

SCHOOL OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHY

Transfer of Status Guidance

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Brief Overview

1. CD to draw up a preliminary list of ToS assessors (to balance workload, schedule and expertise).
2. GCA to circulate list to supervisors. There will be one week window to make amendments and raise objections on academic grounds. CD will accommodate within reason.
3. Formal submission of the list to TC for approval, final minor amendments
4. GCA to formally invite assessors and confirm with supervisor and student
5. Student to submit work and [GSO2 SSD form](#) to assessors directly, copying in the GCA
6. The GSO2 SSD form will only be signed by the DGS after the interview
7. Student and assessors set up meeting time jointly and inform GCA
8. Assessors to send report to GCA after meeting (or are reminded by GCA if not done within 2 weeks)
9. GCA to obtain DGS approval and send to Social Sciences Division (SSD) to process the milestone

1. The Purpose of Transfer of Status

The Probationer Research Student (PRS) status is intended to be used constructively, permitting a wise choice of the research topic to be made in the context of broader reading as well as preliminary research, helping the student to become accustomed to the rhythm of graduate work, and allowing for the acquisition of any specific skills appropriate to the research.

The Transfer of Status assessment is to ensure that the student is making satisfactory progress in the development of the research, to ensure that the work is of potential DPhil. quality, and that the methodology of the research is appropriate and practicable. The transfer process provides the opportunity for the student to discuss their work with two independent members of staff and to receive feedback. Broadly the assessment should show a plan for the thesis, which locates the research in the context of earlier work in the field, sets out the questions, hypotheses or issues on which it will focus, and describes and explains the methods by which these will be answered, tested or addressed.

The assessment procedures are intended to remove the risk of failure and to reduce the risk of referral at the final examination of thesis as far as possible, and must therefore be as rigorous as is necessary to achieve this.

The formal Regulations for Transfer of Status are set out in the general regulations of the *Examination Regulations*, and in the special regulations for individual subjects, grouped within their particular Division. Further information is also available in the Education Committee "Policy on Research Degrees" <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/research-degrees>.

Students who have been granted leave to supplicate for the degree of Master of Philosophy, where the subject of the Masters thesis is in the same broad field as the research proposed for the DPhil, may progress directly to D.Phil. status with the transfer of status assessment waived.

2. The Timing of Transfer of Status

The Examination Regulations state that PRS status can be held for a maximum of four terms. However, Departments and Faculties are strongly encouraged by the University's Education Committee to require students to transfer status sooner, and in this Department, transfer of status is normally required by the third term.

3. How to apply for Transfer of Status

Applications for transfer of status should be made using the GSO2 SSD form available from <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/progression>. Students are required to complete the form and to provide supplementary information on development of both research specific and personal and professional skills during their time as a Probationer Research Student. Students are also required to indicate whether their work requires research ethics approval and to provide evidence that they have successfully completed the University's online researcher integrity training course. Both

the student's supervisor and College should then sign the form. The DGS will approve it after the completion of the assessment.

In addition, students will be required to submit/complete the following:

Students are required to submit their work (20,000-word limit) together with the GSO2 SSD Transfer of Status form to the assessors, copying in the GCA, by Friday of week 8 of their 3rd term after admission.

The following is a checklist of headings that might be included in the typical transfer paper:

1. Proposed Thesis Title
2. Thesis Outline
3. Research Proposal
4. Timetable for Completion
5. Literature Review
6. Bibliography
7. Presentation of work at the PRS research seminar
8. Research Ethics Forms (CUREC)
9. Health and Safety Forms (e.g. for fieldwork)

4. The Transfer Assessment

The CD will appoint two assessors which will be typically internal to SAME and will not necessarily be active in the student's field of research. Neither of whom will be the student's supervisor to read the transfer application materials and to interview the candidate (for both the first and second attempt, if the student is referred back). The assessors will normally be academic staff working in the University of Oxford. However, it is possible for the CD to nominate assessors from other departments if necessary based on thematic expertise. Only in exceptional circumstances will external assessors be appointed. It is permissible for the same assessor to be used for both transfer and confirmation of status, and this person may also act as the internal examiner for the D.Phil. viva voce examination.

Once approved by the SAME Teaching Committee, the GCA will invite the assessors and inform the student and supervisor, confirming the process for submitting the materials.

Students should normally expect to be interviewed within 4 weeks of submitting their transfer application, though this may be longer during the vacation periods due to availability of the assessors. The Transfer assessment is a formal requirement, but the interview is not an official examination or viva, and sub fusc is not worn. The assessors will write a joint report and submit recommendations to the Graduate Studies Committee. Following their interview, students should normally expect to hear the outcome of their assessment within 3 weeks, though this may be longer during the vacation periods.

5. Instructions to Assessors

The student will send the materials directly to the assessors, copying in the GCA. The assessors are asked to arrange a time for the interview directly with the student.

Assessors are asked to contact students as soon as reasonably possible to arrange a time for the interview, or to explain problems in doing so. Students may sometimes find it an anxious wait, and may have good reasons for wanting the assessment completed as soon as possible. Students should let the GCA know if there is a problem in this respect at the time of application.

