PhD Research Handbook

School of Computing

FACULTY OF COMPUTING, ENGINEERING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Ulster University

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Welcome from Postgraduate Tutor

I am delighted to welcome you to School of Computing at Ulster University. I am sure you will benefit from and enjoy the time you spend working towards your PhD. Our aim is to equip you with the subject knowledge, research expertise and transferable skills that you will need to advance your research and technical abilities, whilst enhancing your future prospects. We hope you will also embrace the rich opportunities available at the University and in the thriving research community, have an enjoyable time, and meet new friends and colleagues.

Research, by its very nature, is challenging and postgraduate research even more so. Not only are you trying to discover or create new knowledge, but you are simultaneously learning how to do research effectively. You will need a high level of self-motivation and determination in order to make a significant contribution of your own. A PhD is very much what you make of it, but your supervisors are there to guide you towards your research objectives and help you develop your abilities.

If you have any problems whilst at Ulster (whether academic, personal, or financial) you'll find that help and advice is always available. Please check through this Handbook - it will serve as a first source of information if you need help. Your main contact should always be your supervisors, but many others can offer advice and assistance – they are listed in the following pages. I hope you enjoy your studies here and I look forward to talking with you about your research. Good luck with your work.

Dr. Ian Cleland
Postgraduate Tutor
School of Computing
E: i.cleland@ulster.ac.uk
Room: 16G04
1. Introduction

Who is this handbook for and what does it contain?

This handbook has been prepared by the School of Computing to help PhD Researchers and their Supervisors find their way through the various School level administrative stages of the PhD Research Degree. This includes information on where to get help, staff responsibilities, procurement and travel arrangements, services, office safety, demonstration/ teaching opportunities and local guidance on initial, confirmation and final assessments.

The handbook supplements the information provided by the Doctoral College in relation to policies and procedures. More information provided by the doctoral college can be found here.

2. Staff Responsibilities and Contacts

School Structure and Staff responsibility

The School of Computing is part of the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment. The Faculty consists of four Schools; the School of Computing, the School of Engineering, the School of Architecture and the Built Environment and the School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems.

The School of Computing, based at the Jordanstown Campus, is comprised of two focused research groups in Pervasive Computing and Artificial Intelligence. The School is also home to two industrially focused Innovation centres, BT Ireland Innovation Centre (BTIIC) and the Connected Health Innovation Centre (CHIC). As illustrated by Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Research Structure of the School illustrating the two research groups and cross cutting Innovation Centres.](image)

*Numbers correct as of April 2019

Computer Science at Ulster continues to be in the top 25% in the UK for research power. In the national assessment of research quality, REF2014 (Research Excellence Framework), with 90% of our Research Environment being rated as world-leading or internationally excellent with the quality of its 4* and 3* publications ranking the submission at 17th out of 89.

In Pervasive Computing, research is focussed on sensor-based technologies, connected health, data analytics, computer vision, and next generation networks, systems and services, with applications in activity recognition, assistive technologies for healthcare and independent living, healthcare modelling and bioinformatics.
Research in Artificial Intelligence is focused on machine learning, logic and reasoning, knowledge engineering and ontology, semantic analytics, biomedical informatics, and mathematical modelling and optimisation with various applications including pattern recognition, decision support systems, text mining, biometrics such as face recognition and palmprint recognition, satellite image analysis and food authentication.

The School has a number of academic and administrative staff who support the PhD research within the school, a simplified structure for this is shown in Figure 2. These include the Research Director, Postgraduate Tutor and Academic Excellence Assistant. The head of School, Professor Chris Nugent, oversees all teaching and research activities within the School. The Associate Head of School oversees activates related to teaching and learning, with the Research Director focusing on research activities.

![Staff structure within the school related to PhD Research](image)

**You and your Supervisor** - The primary responsibility for organising your research work lies with you. However, it is your supervisor’s responsibility to guide your research, point you in interesting directions, monitor your progress and generally provide moral and technical support. Supervisors differ in their methods, but you should normally expect to see your supervisor at least once a fortnight. Feel free to contact him or her at any time if you have a problem or are unsure how to proceed. You will find that you can obtain the most benefit from meetings with your supervisor if you prepare some material for him or her to read in advance or formulate some specific questions you would like to discuss.

