

Confirmation Report

Research Plan

Writing Top Tips

Session 3

Schedule

13:00 – 14:00	Intro to the confirmation process	Isla Myers-Smith
14:00 – 15:00	Top tips for scientific writing - Confirmation reports, proposals, papers and an intro to the peer review and publication/grant funding process	Isla Myers-Smith
15:00 – 17:00	Intro to mixed-effects modelling (repeat of Introduction to Version Control for PGR students who are interested)	Coding Club

PhD Requirements

- a) The candidate must have demonstrated by the presentation of a thesis and by performance at an oral examination (unless, due to exceptional circumstances, this is waived) that the candidate is capable of pursuing original research in the field of study, relating particular research projects to the general body of knowledge in the field, and presenting the results of the research in a critical and scholarly way.
- b) The thesis must be an original work making a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study and containing material worthy of publication; show adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature; show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the candidate's work and that of other scholars in the same general field; contain material which presents a unified body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of three years postgraduate study and research; be satisfactory in its literary presentation; give full and adequate references and have a coherent structure understandable to a scholar in the same general field with regard to intentions, background, methods and conclusions.
- c) Within the College of Science and Engineering the PhD thesis must not exceed 70,000 words. In exceptional circumstances, on the recommendation of the supervisor, permission may be granted by the College to exceed the stated length on the ground that such extension is required for adequate treatment of the thesis topic.

MRes Requirements

Varies by programme – check with your course.

Grounds for award of a PhD

The candidate must have demonstrated that they are capable of:

- pursuing original research in the field of study
- relating particular research projects to the general body of knowledge in the field
- presenting the results of the research in a critical and scholarly way

Grounds for award of a PhD

A dissertation must be:

- be an original work
- make a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study
- contain material worthy of publication
- show adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature
- show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the candidates work and that of other scholars in the same general field
- contain material which presents a unified body of work such as could reasonably be achieved on the basis of three years postgraduate study and research
- be satisfactory in its literary presentation
- give full and adequate references
- have a coherent structure understandable to a scholar in the same general field with regard to intentions, background, methods and conclusions

Grounds for award of a MScR

The candidate must:

- have completed research training
- have acquired an advanced level of knowledge and understanding in the field of study
- be capable of undertaking independent research
- written work (30,000 words max. including thesis and assessed work) must be satisfactory in its literary presentation and include adequate references

Intro to the confirmation process

- Plan your PhD with your supervisor
- Conduct a literature review – part of your research plan
- Put together your confirmation report
- Present a talk
- Discuss your confirmation report with a panel

MRes Students

- Plan your MSc research and identify a supervisor
- Conduct a literature review – part of your research plan
- Put together your MRes proposal
- Conduct your research
- Write and present your dissertation

What is the point of the confirmation process?

 **Crime Muse** @katejmclachlan · 30 May

I had my **Confirmation** of Candidature **Panel** on Monday & my proposal was deemed too ambitious. 'Won't be too much work' to pare back. Since then I've made muesli bars, apricot bliss balls, chocolate custard & currently planning macadamia white choc cookies. #phdlife #phdchat

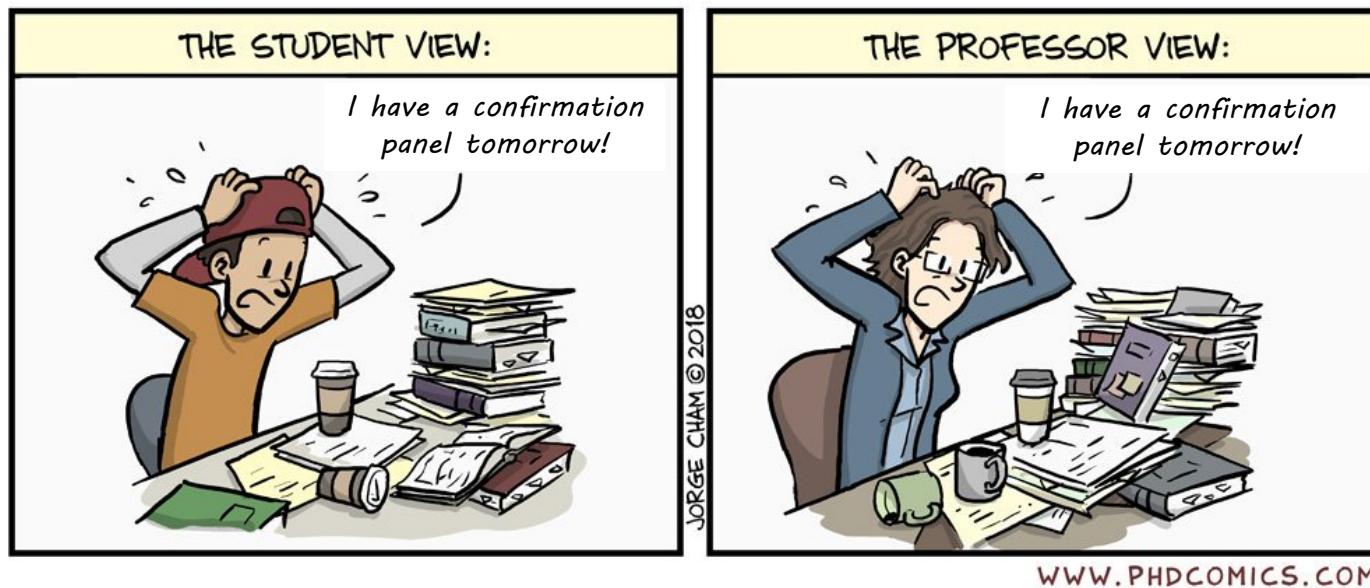


GIF

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Show this thread

What is the point of the confirmation process?



