

Doctoral College Staff Guide on PhD/EngD Confirmation Process:

For the Supervision team, Directors of Studies, Internal Examiners and Doctoral College Staff

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1 Introduction

Confirmation/the mid-term review is a formal progression point that all PhD students and EngD Research Engineers must successfully pass in order to continue with their degree. Confirmation is not required for professional doctorate students. Throughout this document, unless otherwise specified, the term 'Confirmation' is used as a shorthand to represent both the PhD confirmation examination and the EngD mid-term review examination which follow broadly similar processes.

This guidance document is intended for all staff (both academic and administrative) to clarify some of the common aspects and responsibilities for the PhD Confirmation process. This guidance should be considered alongside the following more detailed sources of information:

- [Doctoral College Confirmation Guidance for PhD/EngD Students](#)
- [QA7 Research Degrees \(Section 11\)](#)
- [Regulation 16](#)
- [SAMIS Manual](#)
- Any department/faculty/school-specific information provided locally (see appendix 1 for recommended list of additional information to be provided locally).

2 Requirements for Confirmation

- The requirements for Confirmation are set out in the [Doctoral College Confirmation Guidance for PhD/EngD Students](#).
- Supervisors are expected to ensure that students are made aware of these requirements as well as any additional specific requirements of the programme/department/faculty/school.
- Staff should be aware that students are only permitted **two** attempts to successfully complete Confirmation ([see Regulation 16](#)).

- Although the Confirmation examination will be permitted to go ahead even if the student has not met all of the requirements for Confirmation, it is important to realise that the outcome of the examination will not be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral) **unless all requirements for Confirmation have been met by the student.**

3 Timing and format of the submission

- The individual deadline for each student to submit their Confirmation report and associated documents will be agreed at Candidature.
- If possible, students should be encouraged to submit in advance of their deadline, to avoid any issues arising close to the submission date.
- The primary method of submission should be electronic (although some departments/faculties/the School may require hard copies in addition and they will need to notify students of this requirement).
- The Confirmation report, draft chapter (where appropriate), data management plan and ethical approval (where appropriate) should be submitted through Moodle via the [Doctoral College Submission](#) page. If you would like to have access to this page, please contact the [Doctoral College Programme team](#).
- Students are no longer required to submit their training record as part of the submission, as this can be viewed directly from SAMIS as part of the PGR3 form
- The submission will be sent to the Examiners by the Doctoral College. Submissions should not be sent directly to examiners by either the student or the supervisor
- The Doctoral College will attempt to process the Confirmation documents within two weeks of submission (where no issues arise with the submission).

4 Early submission

- Where a student wishes to submit their Confirmation report and associated documents before the deadline, please contact the [Doctoral College](#) who should be able to accommodate their early submission by initiating the PGR3 process in SAMIS.
- Staff in the Doctoral College should seek guidance from [Student Records](#) in Academic Registry about initiating the Confirmation process early in SAMIS.

5 Unable to meet deadline

- Students should be strongly encouraged to talk to their supervisory team or to the Doctoral College as soon as possible if they become concerned that they will not be able to meet the deadline.
- This is important as the University does not currently allow the use of extensions for those doctoral students who are not able to submit their Confirmation report by the date agreed at Candidature.
- If a student fails to submit the confirmation report by the deadline they will normally be deemed to have failed their first attempt. Students are only permitted two attempts to successfully complete Confirmation.

6 Alternative format thesis

- Students who wish to submit their final thesis in an [alternative format](#), will need to discuss the format of their Confirmation report with their supervisory team.
- Departments/faculties/the School should provide guidance to students on what an alternative format Confirmation report should look like.
- The content of the student's Confirmation report does not commit them to a particular format for their thesis.