**Postgraduate Tutor** - The Postgraduate Tutor is responsible for the overall running of the School’s PhD programme and for providing pastoral support for PhD Researchers. They are available to discuss any matter, personal or academic, in confidence.

For questions relating to your research or administrative process please contact the Research
Where to get Help.

There are a number of places you can look for help on policies and procedures.

- This Handbook- To save time, please check this Handbook first. It covers the most common issues affecting PhD Researchers within the School.
- PhD Manager- Information on the various processes and forms involved with research study at Ulster can be found online in PhD manager.
- Your Supervisors. Consult your supervisors on all academic matters. The formal obligations and responsibilities of your supervisor are explained in the University Handbook.
- Postgraduate Tutor- For any queries regarding academic policies within the school or pastoral support.
- Administrative Assistant- For queries regarding equipment, travel, budgets and general administration.
- Administrative problems- For issues concerning your funding, registration, fees etc., contact the Doctoral College directly.
- General Enquiries- ask at the School Office Room 16G24.
- Student Support- For complex problems around family, finances, health, disability, or other issues affecting your general welfare you should make an appointment to see a Student Support.
- Occupational Health- for information regarding occupational health and the services available.
- First Aid/ Defibrillator available from Jordanstown Security- 22222 (DDI 02870123456). In event of an emergency requiring Police, Fire or Ambulance dial (9)999 directly then contact security immediately on extension 22222 (DDI 02870123456).

3. Working Environment

Research Facilities

To support its Research, the School houses a state-of-the-art Smart Environment with a range of cutting-edge equipment and infrastructure. This environment has been specifically designed to facilitate the design, development and evaluation of solutions to support health, wellbeing and ambient assisted living. The environment has a smart kitchen, smart living room and smart bedroom which have been created to support the investigation into the area of assistive technologies and activity recognition. To complement these test beds, a set of 400 sensing nodes is currently available to be deployed in a smart environment covering a footprint of over 6,800 square feet.

A recently installed maker lab supports the rapid prototyping of IoT endpoints. The environment also offers a large suite of pervasive sensing technologies, image and video modelling tools and a large suite of computing and software resources including high performance PowerEdge Tower servers. Along with the smart environment, the School has a newly refurbished Connected Health Living Laboratory (CH:LL). The Connected Health Living Lab (CH:LL), within the School of Computing at Ulster provides a unique environment to support multi-disciplinary research in the area of connected health. These facilities are used to support the development, deployment and evaluation of connected solutions, data acquisition and semantic analysis of
a user environments.

Your Office Space
A desk within a shared office will be provided for you to work at whilst on campus. This will be arranged for you by your supervisors. These are generally in open plan office space on J or G floor within Block 16. Offices are a mix of PhD Researchers and Research Staff. You should endeavour to make use of the knowledge you have available in your office. Typically, this space will include a clear desk space, a comfortable computing chair and a set of lockable drawers.

It is Researchers responsibility to keep these spaces tidy and to clear the space when leaving at the end of the PhD journey.

Computing Equipment
A Desktop or Laptop computer will be provided for you if needed. This should be discussed with your supervisors. In some cases, a new desktop/laptop will need to be purchased. If this is the case, money may be used from your Research Training Grant to support essential equipment. Your Supervisors can advise you further on this.

Lunch Facilities
Block 16 offers kitchen and lunchroom facilities for all staff and Postgraduate Researchers.
This includes:
- A lunchroom with tables and chairs suitable for dining, located in 16J16.
- Kitchen Facilities, including a microwave and refrigerator, located in 16G30. A key is required for this, contact your supervisor for more details.
- There are also kitchen and dining facilities available in The Doc in the commercial block.

Figure 3. Images of the various lunch facilities available to Staff and PhD researchers within Block 16 and the Doc.

Photocopying and Printing
Information Services (ISD) provide information on how to print including how to access multi-function devices (MFD) that will allow you to print, copy and scan documents. More information can be found on their website. PhD Researchers within the school can access £50 of printing credits. Speak with your supervisor to arrange this.

