



# Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

## Guidance for Year 3 (Year 6) PhD Assessed Seminars (Assessed Seminar 2)

**This guidance must be read in conjunction with the relevant section from the [PhD Regulations \(2020\)](#) - the Regulations take precedence in all cases.**

### 1 Introduction

The assessed seminar progression requirement within the PhD programme was introduced in 2015. There are two assessed seminars. This guidance applies to the second of these seminars, which is undertaken in year 3 (for full-time candidates) or year 6 (for part-time candidates).

The following candidates are required to participate in this assessment:

- Full-time PhD candidates in their third year of academic study; and
- Part-time PhD candidates in their sixth year of academic study.

The assessed seminar must (normally) be completed before the end of the candidate's third (full-time) or sixth (part-time) academic year of study and before submission of the PhD thesis for formal examination. If the candidate is not in a position to deliver their assessed seminar by the end of year 3/6 due to extenuating circumstances, the candidate may apply to the Graduate School Academic Board to delay their seminar.

The assessment takes the form of two parts:

- a) The first part is the submission of a written report, which should provide a clear indication to an assessment panel that the candidate has made satisfactory progress with their research and is writing at doctoral level standard.
- b) The second part is an oral presentation, where the candidate presents an aspect of their research to an assessment panel and member(s) of their supervisory team and, preferably, to members of the wider academic community.

### 2 Assessment panel

The assessment panel established for the candidate's probationary assessment should (normally) evaluate both the second and third year assessed seminars (seminars 1 and 2).

The remit of the assessment panel is to provide the candidate with feedback and guidance for the purpose of aiding submission of a strong thesis and helping prepare the candidate for

final viva voce. The panel will also (if appropriate) highlight any issues that they feel require resolution before the candidate is permitted to progress towards thesis submission and the oral examination stage.

### **3 Written report**

For a PhD by thesis only, the written report submitted to the panel should be at least 5000 words and no more than 10,000 words - this would (normally) include a chapter from the candidate's thesis.

It is emphasised that this report should not be a separate piece of written work purely for the purpose of assessment, but should be a flexible piece of work that the candidate is already undertaking as part of their PhD research and thesis preparation.

Further, candidates must submit the following documents (in an Appendix, if appropriate)

- An abstract of 300 words;
- Their thesis completion plan for their third (full-time) or fifth and sixth (part-time) year(s) of study. The plan must clearly indicate tasks and progress and should be no more than 1-2 pages long. It may be appropriate for the plan to be guided by a traffic light system (or similar) e.g. Red = to do, Yellow = ongoing, Green = complete.
- An update on progress with READ modules and plans for submission of the remaining module(s). This update should be no more than 1-2 pages long.
- An outline impact plan.

For PhDs by Creative Practice, a presentation including completed works and an associated chapter of the thesis would normally be submitted, including a plan on how the candidate intends to disseminate their research. Where appropriate, the assessment panel should also be able to view any performance works or live events at this time.

### **4 Oral presentation**

#### **4.1 Preparing for the oral presentation**

There is flexibility in the manner in which a candidate delivers their presentation, as this is likely to vary depending on what aspect of the thesis is being presented. The talk should, however, be clear and logically organised. It would be appropriate to start with a brief introduction to the research and its wider importance. Candidates should remember that although they are an expert on their topic and the work they have completed, what seems easy and understandable to them may not be so readily understood by non-specialist members of the audience. If the talk includes presenting data and results from a particular research study, for example, it would be appropriate to briefly explain the methodology/method(s) that have been employed to gather that data. A good presentation will also finish with a summary of the main points/findings/conclusions.

All candidates (especially those lacking confidence in public speaking) may find it beneficial to practise their oral presentation with their supervisors before their formal assessment. This will also allow supervisors to provide early feedback on the content/flow of the presentation and the standard of delivery. Timing is also important, and practising will help ensure that candidates deliver a presentation of required length.

#### **4.2 Delivering the oral presentation**

The candidate should aim for their presentation to last 20 minutes. This will be followed by approx. 10 minutes of questions from the panel (and audience, if appropriate).

Candidates may choose their mode of presentation e.g. PowerPoint, Prezi or appropriate other.

It is beneficial to the development and progress of all PhD candidates to attend QMU to present their seminar in person. This includes candidates who predominantly study at a distance, in line with PhD Regulation 3.1.2, which states that 'as far as possible, non-resident candidates should visit QMU for three weeks each year to allow face-to-face supervisory meetings and participation in various research study and development opportunities and to be part of the wider culture of the School and the University.'

The occasions open to candidates to present their work are:

- At a QMU Graduate School Assessed Seminar Day(s);
- At the DCA Doctoral Candidates' Conference, normally held in April of each academic year (as organised by the Doctoral Candidates' Association – DCA); or
- At a QMU internal Divisional/Research Centre seminar session, as organised by the candidate's supervisory team.

In very exceptional circumstances, and predominantly only for part-time candidates based overseas, it may be possible to arrange for the seminar to be held remotely using video conference, Skype, or other technology.

