Doctoral College | UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Doctoral College Confirmation Guidance for PhD Students/EngD Research Engineers

Contents

1 Introduction

This guidance document is intended to provide support to you as you prepare to go through the PhD Confirmation/EngD mid-term review process. It will hopefully clarify some of the common aspects of the process across the University but should be considered alongside any programme-specific information provided to you by your department/faculty/school. You may also wish to refer to Section 11 of QA7 Research Degrees regarding University policy on your progression as well as Regulation 16. Please note that if you are on a Professional Doctorate you are not required to undertake Confirmation. 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.

Appendix 1 of this document provides a process flow chart of the full Confirmation process.

Appendix 2 provides additional information on faculty/school-specific guidance.

2 What is Confirmation?

Confirmation is a formal progression point that you must successfully pass in order to continue with your PhD/EngD studies and have your doctoral registration confirmed. Students will be transferred to an MPhil registration, awarded a lower level exit award, or withdrawn from study if they do not pass this examination. Confirmation consists of a written submission and an oral defence of the work. Confirmation can occur at different points depending on your programme. For example, standard full-time PhD programmes will usually have Confirmation around twelve months after initial registration, whereas for part-time programmes it will be at eighteen months, and for integrated PhDs and the EngD it may occur two years after registration. Your individual deadline for you to submit your Confirmation report and associated documents will be agreed at Candidature.

During Confirmation, you will be assessed by two internal Examiners to see whether you have reached an appropriate level of understanding in your area of research, are capable of carrying out your research at doctoral level and also whether you are capable of successfully completing on time before your registration end date. It is designed to be a developmental process and can help you obtain feedback from academic staff internal to the University, but independent from your supervision team.

3 Requirements for Confirmation

In order to successfully pass Confirmation, you are required to undertake the following (where appropriate):
1. Submit a Confirmation report
2. Develop and submit a data management plan
3. Submit at least one draft chapter of your thesis
4. Obtain and submit ethical approval (where required)
5. Complete any training and development identified at Candidature
6. Complete your section of the Confirmation form (PGR3).

You are also expected to successfully pass the following tests:
7. Academic Integrity Test
8. Research Integrity Test
9. Research Ethics and Governance training module *(Humanities & Social Sciences students only)*

You may also be required to take part in:
10. Any departmental/faculty/school-specific activities related to Confirmation

Further detail about the requirements can be found in the sections below.

Please note that you are only permitted **two** attempts to successfully complete Confirmation (see Regulation 16). You are expected to ensure all of the requirements for Confirmation listed above are completed (where appropriate). If they are not, your Confirmation examination will be permitted to go ahead, but the **outcome of the examination will not be considered by the Board of Studies (Doctoral) unless all requirements for Confirmation have been met**.

4 Timing and format of the Submission

You are required to submit your Confirmation report and associated documentation by the deadline given at Candidature. Your exact deadline can be viewed in your MyDetails section in SAMIS. If possible, you are encouraged to aim to submit in advance of this deadline, in order to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays to your Confirmation examination. This is good practice as it also provides you with a safeguard should issues arise nearer your

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deadline.

You are required to submit your Confirmation report, draft chapter (where appropriate), data management plan and ethical approval (1-4 in the above list) electronically through Moodle via the Doctoral College Submission page. This will be regarded as your primary submission. Your documents will then be automatically reviewed by Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service used by the University to identify any similarities between student work and existing sources elsewhere. Your department/faculty/school may also ask you to submit paper copies of your report and associated documents, and therefore you should seek clarification from your department/faculty/school (see also appendix 2). The Doctoral College will attempt to process your documents and forward them to the internal Examiners within two weeks of submission (where no issues arise with the submission).

5 Early submission

You may wish to submit your Confirmation Report and associated documents before your deadline as advised above. If this is the case, please notify your supervisor and the Doctoral College who will be able to accommodate your early submission.

