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**NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF**

**PHD CONFIRMATION OF REGISTRATION PANELS**

 ***[only for students based at a Partner Institution]***

**1 When should the Event take Place, and how is it Initiated?**

[a] The process shall normally be initiated at the point at which the Director of Studies judges that the student has made sufficient progress to enable a Panel to assess whether the student is on track towards achieving the University’s expectations for doctoral work

[b] Irrespective of the Director of Studies judgement of the progress made by the student, the process shall normally be initiated in time for the process to be completed within 2 years of initial registration for full-time students and 4 years of initial registration for part-time students.

[c] The event may, if appropriate, be held at the same time as an annual review.

[d] The student shall be required to submit a Written Submission and to attend a Confirmation interview, normally held within one month of the receipt of the Written Submission.

[e] In order to initiate the process, the Director of Studies shall submit to the Research Office [or equivalent] in the partner institution a formal notification that they wish their supervisee to undergo the Confirmation of Registration Event. The administrator shall arrange for the next Progression and Award Board to be informed that the process has been initiated, and shall inform the relevant Moderator of the need to appoint a Panel.

**2 How is a Panel Appointed?**

Composition of the panel:

* **all** members of the Supervisory Team shall sit on the panel;
* an Independent Reader shall serve as Chair. The Independent Reader shall not necessarily have expertise in the area of the research, but shall normally have been formally approved as Director of Studies; in exceptional circumstances, the reader may not be an employee of the University;
* the Panel may be the same as the student’s Annual Monitoring Panel.

The responsibility for appointing the Panel will be held with the Moderator and facilitated by the Research Office [or equivalent] in the partner institution:

* the Moderator will appoint the Independent Reader [Chair];
* the partner institution’s Research Office [or equivalent] shall liaise with the Independent Reader [Chair], full supervisory team and the student to arrange the scheduling of the event.

**3 What are the Requirements for the Written Submission, and How should the Student be Informed of Them?**

After initial consultation with other Panel members, the partner institution’s Research Office [or equivalent], acting on behalf of the **Chair of the Panel write to the student to request that they submit a formal Written Submission, by a specified deadline, and confirm to the student that they must attend the interview on the agreed date/time [which shall be within 1 month of the submission deadline]**. The information provided by the partner institution’s Research Office [or equivalent], must outline that the aim of the Written Submission is to demonstrate that the work which the student has done so far indicates that they are capable of carrying out research at doctoral level; furthermore, it should also specify the required content and length of the Written Submission. This shall be copied to the Chair, who must be kept informed of the student’s response, of the receipt of the Written Submission and of the confirmed date/time for the Confirmation of Registration Event interview.

The requirements shall be broadly consistent with the following guidelines, but the detailed requirements may legitimately vary across academic disciplines [It is expected that some aspect of existing work will be submitted – possibly a single chapter or a selection taken from different sections of their draft thesis, together with an appropriate narrative. There is no expectation that the student should submit an entirely new piece of work separate from that on which they have been working since being registered for doctoral studies.]:

[a] Length

Typically around 20,000 words (although the precise length is dependent upon the discipline).

[b] Content

*Introduction*

* A brief outline of the nature of the submission (i.e. whether it is a chapter or a selection of pieces from more than one section of the draft thesis) setting out **in summary fashion** its aims, structure and content (including any tentative findings, arguments or conclusions) to enable the reader to see and appreciate the chapter’s/selections overall form and purpose.

Aims

* An articulation of the aims of the study, how they have evolved. and how they will enable the student to extend previous knowledge.
* Sufficient detail to demonstrate that the student is developing the ability to “conceptualise a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems”.

*Methodology*

* A discussion of the methodology [including theoretical and analytical frameworks] being used, the ethical issues being addressed, and how the proposed methodology has evolved.
* Sufficient detail to demonstrate that the student is developing the ability to “design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, & to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems”.

*Interim Findings and Outcomes*

* A discussion of the findings obtained so far, how they are influencing the developing project overall, and any publications [or material submitted for publication] that have emerged, ranging from internal seminar presentations to referred journal articles.
* Sufficient detail to demonstrate that the student’s research has the potential for generating “new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline”, of a “quality to satisfy peer review”.
* Publications [or material submitted for publication] should be included in full, in an Appendix].

*Bibliography*

* Full references to primary and secondary sources which have been used so far, as well as those still to be accessed.

*Proposed Structure of the Thesis*

* A draft structure, including chapter headings and a short summary of content for each chapter.
* Sufficient detail to demonstrate that the scope of the research will be sufficiently substantial to warrant consideration for a doctoral award.

*Proposed Programme for Completion of the Research*

* A timetable for completion of the research, including an estimate of the likely submission date.

*[OPTIONAL] Issues for Discussion*

* Questions that the student wishes to pose to the Examiners during the Confirmation Interview.

**4 How should the Panel Prepare for, and Conduct, the Interview?**

[a] Receipt of the Proposal and Arrangements for the Interview

* Upon receipt of the Written Submission, the Research Office [or equivalent] in the partner institution should forward it to Panel members (and reconfirm the time and date for the interview to the student and members of the panel)
* The interview shall normally be held at the Partner Institution. However, in the case of students admitted under Distance Supervision arrangements, the interview may be held at an alternative location.
* The interview shall normally take place within one month of the receipt of the written submission.

