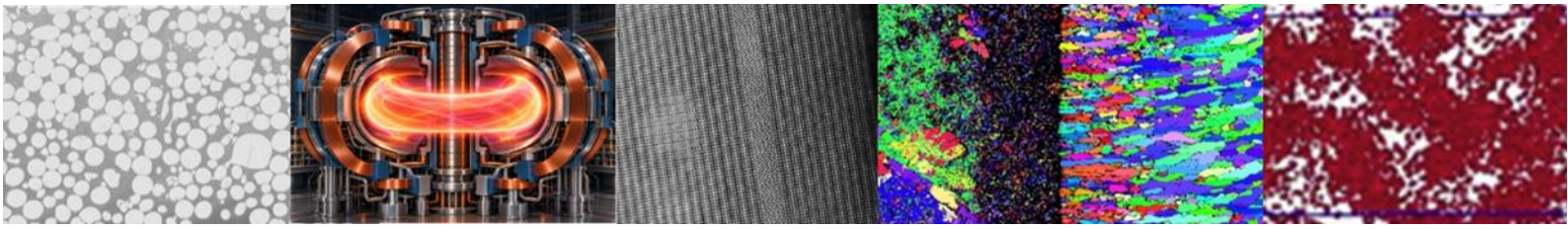
Department of Materials
University of Oxford

Notes of Guidance on Research Degrees in Materials: DPhil in Fusion Power (EPSRC CDT)

2026/2027 Starters



Version 1.0 19th October 2026

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Change Log

This is the first release of this document for Academic Year 2026/27

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the key points and principles of the formal progress assessments and examinations for the DPhil in Fusion Power via the EPSRC CDT programme. The content covers aspects of processes required by the University of Oxford. Other documentation is available for detailed training and support provided by the CDT which is run out of the University of York. If any of the content is confusing or worrisome then please speak to someone (supervisor, college advisor, materials graduate studies team, etc). Most concerns are easily addressed, but equally it is easy for worries to grow if left unaddressed.

This document is specifically for those enrolled at Oxford in a DPhil in Fusion Power via the EPSRC CDT programme. If you are part of a different CDT or studying for a non-CDT DPhil or MSc(Res) in Materials then please find the document specific to your course.

For DPhil candidates there are two formal assessments before the final examination of the thesis, firstly Transfer of Status and then Confirmation of Status. These assessments are there to help you by providing independent feedback on the research ideas you are working on and how you are able to explain and discuss them. This should help ensure you have a worthwhile research project with ambitious and achievable goals, are receiving the right training, and should give you some preparation towards the final viva.

The Education Committee of the central University is responsible for policy and regulations for degrees including graduate research degrees. The Mathematics Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division implements these exam regulations through procedures and guidelines designed to support students in the sciences. This document describes the procedures that the department runs within these wider frameworks for the DPhil in Materials research degree.

1.1 Regulations and Divisional Policies

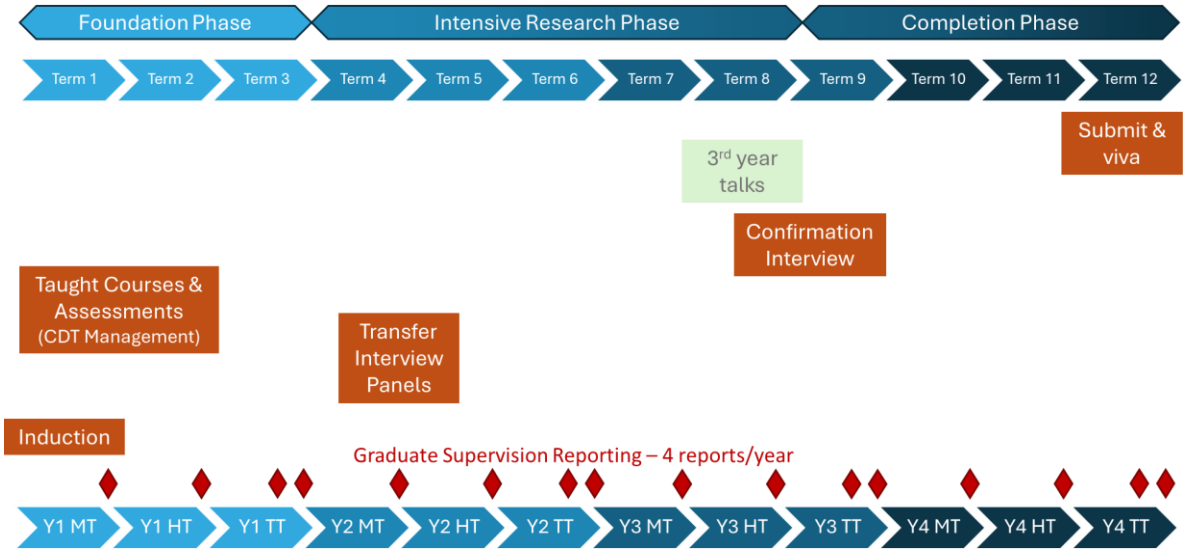
This document should contain all the information you need concerning progression assessments and examination for a DPhil in Materials. For completeness though the relevant exam regulations can be found here:

