



The European Graduate School
EST. 1994

PhD Thesis Guidelines — Division of Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought

Students are given orientation and supervision by the Dean of the PACT Division at the outset of their study. They may continue with the supervisor of their MA thesis if they have gained their degree at the EGS, in the PAS or LMVT programs. All students will be encouraged, however, to select an advisor who is specially suited to oversee their doctoral research.

Monitoring of the supervisor/student relationship will be undertaken by the Dean and conducted on a yearly basis.

Students are qualified to proceed to the stage of writing their thesis after two sessions of seminar study at the EGS. This study will normally be undertaken in successive years (in Saas Fee, Malta, or both), though it is possible to complete it in a single year (students should contact admissions if they are interested in this possibility; it is not available to students on FSA loans). Leaves of absence between the first and second year of study are discouraged and require permission from the Dean.

By the end of their second session of study (normally their second year), students should identify a supervisor for their PhD thesis and begin discussions regarding their area of research and possible topic. Before the beginning of the third year of study, they will submit a proposal for a PhD thesis that must be accepted by their supervisor and filed with the Division administration. Students may seek a second supervisor who will provide inspiration and feedback (at the EGS, these have traditionally been called “muses”), but this individual will not have a formal role in the evaluation of the thesis or the procedures leading up to submission. Students are always encouraged to discuss their work with their peers, EGS fellows, or willing faculty.

The proposal should take a form that meets the expectations of the advisor (which should be discussed before submission). Normally, however, the thesis proposal will define the topic and provide a provisional approach to this topic in no less than a page. A student should show in their proposal that they have a sufficient grasp of their field to construct a question or problematic that will form the basis of an original contribution to this field of study. (“Field” is conceived here in broad terms since the EGS promotes work of a strong

cross-disciplinary character; where innovative cross-disciplinary research is undertaken, the student must define their domain of research and, in their thesis, show strong familiarity with the published research pertinent to it.)

At the outset of the thesis project, the student will establish with their supervisor an understanding concerning expectations, which includes a calendar (however approximate) for submission of work. It will be up to the student and supervisor to define what is required at each stage. The outline, for example, can take many forms; some supervisors will look for a standard outline of chapters, while others will look for a more expository document. Some supervisors may also request a literature review along with a relevant bibliography at the outset of the project. The understanding reached between the student and supervisor should be in some written form that can be kept as a record, but should not be conceived as a form of contract. It should be a working document serving to orient the progress of the student.

Students should understand that there is no fixed form of supervisory relation. Some supervisors will expect frequent contact (by Skype or other means) and have a firm idea of the appropriate steps leading to completion. Other supervisors will give greater independence to their students, requiring less in the way or frequency of reporting (though ongoing contact is expected and essential). Students may find that the most suitable thesis supervisor is not the most famous person in the field among the faculty present at the EGS. Students will have an opportunity in the course of their seminar work to determine the advisor who might best suit them.

The standard supervision period for the PhD thesis is two years. However, students have the option of taking a third year for the completion of their thesis. (They must pay a supervision fee for this third year, as in the first and second years.) The maximum time allowed for the completion of requirements leading to the PhD degree is seven years.

The thesis should be 250 to 300 pages in length (roughly 100,000 words), and include a table of contents, introduction, conclusion, and bibliography. It should conform to an established style (Chicago, MLA, etc.) of the student's preference, but it must adhere to that style in a consistent manner.

The work will show strong scholarly qualities in that it will provide a thorough definition of the field within which the research is situated (as indicated above) and the problematic under examination. It will cite the relevant primary materials and all prominent secondary materials relevant to this problematic.

It should be written in a scholarly fashion and of a quality and style that will make it publishable after editing designed to bring it into conformity with the expectations of a publisher in the chosen format (articles or monograph). The work presented in a PhD thesis must demonstrate that a student commands a field of research and is capable of situating their work within that field. The work itself should be of an original character and represent a contribution to the identified field. Any intentional plagiarism will constitute grounds for refusal of the thesis.

The PACT Division does not accept practice-based work for the PhD thesis. If a student wishes to make some artistic or literary work a part of their thesis, they must give it a proper critical presentation in scholarly form, treating in a substantive way the work's contribution or significance.

The supervisor will determine when the thesis is ready for submission and should signal this fact to the PACT administration. Doctoral defenses are normally held during EGS sessions, but can also be arranged in other locations and times with the agreement of the Dean if members of the committee are not available in Saas Fee or Malta, or the candidate is prevented from being there. The defense will be held within 7 months of the date of submission.

A PhD committee of three members will be present at the defense, with a member other than the supervisor serving as chair (the supervisor can be one of the three examiners). Examiners will hold PhDs and at least two of these must be affiliated with the EGS. The composition of the committee will be determined by the Dean. The defense may also be attended by observers (who will not participate in the defense unless invited to speak by the chair). The defense will last for at least one hour, but may be extended to a longer period at the discretion of the chair of the defense and in accordance with the availability of the committee members. The student should be prepared to give a 20 minute presentation of their work, describing the salient points of the argument and suggesting what they feel they have accomplished. Each examiner will have at least 10 minutes for questions and remarks.

The committee will determine at the conclusion of the defense (in private) whether the PhD thesis meets the required level of quality and whether honours are appropriate. The PACT Division of the EGS has three level of honours: Summa cum Laude, Magna cum Laude, and cum Laude. A committee may deem that a thesis is only of "passing" quality and not assign honours, or a committee may deem a thesis passable but requiring more attention (either in substance or in formal matters). In this case, a passing designation will be assigned provisionally, and a firm date for submission will be assigned by the examining committee.

Students will submit two bound copies of their completed thesis (in full form), at least 6 weeks in advance of the defense to the office of the European Graduate School, Division of Philosophy, Art, and Critical Thought, Alter Kehr 20, CH-3953, Leuk-Stadt. (For Fed Ex and other delivery systems, the phone number is 02704749917.) The student should also submit with these bound copies, on a separate sheet (in two copies), a one-page abstract, as well as an extra sheet with the following signed and dated Affidavit: "I hereby attest that my PhD thesis, entitled "XYZ" was written independently, that the text does not infringe in any copyright laws and is free of plagiarism, and that editorial and other personal assistance is acknowledged by name."

Students will also send a bound copy of their thesis to their supervisor as well as a final electronic copy. An electronic copy must also be sent to: admissions@egs.edu.