

GUIDELINES FOR THE ORGANIZATION, DELIVERY, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING OF MANDATORY MPhil AND PHD SEMINARS

Updated August 2018

The following guide is designed to assist Faculty and Students in the Organization, Delivery, Assessment and Reporting of the Mandatory MPhil, Phd, MD and Professional Doctorate seminars

Regulation 1.68, Revised Regulations for Graduate Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees (wef August 1st, 2018) guides as follows:

Students enrolled for an MPhil degree must satisfactorily complete at least two research seminars, to be convened by the relevant Head of Department, prior to the submission of their MPhil thesis. Students enrolled for a PhD or MD degree must satisfactorily complete three such seminars. The upgrade seminar will count as one of the three seminars for the PhD, provided that it is not the last seminar. Assessment of students' seminars must be included in their Progress Reports. Students enrolled in Professional Doctorates must satisfactorily complete research seminars as specified in Programme requirements.

Regulation 38, page 11, *Manual of Procedures for Graduate Degrees and Diplomas* guides as follows:

All candidates for research degrees are required to present research seminars. MPhil students must present a minimum of two seminars during the period of registration, and Ph.D and MD students a minimum of three. The results of these seminars must be reported to the Campus Committee in the Supervisor's Progress report and should be documented on the student's final transcript.

1. Clarification of Seminar Delivery

- During the lifetime of a student's programme the MPhil student must present two seminars and the Ph.D/MD student three seminars.
- MPhil students are not required to complete the two seminars before moving to an upgrade seminar.
- If the student successfully upgrades from MPhil to PhD having only done one of the mandatory seminars, then the additional two must be completed during the Ph.D research stage.

- The upgrade seminar will count as one of the three seminars for the PhD, provided that it is not the last seminar. Reg. 1.68. This may be left to the discretion of the supervisor and department based on the student's progress and performance, with the final decision being that of the Chair of the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research.

2. Registration for Seminars

A course code is assigned for the seminars and students are required to register for each seminar. Seminars carried out by students on exchange or training programmes in foreign or sister universities may be considered on condition that a request is made for this seminar to be thus considered and that a grade as well as comments be submitted by the department or supervisor to the Chair of the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research for final agreement.

3. Composition of Assessors

It is advised that the Assessors of the Graduate Research Seminars be appointed by the Head of Department or Co-ordinator of the programme *in consultation* with the Supervisor/s of the student to ensure that in addition to one or more Supervisors there is at least one independent assessor of the written and oral seminar presentation. The Supervisor/s and members of the Advisory Committee of the student may be assessors.

There is no need to inform or seek approval from Graduate Studies and Research on the selection of Graduate seminar Assessors.

4. Overall result of assessment and notification of outcome

The Assessment panel will determine the overall result and report this through the Head of Department or Coordinator of the Programme to Graduate Studies and Research. This will be reported as either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The criteria for this is to be left to the discretion of each Faculty or discipline but a guide to Assessment adopted from best practice on this campus is presented under point 6 Grading and Assessment Rubric. Where there are differences on the part of the various assessors, individual reports shall be submitted to the Graduate Studies and Research for the decision of the Chair of the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research.

5. Guidelines for Seminar Presentations

Students may be guided by supervisors on what they should present for each of the required seminars. Some basic rules apply:

MPhil programme: candidates are required to demonstrate continued progress in their research in their specialist field. Candidates are required to deliver a paper at the beginning of their research work and another Seminar before submission of the thesis and to be able to field questions put to them at these presentations.

PhD programme: candidates are required to demonstrate continued progress in their research in their specialist field. It is advised that they deliver a paper at the beginning of their research work and subsequently two Seminars before submission of the thesis and field questions put to them at these presentations.

The seminars are to be viewed as intervals for assessment of the research proposal, methodologies, data, findings and analyses, and viewed as an opportunity for the research student to discuss their project and receive critical feedback that will assist with the continued development of their study. The seminars also provide training for the student in oral delivery of academic papers, to assist the student with fielding academic critiques and providing thoughtful responses to assessors and questioners. This is part of the skill training that is involved in academic work.

6. Guidance for submission of written paper prior to Seminar presentation

The research student is required to submit written work prior to the assessment seminar, by which time the date for the seminar should have been agreed with the student. The seminars are normally open to the university and external community, except in such cases when the Supervisor and the student agree on the preservation of Intellectual property and the need for an in camera seminar.

