

Research
Degrees
in
English Studies
at Stirling

A Handbook for PhD Students

2009-10

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Research Degrees in English Studies at Stirling

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Introduction

Welcome to the Department of English Studies. This booklet is intended to introduce you to the Department's procedures and facilities, but do feel free to ask your supervisor, or the Departmental Postgraduate Tutor (Dr Stephen Penn), or the Postgraduate Secretary (Alison Scott) about anything that is unclear to you.

The Department of English Studies has created a vibrant research culture. All members of academic staff are research active and research students play a crucial role in helping the Department to remain at the cutting edge of its discipline.

In addition to this document, the University publishes a Postgraduate Prospectus. Regulations governing postgraduate study are contained in the University Calendar, and also in a separate supplement, *Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research, for Students registering for first time after 1st September 2003*. These, along with codes of practice and support for research students can be found on the University website at:
<http://www.ifs.stir.ac.uk/research/research-home.php>

The Department was awarded a **5** in the last Research Assessment Exercise, a grade exceeded in Scotland only by Edinburgh and St. Andrews who each received 5*. In the recent Quality Assessment of teaching the Department was awarded the top grade of "Excellent".

David Richards (Head of Department)

Administration and Support

• Departmental Office Staff

Mrs Jacqui Harrop, room A11, ext. 7504, email: jacqui.harrop@stir.ac.uk

Departmental Assistant responsible for all departmental administration.

Mrs Alison Scott, room A11, ext. 7510, email: alison.scott@stir.ac.uk

Secretary for both taught and research postgraduate students and responsible for all postgraduate administration.

Ms Laura Paterson, room A11, ext. 7495, email: laura.paterson@stir.ac.uk

Secretary responsible for undergraduate administration and provision.

Alison Scott is the postgraduate secretary who deals with issues concerning postgraduate studies and administration.

The 'office window' is open to student enquiries at the following times:

9:00am-12.30pm

Closed for lunch 12.30pm-1.30pm

2:00pm-5:00pm

Staff are available in the office from 9:00am-5:00pm, but note that if you are phoning from off campus, you should prefix the internal number with 46.

• Departmental Postgraduate Officer

The Departmental Postgraduate Officer is currently Dr Stephen Penn (room A17; tel. 46/7498; email Stephen.penn@stir.ac.uk). His role is to create a strong, interactive relationship between students and supervisors, and between students and the department in general. He is available for advice and consultation by both staff and students. Although resources —space, computers, and so on— are primarily the responsibility of the Head of Department, the Postgraduate Officer acts as a spokesperson for students in this area. He also acts as chair of the Department's Postgraduate Committee.

The Postgraduate Officer holds a formal meeting with all research students once a semester to discuss plans and projects and to try to iron out any difficulties that may have arisen. All postgraduate research students are expected to attend this meeting, and for new postgraduates it is mandatory.

The Postgraduate Officer also sees the annual report forms issued by the University Admissions Progress and Awards Committee (APAC), and takes up any relevant issues with the supervisor and/or student.

The Postgraduate Officer has a formal mentoring relationship for the first year of supervision with a colleague who is supervising for the first time.

If you have problems with supervision, or any other difficulties, you should, in the first instance, consult Professor Watson.

- **Postgraduate Training Officer**

The departmental Postgraduate Training Officer is Dr Scott Hames (room A14; tel. 46/ 6205; email scott.hames@stir.ac.uk). His remit is to facilitate all aspects of research training — following on from the Research Methods programme that all first year taught postgraduates take (which you may have already done as an MLitt student), to the specific needs and training requirements of each individual research postgraduate as specified and worked out in collaboration with their particular supervisor. The RTT also oversees the training of research postgraduates as Teaching Assistants, from the generic training offered by the University to the monitoring of essay marking, which is carried out with the cooperation of the core module convenors. The RTT holds an essay-marking workshop with advice on running tutorial classes as a TA.

- **Postgraduate Student / Staff Committee**

To ensure you are involved with matters that affect and relate to you and your studies we have a Postgraduate Student Staff Committee. This is made up of postgraduate representatives and members of staff, and is concerned with both taught and research postgraduate affairs. It deals with matters of relevance to postgraduates, their supervisors and directors of taught courses, and reports to the Departmental Committee.

Staff members of this Committee are: the Postgraduate Officer (in the chair); the Postgraduate Training Officer; the Head of Department; and the course directors of the MSc in International Publishing Management, and the MLitts in Publishing Studies, the Gothic Imagination, Postcolonial Diasporas and English Studies. There are six elected postgraduate representatives on the Committee. One is chosen from among the research postgraduates, and one represents the MLitt in the Gothic Imagination; the MLitt in Postcolonial Diasporas; the MLitt in English Studies; and the MLitt in Publishing Studies and the MSc in International Publishing Management. Representatives are nominated, elected or reaffirmed each year or as required.

At the meetings these representatives are responsible for reporting their own and their fellow students' views about the course, the Department or the university. We will discuss these issues and who will be responsible for dealing with them. Details are recorded in the Minutes and at the next meeting we will update you on the action that has been taken regarding these points. Prior to the meetings we will ask if you have any items for the Agenda.

- **Stirling Graduate Research School**

Research in English Studies operates under the aegis of the Stirling Graduate Research School, which provides a focus for the postgraduate research community in the University. All research students are members and are represented on the Steering Committee. Under the direction of the Deputy Principal for Research, Professor Ian Simpson, SGRS co-ordinates the provision of generic research training, specific skills training (eg: using the internet and PowerPoint etc.) as well as skills development activities relevant to research students and their supervision. A weekly seminar series, with external and internal speakers, helps foster transferable skills in areas such as research planning; time management and communication; and introduces generic research-related topics such as technology transfer and intellectual property rights.

