

The University of Edinburgh

The Moray House School of Education

School Postgraduate Studies Committee

2 February 2017

Proposal for a Distance PhD

Brief description of the paper

This is a proposal for a PhD in Education and Sport. There are some items, notably fees, still being discussed at College level. However, College has still approved proposals while this is happening.

Action requested

This is for comment and recommendations, and possible approval. If approved, the proposal would go to School Policy and Resources Committee and then to College.

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? Yes

If 'Yes', in which section(s) of the paper are they described?

There is a section entitled Resource implications.

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? Yes

If 'Yes', in which section(s) of the paper is it set out?

There is a section entitled Risks.

Equality and diversity

Have due considerations been given to the equality impact of this paper?

A distance mode might be support greater equality, but there could be some issues, and this has been mentioned in the paper.

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Proposal prepared by Dr Christine Sinclair, Programme Director for MSc in Digital Education, and Dr Rory Ewins, Programme Director for Research Methods – 25 January 2017.

PhD by Distance – The Moray House School of Education and Sport

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The Moray House School of Education and Sport proposes to create a PhD by distance for its existing FT and PT PhD programmes. There are a number of reasons for doing this:

- A distance PhD provides a natural progression for high-achieving students on a distance Masters programme, such as the MSc in Digital Education, and the MSc in Social Justice and Community Action.
- Many international PhD students in the School already return to their home country for a long period for their data collection and also for writing up, effectively creating a distance route for a significant proportion of their studies. Formal recognition of this de facto distance student status would be useful, not least in providing clearer agreed support mechanisms.
- For many part-time students, the ability to keep working may be the only way that a PhD can be undertaken. There is potential for attracting more students interested in a University of Edinburgh qualification.

It is anticipated that students on this programme would visit the University of Edinburgh at least once a year to meet their supervisors, attend any appropriate seminars, and to have an annual review. The students might also return to Edinburgh for their oral examination, though alternative arrangements for oral examinations using video-conferencing or similar technologies are already possible under current regulations (see 16.1 of the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees Academic Year 2015/16).

GENERAL PROGRAMME INFORMATION

School	Moray House School of Education and Sport
Subject	Research clusters: Digital Education; Equality, Social Justice and Inclusion; Language, Culture and Communication; Pedagogy, Learning and Curriculum; Sport, Physical Education and Health Science
Programme Title	PhD (Education) by Distance
Method of Study	Full-time (by distance) – 36 months Part-time (by distance) – 72 months
Proposed Fee	This is under review by the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Currently, PhD by Distance fee is at the same rate as the on-campus fee, i.e. Home/EU students will be charged the Home/EU fee and Overseas students the Overseas fee.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

<p>Application</p> <p>The PhD (Education) by Distance will be available for all applicants to apply for via the online prospectus / degree finder.</p>
<p>Entry requirements</p> <p>The entry requirements will be the same as for the on campus PhD programmes with the same academic and English Language entry requirements. Applicants will be required to submit the standard supporting documentation for their application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree Certificates • Academic Transcripts • Research Proposal • 2 x Academic references • Certificate of English Language if required <p>In addition to the standard supporting documentation applicants will be required to complete the School's PhD (Education) by Distance Applicant Admission form, which will be based on the College's template (Appendix 1).</p>
<p>Funding</p> <p>Applicants to the PhD (Education) by Distance need to be made aware that some funding bodies do not permit students to study by distance, for example both ESRC and AHRC regulations currently state the students have to be resident where they are studying.</p> <p><i>The School will need to review the terms of the College Research Awards in consultation with the College Office and clarify whether this funding can be awarded to an applicant for the PhD by Distance.</i></p>
<p>Location of studies – on campus requirements</p> <p>The general expectation is that students on this programme should visit Edinburgh at least once per year of study in order to meet with supervisors, attend seminars and/or research training, and to have an annual review (although distance alternatives to the latter can be arranged if necessary). The length and timing of these visits are negotiable but students should ideally spend at least two weeks* at the University of Edinburgh. International students can apply for a short-term visa for up to 6 months if they wish – if they want to spend longer than that in Edinburgh they should be directed to the on-campus route. (This may be subject to change.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This is based on advice from College that 'pure' distance PhDs are unlikely.</i>
<p>Visa Regulations</p> <p>The current guidance from the UKVI indicates that overseas students on official distance programmes are able to apply for a Short Term Study Visa for up to 6 months for each year of study.</p> <p><i>Further clarification from the College Office and the International Office is required regarding the pattern of visits and whether International students could</i></p>

