

PhD Induction Humanities and Social Science (HSS): The PhD Process

Professor Caroline Morris

DEPUTY DEAN FOR RESEARCH (PGR), HSS

**WELCOME
AND
CONGRATULATIONS!**

Outline

The institutional and administrative context for your PhD: what's what and who's who

Research in HSS

Key aspects of the PhD programme

- The regulations

- What is the PhD?

- Supervision

- Progression points

- Interruptions and Extensions

- Funding

- The viva and after

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- HSS Faculty comprises 7 Schools and has approx. over 7,300 students and 660 staff altogether with many inter-departmental links.
- Schools:
 - Arts (English, Drama, Film, Languages and Linguistics) *new school for 2024-25
 - Business and Management
 - Economics and Finance
 - Geography
 - History
 - Law (Department of Law and the Centre for Commercial Law Studies)
 - Politics and International Relations

The Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (IHSS)

The IHSS brings together researchers at Queen Mary with each other and the world

Umbrella Institute for many HSS Interdisciplinary Research Centres

Funding opportunities are available

Research Programme and projects
eg Health and Humanities
Empire and Its Afterlives
Digital Lives Programme
Critical Hope Collective

Director: Professor Kate Malleson (Law)
IHSS Fellows



Postgraduate research in HSS

Our research grant funding is around £7 million annually, and more than £1million is invested in scholarships for research students.

We are part of large national Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP)

ESRC - LISS (London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership) DTP

AHRC - LAHP (London Arts and Humanities Partnership) DTP

London NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) DTP

Mobile People Leverhulme Trust funded programme for doctoral scholars (QMUL-LTDS)

A thriving research and training environment

- Staff Seminars
- Ad Hoc Events
- Regular events series
- Institutes and Centres seminars
- PhD writing and research retreats
- Career events

Formal Training provision from:

- Your School
- Doctoral College
<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/>
- The Queen Mary Academy
<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/queenmaryacademy/>
- LISS and LAHP training open to all Queen Mary PhD students

- Together with the PhD office within your School, they are responsible for the smooth functioning of the programme and the implementation of relevant rules and regulations.
- The Doctoral College works with schools, institutes and academic services across Queen Mary to oversee the recruitment and admission, training and development, academic progression and examination of Queen Mary's PhD students.
- All students studying for research degrees are automatically enrolled in the Doctoral College
- The Doctoral College also provides a series of events and activities and... .FUNDS!

- Doctoral College Manager: Dr Zi Parker

Email: z.parker@qmul.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7882 6617

- The Research Degrees Office (RDO) provides an administrative service to research degree students in the Doctoral College and staff involved in their supervision.
- The RDPEB (Research Degrees Examination Board) sits within the RDO. This is the board responsible for the monitoring and the final approval of all matters and requests related to your own PhD. Meets monthly.
- Considers interruptions, extensions, examiners nominations, awards, withdrawals, etc.
- Head of the RDO: Ms Mary Childs

Email: m.childs@qmul.ac.uk

The Deputy Dean for Research (PGR) HSS

Co-ordinates the contributions of PGR students across the Faculty.

Works closely with the Deputy Deans for Research in each Faculty to provide academic leadership for the Doctoral College, with the aim of achieving excellence in all aspects of postgraduate research students' education.

Co-ordinates the allocation of institutional PhD studentship funding, and lead on strategy and operational activity for Doctoral Training Partnerships, and wider funding of the PGR community.

Co-ordinates the work of School Directors of Graduate Studies across the Faculty in supporting and enhancing the PGR community and research student experience.

The Director(s) of Graduate Studies

- Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) oversee PGR provision in each School/Institute (there may be more than one DGS eg School of Arts, Law)
- Approve requests for interruptions/extensions/expenses in the first place
- Decides/approve yearly progression outcomes
- Transfer between FT and PT status must be approved by the DGS and Deputy Dean
- Deal with all students' matters: please reach out to your DGS for any problems you encounter from an academic point of view



The PhD programme in your School

-

Director(s) of Graduate Studies

Deputy Director
Director of Admissions

Doctoral Administrators

Doctoral Academic Adviser(s)

The regulatory framework

Your PhD is governed by a set of Regulations included in:

- Your School PhD Handbook
- Queen Mary Academic Regulations for Research Degree Students
- Queen Mary Code of Practice for Research Students

.... available here: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/governance-and-legal-services/policy/>

Please refer to those for any questions you may have

What's included?