7 Appointment of Progression Board of Examiners (PGR14)

- Lead Supervisors are required to start the process for appointing the Progression Board of Examiners for the Confirmation examination around **three months before the deadline for submission.**
- Lead Supervisors will need to nominate internal Examiners using the PGR14 form via a task in [SAMIS](#) which will then be passed to the Director of Studies to agree (*except in the Department of Physics where the Examiners are nominated solely by the Director of Studies.*)
- Lead Supervisors will receive an automatic reminder email six months before the deadline for Confirmation as a prompt to nominate the examiners, and will be able to access Task 1 on SAMIS to complete.
- The Director of Studies will then receive a reminder to complete Task 2, asking them to confirm the nominations for the Progression Board of Examiners
- Please note that the Confirmation form (PGR3) as referred to below, cannot be submitted by the Supervisor until the Progression Board of Examiners has been approved by the Board of Studies (Doctoral). **It is therefore strongly encouraged that the nominations for the Progression Board of Examiners is approved at the earliest point.**
- The Progression Board of Examiners will usually consist of two members of internal academic staff who are independent to the supervision team.
- In certain circumstances, where the Director of Studies considers that presence of an experienced academic would be of assistance, the Progression Board of Examiners may also include an independent Chair (this is a mandatory requirement for the School of Management).
- Where the Director of Studies is one of the examiners, the Supervisor or Director of Studies must notify the Doctoral College at the earliest point, before the task has been started. The Doctoral College will amend SAMIS to ensure that an alternate member of staff (such as the Head of Department) can agree the membership in the DoS task.
- The Doctoral College will run a report on a weekly basis to identify when the PGR14 process has been completed.
- The nominations will then be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral) and the Supervisor, Director of Studies and student will be notified by email once the Progression Board of Examiners has been approved.
- If nominations need to be amended after the PGR14 task has been completed, please contact the Doctoral College for advice. Doctoral Programme Administrators should liaise with Student Records to reset the task.

8 Confirmation form (PGR3)

- The Confirmation form (PGR3) is initiated by the student but is also completed by the Supervisor, Director of Studies and the Progression Board of Examiners.
- **From November 2018 and for students undertaking a PhD:** PGR3 will be completed by all involved through [SAMIS](#) as a series of tasks. Prompts to complete the tasks will appear in the individual's SAMIS in tray.
- **For students undertaking an EngD or MPhil:** PGR3 will continue to be completed by all involved using the word document which can be obtained from their [Doctoral Programme Administrator in the Doctoral College](#). Doctoral College to set up CONF tasks for EngD students in SAMIS manually.
- Students will receive an email around three months before their Confirmation deadline date to remind them about the process for Confirmation. Task 1 of PGR3 will be available at this point for them to start.
- It is recommended that the student does not submit Task 1 of the Confirmation form (PGR3) until they have submitted their Confirmation report and associated documents through Moodle.

- Supervisors are required to liaise with their student during this process.
- The PGR3 will highlight the training undertaken by the student against the requirements set at Candidature. Where there is mismatch between the training identified at Candidature and the training undertaken, the supervisor will be asked to comment. Note: failure to undertake the mandatory researcher skills training will not prevent the examination from proceeding, but the outcome will not be confirmed by the Board of Studies until it is completed.
- Once Task 1 has been completed by the student, the Supervisor will receive an automatic email asking them to complete Task 2 commenting upon the student's progress to date and potential to complete the doctorate within the remaining registration time. This needs to be completed at least **two weeks** in advance of the examination. **Please note that if the Progression Board of Examiners have not been approved by Board of Studies (Doctoral), then the Lead Supervisor will not be able to submit their part of PGR3.**
- Where a Progress report has been completed around the same time as Confirmation, Supervisors will be given the opportunity of referring to, and where appropriate, using any text already provided.
- The Supervisor may view the answers submitted in the PGR3 form at any point during the process by logging into [SAMIS](#), clicking into 'PGR Student Reports', selecting the correct student from the list, scrolling down to 'Confirmation of PhD' and clicking on the link to the report beneath. The report will continue to be updated in real time.
- Once completed by the student and Supervisor, the responses from Task 1 and Task 2 will be made available to the Progression Board of Examiners in advance of the Confirmation examination.
- Following the Confirmation examination the Progression Board of Examiners will have two weeks to submit their feedback via Task 3 of the PGR3 form
- The student will receive an email to complete Task 4 of the PGR3 form within **five days** to provide comment on the process and the outcome
- The Director of Studies will receive an email to ask them to complete Task 5 by reviewing the full form and outcome, check that the training outlined at Candidature has been completed and submit the task before the outcome can be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral).
- Where the Director of Studies is one of the examiners, the Supervisor or Director of Studies must notify the Doctoral College at the earliest point, before the final task is sent to the Director of Studies. The Doctoral College will amend SAMIS to ensure that an alternate member of staff (such as the Head of Department) is able to complete the DoS task.
- Once a task has been submitted, no additions/changes can be made to that section. If additional information needs to be subsequently added to the PGR3, please either contact your Director of Studies for them to add this to their final task or email your Doctoral Programmes Administrator with full details to be appended to the final form.
- Please note that you may lose the formatting (such as bullet points) when copying and pasting text into any of the SAMIS tasks. Please use text such as A. B. C. instead of bullets.