Confirmation Process

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/pgr-handbookstudents/7-training-progress-review-and-monitoring>

7.4 Confirmation Report: Months 6-9 for Full Time Student, Months 12-18 for Part Time Student

7.4.1 Aims of PhD Confirmation

Although there is no formal change of degree status during Year 1, it is essential to review and 'examine' progress of students normally within the first 6–9 months for Full-Time students (12-18 months for Part-Time students). The purpose of Confirmation is to check that: (a) the student is capable; (b) the project is working and feasible; (c) the supervisory team is adequate; (d) the necessary resources are available.

Students in the ESRC 1+3 model (Masters + 3 year PhD) will have two progression points: (1) their satisfactory completion of the Masters will confirm progress to PhD; (2) during Year 1 of the (+3) PhD they will undergo Confirmation in line with School policy and as specified below.

Confirmation involves three components: the Confirmation Presentation, the written Confirmation Report, and the Confirmation Panel.

PGR offers workshops for Year 1 PhD students to provide guidance and advice in preparing for Confirmation. These are usually run in conjunction with the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

7.4.2 Confirmation Presentation (Student responsibility)

- A short (normally 10-15 minutes) illustrated presentation outlining the research proposed, followed by 5 minutes of questions.
- Normally delivered at the Annual PGR Conference in spring.
- Attended by the student's supervisor/s, Advisor and preferably all academic members on the student's Confirmation Panel.
- The Seminar content should include: the research question/s, the rationale for the research, relevant theoretical and methodological issues, technical and procedural aspects of data collection and analysis. If appropriate it may report on initial findings.

Confirmation Process

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/pgr-handbookstudents/7-training-progress-review-and-monitoring>

7.4.3 Confirmation Report (Student responsibility)

- A written report circulated to the Confirmation Panel members 10 working days in advance of the scheduled Confirmation Panel meeting and also attached by the student to the student online first year review.
- Students can receive feedback from the supervisor/s on a draft version of the Confirmation Report if appropriate time is allowed.
- The Confirmation Report is a fully-illustrated and referenced written report. Students should consult with supervisor on the length of this report (maximum length 10,000 words) which should contain:
 1. A statement of the research topic and the research question, if appropriate;
 2. An account of the research context, including background to the topic, a rationale for its relevance to contemporary scholarship, and a brief review of relevant literatures;
 3. An account of the proposed research design, methods of data collection and analysis (including a statement on ethics) and, where appropriate, any results obtained from the PhD research so far (results are not expected for all students);
 4. Preliminary identification of the key thesis chapters and/or publications arising from the research (as appropriate);
 5. A detailed plan for the next 6 months;
 6. An outline plan for the next 18 months;
 7. A data management plan
 8. A brief overview of the supervisory arrangements
 9. An assessment of resources needed to complete the project;
 10. The Ethics Determination Form.

Confirmation Process

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/pgr-handbookstudents/7-training-progress-review-and-monitoring>

7.4.5 Confirmation Table

Month in Year 1 (assuming September start)	Action	Responsibility
Months 1-2 (October-November)	Find advisor and inform PGR support Student meets Advisor Meet with Advisor	Supervisor Student
Month 4 (January)	Attend PGR training workshop 'Preparing for Confirmation'	Student
Month 6 (March)	Nominate Panel members.	Advisor in consultation with supervisor/s and student
Months 6-7 (March-April)	Arrange Confirmation Panel meeting	Advisor
Months 7-8 (April-May)	Submission of Confirmation Report to Confirmation Panel members (including supervisor/s) 10 working days before Confirmation Panel and attachment to the student online first year review	Student
Months 7-9 (April-June)	Confirmation Panel meeting	Members of the Confirmation Panel
Months 7-9 (April-June)	Completion of the Confirmation Report Form- http://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/forms and submission of this to pgrsupport.geos@ed.ac.uk	Advisor
Months 7-9 (April-June)	Director of PGR to review panel's recommendation and form is returned to Advisor.	PGR Support
Months 7-9 (April-June)	Advisor to return approved confirmation panel report to student and supervisor so it can be attached to student's first annual review.	Advisor/ Student/ Supervisor

The Confirmation Report

- The Confirmation Report generally should contain:
 - A statement of the research topic and the research question(s).
 - An account of the research context/background/brief review of relevant literatures
 - An account of the proposed research design, methods of data collection and analysis
 - Any results obtained so far where appropriate
 - Preliminary identification of the key thesis chapters and/or publications
 - A detailed plan for the next 6 months and an outline plan for the next 18 months (Gantt chart or timeline)
 - A data management plan
 - An brief overview of the supervisory arrangements
 - An assessment of resources needed to complete the project
 - The Ethics Determination Form

