

Guidance for Late Stage Review (LSR)

To be completed no later than 24 months for full-time students/48 months for part-time students¹

1. Late Stage Review (LSR)

- 1.1. The College requires that a review of a student's PhD research ability will be undertaken to determine whether registration of the PhD can continue. The form of the review will be determined by the student's department² and been approved by the College. **The LSR must be completed by 24 months (full-time students) and 48 months (part-time students), which may include one opportunity for re-assessment.** The assessment must be based upon an examination, which involves the submission by the student of a written report and an oral examination on the report. The assessment panel will include at least one independent academic assessor (independent from the research "group", i.e. from the project and the supervisor). See the College's [Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD](#) (Section 8).
- 1.2. The purpose of the Late Stage Review is to confirm that the student (a) has an adequate understanding of the research problem, (b) has the capacity to pursue research, (c) has a critical awareness of the relevant literature on the subject and (d) has a realistic research plan and schedule for completion within the registration period. These arrangements apply to all students whether full-time or part-time, registered under the Partner Research Institute (PRI) Scheme or for split PhDs, for Joint PhDs (unless a variant has been explicitly negotiated), and to staff registered for a research degree.
- 1.3. If the College determines that the student's progress is such that they cannot continue, the student may be required to withdraw from the College at this stage; alternatively the College may transfer their registration to the degree of MPhil and require the student to write up for the MPhil degree. The date of MPhil registration will, in this case, be backdated to the date of the initial PhD registration. Where a student has had their registration transferred from PhD to MPhil following a LSR they should normally complete the MPhil within six months (full-time students) and 12 months (part-time students) of the date of that LSR.
- 1.4. A student has one opportunity to repeat the LSR if required to do so by the department; the LSR must still be completed within 24 months (48 months for part-time students) of the date of the initial PhD registration.
- 1.5. All PhD students are expected to complete a programme of professional skills development training as prescribed by the Graduate School. Failure to complete the requisite training may result in a student's registration being transferred from PhD to MPhil or in a student being barred from entering the PhD (or MPhil) examination. See the College's [Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD](#) (Section 8).

¹ The milestone deadlines listed in this document apply to students admitted from October 2021 onwards. Students registered prior to October 2021 should refer to the Academic Regulations in effect for their cohort.

Additionally, the timings of some milestones may vary for some CTS students and some EngD students on four-year programmes. Students are advised to check the timing of their milestones with their department.

² Any reference to "department" or "departmental" includes schools, institutions, centres or divisions, as appropriate.

The Late Stage Review must ask whether a student has completed the professional skills development requirement as follows:

Doctoral Students (PhD, MD[Res] and EngD): The College requires all doctoral students to achieve a minimum of four Graduate School credits, plus the online doctoral plagiarism awareness course. The online Plagiarism Awareness Course is compulsory, but does NOT count towards the minimum credit requirement which is set out below:

Doctoral students are required to accumulate a minimum of 4 credits by the LSR as follows:

- By the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) – 2 credits
- By the Late Stage Review (LSR) – a further 2 credits

Course Type	Number of Credits
Online courses	1
Face-to-face workshops	1
Webinars	1
1 Day Retreat	1
2 Day Retreat	3
5 Day Global Fellows Programme	4

MPhil Students: those who are direct entry MPhil, or those being awarded with an MPhil degree having first registered for a PhD, must complete a minimum of two credits and the Plagiarism Awareness Course by the ESA. The LSR professional development credit requirement does not apply to MPhil students.

- 1.5.1 If a PhD student has not achieved a minimum of four professional skills credits and completed the plagiarism awareness course by the date of their LSR, then provided they pass the academic requirements of the LSR, the student can still progress with their research programme. However, a condition of progression will be to set a deadline for achieving the required number of professional skills credits and if not already completed, the plagiarism awareness course. This deadline will be set by the Department, in agreement with the Graduate School
- 1.6. The LSR must also consider whether the student would benefit from further developing their academic communication competence. In such cases, students should be referred to the Centre for Academic English.
- 1.7. The Head of Department (or nominee) and all supervisors concerned should sign the Late Stage Review form. The independent assessors must also be named on and sign the form.
- 1.8. The Late Stage Assessment form can be found at the College's [Academic Policy webpages](#), under the *Milestones for Research Degrees* section.
- 1.9. Departments are responsible for confirming to the Registry that an LSR has been completed for all students where required by College regulations. The completion date will be recorded as the date of student assessment and must be reported to the Registry Assessment Records Team for recording on the College's central student record system; however, this should only be reported and the LSR confirmed as complete once all aspects of the procedure (including submission, assessment and review of the outcome recommended by the independent LSR assessors by the Director of Postgraduate Studies or nominee) has been completed.