All new research students attend a one-day 'Getting Started' induction programme (held in October and again in March) to familiarise them with the University, and with their role as graduate students. Then, and at registration, they receive information about the SGRS and its programmes. The programmes include a five-session set on learning skills and a four-day course on teaching skills (held in October and April). This latter course is mandatory for all

those postgraduates wishing to work for the Department as Teaching Assistants. The SGRS office is located in Cottrell Building. Enquiries should be addressed to, and further information requested from, the SGRS Administrator: tel.: (46)7041; email: graduate-research@stir.ac.uk

- **University Postgraduate Handbook**

The SGRS website is at: <http://www.stir.ac.uk/sgrs>. Here you can download the University's **Postgraduate Research Student Handbook** which describes the expected study outline for a research degree over three years and offers a wealth of detail about what is expected of your meetings with your supervisor, along with the degree regulations, intellectual property issues, information on funding sources, regulations for the submission and presentation of degrees, as well as much useful advice and further links. **This is an important resource and you should use it.**

- **Research Methods Course**

This is a year-long Departmental course in research methods, meeting weekly which all new English Studies taught postgraduate Masters students are required to attend. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to a range of practical issues and methodologies. The course is conducted by seminar. The seminars are led by a wide selection of staff members. It is an opportunity for you to supplement your training with specific reference to literary study while also meeting your peers and other members of the department. If you are a new research student and have not completed such a course before, you may wish to attend the course also (though you are under no obligation to do so). Please contact Dr Suzanne Gilbert in the first instance to ensure that you can be accommodated on the course.

- **Further Research Training**

The Research Training Tutor is responsible for all aspects of professional academic training, including guidance on running tutorials and marking essays as a TA. The RTT can respond to the specific training needs of individual postgraduates in collaboration with their supervisors as required. For PhD students well under way or nearing the end of their studies, the RTT liaises with staff to mount classes on keeping an academic dossier; on developing parts of your thesis for publication in academic journals; on constructing a CV and writing cover letters for job applications.

Information Services, Computing and Other Facilities for Research Students

- **The University Library and beyond**

The University Library is a central and vital resource for students of the humanities. General information about library and research facilities can be found on the **Information Services** website: <http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/>, which includes a useful section on IT Support and much invaluable guidance about using the University Library. This should be your first port of call for information about opening hours, printing and photocopying material, access to databases and e-journals, document delivery, research guides, other theses, and a wide range of online resources. This site also has advice on how to connect your PC or laptop to the University network and printers, as well as a helpline if you are having problems with your own computer, or the ones provided for you in the English Studies postgraduate study room.

An introduction to the Library and its facilities can be organised for new research students in the Arts. There is a particularly useful site on research practices, resources and services at <http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/research/researchers/index.php> Focused training courses for specific purposes can also be arranged: see <http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/help/index.php>

The Arts and Humanities subject Librarian also in charge of special collections, is Ms Helen Beardsley, who can be contacted at 7236 and h.r.beardsley@stir.ac.uk. The University Library also holds several special collections of interest, including Scottish literature and theatre; publishing; the 17th century library of Archbishop Robert Leighton; film and media; early left wing politics etc. See <http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/libraries/collections/spcoll/index.php>

A number of major libraries, above all the National Library of Scotland, a copyright institution, are within easy reach of Stirling; Edinburgh and Glasgow are less than an hour away by road or rail. Online access to the NLS catalogue is easily accomplished and the University Library will help you with electronic catalogue access, the e-journal gateway, document delivery service and interlibrary loan procedures.

- **Pathfoot Computer Access and Information Services**

As a research postgraduate student with the Department of English Studies you are offered the use of the study room designated to you and your fellow students. This is **B22/24** in the Pathfoot Building, which is fitted out to provide 10 workstations, each with desks with lockable drawers and privacy screens; the room is provided with a printer and is networked for emailing and access to the Library. Shelving is also provided and the Research Postgraduate mail trays are housed here, too. For security purposes the office has a digilock, which requires an access code before you gain entry. This will be issued to you once you have been authorised by Alison Scott (Postgraduate Secretary) to use the room. Allocation of places is undertaken by the space survey system.

To determine the use of the room and to allocate computer workstations all students must complete the application for 'Study Space' form, available from the English Studies Office. In the event that the number of students wishing to use the room exceeds the number of computer workstations it may be necessary for us to implement a shared desk arrangement or a timetabling/hot-desking system. We will do our very best to accommodate all students.

Students who are allocated a workstation and go on Leave of Absence or decide to study elsewhere must inform Alison Scott so arrangements can be made for the vacant desk to be used by another student during this time.

G10 (at the far end of the G corridor) is a computer room available for all research students in Pathfoot. It has networked PC computers with word processing applications. The Stirling Graduate Research Newsletter contains an up-to-date list of facilities available in Pathfoot to research students. Your user-name and password will have been arranged, along with your student ID and Library Card as part of the process of registration.

The Department is responsible for ordering and replenishing printer toner cartridges and paper, for which needs please report to Alison Scott. Any computer faults and technical problems, however, must be reported to the Information Centre on 7250. You must have your student computer ID number ready when calling so the fault can be logged. You will be issued with a fault report number, please retain this or pass onto Alison Scott so the problem can be followed up in the event that it has not been rectified. The fault will be assigned to the appropriate member of the Pathfoot Computing Advisory Team to deal with. Due to the demand on the Information Centre please be aware that faults may not be attended to on the day of reporting.