[b] Initial Scrutiny of the Proposal

* Each Panel member shall read the Proposal, form an initial judgement, with reference to the University’s expectations for doctoral research, about the applicant’s potential to complete their research to doctoral level within the required timescale, and complete, independently, the Initial Report Form.

[c] Conduct of the Interview

* The Panel shall meet before the interview, to discuss, in view of the Initial Report Forms, how the interview is to be conducted.
* The interview shall be chaired by the Chair of the Panel, with other members in attendance.
* The aims of the interview shall be to:
	+ provide the Panel with an opportunity to corroborate their initial judgements based on the written proposal, and explore with the applicant any issues arising from that submission,
	+ provide the applicant with an opportunity to develop and improve her/his oral and presentation skills in preparation for the final oral examination.
* The student shall be allowed to audio-record the interview if they wish.
* After the student has left the interview, the Panel shall complete the Final Report Form which shall require the Panel to allocate the student, via the Form, to one of the four recommended outcomes specified in Section 6 below.

**5 What will Happen After the Interview?**

[a] The Chair shall, normally within one week of the interview, submit the completed Confirmation Report Form, with attachments as appropriate, to the Research Office [or equivalent] in the partner institution and the Moderator. The Moderator shall confirm that due process had been followed, and authorise the Research Office [or equivalent] in the partner institution to attach the form to the student’s record, convey the recommended outcome to the Progression and Award Board, and provide a copy of the report to the supervisory team and the student.

[b] The Director of Studies shall ensure that the student understands the rationale for the outcome (and the implications thereof).

[c] At its next meeting, the Progression and Award Board shall confirm the outcome for each student and, in the case of students in the *Confirmation Deferred* category, confirm the date by which the student is required to resubmit, and whether the student must undertake a second interview.

[d] The Student Administration office shall formally communicate the confirmed outcome to the student, and, where appropriate, arrange for the student to re-register for the following academic session. Following the communication of the formal outcome, the student will be entitled to appeal, via the normal channels.

**6 What are the Four Possible Recommendations, and what are the Implications of Selecting Each One?**

[a] **PhD registration confirmed [CRS\_PHD]**

* This means that all subsequent annual registrations will be for a PhD.
* The recommendation, and a rationale, needs to be recorded on the form.
* In order to provide feedback to the student, the Panel should include in the form a brief summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the research project, the written submission and the student’s performance.

[b] **PhD confirmation deferred [CRD\_PHD]**

* This means that the student remains registered for a PhD for a further calendar year, pending a further Confirmation of Registration Event.
* The recommendation, and a rationale, needs to be recorded on the form, which should also specify a resubmission date and whether a further interview would be required.
* In addition, the Panel should, in order to provide feedback to the student, include on the report form a clear indication of [i] key strengths and weaknesses of the research project, the written submission and the student’s performance, [ii] the improvements the student must take in order for the resubmission to be successful, this information being provided without prejudice to the outcome of a resubmission, [iii] the deadline by which a resubmission must be submitted, and [iv] whether the student would also need to undertake a second interview.
* The Panel should select this outcome if student has not demonstrated their potential for working at doctoral level, but the submission has sufficient strengths to persuade the Panel that the student should be given a further opportunity to demonstrate their potential.
* The Panel should only select this outcome if it judges that the student would be able to make a successful submission within the maximum timescale stipulated in the regulations.
* In the case of a student being required to make only minor amendments, the Panel may request that such amendments are made in time for the outcome to be reviewed before the formal recommendation is submitted to the next meeting of the Progression and Award Board for approval.
* This outcome may normally only be issued to a student on one occasion.

[c] **Confirmation unsuccessful; transfer to MPhil [CRF\_MPHIL]**

* This means that all subsequent registrations will be for MPhil.
* The recommendation, and a rationale, needs to be recorded on the form.
* In addition, the Panel should, in order to provide feedback to the student, include on the report form a clear indication of key strengths and weaknesses of the research project, the written submission and the student’s performance.
* The Panel should select this outcome if student has not demonstrated their potential for working at doctoral level, and the Panel judges that the student would be unable to make a successful submission within the maximum timescale stipulated in the regulations.

[d] **Confirmation unsuccessful; terminate PGR [CRF\_FAIL]**

* This means that the student’s studies would be terminated.
* This outcome is likely to be extremely rare, but would be used if the Panel judged that the weaknesses were so serious that the student would not be able to achieve a postgraduate research award.
* The recommendation, and a rationale, needs to be recorded on the form.
* In addition, the Panel should, in order to provide feedback to the student, include on the report form a clear indication of key strengths and weaknesses of the research project, the written submission and the student’s performance.

**7 What are the University’s Expectations for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree?**

[a] Liverpool Hope University will award the degree of PhD to students who have demonstrated:

* the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
* a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
* the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
* a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

[b] Typically, holders of a PhD degree from Liverpool Hope University will:

i. be able to:

* make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
* continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

ii. have the qualities & transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of:

* personal responsibility;
* largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations.