

## Confirmation of enrolment for PhD and EngD students

### *Purpose of confirmation of enrolment*

8.13 Research students embarking on a PhD or EngD programme will normally be enrolled provisionally for that degree.

8.14 Confirmation of PhD or EngD enrolment is a formal progression requirement that will determine whether or not a student will be allowed to continue with enrolment on a PhD or EngD programme. Confirmation of enrolment is determined by a confirmation of enrolment examination, which comprises two parts: a written submission by the student, and an oral examination of the student conducted by a confirmation of enrolment panel (hereafter Confirmation Panel) appointed by the Graduate School Board for the department.

### *Composition of the Confirmation Panel*

8.15 The University aims to ensure that confirmation of enrolment examinations are conducted fairly and consistently, and that decisions about confirmation of enrolment are based on an informed and balanced judgement as to whether the student in question can complete the programme successfully within the required timeframe. To this end, the University permits supervisors, with their comprehensive knowledge of the student and research topic, to be part of the Confirmation Panel but requires that the oral examination is chaired by an independent member of the TAP (see below), and that the recommendation made by the Confirmation Panel is approved by the Graduate School Board (or its Chair) of the department concerned.

8.16 The Confirmation Panel is made up of all members of the TAP and should be chaired by a member of the TAP who: (i) is not part of the supervisory team (i.e. not the main or the/a subsidiary supervisor) and has not served in a quasi-supervisory capacity (i.e. has not provided significant advice, guidance or support to the student in question outside formal TAP meetings), and (ii) meets the criteria for appointment as a main supervisor (i.e. is a permanent member of staff on ART grade 7 or above). If no member of the TAP fulfils these criteria (e.g. if in a TAP of two the non-supervisory member has had to stand in for the supervisor) the Graduate School Board concerned must appoint someone who does meet the above criteria to chair the Confirmation Panel. It is also acceptable for a department to decide that all Confirmation Panels should be chaired by the Chair of the Graduate School Board or their nominee (as long as an alternate is found if the individual concerned is also a student's supervisor).

### *Procedure for confirmation of enrolment*

8.17 It is expected that the first attempt at the confirmation of enrolment examination for PhD students (including those registered on four year programmes) should be held within the first eighteen months (for full-time students) or first three years (for part-time students) of enrolment. Any written or oral re-examination after failure must occur by the end of the second year of enrolment. The Confirmation Panel **MUST** make a final decision whether or not to recommend confirmation by the end of the second

year of enrolment (for full-time students) or of the fourth year of enrolment (for part-time students). Confirmation of EngD enrolment should be considered within two-and-a-half years of enrolment (for students on a four-year full-time programme); a final decision whether or not to recommend confirmation must be taken by the end of the third year of enrolment. Failure to recommend confirmation by the appropriate deadline may result in termination of the student's registration.

8.18 The written submission must be provided to the Confirmation Panel no later than ten days prior to the scheduled oral examination. To inform the questions asked at the oral examination, the student must make available the following:

(i) evidence that work relevant to the research project is under way and that appropriate research training has been undertaken;

(ii) a substantial piece of written work produced by the student during the period of PhD/EngD enrolment and intended to contribute to their completed thesis; and

(iii) a coherent and realistic plan for the completion and submission of the thesis within the required period.

8.19 The outcome of the confirmation of enrolment examination will be based on the following criteria: by the date of the confirmation of enrolment examination, the student should be able to:

(i) identify and articulate a hypothesis or research question(s), which, if properly explored has the potential to lead to an original contribution to knowledge within the required period;

(ii) identify, categorise, and critically engage with an appropriate amount of academic material already published in the area of their research (and with appropriate literature from industrial research and development where appropriate);

(iii) articulate their methods and explain their research approach both in writing and in answer to direct questioning by the Confirmation Panel;

(iv) produce a piece of academic writing which indicates to the examiners that the student has the ability to progress to writing a successful PhD or EngD thesis.