Once again, do note that the University's **Information Services** network (<http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/>) has an invaluable IT support page, which can be found at: <http://www.is.stir.ac.uk/itsupport/index.php> This will help you to use the University's IT services effectively. Through this gateway IT training can be provided should you need it, along with advice on using the network, buying a laptop at student rates, etc, etc.

- **Photocopying**

Research Postgraduate students are entitled to £20.00 of photocopying each year. This will be credited to your student library card and Alison Scott will advise you once these have been activated.

- **Financial Assistance**

The SGRS website includes a section with a user-friendly database of Grants and Trusts which is updated regularly and which enables prospective applicants to establish their eligibility for help quickly and efficiently. <http://www.research.stir.ac.uk/sgrs/funding.htm> News of any funding opportunities or bursaries is usually available at the start of each calendar year and throughout the year from Susan McGiffen in the Postgraduate Admissions Office: sm9@stir.ac.uk

- **Conference Papers and Research Travel**

The Department is keen to encourage research travel and also your attendance at conferences. Whenever possible we will assist with the expenses involved. Conference support is available only to those who are presenting papers. The writing and presenting of papers is a key research experience, an important part of your training and an invaluable addition to your CV.

Research Activity and Teaching in the Department

- **Seminars and Discussion Groups**

There are a number of activities run by and from the Department that you are welcome to attend, and indeed expected to take part in, as a way of maximising the usefulness of your stay at Stirling.

THE DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH SEMINAR operates on a regular basis throughout the semester with a programme of talks from visiting speakers, members of staff, and research students. Research students are expected to give at least one talk at some suitable point in their studies. We do strongly encourage all postgraduates, PhD and taught MLitt alike, to come to these seminars. Please contact Dr Stephen Penn for details.

THE CENTRE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES is an inter-disciplinary group with a focus on matters of colonial and post-colonial interest. (Contact in English Studies: Professor David Richards.)

STIRLING CENTRE OF POETRY (SCoP) has a programme of readings by visiting poets with three meetings each semester. Undergraduates, postgraduates, staff and members of the public are all very welcome. Attendance is free. (Contact in English Studies: Professor Rory Watson.)

POSTGRADUATE SEMINARS have been arranged in the past as a fortnightly meeting run *by* postgraduates *for* postgraduates. This can provide a forum for giving papers in a non-threatening environment with the opportunity for feedback and discussion. For further information, or for help in setting up a series of seminars, see the Departmental Postgraduate Tutor.

READING GROUPS

The Department also supports informal reading groups for all interested postgraduates. These can be connected to degree courses such as the MLitts in English, Postcolonial Diasporas or the Gothic Imagination, or they can be prompted entirely by the individual enthusiasms of students and staff. Whatever their specialisms, all postgraduates are more than welcome and the Departmental Postgraduate Tutor will be glad to help facilitate any such group under the initiative of the postgraduates themselves.

These meetings and research seminars serve a number of functions: they may give individual researchers opportunities to pursue their own specialist areas; alternatively, they may be broadly educative and an introduction to areas outside one's specialism; they almost always involve some social interaction, usually after the formal part of the proceedings is over. One advantage of attending such meetings is that you may meet senior colleagues from other institutions, interesting in itself, and also possibly useful when the time comes to start thinking about external examiners and jobs.

- **Teaching Assistantships**

The Department is keen to offer experience in tutorial teaching within a helpfully controlled environment. The need for teaching assistance varies from semester to semester, but there are

generally opportunities for TAs each semester on the core modules of the undergraduate degree programme, and also on the evening degree modules.

Teaching Assistants become recognised teachers of the University and are expected to attend relevant training sessions run by the University's HR Development Centre and by the Department itself. (See also under Postgraduate Training Officer on p. 4 above.) The University's HR Centre runs these 4-day courses in October and again in April each year. You must attend the complete set of these classes and they must be pre-booked through HR. Contact them on extension 7026, or by email at staff.development@stir.ac.uk.

You may not work as a TA until you have passed your transfer interview and you must also have the permission of your supervisor. Qualified TAs should note that the availability of teaching opportunities is determined solely by departmental need, and that teaching experience should never be regarded as an entitlement. If you expect to be teaching in the near future it makes sense to book your HR training session in advance so that you have already undertaken the training when the Department gives you the go-ahead.

Once accepted as a departmental TA, a senior colleague will monitor your teaching and marking/assessment, and the Departmental Research Training Tutor will arrange for further support and at a later date sit-in on one of your tutorials. (See also under RTT on p. 4 above.) As valued members of staff, Teaching Assistants are involved in core module team meetings for planning and assessment of the classes on which they teach. This work forms an invaluable contribution to the life of the Department and clearly also assists you in building up a CV in relation to your own career development.

These opportunities are not usually available until the second year of study in order to allow you to settle into your research unencumbered by other responsibilities. They are offered to PhD students whose status has been confirmed —as described on pp.8-9. Applications for teaching should be made to the Head of Department, on the form obtainable from the departmental office. Forms should be submitted to Jacqui Harrop by the end of April (for the autumn semester) and the end of October (for the spring semester). You can apply for a Teaching Assistantship before your transfer interview, but your appointment as a teacher is conditional upon being confirmed as a PhD student by the semester in which you begin teaching. Priority is given to postgraduates in their second and third year of study.

Teaching Assistants are paid at the current university rate. This remuneration covers all training sessions, teaching preparation, teaching, marking, attendance at lectures and meetings, office hours and invigilation. It should be noted that the marking load is often quite considerable because the Department uses periodic assessment by essay as a grading practice (there are no exams), and tutors are expected to give written feedback on the essays they mark.

