

# DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Trinity College Dublin

<http://www.tcd.ie/philosophy>

CURRENT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

HANDBOOK 2012 – 2013

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*Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this booklet, it is issued for guidance only and may be updated at any time.*

*Please consult the Graduate Studies Office, the University Calendar, and the external agencies listed below, for the most accurate and up-to-date information.*

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## **The Dublin Graduate Philosophy Programme**

### **Basic elements of the programme**

In the **first year** of the programme students are required to take four modules, at least one but no more than two at UCD (with reciprocal rules applying to UCD students). To achieve the expansion of resources, rather than duplication, both institutions will endeavour to provide modules which do not significantly overlap in content. Students are free to audit classes at either institution. Students' choice should be in accordance with their research interests in consultation with their supervisor and are meant to provide a solid grounding in research methods at the postgraduate level in various areas of philosophy.

Please ensure that you have completed the course registration form for all courses taken at TCD by the third week of the semester. The registration form, which must be signed by the student's supervisor, should be submitted to the office of Una Campbell (5009) and can be downloaded from the following web address:

<http://www.tcd.ie/philosophy/files/courseregistrationform.doc>.

The courses offered will be listed at the end of August prior to the beginning of each academic year.

The courses are each worth 7.5 ECTS units; they are meant to supplement independent work with the supervisor.

Students who perform well subject to the discretion of the departmental Graduate Committee achieving a sufficient average mark in their course work (on average 65% or above) are invited to stay on the PhD programme. Both institutions operate their own grading systems but will put in place a table of equivalencies between the two.

Students will be required to write one substantial essay (3,000 – 4,000 words) or the equivalent in each of the four modules. Taught course modules are delivered in the first two semesters and consist of one two-hour seminar each week. The academic year is divided into two 12-week semesters. It is recognised that both institutions operate under different academic calendars: there is no requirement of harmonisation.

Deadlines for submission of course work for TCD will be announced on <http://dublinphilosophy.net/>.

A hardcopy of the essay should be submitted to the Departmental Office (Room 5009) and an additional electronic version should be sent to [ucmpbell@tcd.ie](mailto:ucmpbell@tcd.ie).

An essay which is not handed in at the Philosophy Department Office by the due date may be accepted up to one week late with the loss of ten marks. **It will not be accepted after the lapse of one week.**

The number of staff participating in the programme will be determined each year in advance by the head of the programme, and will be drawn from both departments.

Once the course work has been completed each student works closely with his or her supervisor at the institution at which he or she is registered in order to prepare the material that is required for the Confirmation of Continuation on the Ph.D. Register (see [pg. 11](#) below) which needs to be submitted by the end of September.

**Further information can be found on the Dublin Philosophy website:**

<http://dublinphilosophy.net/>

**The Second Year**

Each student is required to prepare for the oral examination (which will take place in the first semester) based on his or her dissertation proposal, bibliography and sample chapter (see [Confirmation of Continuation on the PhD register](#) below). Students passing the oral examination will have only the PhD thesis to complete in order to earn the PhD. Students who are deemed unsuccessful on the oral, or who wish to exit the programme at this time may do so, but will not be awarded any degree. Alternatively students deemed unsuccessful on the oral may choose to revise the work and retake the oral exam at the beginning of the second semester.

Each student is required to participate in the weekly Graduate Philosophy Research Seminar at which each student presents at least one paper over the course of the year (see [pages 7 – 8](#) for more information on this seminar).

It is expected that students will be in a position to submit the PhD thesis (100,000 words maximum) within two years after successful completion of the oral examination. **Specific guidelines for submission can be found on the College Calendar as well as on [pg. 14](#) below.**

## **Facilities for Postgraduate Research Students**

### **The Library**

The College's research facilities include a book stack of more than four million volumes, one of the largest in Europe. As the only copyright library in Ireland it enjoys the privilege of receiving, automatically and by right, all Irish and UK copyright material. Postgraduate students can apply for a library carrel which guarantees them study space within the library.

### **Special facilities for graduate research students**

Trinity College has a Graduate Common Room located in House 7 in Front Square. There is also a Graduate Students' Union office. Graduate students are also represented on college committees and on the School Executive.

### **The 1937 Reading Room**

The 1937 Reading Room is a designated postgraduate library and study area for research students. It is located in the Front Square beside the Exam Hall. There 24 hour swipe card access, seven days a week for postgraduate students. The 1937 Reading Room is fully equipped with computers on the ground floor, a basement computer room and lockers. The lockers are administered by the Graduate Students' Union and research students can sign up to get one for the coming year in the Graduate Students' Union Office (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, House 6, Front Square).

## **Funding**

A range of funding opportunities are open to postgraduate students. And the department makes every effort to secure funding for students accepted into the programme. Some of those opportunities are identified below, and further details are available from the websites listed.

