



SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY
SCOIL NA TÍREOLAÍOCHTA AGUS NA SEANDÁLAÍOCHTA

Geography Research Graduate Handbook, 2009/10

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/geography/postgrads/graduateresearch.html>

Introduction

This handbook applies to students who are pursuing PhD or MLitt Degrees in Geography. The purpose of the handbook is to provide information and guidance to graduate research students that will facilitate progression through their degree programme. Because the graduate research environment in geography is so varied, the handbook should not be seen as comprehensive but as a starting point, with specific issues being dealt with through the appropriate channels that are described in the following sections.

Orientation and integration

As part of the graduate experience, it is our aim to integrate graduate students into the life and everyday workings of the Department. Upon arrival students should:

- contact the Director of Graduate Studies, and signal their presence
- leave contact details (e-mail address and mobile number) with the Director of Graduate Studies
- provide a page-long description of their research project for the Geography Graduate web-pages to the Geography Webmaster
- arrange with the Geography Administrator to have a photograph taken for the Graduate notice-board.

Study facilities

It is our aim to provide graduate students with desk space and computer/printing facilities for the duration of their degree programme¹. Access to the Geography photocopy room and laboratories is enabled through your student ID card; this is arranged through the Geography Administrator. Lending facilities with the James Hardiman Library are also enabled through your ID card. Once registration is completed, students have access to the University's online and WiFi internet and email systems. Students are also issued with an NUIG email address. It is students'

¹ Depending on new graduate intake, the Department regrets that it cannot guarantee desk space for students who exceed their research completion dates. Advance notification will be given should this situation arise

responsibility to check this on a regular basis for messages issuing from Geography or other college staff or offices. During their time in the Geography Department, students can avail of other material support. Dictaphones, digital cameras and laptops may be used for research purposes only, provided no member of staff requires the use of mobile equipment. Any equipment must be signed off for specified periods of time with the Geography Administrator and can be recalled at short notice.

NUIG Graduate Studies Office

This office, represented by the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Pat Morgan, is responsible for the overall management of the University's graduate research programmes. The Graduate Studies Office has established a dedicated Blackboard site for graduate students, IGST1, accessed via <http://blackboard.nuigalway.ie>.

The Graduate Studies Office is also responsible for compilation of the overall University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes for both students and staff. This provides detailed information and recommendations on the operation of research programmes at NUI Galway, and forms the basis for Department-level guidelines.

The current version (which is being updated) is available via the following link:

(http://www.nuigalway.ie/graduatestudies/Current_Students_2/guidelines.html).

Supervision

All permanent, full-time members of staff in Geography can serve in the capacity as supervisors to graduate research programmes. Joint supervision of a student may be preferred by student and/or staff or joint supervision may develop during the undertaking of research; in this case, a principal supervisor must be designated. The responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- supporting the student in the development of a research project and plan of work, and providing advice and guidance on the direction of the research.
- advising the student on his/her specific and generic training needs, particularly in the context of the Structured PhD

- communicating clearly to the student with regard to his/her performance
- ensuring that regular (monthly, at a minimum) contacts are maintained, and that all important understandings and decisions are recorded
- providing a written report to the Departmental Research Committee on the student's progress at the end of each year
- encouraging and facilitating the student's attendance at conferences and seminars where feasible
- providing encouragement, advice and assistance with the presentations of conference papers and the publication of scholarly papers arising from the research
- ensuring the research is conducted according to ethical standards
- ensuring that adequate supervision is in place for students during any extended periods of absence by the supervisor.

Student responsibilities

Each student is expected to accept full responsibility for the contributions he or she must make in order to successfully complete their research. These include:

- working sufficiently and effectively on the research project, in an ongoing and sustained manner for the duration in question
- acquiring the special and generic skills necessary for the research and the preparation of the thesis
- becoming familiar with guidelines relating to communication of research findings, including appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others and avoidance of plagiarism
- communicating regularly with their supervisor(s) on progress and on any difficulties being experienced
- availing of other available channels of communication where the need may arise (i.e. Student Research Committee members, Director of Graduate Studies, Head of Geography, Head of School)
- producing timely progress reports as required

- submitting work in a timely and professional manner, and in accordance with agreed timelines
- participating in relevant teaching, demonstrating or tutoring assignments where these are agreed
- understanding the absolute requirement to exercise professionalism, confidentiality and respect when working with colleagues and students.

