

DCU

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

School of English

PhD Handbook 2023-24

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1. Welcome

Welcome to the School of English at Dublin City University. We are delighted that you have decided to embark on your PhD with us.

DCU's pursuit of excellence has led to its current ranking among the top 2% of universities globally. It is also one of the world's Top Young Universities (QS Top 100 Under 50, Times Higher Top 150 Under 100). The university is ranked 23rd in the world and first in Ireland for its graduate employment rate, according to the 2020 QS Graduate Employability Rankings. DCU was also the Sunday Times Irish University of the year in 2021 and the 2022 'The Education Awards' winner for Best Student Experience, as well as winning the Best Education Outreach award. It is our aim that you will find your time with us intellectually stimulating, and we hope that you will feel a part of, and contribute to, our growing community of postgraduate researchers.

As you are new to pursuing a PhD at DCU, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the academic structures of the University and the process of your PhD. This Handbook is designed to help you find out where to look for the information you need to settle in and progress through your PhD here. Most of this information is available on the DCU website and we have included links below.

We want you to enjoy studying for your PhD and find it both inspiring and rewarding. And we hope you enjoy life in Dublin. We look forward to working with you in the next few years.

Dr Keith O'Sullivan, Head of School

2. About the School

The School of English is one of seven Schools in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It came into existence in 2016 after the amalgamation of staff from the Departments of English in St Patrick's College, the Mater Dei Institute of Education and the Church of Ireland College of Education. Since its establishment the School has consistently featured as one of the more highly-ranked Schools of English internationally, while our staff are acknowledged experts in their fields.

The School is committed to excellence in teaching and research. Since 2016, we have grown rapidly, with new staff, programmes, and increased student numbers (at undergraduate and postgraduate levels). At undergraduate level we teach students on the Bachelor of Arts (Joint Honours) Programme, as well as students on the Bachelor of Religious Education Programme. The School also has MAs in Creative Writing and in Children's and Young Adult Literature.

Faculty members in the School are outstanding researchers with a range of expertise. Their research profiles are available to you through the School website, which you can access by clicking this [link](#). Our lively research culture emphasizes the interaction between staff and research students, and across disciplines, as evident in the School's Research Seminar. This provides a forum for staff, students and visiting scholars to present the results of their research.

3. Contacting Staff

The School of English office is located in S216 on the second floor of Senior House on the DCU All Hallows campus, Drumcondra. Ms Susan Byrne, the School Assistant, can be reached at (01) 7007488 or at susan.byrne@dcu.ie. She can answer or direct you to the right place for many queries relating to practical matters such as desk allocation, telephone, post, or internet access.

Your first point of contact on most academic matters should be your Supervisor, but if the query is of an administrative nature other useful contacts are Sharon Murphy, Research Convenor for the School, and Carol Diamond, the Research Administrator in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, depending on the nature of the query. Carol can be contacted at 01-7008332 or carol.diamond@dcu.ie. For issues relating to individual modules, you should contact the module co-ordinator.

You may also find the [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Research Student Information Page](#) useful.

Staff in the School have a very open attitude to meeting students. Nonetheless, it is usually best to make an appointment.


Staff contact details, and more information on their areas of expertise, are available on the School of English webpage.

4. Pursuing a PhD

The research and writing of your PhD is your responsibility, but you will work closely with your appointed supervisor(s) who will advise you in terms of the research and writing you will be undertaking. When completed, your thesis should make an original, coherent and scholarly contribution to the field, and it should be presented in accordance with internationally-accepted academic standards. For further detail regarding DCU's expectations see [Postgraduate Academic Regulations](#). You should become familiar with this document as it outlines the procedures along the entire PhD continuum.

While a PhD can prove a gateway to an academic career, completing a research degree will also enable you to develop skills in organization, analysis, communication, and project management. These are skills that will stand to you in whatever career you pursue afterwards.