- General Regulations Governing Research Degrees
- General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
- Research Degrees in the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (2025/26 issue)
- Research Degrees in Physical Sciences (2025/26 issue)

The MPLS Division has information on progression available at: https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/graduate-school/information-for-postgraduate-research-students/progression

1.2 Timeline

The figure below depicts the anticipated timeline for a 4 year DPhil in Fusion Power (EPSRC CDT). The terms marked at the bottom are on the basis of a Michaelmas term start, with no suspensions. The timeline near the top simply counts terms (regardless of start term or suspensions). The Graduate Supervision Reporting (red diamonds) occurs at the end of each full term, and at the end of the long vacation (ie a second report in the much longer Trinity term). The orange boxes, mark the key milestones of induction, transfer, confirmation and the final submission and viva.



In exceptional circumstances it is possible to request that the progression points of transfer and confirmation are deferred. We encourage timely engagement with these processes, however, as they are designed to bring in opportunities for independent feedback at key times. This is particularly the case for the first milestone transfer of status.

1.3 Student Self Service - eVision

The majority of procedures for progression and examination are initiated by the student using the Student Self Service system (also known as eVision). This is a web-based system that holds student records and is used across university departments and colleges (more information here). You can access the Student Self Service using your Oxford Single Sign On (SSO).

The main forms that you are likely to need (and many others you may not need) are detailed here. A manual describing the Student Self Service system in detail can be found here.

2. Transfer of Status

2.1 Purpose

This first progression milestone looks at: (i) the scope and significance of your project, (ii) the training that has been identified and engaged with, (iii) your knowledge of the existing literature and the gaps within it, (iv) your ability to express the key scientific/technical concepts clearly, and (v) any progress you have made to date.

The emphasis is on establishing that the project has suitable scope for a DPhil, and that you are taking charge of it (ie not just following instructions but thinking and contributing ideas too).

Formally, two independent assessors are asked to consider your project and the progress you have made with it. The assessors will be assigned by the DGS and will not include any of your supervisors, or advisors. The assessors will be asked whether they are satisfied that:

a) The student has proposed a viable DPhil project that can be completed within the proposed timeframe and funded period or within 12 terms.
b) The work undertaken to date provides an appropriate background and platform for progress.
c) The student has developed a critical understanding of the relevant literature.
d) The student understands, can justify and defend their research project, its objectives and rationale.
e) The student has a clear plan for the future direction of the project.

f) The student has begun to take intellectual ownership of the project.

If the assessors are both positive about all of these points, then you will transfer status from probational research student to a DPhil student. If they have doubts (eg the project is too limited, or too ambitious, or needs some risk mitigation, or progress and training need a little more time,) then they will provide feedback. This might be responded to by a written submission, or by a further interview (more on this here).

2.2 Timing

The first attempt at transfer of status is ideally made within your third term of study, and at least before the end of your fourth term as stipulated by the exam regulations. During your first year, you will be working towards Transfer and timely engagement with the process is important as it will provide constructive feedback on the setup of your project. Delaying transfer is almost always unhelpful as it means that feedback comes too late to be useful in setting out the project.

During the first year, you should be carrying out the following activities: critically reviewing the background literature and formulating specific research questions, training on specific research techniques that you will use, preliminary experiments/simulations, and wider transferable skills training (research integrity, presentation skills, writing skills, public engagement and outreach, teaching, inclusive practices, research seminars). These are all important aspects of your development into an independent researcher and your engagement with them will be captured in the following submissions detailed further here: (i) research integrity training certificate, (ii) skills training portfolio, and (iii) research project report. These milestone documents will be used alongside a discussion with two independent assessors to determine your progress.

