**This document contains guidance on the Confirmation Process for PhD students who enrolled after 1 August 2016.**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice paragraphs 71-80.

(<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionV/code-practice.html>)

**Timing of the Confirmation**

Students who were registered for the degree of PhD after 1 August 2016 must successfully meet the requirements of a confirmation panel if they wish to submit for a PhD. The confirmation process must occur between 18-21 months of PhD candidature for full-time students and 30-42 months for part-time students. If a second attempt at confirmation is required this must have been completed with a recommendation by the end of month 24 for full time students or by the end of month 48 for part time students.

The main supervisor will complete a Confirmation Nomination of Assessors Form and submit this to the Graduate School Office as soon as these arrangements have been made but no later than two months prior to the confirmation viva (i.e. by the end of month 19 for full time students or the end of month 40 for part time students). It is the responsibility of the main supervisor to inform the student of the date, time and location of the confirmation viva.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit four weeks prior to the scheduled confirmation viva, to each panel member a copy of the confirmation material and to upload the confirmation material to the University SafeSend (<https://safesend.soton.ac.uk/>) addressed to Humanities Graduate School and email address [fah-gradschool@soton.ac.uk](mailto:fah-gradschool@soton.ac.uk)

**Confirmation Panel**

The Code of Practice states that the recommendation whether or not to confirm PhD candidature will be made by a confirmation panel constituted for the purpose. The confirmation panel will normally consist of at least two members of staff who have had no direct involvement in the research and can take the role of independent assessors. One of these two participating members of staff should act as chair of the confirmation panel.

In addition a member of the supervisory team will normally be invited to attend as an observer. However, the supervisor should not engage in the discussion during the confirmation viva. You can request the opportunity to meet the confirmation panel without a supervisor being present. If this request is made this should be done through the Faculty Graduate School Office.

In exceptional circumstances where an agreement with an external organisation (e.g. National Trust) states that an external supervisor is required to attend, permission should be sought from the Graduate School Director and the student should be notified well in advance of the viva.

**Please note**: An independent chair will only be appointed in exceptional cases.

**Confirmation Criteria**

In order to be confirmed you must meet the following **criteria** set out in the Code of Practice (paragraph 74):

1. You must demonstrate the ability to manage your research project, that you have become proficient in the special field of research you are studying and show that you have adequate motivation and perseverance to achieve success at PhD level.
2. Your project must be of sufficient scope, originality and theoretical interest to constitute a genuine contribution to the subject in the form of the understanding of a problem, the advancement of knowledge or the generation of new ideas.

**Confirmation Material** **and Viva** [Paragraphs 75 and 76 of the Code of Practice.]

All students must complete the Student Submission Form (which reviews your Academic Needs Analysis and allows you to update your training record) and an Interim Thesis. Details of the material which constitute the Interim thesis are listed below.

The University requires the confirmation panel making the recommendation to have reviewed material within the accepted word length parameters in order to make a judgement on the above criteria.

This will normally be between 15,000 and 20,000 words to reflect the point in the period of candidature at the time of confirmation. It is important that you establish in advance how long your material should be – arrange a supervision session to discuss it.

Typically, the material which you present will include:

1. an overview of the research problem and a rationale for the project
2. a substantial literature review establishing the current state of knowledge within the field,
3. well-developed plans for fieldwork and data analysis (if applicable)
4. a well-developed chapter plan of the thesis and a schedule for completion.

English (Creative Prose) students should submit:

1. 10000-12000 words of the creative component (or equivalent in script or poetry) AND
2. A 2500-3500 word essay exploring a key critical question raised by the creative work or a 2500-3500 word summary of the research process so far AND
3. a thesis bibliography of primary and secondary sources, both read and noted for future reading, which thus demonstrates the scope of the investigation AND
4. a planned outline of the completed project and a timetable for completion

English (Scriptwriting) students should submit:

1. a script of 30-45 minutes) AND
2. A 2500-3500 word essay exploring a key critical question raised by the creative work or a 2500-3500 word summary of the research process so far AND
3. a thesis bibliography of primary and secondary sources, both read and noted for future reading, which thus demonstrates the scope of the investigation AND
4. a planned outline of the completed project and a timetable for completion

English (Poetry) students should submit:

1. 2000-4000 words or poetry (or 14-16 pages) AND
2. A 2500-3500 word essay exploring a key critical question raised by the creative work or a 2500-3500 word summary of the research process so far AND
3. a thesis bibliography of primary and secondary sources, both read and noted for future reading, which thus demonstrates the scope of the investigation AND
4. a planned outline of the completed project and a timetable for completion

Film (Creative/Practical) students should submit:

1. a written piece (of research, analysis and reflection) of 2500-3000 words length discussing the creative and critical process of the practical element of the PhD and a plan for progressing to confirmation, demonstrates discernible and coherent aims and objectives. It should include a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, both read and noted for future reading, which thus demonstrates the scope of the project AND
2. a practical audio-visual piece of not more than 15 minutes’ duration.

Music composition

Students will follow the relevant Faculty guidelines, with the following exceptions. The submission must consist of two parts:

1. Compositions (or if appropriate one composition) equating to 40% of the final submission AND
2. A critical written component with a maximum length of 16000 words and an indicative minimum of 8000 words

Music performance

1. Evidence of music performance activities (for example a recital or lecture recital) of an indicative length of 50 minutes. This evidence may take the form or a live performance to be attended by both independent assessors OR via video recording AND
2. A critical written component with a maximum length of 35000 words

Three-paper format

1. An outline version, of a minimum 5000 words in length, of the Introduction that demonstrated the cohesion of the three papers to be submitted, and their significance to research in the relevant field.
2. A draft of one paper, 8000-10000 words in length that will be a final submission.
3. A clear plan, with substantial abstracts, of all three papers that will be final submissions.

The Viva will include a detailed discussion of the subject matter of the thesis, the material supporting the application and any other relevant issues, at a formal meeting (the confirmation viva) between you and the Panel.

**The Recommendation** [Paragraph 77-80 of the Code of Practice.]

The Panel shall agree and then submit a reasoned report containing a summary of the discussion and the recommendation to the Graduate School which will then be signed off by the Director of the Graduate School.

There are two possible outcomes from the 1st attempt:

1. Pass and confirm PhD candidature
2. Reassess (you are normally required to resubmit the Interim thesis and have a re-viva. If no amendments to the Interim Thesis are required, you will resubmit the Interim Thesis without any changes.)

In the event of outcome 2 you will be advised by your supervisor as to how to proceed. If following submission of your amended Interim Thesis, the Panel are satisfied that as a result of the changes, this is enough to “confirm” your Doctoral status, there is no need to hold a re-viva. However, confirmation cannot be declined without a re-viva with an Independent Chair. Therefore, if the amended Interim Thesis is not sufficient for confirmation, a re-viva must take place.

There are three possible outcomes from the 2nd attempt:

1. Pass and confirm PhD candidature
2. Fail – transfer programme to MPhil
3. Fail – terminate candidature (As per procedures for circumstances that may lead to withdrawal or termination (point 1) <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/quality/pgr/research_degree_candidature/termination_withdrawal.page>

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