

Guidelines for the Transfer Examination for Masters to PhD Conversion and Confirmation of Candidature for Probationary PhD Students

Key personnel

The Director of Graduate Affairs
xxx, (email: @eng.monash.edu.au, Tel:)

The Manager of Academic Programs
xxx (email: @eng.monash.edu.au, Tel:)

ECMS equipment booking
<http://www.eng.monash.edu.au/ecms/staff/av/>, Tel: 51911

Language and learning training
<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/index.xml>

Objectives

The department is required by the university to formally review the progress of M.Eng.Sci seeking to become Ph.D candidates and probationary Ph.D candidates, after approximately 10 months of enrolment. The review is in the form of an examination and serves as a means of ensuring the candidate:

- has made the transition from undergraduate study to the conduct of research,
- has reviewed previous work in the area of their nominated thesis topic,
- has, as a consequence of this review, demonstrated evidence of discussions with their supervisor to form original thinking and a set of hypotheses, the testing of which would represent original work in the field,
- has planned the research required to test the hypotheses, and
- has assessed the resources required and ensured that such resources are available with their supervisor.

Timing

Transfer exams take place 10-12 months after enrolment as a postgraduate student.¹

Six months after enrolment: The supervisor is responsible for discussing with the student whether transfer to/confirmation of PhD should take place.

Two months (approx.) before the exam: The supervisor should initiate the transfer process by requesting via email, the director of graduate affairs to arrange the examination.

One month (approx.) before the exam: The names and contact details of two suitable external examiners are to be provided by the supervisor. External examiners must be external to the department, and preferably external to Monash University. They are not to be close colleagues or collaborators of the supervisor. The director of graduate affairs will choose one of the proposed external examiners, although in the event of either perceived conflict of interest or lack of availability, the director may choose another external examiner. An internal examiner will be chosen by the director to complete the examining committee.

Three weeks (approx.) before the exam: The supervisor will be informed of the composition of the examining committee, and may ask the department chair to intervene in its composition (due to potential bias or other relevant cause). Upon agreement being reached by all parties, the manager of academic programs and the director of graduate affairs will then meet to discuss and set the final date for the exam.

Two weeks before the exam: The candidate should ensure the transfer report and associated paperwork are received by the academic program manager. The supervisor² is expected to have read and approved the submitted transfer report and to believe the student is capable of completing the transfer to or confirmation of PhD candidature.

Before the examination: The manager of academic programs manages the delivery of the reports to the examiners, supervisor and director. All examiners are expected to have read the student's transfer report in detail.³

Within one week after the examination: examiners to provide reports on their assessment of the candidate.

Within two weeks after the examination: supervisor and candidate to receive results of the assessment.

¹ Transfer examinations occurring 13 months or later after starting requires an explanation of the delay to the *faculty* director of research training.

² This includes both the principal and any other supervisor of the postgraduate student. If co-supervised, the co-supervisor is expected to attend the examination under similar rules as the main supervisor.

³ This is because the student is unlikely to present the full detail of their work in the presentation, and often the written report exposes problems not apparent in the presentation.

For the supervisor and examiners

The exam should begin with the student making a 20 minute presentation of their work, typically incorporating a review of the literature, the research completed to date, the research issues that will be addressed during the PhD, a proposed research plan, a timetable for the research, and a statement on any possible resource implications. This portion is open to the academia, all students, and the public.

During the open portion of the examination, any member of the audience can ask questions of the candidate. The candidate is expected to respond without assistance from the supervisor, though the director may request supervisor intervention. Generally, the examiners and the director do not ask questions during this part of the proceedings, which should last no longer than ten minutes.

The examination is then closed to all but the examiners, supervisor(s), student and the director. The examiners and director may then ask questions relevant to the PhD transfer:

- the candidate's research progress to date,
- the candidate's presentation and research plan,
- whether the candidate's work is of sufficient quality and amount to merit PhD candidature, and
- whether the candidate has sufficient resources to successfully complete the PhD.