## **Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS)**

The Research Council invites suitably qualified candidates to apply for postgraduate scholarships in the humanities, social sciences, law and business studies. Applicants must be nationals of a member country of the EU who have been ordinarily resident within Ireland for a continuous period of not less than 3 years. They should already be, or about to become, registered in a recognised third-level institution as full-time postgraduate research students pursuing degrees by major thesis. For more information, please visit <http://www.irchss.ie/>.

## **College awards**

See [https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate\\_Studies/currentstudents/funding/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/currentstudents/funding/index.php)

## **Departmental awards**

The department aims to offer a number of departmental awards to new or continuing students based on its financial position. Typically these fund EU tuition fees.

Application procedures for these awards are as follows:

New students: incoming students are considered automatically for departmental awards by the department. There is no separate application procedure for this type of award.

Continuing students: should additional funding be available the department will advertise these awards. Students would be required to submit a writing sample, curriculum vitae, research outline, two references and a statement of when they intend to submit their thesis.

## **Additional funding opportunities**

Each year the department offers a number of teaching assistantships to postgraduate students. These entail marking essays arising out of a particular course, and serving as teaching assistants. Rates of payment are set by the Head of Department.

Students can apply to become teaching assistants by approaching the Head of Department. Heads of Department may also directly request postgraduate students to serve as teaching assistants especially if such duties are required as a condition of a financial award.

## **Funding for conference travel**

The department offers euro 300 per annum for conference travel and books.

Additionally the Graduate Studies Office offers a Trinity Trust Travel Grant. Please see [https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate\\_Studies/currentstudents/funding/travelgrants/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/currentstudents/funding/travelgrants/index.php) for more information.

### **Extraordinary funding requests**

Under extraordinary circumstances, students may make a written appeal to departmental postgraduate coordinators outlining their need and request for tuition or some portion of tuition. These requests will then be considered by the Head of Department.

### **External funding opportunities**

An excellent list of sources of external funding is available from the website of the Graduate Studies Office,

[https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate\\_Studies/prospectivestudents/awards/externalfunding/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/prospectivestudents/awards/externalfunding/index.php)

## **Philosophical Events in Dublin**

### **Dublin Graduate Research Seminar**

A central aspect of the Dublin Graduate Philosophy Programme is the weekly research seminar, which is held on Tuesday evenings. At each seminar a graduate research student enrolled in the Dublin Graduate Philosophy Programme is given the opportunity to present a paper on a topic of their research. In the first semester seminars are held at UCD, while in the second semester they alternate between TCD and UCD. Please check <http://www.tcd.ie/Philosophy> for the most up-to-date information.

The main purpose of the seminar is to provide an opportunity for research students to develop their presentation skills and to get feedback on their work. Students should discuss their work with their respective supervisor prior to the presentation. If possible, the supervisor will attend the seminar.

Format:

Papers should be no longer than 45 minutes. The paper should reflect the research the student is undertaking. It can either be based on a chapter of written work, or it may discuss a particular article or problem.

Requirement:

Please note that all research students enrolled in the Dublin Graduate Philosophy Programme are required to attend each of the seminars, regardless of location and topic. It is expected that every research student enrolled in the Dublin Graduate Philosophy Programme will give at least one paper at the Research Seminar per annum.

<http://www.tcd.ie/Philosophy/events/grs.php>.

### **The Monday Colloquium**

Most Mondays during the academic year, the Philosophy Department hosts a Visiting Speaker Research Colloquium in which postgraduate students are expected to participate. Its main purpose is to provide a forum for academic interaction in the department as a whole, and, in particular, for interaction between staff and postgraduate students. For an updated schedule of speakers see <http://www.tcd.ie/Philosophy/events/colloquium/colloquium.php>

### **The Donnellan Lectures**

The Department of Philosophy at Trinity is host to the triennial series of endowed lectures, The Donnellan Lectures in Philosophy. Recent Donnellan Lecturers have been Jerry Fodor, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Sorabji, Richard Rorty, Stanley Cavell and Robert Pippin.

### **Royal Irish Academy**

The Committee for Philosophy of the Royal Irish Academy (<http://www.ria.ie/>) brings together representatives from all the philosophy departments in Ireland and hosts a number of conferences. Keynote speakers have included Alasdair MacIntyre, Hilary Putnam, Stephen Stich and Jonathan Glover.

### **Irish Philosophical Club**

The Irish Philosophical Club meets once a year and brings together Irish philosophers from north and south of the border with guests from overseas. Recent guest speakers have included Crispin Wright, Ernest Sosa, Ernie Lepore, Jack Copeland, Frazer MacBride, Alex Miller and Robert Stern.