- Your responsibilities
- Your progression points (including transfer to writing up)
- Interruption and extension
- Important dates
- Supervision
- What is expected from a PhD thesis
- The viva and after
- Queen Mary Support

What is the PhD thesis?

Classic format:

100 000 word thesis

Alternative formats:

Shorter thesis + practical element eg film, new media eg Drama, Theatre, Performance, Film Studies.

Shorter thesis + creative element eg novella, poetry, stage play, screen play eg English.

Shorter thesis + translation of literary text into English eg Modern Languages.

NB: the elements must be submitted concurrently and form an integrated whole

The thesis assessment criteria

The thesis shall:

Consist of the candidate's own account of their investigations;

Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality;

Be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;

Give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, describe the method of research and its findings;

Demonstrate a deep and synoptic understanding of the field, objectivity and the capacity for judgement;

Be written in English;

Demonstrate relevant research skills; and

Be of publishable standard.

Your PhD in practice: Supervision and record keeping

- You have been assigned 2 supervisors: they are either both experts in the field or each of them can guide you through a specific aspect of your research
- You need to meet them 10 times a year (5 for PT), of which 3 meetings have to be joint
- (PreCovid) We expect(ed) meetings to be in person, however on occasion contact may be online
- You then need to upload the agreed minutes of the meeting on Mysis
- We check Mysis regularly!
- Your handbook normally includes a section of yours and supervisors' responsibilities

Supervision and record keeping: useful tips

- Give supervisors enough time to read your work: ask how long in advance they want to receive it

Good feedback is essential to good progress

It's very useful to discuss and agree with your supervisor, at an early stage, what form of feedback will be given at different stages of the project

It's especially important to be clear about how feedback on written work will be provided. Consider:

How many drafts of each chapter will your supervisor be prepared to read?

What form will written comments take (brief annotations, discursive prose, or a mixture of the two)?

Your PhD in Practice: work and leave

- You should agree holiday periods with your primary supervisor. FT students have the same annual leave entitlement as FT staff (30 days, plus the 8 UK public holidays and the 4 Queen Mary closure days). Don't try to go without leave...
-But please remember to TAKE LEAVE! Your wellbeing is important.
- In cases of illness, you should inform your supervisor(s) and School/ Institute of absence from studies. On the eighth day of absence (including nonworking days), you should supply a doctor's certificate for any further absence, and provide this to the School/Institute research student administrator.
- If you're expected to be absent for more than one month, whether consecutively or cumulatively, you must apply to interrupt.

Your PhD in Practice:

progression from Y1-Y2-Y3

- Normally three progression points, at Y1; Y2 and Y3
- Each School has different requirements, and sets the first attempt at a different point in Year 1
- All require some form of written work to be submitted, between 6 and 9 months after registration (12-18 months PT)
- Progression panels must include at least two people – at least one should be independent of your supervisory team
- Independent panel members can't subsequently examine your final thesis
- A student who fails to progress on the first assessment will be allowed a second attempt within three months

- Allowed only when a FULL DRAFT THESIS has been completed.
- Full draft? The chapters may be in draft form, but the main bulk of research must have been conducted and finalised already
- You can transfer to writing-up status between 2 years (4 years PT) and 4 years (7 years PT) from initial registration
- Max. one calendar year, both FT and PT
- Students on writing-up status don't pay fees (but must re-enrol at the beginning of each academic year)
- Completed applications must include a plan and timetable for completion
- Outline thesis plan showing the status of each chapter (complete / in draft / to be drafted) and estimated completion dates
- Applications are approved successively by the primary supervisor, DGS, and Deputy Dean PGR

Your PhD in Practice: Interruption

- Requests should normally be supported by the supervisor and DGS, and submitted to the RDO to refer to RDPEB
- Grounds for interruption may include: illness, personal and family reasons, pregnancy or pregnancy-related illness, parental or primary carer leave, adoption leave, financial difficulties. Evidence must be provided.
- Students may not interrupt simply because of a lack of progress!
- Interruptions cannot be made retrospectively, except in exceptional circumstances
- Interrupting students remain registered on their programme, but are not enrolled with Queen Mary. This has consequences for student status, funding, and immigration permission for international students
- Interrupting students may continue to work personally on their research, and have access to the library with limited borrowing rights. Arrangements for contact with the supervisory team should be agreed in advance of the interruption. Interrupting students should not have access to laboratories, or carry out fieldwork
- The maximum period of interruption allowed is 2 years in total (excluding periods of primary care leave)
- It's important to discuss the implications of interruption with Advice and Counselling, particularly if your fees are paid by a sponsor or you hold a Tier 4 visa where Queen Mary issued a CAS