The supervisor acts as an observer and should not interfere with the candidate or examiners in this process unless specifically asked by the director. The director has the right to intervene in examiners' questions and comments and is there to facilitate the examination process as the convener. In this role, the director will chair the meeting but the discourse will be principally between the examiners and the candidate.

Subsequent to the question session, the student will be asked to leave, and examiners can discuss the transfer examination with the supervisor at that time, using the criteria above. Ultimately, the examiners must decide whether the case made by the student in the written and oral parts of the examination merit transfer to or confirmation of candidature in the PhD program. Written comments by each examiner in support of their decision are required, typically no more than one A4 page, and these will be kept on record and are forwarded to the Monash Research Graduate School when a recommendation of pass is given. The written comments are also passed on to the student and supervisor within 2 weeks of the examination. Several options are available to the examiners:

- **Unconditional passage.**
- **Conditional passage:** defined and achievable conditions in a short time frame⁴.
- **Re-examination** at a later time due to serious, yet addressable issues in a matter of months⁵.
- **Failure**, resulting in the student having the option to finish within a year following the examination date to obtain a Masters degree.

The director is to make clear to the examiners what the options are and to assist them in coming to a consensus on the result. As the convener, the director has a casting vote to decide the outcome if the examiners cannot reach agreement. The reasoning behind this is that the director is the person who attends each examination, and this provides some uniformity of assessment between examinations. The supervisor is welcome to make comments on the examiners' observations during this process, but interference will generally not be tolerated.

After reaching a conclusion, the director will call the candidate back into the room and inform them of the outcome.

⁴ Examples: Rewrite certain parts of the report and resubmit in 2 weeks. Submit a short document explaining/expanding on part of the transfer report/presentation that the examiners found unsatisfactory.

⁵ Three months is the typical amount.

For the student

Preparing the PhD transfer or confirmation of candidature report and presentation

The examination is a combined oral and written examination of a postgraduate student seeking to become a PhD candidate, the *presentation* and the *transfer report*, respectively.

You are expected to author a detailed report on your progress and plans in your proposed PhD candidature. The supervisor is responsible for discussing with you whether transfer to PhD should take place around six months into your Master's candidature. **The supervisor should initiate the transfer process** about two months before the exam. Once the process is initiated, **you should do the following as soon as possible, and at least two weeks before the scheduled seminar:**

- Complete the transfer notice below with your abstract and email it to the director of graduate affairs and the manager of academic programs for circulation to staff and students.
- Check and ensure you have two examiners in addition to your supervisor(s). Details on this process are given above.
- Provide bound copies of your transfer report to the manager of academic programs **at least** two weeks in advance of the exam. One each is required for your supervisor(s), the two examiners, the director, and one extra for safekeeping.
- Book electronic equipment you need to make the exam presentation with ECMS. The room booking will be made by the manager of academic programs, who plans the exam date and time in consultation with those involved. Be sure to test your presentation with the ECMS equipment well in advance as compatibility problems are common.

The 20 minute oral presentation is open to the academia and public. It should contain a review of the literature, the research completed to date, the research issues to be addressed during the PhD, a proposed research plan, a timetable, and a statement on any possible resource implications. *Do not* exceed 20 minutes for your presentation; you are not expected to cover all the material presented in the transfer report. Ignoring this guideline may adversely affect your chances of passing the exam. *Do* your best to make the presentation interesting for a general audience far outside your chosen research area.

The transfer report is to be prepared as described in the separate document "PHD TRANSFER/CONFIRMATION APPLICATION".