ISD can also provide support with university wide IT services such as email and wifi. Should you require any advice with regard to computing equipment in Block 16 contact Technical Services (Room 16E30 or 16C32).
**Attendance & Absences**

Attendance to University on a daily basis is expected, except by agreement of your supervisor or the Research Director. Hours should be agreed with your Supervisors. Typically, PhD Researchers will work 35-40 hours per week, between core hours of 9:00am- 5:00pm. Holidays, as approved by the Supervisor are allowed within the period of the Studentship. These must not exceed a total of eight weeks including public holidays (40 days) per year. Any periods of sickness should be notified to your Supervisors.

If you experience some health, family or other problems that make it difficult for you to continue working on your PhD research project, you may need to consider applying for leave of absence. Funded PhD researchers should be aware that they may normally only be allowed Leave of Absence for a maximum of one year, and that their maintenance allowance is suspended during any Leave of Absence. It is also important to note that Leave of Absence is not permitted if the main reason is to take up paid employment. Should you need any advice on Leave of Absence you can ask you Supervisor. Support is also available through the Doctoral College and Student Support.

**4. Research Integrity and Ethics**

Ulster University requires the highest standards of professionalism in research conducted by all staff and students in all disciplines. Refer to the Research Office policy and procedures with regard to research practice, publications and intellectual property. All PhD researchers should act professionally in your role. Including the use of appropriate email etiquette in a reasonable fashion and acting professionally in the office and around campus.

**Research Integrity**

Integrity is fundamental to the research process and an important component of our research environment, demonstrating to partners and funders that we undertake excellent quality research to a consistently high standard. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Impact, Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan, explains the importance of integrity in this short video.

The research integrity course is mandatory for all PhD researchers and must be completed prior to undertaking the Initial Assessment. This course is available via your Blackboard account.

Please note that all investigators named on applications to UREC, and via the IRAS system for studies in the NHS and HSC for which the University is sole or co-sponsor, are required to provide confirmation of successful completion before University approval will be granted.

**Research Ethics**

It is University policy that all research involving human participants must be reviewed through the filter and ethics committee process as appropriate.

It should be noted that, in many cases, review is a legal or regulatory as well as policy requirement (for example, research involving HSC/NHS patients and others in care, and research which requires the use of human cellular material) and in others it reflects accepted best practice (for example, research involving those aged under 18 and other potentially vulnerable people). Increasingly, in many disciplines, evidence of ethical review is required by editors before they will accept a paper for publication.
Studies covered by the University’s policy include interview, questionnaire and focus group research as well as research involving interventions of any kind.

There are several reasons for this, including:

- reducing risk of harm;
- protection of participants, researchers and the reputation of the University;
- maintenance of insurance cover/indemnity;
- providing assurance to collaborating organisations, funders and publishers;
- maintaining and improving quality and standards; and
- demonstrating adherence to research integrity requirements

Details of the University’s policies and procedures in this area are currently available through the portal. Please click on the Research Governance & Ethics tab. Early in your project you should discuss the Ethical implications of your work with your supervisor. If required, you should then make an ethical application.

Filter committees have been established in all of the areas in which significant levels of human research are likely to take place. For information on the Filter committee for the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment contact Nicola Dunbar-nc.dunbar@ulster.ac.uk

5. Health and Safety

Laboratory and Office Safety

It is everyone’s duty to ensure a safe working environment. Your first point of contact if you have a health and safety query should be your supervisor. The Schools Health and Safety Co-Ordinator is Michael Crozier. Risk assessments are carried out and updated annually. First Aid/Defibrillator available from Jordanstown Security- 22222 (DDI 02870123456).

In event of an emergency requiring Police, Fire or Ambulance dial (9)999 directly then contact security immediately on extension 22222 (DDI 02870123456). If working late you should make security aware and let them know when you leave.

Fire Safety

If you discover a fire, activate the alarm immediately using nearest break glass point. On hearing alarm,

- You must leave the building using the nearest available route by following the emergency exit signs
- You must go directly to the assembly point- Carpark 9
- You must not re-enter the building until told it is safe

Fire marshals sweep each floor in the event of an evacuation. The alarm is tested in Jordanstown at 1:10pm and 6:10pm every Wednesday.
6. Training and Research Community

The School of Computing provides a number of forums to engage and immerse yourself in the vibrant research community. These can help with skills development and feedback on your own research ideas.

