

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE & CELTIC**

**MPhil in  
Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic  
Course Handbook**

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## Members of the ASNC Department

The following members of staff teach the MPhil course in Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic:

*Dr Alison Bonner* (Dept of ASNC): Brittonic and Gaelic history; also Insular Latin language and literature. [acb64@cam.ac.uk](mailto:acb64@cam.ac.uk)

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*Professor Máire Ní Mhaonaigh* (St John's College): medieval Irish language and literature; medieval Welsh language and literature; Celtic philology. [mnm21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mnm21@cam.ac.uk)

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*Dr Judy Quinn* (Newnham College): Old Norse language and literature; Old English literature. [jeq20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jeq20@cam.ac.uk) [**MPhil Convenor, Michaelmas and Easter Terms 2021-22**] [*on leave in Lent Term 2022*]

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The Departmental Secretary is Lauren Lalej and can be contacted at [office@asnc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:office@asnc.cam.ac.uk).

The ASNC Departmental office is in the English Faculty, room FR26; telephone: 01223 335079.

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## Introduction

The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (known as ASNC) is dedicated to the study of the history, languages, literatures and material culture of the different peoples of Britain and Ireland, Brittany and Scandinavia in the earlier Middle Ages; the MPhil provides a one-year course of study in the scholarly methods and disciplines relevant to those subjects. The course allows candidates the possibility of achieving an understanding of early Insular culture as a whole, while at the same time specialising in aspects of particular interest, whether historical, palaeographical, literary or linguistic (including the languages Insular Latin, Old English, Old Norse, Medieval Welsh, Medieval Irish, Middle Breton and Middle Cornish).

Teaching for the course consists of individual supervision, seminars and classes. Each MPhil student has an allocated supervisor who is responsible for planning the research and courses to be followed during the year; other senior members of the Department are also available for consultation. Instruction is given in scholarly methods in general, as well as in the particular fields of the candidate's interests.

Flexibility, and the possibility of tailoring supervision and instruction to individual needs, are the Department's priorities. The University Library's extensive collections of manuscripts and printed books provide a rich background for research, augmented by the ASNC section of the English Faculty Library, and many special holdings in College libraries. In addition to following the seminars and classes specified for the course, MPhil candidates also have the opportunity of attending the Department's lectures, seminars and classes relevant to their individual interests.

## The formal structure of the MPhil course

The assessment of the MPhil comprises the following elements:

Review of Scholarship Essay	10%	due end of Michaelmas term
Written Exercise 1	15%	examined end of Lent term
Written Exercise 2	15%	examined end of Lent term
Take-home Essay on seminar texts	10%	due beginning of Easter term
Dissertation	50%	due end of Easter term

All elements are submitted anonymously (a candidate number will be assigned to each MPhil student at the start of the year) and assessed by two examiners; the whole course is moderated by an External Examiner. In order to pass the MPhil, candidates must achieve an overall mark of 60; it is a pass/fail degree but a mark over 75 is considered as distinction-level. A candidate whose failure in one of the elements (review of scholarship, written exercises, or take-home essay) is marginal may be allowed to go on to submit a dissertation if the Department's Graduate Sub-Committee considers it possible that that candidate will pass on aggregate. Such a candidate will be obliged to attend a *viva* at the end of the year. If failure in exercises or essays is more than marginal, or if there is failure in more than one element, candidates will not normally be allowed to continue with the course.

Those MPhil candidates who wish to go on to a Cambridge PhD will be required to achieve an overall mark of 70 or more, including a mark of not less than 70 on the dissertation. They will also be obliged to attend a *viva* at the end of the MPhil year, after they have submitted their dissertation. Procedures to be followed by MPhil students wishing to apply to continue to a Cambridge PhD are set out on the relevant section of the University of Cambridge website:

([www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/prospec/apply/continuation/](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/prospec/apply/continuation/)).

MPhil candidates should keep in mind that all marks are provisional until the final Examiners' Meeting, and also that the External Examiner will review all the assessed work.