visit the campus on more than one occasion across each year of study.

Facilities at local site

Essential

- Computing facilities – own access to internet or access through local University

Desirable

- Access to local University level library facilities
- Access to local research seminar/research groups at local University
- Plan for visiting relevant academics in local institutions

The applicant will be required to provide this information at the point of application. Applications to the PhD by Distance will not be accepted if the applicant does not have good access to the internet.

Local Advisors

Profile

In addition to two supervisors at Edinburgh, there may be a local advisor nominated by the candidate. If one is available they should meet the following standards:

- PhD
- Track record of publications in the relevant area
- Experienced in supervising research students
- Read and agree with the University Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students
- Be involved in the annual review of the student through the Edinburgh system

Local advisors will be approved by the Edinburgh supervisory team, and the School Director of Postgraduate studies. An appropriately qualified local person may be considered appropriate to replace the second supervisor, but this would be subject to approval of the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Training

Local advisors will be sent supervisor briefing documentation when sessions take place.

Remuneration

The School will need to discuss appropriate stipend for a local advisor/external second supervisor with the College.

School collaboration with local advisors

The expectation is that the Edinburgh supervisors will liaise with the local advisor to confirm supervision arrangements for the students e.g. frequency of meetings, record of meeting, split of responsibilities etc. Collaboration on the annual review process will be required.

Pastoral support and community

As is the case with other postgraduate ODL students, distance PhD students would

have access to University services such as the Disability Service, Counselling, Careers, the International Office, EUSA.

Students will be alerted to the ODL Student Resources wiki resources in Confluence - <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/OL/ODL+Student+Resources>

Community groups will be established in Moodle and Learn. Students will be encouraged to make use of University-based communication services such as Collaborate Ultra and MediaHopper, as well as social media.

Programme Structure

Courses

Students can take advantage of online research training opportunities are also available from the Institute of Academic Development. For example, they might begin with the interactive course in Learn entitled *Prepare for Doctoral Success*, and there are other courses on specific topics. If appropriate, students will also be alerted to online courses offered by the English Language Teaching Centre.

PhD (Education) by Distance students will be encouraged to participate in the Massive Open Online Course on Research Methods jointly run by teams from the MSc in Digital Education and the MSc in Digital Sociology. This is currently in preparation and going through course approval. A credit-based route through this course is possible, but would not be expected.

Other online resources

PhD (Education) by Distance students will be able to access the electronic library resources and support and home use software through University site licenses.

Any limitations on this would need to be checked with the Library and IS.

Study Plan

The student and supervisors will agree a study plan for the first year of the programme (ten week review) and added this to the student record. This plan should include the following:

- Revised research proposal
- Online ethics application
- Timeline for project and written work with deadlines

Supervision

PhD by Distance students will receive the same level of support and supervision as on-campus students, with two supervisors and regular meetings by Skype or other means. It is likely that there will be more email communication.

The frequency with which students will meet with their supervisors will be provisionally agreed at the initial meeting. This is likely to include at least one face-to-face supervision session each year with additional meetings via Skype (or equivalent) and communication on a regular basis. Meetings will be recorded in EUCLID.

Assessment & Progression

Annual Review Process

In the same way as on-campus students, distance students will be expected to have a first year Progression Board to allow them to move from their probationary period. This is expected to coincide with a visit to the University of Edinburgh; however, it will be possible to undertake the progression board via Skype, videoconference or alternative if necessary. They will be strongly advised to go through a second year review, again on a visit to the University. This will not be compulsory, however.