Training

In addition to the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) at Ulster which covers generic research and transferable skills, the School occasionally offers focused training courses on technical aspects including writing. If you have an idea for a training course which you feel may be useful for a number of Researchers within the School; please contact the Postgraduate Tutor or Research Director. Your Research Training Grant can also be used to attend more specific training needs as agreed with your supervisors.

Doctoral Research Seminars

These informal seminars are designed to give PhD Researchers an opportunity to share their research in a supportive environment, with their student peers and interested academic colleagues.

Each seminar will last approximately One hour and will be chaired by the Post Graduate Tutor or another member of Academic staff. It is envisaged that two or three Researchers will speak for 15 minutes each, to be followed by questions. Researchers who are interested in speaking should discuss this in the first instance with their supervisors, and then notify the post graduate tutor who will co-ordinate the events.

All PhD Researchers are expected to attend these Research Seminars. This provides two important aspects of your research training:
1. developing an awareness of research in related science and technology fields,
2. and learning the practical skill of presenting your research, which can also be developed through observing how other people present.

Details of research seminars are disseminated through email to all staff within the school. Please make sure you are receiving these and if not contact the school office to be added to the mailing list.

In addition to the Doctoral Research Seminar Series, the School runs a number of other research seminars throughout the year. These included academic and industrial speakers from a range of computing and engineering disciplines. PhD researchers are encouraged to attend these.
7. Travel and Procurement Procedures

As a PhD Researcher, it is expected that you will try to attend at least one academic conference during your studies, in order to present your work to a wider audience. Talk to your supervisor about how to fund such trips. Funded PhD awards have Research Training Grants that can be used to travel to conferences and attend training events. Additionally, many organisations, including the University, have travel awards for which you may apply for.

Agreement for travel and accommodation must be sought from your supervisor prior to proceeding with any booking, once confirmed please contact the School office to obtain the relevant prior approval and expenses paperwork.

It is expected that, prior to travelling to a conference, you will present at the Doctoral Research Seminar Series (DRSS). You should contact the Post Graduate Tutor to arrange this.

Travel Procedures

Prior to Travel

- Check with your Supervisors
- Complete a Prior Approval (PA) Form, available from the school office.
- Have this form signed by your supervisor.
- Take the signed form to the school office for Approval from the Research Director or Head of school.
- Once approved a Prior Approval number will be returned. This can be used to book travel through Key Travel following the University’s travel policy.

After Travel

- Receipts for expenses incurred whilst travelling can be claimed back.
- This includes: food and transport (no Alcohol)
- Complete a Travel Subsistence claim form.
- Attach original receipts formatted appropriately.
- Have this signed by Supervisor.
- Take the completed form, along with receipts to the school office for approval by Research Director or Head of School.
8. Demonstration and Teaching Opportunities

Many PhD researchers help with teaching and marking within the School. For example, they may support workshops and demonstrate in the undergraduate practical laboratories. If you are interested, please discuss with your supervisor and inform the Postgraduate demonstrator coordinator (details below).

PhD Researchers can do up to 6 hours per week in demonstration. This can cover a range of practical skills including programming, professional issues and communication skills.

There may also be opportunities to take lectures and seminars, and to carry out assessment marking. All of these activities are useful for your CV should you wish to remain in academia.

Reasons to do lab demonstration
- Builds your CV (particularly if you want to stay in academia).
- Gets you talking to staff you may not necessarily talk to.
- Gives you some extra money.
- Become a part of the wider team.
- It’s rewarding to help students!