In order to assist you in this regard there is also a structured training element to provide students with core research and writing skills. The aim of these graduate training elements (GTEs) is to give you core skills you need as well as modules designed to assist in your professional development (e.g. research ethics, teaching, academic writing, conference presentation, event organization, or cv writing skills). You can find more information about these at the [Graduate Studies Office](#) webpage. You should aim to develop these

skills in the first two years of your PhD. Every year the School will publish a  Structured Pathway outlining the GTEs available to you that year. **All** new PhD students are required to take the online **Research Integrity Training Module** in their first year.

You should consult your Supervisor(s) if you identify training that you believe would be useful for your research.

School of English

Overview

The School of English offers a graduate training pathway for students undertaking a four-year PhD. The structured doctoral programme will support and develop students' research skills and knowledge as well as assist in their acquisition of transferable skills that might be applied in a range of career pathways. The School of English's doctoral assessment continues to be based primarily on the examination of a written thesis based on original research and its defence at a viva voce examination. The School also supports students who wish to complete a PhD by Artefact, allowing for submission in a format that includes two substantial elements: a written document of at least 20,000 words and a substantial artefact or portfolio of artefacts. Irrespective of the format for submission, the standard by which the work is evaluated remains the same as doctoral awards through other formats: a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the field.

Selection and Registration

Graduate Training Elements (GTEs) support the students' research and writing by providing a range of opportunities to develop the necessary skills and understanding of postgraduate study. The GTE modules available include both credit and non-credit courses. Students who complete credit-bearing modules will receive a separate transcript of their courses.

The graduate training pathway provides a mix of modules that includes discipline-specific knowledge, generic skills and wider offerings that encourage students' autonomy in research. Modules selected by students should be relevant to and support their research and writing. They should discuss their needs with their principal supervisor who must approve the selected modules prior to registration. The School recognises that individual student needs may vary because of the distinct nature of individual research and writing. Students may follow the pathway overleaf or use it as a template to structure an individual pathway, to include:

- Up to 20 credits of core discipline-specific modules;
- 10 credits of core generic and transferable skills;
- Up to 20 additional credits for selected elective modules.

Students normally take 10 credits each year for Years 1-3, with Year 4 most likely focused exclusively on research, but students can tailor their work programme to suit their needs. Students may include non-credit bearing courses in their pathway that, in discussion with their principal supervisor, are deemed appropriate to their needs. Students should register for their approved GTEs during the online registration process.

Mandatory modules

All research students in their first year of registration must also complete the relevant stream of the self-directed 'Online Research Integrity Training Module'. Students will be invited to complete this by an email from the Graduate Studies office. All students who are assigned teaching-related responsibilities are strongly encouraged to complete the module GS602 Postgraduate Tutoring Principles and Practice.

Progression

Along with level 9 modules, appropriate level 8 modules may be taken by students following discussion with their Supervisor and module coordinator. GTE modules taken should be noted in the student's annual progress report (PGR2), which should also include confirmation that mandatory courses are completed.

Induction and Training

Research students are also encouraged to take advantage of additional training opportunities offered by the Graduate Studies Office as appropriate throughout their period of study. In year one, at the time of initial registration, new students are expected to attend orientation sessions, the GSO- & library-run programmes and other relevant induction sessions.

Structured Doctoral Pathway 2023-24

Core Discipline Specific Modules

Year 1 - 3

- Histories & Contexts (**EL501**) (10 ECTS)
- Theories Critics Research Methods (**EL502**) (10 ECTS)

Core Transferable Skills Modules

Year 1 - 3

- Postgraduate Tutoring Principles & Practice (**GS602**) (5 ECTS)
- Strategies for Academic Writing (**GS608BS**) (5 ECTS)
- Advanced Academic Writing in the Humanities (**TP600**) (5 ECTS)
- Conference / Academic Event Organisation (**TP601**) (5 ECTS)
- Research Ethics (**TP602**) (5 ECTS)
- Navigating the Academic Publishing Landscape (LC604) (5 ECTS)