## **The components of the MPhil: Review of Scholarship**

You will meet your appointed supervisor in the first week of Michaelmas term to confirm the topic for the Dissertation which will form the main component of the MPhil, and to plan the stages of your research and drafting. The first assessed item of course-work, the Review of Scholarship Essay, submitted at the end of the first term, is aimed at laying the groundwork for that dissertation. The essay should not exceed 5,000 words in length (including footnotes but excluding bibliography) and will demonstrate your familiarity with the scholarship in the area of your dissertation topic and will situate your own projected research in relation to existing knowledge and debates. Although the structure of a review essay and its relationship to the content of the projected dissertation will vary greatly according to topic, the review should be thought of as primarily an assessment of the published material in your field rather than a detailed account of your own fresh ideas about the topic, which you will naturally want to save up for the dissertation. In order to encourage the habit of producing good quality writing well before the deadline, you will be required to give your supervisor a draft of your Review two weeks before it is formally due.

This Michaelmas term exercise also serves to alert MPhil students to the Department's expectation of a high standard of accuracy in referencing and of clarity of expression in the work of its graduates, and essays will be assessed on this as well as on their content and structure. You are required to choose and follow one of three possible style-guides for the referencing in this first piece of work: either ASNC's own style-sheet (available from the departmental Moodle site), the style-guide of the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA), or the style-guide of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Having chosen your style, the skill lies in carrying it out consistently and applying its principles with common-sense throughout the essay.

Since it is thus in every regard preparatory to the final dissertation, you will receive detailed written feedback from the examiners as soon as the Review essay has been assessed.

## **The components of the MPhil: Written Exercises**

30% of the ASNC MPhil mark derives from assessment of the two core scholarly skills which you have chosen to pursue, tested by means of Written Exercises. These exercises take the form of three-hour examinations taken at the end of the

Lent Term (mid-March).<sup>1</sup> You will receive feedback on the Written Exercises at the beginning of Easter Term. These exercises are designed to broaden research skills and assess students' acquisition of or improvement in a language or other subject taught within the Department, after two terms' study, and can be beginner-, intermediate- or advanced-level, as appropriate. At the first meeting with your supervisor at the start of the year, you should discuss how you might broaden your skills and range of expertise with a view to identifying specific areas of study for your two Written Exercises. The teaching in languages, palaeography and historical subjects is provided through the classes and lectures provided for Parts I and II of the Undergraduate Tripos, listed below (see the 'current undergraduates' section of the ASNC website for more detailed descriptions of each course). All teaching commences at the start of full Michaelmas term, usually the first or second week in October, and you are expected to attend and prepare work for all classes and lectures in your two chosen subjects for the sixteen weeks of both Michaelmas and Lent terms.

A preliminary indication of the two subjects in which you wish to take Written Exercises is required in Michaelmas Term, with confirmation in Lent Term.

### **Taught courses available to MPhil students**

MPhil students may attend all the Department's undergraduate courses of formal lectures, classes and seminars. Since these include courses at first-, second-, and third-year levels, you can either improve upon knowledge and skills already acquired during your undergraduate courses or acquire a new area of expertise which will be useful to your future studies.

#### ***ASNC Tripos Part I (and Prelim)***

The Department offers courses in the following areas each year:

1. England before the Conquest.
2. Scandinavian history of the Viking Age.
3. The Brittonic-speaking peoples from the fourth century to the twelfth.
4. The Gaelic-speaking peoples from the fourth century to the twelfth.
5. Old English language and literature.
6. Old Norse language and literature.
7. Medieval Welsh language and literature.
8. Medieval Irish language and literature.
9. Insular Latin language and literature.
10. Palaeography and codicology.

These courses are general introductions and assume no prior knowledge. All classes, and a few lectures, are specified as being for first- or second-year undergraduates, but most lectures run on a two-year cycle and are for both.<sup>2</sup> MPhil students wishing to take a beginner-level Written Exercise should go to the classes and/or lectures for the relevant course attended by first-year undergraduates (i.e. those undergraduates preparing for year 1 exams, a.k.a.