Lab Demonstration Coordinator
If you are interested in demonstrating, contact:
  Dr Mark McCartney
  Room 16G10
  m.mccartney@ulster.ac.uk
  +44 28 9036 6590
9. Assessments

During your research journey, there are a number of key milestones which you will be expected to achieve within specific timeframes. This table provides you of an overview of what is expected of you. General information about these milestones can be found on the doctoral college website. The table below provides some rough guidelines of when each of these assessments will take place. The School may adjust the timing in order to better accommodate the assessments within the academic calendar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>When (full time)</th>
<th>When (part time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-enrolment</td>
<td>Around mid-September, annually</td>
<td>Electronically, every summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Assessment</td>
<td>Within four months of first registration. Typically, these occur before Christmas</td>
<td>Within ten months of first registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual report</td>
<td>First week in May, annually</td>
<td>First week in May, annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>Between eight and twelve months of first registration</td>
<td>Between twelve and twenty-four months of first registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Assessment</td>
<td>Within thirty months of first registration</td>
<td>Within sixty months (PhD) or thirty-six months (MPhil) of first registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to Submit</td>
<td>Three months before proposed submission date</td>
<td>Three months before proposed submission date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of thesis</td>
<td>Within thirty-six months (PhD) or twenty-four months (MPhil) of first registration</td>
<td>Within seventy-two months (PhD) or forty-eight months (MPhil) of first registration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections provide School specific guidance for the Initial, Confirmation and Final assessment. Dates and times for each of these assessments will be communicated to you by the School.
Initial Assessment Guidelines

After approximately 3-4 months (100 days) of full-time study, or 10 months part-time study, it is expected that postgraduate researchers will have developed a reasonable understanding of the problem area in which they are working and have some initial ideas on the likely contribution that their research will make. The 100 Day Viva seeks to ensure this level of progress has been achieved. Your supervisory team, in consultation with you, is required to review progress to date, identify any issues to be addressed and ensure that ongoing training needs are identified prior to this assessment taking place.

Content

The assessment comprises a written and oral element. Researchers should discuss the details of their assessment with their supervisor before completing the application form in PhD Manager. In PhD Manager the Initial Assessment process is started by the Researcher. A date and time when the assessment will take place will be scheduled for you by the School.

Oral Presentation

The researcher is expected to give an oral presentation, using appropriate presentation materials e.g. PowerPoint, to an audience of research students, academic staff, including the student’s supervisor(s), and the Assessment Panel.

The presentation will normally last between 10-15 minutes, followed by 5-10 minutes of questions, and should provide information on the:

- Project background
- Overall aim of the research
- Objectives to be achieved within the first 10 months (full-time) or 20 months (part-time) and the activities that will achieve those objectives.
- Summary of training to date and any training planned

Written Report

The oral presentation should be accompanied with a concise written report. The report, including references, should not exceed four A4 pages. A Gannt Chart may be attached as an appendix. Please note that the internal reviewer is not required to read beyond the four pages limit, and you may be requested to resubmit should you exceed this limit.

Suggested contents for the plan include:

- Abstract/ Introduction
- An overview of Key Research Areas
- Research Plan: including Aims and Objectives
- Summary/ Conclusion
- References

An electronic version of the Written Report and presentation slides should be uploaded through PhD Manager at least two weeks prior to the presentation date. The submission date will be confirmed by the School Office. Guidelines for this can be found here. This should also include a copy of your Turnitin similarity report from blackboard.

Note: You must complete the Research Integrity Course prior to completing your Initial Assessment application

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1 Please use the standard margin sizes for a Microsoft Word Document (2.54cm) and a font size of at least 12pt for main text and no less than 8pt for references and figure captions.
Procedure
The School will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the assessment. The room and data projection equipment will be booked by the School, but the student and/or supervisors should arrange any other additional equipment required and check that everything in the room is satisfactory shortly before the assessment.

In advance of the viva the researcher will be responsible for initiating the Initial Assessment form through PhD Manager. Once submitted the system will route the documentation to the Academic Excellence Executive Assistant within the School Office, u.macdonald@ulster.ac.uk. This will enable them to organise the assessment meeting. You will be able to track the progress of your application via the Initial Assessment button on your main project dashboard.

The system will then notify the Supervisor to create their report for the Assessment Panel. Once the Supervisor has completed their report the system will notify the Chair of the Assessment Panel. Once the meeting has been held the Chair will complete the assessment report through PhD Manager. This is finally signed off by the Research Director.

For the Assessment, an Assessment Panel will be assembled. This will comprise of a reviewer (suggestions are requested from the supervisors) and an appointed chairperson. The other individuals present at the assessment will be the researcher, at least one supervisor and, possibly, an adviser, if one has been appointed. Other Researchers, their supervisors and assessment panel may also be present.