To ensure that transfer happens in a timely fashion the interviews with your assessors are timetabled and organised by the Department and will occur towards the end of your fourth term of study. For the majority starting in Michaelmas Term this means transfer interviews will be at the end of your second Michaelmas Term. Other aspects of the transfer of status process need to be completed before the interview.

For the 2026/27 Michaelmas Term starters the interviews will occur on either 7th or 10th January 2028. The Materials PGR Support Team will let you know specific timings in due course.

2.3 Preparing for Transfer of Status

The MPLS Division has written a form on Preparing for Transfer of Status which lists a series of questions that can be helpful to run through ahead of transfer of status. The idea is that it will prompt you to think about key aspects of your development, knowledge base, and project plan. It is sensible to go through this form yourself and then discuss it with your supervisor. The form is available via the MPLS website (https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/graduate-school/information-for-postgraduate-research-students/progression).

Good timing to do this is for the GSR reporting window that proceeds your transfer interview. For Michaelmas Term starters this would be in Trinity Term ahead of the September interview panel days.

2.4 Components of Assessment

2.4.1 Research Integrity Training

Everyone involved in research has a duty to consider how their work affects others whether project collaborators, local research groups, wider research community and indeed society more generally. The principles are well-captured by the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity as consisting of Honesty, Accountability, Professional courtesy and fairness, and Good stewardship. Upholding these principles gives rise to responsibilities for all researchers.

We feel that it is crucial for all research students to receive training in research integrity as it should underpin everything you do in your research. There are a series of on-line training courses for research integrity delivered through the CoSy system.

For transfer of status, you must complete the Research Integrity: Introductory Core Course 2.0, and achieve a score of at least 80% on the embedded quizzes. **You must upload to the eVision system the Certificate that confirms you have completed the Research Integrity course when you apply to be considered for transfer of status (before Friday 17th December 2027).**

2.4.2 CDT Taught Courses and Skills Training

There will be a number of taught academic courses run at the partner Universities of the CDT, that will take place mostly through the first two terms of your studies. Many of these courses have assessment elements that you must engage with. The central CDT management group will keep you and us informed of your progress.

There will also be a number of activities aimed to support your growth towards an independent researcher that cover a range of general academic skills that are important to develop. These are of wider reach than the specific technical skills and knowledge needed for your particular project and include topics such as: academic writing, critical reading, research methods, presentation skills, time and project management, research ethics, managing research information, good teaching practice, public engagement, outreach, inclusive practices.

In addition to tailored provision within the CDT there are many courses and seminars that will help you develop these transferable academic skills that are offered more widely at Oxford. Such training is intended to help you build confidence in your research, improve how you communicate your ideas, and give you transferable skills that will benefit you both during your degree and in your future career. Some examples are noted below.

Courses from the Graduate Training Framework (esp Your Successful DPhil) MPLS courses on Public Engagement with Research MPLS courses on Inclusive Practices Information Skills (see dept lecture list) Teaching Skills (see dept lecture list) Departmental Research Colloquia	Research Group Meetings Undergraduate Lectures EM Training on microscopes Induction Day Sessions Research Integrity: Introductory Core Course 2.0 Paid Teaching Assistant roles

We will communicate with the CDT administration team to confirm that you have reached a satisfactory level with assessments on taught/training elements.

2.4.3 Research Project Report: Proposal and Progress

To capture the progress you have made in your research project, you need to prepare a report of no more than 3,500 words (excluding the title page, table of contents, acknowledgements, references, figures, figure captions, tables, and project timeline). This word count should be divided across the following elements:

Literature Review (≤1,500 words): This should capture the context of your research project in terms of the technological needs, a brief description of the key literature including central facts and theories where there is consensus, any points of

disagreement or competing interpretations, and any gaps in our knowledge. [Your supervisor may want you to write a longer, more in-depth literature review you should discuss this with them but it is not required for transfer of status].

New Science/Research Questions (≤1,000 words): The literature review should lead into a clear statement of research questions you will aim to answer over the course of your studies. The research questions should show some ambition to advance the field but balance this with some other targets that seem easier to achieve. You should make it clear why the new science you aim to deliver is important and what its impact will be.

Training & Progress to date (≤1,000 words): This section should give the key techniques that you will need to deliver your project along with a description of the training you have either had or have planned. Some data (micrographs, spectra, diffraction patterns etc), however preliminary, should be given to demonstrate the progress you have made. The progress can be either on mastering techniques, or in answering research questions, or both.