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<sup>1</sup> Past years' exam papers may be consulted on the departmental Moodle site available via the website at <<http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk>>.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that a consequence of the two-year lecture cycle is that not all subjects relevant to the scope of each paper will be taught in lectures every year. If you are in any doubt as to the content of this year's lectures, and their relevance to your work, then please discuss this with the lecturer concerned.

Prelims); and those opting for an intermediate-level Written Exercise should go to the classes and/or lectures attended by second-year undergraduates (i.e. those preparing for year 2 exams, a.k.a. Part I).

Please note that it is **not** possible for MPhil students to take written exercises in the 'borrowed papers' taught by other departments and offered at undergraduate level only.

### *ASNC Tripos Part II*

Part II is the third and final year of the undergraduate course and involves a range of papers which in some way or another take further the knowledge and skills acquired in the corresponding Part I courses. The teaching is generally by seminars and classes, and some lectures; in all cases the students will be expected to give brief oral presentations in class reporting on the results of their own reading.

1. A subject in Anglo-Saxon history (*currently* Saints and Farmers: Economy and Society c. 950-1050).
2. A subject in Scandinavian history of the Viking Age (*currently* Rethinking the Viking Age).
3. A subject in the history of the Celtic-speaking world (*currently* Sea-Kings and the Celtic-speaking world, c. 1014-1164).
4. A subject in ASNC History (*currently* Law and Lawlessness).
5. A subject in Old English literature (*currently* Beowulf).
6. Advanced Medieval Scandinavian language and literature.
7. Advanced Medieval Welsh language and literature.
8. Advanced Medieval Irish language and literature.
9. A subject in Insular Latin literature (*currently* Writing Women).
10. Germanic philology.
11. Celtic philology.
12. Textual criticism.

### **The components of the MPhil: the Text Seminar & THE**

In addition to classes and lectures in the subjects which you have chosen for your Written Exercises, you are required to attend the weekly MPhil seminar in *all three terms*. Each week, students will be required to read (in translation) and discuss a sequence of prescribed texts, along with recommended secondary reading. These texts are a selection of key Latin and vernacular texts chosen from all the fields within ASNC; also included are earlier works that provide the intellectual background to the medieval world. **These seminars are compulsory** and you are expected to have read the assigned texts and to come prepared to participate in discussion. Suggested points of discussion and further reading will be available on the MPhil 'Moodle' site (go to <https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/login/index.php>, login with your Raven password and choose 'MPhil Text Seminars'). The seminars are led by senior members of the Department; hence the format of discussion will vary slightly from seminar to seminar, giving you the experience of a range of different styles of engagement with texts and textual culture at this level. In important ways it is the MPhil students who provide the continuity from week to week and the onus is on you to make active connections and comparisons between the texts you encounter.

Assessment of this part of the course takes the form of a Take-home Essay not exceeding 3,000 words, on a topic chosen from a list made available for collection from the Departmental Secretary (and by email) from noon on the first Thursday of Easter Full Term. Essays are then due for submission the following Monday. The topics are broad and intended to encourage comparative discussion, and candidates are required to write about at least three of the texts read during the year's seminars including at least one each from lists A (*Psalms*; *The Aeneid*; Orosius, *History against the Pagans*; Dhuoda, *Handbook*; and *The Passion of Agnes* or *Life of St Antony*) and B (Gildas, *On the Ruin of Britain*; *Ynglinga saga*; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (to 892); *Beowulf*; *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* (chs 1-30 and 399); Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* (books III-V); Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*; *Hrafnkels saga*; *Táin Bó Cúailnge*; *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*). Feedback will be provided on these essays.

In the Easter Term, the MPhil seminar takes the form of a **Research Forum**, in which all students in turn give a short presentation on the subject of their dissertation research. Attendance at all seminars is again **compulsory**.