The Confirmation Panel

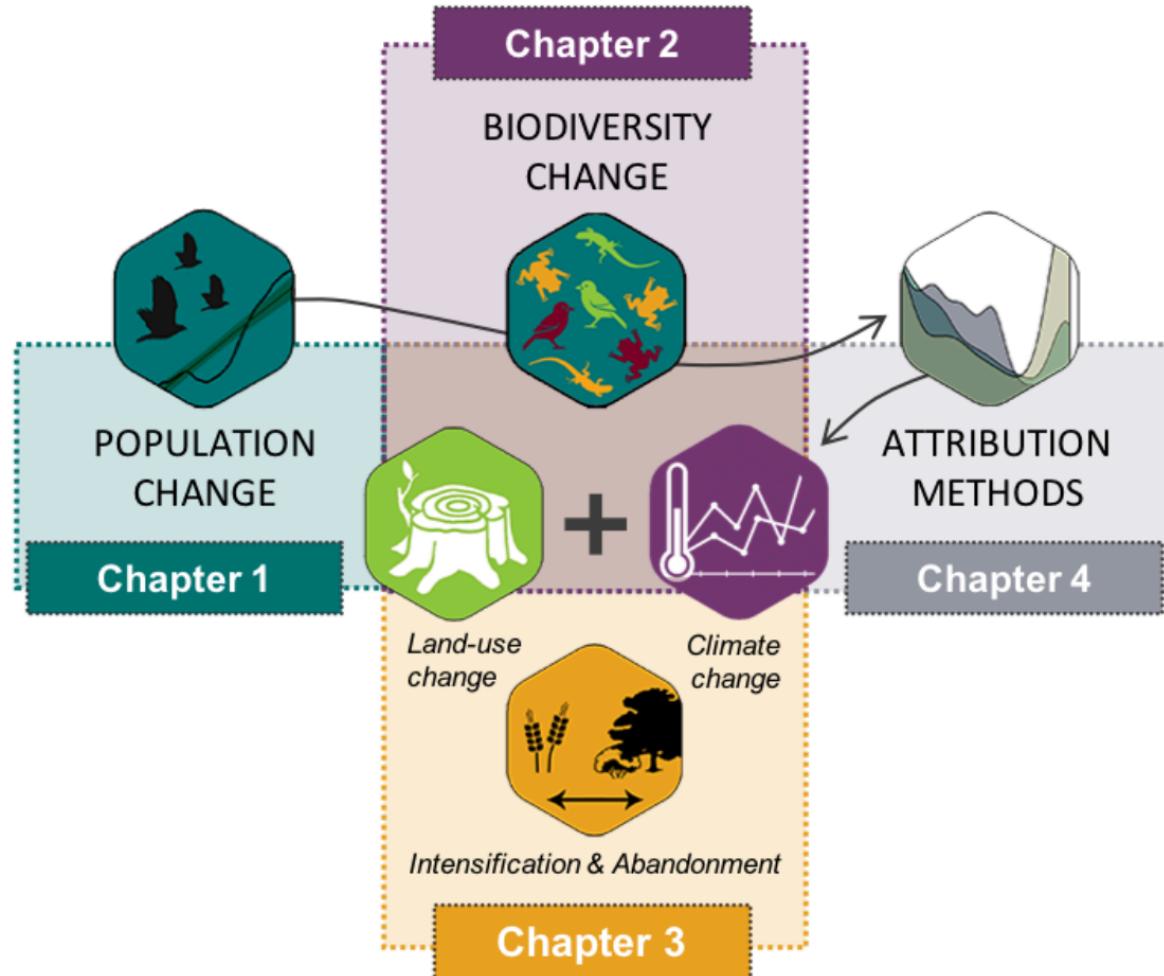
- 5-9 months into 1st year
- **Aims:**
 - Student is capable
 - Project is working and feasible
 - Supervisory team is adequate
 - Necessary resources
- **Format:**
 - 15 minutes talk at School Research Conference
 - Report (word limit agreed with Supervisor; max. 10,000 words)
 - Interview (c.45 mins) with Review Panel (Advisor, other staff, +/- supervisor)
 - Written feedback from Advisor

