

Taught Postgraduate Degrees  
in  
English Studies  
at Stirling

A Handbook for MLitt/MRes/MSc Students

2010-2011

# Taught Postgraduate Degrees in English Studies

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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 course convenor, or the Departmental Postgraduate Officer (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

- **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.

- **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.

- **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)). His 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. Note that taught postgraduate are not eligible to work as TAs.

- **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.

- **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)

- **Arts Research Training**

Arts Research Training is a compulsory element of all Arts PG programmes at Stirling, in which students undertake skills-oriented training related to their own intellectual interests and career aims. Students choose the skills they wish to develop, and are responsible for undertaking and recording training activities. You will need to agree your choice of skills, and a plan for how you will acquire them, with the convenor of your postgraduate course by **31 October 2010**. For each of the semester-long ART modules, students must undertake 2 skills activities in each of 4 separate categories (8 in total), and submit by 31 December 2010 a Reflective Journal demonstrating what they've learnt. **You will receive separate detailed guidance on how to complete the ART requirement early in the Autumn semester.**

# Information Services, Computing and Other Facilities for Research Students

- **The University Library and beyond**

It goes without saying that 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.

The Department of English Studies Librarian 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.

- **Pathfoot Computer Access and Information Services**

As a taught 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 Pathfoot **B26**, which has four networked computer workstations, a printer and an internal telephone. There are also shelves and desk drawers provided for storage purposes.

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.

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 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.

Please 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.

- **Photocopying**

Taught Postgraduate students are entitled to £15.00 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 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)

- **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

- **Seminars and Discussion Groups**

There are a number of activities run by and from the Department that you are welcome and strongly encouraged to attend. Note that you can receive credit for attending research seminars in your Arts Research Training portfolio.

**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 strongly encourage all postgraduates, PhD and taught MLitt alike, to come to these seminars. For details contact Dr Stephen Penn.

**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.

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

### **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.

# Academic Regulations

The full University regulations that govern your studies can be found in the University calendar (<http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk>). This section draws your attention to especially important rules concerning attendance, assessment and plagiarism.

## • Attendance

Tutorials and seminars in English Studies are designed to give students hands-on experience in guided reading and, week by week, to monitor their understanding of specific topics prior to formal assessment, usually by written essay. The ability to formulate a point of view and to present, develop, illustrate and defend it are among the key learning outcomes pursued in English Studies modules. Equally central to the discipline is the ability to engage in critical discussion and debate with those whose point of view may differ from your own. Tutorials and seminars allow your tutor to monitor your progress in acquiring these key skills and to intervene where required in order to benefit your performance in formally assessed work (essays). Tutorials are also designed to develop skills of oral presentation, which are again key learning outcomes in this subject area. **For these reasons attendance at TPG classes in English Studies is designated ‘prescribed’** in accordance with the University's Attendance Regulations.

The rules below are excerpted from the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook (<http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/Reg14.php>).

- Attendance at a prescribed class is required. Acceptable grounds for non-attendance include (supporting documentation should be provided wherever possible):
  - Unavoidable detention elsewhere
    - In hospital on/before date of class
    - In court/detention on/before date of class
    - Participation in authorised national or international sporting competition or authorised national sports training camps.
  - Medical grounds
    - Confined to bed or otherwise unable to attend University
    - Ability to work seriously impaired on or before the date of submission
  - Compassionate grounds
    - Death of a close person
    - Sudden acute or serious illness or injury (including serious mental illness) of a close person.
  - The definition of a ‘close person’ is, for example, a family member (parent/guardian, spouse/partner, son/daughter, brother/sister, grandparent, grandchild) or someone living at the same address as the student.
  - Other exceptional grounds (or other good cause for absence)
    - Exceptional circumstances will be considered on their own merits.

Students who are absent from more than a third of prescribed classes with good cause\* will receive the original grade obtained for that module.

**Students who are absent from more than a third of prescribed classes without good cause will have their grade capped at a maximum of 3C for that module.**

- 6.2 In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, where a student has disclosed a disability and cannot attend a prescribed class for a reason connected with their disability, an alternative means of meeting learning outcomes should be agreed where possible.
- 6.3 Once reasonable adjustments are agreed, they are recorded on a summary Agreed Record of University Adjustments (ARUA) where available. Where an ARUA is not available advice should be sought from a Disability Adviser.