Study Procedures, Supervision and Progress

- **Supervision**

You will be allocated to a recognised expert in your field as your supervisor as well as a nominated second supervisor. In some circumstances a joint supervisor may be appointed if, for example, the range of your topic is very wide. You are also encouraged to seek out other members of staff for advice and discussion, including those from other departments, who may be able to help you in your work. Where necessary arrangements will be made to deal with your supervisor's absence from the University if, for example, they are themselves on research leave.

- **Formal Practices**

The commitment of English Studies to excellence in its work with research students is indicated by a number of formal practices as explained below. The Departmental Postgraduate Tutor (DPT) is charged with the general welfare and progress of postgraduate students, while the Research Training Tutor (RTT) is responsible for more specific aspects of the research training programme.

The most common route to a PhD is via one of the one-year taught MLitt degrees, or via the MRes in the Humanities shared with the School of Modern Languages, Cultures and Religions. Students often take these programmes with a view to going on to do a PhD and there is a research training element in each of them. Students who already have postgraduate qualifications from another institution may go direct to the PhD programme.

Full-time research students must meet regularly with their supervisors at times to be arranged between them. The frequency of contact will vary according to the discipline and during the period of the student's research. At some stages (in the first year, or at a period of crucial development) this might be as often as once a fortnight. Formal progress reports on their work are submitted to the Admissions Progress and Awards Committee (APAC) in April each year.

The DPT sees these annual progress report forms and takes up any relevant issues with the supervisor and/or student.

- **The Transfer Interview**

Students undertaking the PhD programme have their PhD status confirmed towards the 10th month, or the end of the second semester of their first year of study. This is done by the 'transfer interview', which is intended to give you the opportunity to discuss your work in a slightly more formal atmosphere than one-to-one discussions with your supervisor. The meeting is intended to be productive, and will have a developmental function in helping to prepare you for your eventual viva.

The student is expected to submit three items: a substantial piece of written work (about 7,500 - 10,000 words), a bibliography for that piece of work, and a plan of the overall thesis. This work should be submitted to the postgraduate secretary for distribution to the members of the interview panel at least one week before the date set for the interview.

The plan of the thesis should be as detailed as is possible at this stage, and should include a statement of the overall argument as it is seen at this time. The plan should include a literature

review which positions the research project within its field, indicating the major critical contributions to the debate in the area; it should also include some evidence of the close analysis to be undertaken in the thesis. The plan, which can be modified later, should give the interviewing panel a framework within which to place the written work submitted.

The written work should be the equivalent of a chapter; however, the work need not necessarily appear in the final thesis in the form in which it is submitted at this stage of the student's studies. This sample work should engage with one of the main points from the overall plan; it should have a clear statement of argument, and students should be prepared, in the interview itself, to expand upon the relationship of the argument set out in this chapter to the overall thesis argument as set out in the detailed plan. Students should aim to combine, as appropriate, general discussion of the issues, close textual analysis, and a clarification of their position with respect to that of other critics.

The interview panel will consist of the Postgraduate Tutor, the student's supervisor, and one other member of the department, usually the second supervisor. It will last approximately one hour. If the work submitted and the interview is entirely satisfactory, the student will be recommended for upgrade to the PhD.

If the panel considers some issues still remain in need of clarification, however, students may be asked to revise the submitted work, in accordance with notes from the DPT, or to provide another brief piece of work. The panel will read the revised work when it is submitted and communicate the result to the student without a second interview

After the interview, the DPT will prepare a report on the proceedings, which will be placed in the student's file and a copy given to the student.

- **The Mock Viva**

Once their dissertation has been submitted for examination, postgraduate candidates can opt to take a 'mock viva' as preparation for the actual viva with an external examiner. The mock viva takes place with the DPT and one other staff member—often the second supervisor—while the supervisor attends to take notes that may be of use to the candidate. The candidate chooses and submits a single chapter from their dissertation, which becomes the basis for the oral examination. This practice is recommended as a way of polishing interview technique and overcoming nerves and has been supported by most of our PhD candidates in the past.

- **TA Training and Supervision**

If and when a research student is accepted (after University-led training, see p. 8) as an undergraduate Teaching Assistant, the departmental Research Training Tutor holds an essay-marking workshop with advice on running tutorial classes as a TA. The RTT also monitors progress at a later date by sitting-in on a tutorial, talking to the tutor afterwards, and writing a report on the teaching practice. Research postgraduates may not work as TAs until after a satisfactory transfer interview towards the end of their first year, or without the agreement of their supervisor.

- **Examination Procedures**

A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall be no longer than 80,000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliographies, except with prior permission. The same applies to a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), which should normally be no longer than 40,000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliographies.

Students, especially those from overseas, should be aware of the examination process for postgraduate research degrees. The examining committee normally consists of an external examiner who is a recognised specialist in the area of the thesis from another British university and an internal examiner (not the supervisor) from within the Department of English Studies. The examiners receive their own individual copies of the completed thesis and arrive at their provisional judgment separately. The crucial final phase of the process is the viva (*viva voce*), or oral examination, at which the candidate is questioned about the thesis by the examiners in a meeting that will last at least an hour. The supervisor may be present at the viva, at the invitation of the external examiner and with the agreement of the candidate, but does not take part in the examining process. It is important for students who may have to make special travel arrangements to realise that it is hardly ever possible to waive the viva part of the examination as it is regarded as an essential part of the process. Also, it should be noted that the viva examination might be scheduled up to several months after the submission of the thesis.

- **Registration-only Fees**

Students should be aware that the University operates a system of registration-only fees after a certain number of years of study. The implication of this policy is that once students are in the 'registration only' category they should be solely concerned with finishing their thesis and must not expect the same degree of supervision or use of resources as they receive while paying the full-time fee. This emphasizes the importance of aiming to completing your research studies within their allotted time.

