Procedure for Upgrade from MPhil to PhD Studies

General
The upgrade process in PCPH conforms to the UCL guidelines and procedures. All students and supervisors should familiarise themselves with these guidelines, which can be found here:

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/research_degrees/documents/mphil_phd_upgrade_guidelines

Timing and Requirements
Whilst it is expected that most students will successfully upgrade on the first attempt, there can be two possible attempts at upgrade. For full-time students the first attempt should be between 9 and 18 months and, if the student fails at the first attempt, the second between 15 and 24 months. The period between the first and second attempt should normally be no more than 6 months. For Part-time students, the first possible attempt at upgrade should take place between 15 and 30 months and, if the student fails at the first attempt, the second between 25 and 40 months. The period between the first and second attempt should normally be no more than 10 months.

- Transfer of registration must be recommended by the upgrade examination panel and the Departmental Graduate Tutor;
- The process of upgrading should include an assessment of the student’s progress by supervisors and an additional examiner and includes four components:
  1. An Upgrade report on work conducted so far and future plans of no more than 10,000 words is prepared by the student.
  2. A departmental seminar on work conducted so far and future plans is given by the student.
  3. An oral examination with the upgrade examination panel is conducted.
  4. A report by the Principal Supervisor is submitted to the upgrade panel and the Departmental Graduate Tutor.

Criteria for Upgrade
The purpose of the upgrade is to assess the student’s progress and ability to complete their PhD programme in a reasonable time frame. In this assessment, the criteria defined below should be applied. The assessment should not be confined to the research material presented by the student but should also consider the student’s demonstrable academic and generic skills.
A student should be upgraded to PhD status if he or she meets the following criteria:

i. Commitment to pursuing research at UCL leading to the PhD degree;
ii. Satisfactory progress in the work so far;
iii. Demonstration of sufficient awareness of the context of the work and completion of such tasks as a review of relevant literature and a bibliography;
iv. Ability to formulate a viable hypothesis or research question that could be completed within the normal time frame of the PhD programme;
v. Satisfactory technical and generic skills development. Students should undertake a minimum of 20 recognised skills training units per academic year.
vi. Formulation of a viable plan for the work;
vii. Consideration of the research ethics dimensions of the project, and application for
ethics approval from the relevant Research Ethics Committee if appropriate
viii. Completion of the appropriate sections of the Research Student Log;
ix. English Language proficiency, both written and spoken.

It is expected that the specific components in the student’s upgrade report, in conjunction with the upgrade seminar and viva will demonstrate that these criteria have been met.

The Upgrade Report
The Upgrade Report should be drafted by the student in consultation with the Principal Supervisor and the Subsidiary Supervisor(s). Whilst it is recognised that the exact nature of the report submitted by the student will depend on discipline and the nature of their research, it should cover at least the following components (not necessarily as discrete items).

i. Overview of the upgrade report and thesis
ii. Literature review and/or background and rationale for the research.
iii. Research questions and hypothesis(es)
iv. Methodology employed
v. A substantial piece of work towards the thesis objectives
vi. Plan and timetable for the remainder of the work;
vii. Bibliography.

In the literature review/background the student should demonstrate that they have sufficient awareness of the context of the work, and the rationale for the study. The ‘substantial piece of work’ will vary depending on the discipline of the student and the research project. For example, in secondary research projects it may be presentation of the findings of a completed preliminary piece of research meeting one or more initial research objectives. In primary research projects where initial work is often focussed on gaining necessary Ethical and Governance approvals, recruitment and data collection, it may instead be a draft chapter of the thesis and demonstration in the report and/or seminar that sufficient progress has been made in the initial study phases.

The Upgrade Report should be submitted to the examination panel at least two weeks prior to the viva examination.

Report by Principal Supervisor
A report from the Principal Supervisor on the student’s work must be submitted in advance of the upgrade viva to the Upgrade examination Panel, the Departmental Graduate Tutor and the Student. This report should outline how the student meets the criteria for upgrade.

The Upgrade Viva
The purpose of the viva is to ascertain, in conjunction with the student’s upgrade report, the student’s upgrade seminar presentation and the report by the Principal Supervisor, that the criteria (see above) have been met. The viva should also be an opportunity for the student to discuss and defend his/her ideas. This can have a ‘formative’ function, and inform the direction and further content of the PhD.

The Upgrade Examination Panel
- The Upgrade Panel should be made up of a minimum of two members of academic staff, including the student’s Subsidiary Supervisor(s) who normally chairs the Upgrade Panel, and the additional external examiner. The Principal Supervisor should provide input via a written report but may not be a member of the Panel.
- The primary supervisor will be invited to a post viva meeting where next steps for the conduct of the student’s research will be discussed. This ‘next steps’ meeting may be conducted immediately post viva.
The additional examiner should have an appropriate academic background and, in order of preference, should be external to University College London, external to the department, or external to the research group in which the student’s supervisors are located; The latter two of these options should only be pursued in exceptional circumstances, with an approach to an examiner from within the Department as a port of last call.

By virtue of having become involved in the PhD at the upgrade stage, the additional examiner cannot conduct the final PhD examination;

The Departmental Graduate Tutor has final jurisdiction over the membership of the Panel, its constitution and any dispute between Panel Members.

A written joint report on the outcome should be signed and submitted by the Chair of the Upgrade Panel to the Departmental Graduate Tutor for signature, using the standard form available from the Departmental website. This report should be copied to the Student, Supervisors and the Head of Department. The student may request further oral feedback from the Panel.

### Arranging the Upgrade Seminar and Viva

The responsibility for arrangements of the Upgrade process, that is identifying possible seminar slots and the additional examiner, lies with the supervisors. Sufficient forward planning should be undertaken to ensure that

- An additional examiner is identified
- the additional examiner is approved by the Graduate Tutor(s), and when this has happened
- a date for the Upgrade seminar (which can be run as part of the Departmental Seminar series) is set

It is suggested that supervisors should allow approximately 3 months for these arrangements to be made.

### Outcomes

A written joint report on the outcome should be signed and submitted by the Chair of the Upgrade Panel to the Departmental Graduate Tutor for signature. The Graduate Tutor will then notify the Student and Registry Services.

Students may either upgrade on the first attempt or, if unsuccessful, be referred for a second attempt within the time frame described above. Students who fail on the first attempt must be given specific written criteria to meet for the second attempt. In some cases, a student may be referred to resubmit the written work only, without the need for a second oral assessment.

It is essential that it is made very clear to students at the outset of the process about the potential outcomes of the process, including the specific criteria to be met after a first failed attempt and the potential outcomes of failure at the second attempt. The following are the potential outcomes of the upgrade process:

#### Potential outcomes of first attempt:

i) Student is recommended for upgrade to PhD status;

ii) Student is referred to a specific date, with specific criteria to meet, for a second attempt with the need for a second viva;

iii) Student is referred to a specific date, with specific criteria to meet, for a second attempt without the need for a second viva.

#### Potential outcomes of second attempt:

i) Student is recommended for upgrade to PhD status;

ii) Student is not recommended for upgrade and remains registered for the MPhil.
It should be made clear that a second failed attempt at upgrade will mean that the student will remain registered with MPhil status. This may lead to the submission of a thesis for the MPhil which must be done in accordance with the UCL Research Degree Regulations. It is not the role of the Upgrade Panel to determine, at that stage, if the student’s work is appropriate for submission for the MPhil degree.

It is also not the role of the Upgrade Panel to consider action to deregister students who are deemed academically insufficient. Evidence from the upgrade process, however, may be used in subsequent Academic Insufficiency proceedings implemented by the Faculty.