\*Responsibility for demonstrating and providing adequate evidence of acceptable grounds for non-attendance, with reference to paragraph 5.2, lies with the student.

**• Assessment**

Below is an extract from section D of the General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates, by coursework. The full Calendar entry can be found at <http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk> (click on ‘Postgraduate Programme Regulations’).

***D Assessment***

1. The examinations in whatever form shall be conducted by such internal and external examiners as may be appointed by the Academic Council, provided that for each programme of study at least one external examiner shall be appointed.

The grades used to denote standards of achievement are:

1A, 1B, 1C (Distinction level); 2A, 2B, 2C (Very good); 2D, 2E, 2F (Good); 3A, 3B, 3C (Satisfactory); 4A, 4B, 4C (Marginal fail); 5A, 5B, 5C (Clear fail); X (No grade).

Examiners have discretion to award credit at a lower level to a student who has not successfully achieved the learning outcomes for a module at SCQF level 11. The minimum level at which credit may be awarded in this manner is SCQF level 10. The maximum amount of credit below level 11 that can count towards the minimum requirements for a Postgraduate Diploma or Master’s degree is 30 SCQF points.

2. The examiners appointed for a programme of study shall recommend: <i>either</i>	(a) that a degree, diploma or certificate be granted, with distinction if appropriate;
<i>or</i>	(b) that the candidate be permitted to extend the period of study for the purpose of re-assessment and re-examination up to a limit specified by the examiners;
<i>or</i>	(c) that the degree, diploma or certificate be not granted.

**• The Submission of Course Work**

All written assignments should be submitted by the due date and **must carry on the first page the following information:** (1) the writer's registration number; (2) the degree for

which the work is submitted; (3) the essay question or other assignment identification; (4) the name of the writer's tutor.

**Unless otherwise arranged with programme convenors, written assignments must be posted through the essay box outside the Departmental Office by 4.00pm on the due date. They should not be submitted in plastic or cellophane folders or envelopes. Late submissions may be penalised by a reduction in the grade awarded.**

If you wish to email your essay you must email it to Alison Scott ([alison.scott@stir.ac.uk](mailto:alison.scott@stir.ac.uk)) and not to your tutor by the deadline. You must also phone afterwards to check that your essay has been received successfully. In the event that you need to post your essay you must send it by recorded delivery before the deadline. The office can see from your envelope when it was posted and this is used as your submission time. Please address your envelope to Alison Scott, Postgraduate Secretary, Department of English Studies, Room A11, Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA. Again please contact Alison Scott to ensure your essay has been received. **PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY DIRECTLY TO YOUR TUTOR.**

It is the student's responsibility to have a copy of each piece of their written work, in case the original is misplaced.

The layout of essays and written work must follow the guidelines given in a professional stylesheet of your own choice (MLA, MHRA, etc). Any weaknesses or inconsistencies in presentation will adversely affect the grade awarded.

#### • Plagiarism, Cheating and Academic Misconduct

It is generally understood why cheating in examinations is wrong: it is an attempt to gain undeserved credit by presenting the work of another as one's own. For the University not to treat cheating as an extremely serious offence would be unfair to its students and would jeopardise the standard of its awards. Exactly the same is true of coursework and dissertations submitted for assessment. Plagiarism is the equivalent of cheating in an examination because it involves the reproduction of another's work, whether ideas, data or expressions, without due acknowledgement. This is plagiarism, whether the source is printed, electronic or handwritten, whether it is reproduced verbatim or is paraphrased and whether it is drawn on extensively or in brief.

The University has an agreed policy setting out procedures and penalties for dealing with plagiarism in postgraduate coursework and dissertations. This policy is available online at: <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/PlagiarismPG.php>

It is vital that you read this and make yourself aware of the penalties. The policy also gives guidance on proper and adequate acknowledgement of source material, but if you are in any doubt at all about the nature of plagiarism, or the means by which to avoid it, you are strongly advised to consult your tutor. You should clearly understand that it is your responsibility to be sure that you understand these matters. Ignorance is not accepted as a defence for plagiarism.