6 Unable to meet deadline

It is important for you to meet the deadline for submission given to you for Confirmation, as failure to submit by the deadline will normally result in failing the first attempt. However, if you become at all concerned that you are unable to meet your deadline, you are strongly encouraged to talk to your Supervisor or the Doctoral College as soon as possible, who will be able to provide you with guidance and support. You can also find information on suspending your studies on the Student Services web pages.

7 Confirmation report

The format of your Confirmation report (or major report for EngD Research Engineers) will vary, depending on your department/faculty/school requirements (see also appendix 2). The Confirmation report should be written in a way that demonstrates your knowledge of the research area. It should evidence research already undertaken, provide information on what further research will be conducted and confirm how it will be accomplished. You can find guidance in Appendix 5 of QA7 *Research Degrees*, on points to consider when writing up your report.

The following is a general guide to what you **may** be required to include in your report, but you are **strongly advised to discuss this with your Supervisor and refer to your specific departmental/faculty/school guidance (see appendix 2)**:
- Introduction
- Aims and objectives
- Literature review
- Confirmation as to why the research is being conducted
- Statement of work conducted so far
- Research methodology
- Timetable of planned work up to completion
- Contents page of full thesis with chapter titles. Summaries of each chapter may be required by some departments
- Relevant appendices
- Statement on ethical considerations
- Bibliography/references

The word limit for your report should also be specified in your departmental/faculty/school guidance (see appendix 2).

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8 Alternative format thesis

If you are planning to eventually submit your final thesis in an [alternative format](#), you will need to discuss the format of your Confirmation report with your Supervisor, consider the further [information on alternative format thesis](#), and follow departmental/faculty/school guidance. Please note that the content of your Confirmation report does not commit you to a particular format for your thesis.

9 Draft Chapter (Humanities and Social Sciences only)

Students within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences are also required to submit at least one draft chapter of their thesis/portfolio. QA7 Appendix 6 provides a [Specification of Higher Degree theses and portfolios](#). You will also need to speak to your Supervisor for further information on which draft chapter needs to be provided.

10 Data management plan

You will be required to develop a data management plan as part of the confirmation process and in line with the requirements stated in the [University's Research Data Policy](#). This is to confirm how your research data will be handled during and after your doctorate. You can find guidance about [writing a data management plan](#) as well as a specific [data management plan template](#) that doctoral students/research engineers can use to support this activity.

11 Citing References

You will need to ensure that any sources you draw from in your Confirmation submission are referenced correctly to avoid plagiarism. The Library has further guidance on [Citing References.](#) Your Confirmation documentation will automatically be submitted through [Turnitin](#) upon submission to Moodle.

12 Ethical Approval

If your research has ethical implications, you are required to discuss this further with your Supervisor and seek ethical approval where appropriate. This will need to be submitted as part of your Confirmation submission. You may wish to contact your [Departmental Research Ethics Officer](#) who will be able to provide you with departmental/faculty/school-specific guidance on what is required for obtaining ethical approval. General guidance on [research integrity and ethics](#) as well as [carrying out ethically responsible research](#) can be found on the University web pages.

13 Training and Development

Your requirements for undertaking training/professional development/personal development activities will have been specified at Candidature. It is your responsibility to ensure that this (or equivalent) is completed in time for Confirmation. Please note that the Examiners' recommended outcome of your Confirmation examination will not be presented to the Board of Studies (Doctoral) for approval until all training requirements have been successfully met. You can find out further information about what development opportunities the Doctoral College can offer via the [DoctoralSkills](#) web pages.

14 Confirmation form (PGR3)

The Confirmation form (PGR3) provides essential information about your Confirmation submission to the Progression Board of Examiners. All PhD students undertaking Confirmation from November 2018 will need to complete the form through [SAMIS](#). EngD Research Engineers and MPhil students will receive a copy of the form from their Doctoral Programmes Administrator.