- 1.10. In accordance with the College's [Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD](#), any extension to the LSR completion deadline³ (as noted in section 1.1(ii) of this procedure) would require approval. An extension should only be considered due to mitigation where a student's progress has been affected by circumstances beyond their control. Students concerned about their ability to submit and complete the assessment for their LSR by the given deadline are advised to speak to their supervisor and departmental administrator at the earliest opportunity. Prior to consideration of an LSR extension request, departments are advised to consider whether an Interruption of Study would be appropriate and more beneficial to the candidate based on the mitigation declared. For further information, please refer to the College's [Authorised Interruption of Studies Procedure](#).

All requests for an extension to the LSR completion deadline are subject to departmental approval, prior to subsequent confirmation of the extended completion deadline to the Registry Assessment Records Team for recording on the student's central College record. The agreed new deadline will be visible to students via the *PGR Milestones* platform accessed via the *My Imperial* student portal.

An approved milestone extension will extend the milestone completion deadline for the individual student with no detriment to the student's academic record; this will allow the student to proceed to assessment in the usual way. Please note that extensions will apply only to the relevant milestone (ESA or LSR), and any agreed extension period will not affect future milestone deadlines or extend the overall registration period.

An ESA/LSR Extension Request Form recommended for use by students, supervisors and departmental representatives to inform the extension review process can be accessed via the 'Milestones for Research Degrees' section of the College's [Academic Policy webpages](#).

³ 'Completion deadline' refers to the date by when student submission and assessment for the LSR must be completed

2. Guidance on completing the Late Stage Review Form

2.1. Section A

- 2.1.1 To be completed by the students and Department ahead of the LSR. Section A also includes confirmation from the Department that the student has met the College's professional skills requirements.
- 2.1.2 The Graduate School (graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk) will provide Departmental administrators with a report confirming what professional skills courses students have completed. Alternatively, students may present their administrator with a copy of their professional skills attendance certificate as evidence.

2.2. Section B

- 2.2.1 To be completed by the independent assessors. Departments are reminded that it is not good practice to appoint members of staff who are also responsible for providing pastoral care to students as independent assessors of those students.

2.3. Section C

- 2.3.1 To be completed by the supervisor following the LSR. Both the supervisor and student are then asked to sign the form to confirm the conversation has taken place.
 - 2.3.2 The College wishes to provide its research students with an outstanding and world-class experience whilst at College. This includes the provision of excellent support and guidance from supervisors. It is recognised that supervisors will provide students with regular informal feedback but the LSR is an opportunity for supervisors to provide formal feedback to students.
 - 2.3.3 Supervisors and assessors are also reminded that students are asked to comment on the quality of supervision that they receive at College as part of the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), an important benchmarking tool. Students will be asked to comment on whether they are supported by their supervisors and receive regular feedback on their research activities.
 - 2.3.4 Section C has been developed in order to facilitate broader discussions between students and supervisors not just on academic progress but the wider developmental needs of students. Supervisors should also take the opportunity to support students through honourable exit following an outcome of transfer to MPhil.
- 2.2.1 When considering what professional, technical and other training students may need as they progress through their PhD, Supervisors are reminded that a [full list of Graduate School courses](#) is available. It may also be possible for students to attend technical and other taught courses offered by departments. To access this information, supervisors are advised to search the College's Timetabling software and contact departments directly to see if venue capacity will permit additional attendees.

Document title:	Early Stage Assessment Guidance Notes		
Version:	9	Date:	May 2023
Location and filename:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\9. Research Programmes\Early Stage Assessment Guidance Notes		
Approved:	N/A		
Effective from:	October 2016		
Originator:	Assessment Records		
Contact for queries:	Head of Assessment Records		
Cross References:			
Notes and latest changes:	<p>Formatting changes made on 15 March 2016, revisions made in June 2016 to reflect change to professional skills requirements and removal of RPC requirement.</p> <p>Updated to reflect Turnitin requirements for students starting on or after 24 September 2019 (August 2019)</p> <p>Updated to reflect exemptions for research covering national security (September 2019)</p> <p>Updated to reflect new milestone deadlines in effect from October 2021</p> <p>Updated to include reference to ESA/LSR milestone extension procedures and formatting changes (July 2023)</p>		

