

Research  
Degrees  
in  
English Studies  
at Stirling

**A Handbook for PhD Students**

2010-11

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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 Adrian Hunter), 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 taught postgraduate programmes are contained in the University Calendar (click on 'Postgraduate Programme Regulations' at <http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk>).

Finally, a word on nomenclature. During the 2010/11 academic session, the university will implement a major restructuring plan which will see large Schools replace Departments as the main academic unit. Technically speaking, 'Departments' will cease to exist; but there will remain subject-specific 'sections' of the new Schools broadly equivalent to Departments. We anticipate that most aspects of postgraduate life will continue under Schools as they have under Departments, though changes to the committee structures described below are likely.

David Richards (Head of Department))

# Administration and Support

## o Departmental Office Staff

**Jacqui Harrop, room A11, ext. 7504, email: [jacqui.harrop@stir.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.harrop@stir.ac.uk)**  
Departmental Administrator responsible for all departmental administration.

**Alison Scott, room A11, ext. 7510, email: [alison.scott@stir.ac.uk](mailto:alison.scott@stir.ac.uk)**  
Secretary for both taught and research postgraduate students and responsible for all postgraduate administration.

**Laura Paterson, room A11, ext. 7495, email: [laura.paterson@stir.ac.uk](mailto: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

1.30pm-5.00pm

Staff are available in the office as above, but note that if you are phoning from off campus, you should prefix the internal number with 46.

## o Departmental Postgraduate Officer

The Departmental Postgraduate Officer is currently Dr Adrian Hunter (room B15; tel. 46/7507; email [adrian.hunter@stir.ac.uk](mailto:adrian.hunter@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, and acts as chair of the two departmental committees focused on postgraduate affairs, the Postgraduate Student/Staff Committee (PG SSC) and the Postgraduate Learning and Teaching Committee (PG LTC).

In the first instance, you should contact the programme convenor(s) with any issues or difficulties relating to your taught course. If the problem cannot be resolved at this stage, you should contact Dr Hunter.

## o Research Training Tutor

The Departmental Research Training Tutor (RTT) is Dr Scott Hames (room A14; tel. 46/6205; email [scott.hames@stir.ac.uk](mailto:scott.hames@stir.ac.uk)). Her remit is to preside over all aspects of research training, from the Arts Research Training programme undertaken by all taught postgraduates, to the specialised needs and specific training requirements of individual postgraduate students. 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. Dr Hames will also arrange to visit TA tutorials to monitor teaching skills in practice. It is the responsibility of research students, in discussion with their supervisor, to identify training needs and opportunities.

#### o **Postgraduate Student/Staff Committee**

To ensure you are involved with departmental practices which affect 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 Research Training Tutor; 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 Studies, Modern Scottish Writing and English Studies. There are elected postgraduate representatives from each TPG course on the Committee in addition to one student who is chosen from the research postgraduates who is nominated, elected or reaffirmed each year 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 course representatives have any items for the Agenda, based on input received from other members of the TPG programmes.

#### o **Stirling Graduate Research School**

The Stirling Graduate Research School 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. These programmes include a five-session set on learning skills. 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](mailto:graduate-research@stir.ac.uk)

# Information Services, Computing and Other Facilities for Research Students

## o 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](mailto:h.r.beardsley@stir.ac.uk). The University Library also holds several special collections of interest, including Scottish literature and theatre; publishing; the 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

The university library underwent major refurbishment in 2009-10, and while the 'new' library will be open from the beginning of the Autumn 2010 semester, there may be some disruption as students and staff adjust to new spaces and services.

## o 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.

### o **Photocopying**

Research Postgraduate students are entitled to £20.00 of photocopying each year. Photocopying Cards are issued from the Departmental Office – please contact Alison Scott.

### o **Financial Assistance**

The University and Department are able to offer a limited number of annual postgraduate tuition fee bursaries. Further details will be available at the beginning of the calendar year.

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](mailto:sm9@stir.ac.uk)

### o **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 students in this department have a proud tradition of organising annual postgraduate conferences, to which taught postgraduate students are eligible to submit paper proposals.

## Research Activity and Teaching in the Department

### o 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. 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.)

**THE CENTRE FOR SCOTTISH STUDIES**, whose activities are largely shared between the Department of English Studies and the Department of History and Politics, often run summer conferences.

**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: [english@stir.ac.uk](mailto:english@stir.ac.uk))

**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 friendly 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 Officer.

### 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 Officer 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.

### o **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.

Teaching Assistants become recognised teachers of the University and are expected to attend relevant training sessions run by the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL) and the Department itself. (See also under Postgraduate Training Officer on p. 4 above.) CAPL runs a six-part 'Researcher Development Programme' aimed at beginning academic staff as well as PhD students. To become eligible for a Teaching Assistantship, you must complete 4 of the 6 elements of this programme ('Managing Tutorials and Seminars', 'Marking Essays and Assignments', 'Giving Feedback to Students', and 'Reviewing and Enhancing Practice in Teaching and Assessment'). To book your place on the next running of this course, see the schedule and booking instructions on the CAPL website:

<http://www.strategicplanning.stir.ac.uk/CAPL/ed-dev/courses-and-workshops/index.php>

In addition to the CAPL sessions, beginning TAs must attend an essay-marking workshop run by the Research Training Tutor.

Note that you **may not work as a TA until you have passed your transfer interview**; 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 CAPL training 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 research degrees in order to allow you to settle into your research unencumbered by other responsibilities. 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**

### **o 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.

### **o 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 Officer 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 May/June each year.

### **o The Transfer Interview**

Students undertaking the PhD programme have their PhD status confirmed towards the 10<sup>th</sup> 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 Officer, 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.

### **o The Mock Viva**

Once their dissertation has been submitted for examination, postgraduate candidates may request a 'mock viva' to prepare them for the actual viva with an external examiner. If requested, 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 many PhD candidates in the past.

### **o 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.

## **o 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.

## **o 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 complete your research studies within their allotted time.

## **o 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.

## **o 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.

## **o 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 May/June of each year.

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

### o 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.aro.stir.ac.uk/research/research-home.php>

Full details about the form and presentation of the completed thesis can be found at:

<http://www.aro.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.aro.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.

# Regulations and Codes of Practice for Research Students

## Higher degrees by research

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## 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>**

## 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

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

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