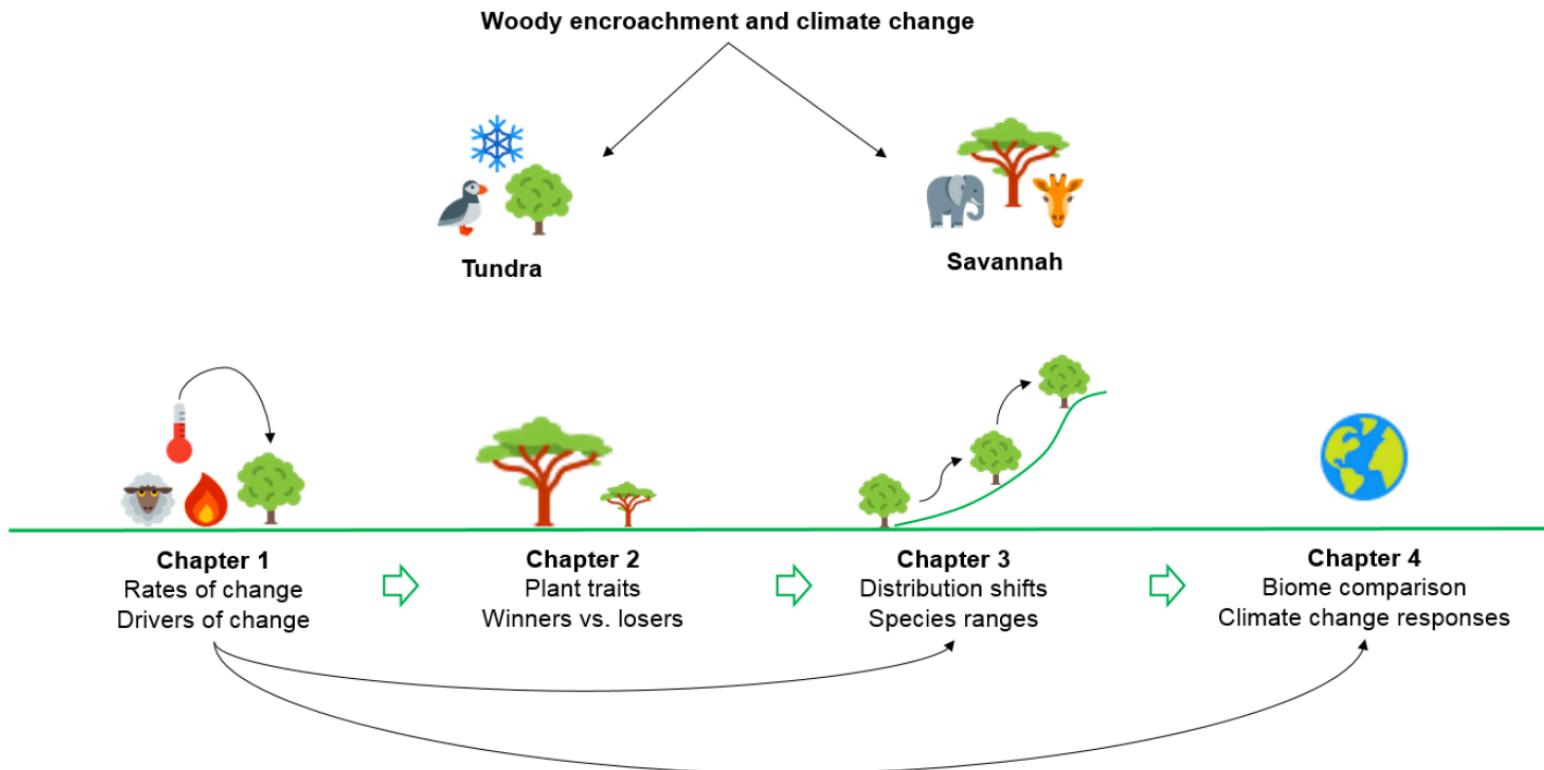
MRes Proposal

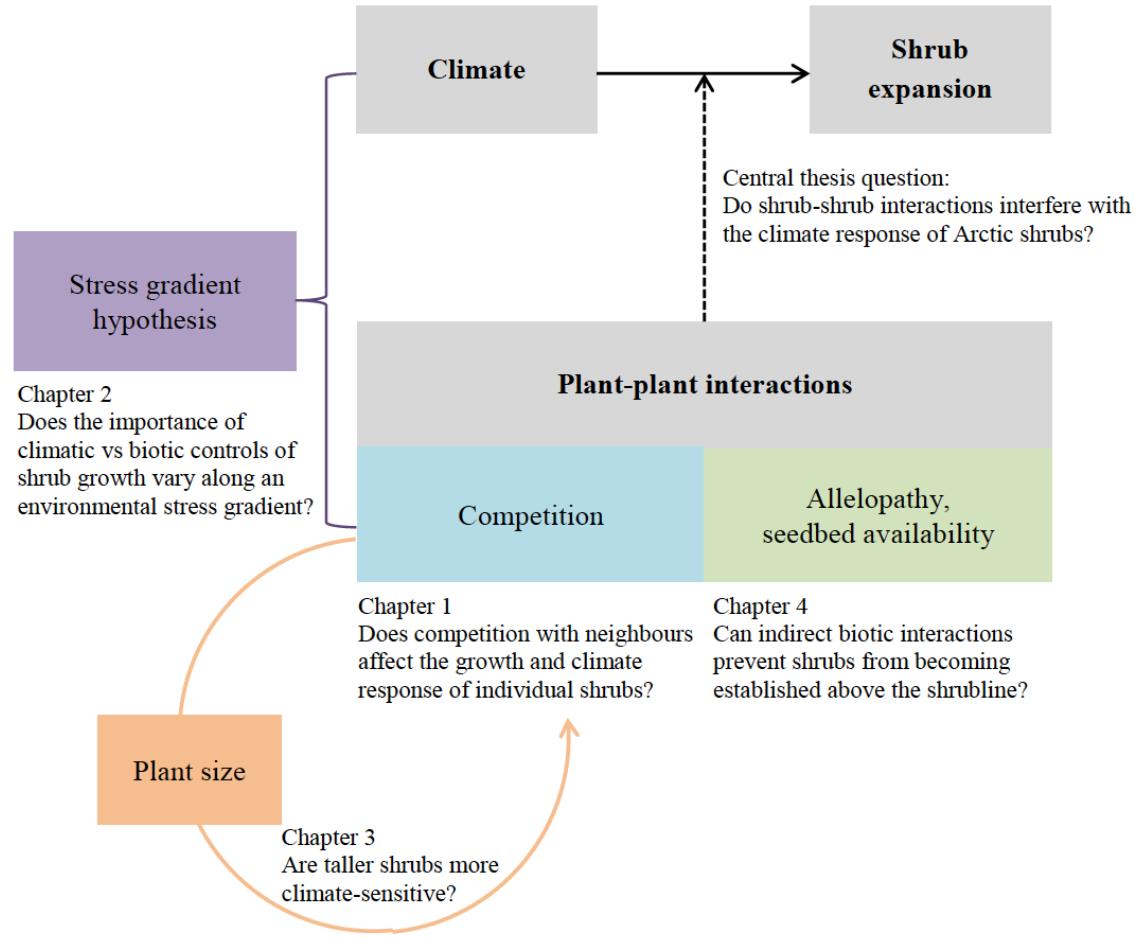
- A statement of the research topic and the research question(s).
- An account of the research context/background/brief review of relevant literatures
- Preliminary identification of the dissertation research
- An account of the proposed research design, methods of data collection and analysis
- Any results obtained so far where appropriate
- A detailed plan for the next 10 months (Gantt chart or timeline)
- A data management plan
- An brief overview of the supervisory arrangements
- An assessment of resources needed to complete the project
- The Ethics Determination Form

