

## MID-TERM PhD PROGRESS CHECK

### *The Mid Term Report*

At 18 months the student will prepare a report of a maximum of 50 pages. This report will consist of an outline of the research proposal, a comprehensive literature review, methodology, results obtained to date, and a Plan for the rest of the doctoral study. An excellent report would be considered as one in which the student had attempted to analyse the data they had already obtained.

The literature review should be of sufficient quality that it should be directly transferable to the thesis, probably with some additions at the thesis writing stage. The methodology will include either details of theory or experimental techniques to be applied. Again this section should be of sufficient quality to be incorporated into the thesis at a later date. Therefore the student should see that they are not writing two separate reports: rather, they are preparing the way for their thesis and at the end of their PhD period there should in fact be less to do in the way of writing.

### *Assessment*

This report will be assessed in one of two ways. The supervisory team will assess the report for factual correctness and make a check against expected progress in the field after 18 months work. An independent assessor outside the supervisory team will assess the report in terms of its presentation, perhaps its technical content, and whether it demonstrates that the student has fully engaged with the PhD research and learning process. *This person will be appointed by the Director of Post Graduate Studies in each department, and could consist of an academic in that or another department, or an Erskine Fellow.*

After submission, the student will undergo a short (stipulated no more than 90 minutes) oral examination on the contents of this report. The examiners will be one from the supervisory team (normally expected to be the Principal Supervisor) and the same independent assessor.

The viva will serve several purposes.

- It will ensure that the report was written by the student and that they understand the text that they have written, i.e. it could uncover whether large portions of text have been cut and pasted from other sources without a deep understanding.
- The student's background knowledge will be explored – i.e. how much reading around the subject have they done, can they put their work into context
- The student's current knowledge around the research topic will be assessed against the point at which they should be this far into their studies, e.g. do they understand the model or equipment they are using
- The student will be exposed to the type of questions they can expect in the real oral exam at the end of their studies.

At the moment there is no formal process in the College of Engineering for ensuring that either the submission of a substantial report, or a practice viva, occurs. Although in many cases students do give presentations to audiences, this is very far from the situation of a close examination with just 2 or 3 examiners in the room. A resume of Departmental practice is shown in Appendix 1, for completeness.

### **Implementation of the new plan**

It will need to be stressed to the students that these reports should be of sufficient quality whereby large portions can be used in the thesis and they are not being asked to do considerably more work. The whole process will need to be overseen by the Postgraduate Committee and Directors of Postgraduate Studies. A template form to be used for this process is attached.

This new step provides information that can help the end of second year progress report be used as a progression hurdle.

## **Remedial Action**

If a student is found to be lacking in the necessary skills to write and produce a PhD thesis they can be directed to their supervisor, UCTL (or its successor) or other remedial actions for help **only if the supervisor and independent assessor thinks that this action will solve the problem.**

If the student is found to be lacking in enough grounding whereby the supervisor and/or independent assessor becomes concerned about their ability to carry out their research to PhD level, the data now exists on which to make a decision to terminate the student's studies at PhD level. It will be up to the supervisory team whether they wish to re-enrol the student as a Masters student.

In this way, we can be confident that we are sending out PhD students who are insightful and independent, of whom we are proud.