It is highly recommended that you complete your section of the Confirmation form (PGR3) before the deadline for submission of your report (and associated documents) and once your training record is up-to-date (in line with the requirements set out at Candidature). You will receive a reminder email three months before your deadline to encourage you to start thinking about completing the Confirmation form (PGR3). You are expected to liaise with your Supervisor before completing your part of the form. Once you have completed your section, this is then sent to your Supervisor to provide a commentary on your progress so far and their opinion of whether the research is on track for an on-time thesis submission. The information provided in PGR3 is then passed to the Progression Board of Examiners in advance of your examination. Following your examination, you will be given the opportunity to view the examiners feedback and provide your own comment on the process. The form is then signed off by the Director of Studies before finally being considered at the Board of Studies (Doctoral). For those of you that have completed your PGR3 form online, you will be able to view it through SAMIS by going to the 'PGR Student Details'' screen.

15 Academic Integrity Training and Test

The academic integrity training provides all doctoral students/research engineers with a basic knowledge and understanding of good academic practice. You are required to undertake this training and then successfully pass the associated test in order to progress through Confirmation. The test is available through Moodle, please search for 'Academic Integrity' and click in to your departmental/school page.

16 Research Integrity Training

You are also required to successfully complete the research integrity training to ensure compliance with the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This training is offered through Moodle, please search for 'Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Doctoral Students)'.

17 Research Ethics and Governance Module (Humanities and Social Sciences only)

Doctoral students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences are also required to complete the Research and Ethics Governance module in Moodle. Further information about the module and instructions on how you take it can be found on the DoctoralSkills web pages.

18 Progression Board of Examiners

The Progression Board of Examiners will usually consist of two members of academic staff who are **not** part of your supervision team. In certain circumstances, the Progression Board of Examiners may also include an Independent Chairperson who will not take part in the examination, but who will assist the examiners in ensuring that the examination is fair and conducted in accordance with the University's Regulations (this is a mandatory requirement for the School of Management).

Your Supervisor will be required to start the process for appointing the Progression Board of Examiners for your Confirmation examination around three months before your deadline for submitting the Confirmation report (and associated documents).

19 Confirmation examination

Your Supervisor will be encouraged to organise for your Confirmation examination to be held within four weeks of the Doctoral College sending your Confirmation report on to the Progression Board of Examiners. Your Supervisor/lead examiner will confirm the date, time and place of your examination. Supervisors are not usually required to be present during the Confirmation examination (with the exception of the School of Management where

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attendance is mandatory). However in certain circumstances, they may be permitted to be in attendance but must not be involved in the examination. Your department/faculty/school will be able to advise you further on Supervisor attendance. You will need to give permission for your Supervisor to attend. From November 2018, you will be asked to provide permission when completing of the PGR3 form.

Your Confirmation examination will consist of a discussion between you and your Examiners about your research. In some instances, depending on your discipline, you may also be required to give a short presentation. In some cases, these may be open to other interested students and staff to attend.

Your Examiners will then hold a closed meeting to discuss and agree a recommendation, after which you will be informed of the provisional outcome of your examination. Your department/faculty/school will be able to advise you as to the specific requirements for your Confirmation examination.

Timings for the examination will vary depending on your department/faculty/school and your research area, but an average examination would usually last between one/two hours. Your examination may take place in an academic's office, or in a suitable room elsewhere. The room must have the correct equipment needed for you to conduct your examination presentation.

For further information on points to consider during your examination, you may wish to access Appendix 5 of QA7 Research Degrees.

20 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.

You will be notified of the recommended outcome at the end of the examination and the Progression Board of Examiners will notify the Doctoral College of the outcome within two weeks of the examination. If the examiners are satisfied and your registration has been confirmed (outcome 1, above), you may still receive suggestions for further work or training that might be useful to pursue, but these are not a condition of passing the examination.

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Where you are permitted to make a second attempt to pass the examination (outcome 2, above), the Progression Board of Examiners will clarify what work is required (i.e. written work only, oral examination only, both written work and oral examination). The Board will also set a provisional timescale for the re-submission (usually within six months for full-time students/research engineers and within nine months for part-time students).

