

Ph.D. Handbook for the aspirant Confederate School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics, TCD (2009-2010)

1. Overview of the School and TCD

The aspirant Confederate School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics is composed of two parts: the School of Religions and Theology and the Irish School of Ecumenics.

The School of Religions and Theology offers undergraduate degrees and postgraduate research supervision on the history, contemporary manifestations, texts, self-understanding and interpretations of the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is currently developing programmes in World Religions. The School is based in the Arts Building on the TCD campus.

The Irish School of Ecumenics offers taught Masters programmes and research student supervision in the fields of Ecumenics, Peace Studies and Reconciliation Studies. As such it provides research supervision across disciplinary fields which include the ethics and theology of conflict and peace; reconciliation; human rights and ethics in international affairs; interreligious dialogue and intercultural theology; ecumenical theology; gender issues; development and globalisation; the interplay of politics and religion. The ISE is TCD's only cross-border institution with the Ecumenics and Peace Studies programmes based in Milltown Park in Dublin and the Reconciliation Studies programme operating from Antrim Road in Belfast.

You can learn more about the schools at:

www.tcd.ie/Religions_Theology

www.tcd.ie/ise

Graduate Studies in Trinity College Dublin

Regulations concerning graduate students are to be found in the University of Dublin, Trinity College, Calendar Part 2 (www.tcd.ie/Calendar/part2)¹, which contains all information concerning graduate studies in TCD. The College Calendar is updated annually.

This Ph.D. Handbook for the aspirant Confederate School of Religions Theology and Ecumenics is intended to introduce students to the provisions the School makes for graduate education and does not supersede any of the information and regulations found in the University College Calendar Part 2.

¹ Hereafter referred to as the College Calendar Part 2.

Other Resources for Research Students in TCD

The following offices are useful contact points for Trinity research students:

Graduate Studies Office – www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies

The Graduate Studies Office administers applications to read for higher degrees by research (M.Sc., M.Litt., and Ph.D.) as well as Diploma, Masters and Doctorate programmes. The GSO is also the place for submission of research theses.

Graduate Students Union – www.gsu.tcd.ie

The Graduate Students' Union is an independent body which represents graduate students in TCD. All graduate students of the College, including postgraduate research students and those on higher degree and higher diploma are automatically members of the Union.

Careers Advisory Service – www.tcd.ie/Careers

Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning – www.tcd.ie/CAPSL

CAPSL assists the College in developing a strong and integrated framework for supporting best academic practice and the highest quality of student learning. It also offers a development programme for postgraduate teaching assistants.

Information Systems Services – <http://isservices.tcd.ie>

IS Services is the provider of e-mail and other computer services to the College community. It has a help desk which can be e-mailed to report problems or seek advice.

International Office - <http://www.tcd.ie/international/>

Library – www.tcd.ie/Library

ISE library – www.tcd.ise/ise/library

Postgraduate Advisory Service – http://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/postgraduate/

The PAS offers a range of academic, pastoral and professional supports to postgraduate students.

Student Accommodation – <http://www.tcd.ie/international/student-support-services/accommodation/>

Student Counselling Service – www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling

Funding Information

Information about research funding available within TCD, (for example the Ussher Awards and Postgraduate Awards) can be found at:

http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/prospectivestudents/awards/index.php.

If a member of staff receives research funding from an outside source, scholarships may be available within ISE or Religions and Theology. News about any such awards is carried on the Schools' websites.

Further information on postgraduate prizes awarded by the School of Religions and Theology can be found on the School's Graduate Students' web page (www.tcd.ie/Religions_Theology/postgraduate/).

The Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences awards Ph.D. scholarships annually. See www.irchss.ie.