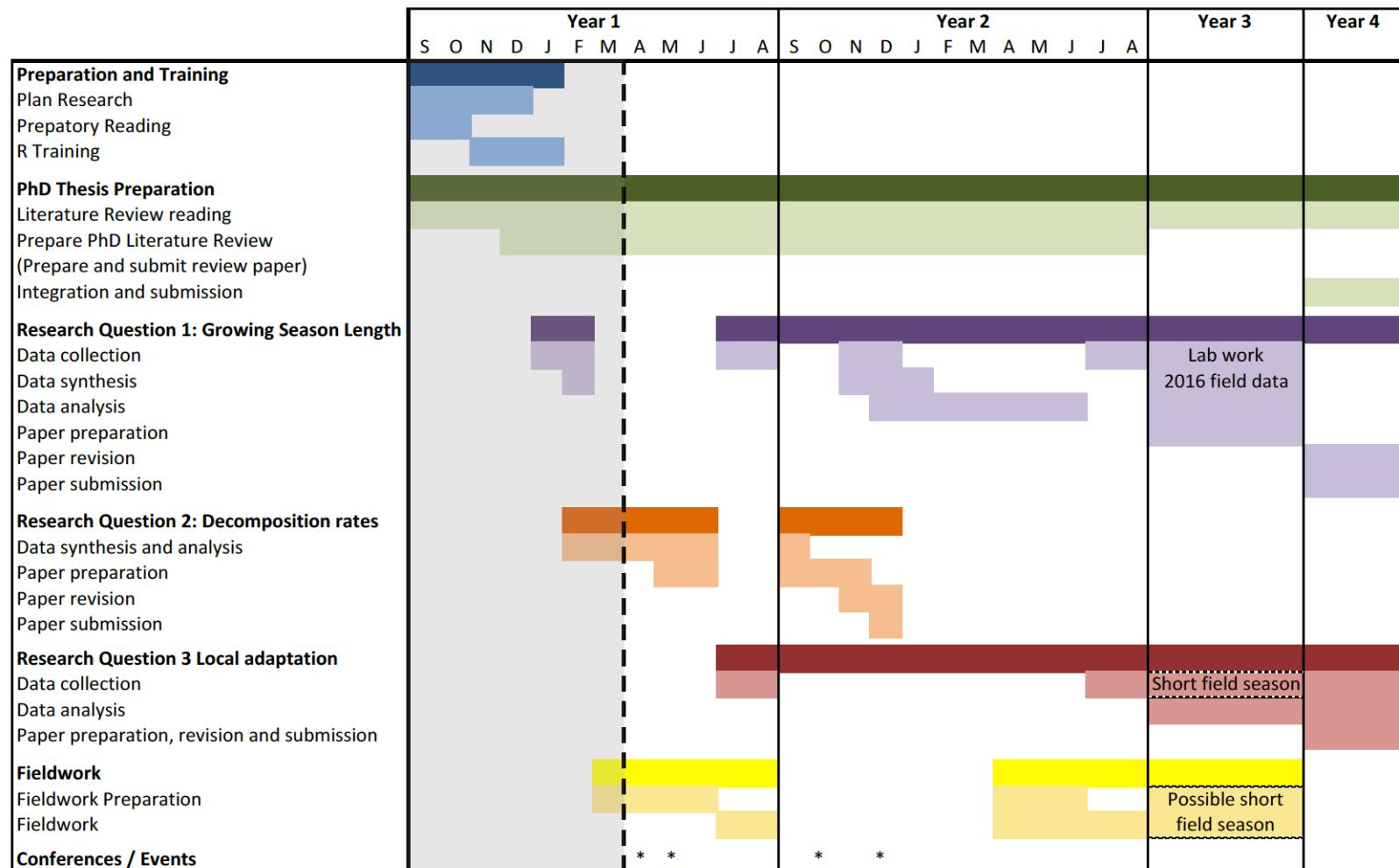
Summary	3
Research aims	4
Background.....	5
Literature review.....	7
Evidence for population change	7
Evidence for biodiversity change.....	8
Biodiversity change across metrics.....	8
Biodiversity change across scales	8
Drivers of biodiversity change.....	9
Evidence for biodiversity change due to land-use intensification and land abandonment	9
Methods for attribution analyses in ecology.....	10
Databases.....	11