21 Board of Studies (Doctoral)

Board of Studies (Doctoral) is the University committee responsible for checking the examiners reports and approving the outcome of your Confirmation examination. The Board of Studies (Doctoral) normally meets every month (approximately every four/six weeks). Where a second attempt to pass the examination is permitted, the Board will formally agree the exact deadline for re-submission. You will be formally notified of the outcome by email from both the Secretary of the Board of Studies and Academic Registry shortly after the meeting.

22 Second submission / examination

Depending on the details specified by the Progression Board of Examiners when they recommended that you are permitted to make a second attempt to pass Confirmation, you will either re-submit your amended report, attend a second examination, or undertake both. You are required to submit your second Confirmation report (and any other documents such as the draft chapter, where appropriate) electronically through Moodle via the Doctoral College Submission page. You are **not required** to complete another PGR3 form for your second submission. Your department/faculty/school may also ask you to submit paper copies of your amended report and associated documents, and therefore you should seek clarification from your department/faculty/school (see also appendix 2). The Doctoral College will attempt to process your documents and forward them to the internal examiners within two weeks of submission (where no issues arise with the submission)

23 Assessment Offences / Plagiarism

The procedures for dealing with any allegations of plagiarism and other assessment offences during the Confirmation process are set out in section 7 of QA53 Examination and Assessment Offences.

24 Appeals procedure

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your Confirmation examination, the University's Regulation 17 sets out the grounds and process for appealing a decision of the Board of Studies, and the timescales by which you may appeal. The University provides general guidance about Academic Appeals and Reviews and the Students' Union Advice and Support Service can provide independent guidance throughout the academic appeals process.

APPENDIX 1: Confirmation Process Flowchart

ACTIVITY	GENERAL TIMESCALE	EXAMPLE TIMESCALE (Full-time PhD with a 4 year registration)
Complete training / Obtain ethical approval / Produce data management plan / Produce Confirmation report / draft chapter Complete academic / research integrity tests	Between Candidature and deadline for Confirmation	1 - 12 months (after registration)
Supervisor to commence appointment of Progression Board of Examiners	3 to 6 months before deadline for Confirmation	6 - 9 months (after registration)
Student is reminded to start the process for completing their section of PGR3	3 months before deadline for Confirmation	9 months (after registration)
Student submits their Confirmation report / data management plan / ethics approval / draft chapter	By the deadline for Confirmation	12 months (after registration)
Student completes their section of the PGR3 form & Supervisor completes their section of the PGR3 form	By the deadline for Confirmation	12 months (after registration)
Confirmation examination is held	Within 4 weeks of submission	13 months (after registration)
Progression Board of Examiners completes their section of PGR3	2 weeks after Confirmation examination	13.5 months (after registration)
Student provides feedback in PGR3	2 weeks + after Confirmation examination	13.5 months (after registration)

Director of Studies to sign off PGR3	2 weeks + after Confirmation examination	14 months (after registration)
Outcome of Confirmation examination considered at Board of Studies (Doctoral)	Next appropriate meeting (meetings held every 4-6 weeks)	15 / 15.5 months (after registration)
Outcome of Board of Studies (Doctoral) reported to student	Shortly after Board of Studies (Doctoral)	15.5 / 16 months (after registration)
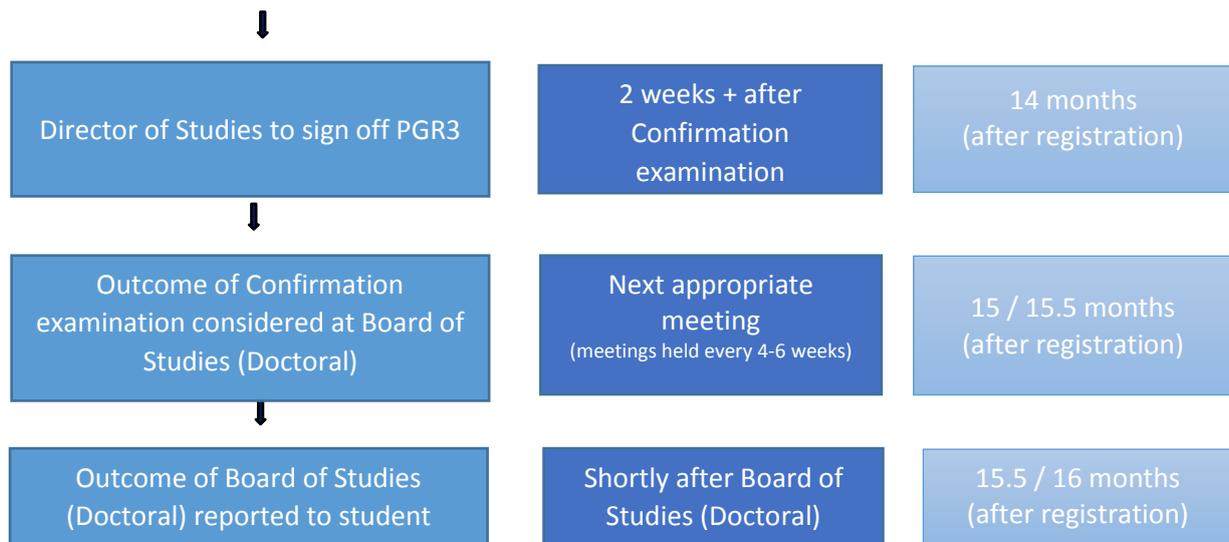
APPENDIX 2: Additional faculty/school-specific guidance

