

Guideline for submission of PhD progress/confirmation report.

The report should normally be submitted within the first eighteen months of registration and not later than 24 months.

The purpose of the confirmation report process is:

- (i) To provide an independent confirmation that research question or area under investigation forms a valid subject for a doctoral thesis.
- (ii) To consider whether the approaches taken so far are valid and likely to yield results and insights at a level commensurate with what would be expected of a doctoral thesis.
- (iii) To provide an evaluation of the rate of progress towards the goal of a doctoral thesis and likelihood that the student will submit a doctoral thesis within the normal time scale.
- (iv) To provide independent advice on possible directions the research might take.
- (v) To encourage both student and supervisor to take stock of the situation at the mid point position of the normal PhD timescale.

What should the report contain?

It is important to keep in mind that this process is not a dry run for a PhD write up and viva, although it should be helpful in preparing for this task. The prime objective of the process is to determine what the research is about, whether it is an appropriate subject for a PhD. The report should contain:

- (i) An introduction that clearly and precisely introduces the research under consideration. It should be clear from the introduction what the research question(s) is and why it is important. All non original material (figures etc.) should be properly referenced. The introduction should focus on the issues and literature that are relevant to the research question. It is not necessary to write an exhaustive review of the field. The introduction should conclude with a list of clear aims and objectives of the proposed doctoral thesis.
- (ii) A methods section that contains appropriate detail on how the experiments were performed and the major methodologies employed. It is important to note that candidates may be requested to explain the key technologies they have used to generate their data.
- (iii) A results section constructed in a clear and logical manner that allows the reader follow the experimental data and evidence being presented. Particular attention should be given to the presentation and titles of figures. In all cases appropriate legends should be included. The results section should demonstrate sufficient progress towards the goal of delivering conclusions, insights or outcomes that would be expected of a doctoral thesis. However, it is important to stress that at this stage (after 12-18 months work) the results do not necessarily have to be conclusive or completely novel but should generate an expectation among the reviewers that these are both achievable within the normal time scale considered appropriate for a doctoral thesis.

(iv) A discussion section that draws appropriate conclusion from the results, places them in the context of other published results and where develops new insights where appropriate. At this stage (after 12-18 months work) it is not expected that these insights or proposals be fully formed but represent reasonable conjectures.

The final section should contain an outline (1-2 pages) of the proposed future directions of the work with an estimated time line of expected key experiments/results and the intended submission date of the thesis.

A complete list of references should be provided using a peer review journal accepted format. If you cite an article you should be familiar with the details and contents of the article as you may be quizzed on this point. If you have hundreds of references you may well attract attention to this point.

The report should also contain:

A single page abstract/summary of the report should also be provided.

A complete list of abbreviations employed, standard definitions, ATP etc, are not necessary

How long should the report be?

There is no absolute limit but the expected size of a confirmation report should be approximately 50 –70 pages and should not normally exceed 100 pages but this number would depend on the number of figures, tables etc. It is important to keep in mind that after 18 months you are not expected to produce a min-version your PhD thesis.