## The components of the MPhil: the Dissertation

The main component of the MPhil course is a Dissertation of between 10,000 and 15,000 words in length (including tables and footnotes, but excluding bibliography), written in accordance with an approved style-sheet on a subject within the field of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic.<sup>3</sup> The Dissertation accounts for 50% of the final mark for the course and you are expected to be working on it throughout the year, alongside the other elements of the course. You will be required to give a preliminary indication of your Dissertation topic at the beginning of the year, and to confirm the topic and the title of the Dissertation during Lent Term (including a summary of or detailed plan for the Dissertation, of about 500 words).<sup>4</sup> Thereafter substantial changes to the title may be made only after consultation with the MPhil Convenor. During the Easter Term, all MPhils give a short presentation on their dissertation topic to the weekly MPhil Research Forum, attended by all students and the MPhil Convenor, and by MPhil supervisors. You will be required to hand in a full draft of your Dissertation (and a draft of your abstract; see below) to your supervisor three weeks before the formal deadline in order to allow time for feedback and revision.

### *Referring to your Review of Scholarship essay in your dissertation*

Since the Review of Scholarship Essay will necessarily have laid the groundwork for the Dissertation, it may very well be that you will wish to refer back to it within the Dissertation (though obviously, the Dissertation cannot substantially repeat the content of the Review Essay). In order to maintain candidate anonymity as far as possible, it is best to refer to the Essay in general terms, perhaps summarising its findings ('in my Review of Scholarship Essay, I discussed X and

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that this word-limit, between 10,000 and 15,000, is different from the one set for the English MPhils; so the 12,000-15,000 limit stated in the Faculty's *Green Book* refers only to the latter.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that students wishing to work on a subject similar to that of their undergraduate dissertation will be asked to show their supervisors, at the beginning of the course, copies of any relevant previous work.

Y') rather than treating your Essay as a bibliographical item and citing it in a footnote.

#### *Applying to include an appendix which exceeds the word limit*

Please note that wherever material not in English is included in a Dissertation, an English translation should be provided, but does not need to be included in the word-count. Applications to include an appendix which exceeds the word limit may also be made. Such appendices would normally consist of editions and/or translations of texts discussed in the Dissertation, or bodies of data gathered in the course of research for the Dissertation. In such cases, students should submit an application to the MPhil Convenor, for consideration by the ASNC Graduate Sub-committee. The application should consist of a fully argued case, supported by a detailed calculation of the number of extra words to be included in the appendix, and should be supported by a letter from the supervisor.

#### *Notes on submitting your Dissertation*

As is the case for all MPhil written work, for the Dissertation you are free to choose between the ASNC style-sheet, the MHRA style-guide, or that of the MLA. You must indicate which style you are following and ensure that you are consistent in your referencing and punctuation; in particulars not documented in the style-guide which you have chosen (since no such guide can possibly cover every eventuality) you should try to develop a consistent practice, footnoting if necessary the reasons for your decisions. Remember, too, to number the pages of your Dissertation and to proof-read it carefully before submission.

You are required to submit THREE soft-bound copies of your completed Dissertation, printed out on A4 paper with the text double-spaced or one-and-a-half-spaced at 12 pt. Double-sided print-out is acceptable, but take care to leave sufficient margins to accommodate the soft-binding (spiral-binding is the most efficient method). Please note that the third copy of the Dissertation is for the External Examiner, and is a particular requirement of the ASNC MPhil. Should changes to these submission specifications be necessary due to Covid-19 restrictions being implemented (such as online submission instead of hard copies), you will be notified in advance.

With each copy of your dissertation, on a separate page, you must include an **abstract**, summarizing the object, scope and conclusions of your dissertation, in **no more than 250 words**.