Please note that some departments may also provide further advice on Confirmation, alongside the faculty/school-specific information provided below:

Faculty of Engineering and Design

- Confirmation occurs 12 months from date of registration (full-time PhD)
- Report to be written in the style of a research dissertation
- Report to be a maximum 50 pages cover to cover
- Format of the report:
    a) Draft contents of the PhD, with short summaries of what will be covered in the main chapters
    b) Introduction to the subject and essential background to the research
    c) Objectives of the research and why it is important
    d) Literature survey. This will not be as exhaustive as that found in the final PhD but will demonstrate that the student has a deep understanding of the field, that the student is able to source information and refer to it appropriately, that the student can distinguish the important from the unimportant, and that the student has identified gap(s) in present understanding which will form the basis for the present research. (The material presented in the confirmation report can be included in the final thesis and would not constitute plagiarism)
    e) Description of the methods already used, and to be used, in the research
    f) Discussion of any results obtained so far
    g) Clear description of the future directions of the research, including planned activities, expected outcomes, risk mitigation measures, 'what if' scenarios, and a timetable which shows realistic timelines to graduation within the Faculty (full-time) target of 3 years (or 3.5 years if funding is available for this period)
    h) List of references
- Alongside Moodle submission, two paper copies of your report should be submitted to the Doctoral Programmes Office (10 West 3.54) before 4pm of the deadline.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- Report to be a maximum of 5,000 words (excluding references and appendices)
- Format of the report:
    a) Abstract (200 words)
    b) Context/background literature
    c) Aims, objectives/research question(s)
    d) Main research methods and rationale for these
    e) Likely contribution to knowledge
    f) Record of work completed and written progress to date and outline of remaining work to be completed
    g) Contents page of full thesis (containing titles of chapters). Chapter summaries are not necessary at this stage but can be included if students wish
    h) Detailed timetable for completion
    i) Any issues relating to ethics not covered by the signed ethics forms
- Suggested format of cover page of the report:
    a) University of Bath logo
    b) Department logo
    c) Student name
    d) Student number
    e) Title
    f) Date
    g) Name of supervisors
- Ethical forms need to be signed off prior to any data collection

- In the case of a student on a Collaborative/Interdisciplinary SWDTC programme, it is good practice if the second Examiner (i.e. not the Chair or Examiner One of the Progression Board of Examiners) is from either the University of Bristol or the University of Exeter (defined by the location of their Second Supervisor), where possible
- The oral examination (comprising a brief presentation by the student followed by questions and discussion) may or may not (depending on departmental practice) be open to other interested students and staff to attend.
- HSS would strongly recommend that the Lead Supervisor attend (but cannot participate). However, this is subject to permission by the candidate
- Where a department uses an open session, HSS recognises that occasionally an external academic may also attend. However they would not play a part in the formal examination of the student.
- HSS would expect that the Progression Board of Examiners would hold a closed meeting immediately after the oral examination to decide on the outcome. Where the presentation has been open to others, the Progression Board of Examiners may decide to hold closed discussions with the candidate at this stage if they wish.
- Where a department does not have set/block periods then the confirmation meeting should take place within one month of the submission of papers/report.