You are strongly recommended to consult the following web resource, "The Little Book of Plagiarism", devised by the university:

<http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/documents/BookofPlagiarism.pdf>

The University has an agreed policy setting out procedures and penalties for dealing with plagiarism and other forms of Academic Misconduct. The policy forms part of the University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook and can be viewed in full at this link:

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

You should note that penalties for Academic Misconduct are cumulative and include compulsory withdrawal from a degree course. The policy also gives guidance on proper and adequate acknowledgement of source materials, and these sections should be read in conjunction with "The Little Book of Plagiarism" (link above).

If you are in any doubt at all about the nature of plagiarism, or the means by which to avoid it, you are strongly advised to consult your tutor. Students should clearly understand that it is their responsibility to familiarise themselves with the university's policy on plagiarism. Ignorance is not accepted as a defence in cases of academic misconduct.

- **Electronic Submission of Coursework (Turnitin)**

To protect the integrity of its degrees the university requires departments to make use of the plagiarism detection software *Turnitin*, which is accessed through WebCT. Students are **REQUIRED** to upload an electronic copy of their essay, in addition to submitting it in hard copy, by the advertised due date. Essays will not be marked unless the electronic copy is uploaded. If you fail to upload your essays, you will receive a No Grade for that essay.

On your module homepage on WebCT you will find guidance and instructions for uploading electronic copies of your essays. Note that all the regulations about submission of the paper copy of your essays and assignments set out in this Handbook still apply. The electronic copy is an additional requirement not a substitute for the hard copy; that is to say, an essay or assignment submitted electronically on time but not submitted in hard copy before the due time will still be counted as late.

Needless to say, the electronic version and the paper version must be identical, and checks will be carried out to ensure that this is so. Following a successful upload, you will receive a confirmation e-mail. If you do not receive this e-mail, or have any other difficulties making the electronic upload, for example because you get an error message during the process, you must contact your tutor immediately. Likewise, if your tutor notifies you that your essay has not been received in electronic version, you must make the upload immediately; otherwise you risk receiving a No Grade for the essay.

In order to assist your understanding of plagiarism, the university provides limited access to the Turnitin system so that you may, if you wish, present your essay for screening by the plagiarism detection software in advance of the formal submission. The results of the screening will be made available only to you and will not form any part of your assessment record on the module.

The screening facility will be available on **one core module of your taught postgraduate programme, during your first semester**. Instructions on using the screening facility are available on the course homepage on WebCT.

## • Resubmission Policy for Masters Degrees

The guiding university regulations in respect of resubmission in postgraduate programmes are these:

6.2.10.1 Re-assessment of postgraduate modules including re-submission of the dissertation may be permitted by the examiners within a limited time period.

6.2.10.2 To ensure that students who are re-assessed do not thereby gain an unfair advantage over other students, the maximum module grade possible after re-assessment should be C. [3C]

The Department's policy on resubmission, derived from the above regulations, is as follows:

At the discretion of the Chief Examiner, any student receiving an overall module mark between 4A-4C may be allowed to resubmit the failing components of the module. The highest mark that can be achieved for the whole module on reassessment will be 3C. Resubmission work will be completed in a timescale detailed by the Chief Examiner, but not longer than 3 months. Resubmission assignment briefs will either ask students to make specific improvement on existing work or to undertake a new assignment as appropriate to the course. Ongoing supervision or tutoring, beyond any necessary clarification of the written resubmission requirements, will not be available.

Any student receiving an overall module mark below 4C will not be permitted to resubmit work. To pass a module, students *must* receive at least a mark of 3C for all coursework elements weighted 40% or more. If a student has a mark in a coursework element worth 40% or more in the 4A-4C category they are entitled to resubmission. If a student has a mark in a coursework element worth 40% or more below 4C, they are not entitled to a resubmission and will fail the module overall.

### Dissertation and Research Case Study:

At the discretion of the programme examiners, a student with an overall module grade of between 4A and 4C **may** be allowed to resubmit the dissertation or research case study, or the failing component(s) thereof. In the event that a resubmission is granted by the programme's examining board, the highest mark that can be achieved for the whole module will be 3C. Resubmission work will be completed in a timescale detailed by the Chief Examiner, but not longer than 6 months. Resubmission assignment briefs will either ask students to make specific improvement on existing work. Ongoing supervision or tutoring, beyond any necessary clarification of the written resubmission requirements, will not be available.

Any student receiving an overall module mark below 4C will not be permitted to resubmit work.

