

**Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Nanyang Technological University**

**Confirmation Exercise for Masters / PhD Candidature**

The purpose of the confirmation exercise is to ensure that you have a good grasp of your research area and topic and are qualified to begin independent research. Full-time PhD students from the January 2011 intake onwards must confirm their candidature within 18 months, while Part-Time PhD students must confirm within 24 months. Confirmation should normally be done 3 months before the deadline (that is within 15 months for full time; 21 months for part time).

The following outlines the four steps of the confirmation process.

**Step 1: Candidates are required to submit a copy of their written submission to their supervisor 3-6 months before their deadline for confirmation.**

The submission should contain

- an abstract;
- a concise statement of the research topic;
- a justification for the choice of topic, and discussion of how the proposed work will contribute to a new understanding of the phenomenon investigated;
- a thorough literature review and critical summary of previous research;
- an explanation of the conceptual framework to be used and/or a summary of experimental methods and equipment requirements;
- an outline of the preliminary work that has been done, and the initial findings;
- plans for future research work and areas to be explored;
- a tentative table of contents for the thesis;
- a timetable for the future that sets out phases of research and deadlines for submitting drafts of chapters – this should be 3 pages in length;
- a brief bibliography, and a list of publications produced or presentations made during probationary candidature.

The submission should be succinctly written in 10,000–20,000 words, with 1½ line spacing. Include a word count on your title page. The introduction should provide a clear statement of the research topic and explain how the proposed work will build on current knowledge. A substantial section of the submission must demonstrate a

thorough review of existing literature; ideally this will serve as a point of departure that identifies where the gaps lay in previous work, and how your research will advance knowledge in your nominated area of investigation. Where relevant, you should discuss the methodology to be employed. Your submission needs to demonstrate that you have the necessary background to begin independent research, a clear research direction in which to precede, a well-developed understanding of what work has previously been done and what needs further examination, and the organizational skills to see your candidature through to the end goal of submitting a completed thesis.

**Step 2: The supervisor signs off on the written submission if the work is judged to be of the required standard.**

- If the supervisor determines that the student is not ready for confirmation, feedback is given and the written submission should be revised and resubmitted to the supervisor for assessment.
- If the supervisor is satisfied that student demonstrates the necessary requisites for succeeding in independent postgraduate research, the student is instructed to prepare 3 copies (MA) or 4 copies of the written submission (PhD) to be distributed to the Confirmation Panel.

**Step 3: The Confirmation Panel members read the submission to judge if the candidate's research proposal and preparation meet the requirements for independent research.**

- The supervisor gathers a panel of four members:
  - The LMS faculty responsible for *PG Confirmation and Exams* (if not on the committee, if so, the PG coordinator) **Chair**
  - The supervisor
  - One member of the student's Thesis Advisory Committee
  - One other member (can be from LMS or external)
- If the Confirmation Panel deems that research proposal has problems or deficiencies, feedback is given to the student. Revisions should be made to the submission in consultation with the supervisor and the student goes back to Step 1.
- If the Confirmation Panel is satisfied that the written submission is of the required standard and the research proposal is tenable, the student is invited to formally present their preliminary work in a confirmation exercise. A seminar date is arranged and advertised in the School.

**Step 4: The Confirmation Panel members attend the confirmation exercise presentation and determine if the student's research proposal should be confirmed.**

The Panel's decision is conveyed to the student within one week, and the report and recommendation is conveyed by the School to GSO.

- Candidates who do not pass the confirmation exercise will be required to undergo the process again before their confirmation deadline.
- Research students who are not confirmed after resubmission of their report may be downgraded to Master's candidature, given an option to exit by transferring to a Master by coursework programme or asked to leave the division.
- Note that the funding for studies may be terminated if candidature is not confirmed.

**To prepare for confirmation of candidature, candidates should:**

- start early – write the outline of the research proposal as soon as possible, solicit feedback on drafts from your supervisor and peers, and rewrite or expand parts of it as necessary as your project begins to take shape;
- practice your oral presentation skills and enlist the critical feedback of others; ensure that you can speak with confidence and within the time limit set for your oral presentation;
- ensure that your written expression is grammatical, that you have referenced other work according to the conventions of good scholarship, and that you duly acknowledge the sources of your information – see “guidelines to submitting written work” available at this link:  
<http://linguistics.hss.ntu.edu.sg/CurrentStudents/Pages/Resources.aspx>
- check that any specific requirements for confirmation will have been met by the confirmation due date.

Original by Alex Coupe (2011)

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