Student Research Committees

Each student and his/her supervisor(s) are required to nominate a Student Research Committee to help give direction and give advice during the proposed course of the research. This committee typically comprises three members; the student's supervisor, and two other members, one of whom must be a personal or established professor. The Department strongly recommends that each graduate student and his/her supervisor approach academic staff possessing relevant expertise to serve on the Student Research Committee. This may include staff from outside Geography; under certain circumstances and if warranted by the topic, such expertise may also be sought outside the university. This committee should meet no less than twice in the first academic year, and at least annually thereafter. In the case of students undertaking a Structured PhD, this committee is required to prepare a report on the progress of the student at the end of Year 1, indicating whether the student is to continue with the PhD, or whether his/her status should change to an MLitt (see section below on Structured PhD Programme). The committee is available for less formal consultation by the student throughout his/her time at university, and is also consulted in the choice of an External Examiner for the thesis.

Student involvement in Departmental activities

Graduate students are an extremely important part of the Geography research and academic community. As such, they are expected to become involved in related activities in the following way:

- active participation in the weekly Geography Seminar Series
- an annual, research-related presentation as part of the Seminar Series
- participation in inductions activities organized by the Arts Faculty for incoming graduate students
- contribution to Departmental teaching and course-related classroom demonstrations, in consultation with supervisor(s). This is expected and encouraged as part of the development of a wider portfolio of academic skills. It is currently set by the university at a maximum of 120 hours per academic year, approximately half of which translate into direct contact hours with undergraduate students (i.e. 30 hours per semester), the other half being assimilated into other, related activities such as class preparation, examination/practical corrections, or related duties. Where students are in receipt of scholarships through private funding agencies, the terms and conditions of these in relation to teaching responsibilities shall take priority.
- participation (for students in their first year of studies) in the annual Residential Graduate Training Weekend, normally held in January or February
- attendance on relevant courses provided by Computer Services to enhance research skills
- where feasible, attendance at the annual Conference of Irish Geographers

Structured PhD Programme

The start of this academic year sees the introduction of the new 4-year, Structured PhD. This programme involves 3 components:

- 1) the thesis as a major piece of original research (290 ECTS Credits)
- 2) 'discipline/dissertation specific' taught modules (40 ECTS)
- 3) 'generic/transferrable skills' taught modules (30 ECTS)

Students select taught modules to the value of 70 ECTS over 4 years in consultation with their Supervisor(s) and/or Student Research Committee. A full list of available

taught modules, along with a detailed description of the format of the Programme, is attached in Appendix 2.

The principal focus of the first year of study is the thorough development of the research proposal, most probably involving completion (at least) of the literature review and bibliography. Students undergo an interview towards the end of their first year, to 'confirm' their status as a PhD student. This interview is conducted by the student's Research Committee during the period April to June, with a second opportunity for interview (where required) before the end of August. Students whose PhD status remains 'unconfirmed' after the second interview attempt may be recommended for transfer to the standard MLitt. The opportunity to transfer to an MLitt may also be provided at the end of Year 2.

A mandatory induction course worth 5 ECTS must be undertaken by all Structured PhD students in September. Students on traditional research degree routes may also attend this course

IRCHSS Fellowship holders entering years 1 or 2 of their degree, and traditional PhD students may take modules amounting to 15 ECTS credits. The Certificate in Postgraduate Development (CPD) will be awarded in these instances.

Students may register for an MLitt from the outset, but can neither avail of 'structured' modules nor 'convert' to a PhD, i.e. there is no longer an option to upgrade from MLitt to PhD.

Student Scholarships

Students not already in receipt of scholarships at commencement of their studies are strongly encouraged to apply for funding. Among the currently-available sources are

the Irish Research Council for Humanities and the Social Sciences, and the Galway Scholarships (available through the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUIG). Details of these (and any other potential sources) are circulated to current students by the Director of Graduate Studies as calls for applications are announced. Typically, these scholarships are awarded for 2 or 3 years respectively, renewable on an annual basis. The continuation of funding to a student is contingent mainly upon the extent and quality of student progress. In addition, students in receipt of Galway Scholarships are required to subsequently (and each year) apply for external sources of funding (typically, IRCHSS) in order to free up funding for incoming students (failure to secure alternative sources does not jeopardize continued receipt of a Galway Scholarship).

Scholarship and full-time research obligations

A Galway Scholarship involves approximately 100 hours of unpaid departmental obligations per annum on the part of the recipient, undertaken in the second and third years of studies (between 2-3 hours per week). College rules state that Galway Scholarship holders may not engage in any work outside of their research programme. Scholarship holders who work in excess of the **maximum** number of hours allowed by College (150 per annum), or in areas away from their doctoral programme will be in breach of the conditions of their scholarship, and may have their funding discontinued. Students in receipt of grants from other funding bodies, e.g. IRCHSS, EPA, must abide by the terms and conditions of their award. Failure to do so may result in the discontinuation of support.