The idea is to clearly convey how the proposed PhD

- Addresses a clear and important problem, question or issue
- Is challenging yet feasible, significant and innovative, and how it builds on your previous work
- Will be carried out (explain *the approach* and *the method in detail*)
- Fits in the context of work of international standing, your proven abilities to date, and the remaining time available

For help on writing, consult the research student academic support lecturer for English training in 220/72, or see their web page at <http://www.eng.monash.edu.au/current-students/lls.html> **Do not underestimate their ability to help you.**

During the examination

The public presentation component should take about 20 minutes. Up to 10 minutes of questions from the audience may follow; these questions are *not* a part of the formal examination process. Generally, the examiners will not ask questions during this part of the proceedings. After the presentation, everyone except the supervisor(s), examiners and director will be asked to leave. The formal questioning will then commence. The examiners will ask questions of your research progress, presentation, and plan, to determine whether the work is of sufficient quality and amount to merit PhD candidature, and whether you have sufficient resources to complete the PhD successfully. The director has the right to intervene in examiners' questions and comments and is there to facilitate the examination process as the convener. In this role, the director will chair the meeting but the discourse will be principally between the examiners and the candidate.

The criteria applied include the following:

- Satisfactory advance preparation for undertaking a PhD: a full understanding of the critical literature and identification of suitable open issues on which to base PhD research.
- Reasonable expectation that a PhD thesis of sufficient quality is likely to result in the required timeframe, usually 3 years⁶;
 - The preliminary research outcomes already should be of sufficient quality for PhD research.
 - The necessary analysis and experimental skills have been or are likely to be developed.
 - An explicit and achievable research plan, preferably as a series of hypotheses, with a plan to test each on a schedule.
 - Ideally, a series of publications to result and the journals targeted.
- Resources required and identified, and whether these are available or are likely to become available during candidature.

⁶ Note that this is often a constraint imposed by funding, not maximum candidature time, currently 4 years.

You will be asked to leave for a short time; during this time they will discuss your examination results after which you will be called back into the examination. The waiting time could be quite short, though may take up to an hour depending on the circumstances. The director will inform you of the outcome, one of four options listed below:

- **Unconditional** passage.
- Conditional passage: contingent on defined and achievable conditions over a short time frame⁷.
- **Re-examination** at a later time due to serious, yet addressable issues in a matter of months⁸.
- **Failure**, resulting in the student having the option to finish within a year following the examination date to obtain a Masters degree.

The director will also inform you of special conditions, should these be specified by the examiners. Should you be unhappy with the outcome, the director and the manager of academic programs are people you can discuss your result with independently of your supervisors and the examiners. Understand, however, that ultimately it is the examiners who make the decision.

After the transfer seminar and oral exam

The director or manager will supply copies of the examiners' reports to you within 2 weeks following the examination. If necessary, you will also receive a statement of what is required to complete examination passage. If changes are necessary in your transfer report, provide to the manager of academic programs two bound copies of your transfer report with all the corrections specified in your examination as made and approved by your examiners and supervisor(s).

If successful in the examination, congratulations!

Complete the transfer and the PhD forms, and provide a copy of your academic transcripts (if not a Monash U/G student) and a copy of your IELTS/TOEFL certificate (if an international student) to the manager of academic programs. You can download the transfer form from the following website under "*C*" confirmation of candidature form and guidelines:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/research/internal/forms/atoz.html#m>

<http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/students/confirm.rtf>

If you have any questions please see the manager of academic programs or the director of graduate affairs as soon as possible.

⁷ Examples: Rewrite certain parts of the report and resubmit in 2 weeks. Submit a short document explaining/expanding on part of the transfer report/presentation that the examiners found unsatisfactory.

⁸ Three months is the typical amount.

Monash University

Department of xxx

Ph.D. Transfer Seminar

Enter title here

by

Enter Name Here

DATE: Enter date here

START TIME: Enter time here

VENUE: Room, Building

ABSTRACT

Enter abstract here

MONASH UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF xxx
PHD TRANSFER/CONFIRMATION APPLICATION

Applications must read the guidelines for the confirmation and transfer process.

PART A—SUMMARY

A1 STUDENT

Name	
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A2 TRANSFER/CONFIRMATION

Type of application: Transfer Confirmation

A3 TITLE

Provide a short descriptive title of no more than 20 words.