Project Management and Timeline (1 page + Gantt chart or similar): One further page can be used alongside a Gantt chart, to describe the timeline and key aspects of project management. As far as possible you should identify any aspects of risk where your project is reliant on external factors, or with key pieces of equipment. A brief consideration of risk mitigation should be given for each of these, along with discussion of when very ambitious parts of a project may need to be reconsidered. Having a plan B can make having an ambitious plan A into a safer proposition.

Statement on use of Generative AI (1 page): In accord with MPLS guidance on Generative AI Use for PGR Summative Assessment all students must provide a declaration that their generative AI use complies with university and divisional policy and guidance, and statement of which AI tools have been used and for what specific purpose in their work. As a minimum this should for each different usage case list the name, version and publisher of the generative AI tool. Students are encouraged to also provide a brief reflection on any steps taken to protect IP, ensure data integrity, and testing reliability/robustness of outputs. An example statement is provided on the PGR webpages.

The research project report should be written as a single document, with the section headings above clearly identified. In writing your report, make it clear when you are referring to your own work (“I” rather than “we”). If parts of the work will be in collaboration try to be explicit about others involved if you already know. Collaboration is absolutely fine, and happens in almost all scientific endeavour, but for your thesis, it is important that individual contributions are clearly demarked.

You must upload to the eVision system your Research Project Report as one of your milestone documents for transfer of status (before Friday 17th December 2027).

2.4.4 Transfer Interviews

The final aspect of the transfer assessment is an interview which will discuss your research questions, the progress you have made so far and your plans going forward. The interviews will be organised by the Department and will occur towards the end of your fourth term of study. For 2026/27 starters this means transfer interviews will be at the end of the Michaelmas Term 2027. Dates of 7th and 10th of January 2028 have been identified and you must keep these clear for interviews. The PGR Support Team will give you the specific day and time in due course.

Discussion in the interviews will be led by two independent assessors who will have already seen your written milestone documents. There may be a small number of other academics present too, one chairing the session, and in most cases the DGS. Your supervisors will not be present for your interview. This is because we are interested in what you have to say, and we realise that some may find it intimidating if their supervisor were present.

The interviews will be between 15 to 30 minutes, and the first five minutes will be for you to present a summary of your project (the chair will keep us to time). It is important that you think about and practice this presentation. You should certainly discuss this with your supervisor, and it would be sensible to have a run through in a group meeting. You should prepare a slide deck for this - our guidance would be that any more than five slides will very likely lead to you over running and being cut off by the chair. Think hard about the central messages. Things are likely to go well if your assessors understand what your research questions are, why they are important, and how you plan to answer them. You might want to look at some "three-minute thesis" videos or attend the MPLS training session. The remainder of the time will be spent discussing your project proposal and progress with it. This is a chance for the assessors to explore any points they had not fully understood from your written submission, and/or suggest other approaches you might consider. Sometimes links to other pieces of work are suggested and even possibilities of new collaborations emerge. You will be asked about use of generative AI in your research and preparation of transfer documentation. We will make sure you have a chance to voice any concerns you have about the project, delivery of training etc.

After the interview, your assessors complete a report form and make a recommendation on the outcome of the assessment.

2.5 Possible Outcomes

A blank copy of the report form that assessors complete is given in appendix A. This is submitted into the eVision system, approved by the DGS, and passed onto the MPLS Division. You will then receive an email detailing your transfer outcome from the MPLS Division.

Whether pass or fail, you should spend some time reflecting on the verbal and written feedback you have received and discussing this with you supervisor. In some cases, you may be asked to provide a written response to some questions that have been raised by the assessors before the transfer of status is confirmed.

If the outcome is not favourable at the first attempt, then you can make a further attempt to transfer. This is normally done one term after the initial attempt. For the second attempt, a new application should be submitted with a revised research report, and another interview will be held (the PGR Support Team will provide detailed instructions). In these circumstances, honest and open discussion with your supervisors is the best way forward. Construct a plan that will enable you to address specific points of concern that the assessors have raised. Remember too that you can seek guidance from your college advisor, and indeed from the DGS, though this may lack technical insight.

An extension of time of one term will be granted if necessary to make the second application. If your second attempt at transfer is unsuccessful, transfer to the Masters by Research degree should be considered by both the assessors and you, but if this is not recommended or desired, then you will no longer be able to continue with your studies, and your name will be removed from the Register of Graduate Students.