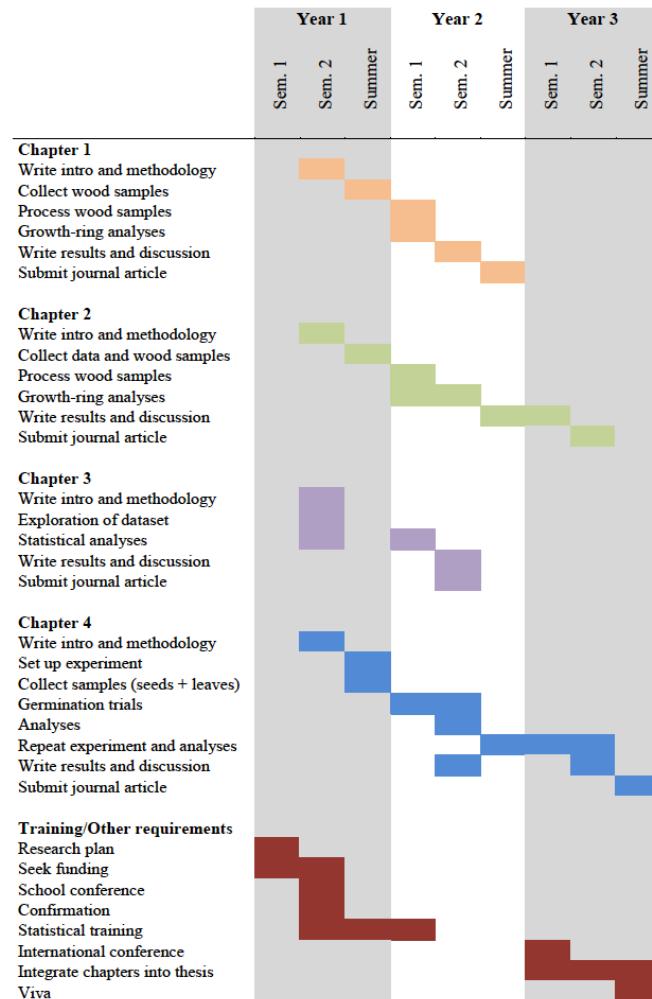
Chapter 1. Do species attributes and/or global change drivers explain vertebrate population change?	15
Chapter 2. How is land-use change influencing biodiversity change?.....	20
Chapter 3. How are land-use intensification and land abandonment influencing biodiversity change?	25
Chapter 4. How can we statistically attribute biodiversity change to global change drivers?	27
Project resources.....	30
Data management.....	31
Activities	33
Supervisory arrangements.....	36
Training	37
Timelines	39
References	41
Appendices.....	48











The Research plan

~ 5 page literature review (double spaced):

- Context (brief literature review)
- Research aims / objectives
- List of research chapters
- Time plan
- Overview of project resources
- Data management plan
- Supervisory arrangements
- Training needed
- Teaching experience

Total word count: 3000-5000 words

Due December 6th at 12pm

A storytelling exercise

Form groups of 5 or 6 people:

In a circle, "write" a paragraph out loud of how to make a sandwich.

The paragraph must end by the last person

Dissect your paragraph:

- What did the first person say?
- What did the middle people say?
- What did the last person say?

A research pitch exercise

Form groups of 3 people:

Ask your group the following questions:

What is the topic of your research in five words?

What is the main research question of your research in one sentence?

What do you think you will find in your research?

What is one reason why your research matters to the field?

The hook *Here is what is known about your general field – the big picture of your research:*

The knowledge gap *Here is what is not known about your general field – the gap you will fill:*

The PhD motivation *Here is how you are going to fill this knowledge gap – your methods plans:*

The take-home message *Here is why this research matters to the bigger picture of the field:*

Chapter 1

Specific 'what we know' hook:

Specific knowledge gap:

Research question:

Hypothesis:

H_1 :

H_0 :

etc.

Methods (bullet points):

-
-
-

Anticipated results (what you anticipate finding out your hypothesis and null and/or alternative hypotheses spelled out in words):

If we find this ... this will mean ...

If we find that ... that will mean...