The Assessment Panel will provide a report on the student's progress through PhD Manager and make recommendations concerning his/her advancement and suitability for confirmation of registration status.

The Assessment Panel will normally consist of:

- Head of the Research Group or his/her nominee
- Internal Reviewer(s)

The reviewers will be attempting to answer six basic questions:

1. Is the project clearly defined?
2. Are the objectives realistic and achievable in the time available?
3. Will the project provide adequate research training for the student to at least MPhil level?
4. Is the programme of work likely to provide a sufficient foundation for PhD study?
5. Does the student show evidence of at least a basic understanding of the problem, the nature of the approach being taken to investigate it and the relationship of the work to other research in the field?
6. Are the supervisory arrangements satisfactory?
Confirmation Assessment Guidelines

All PhD and MPhil researchers will undergo a formal assessment of progress, known as the confirmation assessment, usually towards the end of your first year (8-10months) for full time researchers or before the end of the second year (20 months) for part time researchers. The assessment includes a written submission along with a presentation. You will not normally be permitted to re-enrol into your second year (for full time, funded PhD Researchers) until the Doctoral College has received notification from the Faculty of successful completion of your Confirmation, so you should take this into account as it may impact on progression and payment of your stipend.

Content

The assessment comprises a written and oral element and should be organised in close co-operation with the project supervisors.

Written Report

The written element comprises two components:

1. A Literature Review, including project plan, in the form of a Gantt chart, and thesis outline must be produced in font Arial 12 with 1 ½ spacing. It should not exceed 30 A4 pages including, references, and any relevant additional information contained in appendices. Please note that the internal reviewer is not required to read beyond the 30 pages, and you may be requested to resubmit should you exceed this limit.

The Literature Review should:
- Identify the broad problem area in which the research is being undertaken.
- Identify the specific problem being addressed by the research.
- Summarise relevant work in that area.
- Conclude with a summary evaluation of previous work (possibly in tabular form) showing its strengths and weaknesses. This should reveal the knowledge gap(s) that the research is attempting to fill.
- Identify the primary aim of the research project including research questions to be addressed.
- Outline the plan of activity for the remaining period of study (including a Gantt chart).
- Provide a Thesis outline emphasising its structure and how it meets the research aims.

2. A Journal, Conference or Review Paper in scientific notation, in the style of a journal relevant to the discipline, as identified by the supervisors.

An electronic version of the Written Report should be uploaded through PhD Manager at least two weeks prior to the presentation date. The submission date will be confirmed by the School Office. Guidelines for this can be found here. This should also include a copy of your Turnitin similarity report from blackboard.

Oral Presentation

The student is expected to give an oral presentation to the Assessment Panel, using appropriate materials, e.g. PowerPoint, summarising the information contained in the written components. This is a closed session so only your Assessment panel and supervisors will be present.

The following points are suggested as guidelines (not requirements) for the presentation content:
- Aims of the research and planned contribution to knowledge
- Main points of the research so far, with a plan of activity for the remaining period
- Thesis outline, emphasising its logical structure and how it meets the aims of the research

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2 Please use the standard margin sizes for a Microsoft Word Document (2.54cm) and a font size of at least 12pt for main text and no less than 8pt for references and figure captions.
A maximum of one hour is set aside for each viva. The presentation will last no longer than 20 minutes, followed by (up to) 30 minutes for the Panel to question the student and supervisors (s). The final 10-15 minutes will be a private discussion between the Panel and the supervisor(s).

Procedure
The School will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the assessment. The room and data projection equipment will be booked by the School, but the student and/or supervisors should arrange any other additional equipment required and check that everything in the room is satisfactory before the assessment.

In advance of the viva the researcher will be responsible for initiating the Confirmation Assessment form through PhD Manager. Once submitted the system will route the documentation to the Academic Excellence Executive Assistant within the School Office, u.macdonald@ulster.ac.uk. This will enable them to organise the assessment meeting. You will be able to track the progress of your application via the Confirmation Assessment button on your main project dashboard.