## **Progress Reports**

All registered postgraduate students are required by the Graduate Studies Office to complete a Progress Report Form at the end of each academic year (the end of October for those who registered in October and the end of April for those who registered in April).

Forms may be found on the Graduate Studies website at:

[https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate\\_Studies/currentstudents/admin/progressreports/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/currentstudents/admin/progressreports/index.php)

## **Request for extension**

Request for continuation on the research register beyond year 3 for the MLitt and beyond year 5 for the PhD must be requested in writing by the departmental postgraduate coordinator to the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), who will forward the request to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

## **Withdrawing from the programme**

If for some reason a student opts to withdraw from the MLitt/PhD programme at any stage he or she must immediately inform in writing: a) his or her supervisor; b) the Director of Graduate Studies; c) the Graduate Studies Office.

## **Request for the “Dean’s Grace” Extension**

A “Dean’s Grace” extension of one month (free of fees) to submit a thesis or dissertation may be requested from the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Requests for Deans Grace should be made by the student’s supervisor to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the deadline for the student’s annual registration.

## **General Responsibilities**

### **Responsibilities of supervisors**

A supervisor must be accessible to the student for academic help and advice throughout the progress of the research and the final preparation of the thesis. The supervisor will negotiate and monitor a timetable for the submission of work. Supervisors will do everything they can to provide careful analysis and constructive criticism of all work submitted to them within an

agreed period of time, and to make themselves available, when feasible, for discussions with students.

### **Responsibilities of research students**

The research student must keep in contact with his or her supervisor and inform him or her on the progress of the research. The student should meet the supervisor for discussions, to submit written work, and to perform other academic exercises (for example, attending and contributing to the departmental Monday Colloquium) according to the timetable negotiated with the supervisor.

The student should inform his or her supervisor as early as possible of anything that might impede his or her ability to complete an agreed programme of work on schedule, rather than bringing problems to the department at a late stage. The essential point to remember is that the department is on the side of the postgraduate student in relation to almost any problem that might arise, and will do everything possible to help given good notice and the information necessary to do so.

### **Resolving problems**

Although rare, problems may arise between supervisor and student. In these cases it is important for students to know what to do. In the first instance, student and supervisor should meet informally to discuss the problem and attempt to resolve it in a balanced manner.

If an informal discussion of the problem fails to yield a solution, then the student should write a letter to the supervisor setting out the problem in more formal terms, and send a copy of this letter to the departmental postgraduate coordinator. (In exceptional circumstances a student may be unwilling to commit such problems to paper, in which case a meeting should be sought with the School Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)). If the supervisor is still unable to offer a resolution to the problem set out in the letter from the student, then the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) will meet both parties individually and attempt to negotiate a solution. If the student is unwilling to accept the solution negotiated by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), then there is no alternative but to take the matter up with the Dean of Graduate Studies and implement the procedures set out in Part 2 of the University Calendar.

## **Confirmation of the Continuation on the PhD Register**

### **Criteria for successful confirmation**

It is required that students confirm their continuation on the PhD register at the beginning of the second year. This process of academic assessment represents an important step in a student's postgraduate education involving a serious commitment by both the department and the student.

### **Components of the confirmation process**

Students should submit the following:

- (1) a written chapter-length document (of approximately 10,000 words) on a theme or topic agreed upon with their supervisor,
- (2) a one-page synopsis stating how this chapter fits into the overall thesis,
- (3) a detailed thesis proposal (of approximately 3,000 words) and a bibliography.

Students should submit three copies of these documents to the Executive Officer before the end of September of the second year. Candidates are then interviewed by the confirmation panel in October. Students who are unsuccessful in October may be permitted to submit a revised research proposal for consideration by the confirmation panel the following January.

### **The PhD confirmation panel**

Work will be considered by a PhD confirmation panel. The panel will be chaired by the departmental postgraduate coordinator (as the nominee of the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as required in the University Calendar Part 2 section 2.13), as well as a second member of the department appointed by the departmental postgraduate coordinator on the basis of his or her acknowledged expertise in the subject area of the student's research (or a cognate field). Members of the confirmation panel may be drawn only from academic staff eligible to supervise (see Calendar Part 2, section 2.9).

For cases in which the departmental postgraduate coordinator is also the student's supervisor, the departmental postgraduate coordinator may appoint another member of the academic staff to chair the confirmation interview and panel, subject to confirmation and approval by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate).

The supervisor shall not be a member of the confirmation panel, but will attend the interview. He/she withdraws at the same time as the student.

### **The PhD confirmation interview**

The PhD confirmation interview shall consist of a *viva voce* type examination of the student in front of the PhD confirmation panel. In addition, it is expected that the supervisor (and any co-supervisors) should be present at the PhD confirmation interview. The supervisor's presence at the PhD confirmation interview ensures that he or she is aware of the transfer panel's critique of the student's work.

