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A Student guide to the MPhil / PhD transfer process

2009

A Student guide to the new MPhil / PhD transfer process

This is intended to help give guidance-on the completion of the transfer report for all research degree students registered for MPhil/PhD who are due to submit transfer reports after 1st September 2009 . The transfer process must occur between 12 and 15 months after enrolment for full-time students or between 18 and 24 months after enrolment for part-time students. These deadlines are calculated from the original enrolment date.

The transfer from MPhil to PhD registration, generally but not always, coincides with the stage of research where there has been time to conduct an in-depth literature review of the subject area and where preparatory work for the body of the research work has been undertaken and a first exploratory use has been made of the chosen research methodology or approach.

Students applying to transfer will be required to submit a written report, to undergo a formal interview with the assessor and at least one member of the supervisory team, and in the case of creative practice based work to submit evidence of the work to date, in order to inform the decision of the internal assessor(s). The student will be informed of the arrangements for the interview by the supervisor.

The purpose of the Transfer Report is to provide evidence that the work to date forms a solid platform for a PhD level programme. To achieve this the report should demonstrate that the research project:

- * constitutes a timely and relevant issue for research
- * shows evidence of analytic insight/theoretical development and creative development where appropriate
- * demonstrates a plan for an investigation that addresses the issues identified
- * includes evidence that work is progressing in an orderly and pre-planned manner

- * outlines the work to be done and the original contribution to knowledge which will be made

Once it has been achieved this then the case for transfer will be justified.

1. The background to the transfer process

1.1 MPhil and PhD

There are two types of research degree, MPhil and PhD at De Montfort University. As set out in Regulation 2.1, students can be admitted to, and subsequently enrolled on:

- a) MPhil
- b) MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD (MPhil/PhD)
- c) PhD (PhD direct)
- d) PhD by published works.

When a student starts their research studies, she or he is enrolled onto the research degree programme. In due course, they are registered; as explained in Regulation 2.2, the period between enrolment and registration is the probationary period. This guide is intended to help those registered on MPhil/PhD.

Transfer from MPhil to PhD requires the Faculty Research Degrees Committee to see that a student has the potential, motivation and capability to make an original contribution to knowledge and to become capable of being an independent researcher.

2. MPhil/PhD transfer

The timing of the Transfer Report means that the student should ensure that the registration for MPhil/PhD is submitted as soon as possible after enrolment. The regulations state that it should in any case be submitted within 6 months from enrolment for full-time students and within 12 months of enrolment for part-time students.

What is expected in the transfer report is set out in Regulation 13.10 and more details are given in the guidelines below. The stipulated length is 5,000 – 10,000 words.

Those students studying under Regulation 11.1, Exhibition, Performance, Creative Writing or Similar work will produce 3,000 – 5,000 word written Transfer Report together with evidence of the practice based work created. This evidence shall be submitted either as a body of work in a physical form or suitably documented.

In order to approve the transfer from MPhil to PhD status, the Transfer sub-Committee must be satisfied, on the basis of the recommendations of the supervisors and the assessor, that the student's submission fulfils the following criteria:

- i) the PhD is awarded for a critical investigation and evaluation of an approved topic which results in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and a demonstration of an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field;
- ii) the progress report on the work undertaken should be 5,000 to 10,000 words in length and include a brief review and discussion of the work already undertaken and a statement of the intended further work, including details of the original contribution to knowledge which is likely to emerge;
- iii) A student registered for a research degree by creative, scholarly or practical work shall also present, in an appropriate form, examples of the creative, scholarly or practical work in support of the Transfer Report, which in this case will appropriately be within the range of 3,000 - 5,000 words.
- iv) Students submitting their application to transfer should undergo a formal interview with the assessor in the presence of the supervisor(s) in order to inform the decision of the internal assessor(s).

- v) Before approving transfer, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee must be satisfied that the candidate has made sufficient progress and that the proposed programme provides a suitable basis for work at PhD standard, which the candidate is capable of pursuing to completion.

3. The Report

There are different strategies to write the Transfer Report. Students can:

- a) i) write a brief review and discussion of work already undertaken, including a review of relevant sources and methodologies as well as a plan of further work,

OR

- ii) present an annotated list of chapter headings indicating the overall thesis structure together with a provisional timetable for the completion of each draft chapter and include one or two draft chapters, together with a statement outlining the rationale, methodology and theoretical perspectives of the thesis including a statement of the original contribution to knowledge that is likely to emerge; (it is likely that students from the Faculty of Humanities will choose this option)
- b) in the case of creative work, students will be able to present a body of work together with a statement outlining the rationale, methodology and theoretical perspectives of the thesis including a statement of the original contribution to knowledge that is likely to emerge.

Students are strongly recommended to seek advice from their supervisors about the transfer report.

4. Guidance on completion of the MPhil/PhD Transfer Report

As guidance, students are recommended to include statements about the following points:

- i) a *brief* description of the aims and objectives of the research, articulating the specific research question. (If these have changed since the original registration, outline the developments.)
- ii) critical evaluation of the literature and or precedents in the field.
- iii) an account of the research methods employed.
- iv) a summary and evaluation of the work already completed (this can include published papers in conferences, exhibitions, performances or planned published material.
- vi) the proposed programme of research at PhD level.

Students should bear in mind the criteria for PhD level work; theoretical development, contribution to knowledge, originality and a sound basis for the chosen methodology.

5. Formal interview

The new transfer procedure requires all students to undergo a formal interview with the Assessor(s) in the presence of their supervisor(s). This should not be viewed as an additional hurdle but rather as an opportunity to present the research programme in person and to address any issues which the Assessor(s) may have identified when reading the report. It also provides an opportunity to rehearse for the longer viva examination which will take place following submission of the final PhD thesis, since many students will not have taken part in a viva examination before.

6. Requirements

- a. Students should attach a copy of the original Registration form to the Transfer document.
- b. Appropriate parts of the Research Methods Training Programme need to have been completed before any transfer of registration can be approved.
- c. Ethical approval is required **before** the relevant work is commenced. Where appropriate, it should be outlined in the Transfer Report how ethical issues are addressed.