

02 February 2012

Request for Exemption from Regulation 7.4.2 (d) for PhD in Creative Writing

Purpose of Paper

1. APRC is asked to **consider**, and if thought appropriate, **approve** an exemption from Regulation 7.4.2 (d) for the proposed PhD in Creative Writing, in English, Drama, and American and Canadian Studies, in the College of Arts and Law.

Proposal

2. That the proposed programme is granted exemption from the following Regulation:

7.4.2 (d) The maximum number of words in the thesis or report, excluding supplementary material such as tables, diagrams, appendices, references, the bibliography and any bound published material is as follows:

<i>College</i>	<i>One year Mres</i>	<i>One year MPhil (Mode B)</i>	<i>One year MPhil (Mode A)</i>	<i>Two year MPhil</i>	<i>Profess- ional Doctorate</i>	<i>PhD</i>	<i>PhD with Integrated Study</i>	<i>Eng D; DDS; MD</i>
<i>Arts and Law; Social Sciences</i>	20,000	20,000	40,000	60,000	50,000	80,000	80,000	NA
<i>Dentistry, Health Sciences and Medicine; Life and Environment al Sciences; Engineering and Physical Sciences</i>	15,000	15,000	30,000	40,000	40,000	50,000	50,000	50,000

3. That instead, The PhD submission will usually entail:
 - (a) For prose: a creative document (50 – 80%) of either long-form prose/novel, or a collection of short-form prose/stories supported by a critical paper (20–50%) of a similar length to a critical literary PhD submission (around 80,000 to 100,000 words)
 - (b) For poetry: a creative document of collected poems or a single work with a developed critical thesis (around 50,000 words).
 - (c) For scriptwriting (for stage, film, performance): a single project or a collection of multiple shorts should be of comparable length and commitment as the

prose element, with a critical element between 20-50% of the overall submission.

(d) Other creative formats (for example a script for a graphic novel) will follow the poetry or prose model, with a 20–50% split for the critical element.

4. The submission will be of publishable quality (meaning both elements, creative and critical, will be ready for submission to an editor / agent).
5. The creative and critical elements will entail considered independent research and development. The creative document will be original work by the author of significant, publishable quality which demonstrates, as appropriate, an understanding of craft, genre, and form. The critical document will follow academic standards in terms of the presentation of a structured and developed argument, an awareness of context, and (potentially) discuss critical and creative processes.

Background and Consultation

6. The PhD in Creative Writing is a newly proposed programme. A Research Descriptor Title form is due to be submitted to PARC, but as the method of assessment is integral to the success of the PhD itself, exemption from the Regulation is being sought prior to the submission of the Research Descriptor Title form to PARC.
7. This request for exemption has been approved by the College of Arts and Law Director of Education, Steve Ellis.

Argument to Support Proposal

8. The word limit of 80,000 specified in the Regulations is not suitable for programmes which include novel writing. 40,000 to 67,000 for the creative project is more akin to a novella. The School have not received any enquiries from prospective students asking if they could write a novella.
9. Anything shorter than 70,000 words is not considered a novel by current market standards. Picador is one of the leading publishers of literary fiction in the UK, and in discussions with Paul Baggaley, the publisher at Picador, and editor Kris Doyle, it was advised that Picador's contracts define a novel as being a minimum of 87,000 words. In recent talks they have been absolutely clear that novellas are not marketable unless the author is firmly established with a secure readership (or they are exceptionally excited about the work - and this is very rare).
10. The School feel that they would not be preparing students for the professional arena, as publishers will not publish short pieces by untested and unproved novel writers, and agents typically won't handle shorter creative pieces by unproved writers.
11. There are a number of other Universities which offer 80,000 - 100,000 word limits. Specific examples include the University of East Anglia and the University of Exeter. The University of East Anglia runs the UK's most reputable and established creative writing programme.
12. Submitting a portion of a completed novel would not allow for proper assessment and compromises professional achievement (a portion of a project doesn't demonstrate appropriate achievement). Working on a part of a creative project is already achieved through MA level. There are also concerns that a University

that offers a partial project would not be taken seriously in the current market, particularly if post-graduate programmes increase in cost.

13. Application of the current word limit would privilege some forms of creative writing over others (students would be able to complete a screenplay, a series of poems and short stories ready for publication, but not a novel).

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