The decision as to when and where to hold confirmation interviews will be determined by each department and organised by the departmental postgraduate coordinator.

### **PhD confirmation interview outcomes**

Following the confirmation interview, the confirmation panel will deliberate without the student or the supervisor present, and will decide on one of the following outcomes:

- (a) Continuation on the PhD register.
- (b) Continuation on the PhD register after some minor changes have been made to the PhD confirmation report.
- (c) Continuation to the PhD register not recommended at this time: a new report to be written and a new confirmation interview to be held as soon as possible thereafter.
- (d) Change to the MLitt register to submit an MLitt thesis.
- (e) Not to continue as a postgraduate research student.

Written feedback will be provided as soon as possible following the PhD confirmation interview in all cases.

In the case of (a), the supervisor and the student will be notified that the continuation on the PhD register has been approved as soon as possible after the PhD confirmation interview. The departmental postgraduate coordinator and the student will then complete the transfer form and return it to the School Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate).

In the case of any outcome other than (a), the departmental postgraduate coordinator will prepare a written report providing feedback to the student from the PhD confirmation interview. In the case of (b) or (c) this report shall consist of changes required or suggested for the student to address in revising the PhD continuation report. In the case of (d) or (e), the report shall briefly outline the reasons why the student's PhD confirmation application was rejected by the panel. In the case where external examiners participate in the PhD confirmation panel, the chair of the PhD confirmation panel may request that the external examiner prepare these reports. These reports shall be returned to the student and his or her supervisor within two days following the *viva*, unless extraordinary circumstances prohibit the completion of the report within this deadline.

### **Appeals**

Students have the right to appeal either decisions of the PhD confirmation panel or decisions made to deny their confirmation on the basis of criteria other than the PhD confirmation interview. Appeals should be made in writing to the School Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate). The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), following consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies, will appoint an appeals committee consisting of him/herself, a member of the student's department with some knowledge of the research area, and a member from another department. Members of the appeal committee will not have served on the confirmation panel. The appeals committee will be provided with the student's original PhD confirmation report, the panel chair's report explaining the decision under appeal, and the student's written appeal request.

Appeals will be considered only if regulations covering the PhD confirmation or transfer process were applied unfairly or improperly in a particular case.

It shall not be within the remit of the appeals committee to reconsider the academic basis for the decision made by the PhD confirmation panel.

The appeals committee will either reject the student's appeal, or may recommend a different outcome (such as option (c)). Following the appeals committee, the Director of Teaching and

Learning (Postgraduate) will prepare a written report which will be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies and communicated directly to the student and his or her supervisor.

### **Submitting and Defending the Thesis**

When the thesis is complete it is submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for examination. The thesis is read by an internal examiner who will be a member of the department, other than the student's supervisor, whose job it will be to evaluate the thesis in the context of its contribution to the profession as a whole, and by an external examiner from another institution, who has detailed professional knowledge of the thesis topic and whose job it will be to provide an expert assessment of this.

It is the full responsibility of the departmental postgraduate coordinator, who will consult with the student's supervisor and the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), to choose the external examiner of the thesis in order to maintain objectivity in the examination process. Clearly students may have views on who is best to serve as external examiner and they are thus encouraged to discuss this with their supervisors well in advance of the date of final submission; their supervisors will then discuss the matter with the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) who will make the final decision. **Under no circumstances** are any students to approach and ask any potential external examiners of their willingness to serve on the examination committee.

Once the thesis is read by both the internal and external examiners, an oral examination, a *viva voce*, will be held generally around 12 weeks after the thesis has been submitted to the Graduate Studies Office. The examination should last about two hours and the internal and external examiners may ask questions on any aspect of the thesis and the theme with which it deals. The role of a supervisor in the oral examination, if present, is to act as an observer and not to act as an examiner. The *viva voce* is chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), or his or her nominee (usually a director of a discipline or other senior academic).

Regulations governing the formatting and submission of research theses may be found on the Graduate Studies Office website at:

[https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate\\_Studies/currentstudents/admin/thesisregs/index.php](https://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/currentstudents/admin/thesisregs/index.php).

Students submit both MLitt and PhD theses directly to the Graduate Studies Office.

Examination of the thesis will result in one of the following outcomes:

- (a) The thesis passes as it stands.
- (b) The thesis passes after minor corrections have been made (the internal examiner must certify that these corrections have been made before the final thesis is submitted and the degree awarded).
- (c) The thesis must be revised in a more major way, and then submitted for re-examination; in this event the examination procedure outlined above will be repeated.
- (d) A lesser degree (such as a Master's) should be awarded.
- (e) The thesis should fail outright.