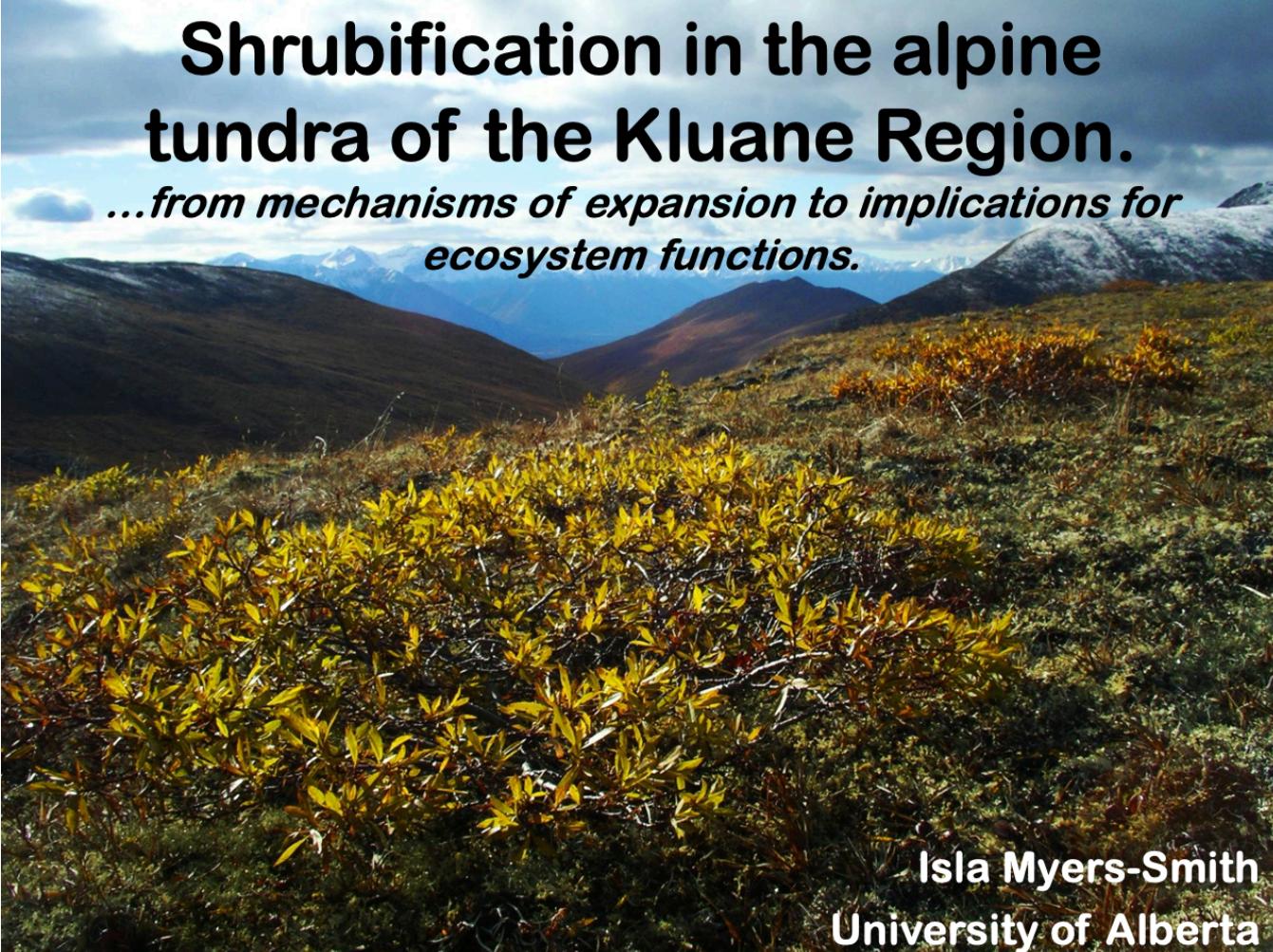
**SHRUB LINE ADVANCE IN ALPINE TUNDRA OF THE KLUANE
REGION: DIVERSITY OF WILLOWS AT SHRUBLINE.**

Isla Myers-Smith

University of Alberta

PhD Chapter 4 Proposal Draft

January 2008



Shrubification in the alpine tundra of the Kluane Region.

...from mechanisms of expansion to implications for ecosystem functions.

Isla Myers-Smith
University of Alberta

The first paragraph of my PhD proposal

With a warming climate, northern ecosystems will face significant ecological changes such as permafrost thaw, increased forest fire frequency, and shifting ecosystem boundaries, including the spread of tall shrubs into the tundra. In northern mountain ranges such as those in the southwestern Yukon, the shrubline will likely advance up mountain slopes with climate warming (Danby and Hik 2007). In the last 50 years, rapid shrub expansion has been documented in arctic Alaska (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Tape *et al.* 2006) and the Northern Yukon and NWT (*pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz) using repeat aerial photography. Paleoecological evidence suggests that tall shrubs last invaded tundra ecosystems in Alaska and North-Western Canada between 7 and 12 thousand years ago during the warm post-glacial period (Ritchie 1984). Growing season temperatures are again warming in Alaska and western Canada (Chapin *et al.* 2005, Hassol *et al.* 2004, Stafford *et al.* 2000), and concurrent with this trend, satellite imagery shows a greening of the arctic tundra (Jia *et al.* 2003, Stow *et al.* 2004). The correlation between warming and greening has been used to link climate change with shrub expansion (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Epstein *et al.* 2003); however, the mechanisms driving shrub increase are likely more complex. A combination of changes in nutrient mineralization, snow depth, microclimate, (Sturm *et al.* 2001b, Grogan and Jonasson 2006) disturbance (Forbes *et al.* 2001, *pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz), and species interactions are all contributing factors to shrub expansion patterns on the landscape.