Elective Modules

Year 1 - 3

- Uaneen Non-Contributing Module (**UM405**) (5 ECTS)
- *Picturebooks and Film (**EL503**) (10 ECTS)
- Engaged Research (**CM602**) (10 ECTS)
- Philosophical Texts: A Reading Group Seminar (**TP603**) (10 ECTS)

Non-accredited Training, Workshops and Masterclasses

Year 1

- Graduate Studies Office Orientation Programme
- Online Research Integrity Training Module (non – accredited, compulsory)
- Students are also encouraged to participate in suitable centrally-offered workshops/seminars, and to attend conferences.

5. Academic progression

A full list of the academic regulations is available from Registry (see Section 4 above). Be aware that these may change.

The Process

There are three main stages in the PhD process. Almost all students are initially enrolled on what is known as the PhD “track” programme, until you reach a stage in your research (usually not earlier than the end of your second year) where you apply for acceptance to what is known as the PhD “register” or PhD degree (see below). It might be helpful to think of the PhD track as a probation period. The third stage is submission of your PhD for final assessment, which consists of submitting copies of the completed thesis and undergoing an oral examination of your work (what is known as a *viva voce*, or “viva”) after which a recommendation is made by the examiners.

The Beginning

From the outset, you will be expected to embark on a pattern of regular and consistent work – research and writing – while signing up for and taking the agreed professional development, skills or subject modules. As noted, this work will be overseen and supported by your Supervisor(s), and this should be grounded in an agreed pattern of meetings. Your Supervisor(s) will provide you with guidance, advice, feedback, and professional mentorship.

In addition to your Supervisor(s), you will be assigned a member of staff who is known as an Independent Panel Member (IPM). You will meet this member of staff at least once a year. This Independent Panel Member should be regarded as a further source of advice and counsel, while in the event of difficulties in the matter of progression, or in the supervisory relationship, the Independent Panel Member will seek to aid a resolution.

Annual Review

Each year, starting at the end of your first year, you will have a formal review of your work by a panel, including your Supervisor(s) and the Independent Panel Member. During this process, you must satisfy your Supervisor(s) and the Independent Panel Member that you have made sufficient progress to warrant being granted another year of study. If you cannot satisfy them that you have made sufficient progress, you will be required to withdraw, or you might be offered the opportunity to be examined for a Masters by Research degree. The annual reviews usually take place in June and you must be available on campus at this time. The review process is initiated by the student, normally on receipt of a prompt from Registry, and reviews will be preceded by your submission of a short progress report and, if required, a substantive piece of written work. You will receive both oral and written feedback after the review. Each annual review involves the completion and submission of a PGR2 form.

Progress to PhD Degree

In order to progress from PhD track to the PhD degree you will have to complete a PGR3 PhD-track/PhD Confirmation Procedure. This normally consists of the submission of a substantial written piece (e.g. a draft chapter) for examination by a staff member other than your Supervisor(s), who acts as an Internal Examiner. To progress a PGR3 form must be completed and submitted to Registry. Your application at that point must be supported by your Supervisor(s) and is subject to a satisfactory performance in an oral

examination, conducted jointly by your Supervisor(s) and the other Internal Examiner. The completed PGR3 form must be submitted to Registry *at least two weeks* in advance of the next Graduate Studies Board (GSB) meeting.

The confirmation procedure must take place not later than the second year of research for full-time students (and at an appropriate corresponding time for part-time students). If the outcome of the confirmation procedure is unsuccessful you may, if appropriate, be invited to complete such research as will allow you to graduate with a Master's degree.

Intention to Submit

At least three months in advance of the completion of your thesis, you and your Supervisor will submit a PGR4 form. This is official notification that you intend to submit your thesis for examination, and, normally, it is at this point that your examiners (internal and external) are nominated. These examiners must be approved by the Graduate Studies Board.