This policy does not over-ride the University's policy on resubmission with regard to plagiarism:

'6.10.4.4 A student is not able to submit a subsequent piece of work on a module to substitute for any assignment which has been penalised for plagiarism. Normally a student may be permitted to repeat or substitute a module which has been failed because of a penalty for plagiarism, if that failure alone precludes the student from completing a Postgraduate Diploma programme. The student will not be eligible to graduate with a Masters degree.'

Please be aware that the university charges a fee for resubmission.

# APPENDIX A

## Academic Staff Research Profiles

For details of recent research publications please refer to the relevant section of the English Studies website: <http://www.english.stir.ac.uk/staff/index.php>

# APPENDIX B

## Doing the Dissertation

These notes are intended to help you through some of the more practical aspects of writing a dissertation, from formulating a topic, to formatting the finished work.

### • **Starting Your Research**

Your preliminary thinking about what your dissertation is going to deal with should be undertaken (if not before) in the second semester of study. This will give you time to discuss the project with your tutors as the term progresses. You will need to consider the following issues:

- Is the dissertation 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.)

You will be given further guidance on these matters by whichever tutor you have been discussing the dissertation with. Issues to consider should include:

- A description of your intended project, outlining methods, approaches you would intend to use, and the angle you would wish to take on the material.
- A provisional outline of how your dissertation would be arranged into chapters.
- A proposed title for your dissertation.
- An annotated and/or a critical bibliography indicating of the most important primary and secondary sources you wish to use.
- Note that several aspects of the above may already have been discussed as part of the Research Methods module.

## • Technical Preparation

You are advised to do three things:

(i) Consult existing dissertations.

(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, and make sure that you do not leave the acquisition of the necessary skills until the last minute.

## • 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 your own niche – how is what you are planning to research different from what has already been done in the field? An MLitt or MA dissertation is not expected to make an 'original contribution to the field of knowledge', which used to be one of the requirements for a PhD. Nevertheless, it makes sense to try to take a fresh line on your topic, which might involve looking at a writer who has been little researched, for example, or comparing writers not usually compared, or bringing (new) theoretical approaches to a particular writer.

### ***Criteria for a successful dissertation***

As above, does it take a fresh line on the material at hand?

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).

Good engagement with close textual analysis

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

## APPENDIX C

### Submitting the Dissertation

#### **Number of copies**

Two copies of the dissertation must be submitted to the English Office and the candidate must retain a further copy for their own use.

#### **Paper specification**

The paper must be good quality A4 for the two submitted copies. Diagrams, maps and similar addenda may be submitted in a separate binder or portfolio, if they cannot be bound in the dissertation.

#### **Production methods**

The text should be word-processed. If it is typewritten the original typescript must be the principal copy. Other copies will be acceptable if produced by means of xerographic processing or by other duplicating methods at a high standard of reproduction.

#### **Layout of typescript**

The text should be arranged in double spacing with a single binding (left-hand) margin of 3.5cm and should be neat and legible. Do remember to allow for this left-hand margin, as the binding of the finished work will use up some of this space. Right-hand margin justification is not necessary.

#### **Binding**

The copies of the dissertation submitted for examination should be submitted in glued bindings that guarantee the security of the contents. The English Studies Office can help you with this and we strongly recommend that you use their facilities for binding the dissertation. There is a charge of £2.00 per copy for this service.

#### **Additional material**

Arrangements should be made in individual cases for the submission of material (e.g. tapes, films, slides), which is not in book form.

#### **Copyright**

Copyright in all theses and work submitted will remain with the author. Candidates must acknowledge all material used, the copyright of which is not their own.

### **Length**

A taught MLitt dissertation should be 15,000 words long. You should include a word count on the front page of your dissertation. These word-counts should INCLUDE all quotations and footnotes, but EXCLUDE the bibliography and any necessary appendices.

**The Title Page** should be constructed as below:

---

[centred]

TITLE OF THESIS

Student Number

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
M.Litt in XXX

English Studies  
University of Stirling

Month, Year

Word Count:-

---

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.

## 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. 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 which 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.

### **Retention of Master's Theses**

Students should be aware that a copy of their taught course dissertation may be selected by the department for retention in the University Library for a period where it will be accessible both to members of the University and external enquirers through Library access provisions. If you do **not** wish your dissertation to be retained for this purpose please inform the department upon submission.