and if the current plan/timetable is feasible?
 - Are there any developments that are cause for concern?
 - Is any particular action needed to ensure a timely completion?

- Any other comments, on postgraduate researchers or supervision?

These comments will normally be shown to the researcher and discussed with the researcher by the supervisor.

6. Once submitted by the supervisor, this assessment will be passed to the Research Director for final approval through PhD Manager and any issues discussed within the formal meeting.

Any questions regarding this assessment should be discussed with your supervisors or the Postgraduate Tutor.



Final Assessment – Thesis Progress Report

Researcher Name:

Assessment Date:

- 1. Please provide a statement of your progress since your confirmation viva. Outline your achievements and challenges to date, including your publication plan.**

- 2. Please provide an outline of the thesis structure.**

- 3. Please provide a realistic submission timeline: - planning what work still needs to be completed, including the final write up for your thesis.**

- 4. Please provide the names(s) of potential External Examiner for your thesis defence.**

- 5. A draft journal publication written in accordance with the specific journal guidelines.**

14. Where to get Help

If you need help please check with this handbook in the first instance. It should support you with the majority of common issues affecting PhD Researchers. Other links to support you can be found below:

[PhD Manager](#) can provide you with further guidance on the administration of the PhD Researcher journey from registration through to graduation.

The [Doctoral College](#) website provides additional advice regarding funding, registration and fees etc.

The [School Office](#) can support general school enquiries. The office is located in 04D04

[Student Support](#) provides a number of services to guide you through your time at Ulster University. These services include health and wellbeing, financial advice and disability support.

[Occupational Health](#) aims to provide protect and promote the physical and psychological health of the workforce at Ulster.

Ulster's [Research Handbook](#) provides additional guidance for you to include the Code of Practice for Research Study.



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