Faculty of Science

- For the following programmes, Confirmation occurs at:

Department	Programme	Confirmation report due
	Standard PhD	12 months
	Standard Integrated PhD	24 months (12 months after start of PhD)
	NERC GW4+	12 months
	SWBio	18 months
	WISE	24 months
Chemistry	Catalysis	12 months from registration at Bath
	CMAC	12 months
	Sustainable Chemical Technologies	24 months (12 months after start of PhD)
Computer Science	EngD	24 months
Mathematical Sciences	Doctoral College PhD	18 months
	Integrated PhD	30 months (18 months after start of PhD)
	SAMBa Integrated PhD	30 months (18 months after start of PhD)
Physics	Condensed Matter Physics	12 months from registration at Bath
	Photovoltaics	18 months

- Part-time students/research engineers have 50% extra time added to the standard full-time deadlines listed above (e.g. 18 months instead of 12 for a standard PhD)
- The viva should entail probing questioning of the candidate by the Progression Board of Examiners and may include an oral presentation by the student/research engineer, depending on discipline
- The student/research engineer should demonstrate: knowledge of their research area; evidence of conducting research, including (if appropriate) the generation and analysis of novel results, data or other outputs; a realistic future perspective
- The student/research engineer's report should document these aspects in detail and should be: written in a professional style; appropriately formatted; largely devoid of typographical and other minor errors; and should include a correctly formatted bibliography.

School of Management

- Confirmation occurs:
  - 12 months from date of registration for full-time PhD students
  - 24 months from date of registration for part-time PhD students
  - By June of the second year for ESRC students
  - By October of the second year for Integrated PhD students
- What the panel will be looking for in detail will depend on the type of study you are undertaking (e.g. quantitative cross-national projects and ethnographic case studies have different research trajectories). Nonetheless, the panel will usually be looking for:
  - clear, answerable research questions and achievable research objectives
  - good understanding and explanation of relevant literature which contextualises your project
  - some exploration of relevant theoretical issues or frameworks
  - robust research design and methodology, including appropriate treatment of ethical issues
  - clear and feasible timetable for completion.
- Confirmation should occur prior to conducting major fieldwork
- Three soft bound copies of a written report should be submitted (alongside the electronic submission through Moodle)
- The report should be between 10,000-20,000 words (plus any supporting documents)
- The report will normally include:
  1. An introduction which provides a clear statement of the topic being investigated and an account of its academic and practical significance
  2. A review of the relevant literature, including an evaluation of key contributors in the area to be studied; an account of a conceptual perspective developed by the candidate; and any other relevant material
  3. A detailed account and justification of the epistemological perspective from which the research is being conducted, and an exploration of the methodological choices the candidate has (or proposes) to take
  4. A timetable of planned activities, including resource, access and funding considerations
  5. Any relevant appendices
  6. A statement regarding any ethical issues implicated in the conduct of the research.
  7. Bibliography/references.
- All involved will be informed of the date of the confirmation meeting at least one month in advance and panel members will also receive the Confirmation document at this point
- The Progression Board of Examiners will consist of two staff members as Examiners and a chairperson, approved by the Board of Studies (Doctoral). In exceptional circumstances a panel member may be drawn from outside the School.
- *The Chairperson* The primary role of the Chairperson is to ensure 'fair play' for the candidate, and that the rules as set out in this document are adhered to. It is also the role of the chairperson to arbitrate between Examiners in those instances where disagreements arise. The Chairperson may make a formal input into the discussion of the candidate's work if this is requested by the Examiners. At the end of the exam, the Chairperson will ask both candidate and Supervisor(s) to leave the examination room. They will then be called back to the room when the Examiners have reached their decision. The Chairperson will announce the decision to the candidate and ask the Examiners to provide a brief explanation of their decision (a detailed written explanation will need to be provided in writing). At the end of the meeting the Chairperson should ensure that the PGR3 form is completed. The Chairperson is normally a member of the professoriate.
- *The Supervisor(s)* A written progress report is required to be submitted to the Progression Board of Examiners from the Supervisor conveying satisfactory progress by the student (as part of the PGR3 process). The report should include a description of the work, the value of the work completed and the potential displayed by the candidate and should be signed by the person who prepared it. Supervisors are expected to be non-participating observers at the confirmation meeting. However, panel members may, where appropriate, ask supervisors for supplementary information and clarification of important issues.
- *The Examiners* are expected to be knowledgeable in the area they are examining, and well prepared. It is strongly advised that Examiners meet before the confirmation meeting in order to discuss all relevant issues. In those instances where the Chairperson is a subject specialist, or has relevant knowledge, the Examiners may ask them for their commentary. However, the final decision regarding the outcome is to be made by the Examiners. Following the confirmation meeting the Examiners should prepare a written report that is not merely an explanation of their