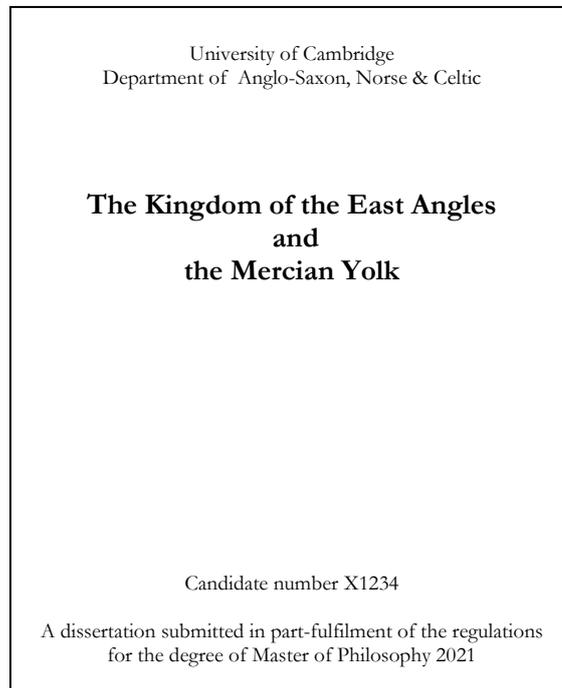
With each copy of your dissertation, on a separate page, you must also include the following two declarations:

I declare that this submission is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography. The style I have followed is that of the ASNC Dept / MHRA / MLA [*stating whichever is appropriate*].

I declare that the word count for this submission, including quotations

and footnotes, but excluding the bibliography is 00000 words.

Below is a specimen title-page for a Dissertation, as guidance for what should be included:



Please do NOT put your name or college, or the name of your supervisor, on the title page, using only the candidate number issued to you at the start of the academic year. Beware, also, of using automated headers or footers that include your name or initial in the Dissertation itself. When submitting the Dissertation you must also hand in one copy of a completed **dissertation cover sheet** which will be sent to you by the Degree Committee (but which can also be downloaded from the MPhil section of the ASNC Moodle site). The cover sheet is a requirement of the Board of Graduate Studies, but will be separated from your completed dissertation before it is handed to your examiners, in order to maintain anonymity.

At the same time as submitting hard copies of your Dissertation by the specified deadline, you are also required to submit an electronic version, as a single word-processed file (and not a pdf). The electronic file, required in the event of queries about word-count or possible plagiarism, should be sent as a clearly labelled email attachment (or delivered on disk or memory stick) to the ASNC Departmental Secretary (NOT to the Secretary of the Degree Committee) on the same day that you submit. The file will be held by her alone, until the examination process has been completed, when it will be deleted.

Work that does not comply with these stipulations will be penalised. False declarations of length will attract severe penalties, as will any work identified as containing plagiarised content. Late submission of the Dissertation will not be accepted without prior authorisation from the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English, via the ASNC MPhil Convenor. Authorisation will be granted only in cases of grave cause, and should be sought through your College Tutor rather than your MPhil supervisor.

## The MPhil examination process

Like the other elements of the course, the Dissertation is assessed independently by two examiners, who also discuss the final agreed mark for the dissertation with the External Examiner, who has a moderating role. The External Examiner can also be asked to adjudicate in cases where there is a wide discrepancy between the independent marks of the two examiners for earlier pieces of course-work, and before the final Examiners' meeting the External looks over all the year's submitted work. Accordingly, although you will be informed of the mark for each element as it is assessed during the year, those marks should be regarded as provisional until the External Examiner has seen the full mark sheet.

The examination of the MPhil may include a *viva voce* examination on the Dissertation, which is compulsory for those who have been accepted to continue to PhD at Cambridge, and for any candidate with a marginal fail mark in one item of course-work; a *viva* for other candidates is at the discretion of the examiners. In addition any MPhil candidate may request an optional *viva*, but should give notice of that request by the same deadline as that for submission of the Dissertation; in making such a request, candidates should bear in mind that a *viva* may serve both to raise and possibly also to *lower* the final agreed mark on a Dissertation. You will be advised of timetabling for the vivas in the Easter Term, but **it is important that you do not arrange to depart from Cambridge until the examination process is completed and/or it is certain that you will not be required to attend a *viva*.**

The vivas will be followed by a final examiners' meeting, after which the marks for the course will be accepted first by the ASNC Graduate Sub-committee, then the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English, and finally by the Board of Graduate Studies, which will then issue formal written confirmation of the degree; the Degree Committee also sends a breakdown of course-work marks and the examiners' reports on the Dissertation (usually in the second week of July). You will only formally have gained the MPhil degree once you have attended a graduation ceremony in the University's Senate House. Such ceremonies, so-called Congregations of the Regent House, occur every few months: there is always a Congregation in mid-July and examining is usually complete in time for successful MPhils to graduate then if they wish, either in person or *in absentia* (please note that graduation is organised through your College rather than by the Department).

