

RCPI - Part II MFPHMI Protocols - Guidelines for Candidates and Assessors

The following guidelines may be used to guide candidates in developing, and assessors in assessing, a protocol for a Part II thesis or report

Part II Exam Regulations

The Regulations state that: 'Candidates are strongly advised to submit a protocol of the project(s) for approval by the Education and Examination Committee of the Faculty. If the proposed work is considered suitable for the Part II Examination, the Education and Examination Committee will appoint a supervisor for candidates who are based in Ireland.' It is **not compulsory** for a candidate to submit a protocol. A completed thesis can be submitted for Part II **without** going through the Education and Examination Committee.

Approval of the protocol by the assessor/s and subsequent approval by the Education and Examination Committee does not guarantee that the candidate will pass Part II. This is stated in the follow-up letter from the Education and Examination Committee to candidates when informing them of the appointment of a supervisor.

The Assessment Process

The process of deeming a submitted protocol appropriate or otherwise includes

- i. Selection of independent assessor/s by Education and Examination Committee
- ii. Protocol assessment by assessor/s
- iii. Forwarding of report by assessor/s to Education and Examination Committee
- iv. Consideration of assessor/s report/s and of protocol by the Committee
- v. Decision – with nomination of supervisor if protocol deemed likely to lead to a successful Part II thesis or report

Timeframes

Education & Examination Committee meeting dates are posted on the RCPI Website at the start of each year. The Committee meets 4-5 times a year.

- Where a candidate submits a protocol to the Education and Examination Committee more than 4 weeks prior to its next meeting
 - Assessors are selected before the meeting. Each is contacted by the Committee Secretary and, following agreement, an Assessor's Report is requested of each for the next Committee meeting

- Where a protocol is submitted to the Education and Examination Committee within 4 weeks of its next meeting
 - The issue is raised at the meeting
 - Assessors are selected at the meeting. Each is contacted by the Committee Secretary and, following agreement, an Assessor's Report is requested of each for the next Committee meeting

- The final recommendation rests with the Education and Examination Committee

- Any subsequent query that a candidate may have should be forwarded by letter or e-mail (not by telephone) to the Secretary of the Education and Examination Committee

Protocol Preparation

Candidates are advised to identify potential projects by reading and consulting widely. In defining the research issues, candidates should consider the following questions:

- What do you want to do?
- Why is this work important?
- What have you already done?
- What has already been done locally / regionally / nationally / internationally? (Contact key people / potential advisors)
- How are you going to do this work?

Protocol Format

A Thesis submitted for Part II MFPHMI may be a single piece of research or two pieces of research. A separate protocol should be submitted for each proposed project.

The protocol should clearly present the question to be answered. It should describe the public health importance of the issue, the potential contribution of the study to addressing this issue, the feasibility of the proposed work and its originality. A conceptual framework, including referenced literature and theory, should put the proposed work in context. The document should refer to potential multidisciplinary collaboration and the partners to be involved.

The following format is recommended *as a guide* for all protocols, whether a single thesis or otherwise. It is intended to summarise the main points to be considered and questions to be answered when preparing a research protocol.

- Use headings 1-9 below

- Include references
- 800-1200 words (excluding references)
- Include word count
- Text at least 12 point type
- Use one and a half line spacing

1. Introduction & Background

- Introduction should include an outline of the context and rationale for the proposed work (with key references)
- What will be the potential value of the findings and public health impact?

2. Aims & Objectives

- **Aim** should be a succinct statement on the overall research purpose
- **Objectives** should describe the specific tasks to be completed to answer the research question

3. Methods

- Describe study design (e.g. observational, cohort or case control study)
- State sample size
- Outline data collection methods (draft instrument may be included)
- Data processing / management
- Expert statistical advice should be sought at an early stage

4. Results

- Methods of data analysis should be stated for both quantitative and qualitative research

5. Feasibility / Time

- The feasibility of actually conducting the research project should be considered (time for research, ethics committee approval, fieldwork etc)
- Include timeframe for completing the project (Gantt chart useful)

6. Cost

- Refer to potential costs of study including human (e.g. fieldworkers, travel, data entry and analysis, clerical support), equipment (e.g. software, lab, various supplies etc), printing, post etc.
- Sponsors, if any, should be mentioned

7. Research Ethics

- Ethical issues such as data protection and confidentiality will need consideration
- It is necessary to submit the Part II MFPHMI protocol to a research ethics committee for approval prior to commencing research (such approval is required as part of the examination process)
- The Faculty has its own Research Ethics Committee to which application may be made or an alternative may be chosen
- If the proposed study involves data acquired in a health service setting, some managers or clinicians may require that approval also be obtained from a local research ethics committee

8. Potential Value of Project

- Discussion should refer to the potential public health value of the study
- If work had been carried out on the topic of the thesis for the purpose of any course of study in the past, it is important to clearly state the further substantial original research that is proposed

9. Declaration

- If the proposed research is to be carried out jointly, the candidate's role should be clearly described. The candidate will be required to sign a declaration when applying for the Part II, stating how much of the work is the candidate's own.