- **Notice of Submission**

In the final stages of the student's work the Academic Registrar must be given four months notice of the title and proposed date of submission of the thesis to give time for the setting up of an examining committee, and other administrative arrangements. The candidate may make minor amendments to the title on submission, in consultation with the supervisor. Do not leave your notice of submission until the thesis has actually been completed.

- **Part-Time Students**

Part-time candidates must meet with their supervisors at times to be arranged between them. The frequency of these meetings will vary according to the stage of the student's research and may be supplemented by e-mail. With candidates from abroad the supervisor should meet with the student at least twice a year. Formal progress reports on their work are submitted to the Admissions Progress and Awards Committee (APAC) in April each year.

- **Study Away from the University**

Permission for the above should normally be sought in advance from the Department. In the case of full-time candidates the supervisor should meet and report on the student's progress at least twice a year. In the case of part-time candidates the supervisor should meet and report on the student's progress at least twice a year. These meetings should be in time for the supervisor to report to APAC for April of each year.

The Department will do its best to keep such students informed of its activities

- **Further Information**

Further information on good practice for research students and the code of practice for their support can be found on the University website at the following address:

<http://www.ifs.stir.ac.uk/research/research-home.php>

Full details about the form and presentation of the completed thesis can be found at:
<http://www.ifs.stir.ac.uk/research/research-thesis-presentation.php>

The full regulations for higher degrees by research, including minimum and maximum study periods for full- and part-time MPhil and PhD students, can be found at:
<http://www.ifs.stir.ac.uk/research/research-higher-post2003.php>

Frameworks of Study

The following frameworks are intended to suggest a structure for the relationship between student and supervisor. They are offered as guidance and as an indication of reasonable expectations; they are not prescriptive.

(Note that the University produces its own *Postgraduate Research Student Handbook*, and also a *Code of practice for the support of Postgraduate research students*. Both these documents can be found on the SGRS website: <http://www.research.stir.ac.uk/sgrs/>

Note especially the 'three year plan' outline on p. 11 ff of the *Postgraduate Research Student Handbook*. <http://www.research.stir.ac.uk/sgrs/PGRHandbook%202006-07%20AUG2006.pdf>

Full-time PhD

Pre-entry

- Application
- Detailed consideration of application, with interview if possible
- Recommendation by Department to Registry.

Year 1, semester 1

- Registration
- Induction by Department
- Induction by University (in early October)
- Training in the use of the Library, including retrieval techniques using information technology
- Agreement on and refinement of research topic
- Creation of bibliography that should include current research on the topic of the thesis
- Construction of an initial plan, subject to change and development
- Agreement on schedule of meetings for semester - in the early stages of research these meetings should occur reasonably frequently, normally every fortnight or three weeks
- Discussion of student's involvement with the Department, including attendance at research seminars and other groups, and research methods course if not completed previously.

Year 1, semester 2

- Agreement on schedule of meetings for semester
- Student's involvement with the Department
- Check on adequacy of resources

Submission of sample of written work towards the thesis
Transfer interview
Supervisor's progress report (in April) to APAC, the Academic Progress and Admissions Committee

Year 2, semester 1

Agreement on schedule of meetings for semester
Student's involvement with Department
Teaching Assistantships now become possible - if the transfer interview has taken place and the student is confirmed as a PhD candidate
Research Assistantships now become possible - if the transfer interview has taken place and the student is confirmed as a PhD candidate
Active encouragement and assistance in student attending conference;
Applications for financial support are currently dealt with by the Head of Dept. and should be requested using a form obtainable from the departmental office.
Discussion with supervisor about submitting to the editors of journals those sections of the thesis that are in publishable form.

Year 2, semester 2

Agreement on schedule of meetings for semester
Student's involvement with the Department, including arrangements for the presentation of a paper at the Departmental Research Seminar
Conference attendance
Major review of research plan
Supervisor's progress report (in April) to APAC, the Academic Progress and Admissions Committee

Year 3, semester 1

Schedule of meetings
Working on first draft of complete thesis
Involvement with Department
Conference attendance
Assistance in job applications and CV writing, with input from the Departmental Research Training Tutor and also Careers Advisory Service
Publication plans

Year 3, semester 2

Schedule of meetings
Involvement with Department
Identifying and appointment of external and internal examiners
Formal notification of intention to submit FOUR MONTHS in advance of the submission date
Supervisor's report (in April) to APAC, the Academic Progress and Admissions Committee
Submission of thesis
Viva examination

It is hoped that the above arrangements will act as a framework for students and supervisors to enable them to recognise what is expected on both sides. The final responsibility for the quality of the work undertaken does, of course, lie with the student.

Part-time PhD

The period of study for part-time PhD students is not less than three years and not more than eight years. However, in most cases it would seem reasonable to aim for completion in five years and to adjust the above schedule accordingly. The number of meetings between a part-time student and his/her supervisor is reduced in comparison with a full-time student's meetings. In the case of part-time candidates the supervisor should meet and report on the student's progress at least twice a year. These meetings should be in time for the supervisor to report to APAC for April of each year.

Full-time MPhil by Research

The period of study involved here is not less than one and not more than three years. If the student is planning to take two or three years before completion, it would seem reasonable to adjust the guidelines for the full-time PhD to these circumstances.