6. Some Other Basics

Your Responsibilities

Primary responsibility for completion of the PhD rests with you. As well as being an intellectual test, the PhD is a test of your capacity to work independently and consistently over a long period.

Each research student must keep in contact with their supervisor(s) and inform them about the progress of the research. You should meet the Supervisor(s) for discussions, submit written work and perform other academic exercises (for example, attending and contributing to the Research Seminars) according to the timetable negotiated with the Supervisors. While the doors of most members of the School are nearly always open to postgraduates, students should remember that members of staff do have other responsibilities, and that these may at times preclude a member of staff giving them immediate or unscheduled attention.

Students should inform their Supervisor(s) as early as possible of anything that might affect their ability to complete an agreed programme of work on schedule, rather than bringing problems to the table at a late stage. The essential point to remember is that the School is on the side of its postgraduate students 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.

Students should familiarise themselves with DCU's Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy (see [link](#)). Plagiarism is academic theft and is one of the most serious offences in academia. Students found to have plagiarised may be required to withdraw from the PhD programme. Also consult the DCU handbook, [Code of Good Research Practice](#).

Any candidate conducting research on human subjects is required to obtain approval from the Faculty of HSS Research Ethics Committee (F-REC). Ethical approval must be obtained before the start of the data collection/analysis. Information on the application process for ethical approval can be found [here](#) and the guidance on the application process to F-REC can be found [here](#). All higher-risk research projects must be reviewed by the University-level REC.

The Role of Supervisors

Your Supervisor(s) and Independent Panel Member are voices of experience and sources of guidance.

Supervisors have both a reactive and a proactive role. On the one hand, Supervisors must be accessible to the student for academic help and advice during the progress of the research and the final preparation of the thesis. On the other hand, Supervisors have an active duty to be informed about the progress of the research student's work, to give frank and constructive opinions about this work (whether or not these are asked for), to make sure that the student is aware of the quantity and quality of work required, and to negotiate and monitor a timetable for its submission.

Supervisors undertake to provide careful analysis and constructive criticism of all work submitted to them within an agreed period of time. Normally, your Supervisor(s) will meet you for an agreed schedule of formal meetings. It is likely that they will make themselves available, when feasible, for informal discussions with students.

Supervisors also have an administrative duty to submit the necessary forms to allow their student progress and submit the PhD.

If your work progresses well it is likely that your Supervisor(s) will become mentors and referees.

Embracing a Research Culture

It is important as a PhD student that you embrace the research culture in the School and in your discipline.

The School has a Research Seminar Series which is regarded by the School as an important element of your personal and professional development and you should attend this on a regular basis and aim to present a paper at least once during your time with us. You should, however, obtain permission from your supervisor before submitting a paper proposal. Other School activities, such as guest lectures, book launches, promotional events etc., are important elements of the social and academic life of the School and should be supported by you.

You should also attend and, where appropriate, present at the seminars, workshops, and conferences relevant to your discipline whether these are organized by the University or other relevant actors in the field. This is important if you are to understand the state of your field, but also if you are to establish the relationships that may be of assistance to you in a career in academia. You should also identify and familiarize yourself with the national and international organisations in your field and become a member.

Funding Opportunities

Doing a PhD is expensive, and opportunities to access funding in the field of arts and humanities are limited. We hope to offer as much support as we can to our best PhD students. There are also external funding schemes, notably with the Irish Research Council (IRC), which you should aim to secure. Students who are in receipt of a scholarship from the School are obliged to apply for an IRC doctoral scholarship at the earliest opportunity and by no later than the start of the second year of their research studies.

Finances allowing, the Faculty provides a competitive scheme that supports PhD students to publish in academic journals, while some of the disciplinary societies and organizations offer grants and prizes.

Further Information

This handbook is intended to be a general overview of the PhD experience in the School of English and is not meant to be a substitute for, nor does it supercede, university policies and practice. The current DCU Graduate Research Guide can be accessed under the 'Policies and Publications' section of the Graduate Research Office page on the DCU website. It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with these regulations.