Your PhD in Practice: Extensions

- You're expected to compete within 4 years...and encouraged to finish in 3 and a half in fact!!
- You can apply for an extension to your maximum registration period if circumstances beyond your control make it impossible to complete on time
- Requests should normally be supported by the supervisor and DGS, and submitted to the RDO to refer to RDPEB
- Extensions can normally only be authorised for students who are in their fourth year of study or have writing-up status. Students may request an extension of their submission deadline of up to one year, normally on one occasion only. Applications must normally be made no later than three months before the programme end date
- Extensions will be considered only if students can provide evidence of satisfactory progress to date and the ability to submit within the requested period

Your PhD in Practice: Funding

You may have access to School research support funding

If this is unavailable or insufficient, you can apply to Queen Mary's Postgraduate Research Fund (PGRF):

Max. £1000 to attend an internationally renowned conference/meeting

Max. £2000 for fieldwork, networking, access to training/facilities

“one time-last time”!

Deadlines on 1 October, 1 February, and 1 June (Schools will have their own internal deadlines on earlier dates)

You should show evidence of having sought external funding and of relevance to your thesis

Very competitive – not a safety net in any sense

See <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctorscollege/phd-students/funding/pgrf/#d.en.701936>

Your PhD in Practice: Funding

You can also apply to Queen Mary's Doctoral College Initiative Fund (DCIF):

Supports new PGR-led activities to enhance students' research experience, intellectual and/or professional development

May include seminars, conferences, debates, specialist training

Cannot include equipment or consumables

Min. £100, max. £1000; applicants without previous DCIF funding are prioritized

Deadlines on 1 October, 1 February, and 1 June (Schools will have their own internal deadlines on earlier dates)

You should show evidence of having sought alternative support (internal or external; funding or in-kind support)

Activities with a multi/interdisciplinary focus (esp. cross-Faculty initiatives), and which engage the maximum number of participants, are prioritized

Support from primary supervisor and DGS is needed

Very competitive, like the PGRF scheme

See <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctorscollege/phd-students/funding/dcif/#d.en.701923>

Examiners and submission

You should discuss the appointment of examiners, and timing of submission, with your supervisor before initiating the examination entry process

There are restrictions on examiners' appointment

You must submit within 4 years (3 years 364 days) of initial registration

You need to fill a thesis submission form to the RDO together with electronic copy

The thesis can be no longer than 100,000 words, including footnotes but excluding the bibliography and any appendices

The VIVA

The possible outcomes of your examinations are:

- Pass
- Pass with minor corrections
- Pass with major corrections
- Not pass, revise and resubmit within 18 months
- Not pass, but allowed to submit to a second oral examination on the same thesis and by the same examiners within 18 months
- Fail PhD but deemed to have met the requirements for an MPhil
- Fail outright

Getting through the PhD: some tips

Common problems that can affect timely submission:

Slow start

Perfectionism

Distraction from main line of enquiry

External circumstances: getting a job, moving home, etc.

Awareness can make these problems easier to manage

Remember also that PhD projects have a life cycle – you and your supervisor will need to work in different ways at different stages

Never overestimate the time at your disposal!

More advice!

Take training seriously – not just for your thesis project, but for your overall profile.

Keep meticulous bibliographical records, in the appropriate format – this will save endless reference-checking later on.

You may want to use reference management software like EndNote (if so, then do it as early as possible).

Don't be reluctant to experiment – or to be honest about when experiments don't work.

There are no stupid questions.

Make sure you can explain your work clearly to non-specialists. This may take practice.

Seek out critical analysis at conferences, workshops, seminars, 3-minute PhD etc. Dealing with feedback is a skill that most people need to develop.

Relevant links

- **Academic Registry and Council Secretariat (ARCS):**

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/registry-services/>

- **Doctoral College:**

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctorscollege/>

- **Research Degree Office:**

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/registry-services/contact-directory-/research-degrees-office/>

- **Mysis:**

https://mysis.qmul.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/SIW_LGN



**KEEP
CALM
AND
JUST DO
YOUR PHD**

Thank you

c.morris@qmul.ac.uk



Queen Mary
University of London