However, some students, especially from abroad, may wish to aim at completion in a year. In these cases the minimum period of study would be one year from registration to a first submission of the completed thesis. Assuming the normal point of entry, in September/October, this suggests that students should aim to be working on final revision during the summer with the aim of being examined before Christmas. This is a matter of particular importance to overseas students. They should aim either to have their work in such a form that the final revision can take place away from Stirling or take into account, perhaps financially, that they may have to remain in the area over the summer. They must also realise that it will be necessary for them to return to the University for the oral examination of their thesis. This suggests the following programme of work:

Pre-entry

- Application
- Detailed consideration of application, with interview if possible
- Recommendation by Department to Registry

Year 1, semester 1

- Registration
- Induction by the Department
- Induction by the University
- Training in the use of the Library, including retrieval techniques using Information technology
- Agreement on research topic
- Creation of bibliography
- Construction of a firm plan, subject only to minor modification by the end of the semester
- Agreement on schedule of meetings for semester
- Discussion of the student's involvement with the Department, including attendance at research seminar and other groups, and research methods course if not completed previously
- Final firming up of the topic

Christmas Vacation

For those intending to submit in a year, this would be a period of intense work on the thesis.

Year 1, semester 2

Agreement on schedule of meetings for the semester
Discussion of the student's involvement with the Department, including the giving of a paper to the research seminar towards the end of the semester
Progress interview to confirm that the work is of M.Phil standard (see 'Progress', pp. 8-9)
Supervisor's progress report (in April) to APAC, the Academic Progress and Admissions Committee. Verification of the fact that submission will be possible within the year

Summer Vacation

A period of intense activity, mainly unsupervised, to enable the student to submit within the time allowed

Submission

Examination, including the oral examination at Stirling

Part-time MPhil by Research

The period of study is not less than two years and not more than four years from the date of original registration to the date of first submission of the thesis. As with the part-time PhD above, it is suggested that the programme should follow a more extended version of that laid out for the full-time M.Phil.

APPENDIX A

English Studies: Academic Staff Research Profiles

For full details of recent research and publications, please consult our website:

<http://www.english.stir.ac.uk/staff/index.php>

APPENDIX B

Directory of Current Research Postgraduates

See details here: <http://www.english.stir.ac.uk/postgraduate/current-research/index.php>

APPENDIX C

Doing the Thesis and the Viva

These notes are intended to help you through some of the more practical aspects of writing a research dissertation, from formulating a topic, to formatting the finished work and attending the *viva voce* examination.

• Starting Your Research

Your preliminary thinking about what your thesis is going to deal with will already have been undertaken of course. But the first year of study is crucially important for the refinement, the development, and even for the evolution of those initial plans, and you should make full use of your supervisor in this. You will need to consider the following issues:

- Is the thesis do-able in the word length? (ie: is too ambitious? Not ambitious enough? How many texts do you intend to study?)
- Is it in a field that will offer very little —or perhaps far too much— in the way of critical reading and support?
- How will it be divided up into chapters? (It is never too early to think in terms of what chapter will deal with what text or topic.)

Further issues to consider should include:

- The construction of a critical bibliography and an awareness of what has already been published in the field.
- An indication of the most important primary and secondary sources you wish to use.

• **Technical Preparation**

You are advised to take the following steps:

(i) Consult existing theses.

(ii) Make sure you have an up-to-date copy of an academically approved Style Book (MHRA / MLA / etc.)

(iii) Inform yourself about the University's resources for dissertation students, including word processing facilities, library resources, and any available relevant word processing training that is on offer. In other words, make sure that you do not leave the acquisition of these necessary skills until the last minute.

(iv) If you have not already taken instruction on research methods, critical approaches and bibliographical or editing practice, we require you to attend the **Research Methods** seminars that are part of the regular taught MLitt programme.

• **What makes a good PhD?**

A good thesis topic is firmly located in current critical literature, asks useful questions, and addresses these through original research. Is there an existing field of literature in which you can work? Is there enough literature available? Does your topic allow you to show knowledge of the field? Search the literature to answer these questions.

Have you researched the field, identified the hot topics and proposed to a suitable university? Are you making the most use of your supervisor's knowledge and/or the knowledge of other members of staff or the resources of the University at large?

Is your research original? Does it make a contribution to the field? Even if you discover that someone else has published exactly on your topic, your focus may pose different questions or use alternative methodology.

References:

Madsen, D. (1992). *Successful dissertations and theses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Peters, R.L. (1997). *Getting what you came for: The smart student's guide to earning a Master's or Ph.D.* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Chris Hart, *Doing Your Masters Dissertation*, SAGE Publications, 2004

Estelle M. Philips and D. S. Pugh, *How to Get a PhD: a handbook for students and their supervisors*, The Open University Press, 1987–2005 (frequently reprinted)

• **Starting a dissertation**

How to formulate the title and the topic
Choosing a title

A good model is the two-part title. The first part is attention-getting, using a line from one of the books under consideration, or setting up your own title. Eg:

Another Country? Issues of individual and national identity in the writing of four Scottish women novelists, Nan Shepherd, Muriel Spark, Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy

Focusing the topic

A THESIS IS AN ARGUMENT

You need an angle: a hypothesis, an argument, in other words, a *thesis*. It's nice if this can be signalled in the title / subtitle.

In thinking up title you should aim to be more than thematic – whilst the precise argument or hypothesis may not be firmed up until you have done more primary and secondary reading, you need to think about good angles and original approaches to the subject or material. The example above shows that individual and national identity is going to be the frame through which these books and writers will be considered.

A THESIS IS A DEBATE:

Compare texts/authors/critics, previous critical or theoretical positions, and previous arguments. Finding that you *disagree* with another critic on some particular point can be very productive.

A THESIS IS A STRUCTURE:

Think boxes (chapters) *from the start*. A thesis is *not* a long essay.