Key people for research students in the aspirant Confederate School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics

Head of School – Professor Linda Hogan: lhogan2@tcd.ie

Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate – Dr Gillian Wylie: wylieg@tcd.ie

Co-ordinator of Research Degrees Programme ISE – Dr Geraldine Smyth: gsmyth@tcd.ie

Executive officer of Research Degrees Programme ISE – Ms Christine Houlahan: ressec@tcd.ie

Co-ordinator of Research Degree Programme Religions and Theology – Dr Anne Fitzpatrick: fitzpaa@tcd.ie

Executive Officer of Research Degree Programme Religions and Theology – Ms Jane Welch: welchj@tcd.ie

Librarians ISE – Ms Slaine O'Hogain (Dublin): ohogais@tcd.ie and Ms Brid O'Brien (Belfast): brid.obrien@tcd.ie

2. Ph.D. Programme Overview

According to the TCD College Calendar Part 2, a person who gains a Ph.D. will demonstrate:

- a systematic comprehension of a field of study and mastery of the skills and research methods associated with that field;
- that they have the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of scholarly research with integrity rigour and discrimination, which may involve the development of new skills, techniques, tools or methods;
- that they are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- that they have made a significant contribution through original research which extends the frontiers of knowledge by producing a body of work some of which deserves publication in national and international refereed journals;
- that they can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and society in general about their areas of expertise in a sustained and exact manner;
- that they can be expected to be able to promote, with due regard to ethical considerations, within academic contexts, scientific, technological, social or cultural advancement.

A Ph.D. within the aspirant Confederate School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics will correspond to these criteria. As we are a School within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the hallmarks of a Ph.D. are likely to be the mastery of a field, critical analysis of ideas and concepts, effective engagement with empirical and/or philosophical, theological or hermeneutical research methods, rigorous argument and originality.

Generally speaking Ph.D. students within the School are registered with the School of Religions and Theology or ISE and supervised by a respective member of the School's staff. It is however possible for a student to be registered on the Texts, Contexts and Cultures (TCC) Ph.D. programme within the University while being supervised by a member of the School's staff. (Please see TCC website and handbook for further details <http://textscontextsandcultures.ie/>).

3. Ph.D. Programme Details

3.1. Admission

Details of admission criteria can be found in the TCD College Calendar Part 2: 2.2 and 2.3. Candidates are normally required to possess a good honours degree or equivalent. Candidates with appropriate qualifications are normally admitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies directly to year 1 of the Ph.D. register on the recommendation of the applicant's potential supervisor and the School's Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate. It is also possible for candidates to be admitted, on academic grounds, to the M.Litt. register in year 1 with a view to transferring to the Ph.D. register within 18 months (procedures for this transfer are outlined below, see 3.5). Candidates may also apply to do a research Masters (M.Litt.).

Graduate students can register in September or April of the academic year.

Prior to submitting a formal application and research proposal students are advised to discuss their proposal with a relevant member of academic staff. Such a person can be approached directly or; the respective Research Degrees Programme Co-ordinator in ISE or Religions and Theology will be happy to advise you on whom to contact.

The application form and reference forms (available from the School's Research Degrees Executive Officers – Christine Houlahan (ISE) and Jane Welch (R and T) – or the Graduate Studies Office) should be submitted along with a research proposal. Such a proposal should be approximately 1500 words long incorporating:

- A statement of the research question/hypothesis
- A description of the proposed research and its relationship to existing research in the field
- A note on research methodology
- A preliminary structured bibliography
- A work plan

An academic committee within Religions and Theology or ISE takes decisions on the admissibility of applicants and the allocation of supervision. Most often successful candidates will be admitted straight on to the Ph.D. register, although in some cases an initial admission to the M.Litt. register will be suggested. Possible transfer to the Ph.D. register will be decided after 18 months at a transfer viva voce examination (see 3.5 below). After the decision to admit an applicant is taken, a formal letter of offer will come from the Graduate Studies Office. Successful applicants then inform the Dean of Graduate Studies as to whether or not they intend to accept the offer.

It should be noted that the Dean of Graduate Studies has the final decision on Ph.D. and M.Litt. admissions.

3.2. Induction and Orientation

All students must register annually at TCD (in September or April corresponding to the month of first registration). Full information on registration procedures will be sent by TCD.

