

Queen's University Belfast

School of English
10 June 2009

PhD in Creative Writing, Guidelines & Criteria

Practice-based doctorates are deemed to advance knowledge partly by means of practice, through the inclusion of an original, creative piece of work in the submission for examination, along with a substantial contextualisation of the creative work. It is distinct from a normal PhD in that significant aspects of the claim for doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work. The accompanying critical appraisal or analysis not only clarifies the basis for the claim of originality and location of the original work, it also provides the basis for a judgement as to whether general scholarly requirements are met. This could be defined as judgement of the submission as a contribution to knowledge in the field, showing doctoral level powers of analysis and mastery of existing contextual knowledge, in a form that is accessible to and auditable by knowledgeable peers.

Applications

- Applicants should normally hold a good honours degree (2.1 or 1st) and a Masters in Creative Writing (with specialisation in the genre proposed for doctoral work); those applicants with a Distinction at Masters level will normally be given preference; all offers of places are contingent upon adequate and available supervisory capacity
- Applicants must submit a detailed proposal (2500 words minimum) indicating: the topic/area of interest; the aims of the project; the research questions of the project; its conceptual framework and methodology; the relationship to current practice; proposed outcomes (indicating novel or screenplay length, number of poems in a collection, and the balance of creative and critical components)
- A sample of creative work (possibly from MA level) should accompany all applications and should be in the genre proposed for doctoral work.

Supervision

- The School accepts only those applicants for whom a supervisory team of 2 academics (one for the creative parts of the thesis and one for the critical components) can be ensured. It is acknowledged that adequate supervision cannot be provided for all suggested projects and that places are offered in line with University practice that suitably qualified academics normally act as primary supervisors for no more than 6 projects at any one time.

- The student will be allocated a first supervisor and a second supervisor, with whom they will work to develop the research. Each student will present annual progress reports to the School Postgraduate Committee (SPGC). It is recommended that one of the supervisors have direct experience in creative practice, and must be able to satisfy the appropriate Director of Research (DR) that they are familiar with current debates and developments in a relevant field of 'Practice-as-Research' scholarship.
- While it is expected that a registered student will work closely with the relevant supervisor on the respective creative and critical aspects of the thesis at different times over the course of their doctoral work, it is essential that regular contact is maintained between the student and both supervisors.
- Supervisors will read and give feedback on the process and practice of the project, advising the student about the requirements and regulations regarding a Ph.D in Creative Writing at Queen's University Belfast.

Project Scope/Creative, Critical Components

- Where creative work forms the majority of a doctoral project, references to 'thesis' are understood to denote the totality of the submission without privileging any of the submitted components.
- The thesis will consist of (i) an original creative work (a novel, a screenplay, a play, a collection of poetry) and (ii) a critical treatment, written in English, defining the research objectives of the creative work(s) (i), addressing its intellectual contexts, and explaining other factors taken into account in its conception, development, and conclusions.
- The written critical treatment (ii) shall be not less than 20,000 and not more than 40,000 words (excluding references, appendices, and bibliography) and must be of doctoral standard; the overall thesis will not exceed 80,000 (excluding references, appendices, and bibliography).
- Parts (i) and (ii) of the research project must be comprehensively and convincingly integrated and the complete submitted project must reach the required standard of PhD as outlined in the University's General Regulations.

Duration

- The minimum period of enrolment is two years full-time or four years part-time. Students should know that it frequently takes more than the minimum period of enrolment to complete a doctoral-level programme but it should be completed within three years (full-time) or six years (part-time) of admission as a research student. Students are always admitted with undifferentiated research status; acceptance for PhD depends on a successful differentiation interview followed by a formal recommendation from the SPGC.

Assessment

- By examination of the creative work(s) and its accompanying written critical treatment by a panel of internal and external examiners appointed by the SPGC. The examination panel will not include either supervisor. It may be necessary to appoint external examiners much earlier than is customary for

traditionally written PhDs. If process or product (perhaps presented well in advance of the written submission) is to be examined, an external examiner will need access to that process and/or product.

- The candidate will normally attend a viva voce (oral) examination by the internal and external examiners; this examination may be attended by the first supervisor.

The Examiners may decide,

- i) to recommend the acceptance of the research project documentation (i.e. both the creative work(s) and critical treatment) as submitted,
- ii) to recommend that the project fail,
- iii) to accept the project documentation as submitted for the award of the degree of MPhil,
- iv) to recommend acceptance of the research project for the PhD in Creative Writing on the condition that the candidate makes minor alterations,
- v) to refer the research project documentation back to the candidate for more substantial alterations; the candidate must then resubmit the revised work for re-examination.

The copyright of the submitted creative work/s will be vested in the candidate.