Examination

Students will have the option to return to Edinburgh for their oral examination. However, if necessary, either for the student or external examiner, it will be possible to conduct the viva via electronic means.

Risks

1. Student/supervisor not engaging

Records of communications will be kept in the usual way in EUCLID. The main addition recorded may be of email communication where synchronous meetings have not been possible. Students and supervisors can contact the postgraduate school and ultimately the Director of Postgraduate Studies if there are issues with supervision.

2. Students feeling isolated

Efforts will be made to establish an online community through VLE(s) and via social media. In addition, opportunities will be sought to bring on-campus and distance students together with appropriate events.

3. Problems with technology

There may be unanticipated problems with technology, perhaps relating to local conditions. It may be necessary to improvise, for example using mobile devices. Support can be sought from IS in such cases.

Resource Implications

For students

As well as funding implications, students will need to think about technology costs, hardware, software and bandwidth issues. They may need to think about costs associated with local access to resources such as additional library resources, equipment, training courses and community groups. There will also be costs associated with travel and accommodation on annual (at least) visits to Edinburgh.

For the University

University staff do tend to have good access to technology hardware, software and systems support, all of which will be essential for this to work and there may be a slight increase in requests for upgrades, technical support etc. There might also be the need for additional sites to be set up for the PhD (Education) distance students.

The proposal includes a suggestion that a local advisor might be recruited or even a local second supervisor. This would entail consideration of a stipend.

It is not envisaged that supervisors will generally go to the site of study. However,

there may be cases where this would be a good option (for example, if the student were ill or disabled), with associated travel and accommodation costs. This would be an exception; the other reason would be associated with a project requirement which would have been costed in.

Practical Requirements / Approval by College

Following School Board of Studies approval the documentation including the Draft Checklist for programme approval for a PhD by Distance (Appendix 1) and the Board of Studies minutes will be submitted to the College PG Office.

The documentation is considered by the Dean PGR and two members of CPGSC.

The Dean PGR and CPGSC members can recommend approval, revision or that the request is turned down.

The proposal is endorsed by CPGSC or returned to the School for revision.

If endorsed the College Postgraduate Office send a new programme request form to EUCLID support. This creates the new programme codes and the option for an application form on the PG prospectus page.

The PhD by Distance programme must be reviewed every two years.

The prospectus entries will include the following statement: 'PhD by Distance may be an option to suitably qualified applicants. Please visit the School website for further details'. The School website will contain information on the application process, opportunities for training and support, fees and other relevant matters.

Appendix 1. Applicant Admission Template (College Form)

This would be adapted for a School application form for PhD (Education) by Distance Learning

Programme applied for	
Full Time or Part Time	
School & Subject	
Proposed start date	
First Supervisor	
Second Supervisor	
Thesis Subject	
Previous Study	
Postgraduate Level study programme and outcome	
Was the candidate's previous study conducted in English?	
Does the candidate have experience of distance study?	
Has the candidate provided evidence of research experience; ability to work independently?	
Location of study	
Normal site of study	
Is this a HE institution or similar?	
What access will the applicant have to study facilities, a library?	
Does the applicant have access to the required technology (broadband, skype, etc.)?	
Are there any restrictions by funding bodies (or other considerations) on where the applicant can be resident?	
Have you discussed with the applicant the potential risks and characteristics of studying for a research degree at a distance?	
Facilities (in comparison to University of Edinburgh on campus study).	
Library facilities	
IT facilities	
Any research equipment needed	
Support at the site of study from	

