

Transfer from the Master's to PhD Register Code of Practice

A transfer from a Master's to a PhD registration should only occur when a candidate is able to demonstrate their suitability for doctoral level work, usually after a minimum of one year of registration. There must be clear evidence that the candidate has the innate ability to understand the topic deeply enough and has shown the ability to undertake independent research work successfully appropriate to doctoral level. As prescribed in the Academic Regulations Chapter 5: Section 5.6.8, a Research Confirmation Panel will be convened to enable students to meet this requirement.

1. Composition and role of the examination board: Approximately four weeks in advance of the transfer examination a Research Confirmation Panel will be constituted using (PGR-3a) Form. The Research Confirmation Panel will consist of the Head of Department or his/her nominee, who will act as chairperson, and two independent panel members, one nominated by the Head of Department and the other nominated by the Assistant Dean Research.

Chairperson: The chairperson will normally be a Head of Department or his/her nominee who has supervised a PhD candidate to completion. Their role is to manage the transfer examination, ensuring that the candidate is treated fairly, to provide guidance on the University's academic regulations and practices and communicate the outcome of the examination to the candidate. The chairperson will ensure that all the required documentation is completed and communicate the outcome to the relevant parties.

Examiners: To be appointed, the independent panel examiners must satisfy the criteria of appointment of supervisor (as per Academic Regulations section 5.5). The examiners' role is to ensure that the candidate has demonstrated the capability to successfully undertake a doctoral programme by research.

2. Present a written transfer report: The members of the board should receive the report at least two weeks in advance of an oral viva. The report should contain the following:

- (a) Clearly defined research objectives.
- (b) A critical literature review of the subject area(s) relating to the proposed research work.
- (c) Demonstrate the originality of the proposed research work by referring to published material.
- (d) Report on research work carried out to date by the candidate that demonstrates: (i) feasibility of the proposed research work; (ii) the ability of the candidate to carry out the proposed research work.
- (e) A work-plan showing the main steps required to complete the research objectives. This does not need to be detailed but, should demonstrate that the candidate understands the steps and risks involved in working towards his/her research objectives.

3. Present for a viva: The research must be presented to the examination board and the supervisor(s) may attend as an observer at the viva. The viva will take the following structure:

- (a) The candidate will present the work described in the transfer report. It is expected that the presentation should last up to 30 minutes.
- (b) After the presentation the two examiners will orally examine the candidate. The examination may last no longer than one hour.

4. Recommendations: The examiners may recommend one of the following options based on their determination of whether the candidate's research has the potential to make an original research contribution:

- (a) The Candidate's research progress on the master's register is of a sufficiently high standard to warrant transfer to the PhD register.
- (b) The Candidate's research progress on the master's register is not of a sufficiently high standard to warrant transfer to the PhD register. The student may re-apply to transfer to the PhD register within six months.
- (c) The Candidate should continue on the master's register and submit for a master's degree.

5. Outcome: Candidates will be informed of the outcome of the examination by the chairperson of the board on completion of the viva. If successful, the candidate will be informed by the chairperson that the transfer from the master's to PhD register is not a guarantee that the candidate will be awarded a PhD. As prescribed in the Academic Regulations Chapter 5: Section 5.6.8.8, if the candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of the Research Confirmation Panel review, s/he may appeal the matter to the Head of Department.

In the unlikely event of a disagreement between the examiners as to the outcome of the transfer examination, the chairperson will record that a disagreement has occurred, summarise the nature of the disagreement and suspend the examination process. The case will be forwarded to the head of department for further action.