9 Responsibilities of Progression Board of Examiners

- The Lead Examiner will be notified by email in advance of the examination that the PGR3 form is available to view in SAMIS.
- In advance of the Confirmation examination, the Progression Board of Examiners are responsible for considering the URKUND Originality report generated for the Confirmation report submission (and draft chapter where appropriate) and for discussing any issues that arise with the Supervisor and Director of Studies. The Doctoral College must also be notified. Guidance on interpreting the originality report

can be found on the [Moodle Support Hub](#).

- Examiners are asked to use their academic judgement on whether the originality report is acceptable, and should be aware that the procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism (and other assessment offences) are set out in [QA53](#).
- The Progression Board of Examiners should also consider and check the data management plan to ensure that it is appropriate
- The Library provides [guidance for reviewers of data management plans](#) on what to consider.
- The Examiners should note that the examination may go ahead even if some of the requirements for Confirmation are not fully completed, however the outcome of the examination **will not be formally approved by the Board of Studies (Doctoral) until the student meets all of the requirements.**
- Following the examination, the Lead Examiner is required to complete and submit their part of the PGR3 form (Task 3).

10 Academic Integrity Training and Test

- **For PhD students:** the automated PGR3 form in SAMIS will highlight whether a student has successfully completed the Academic Integrity Test.
- **For EngD and MPhil students using the PGR3 word document:** the Doctoral College will check whether a student has passed the Academic Integrity Test.

11 Research Integrity Training

- **For PhD students:** the automated PGR3 form in SAMIS will highlight whether a student has successfully completed the Research Integrity Training.
- **For EngD and MPhil students using the PGR3 word document:** the Doctoral College will check whether a student has passed the Research Integrity Training.

12 Confirmation examination

- The Supervisor (or in some instances, the Doctoral College) is greatly encouraged, where possible, to organise the Confirmation examination to be held within four weeks of the examiner being sent the Confirmation report. They should also ensure that there are at least two/three weeks between the submission date and the examination date to give the Examiners time to look at all of the submission.
- The Supervisor or Lead Examiner should confirm the date, time and place of the examination to the student and to the Doctoral College.
- The examination may take place in an academic's office, or in a suitable room elsewhere. The room must have the correct equipment required for the student to conduct their examination, for example if a presentation is required.
- If a room needs to be booked for the examination, please book either through the University's [Room Request System](#) or the Doctoral College can provide further assistance.
- Supervisors are not usually required to attend the Confirmation examination (with the exception of the School of Management where their attendance is mandatory). However, in certain circumstances, and with the permission of the student, supervisors may be permitted to be in attendance. In all instances Supervisors must not be involved in the actual examination.
- Students will be required to state in the automated PGR3 form whether they wish their Supervisor to attend
- Staff are encouraged to provide further guidance to students on the requirements for the Confirmation examination for their specific department/faculty/school.

13 Outcome of Confirmation examination

The Progression Board of Examiners will recommend one of the following outcomes to Board of Studies (Doctoral) for **PhD students**:

1. that the candidate's registration for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy be confirmed; or
2. that the candidate be permitted to make a second submission for confirmation within a timescale to be determined by the Progression Board of Examiners; or
3. that the candidate's registration be transferred to the Degree of Master of Philosophy; or
4. that the candidate having failed to achieve the standard required for continuation as a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy, be required to withdraw

The Progression Board of Examiners will recommend one of the following outcomes to Board of Studies (Doctoral) for **EngD Research Engineers**:

1. that the Research Engineer's registration for the Degree of Doctor of Engineering be confirmed; or
2. that the Research Engineer be permitted to make a second submission for confirmation within a timescale to be determined by the Progression Board of Examiners; or
3. that the Research Engineer be awarded an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma or Degree of Master; or
4. that the Research Engineer, having failed both to achieve the standard required for continuation on the programme and the standard required for the award of Postgraduate Diploma or the Degree of Master, be required to withdraw.

