School of English

Senior Sophister Dissertation Handbook
2016–2017
The Senior Sophister dissertation is an extended piece of writing of 12,000 words, based on supervised research. It will normally involve the critical analysis of primary texts, the evaluation of critical or historical context, the application of a critical or theoretical methodology, a literature review or account of sources, and the presentation of a research bibliography. In order to prepare the dissertation you will work on your own, under the supervision of a member of staff, from the end of your JS year to the submission date in Hilary Term of your Senior Sophister year.

How will supervision work?

Each student taking the option will meet their supervisor regularly, based on the timeline agreed with the supervisor, building up to submission of the completed dissertation in Week 11 of Hilary Term. They will also maintain e-mail contact, as directed by the supervisor. The dissertation option has no taught element, but please note you are required to attend a training session in the Michaelmas term of your Senior Sophister year. This will take place after Reading Week; a date will be announced in Michaelmas term.

How will the dissertation be assessed?

Each dissertation will be read, evaluated and given an agreed mark by your supervisor and one other member of staff. Senior Sophister dissertations will also be made available for the External Examiners at the School Examination Board. The dissertation option is worth 20 ECTS.
DISSERTATION TIMELINE

2016 Hilary Term – Junior Sophister year

**Friday, week 10:** Following a meeting of the Dissertation Committee the Sophister Office will e-mail a list of those accepted for the Dissertation Option, with assigned supervisors. Those who are not accepted into the Dissertation Option will be given their next available preference on the Option selection list. Please note that dissertation supervision has to be allocated equally among the teaching staff, and students may not, therefore, request a change of supervisor.

**Weeks 11 and 12:** during this fortnight students should contact their supervisor to initiate their individual research plans. **Remember: it is your responsibility to make contact with your supervisor and, throughout the process of preparing the dissertation, the onus is on you to keep in touch.**

Over the summer you should begin to work on your research materials, as advised by your supervisor. **Supervisors will not usually be available to answer e-mail queries outside term-time.**

2016-7 Senior Sophister year

During the course of Michaelmas term you will begin submitting work on your dissertation. There will also be one taught preparation class for the Dissertation Option. **Please note that this is COMPULSORY.** This will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the dissertation.

Each student will agree with their supervisor a timeline for production of the dissertation. This should include:

(a) the drafting of a preliminary outline and a working bibliography of primary and secondary sources early in Michaelmas Term of the Senior Sophister year, as well as an agreed upon critical approach or methodology for the dissertation.

(b) specific deadlines for the completion of individual sections or chapters in the dissertation over the course of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. The number of chapters or sections will vary from dissertation to dissertation.

(c) **The dissertation must be submitted by all students no later than midday on Friday of Week 11 of Hilary Term (March 31, 2017)**
**Guidance Notes on Timeline for the Dissertation**

All students should have completed at least one third of the writing of the dissertation before the end of Michaelmas Term. It is strongly advised that students do some of this writing over Reading Week (Week 7), as there will be other essay deadlines later in the term. Likewise, it is strongly advised that students make use of Reading Week in Hilary Term to draft the final sections of the dissertation. All students should have completed a final draft of the dissertation by Week 9 of Hilary Term.

**Meetings with Supervisor**

Each student should arrange to meet with their supervisor a minimum of twice per term. However, it is likely that more frequent meetings will be necessary. The timing of supervisory meetings and/or email correspondence will be agreed by the student and supervisor, and will usually follow the timeline for submission of individual chapters or sections. Students should note that supervisors will not be available for consultation over the Christmas holiday period.

**PRESENTATION AND SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATION**

Dissertations should be submitted in typescript/print-out, double-spaced, printed on one side only of each A4 sheet. The pages should be consecutively numbered, with individual chapters starting on a new page. There should be a title page, with your name and your supervisor’s name, and a page containing a table of contents. Referencing must follow a recognised style authority, such as Chicago, MHRA or MLA. Dissertations should be soft-bound.

Late submissions will be penalised in the same way as a sophister essay. Non-submitted dissertations will result in a mark of zero and failure of the option.

A word count must be included at the end of the dissertation. The word count includes footnotes but not bibliography or appendices. Dissertations must not exceed 12,000 words; dissertations exceeding 12,000 words in length will be penalised.

All dissertations must conform to the College regulations regarding plagiarism contained in the

*Academic Calendar, Part II:*

[www.tcd.ie/calendar](http://www.tcd.ie/calendar)


*Any student who is unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism should seek clarification from their supervisor.*
HELP AND QUERIES

If you have Sophister queries at any stage about the dissertation procedure, consult your supervisor, the Head of Research or the Head of Discipline in the School. Further information may be found in one of the reliable published dissertation guides available, such as Nigel Fabb and Alan Durant, *How to Write Essays and Dissertations: A Guide for English Literature Students* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005).

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