ISE holds an orientation morning for all incoming Ph.D., M.Litt. and M.Phil. students on the Friday before the start of the first term at its Dublin campus. During this orientation students meet staff and fellow students, see the ISE building in Milltown Park (Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6) and learn something of the structure of their studies and resources available. In the first week of term induction sessions are offered in the Dublin and Belfast ISE libraries, in addition to induction sessions offered in the library on the main TCD campus. A similar orientation is provided for research students beginning in April.

In September and April the School of Religions and Theology holds an orientation and welcome for all incoming graduate students in the Weingreen Museum, Arts Building, Trinity College. This provides students with an opportunity to meet with staff and other research students.

Trinity College holds an Orientation to the University for all incoming postgraduate students on the Friday afternoon before the first term and at the beginning of April on the TCD campus.

3.3. Supervision

College regulations concerning the role of supervisors and the provision of supervision can be found in the College Calendar Part 2: 2.8 and 2.9.

Students are assigned a principal supervisor from within the staff of ISE or Religions and Theology, respectively. In some cases co-supervision will be arranged involving a second member of the School's staff. It is possible for a co-supervisor to be appointed from another School within TCD, although the member of staff in Religions and Theology or ISE will be the principal supervisor.

Students are expected to arrange to meet with their supervisors regularly to discuss research plans, conduct needs analyses, gain feedback on work in progress and devise a timetable for completion. At the end of each supervision session the supervisor writes a short report on the meeting which is agreed and co-signed by the student. Copies for the records are kept by the supervisor, student and executive officer.

Some texts which may be of use to you in planning and executing your research include:

Gina Wisker, *The Ph.D. Handbook*, second edition, Palgrave Study Guides, London, 2001, 2008.

Patrick Dunleavy, *Authoring a Ph.D.*, Palgrave-Macmillan, London, 2003.

Kate L. Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, seventh edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007.

John W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, second edition, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, 2007.

3.4. Research Seminars

A series of graduate research seminars is held regularly in ISE. These seminars vary in content – sometimes they offer a forum for students to present work in progress to their peers, while others are concerned with the development of research methods and skills. All students are encouraged to attend these. Video conferencing is used to ensure participation from Belfast and Dublin based students and the seminar may travel to Belfast on occasion.

Religions and Theology holds regular seminar series for graduate students in the areas of Theology, Jewish and Islamic Studies and Biblical Studies. In addition, there is a shared staff and student seminar which is attended by staff and students of both the School of Religions and Theology and the School of Classics (the Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies Seminar).

Graduate Students conducting research in the School of Religions and Theology are encouraged to gain some experience of teaching by giving occasional lectures to the Department's undergraduate students. The opportunity to give occasional lectures or facilitate seminars with M.Phil. students may also arise in ISE.

A (non-assessed) Social Science Research Methods course is provided in ISE Belfast and Dublin which is open to all students (Ph.D., M.Litt. and taught Masters programmes).

Students may also find to be of interest the seminars offered within TCD by the Institute for International Integration Studies, the Post-Conflict Justice Centre, the Trinity International Development Initiative, the Trinity Immigration Initiative and the Long Room Hub (details on respective websites and the weekly TCD Newsheet).

There is currently no required taught element to the Ph.D. within the aspirant Confederate School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics which accrues European Credit Transfers (ECTS). Plans to introduce taught elements in relation to research methodology (social science and theological, philosophical) are underway.

3.5. Probation, progress and continuation on the Ph.D. register

As outlined in the College Calendar Part 2: 2.7, continuing registration is dependent upon satisfactory progress. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate is responsible for ensuring through annual consultation with supervisors that students are progressing satisfactorily according to the required standard and norms of their particular degree.

Not later than 18 months after first registration, students on the Ph.D. register are required to undertake an internal viva within the School to confirm their position on the Ph.D. register. Students wishing to transfer from the M.Litt. to the Ph.D. register must also undertake a transfer viva.