Organising the dissertation

What Shall I Research?

Find an original niche – how is what you are planning to research different from what has already been done in the field? Being original may involve looking at a writer who has been little researched, comparing writers not usually compared, bringing (new) theoretical approaches to a particular writer. For language projects – examining new data to test a particular theory, collecting data (either written or spoken) in order to theorise a particular social phenomenon – e.g. language in the service industries, developing an original thesis about e.g. gender identity in a particular textual genre which is then “tested” by close textual analysis.

Criteria for a successful dissertation

What is distinctive about the dissertation compared to earlier work? You need to convey a sense that this is at a ‘higher level’. The research effort, and the time you have to carry this out, needs to be reflected in what you produce.

Use of secondary literature (certain types of dissertation lend themselves to a literature review). Depth of knowledge – awareness of underlying issues.

Judicious use of primary literature (not too much, not too little).

If linguistic – good use of data (collection, transcription).

Good engagement with close textual analysis.

Use of theoretical approaches, tools of analysis – show what your method will be.

Submitting the PhD Thesis

Please note the following points from the University Calendar

<http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/0607/DegReg/HdegsbyResprior98.htm>

23. A candidate shall present the results of the research in a written thesis. Unless the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee gives prior consent, the thesis shall be written in English. A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy shall be no longer than 80,000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliographies, except with prior permission. A thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy shall normally be no longer than 40,000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliographies, except with prior permission. The candidate is solely responsible for the content and presentation of the thesis.

24. A candidate shall notify the Academic Registrar, on the form provided in the Registry, of the title of the thesis at least four months before the expected date of submission. The candidate may make minor amendments to the title on submission, in consultation with the supervisor.

The full regulations for the submission and presentation of a PhD thesis can be found in the University Calendar Website at:

<http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/2006-2007/rules-and-regulations-theses-form-and-presentation.pdf>

This includes instructions about the dissertation's format and binding and its deposit in the University's Digital Repository, as well as matters to do with borrowing, or restricted access etc. **It is vital that you acquaint yourself with this material when you are preparing to submit your dissertation.**

Note especially the following points:

- 1.1 At least two copies of the thesis must be submitted for examination, and the candidate must retain a further copy for use in the oral examination. One copy is required for each examiner.
- 1.2 If a candidate is successful in their examination, three copies of the thesis must be submitted to the University before the candidate can be granted the degree for which the thesis was submitted. One hard-bound copy plus one soft-bound copy of the thesis must be lodged with the Academic Registrar, and one electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted to the University Digital repository at <http://dspace.stir.ac.uk>. The hard-bound copy will be retained by the University library and the soft-bound copy will be retained by the relevant academic department.
- 1.3 Doctoral theses are to be submitted along with one copy of the title page, abstract and table of contents. Masters theses are to be submitted along with one copy of the title page and abstract. This paper work is required to fulfil British Library requirements.

Remember to use double spacing, and to allow a properly wide left-hand margin (3.5 cm), as the binding of the finished work will use up some of this space.

The Title Page should be constructed as below:

[centred]

TITLE OF THESIS

Student's Name

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

English Studies
University of Stirling

Month Year

The thesis itself should be ordered as follows:

Title page
Contents page
Acknowledgements and Declaration
List of abbreviations
Main Text
Notes (if any)
Appendices
Bibliography

The Contents page should look like this:

Contents

Acknowledgements and Declaration	p.ii
List of abbreviations (if relevant)	p.iii
Introduction (or chapter one can be your introduction).	p. 1
Chapter 1 *	p. 5
Chapter 2 *	p.15
Chapter 3 * etc	p. 30
Conclusion (or your last chapter can be the conclusion).	p. 74
Endnotes (only if you are using them)	p. 77
Appendices (rarely necessary, but might contain rare texts, or supplementary statistical material)	p. 79
Bibliography	p. 81

* You may wish to give each chapter a title as well, and /or indicate briefly the area or the topic that is to be covered in it.

Acknowledgements

You may wish to acknowledge your supervisor along with any librarian or some other especially helpful source or sources. Please do not offer an Oscar speech thanking all your friends, Microsoft and Pizza Hut.

If there are *particularly* special circumstances (technical or personal) in the material you have dealt with, a separate **Preface** might be appropriate at this point, but this is rarely necessary.

The Declaration should also be on the Acknowledgements page. It must be made in the following terms and signed and dated by you.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

Signed:

Date:

General Design: Typefaces, Chapter Headings, Page Numbering, Illustrations, Footnotes, Bibliography and Proofreading

Typefaces

Please do not use a plethora of typefaces, type-sizes, or decorative effects. Academic work should be fairly sober in its presentation. The usual form is not to use more than two typefaces. One for your text and another (if you like) for chapter headings. Chapter titles and sub-headings may be distinguished by a discreet change in type-size. Do not over-use **bold**, *italic* or CAPITAL effects. In fact these should be used very sparingly. The use of italics (or underlining) for the titles of books is, however, expected.

Chapter headings

Good practice is to start new chapters with the chapter title at the head of the page, and then to drop the first paragraph of the new chapter approximately one third of the page down from the top.

You may use an epigraph to the thesis, or to each chapter, as you wish. An epigraph is a short quotation chosen because it is in some way relevant —please note— or appropriate.

Page Numbering

Best practice is to number the pages of your thesis at the top centre or the top right hand corner of each page.

Illustrations

Illustrations should be included only if they are necessary or particularly appropriate.

Footnotes

The rule about footnotes is that they should contain only references or further supporting material to do with your engagement with the text or critic in question. They should **not** contain material that is relevant to your thesis. Ask yourself: if all the footnotes were lost – would your argument be weakened? (It shouldn't be.)