8.20 The outcome of the examination will be judged on the basis of pass/fail, where a 'pass' represents the passing of both the written and oral portion of the examination.

8.21 Where YGRS has given its explicit approval for the fulfilment of particular departmental training requirements (e.g. the successful completion of a certain number of credit-bearing modules) to form part of the confirmation decision, the department should ensure that these requirements have also been met.

8.22 A decision on whether or not to recommend confirmation of PhD or EngD enrolment will be made by the departmental Graduate School Board on the basis of a recommendation by the Confirmation Panel.

The Graduate School Board (or its Chair) should have access to sufficient information (the student's full written submission (including the research timetable), and the confirmation of enrolment TAP report) to make an informed assessment of the Confirmation Panel's decision. If the Graduate School Board Chair is a member of the Confirmation Panel, the decision about that student should be referred to the whole committee or to a nominated deputy who has no formal relationship with the student.

8.23 Confirmation of PhD or EngD enrolment should only be recommended to, and will be approved by the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA) on behalf of Senate, where the student has met the learning outcomes outlined above and is considered to be capable of completing a successful PhD or EngD thesis within the required period. Recommendations to the SCA must be made in accordance with the [guidance from the Research Student Administration Team](#), using the [Recommendation for Confirmation of Enrolment form](#).

#### ***Failure of confirmation of enrolment***

8.24 Should a student fail to satisfy the Confirmation Panel that they have met these requirements at the first attempt, the student must be provided with clear and detailed written feedback on the areas that have been deficient in both their written submission and their oral examination performance. The points raised by the Confirmation Panel should be specifically addressed by the candidate in the revision of the written submission, which will be re-examined. If the revised written submission is sufficient to satisfy the Confirmation Panel then the student will be deemed to have passed and a second oral examination is not required. If the revised written submission does not in itself satisfy the Confirmation Panel then a second oral examination must be held.

8.25 In the event that a second oral examination is held, this attempt must be audio recorded and the Chair of the Graduate School Board (or an appropriate alternate appointed by the Chair) must attend in order to protect both the student and the department in the event of any appeal against the outcome. If the student is unsuccessful at the second oral examination, the student will be deemed to have failed to progress, and 8.26 of this document will apply.

8.26 If a Graduate School Board decides not to recommend confirmation of PhD or EngD enrolment to the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA, acting on behalf of Senate) following a student's second attempt, the student's enrolment on that programme will be terminated. The Graduate School Board may recommend to the SCA that the student should be allowed to submit a thesis for the award of either an MPhil degree or an MA/MSc by research degree (where those degrees are available), subject to the normal regulations and requirements for those degrees. In such a case, if the SCA approves and the student agrees, they will be transferred onto the alternative programme. Extensions of normal enrolment period for these degrees may be considered in light of the change of the student's circumstances, but the Confirmation Panel must be satisfied that the student can complete the degree to which s/he will be transferred within a reasonable period (from the date of failing confirmation at the second attempt), normally three months if an MA/MSc by research is recommended, and six months if the recommendation is that the student be allowed to write up for an MPhil.

8.27 The student retains the right to appeal against failure of confirmation of enrolment, on the basis of procedural irregularity as outlined in the Regulations.

8.28 An extension of confirmation deadline is required for a research student who is not able to meet their confirmation requirements within the expected period. Extensions of confirmation deadline are granted by SCC only in exceptional circumstances, namely, where the student's ability to complete the confirmation process has been hampered by documented medical, personal reasons, unexpected academic circumstances or exceptional circumstances arising from employment. The magnitude of the research task, or failure on the part of the candidate to perceive or act upon the magnitude of the research task, is not a sufficient reason for an extension, nor is the need, in itself, to take employment.

8.29 An extension request will not be considered until the student is within three months of their confirmation deadline. An extension of confirmation will normally be limited to three months. The total period of extension that may normally be approved is a maximum of six months.

8.30 Extensions to confirmation are granted as part of the normal registration period. That is, an extension to confirmation deadline does not extend the registration period or result in an extended submission deadline.