- After the examination, the Examiners will notify the student verbally of their recommended outcome. The Supervisor may be present at this point.
- The Progression Board of Examiners are required to inform the Doctoral College of the recommended outcome, and provide their feedback to the student by completing the PGR3 form within two weeks of the examination.
- Where outcome 1 is recommended (pass), examiners may provide suggestions for further work or training that might be useful, but these are not a condition to the student successfully passing Confirmation.
- Where outcome 2 is recommended (permitted to make a second submission / undertake another examination), then the student will be deemed to have failed their first attempt and the Progression Board of Examiners is required to clarify what work is required for submission of their second attempt (i.e. written work only, examination only, both written work and examination). The Board is also responsible for providing a provisional timescale for re-submission (usually within six months for full-time students and within nine months for part-time students).
- Where outcome 3 is recommended (transfer to MPhil), the Supervisor and Examiners should be aware that the student's maximum registration time will be reduced (MPhil maximum registration time is 36 months). They should ensure that the student has sufficient time remaining to fulfil the requisite work and submit for the Master of Philosophy award. Contact the Doctoral College for further guidance on this point.
- The Board of Studies (Doctoral) will consider the examiners recommendations, and formally agree the exact deadline for any re-submission. The student will be formally notified of this shortly after the meeting.

14 Second submission / examination

- When considering the second submission / outcome of the second examination the Progression Board of Examiners will determine whether the feedback provided in the first examiners report for the first attempt has been addressed, and any specific

requirements for revisions have been met.

The Progression Board of Examiners will recommend one of the following outcomes to Board of Studies (Doctoral) for **PhD students**:

1. that the candidate's registration for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy be confirmed; or
2. that the candidate's registration be transferred to the Degree of Master of Philosophy; or
3. that the candidate having failed to achieve the standard required for continuation as a candidate for the degree of Master of Philosophy, be required to withdraw

The Progression Board of Examiners will recommend one of the following outcomes to Board of Studies (Doctoral) for **EngD Research Engineers**:

1. that the Research Engineer's registration for the Degree of Doctor of Engineering be confirmed; or
 2. that the Research Engineer be awarded an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma or Degree of Master; or
 3. that the Research Engineer, having failed both to achieve the standard required for continuation on the programme and the standard required for the award of Postgraduate Diploma or the Degree of Master, be required to withdraw.
- After the examination / consideration of the second submission, the Examiners will notify the student verbally of the unconfirmed recommendation. The Supervisor may be present at this point.
 - The Progression Board of Examiners are required to inform the Doctoral College of the recommended outcome, and provide their feedback to the student by completing Task 6 of the PGR3 form within two weeks of the examination. The student will also be asked to provide comment on the process and the outcome (Task 7). The form is then signed off by the Director of Studies (Task 8) before the recommendation is considered at the Board of Studies (Doctoral).

Appendix 1

Recommended information to be provided to students in departmental/school-specific guidance:

- a) Any specific activities required by the department/faculty/school for Confirmation **not** already mentioned above in this Staff Guide or in the [Doctoral College Confirmation Guidance for students](#)
- b) Clarification of when the Confirmation process takes place for specific programmes (i.e. 12 months / 18 months / 24 months etc.)
- c) Further details about the structure of the Confirmation report (please see section 7 about Confirmation report in [student guidance](#))
- d) Word limits for Confirmation report / draft chapter
- e) Department/faculty/school-specific guidance on the format of the Confirmation report for students submitting an alternative format thesis
- f) Whether the department/faculty/school requires printed copies alongside the primary electronic Moodle submission
- g) Whether there are any specific naming conventions required for the files when saving to Moodle
- h) Department/faculty/school-specific guidance on seeking and obtaining ethical approval (where required)

- i) Information on what is required for the Chapter (departments in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences only)
- j) Department/faculty/school policy on Supervisor attendance at the Confirmation examination
- k) What to expect in the Confirmation examination (timings and conduct and whether the student will be required to present to an open group etc.).