Assessors are invited to consider whether the student is capable of carrying out advanced research, and that the subject of the thesis and the manner of its treatment proposed by the student are acceptable for transfer to D.Phil. Assessors should judge the application against the criteria for success defined below. They should aim to provide constructive criticism and advice to the student to identify and address deficiencies and thereby strengthen their proposed research project, rather than presenting a judgemental verdict. Dismissive or aggressive remarks are not appropriate. An application to transfer to D.Phil. status must provide evidence that the applicant can construct an argument, can present material in a scholarly manner, has a viable subject to work on, and can be reasonably expected to complete it in 3-4 years (6-8 years for a part-time student). However, the assessors should judge the submissions in the light of the fact that they usually reflect two terms work and are made at the early stages of the research project. The written work will not necessarily read like a final thesis. Omissions, unpersuasive arguments, or missing perspectives are not fatal unless they seem to indicate an inability to reach the necessary standard. The research proposal and thesis structure need not be completely

finalised, but the student should have clearly defined ideas of what the research questions are, and have possible ways to answer them.

The joint assessors' report should be 1-2 pages in length, providing a permanent record of advice given to the student at this stage and an indication of the student's progress. It should normally include a summary of the points raised in the interview, feedback on the written work submitted prior to the interview, comments on the positive aspects of the student's work, as well as any concerns about the student's progress and suggestions for the research going forward. Finally, for non-native English speakers, the report should indicate the assessors' view of the student's ability to present and defend the work in English. The assessment outcome must be stated clearly on the report. Once the report is completed, please send to GCA.

Significant differences of opinion between the assessors will be adjudicated by the DGS and/or TC, in consultation with the assessors and supervisors.

6. Criteria for Success

For transfer of status to be approved, the student will need to be able to show that their proposed thesis and treatment represents a viable topic and that their written work and interview show that they have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students must show that they are competent to complete and present their thesis in English. In addition, the assessors will judge the application against the criteria set out below:

1. Attendance and presentation at PRS class
2. Competence in both written and spoken English
3. The aims of the research are realistic and focused
4. Evidence of wide reading and critical analysis
5. Appropriate methodology and research techniques are proposed
6. Limitations to the research are addressed
7. It is clear how the research will develop for a DPhil
8. There is a suitable timetable for the research
9. The candidate demonstrates the progression of an argument
10. The candidate shows a scholarly and rigorous approach to research issues
11. The research topic and treatment meet the Division's ethical standards
12. The written work and interview show that the candidate has a good overall knowledge and understanding of the subject
13. The University has adequate facilities (including supervision) to enable the research to progress
14. The student is capable of carrying out advanced research
15. The proposed schedule of work can be completed within three or at most four years for the DPhil

7. Outcomes of Transfer of Status

The assessors may recommend one of five outcomes, which must be considered and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee or the DGS acting as chair (excluding option (ii)):

(i) Successful transfer - Accompanied by suggestions and advice for future progress.

(ii) Revision of application – The assessors may request further minor clarifications before making a first recommendation. In such cases it should be possible to complete the additional work within one month of the assessment.

(iii) Referral for a second attempt at transfer (with a further interview) - This should take place within one term of the first attempt and normally involve the same assessors. A fresh application form should be completed and an interview should always be held. The assessors should provide clear guidance on what needs to be done to improve the application prior to the second attempt at transfer being submitted. This may require additional written work or other evidence, and possibly the appointment of an additional assessor.

Referral may simply represent attempts to ensure that the student's work is enhanced so that it is set on the best possible course, and should not necessarily be seen as a failure.

If the first attempt is made in the fourth term or later of PRS status, a one-term extension of PRS status is automatically granted to allow the second attempt. This extension of PRS status does not affect the total amount of time permitted for registration on the DPhil.

(iv) Transfer to the MLitt - Although the work presented was not suitable for transfer to DPhil status, nonetheless, the assessors felt it was strong enough for the lower award which is a less demanding and shorter time-scale research degree.

(v) Reject the application - The assessors cannot recommend transfer to either DPhil status or the lower award, and thus it is recommended that the student should withdraw from the course.

At the first attempt at transfer, only options (i)-(iv) should normally be chosen. At the second attempt, options (i), (ii), (iv) or (v) should be considered.

8. Deferral of Transfer of Status

Any student who has not applied to transfer status by the end of their fourth term will be required to attend a formal academic review meeting involving their supervisor(s) and Director of Graduate Studies (or at least one other member of academic staff who may or may not be a future assessor for Transfer of Status). The purpose of this meeting will be to review progress to date, and to draw up a clear timetable to ensure that Transfer of Status is successfully achieved within six terms as required by the Examination Regulations. The student will also be required to apply for a formal deferral of Transfer of Status for one or two further terms by completing an on-line application accessed via Student Self Service <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/selfservice>. The application will then be considered by the student's supervisor and College, with the final decision being made by the DGS.

In exceptional cases only, an extension of PRS status may be granted beyond six terms. Applications for such extensions require the approval of the University's Education Committee for formal dispensation from the Examination Regulations. Students should contact their Graduate Studies Assistant (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/contacts>) for details of the application process. Any extensions to PRS status do not affect the overall time permitted for registration on the DPhil.