DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND PLANETARY SCIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR TRANSFER FROM MPHIL TO PHD DEGREE REGISTRATION

All graduate research students are initially registered for an MPhil degree. If they wish to proceed to a PhD, they will need to pass a transfer assessment before their registration status can be changed to PhD degree. The contents of the transfer report should convince the examiner that you are capable of doing original and significant research work at PhD level.

Readiness for upgrade is judged on the basis of the following criteria;

- Commitment;
- Satisfactory progress based on judgments made by the supervisor(s);
- Awareness of the context of the work
- Up to date knowledge of the subject and associated bibliography
- Satisfactory technical and generic skills
- English Language proficiency, written and spoken

TIME FRAME

Students are required to apply for upgrades;

- Part-time: no earlier than 12 months and normally no later than 24 months after initial registration.
- Full-time: within 12-18 months after initial registration.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is usually based on a written report and oral examination by a panel of two members of academic staff. These would normally be the Post-graduate Tutor and an academic (not the supervisor) from the IEPS, or outside. At least one member of the panel should have some specialist knowledge of the project subject area. The panel will meet with the student to discuss the contents of the report and the project in general. Occasionally, due to availability, a specialist examiner may only be able to submit a written report and under these circumstances the transfer meeting will involve the postgraduate tutor with the supervisor in attendance. The meeting should last no longer than 1 hour. Circumstances (e.g. the student is overseas) may require interview by Skype.

DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Given that each PhD project is different the size and scope of the transfer report should be discussed in advance with the principal supervisor but would normally include;

1. Structured contents listing (Chapter and Section Headings)

2. Introduction: The first chapter is the most important in any thesis as it explains the motivation for study, defines the program of research and sets out the thesis structure. The introduction should explain the context of the research problem (background), establish the relevance of the research (rationale), define the research problem (project aim) and explain how you are going to solve the problem, i.e. the objectives (typical length 5-10 pages).

3. A draft literature review: Give an account of the background literature. This can help reinforce the motivation for study as set out in chapter 1 by highlighting the context of the research problem e.g. gaps in the research area, furthering previously developed research,
proposing alternative, simpler, solutions to current research problems, etc. It also should demonstrate that you are on top of the subject (typical length 10-15 pages).

4: A short outline of the methods and approach to be used including a brief explanation of how these will help you meet the project aims and objectives. Identify any further training needed in order to gain full proficiency (typical length 5 pages).

5: A description of progress made. This may be preliminary results and interpretations, or samples/datasets obtained or, if the project is field based, a description of the fieldwork planned / made and data/samples collected. (typical length 5-10 pages).

6. Schedule: A plan and timetable for the remaining work (typical length 2-3 pages). List work already done and work remaining. For the latter include target dates to completion.

7. References and Appendices (e.g. sample/dataset details, raw data)

Students will submit their thesis upgrade documents to their supervisors in the first instance in order to get feedback before formal submission to the panel.

**Assessment criteria:** A successful transfer report must contain a satisfactory level of literary presentation, clearly stated aims and objectives, a critical assessment of the relevant literature, and the research should form a distinct, original contribution to knowledge of the subject. The student should have a deep and synoptic understanding of the subject and provide evidence for the exercise of independent critical thinking and / or creative investigation. The timetable for completion should be realistic and within the normal period of study.

**Outcomes:**

1. Recommended for upgrade to PhD status;
2. Student is referred to a specific date, with specific criteria to meet, for a second attempt with the need for a second viva;
3. Student is referred to a specific date, with specific criteria to meet, for a second attempt without the need for a second viva.

Students who are unsuccessful will be given specific written criteria that they will need to meet for a second attempt, which may require re-submission of the report only, without the need for a second oral assessment, or a report and a new oral examination.

**Potential outcomes of second attempt:**

4. Student is recommended for upgrade to PhD status;
5. Student is not recommended for upgrade and remains registered for the MPhil.

**Appeals**

A student whose application for transfer is unsuccessful and who disputes the decision on grounds other than the academic judgement of the panel making the decision should have the right of appeal within one month of notification of the decision. Appeals should be made in writing to the Postgraduate Tutor within the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and should be considered by the Postgraduate Tutor in consultation with the Assistant Dean with responsibility for the Department. The outcome of the appeal will be conveyed to the student in writing. There will be no further right of appeal.

AC:3/16