

TRANSFER FROM MPhil TO PHD - GUIDELINES FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS AND REVIEWERS

Purpose of the Transfer Process

LJMU Research Degree Regulations require that all postgraduate research students should be registered in the first instance for an MPhil degree and transfer, if appropriate, to the PhD degree with the approval of the University's Research Degrees Committee. Transfer for full- time students should normally be made 12 months from initial enrolment and for part-time students 24 months from initial enrolment.

The aim of the transfer process is to establish whether the student has produced work of sufficient quantity and quality to suggest that he or she can achieve the standard required for a PhD. The quality criterion relates to the ability to produce work that makes an original contribution to knowledge. The potential of the project to do this will have been indicated at the time of registration, when the MPhil and PhD elements of a study are required to be clearly delineated on the RD9R registration form. At registration a proposed MPhil/PhD project not only promises a useful body of knowledge within existing frameworks, but also has the potential to make an original contribution by challenging, extending or otherwise affecting existing theoretical frameworks or assumptions. There are other possible definitions of originality, for example applying existing methodologies in an original way (often cross-disciplinary), synthesising information in an original way, or testing existing knowledge in an original way.

The transfer process will establish that the student a) understands the problem; b) is aware of the associated literature; c) has demonstrated capability to conduct the research; d) has a realistic research plan and schedule and e) can deliver at PhD level.

Submitting the Transfer Document

1. The transfer process consists of a written report and an oral assessment and is subject to internal or, in exceptional circumstances, external assessment prior to being sent to the University's Research Degrees Committee for approval. Formal feedback to the postgraduate research student will be provided **at the end of the process**.

2. The following documentation is submitted to the Graduate School in support of the application to transfer:

- **Part A** of the application to Transfer from MPhil to PhD form (Form RD9T - <http://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/62172.htm>) to be completed and signed by all members of the supervisory team.

- A progress report on the work undertaken to be produced by the postgraduate research student. The progress report should normally be 3,000 – 4,500 words in length and not exceeding 6,000 words. The progress report must include the following:

- (i) An abstract of the work undertaken and described in the report.
- (ii) A succinct review of the relevant literature and theoretical framework for the research.
- (iii) A brief review and discussion of the work already undertaken.
- (iv) A statement of the intended further work, including the original contribution to knowledge which is likely to emerge.

The Review Process

1. The transfer report and RD9T form must be forwarded to the Graduate School who will arrange an independent review of the report by a member of academic staff who is not a member of the supervisory team but has experience of supervising doctoral students and experience in the relevant research area. The Reviewer will be required to read and comment on the written transfer report and, together with the student's Director of Studies, undertake an oral assessment of the postgraduate research student.

2. Initially the Reviewer is asked read the report and complete **Part B** of the RD15 form <http://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/62172.htm>. In reading the report the Reviewer should consider the following:

- a. Progress of the work so far;
- b. Evidence that the student is capable of making an original contribution to the field;
- c. Appropriateness of the proposed timescale to completion;
- d. The quality of the presentation of the work.

3. Having read the report and completed **Part B** of the RD15 form the Reviewer will liaise with the student's Director of Studies to arrange a suitable date, time and venue for an oral assessment to be conducted. It is expected that the Reviewer will review the written transfer report within 1 calendar month of receiving the documentation and that an oral assessment will take place no later than 6 weeks following receipt of the transfer report by the Reviewer.

Oral Assessment of the Transfer Application

1. Once a date is established for the oral assessment the Director of Studies must inform the Graduate School of the date. The Graduate School will remind both the Reviewer and the Director of Studies of the relevant deadlines for completion of the review process where necessary.
2. The oral assessment is a formal procedure and allows the student to present and defend their research argument and is an opportunity for the Director of Studies and Reviewer to provide further advice and support. The oral assessment will assess the students ability to articulate the expected element of originality in the work, including practice/performance elements as well as the wider implications of the piece of research they are undertaking and in simplistic terms to answer the question “so what?” Although the Director of Studies is present at the oral assessment the Reviewer should be aware that it is the student’s ability to explain, not the Director of Studies that matters.
3. It is expected that the oral assessment will take between 30 - 45mins. Where appropriate the oral assessment may take the form of a presentation for example as part of a Faculty / School research postgraduate seminar or similar providing that the event provides adequate opportunity for the student to be questioned by the Reviewer.
4. At the end of the oral assessment the Reviewer, in consultation with the Director of Studies, must complete **Part C** of the RD15.
5. In the event that the Reviewer and the Director of Studies are unable to arrive at a consensus regarding the recommendation following the transfer process the Reviewer will complete **Part C** of the RD15 form and the Director of Studies will complete **Part D** providing any additional, relevant information with regard to the student’s performance during the oral assessment or any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the outcome.
6. Where a Reviewer and Director of Studies are unable to agree on the recommendation following the oral assessment the final decision will rest with the University’s Research Degrees Committee.
7. The completed form must be signed by both the Director of Studies and the Reviewer and sent to the Graduate School for formal approval by the University Research Degrees Committee.
8. Formal feedback on the outcome of the transfer process and recommendations will be provided via the Graduate School following approval from the University’s Research Degrees Committee. Informal feedback can be obtained prior to this from the Director of Studies.

Recommendations from the Transfer Process

The Reviewer is able to make the following recommendations following completion of the transfer process:

- A. Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD with no additional requirements.
- B. Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD taking note of the recommendations made in the Reviewer's report.
- C. Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD subject to the recommendations made in the Reviewers report. The Reviewer must provide details of the further work to be done and a realistic timescale for completion of the further work. The University Research Degrees Committee expects that this should not exceed 1 month for full-time students and 2 months for part-time students.
- D. Continue registration for the MPhil degree and not be permitted to transfer to PhD (a full explanation must be provided).

All recommendations must be formally approved by the University's Research Degrees Committee. Students will be provided with feedback on completion of the transfer process. This feedback will take the form of a summary of the contents of the completed RD15 form. The University Research Degrees Committee expect that in the event of a student's transfer being deferred or refused that the student's Director of Studies will provide comprehensive feedback and support.

Where a recommendation is made that a student should not transfer (D) the student has the right of appeal through the normal University academic appeals process.

<http://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/100761.htm>

To Note

Where a student has successfully transferred it is still possible that difficulties may arise. This is a matter for the student and his or her supervisory team. Any doubts about the student's ability to progress must be put on record, particularly at annual monitoring. Transparency towards the student must be observable.

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