

File 20090527.1500: Lecture by Professor Marta Kwiatkowska (DGS) on Confirmation of Status:

- At the confirmation viva, you should be almost equal to faculty. You should be able to speak authoritatively about your research.
- Thesis \neq dissertation.
- Confirmation of Status is an essential milestone, required to qualify for submission.
- There is an application, a viva, and a report required. The same rules apply: two attempts allowed; all attempts must be complete *within nine terms*.
- Finally, submission of thesis and examination, with external and internal examiners.
- It is much less common to fail (with a retry needed) at confirmation.
- Confirmation is *more* important than submission!
- MAT.3 and GSO.14 forms.
- Application is due **week 0** of 9th term.
- Can hold DPhil status for a maximum of 12 terms.
- Progression through confirmation is conditional on satisfactory progress—usually measured by publications; also evidenced by evidence of presentations (seminar and conference).
- I must satisfy the assessors that I can submit within three terms.
- When to confirm? **Six to twelve months before submission.**
 - must be able to formulate your thesis
 - must be able to justify what your original contribution is with respect to the state of the art
- What the assessors are looking for:
 - Evidence that the thesis is in the bag—ability to write about it and talk about it *with authority*, as an equal to faculty [the assessors *want to see you* speak as their equal].
 - Does not matter if the research changed direction since transfer, but the assessors might like to hear your story; what went wrong, how you dealt with it.
- Definitions:
 1. *thesis*—the case you are trying to argue. It may be stated in one sentence or one paragraph.
 2. *dissertation*—the document in which you make the case. It must include scientific and rigorous justification for the thesis.
- For a D.Phil. to be awarded, the thesis must be a significant original contribution to the state of knowledge.
- Significance and originality are things you get tested on every time you have a conference paper accepted.
- Confirmation: a **brief report** citing publications. Alternatively, a draft dissertation. Include a list of conference and seminar presentations.
- For confirmation, *cite published papers*.
- Also, TOC of dissertation.
 - brief description of each chapter
- The dissertation must be a book, not a research paper.

- Plan for remaining investigations. NO OPEN QUESTIONS ARE ALLOWED AT THIS STAGE.
- Must be clear, feasible, and without open-ended problems.
- It is okay to defer some work to future work section.
- Sometimes, the best research happens right after the Ph.D.
- Allow six months for write-up! Not two months.
- Confirmation process:
 - It is acceptable to submit the forms before the report is ready.
 - Viva by two assessors.
 - You must convince them that your research is a significant and original contribution, and that you have a clear plan.
 - You get two attempts, but more than one is uncommon.
- Remember: student status lapses at the end of 12 terms.
- Keep on top of things. Talk to your supervisor.
- Resources:
 1. Grad Student Research Handbook (comlab specific)
 2. MPLS handbook (MPLS forms and procedures)
 3. Grey book (authoritative)
- URLs:
 - <http://web.comlab.ox.ac.uk/teaching/dphil/>
 - <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/graduateprog.html>
- Tip: you want *experienced* assessors.
- Tip: you must have *peer-reviewed publications* (that is the key).
- The confirmation of status report, ideally, is a brief report that points to published, peer-reviewed papers.
- Conclusion: if you can point to 3 or 4 or 5 high-quality, peer-reviewed, published papers by the end of term 9, you're golden. Your conf. report can be five pages long.

References