## Feedback on the MPhil

ASNC uses a system of Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires (TEQs) for all the undergraduate courses it offers, and these are given out in the seventh week of Michaelmas and Lent Terms, so that you will have a chance to give feedback on that part of the Department's teaching. In addition, evaluation of the MPhil text-seminar is sought at the end of Lent Term (by means of a TEQ), and you will be asked to provide written feedback on the course in general and on the supervision you have received at the end of the year. At the final MPhil examiners' meeting, the MPhil Convenor reports on all the feedback received. The MPhils also elect one of their number as a representative, who attends the termly meeting of the Graduate Joint Academic Committee; the minutes of the GJAC meetings go to

the termly Departmental meeting (which the MPhil and PhD reps also attend). Thus the GJAC serves as another forum in which students can pass on feedback.

## **Life as a graduate in ASNC**

### *Undergraduate students*

The Department normally has about 80 undergraduates at any one time, spread across the various colleges of the University; these provide the mainstay of the Department's lively social life, and there is frequent interaction between the undergraduates, graduates and senior members, on an informal as well as a formal basis. The students organise an email list for news and discussions of interest to ASNaCs, and there is a regular rendezvous at a local pub on Friday evenings. There is also a student-run ASNC Society (for details of its officers see <[www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/asnc-soc.htm](http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/asnc-soc.htm)>) which graduates are welcome to join, and which organises weekly lunches and other social events.

### *Graduate students in the Department*

At any one time there may be up to 30 graduate students in the Department doing research for an MPhil or a PhD degree on a subject which falls within the scope of the Department's interests. PhD students are often involved in teaching, whether lecturing, giving classes, or supervising. Research students contribute significantly to the intellectual and social life of the Department, and MPhil students are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in ASNC activities during their year of study at Cambridge. One MPhil student is elected each year to be a representative on the Department's Graduate Joint Academic Committee, which meets once a term and is another means by which MPhils may provide feedback on the course.

### *Departmental Seminars*

Students taking the MPhil course are expected to attend the Department's Graduate Seminar, which is held on several Monday afternoons during Michaelmas and Lent Terms, and consists of a mix of guest lectures by distinguished scholars visiting Cambridge, as well as papers by ASNC's doctoral students. In Easter Term, the Department holds a weekly Graduate Symposium at which all graduate students are invited to give short presentations, grouped into panels which devise their own theme for the session and appoint a chair and respondents. MPhil students are expected to attend these as well, and may offer papers or act as respondents if they wish (but are not obliged to do so). The Department also holds two annual named guest-lectures, given by renowned scholars in the various fields encompassed by ASNC, and held on the last Thursday of Michaelmas and Lent Full Terms (the Quiggin and H. M. Chadwick lectures respectively).

### *Other lecture courses*

In addition to the courses which you have chosen for your Written Exercises, you are welcome at any other undergraduate lecture-courses within ASNC. All members of the University are also entitled to attend the extensive range of lectures available in Faculties other than their own, for example Classics, Archaeology & Anthropology, English, History, and Modern & Medieval Languages. For information about these, you are advised to consult the University lecture list available online (<<http://timetables.caret.cam.ac.uk>>).

*General guidance on life in Cambridge*

The Faculty of English produces a booklet known as the Green Book, which offers a wide variety of useful advice aimed specifically at the students enrolled on the various MPhil courses that run within the Faculty, including ASNC. A link to the booklet can be found on the MPhil area of the ASNC website. Please be aware, however, that the section on how to submit your dissertation in that booklet does NOT supersede the information supplied in this handbook.