MPhil to PhD Transfer Guidance.

Under current regulations most students studying for a PhD are initially enrolled as MPhil/PhD students and are formally progressed to PhD following successful defence of their work at MPhil transfer panel meeting. For panel meeting, at least 2 members of UoL academic staff who are not members of the supervisory team are appointed by School PGR Progress Panel to assess the quality of work produced in first year of project and the potential for candidate to complete PhD in good time (normally be ready to submit at 3 years). The assessment consists of 2 elements, a written report of 5000 words, and a panel meeting where candidate can present, discuss and defend their work. Panel members can recommend Pass (i.e. continue to submit for PhD), submit for alternative award (e.g. MPhil or MSc by Research), or fail programme. Candidates should be informed of recommendation on the day of the panel meeting by the transfer panel. The recommendation is passed to CRDB to ratify, and registry formally inform student of decision following CRDB ratification. Candidates who do not Pass on first attempt, have one more attempt available within 3 months of the initial panel meeting. Where candidates plan to resubmit for transfer they should receive a written copy of issues to address within one week of the panel meeting. Members of the supervisory team can attend the transfer meeting at the request of the candidate. Where supervisors are present, they are primarily attending only as observers and cannot contribute to any discussion or clarification of work, unless directed to do so by Transfer Panel.

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to PhD candidates, supervisors and panel members regarding the expectations of work included in the 5000 word report, and the discussion of this document during the Transfer Panel Meeting. The aim of the transfer is to assess the candidate’s progression to date and their potential to complete for a PhD. The written report should therefore be framed to include enough background literature to place the work in context, evidence of completion of work (or potential to do so) of PhD standard, and a clear plan of work to be included in the final thesis. The candidate should be prepared to present, discuss and defend their work during the Transfer Panel Meeting. The members of the transfer panel assessing the work should provide a critically supportive environment, where candidates are given the opportunity to clarify any issues that have arisen as part of the project during the meeting. Where the transfer panel suggest any changes to the presented work (e.g. resubmission for transfer report) or amendments to planned or future work, then candidate should consult with supervisory team, before making the requested amendments.

These guidelines are written to both cover candidates who have completed elements of the original research that they are undertaking as part of their MPhil/PhD and candidates still developing the approaches and methods needed to complete the PhD, but where they are showing clear progress during year 1, and have a clear, realistic plan for completing their PhD within normal timeframes.

The table below sets out the expectations of PhD students at submission of their thesis and PhD viva (first column). As MPhil transfer is at end of first year of study, the candidates will not be expected to show these attributes at the level of a PhD thesis. The second column therefore sets out standards expected of students at point of MPhil transfer. Examples of evidence that can be presented in the written 5000 word transfer report (column 3) or discussed as part of the Transfer Panel Meeting (column 4) are also presented. The evidence is not an exhaustive list, but captures information that would be relevant to most MPhil/PhD projects. This document will set out broad expectations of students within College of Science.

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| PhD Expectation | MPhil Transfer Expectation | Examples of Evidence 5000 word  Written MPhil/PhD Transfer Report | Examples of Evidence  Transfer Panel meeting |
| A systematic and critical understanding of a body of knowledge at the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study or creative domain to which the research relates. | A good understanding of a body of knowledge for the academic discipline, field of study or creative domain to which the research relates. | Written report can contain a literature review with key texts that have informed the project being undertaken.  Alternatively, the report can contain a detailed introduction to and discussion of planned and completed objectives of the thesis that places the work in its current context. | Candidate should be familiar with the key texts underpinning their project, and the relationship between their work and the existing literature.  Candidate should be capable of critically evaluating existing literature. |
| A detailed understanding of research techniques consistent with advanced academic enquiry in the relevant academic discipline, field of study or creative domain to which the research relates | A good understanding of research techniques consistent with academic enquiry in the relevant academic discipline, field of study or creative domain to which the research relates | Written report should contain details of key methodological developments that underpin the thesis.  Written report can include a review of potential approaches that can be used in the project and a rationale for choices they have made. | Candidate should be able to describe and discuss the research methods they have used and plan to use, including the rationale for using these methods. |
| The ability to conceive, implement and, where appropriate, modify a plan of research capable of creating new knowledge at the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study or creative domain. | The ability to conceive, implement and, where appropriate, modify a plan of research capable of creating new knowledge and/or develop research skills necessary for completion of PhD. | Written report should contain evidence of work completed to date, including the methods, results and their interpretation.  Written report can also include accounts of methodological development, preliminary data or pilot studies where studies have not yet been completed.  Written report should include a thesis plan setting out likely chapters planned for PhD thesis. | Candidate should be able to describe, discuss, defend completed work and where appropriate clarify or modify their interpretation of findings. |
| An original contribution to the body of knowledge of an academic discipline, field of study or academic domain in a way that extends the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study or creative domain and which would warrant publication in the judgement of peers | The potential to make an original contribution to the body of knowledge of an academic discipline, field of study or academic domain in a way that extends the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study or creative domain and which would warrant publication in the judgement of peers. | Written report should identify those elements of completed or planned work that have potential to be published.  Where work has been published or is in prep, then this should be identified in document. | Candidate should be able to differentiate between elements of the thesis which are original and have potential for publication, and those elements that primarily inform the development of the project.  Candidate should be able to discuss their plans for publication with transfer panel. |
| The ability of the candidate to undertake further research without supervision, such research being of the kind that would warrant publication in the judgement of peers. | The ability of the candidate to plan and implement further work to meet requirements of PhD with support from supervisory team.  Such research should be consistent with requirements of PhD and have good potential for publication. | Written report includes an account of the work to be completed for the PhD Thesis, including timelines. | Candidate able to present, discuss, defend or modify these plans during transfer panel meeting |