

End of year progression for CDT students

Overview: The CDT students go through end-of-year progression procedures at the end of years 1 to 3. At the end of each of these years, the student will produce a short report summarising progress, and a plan for the subsequent years. Longer reports are required at the end of year 1 and year 2. For most students, these activities are an opportunity to take stock and get feedback, but also for the School to recognise potential problems.

End of year 1: At the end of year 1, the student should have a research topic, and be able to argue its importance and put it into context. The student *may* have identified the approach they are going to take, and *may* have made some progress on it. The student needs to produce a document containing the problem statement, proposed approach, literature review and survey of potential impact. This will be submitted at least two weeks before the scheduled interview. A short report containing an “executive summary” and a plan for the next year will also be produced and submitted a week before the scheduled interview. The long report will be assessed by the supervisory team and an independent second reader prior to the end of year interview. More details of the long and short reports are given in appendices A and B.

The end of year interview will start with a brief (10 minutes) oral presentation by the student, followed by questions from the examiners. The goal of this is to ascertain whether the student has made a good start to the research and is on track to succeed. The panel will use the presentation, the executive summary, the marks of the 3 MSc courses and Scientific Methods courses, and the evaluation of the long report. After the interview, the panel, supervisor, and adviser will consider all the evidence to decide whether to recommend that the student be allowed to proceed to year 2. If not, the recommendation may be to resubmit or retake some parts of the first year, take some other remedial action, or if eligible leave with a diploma.

End of year 2: A long report will be produced and read by a second reader. As the student has been working for 18 months, this should be a substantial document. A good format would be that of a journal paper (but not a conference paper) with no page limit and ample space for literature review and technical details. A short report will also be produced, containing an executive summary and plans for the coming research. Plans for internships, public engagement activities, and targeted conferences and publications should also be discussed. The long report should be submitted 6 weeks prior to the anniversary of registration.

The format of the end of year interview will be similar to that at the end of year 1, starting with a brief presentation followed by questions from the examiners. Afterwards, the examiners will determine whether the student can progress into the third year. Other possible outcomes are

some required remedial action, or to leave possibly with a lesser degree. This is the most significant hurdle. The student has been working for 18 months on research. It should be possible at this point to determine whether they are capable of achieving at the research project they are attempting.

End of year 3: A short report will be produced containing a summary of progress and a plan for completing the research *and* for completing the thesis, including writing. This should also contain the proposed table of contents for the thesis. Any plans for visits, publications, and other activities should also be included in this document.

End of year 4: At this point the student *must* submit. There is no submission pending period at this time.

A More on the end of year 1 report

During the first six-months of research, the student is clarifying the problem they are going to work on for the remaining three years. This document should describe the outcome of that process. In particular, it should address,

1. What is the research problem?
2. Why is the problem important? What would the wider impact be from a solution to this problem.
3. To what extent is the problem unsolved? What attempts have been in the past to solve this problem; what are their successes and deficiencies?
4. What is your approach to addressing this problem and why will this have a chance of contributing to the solution to the problem*.
5. What work have you done towards this so far*.

(It is possible that the questions marked with * have not yet been answered.) Thus, this report should be like a research proposal, in which there is a clear statement of the problem, there is a survey of the possible impacts that solutions of this problem could have, and a convincing review of what has already been done on this problem and why more needs to be done. The length of the report should typically be around 30 pages, but the strength of the arguments are more important than the quantity of words.

B More on End of Year Short reports

The short reports contain “executive summaries” which should summarise the goals and achievements for the examiners, who may not be specialists in the student’s research area. They should be approximately 1000 words in length. In addition to the summary, the report should include:

1. a list of publications, published or submitted,
2. a research plan for the next year, concerning how the research should be carried out,
3. a plan for other activities, including visits, internships, targeted conferences, journal publications, and public engagement activities.