In all cases, the assessment panel must be in attendance and their availability will need to be taken into account. It is also advisory for at least one member of the candidate's supervisory team to attend. Where a candidate is presenting at a QMU seminar, a wider audience is likely to be present and the opportunity to present to the wider academic audience should be welcomed.

## **5 Assessment criteria**

The purpose of the Assessed Seminar 2 is to help candidates prepare for the submission of their thesis and defence of their work to their PhD examiners during their final viva voce. Following their presentation, candidates should expect the assessment panel to ask questions which focus on both the strengths and weaknesses of the research presented.

The aim is to provide the candidate with an opportunity to confidently address questions relating to their research, as would be expected during the final viva voce. It is, however, acknowledged that this is not a simulation of a final viva voce as such, given that in the latter the study is addressed in its totality (e.g. logical progression and interlinking of chapters).

The assessment panel will look for evidence from both the written submission and the oral presentation to answer the following questions (if applicable to the work that the candidate has opted to submit, and the content of the presentation).

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Evidenced from</b>
Is evidence provided that the candidate has thorough background knowledge of their research area and that they understand the significance of their work within the wider research context?	Written work Oral presentation

Does the candidate demonstrate an understanding of their chosen methods/methodology, its ontological and epistemological underpinning, and of any potential methodological limitations?	Written work Oral presentation
Has the candidate drawn reasonable and defensible conclusions from their research data?	Written work Oral presentation
Does the candidate demonstrate an aptitude for critically appraising key research issues?	Written work Oral presentation
Can the candidate clearly explain their research to their target audience?	Oral presentation
Does the candidate demonstrate an ability to participate in articulate academic discussion with research colleagues?	Oral presentation
Are the assessors satisfied that the research will be completed, and thesis submitted, within the maximum 4 years (full time) or 8 years (part time)? If not, what additional support from supervisors or specific training does the candidate need in order to meet their submission deadline?	Time plan
Overall, are the assessors satisfied that the candidate is able to write in a clear and concise manner and written work presented is doctoral standard?	Written work
Overall, are assessors satisfied that the candidate has the knowledge and skills to deliver a strong oral defence of their thesis during their final viva? If not, what additional support from supervisors or specific training do they need in order to meet their submission deadline?	Oral presentation

## 6 Joint report

The Chair of the assessment panel should write a Joint Report (submitted to the Graduate School within seven working days of the seminar assessment) providing formative feedback on the candidate's written report and oral presentation.

The panel may also comment on whether the candidate is, in their opinion, making satisfactory progress. The contents of the Joint Report will be reviewed by the Graduate School Academic Board and, once approved, will be provided to the candidate and their supervisory team.

The report will be provided in such a way that it enables the candidate to plan their development and the supervisory team to guide the candidate. At the end of the report a clear and numbered list of requirements must be set out. Any optional advisory statements are not to be included in this list and can be offered separately – and must be relevant to the candidate's priorities and direction of study. Reports found to be offering poor quality feedback or feedforward and lacking in a clear list of requirements (where needed) will be returned to the panel for revision.

The assessment panel may make one of four recommendations:

- (a) That the candidate continues to progress with their PhD studies
- (b) That the candidate be required to resubmit with specified revisions
- (c) That the candidate be required to resubmit with specified revisions and another presentation
- (d) That the candidate be de-registered.

In the event of (d) above (de-registration), the report must be passed to the Graduate School Academic Board for initial consideration and recommendation to the Research Strategy Committee. The Graduate School will inform the candidate in writing of the decision of the Committee. The candidate may appeal).

In the event of (b) or (c) above, the candidate will normally be invited to meet with the Chair of the assessment panel to discuss their performance and how any concerns could be addressed.

In the event of (b) or (c) above, the form of resubmission will be indicated in the assessment panel's report. For a PhD by thesis only, this would normally consist of a revised full paper or the equivalent. For PhD by Creative Practice, this may require amendments or revisions to the written and/or practical element of the submission. In cases where the Panel requires amendments to the practical element of the submission, they should be fully satisfied that their concerns cannot be addressed solely through amendments to the written element of the submission. Where this is not possible, the Panel should consider whether an additional practical arrangement could be used to address any concerns rather than revise the original practical component.

The deadline for resubmission will be detailed in the Assessment Panel's report. Typically, this will be between six to eight weeks from the report being sent to the candidate. Where a candidate is unable to meet this deadline due to extenuating circumstances, an extension to the submission deadline should be applied for within six weeks and in all cases before the deadline. Failure to resubmit within the maximum timescale defined by the assessors may result in de-registration on grounds of failure to progress, except where extenuating circumstances apply.

On rare occasions, a second presentation may be requested by the assessment panel, in which case, this will be detailed in the assessment panel's report.

Following consideration of the resubmission (and second presentation if appropriate), the assessors will write a Joint Report, making one of the following recommendations:

- (a) That the candidate continues to progress with their PhD studies
- (b) That the candidate be required to resubmit for the final time
- (c) That the candidate be de-registered

In the event of (b) above, a restricted set of final recommendations is available as follows:

- (a) That the candidate continues to progress with their PhD studies
- (b) That the candidate be de-registered