

Appendix VII - Guidelines for ISP evaluations of English-language PhD Programme in Media and Communication Studies

The ISPs are evaluated on the basis of a three-category system, by supervisors and the Subject Area Board (SAB):

- A = the requirements of the ISP are fulfilled;
- B = the requirements of the ISP are partially not fulfilled;
- C = the requirements of the ISP are not fulfilled.

In many cases, a B means that there has not been sufficient progress with the PhD work, while a C means that the PhD study has to end. In response to a B evaluation, sanctions are possible, namely reducing the stipend (a maximum of a 50% reduction).

Although every PhD project is different, and problems that may occur are also different, these guidelines describe a policy to handle these problems, in order to calibrate the SAB responses and protect the fairness of the decisions (by avoiding too different responses to particular cases). Nevertheless, the SAB should always take the context of each case into consideration. One particular scenario occurs when an ISP is evaluated as not having been completely fulfilled, but there is evidence that this was caused by circumstances outside the control of the student. In this case, the SAB can still decide on an A evaluation.

Furthermore, the assumption is that the supervisor has already attempted to remedy the problems with the PhD student, before deciding on a B (or C). In this sense, a B evaluation is already a second phase. It is important to always keep in mind that a B evaluation is an indicator of serious problems with a PhD project; all PhD projects have problems, and a B evaluation should never be given lightly.

When an ISP is evaluated by the SAB with a B, the SAB will also decide how the insufficiency/ies should be remedied and within which time frame, in consultation with the supervisor. These required remediations will become a part of the ISP. When these remediations have been implemented, the student can request the SAB, at least three months after the decision and only during the academic year, to reconsider any sanctions that the SAB has imposed.

If a B evaluation is given by the SAB, then the following policy will be implemented, keeping in mind that the SAB can make exceptions:

- First time B: reduction of stipend by 10%. This is seen as a warning, and should still allow the PhD student to continue. After at least 3 months and only during the academic year, the guarantor (mandated by the SAB) can re-evaluate the stipend reduction, on the basis of a motivated request from the PhD student, supported by a letter of the supervisor confirming that the insufficiencies of the ISP were remedied and the ISP obligations have been fulfilled.
- Second time B: reduction of stipend by 50%. This is a final warning for a student. Also here, there will be a re-evaluation possible (after at least 3 months, and only during the academic year), as described in the previous paragraph. If a B is given for a second time, even when the first reduction to 10% was nullified in the re-evaluation, the stipend reduction will be 50%.
- Third time B: Transformation of B evaluation into a C evaluation, and termination of the PhD project.

In all cases, the supervisor and SAB can also decide to immediately give a C. It is thus not a necessity to give two Bs, before reverting to a C.