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judgment, but which contains recommendations for consideration, improvement, discussion and reflection by the candidate consonant with the developmental nature of the transfer process.

- ***The Candidate*** All students, including part-time students living abroad, are expected to attend the confirmation meeting at the Claverton Down campus of the University of Bath in person. Candidates should prepare a formal or informal presentation to the Examiners of approximately 10 minutes, after which the Examiners will ask questions and otherwise explore the Confirmation report.

- ***The Director of Studies (DoS).*** Candidates may approach their DoS at any time (before or after) the confirmation meeting if they have any concerns regarding the confirmation process. The DoS may attend the Confirmation examination of any of the students enrolled on the programme for which they are responsible if this is deemed appropriate by them.

- The **Confirmation/Transfer** will include an opportunity for the panel to pose questions for the candidate to answer. The questions will be decided amongst the panel in advance to ensure that key areas are covered. This may be achieved in a pre-confirmation meeting, prior to the student (and any non-panel participants) joining them. The student will provide a verbal overview of their PhD for about 10 minutes (following on from the overview provided in the confirmation report). Handouts and audio-visual aids may be used to structure this talk but are not obligatory. The panel should have access to the ethical forms that have been signed off prior to any data collection. Following this, the confirmation panel will ask the student questions about their work. The Confirmation meeting is expected to last from 60-90 minutes in total.

- The **Confirmation/Transfer** should be approached as a viva voce examination and, in some ways, as a fore-runner of the PhD viva. Questions are likely to be tough and testing and so students should be well-prepared to discuss any aspect of their work. However, the **Confirmation/Transfer** is also a positive and constructive opportunity to discuss key aspects of their research, its main strengths and weaknesses, and how best to progress in the later stages of the PhD. Material prepared for confirmation is not necessarily finished, and panel members know this. Students are expected to be able to defend their work, but also be able to recognise difficulties or problems (no research is perfect), and to take on board assessors' comments and recommendations.

- The decision on whether to approve confirmation or not is made by the panel alone. Supervisor(s) may be consulted but do not have a say on the final recommendation.

- The decision of the confirmation panel will be communicated to the student following brief deliberation of the panel. The decision will either be to recommend confirmation to PhD or to defer confirmation (with a second and final attempt to take place within 6 months). The decision will be based on the criteria outlined at the beginning of this note and will take into account the written material provided and the discussion at the meeting. The confirmation decision should reflect adequate progress, clear research questions, situated within a body of knowledge and a conceptual framework, viable and ethical methodology, and evidence that required data is available or can feasibly be collected within the stipulated time period, appropriate level of writing skills, an argument, and a credible plan for completion - the ingredients of a viable thesis, in other words.

- Following the proceedings the Examiners will, within fourteen working days, prepare a report on the examination of normally not less than 300 words.