3. Confirmation of Status

3.1 Purpose

After transfer of status, you will continue to develop your research project, working through experiments, simulations and analysis to answer your central research questions. Often new questions emerge, or unforeseen problems block a particular strand of work. This is an entirely normal aspect of research, and you will need to adapt and evolve your research plan as you go. This should be done with guidance from your supervisor, and any industrial project partners. As you grow into an independent researcher, you should feel able to propose your own solutions and pitch them to your supervisors persuading others that your plan is sound and adds value is a vital skill.

The Confirmation of Status process provides an opportunity for two experienced researchers independent of the project (your assessors), to provide feedback on your progress. The intent is to provide you with feedback on how your work has developed to that point ie the volume and quality of results produced. The assessment will also discuss the forward planning towards delivery of a final thesis. The assessors will give their opinion on the likelihood that a viable DPhil thesis could be produced and submitted within the 3½ year fee liability or four-year submission window.

For confirmation of status to be conferred, the assessors must be satisfied that:

a) The student's DPhil project is following a trajectory that will lead to completion and submission within the remaining timeframe (and not exceeding 12 terms).
b) The work undertaken to date provides a sufficient background and a platform for completion/submission.
c) The student s work/research has the potential to make a "significant and substantial contribution" to their field of study.
d) The student has developed critical knowledge and understanding of the relevant literature.
e) The student understands, can justify and defend their research project, its objectives and rationale.
f) The student has a clear plan for the future direction of the project.
g) The student has taken intellectual ownership of the project.

The focus here is to provide you with helpful feedback on (i) whether the standard required for a DPhil degree is being meet in terms of quality of the work, and (ii) whether timely submission seems likely.

3.2 Timing

Confirmation interviews are organised on an individual basis as specific projects progress at different paces throughout their duration. So that you time things to benefit fully from the constructive feedback from the assessors, we advise that you aim for your Confirmation interview in a timely fashion.

The exam regulations state that the Confirmation of Status assessment should be completed no later than the end of your 9th term of study. For Michaelmas term starters who have not suspended status, this means confirmation of status should have been completed by the end of the long vacation in your third year (ie by start of October 2029 for October 2026 starters).

3.3 Assessment Process

You need to apply for confirmation of status through the eVision system as a new on-course application (link help manual). There are various fields within the student part of the application. The Additional Details section prompts you for a Progress Report for which you should supply 500-1000 words documenting the key new science which the project has achieved and/or is on target to achieve. You can also include a list of any journal articles, conference presentation or patents that the research has generated (completed or in progress). You can either type this directly into the text box or prepare a separate document and upload that (just put a note in the text box that you have uploaded a separate document as your report). Similarly, in the Timetable field, you can either outline your plan directly in the box or upload a separate document (and note that you ve done that). Uploading separate documents will allow you more flexibility in content format, for example allowing you to use a Gantt chart to show the timeline.

You must also upload a thesis outline as a milestone document. This should outline the intended structure of your thesis along with a description of the extent to which experiments/simulations, data analysis and writing have been completed for each chapter.

In your application for Confirmation you may request to use the integrated thesis format. You should discuss this with your supervisor(s). It is advisable to comment on the likely impacts of adopting the integrated thesis approach on the timeline to submission, and quality of the thesis.

You should upload a further milestone document containing a statement on your use of generative AI. In accord with MPLS guidance on Generative AI Use for PGR Summative Assessment all students must provide a declaration that their generative AI use complies with university and divisional policy and guidance, and statement of which AI tools have been used and for what specific purpose in their work. As a minimum this should for each different usage case list the name, version and publisher of the generative AI tool. Students are encouraged to also provide a brief reflection on any steps taken to protect IP, ensure data integrity, and testing reliability/robustness of outputs. An example statement on use of generative AI is available on the website.

Once you have submitted your application on eVision it will pass to your primary supervisor, your college and the DGS for approval. The supervisor is prompted to add their own brief comments on progress too. After this, two independent assessors assigned by the DGS will be asked to consider your written application and arrange an interview to discuss it with you. The assessors for confirmation need not be the same as those for transfer, but mostly are. The PGR Support Team will prompt the assessors to contact you about the time and place for your interview.