Footnotes can be at the foot of each page if your word processor can manage this, in which case they should be numbered afresh for each page. Or they can be endnotes preferably all together at the end of the thesis (In this latter case the notes should be numbered consecutively throughout each chapter.) If all your endnotes are at the end of the thesis, please make sure that the ones for Chapter One are clearly distinguishable from the ones for Chapter Two etc. Putting endnotes at the end of each chapter is also possible, but not to be encouraged, as the reader has to search for them chapter by chapter.

References

The style for references should be as given in academically recognised Style Books in such as those by the MHRA or the MLA etc. These are available in the Library or in good bookshops with an academic clientele. MHRA is also available online. Whatever system you choose it must be consistently used throughout.

Bibliography

If you choose, the Bibliography can separate primary material (the main books by the author or authors being studied) from secondary material (critical works and other books consulted). The secondary Bibliography should be arranged alphabetically, ranked according to the surname (placed first) of the author or editor. See your Stylebook. (MLA, MHRA, etc.) A further separation of bibliographical material is sometimes advisable, as with a separate section for manuscript sources or electronic sources. You should consult your supervisor if you have any queries about this, or about what should be included in the bibliography in the first place.

Please Note: For primary material you should give the date of the edition you are using, *but also* the date of that book's first publication. (Note that this information may turn out to be relevant in the critical text of the thesis itself.)

Proof-reading and the finishing touches

IT IS CRUCIAL that you proofread the finished thesis very carefully. Spellcheckers alone will not catch the wrong word (correctly spelled) or missing words.

It goes without saying that your handling of quotations and book titles etc must follow your Stylebook guidelines. *It is even more important to check that your quotations are (i) wholly accurate, and (ii) accurately ascribed* —with the correct page reference, edition of the book cited etc. ***Check this as you type them. You will not have time to check this kind of detail (or the books to hand) when you are completing and reviewing the whole thesis.***

Good presentation and proof-reading is mandatory and poorly proof-read or carelessly presented work will be penalised accordingly and will have to be corrected before any degree can be awarded.

Please note the following points, which have specific reference to the thesis and proper research practice:

- Plagiarism in the thesis is equivalent to cheating in a final degree examination. It will be treated with the same degree of seriousness and have similar consequences.
- The Annex to the University's Ordinance 2 identifies deceit and examination offences as cases of misconduct that fall within the scope of the Code of Student Discipline (see the current University Calendar, section V.25-6). The Ordinance gives to the Head of Department the authority to initiate proceedings against a student who has plagiarised.
- The accusation of plagiarism is not made lightly, least of all in a thesis. Any such case will always be supported by clear evidence and documentation pointing to the relevant unacknowledged source.
- Any postgraduate facing such an accusation will meet with the supervisor and second reader concerned and the Head of Department and, ultimately, with the External Examiner. At such meetings, the student has the right to have a representative of their own choice or a student advisor with them, appointed from the Stirling University Students' Association.

Preparing for the Viva

By arrangement with your supervisor and the Department's Postgraduate Research Officer, we can arrange for a 'mock viva' to be held after you have submitted your thesis, but in advance of the actual viva. If you wish to take advantage of this, two members of staff will give you a taste the viva experience, based on *one* of your submitted chapters. Your supervisor can also be present but will take no part in the discussion. The aim of this procedure is to accustom you to the experience of being asked questions about your research in a formal setting, and past postgraduates have found it to be a valuable rehearsal.

For the Viva itself, the following pointers may prove useful.

- Do remember to confirm the date and to turn up on time. (Attendance is mandatory.)
- Aim to relax and enjoy the discussion about your work. It marks the end of a period of serious study.
- Bring a copy of your thesis to the viva with you.
- It makes sense for what you have written to be fresh in your mind.
- The panel almost always wants a candidate to shine. You should aim to show that you have grasped the question and its implications. You should show a critical grasp of the subject and what others have said about it. Develop your case and make the most of it and its implications, but don't be afraid to stop when you have made the point.
- Don't be too quick to agree with what looks like an objection. So stick to your guns if you think you have a reasonable case and don't be put off by a probing question. Of course, you shouldn't be disagreeable about it and if you haven't a leg to stand on it's better to concede the point.
- The external examiner will be interested and sympathetic. If you do not understand a question, say so and ask for clarification. If you lose the thread, just say so and start afresh.
- Think about what you would now change (if anything) or do differently, as this is a question that is sometimes asked. No one expects the thesis to be absolutely your last word, and subsequent reflections show that you are still thinking.
- Do think about where you will next take the material of your research. Do you have plans for further development and further research? Do you plan to produce any articles or conference papers from what you have discovered? (Some students will have already sought publication for material derived from their research or given papers based on it.) Do you have plans for book publication? Have you thought of any likely publishers?

Regulations and Codes of Practice for Research Students

Higher degrees by research

A full account of all the regulations appertaining to higher degrees by research can be found on the University website at:

<http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/0607/DegReg/HdegsbyResprior98.htm>

Alternatively, click on Calendar > Subject and Course Information > Degree Regulations and Administrative Guidelines > Professional Higher Degrees by Research: all students first registering from September 2003.

Good practice for full time research students

This material relates to assessment, attendance, learning support, academic appeals etc, all relating to undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate students. It can be found at:

<http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/PGRGoodPractice.php>

Code of practice for the support of postgraduate research students

This material deals more specifically with the responsibilities of supervisors and postgraduates, the programmes of study, training and academic support that you can expect. It can be found at:

<http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/postgrad-res.php>