other researchers/academics	
Access to any other academic input, such as seminars	
Email/skype	
Local advisor/mentor	
If there are any concerns over the study site, can these be addressed in other ways?	
How will the applicant be supported?	
How will the applicant be integrated into the School research/PG community?	
Study Plan (PT) (also provided by College)	To be completed by applicant in consultation with proposed supervisor
Year 1	
Any compulsory training programmes/time in Edinburgh	
10-week review	
Milestones to be achieved	
Arrangements for annual review	
Year 2	
Study visit to Edinburgh (if required)	
Milestones to be achieved	
Arrangements for annual review	
Year 3	
Study visit to Edinburgh (if required)	
Milestones to be achieved	
Arrangements for annual review	
Year 4	
Study visit to Edinburgh (if required)	
Milestones to be achieved	
Arrangements for annual review	
Year 5	
Study visit to Edinburgh (if required)	
Milestones to be achieved	
Arrangements for annual review	
Year 6	
Study visit to Edinburgh (if required)	
Milestones to be achieved	
submission of thesis	
Viva exam (where/how will this take place?)	

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Are there any potential visa implications? (if yes, see additional note on eligibility for student visitor visa)	
Once the student has accepted the offer, has an MoA/study contract been signed?	

Appendix 2 Draft Checklist for programme approval for a PhD by distance (College Form)

School requirements

In deciding whether to set up a distance learning programme, or accept students once a programme has been established, the School will have recourse to consider the following:

<p>Is a DL version of the programme available? (has the EUCLID new programme form been completed?)</p>	<p>This will be completed following agreement in principle by the School Postgraduate Studies Committee.</p>
<p>Availability of distance learning research module</p>	<p>A MOOC being developed for Research Methods by teams from the MSc in Digital Education and the MSc in Digital Sociology will be recommended. Applicants can apply to take the Digital Education route for credit, if places are available, but this would not be expected.</p>
<p>Availability of orientation programme</p>	<p>Students will be alerted to orientation materials and given the opportunity to attend any School induction events in person if they can. An event will be arranged via Collaborate Ultra (or equivalent) with an opportunity to meet the Director of Postgraduate Studies, members of the administration team from the Graduate School, and other relevant people. While supervisors might also attend that event, there will be a separate meeting with supervisors around the time of orientation.</p>
<p>Is any mandatory training available for distance students? If not, how will they access it?</p>	<p>There is no mandatory training for PhD students but students are recommended to take advantage of training opportunities available.</p> <p>IAD and English Language Teaching Centre both offer valuable online courses.</p>

Availability of training for potential supervisors of distance PhD students	Briefing will be available within the School.
Have potential supervisors undergone training in supervising distance learning students?	Some potential supervisors are already experienced in this, particularly from the MSc in Digital Education
Supervision arrangements, including arrangements for joint supervisor/local advisor	It is anticipated that there will be two supervisors, as usual. However, an option for involving a local advisor or supervisor is being raised with the SPGSC.
Is the technology available in the department to support supervising distance students?	The School provides a LEARN site for its Postgraduate Research Students and Moodle sites for its MSc ODL students. New sites or sections of sites could be provided on either or both of these platforms.
Is there a cohort, or likely to be a cohort in place?	There are a few students currently taking this route, all of whom have graduated from the MSc in Digital Education.
Is English language support available?	Applicants must satisfy the entry level of English for admission. The ELTC also provides a variety of online support for students whose first language is not English.
What are the arrangements for annual reviews?	Because of the College's wish to avoid a fully 'pure' distance qualification, it is anticipated that annual reviews will take place on campus. However, circumstances may mean that these will happen through videoconference or other means, as has already been the case on the EdD and also campus-based PhD on occasion.
What are the arrangements for study visits?	
By the applicants to Edinburgh?	Probably at least once a year and more frequently if required.
By the supervisor to the site of study?	Not usually, though exceptions might be envisaged.
If so, who is responsible for paying travel fees?	The student will be expected to cover their own travel costs.
Will this be written into the student contract/memorandum of agreement?	It will be made clear in a written document to students.

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How will any student issues related to the distance learning nature of the programme be addressed?	Advisors and Student Support staff will be on hand to help distance students.
Who has the authority to agree to offer a place to PhD study by DL?	The School Director of Postgraduate Studies (or delegate) after discussion with the proposed supervision team.