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A4 SUPERVISOR

Person number	NAME	Role Main, joint or associate
1		
2		

A5 DATES

Commencement date	
Expected completion date	

A6 SCHOLARSHIP TYPE

If funded, enter the type of scholarship or award.	
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A7 TUTORING/DEMONSTRATING

If undertaking demonstrating in the Department enter the approximate number of hours per week	
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A8 SUMMARY

In no more than 100 words of plain language, provide a summary of the project.

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A9 INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Provide a summary here in no more than 100 words of any expected international collaboration

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PART B—PROJECT RESOURCES

B1 EXPERIMENTAL FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT

Provide a list of the major equipment items and the time in hours required for each. Do not include minor items. If more space is needed, make more rows.

	Enter the expected number of hours		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

B2 COMPUTING

Provide a list of the major computing facilities needed and the time in hours required for each. Do not include desktop PCs. If more space is needed, make more rows.

	Enter the expected number of hours		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

B3 WORKSHOP

Provide a list of major items required to be built in the workshop and the expected time needed for each. A major item is expected to take more than 25 hr of workshop time. If more space is needed, make more rows.

	Enter the expected number of hours		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

B4 SOFTWARE

Provide a list of the major software/programs (eg for CFD modelling, etc). If more space is needed, make more rows. Specify who holds the licence for the software if one is needed.

	Enter the expected number of hours		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

B5 OVERSEAS TRAVEL/CONFERENCE

Provide destinations, likely dates and time away if overseas travel forms part of this program. Also provide a list of conferences you are likely to attend. If more space is needed, make more rows.

	Dates		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

PART C—CERTIFICATION

C1 STUDENT

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information contained in this application is correct.

Signature	Date

C2 MAIN SUPERVISOR

Do you support this application for confirmation/upgrade of candidature? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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I certify that to the best of my knowledge the resources are available for this project.

Signature	Date

C3 DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The transfer/confirmation may proceed.

Signature	Date

PART D – PROGRESS REPORT

These guidelines outline the requirements for the transfer report for research students who wish to transfer from Master's to PhD candidature in the Faculty of Engineering.

In the report, your aim is to propose a PhD project based on the literature review and the preliminary research conducted during the first year of your candidature. You must convince the examiners that the proposed PhD project is viable and worthwhile, and that you have the understanding and the research skills required to carry it out.

Length:

The Transfer Report should be between 5,000 words and 7,500 words (approximately 15 – 20 pages of writing).

Title of research report/thesis

Table of Contents

Abstract

Introduction (1 page):

Provide brief background to the research topic, and establish a general research problem.

Literature Review (5 pages):

Present a critical review of selected relevant previous research in the field. Establish an important gap in the knowledge in the field, and thus clearly justify the need for more research.

Research Aims (1/2 - 1 page):

State what you will address in your research

- (i) research question or hypothesis
- (ii) subsidiary questions

Preliminary Research (5 pages):

Present a concise report of the research work that you have completed to date. Include theoretical and conceptual framework and analytical techniques and research design

Proposed Research (4 pages):

Describe the approach and methods of the planned research in convincing detail. Demonstrate that these are adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the project. Include a timeline for the proposed research.

Contributions of the proposed research (1/2 page):

State the expected outcomes of the research, and highlight the contributions that your project will make to knowledge in your field.

Communication of results

List any journal/conference publications you have produced during the probationary candidature and provide an outline of expected journal/conference publications and their approximate dates.

References

Checklist:

- 1) Sections A1-9 have been completed in full
- 2) All resource requirements have been identified and entered in section B1-5
- 3) You and your main supervisor have signed section C
- 4) You have attached the progress report
- 5) You may now ask the Director of Graduate Studies to sign section C

Make sufficient copies for the examiners and records and ensure these are sent out at least 2 weeks before the date of your transfer/confirmation