The DTLP has the role of appointing at least one reader and a chair for this viva. The student's supervisor(s) may attend as an observer. The student prepares a written submission for the viva incorporating at least one chapter from the thesis and an overview of the thesis as a whole (including the proposed chapter structure). At the exam the student presents her or his work to the panel and is questioned on it. If the candidate's work is judged to meet the criteria for a Ph.D. described above (point 2) the DTLP submits a form to GSO requesting the student's confirmation on the register. If unsuccessful, a student is (1) given the opportunity to resubmit work to the panel (2) advised to submit a thesis for an M.Litt. or (3) advised not to continue postgraduate study. Students wishing to appeal the outcome of the viva may do so using the Appeals process outlined below (3.9).

3.6. Attendance

Regulations concerning attendance are clearly set out in the College Calendar Part 2, 2:10.

3.7 Requests for Extensions

The College Calendar Part 2, 2:12 outlines the extenuating circumstances in which a student's supervisor can apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for an extension on a student's behalf.

Doctoral students should aim to complete their studies within 4 years and M.Litt. students within 2 years. Six months prior to the end of the final year the student should liaise with their supervisor about a timetable for completion. The School's DTLP should be kept informed as to the intended timetable for completion.

3.8. Procedure for examination

Procedures governing the submission and examination of theses are found in the College Calendar Part 2, 2:15.

The thesis produced by a Ph.D. candidate is wholly their own work, which they are prepared to defend in all integrity. Therefore submission of a thesis is done entirely at the discretion of the student.

Students lodge two soft bound copies of their thesis with the Graduate Studies Office by the required date.

The GSO sends a form for the nomination of external and internal examiners to the DTLP. It is possible for this form to be completed in advance of submission or on submission. The DTLP liaises with the student's supervisor to nominate the examiners. The nominations are then sent to the Dean for approval. The viva is normally held within 8 weeks of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. The Chair for the viva is nominated by DTLP. Supervisor(s) may attend as observers.

During the viva students have the opportunity to present their work to the examiners before taking questions. The examiners will then come to a decision.

The possible outcomes of a Ph.D. viva are recommendations for:

- award of the degree of Ph.D.
- award of the degree subject to minor revisions
- award of the degree subject to major revisions
- award of a lower degree
- fail

An M.Litt is also examined by an external and internal examiner. A viva is not held as a matter of course, unless at the request of the examiners.

3.9 Appeals

Postgraduate Appeals Processes

The entire Postgraduate Appeals Process is outlined in the TCD College Calendar Part 2. According to the regulations as outlined in the College Calendar Part 2, all appeals (except for appeals against the outcome of a PhD examination), should be heard first at School level. The following information concerns that first level of appeal.

Postgraduate Appeals at School level: Research Students

Where a transfer/confirmation viva has been held and has determined that a student may not transfer to, or be confirmed on, the PhD register, the student may appeal to the School Appeals Committee (Research Students). The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence.

The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate will convene and chair this committee composed of one Head of Discipline (not the student's Discipline) and one other academic staff member. At the Appeal's Committee the student concerned should have representation appropriate to the formality of the process, for example, a supervisor, course co-ordinator or other appropriate staff member.

No one is appointed to an Appeals Committee where a conflict of interest might arise. Should the DTLP experience a conflict of interest, she or he will be substituted by the Head of School.

Appeals against the decision of a School Appeals Committee (Research Students) may be made in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. Appeals against the decision of the Dean of Graduate Studies may be brought to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances.

For further details of appeals at College level, please see the College Calendar Part 2.

Appeals against the decision of the examiners of a research thesis

Where a viva voce of a thesis has been held and the thesis referred back for extensive revision, or the award of a lower degree, or outright failure is recommended, the Dean of Graduate Studies informs the candidate of the verdict.

If the candidate wishes to appeal the examiners' decision, she or he must apply in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence. If the Dean of Graduate Studies denies the appeal, the student may appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances. For further details see the College Calendar Part 2.