The confirmation interview involves only you and your two assessors and should last between 20 mins to an hour. You should prepare a slide deck of about 5 slides and use these to present the key new science during the first ~5 minutes of the interview. The assessors will then ask you about your work and progress over the whole of your research project to date and your plans going forward. The assessors will be forming their opinions firstly about whether the finished thesis will constitute a significant and substantial contribution to the field and secondly whether it can be delivered on time. Try to be clear on what is new and significant about your work. Remember you can ask directly for guidance too (is that particular experiment, chapter or sub-section really needed?). Try to see the confirmation interview as a resource that you can use to get constructive feedback on your work.

3.4 Possible Outcomes

After the interview, the assessors will write a report and an overall pass/fail recommendation for the DGS to consider. It is possible for a pass to be issued once some follow-up action or a written response has been completed. The outcome is shared with the MPLS division who will email the result to you.

As with transfer, you will get the most out of the process if you reflect on the interview and assessors report and discuss this with you supervisor(s). The feedback can help you produce a better thesis.

If the outcome is not favourable at the first attempt, then as with transfer, you can make a further attempt at confirmation. This is normally done one term after the initial attempt. For the second attempt, a new application with a revised progress report, timeline, and thesis outline should be submitted, and another interview will be held (the PGR Support Team will provide further instructions).

An extension of time of one term will normally be granted if necessary to make the second application. If your second attempt at confirmation is unsuccessful, it may be possible to transfer to the Master by Research degree if the assessors agree and you desire this. Otherwise, you will no longer be able to continue with your studies, and your name will be removed from the Register of Graduate Students.

4. Removal from the Register & Appeals

4.1 Removal from the Register

If a student s academic performance is unsatisfactory, or there are other concerns about a student s academic progress, the department may find it necessary to initiate

the removal from the register process. Before we reach that formal process, we will have worked with your supervisor and college to thoroughly discuss making any suitable adjustments to your study, and have tried to seek help and advice from other suitable sources. Students whose academic performance remains below the standard required will be advised at every stage of the options available to them, including voluntary withdrawal, a period of suspension, and requesting to change their registration to another degree (if appropriate).

4.2 Appeals for transfer and confirmation of status

It is possible to contest the outcome of the transfer or confirmation assessment. You should first discuss the matter with the DGS. Where this does not satisfactorily explain or resolve your concern, then you, your supervisor, or your college authority may put your appeal directly to the Proctors. The Proctors can only consider whether the procedure for reaching an academic decision were properly followed, and cannot challenge the academic judgement of the assessors. Please view the University complaints and appeals processes.

5. Final Examination

As you progress with writing your thesis you should find time to talk with your supervisor about suitable examiners. You will need two examiners. Usually, one of these is a senior member of University of Oxford (the internal), and the other is from outside Oxford (the external). The exam regulations only actually stipulate that at least one examiner should be from outside Oxford, so it is possible to have two external examiners. You need to use the eVision system (under My Student Record) to initiate an application for the appointment of examiners. We strongly advise that you start this process four to six weeks before you intend to submit your thesis, otherwise, the process of approving the examiners may lag behind your eventual thesis submission. It is acceptable to enter an estimate word count if you are applying ahead of finalising and submitting your thesis. Once you have completed your part of the application it will pass to your primary supervisor who will submit details of the proposed examiners. The DGS and MPLS Division will determine if the examiners are suitable and free from any conflicts of interest (see section 7.3.3 of the university's Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees). Examiners can only be appointed after you have achieved confirmation of status.

The final examination will centre on your thesis, which should critically survey the relevant literature, identify the aims of the research (ie your research questions), describe the methodology used and the results obtained. Remember that the development of new techniques and methods of analysis can be as valuable as the

results they produce. The work should be discussed not just in isolation, but within the wider research context. Conclusions should try to draw out the significance or impact of the work rather than just summarise it. All of this needs to be delivered in fewer than 40,000 words for the main body of the text (the following can be excluded from the word count: references, figures, figure captions, tables, declaration, title page, acknowledgements, glossaries, table of contents, statement on use of generative AI, and abstract). An abstract is explicitly required and should concisely summarize the scope and principal arguments of the thesis, in about 300 words. A statement on use of generative AI is also explicitly required and should be placed immediately after the abstract. This statement must include a formal declaration that any generative AI use complies with university, divisional and departmental guidance, where and how generative AI has been used in preparation of the thesis and summarising how specific uses of generative AI will be referenced in the text (this could simply amount to reference to a scientifically accepted standard in place at the time of submission of the thesis).