All written presentation must be properly edited scripts that include well referenced bibliographies and endnotes/footnotes. Plagiarism detection software must be applied to each paper and a report submitted along with the written presentation.

7. Delivery of Seminars

A Chair will be appointed for each seminar to guide the proceedings.

The presentation will normally be 20-30 minutes with additional time for questions. The first round of questions is generally posed by the Assessors. Students are encouraged to speak to power point presentations that serve as a guide to the audience rather than a verbatim representation of the seminar presentation.

It is not possible to stipulate the content per seminar but there are obvious paths that may be followed based on the expected progression of any research degree. A schema that crosses discipline may guide the different seminars as follows:

Seminar 1 - May contain the following:

- Presentation and justification of the topic of research
- Background to the problem and statement and/or importance of the problem situation and purpose of the study
- Preliminary Review of Research Literature as this informs the questions to be answered or objectives to be investigated, preliminary or substantive assumptions and theoretical framework (when appropriate)
- Delineation of the research problem (explication of relationships among variables or comparisons to be considered)
- Statement of hypotheses
- Anticipated methodological approach and research questions
- Definition of terms
- Scope and delimitations of the study

Note that all of the above may be contained in a typically developed Research Proposal. Templates of Research proposals to further guide may be found on the Graduate Studies and Research Website

Seminar 2 - May contain the following:

- Overview of the topic
- More intensive grasp of literature in the field that has informed the conceptual approach and methodologies being used.
- Enhanced description of research methodology or approach and defined research design and tightening up of hypothesis.
- Pilot studies where carried out. These should draw attention where appropriate to instrumentation, selection of subjects, field, classroom or laboratory procedures, system of data collection and recording, data processing and analysis, methodological strengths and limitations.
- Early insights and research dilemmas which confront the researcher.

Seminar 3 - May contain the following:

- Students may choose to present on any aspect of their research project, for example a research chapter.
- Findings are presented in tables or charts when appropriate, or in narratives, or in other qualitative analysis forms.
- Findings need to be reported with respect to furnishing evidence for each research question asked or each hypothesis posed in problem statement.
- Students may choose to present sections entitled "Discussion", "Interpretation", or "Evaluation" that ties together findings in relation to theory, review of literature or rationale and thus get feedback on the rigor and argumentation of the thesis itself, i.e. that there is a match between the conceptual, methodological, data collection mechanisms, analysis of data and findings or insights of the thesis.

8. Grading and Assessment Rubric

Graduate Studies and Research requires that the Assessment Report provides a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade which may parallel a Pass/Fail. It has not stipulated or defined a grading system or assessment rubrics for these seminars. These have largely emerged from practice whereby Faculties or Departments have devised a grading scheme assessing the seminar presentation both as written as well as oral presentation and discussion with peers and assessors. A template which guides the assessment of these seminars also provides for quality and consistency both within and across faculty and departments. This assessment rubric is included as an example with best practice left to the discretion of each Faculty or Disciplinary requirement.

If the assessment is unsatisfactory or failed, then the seminar must be repeated until a satisfactory or pass is achieved.

Grading and Assessment Rubric:

Content

Under this heading, assessors are required to grade students on clarity of seminar paper especially the aims and objectives, coherency and presentation of information, and general flow of presentation.

Presentation skills

Assessors are required to grade students on clarity of expression, use of multimedia, time management, confidence/enthusiasm and relationship with audience.

Subject Knowledge

Assessors are required to grade students on grasp or knowledge of research area, evidence of critical thinking during discussion and expression of ideas.

Merit of Research

Assessors are required to grade students on contribution of research area to knowledge, connection between aims and research area and methods of analysis.

Criteria:

	5	4	3	2	1
Content (a) Clear objectives (b) Organization					
Presentation skills (a) Clarity /confidence (b) Multimedia use (c) Timing					

Subject Knowledge (a) Depth of Study (b) Handling of questions					
Merit of Research (a) Methods of analysis (b) Contribution to research					
Overall Assessment (rate entire presentation)					

General Comments:

Scale:

SATISFACTORY OR PASS	{5 - exceptional {4 - above average {3 - Average
UNSATISFACTORY OR FAIL	{2 - below average {1 - poor

*Graduate Studies and Research
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
2018*