Full-time research students may not engage in more than approximately 5 hours of work per week (approx. 150 hours per annum) outside of their doctoral studies. This applies to both funded and non-funded students. Students who need to work more hours in order to support themselves should be registered as part-time students.

Travel bursaries

The Faculty of Arts also makes available graduate travel stipends, which are announced by Faculty Offices during the academic year. Furthermore, each student can avail of a Geography bursary of up to €250 p.a. to cover attendance at academic conferences, fieldwork expenses, or other, thesis-related expenses. To avail of these funds, students need to furnish relevant invoices or bills to the Head of Geography; funds not used in one academic year do not carry over to the following year.

Research funding administration

Students in receipt of research scholarships will normally have this funding managed via the University's Research Accounts Office. In the event of any questions arising, contact should preferably be made via your supervisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Student welfare/liaison

Issues of individual or collective concern can be raised with either of the Geography Graduate Students' Representatives. If students have any problems or questions relating to study (e.g. materials, resources, facilities, issues with fieldwork), or other issues (e.g. prolonged illness, financial or other related matters), ideally these should first be addressed to your Supervisor(s). If the issue is felt to be more complex or sensitive, you are encouraged to make contact with the Director of Graduate Studies, Head of Geography or Head of School. Similarly, if the issue relates to more fundamental disagreements about the progress of the research, students and supervisors alike have the right to contact members of the Student Research Committee, the Departmental Research Committee, the Head of Geography or the Head of School to air their grievances. Should such action become necessary, the Head of Geography will seek to find a satisfactory solution. Where such action does not lead to the desired outcome, all parties involved may agree to a change of Supervisor.

Completion and examination of theses

The length of time normally provided to complete a full-time research degree is as follows: Structured PhD – **4 years**; Conventional PhD – **3 years**; MLitt – **2 years**.

Students whose research extends beyond that period enter a 'write-up' phase.

Research scholarships do not normally extend to cover write-up periods.

Submission of the thesis for examination must be cleared by the student's Supervisor and research committee, and must adhere to the formal requirements published by the Examinations Office of the University. Additional information on the different stages of the submission process is outlined in Appendix 1 below. Whilst technically, a thesis may be submitted at any time during the academic year, if the candidate aims to be conferred at a particular ceremony, the examination process should be initiated at least four months in advance of the ceremony. Arts Faculty conferrings currently take place 3 times per year, in June, October and November.

You are also encouraged to make contact with the Director of Graduate Studies for further clarification.

Examination arrangements for both PhD and MLitt theses are normally made by the Supervisor, assisted by the Director of Graduate Studies. The student is informed of the appointment of examiners and overall arrangements as they are made, and may express relevant opinions directly to the Supervisor, to other members of their own research committee or to Departmental Research Committee.

PhD theses require the appointment of a dedicated External Examiner. In addition to the External Examiner, an Internal Examiner, normally from within the Department, is appointed by the Head of Geography. An oral examination ('*viva voce*') also forms part of the award of a PhD.

MLitt theses are normally examined by one of the appointed External Examiners serving the Department, and an Internal Examiner (from within the Department), who is nominated by the Head of Geography.

Geography Graduate contact personnel:

Departmental Graduate Committee:		Email:
Prof. Ulf Strohmayer	Head of School (Geography & Archaeology)	ulf.strohmayer@nuigalway.ie
Dr. John McDonagh	Head of Geography	John.mcdonagh@nuigalway.ie
Prof. Micheál Ó Cinnéide	Personal Professor	micheal.ocinneide@nuigalway.ie
Dr. Marie Mahon	Director of Graduate Studies	marie.mahon@nuigalway.ie
Geography Administrative Staff:		
Dr. Siubhan Comer	Geography Administrator	siubhan.comer@nuigalway.ie
Ms. Clodagh Raleigh	Geography Webmaster	clodagh.raleigh@nuigalway.ie
Graduate Representatives:		Email:

Appendix 1: Timetable for PhD Examination Process

Time	Stage of Process	Responsible	Form, document
Prior to submission of thesis	Appointment of examiners	Supervisor(s) (College/Faculty, Academic Council)	Form EOG 03-04
Time zero (at least four months before target graduation date)	Submission	Candidate Supervisor (s), Student Research Committee	Copies of softbound thesis Form EOG 03-05
Plus about two months	Examination	Candidate Examiners Supervisor(s)	Form EOG 03-01

	Formal decision	Standing Committee of Academic Council	Form EOG 03-01
(variable)	Revision	Candidate, Supervisor(s), Internal Examiner	Hard-bound (revised) thesis
		Candidate	Library Submission Form EOG 03-03
About four months	Graduation	Candidate	Graduand's degree parchment