Subject to approval DPhil students in Materials may submit an integrated thesis rather than a conventional thesis. This should be discussed with your supervisor(s) and the request for the integrated thesis route should normally be made in the application for Confirmation of Status. After Confirmation, requests may still be considered and should be made to the DGS via the PGR support team. Such requests should detail the likely impacts of adopting the integrated thesis approach on the timeline to submission, and quality of the thesis.

The thesis must be written by you, in your own words. If you quote from other people s writing, then you need to make this explicit and give clear credit to the original author(s). Failing to do this is plagiarism and is completely unacceptable. Plagiarism, and other research misconduct, will jeopardise your degree and can lead to expulsion from the University. This extends beyond text to figures and tables which can be presented, often in the literature review, but must be credited to the originators. You must also comply with copyright law.

Although the writing must be yours, it is not uncommon for some of the work to have been conducted with or by others (for example particular measurements, or synthesis steps). This is not inherently a problem as most science is collaborative, but you must make it clear and explicit where others have contributed. If there has been significant collaboration, then in addition to noting this in your thesis, it is advisable to also submit a Statement of Authorship. This lays out in a separate document the details of work completed in collaboration, and/or work completed by others along with a guide to where these are reported in the thesis. The Statement of Authorship is then uploaded to eVision as part of the appointment of examiners application. A Statement of Authorship

is likely to be essential in the case of an integrated thesis, but is often a sensible and transparent approach for a conventional thesis.

You are entitled to receive thorough formative feedback on one draft of each chapter of your thesis from your supervisory team. This takes time to happen, and time for you to make any amendments so plan this into your schedule. Most supervisors prefer to get work in chapters, maybe even smaller sections, rather than be faced with a whole draft thesis. Discuss this with them, and if you have more than one supervisor talk about who will comment on each part of your thesis.

Arranging for adequate proof-reading of your thesis is your responsibility, though your supervisor may comment if they feel further proof-reading is required. Proof-reading focuses on the grammar, spelling and clarity of the writing rather than the scientific or technical ideas being presented. You could proof-read for yourself, or it is acceptable to bring in third parties (family, friends, or even a professional proof-reading service). Be aware that a proof-reading service may be part of a set of reasonable adjustments for disability. Make sure that use of a third-party does not contravene any agreements concerning confidential material within your thesis.

When completed, your thesis should be submitted via the eVision system via the 'My Research Degrees' tab. There is no requirement for a printed version of your thesis to be submitted.

Once the thesis is submitted and examiners appointed, the research degrees office will release your thesis to the examiners and prompt the internal examiner to make arrangement for the oral or viva voce exam.

There is no prescribed duration for the viva, but typically in Materials, they last from 2 to 3 hours. Candidates (and internal examiners) must attend the viva in academic dress. Often, the candidate will be asked at the start to outline the context, main findings and significance of the research. Come prepared to respond to such a request but don t try to learn a speech by rote (it comes over poorly). Often the discussion then moves chapter by chapter through the thesis. Try not to get flustered if you cannot answer a specific question no one is an expert on everything and there may not be a known/agreed answer to some questions. After some understandable nerves, a viva settles into a discussion between three knowledgeable and interested people into a body of research work.

The examiners are asked to assess whether:

a) the candidate possesses a good knowledge of the particular field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls

b) the candidate has made a significant and substantial contribution in the particular field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls

c) the thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner

d) in their opinion, the thesis merits the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

e) the candidate has presented a satisfactory abstract of the thesis

For the point on the contribution being significant and substantial, the examiners are guided to take into account what may be reasonably expected of a capable and diligent student after three or at most four years of full-time study.

The examiners write a joint report and make a recommendation to the Board concerning the outcome of the exam. For a first examination, the examiners make one of the following recommendations:

A. That the candidate be given leave to supplicate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy without any further amendments to the thesis;
B. That the candidate be given leave to supplicate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy following minor corrections of the thesis;
C. That the candidate should make major corrections to the thesis;
D. That the candidate should make major corrections of the thesis, followed by a mandatory viva;
E. Student choice of EITHER reference back of the thesis for further work followed by re-examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy OR accepting leave to supplicate for the degree of Master of Letters or Master of Science by Research;
F. Student choice of EITHER reference back of the thesis for further work followed by re-examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy OR reference back of the thesis for further work followed by re-examination for the degree of Master of Letters or Master of Science by Research;

For each of these outcomes you will be given specific guidance on what to do next, but more general information can be found here