The system will then notify the Supervisor(s) to create their report for the Assessment Panel. Once the Supervisor(s) have completed their report the system will notify the Chair of the Assessment Panel. Once the meeting has been held the Chair will complete the assessment report through PhD Manager. This is finally signed off by the Research Director.

For the Assessment, an Assessment Panel, comprising a reviewer (suggestions are requested from the supervisors) and an appointed chairperson. The other individuals present at the assessment will be the student, at least one supervisor and, possibly, an adviser, if one has been appointed.

The Assessment Panel will provide a report on the student's progress through PhD Manager and make recommendations concerning his/her advancement and suitability for confirmation of registration status.

The Panel may make recommendations concerning the direction of the work and are empowered to recommend re-assessment after an agreed period, if the case for confirmation of registration status has not yet been established.

The Assessment Panel will consider the following questions:
1. Have the objectives of the first 10 (20) months’ period of work been achieved?
2. Was the presentation clear and informative?
3. Is the written report appropriate to the expected standard?
4. Is a provisional timeline for completion of the project in place?
5. Is completion of the project likely in three to four years, in light of early review and/or refinement of the original proposal?
6. Is the methodology appropriate and clearly explained?
7. Has the researcher demonstrated adequate development of problem solving and organisational skills?
8. Has the researcher attended relevant training and has the Training Needs been updated?
9. Has essential training e.g. Research Integrity Course and project related training been either completed or scheduled?
10. Is the practice component(s) where appropriate adequately developed or planned?
11. Are all permissions granted to authorise the PhD researcher to carry out the project (e.g. ethical approval(s), AccessNI check, risk assessment)?
12. Does the supervisory arrangement remain appropriate?
Final Assessment
To help prepare for the final submission of your thesis and the examination, the final assessment of progress will take place within thirty months (full-time) and sixty months (part-time) of initial registration.

The final assessment will take the form of a structured meeting and report about Thesis progress. This meeting will be undertaken in collaboration with your Supervisors. You should prepare the following for discussion.

Content and Procedure
The following describes the content and procedure for the Final Assessment within the School of Computing.

1. You should first talk to your supervisors to set up a meeting for the Final Assessment.

2. Once identified, you should begin the Final Assessment process through PhD Manager. This will allow for the formal assessment to be made by your Supervisors.

3. Agree with your Supervisors what materials are needed for the assessment. A template has been created to help with this and should include:
   - A Review of the original research plan outlined in Confirmation Assessment. Including a discussion of whether or not this has been completed, to what extent and why this is the case.
   - A thesis structure- highlighting key headings and knowledge contributions for each section.
   - A submission timeline- planning what work still needs to be completed, when you will begin writing of your thesis, when your supervisors will receive a first draft and when you should receive feedback. This should also include a realistic submission date for the final thesis.
   - Identification of External Examiner for your thesis defence

4. You should aim to submit these materials at least two weeks in advance of your meeting to allow your supervisors to prepare for the Final Assessment meeting.

5. Following the assessment of these materials, the Supervisor will provide some comments/feedback through PhD Manager. This should include:
   - A description on the current state of the writing-up.
   - Comment on how far is the student from completion and if the current plan/timetable is feasible?
   - Are there any developments that are cause for concern?
   - Is any particular action needed to ensure a timely completion?
   - Any other comments, on student or supervision?

   These comments will normally be shown to the student and discussed with the student by the supervisor.

6. Once submitted by the supervisor, this assessment will be passed to the Research Director for final approval through PhD Manager.

Any questions regarding this assessment should be discussed with your supervisors or the Postgraduate Tutor.
## Final Assessment – Thesis Progress Report

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<th>Researcher Name:</th>
<th>Assessment Date:</th>
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1. Please provide a brief review of the research plan outlined in the Confirmation Assessment. In particular provide a discussion of whether or not this has been completed, to what extent and why this is the case.

2. Please provide an outline of the Thesis structure.

3. Please provide a submission timeline: planning what work still needs to be completed, when you will begin writing of your thesis, when your supervisors will receive a draft(s) and when you should receive feedback. This should also include a realistic submission date for the final thesis.

4. Please provide the name(s) of potential External Examiner for your thesis defence.