The hook *Here is what is known about your general field – the big picture of your research:*

Shrubs are increasing as the climate warms.

The knowledge gap *Here is what is not known about your general field – the gap you will fill:*

“the mechanisms driving shrub increase are likely more complex”.

The PhD motivation *Here is how you are going to fill this knowledge gap – your methods plans:*

No idea!

The take-home message *Here is why this research matters to the bigger picture of the field:*

Not sure...

Revise this paragraph!

With a warming climate, northern ecosystems will face significant ecological changes such as permafrost thaw, increased forest fire frequency, and shifting ecosystem boundaries, including the spread of tall shrubs into the tundra. In northern mountain ranges such as those in the southwestern Yukon, the shrubline will likely advance up mountain slopes with climate warming (Danby and Hik 2007). In the last 50 years, rapid shrub expansion has been documented in arctic Alaska (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Tape *et al.* 2006) and the Northern Yukon and NWT (*pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz) using repeat aerial photography. Paleoecological evidence suggests that tall shrubs last invaded tundra ecosystems in Alaska and North-Western Canada between 7 and 12 thousand years ago during the warm post-glacial period (Ritchie 1984). Growing season temperatures are again warming in Alaska and western Canada (Chapin *et al.* 2005, Hassol *et al.* 2004, Stafford *et al.* 2000), and concurrent with this trend, satellite imagery shows a greening of the arctic tundra (Jia *et al.* 2003, Stow *et al.* 2004). The correlation between warming and greening has been used to link climate change with shrub expansion (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Epstein *et al.* 2003); however, the mechanisms driving shrub increase are likely more complex. A combination of changes in nutrient mineralization, snow depth, microclimate, (Sturm *et al.* 2001b, Grogan and Jonasson 2006) disturbance (Forbes *et al.* 2001, *pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz), and species interactions are all contributing factors to shrub expansion patterns on the landscape.

My revisions in 2019

Shrubs are predicted to increase in tundra ecosystems with climate warming. In the last 50 years, rapid shrub expansion has been documented in arctic Alaska (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Tape *et al.* 2006) and the Northern Yukon and NWT (*pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz) concurrent with warming temperatures (Chapin *et al.* 2005, Hassol *et al.* 2004, Stafford *et al.* 2000) and satellite imagery shows a greening of Arctic tundra (Jia *et al.* 2003, Stow *et al.* 2004). The correlation between warming and greening has been used to link climate change with shrub expansion (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Epstein *et al.* 2003); however, the exact mechanisms driving shrub increase remain unknown. Shrub vegetation plays an important role in climate-carbon-albedo feedbacks protecting Arctic carbon stores (Sturm *et al.* 2001b, Grogan and Jonasson 2006). Changes in tundra shrub cover could release frozen soil carbon to the atmosphere accelerating climate change for the planet as a whole.

Revise this paragraph

What we know:

Shrubs are predicted to increase in tundra ecosystems with climate warming. In the last 50 years, rapid shrub expansion has been documented in arctic Alaska (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Tape *et al.* 2006) and the Northern Yukon and NWT (*pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz) concurrent with warming temperatures (Chapin *et al.* 2005, Hassol *et al.* 2004, Stafford *et al.* 2000) and satellite imagery shows a greening of Arctic tundra (Jia *et al.* 2003, Stow *et al.* 2004).

The knowledge gap:

The correlation between warming and greening has been used to link climate change with shrub expansion (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Epstein *et al.* 2003); however, the exact mechanisms driving shrub increase remain unknown.

Why it matters:

Shrub vegetation plays an important role in climate-carbon-albedo feedbacks protecting Arctic carbon stores (Sturm *et al.* 2001b, Grogan and Jonasson 2006). Changes in tundra shrub cover could release frozen soil carbon to the atmosphere accelerating climate change for the planet as a whole.

Revise this paragraph

Shrubs are predicted to increase in tundra ecosystems with climate warming. In the last 50 years, rapid shrub expansion has been documented in arctic Alaska (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Tape *et al.* 2006) and the Northern Yukon and NWT (*pers. comm.* Trevor Lantz) concurrent with warming temperatures (Chapin *et al.* 2005, Hassol *et al.* 2004, Stafford *et al.* 2000) and satellite imagery shows a greening of Arctic tundra (Jia *et al.* 2003, Stow *et al.* 2004). The correlation between warming and greening has been used to link climate change with shrub expansion (Sturm *et al.* 2001a, Epstein *et al.* 2003); however, the exact mechanisms driving shrub increase remain unknown. Shrub vegetation plays an important role in climate-carbon-albedo feedbacks protecting Arctic carbon stores (Sturm *et al.* 2001b, Grogan and Jonasson 2006). Changes in tundra shrub cover could release frozen soil carbon to the atmosphere accelerating climate change for the planet as a whole.

Number of sentences: 5

Average number of words per sentence: ~ 15 – 20?

The paragraph starts with a short clear topic sentence

References are in the centre sentences

The paragraph ends with a short clear concluding sentence

Homework

By 13th of November:

- Draft an outline of your research plan
- Build on the pitch document that we started this week
- Add an outline for the literature review section
- Think about what the topic sentences will be for each paragraph