

Frequently Asked Questions: On-course applications

Background

1. What are on-course applications?

GSO forms are moving online, and Michaelmas term 2019 will see the launch of the first ten on-course applications in eVision. Students will access the forms via [Student Self Service](#), with links also provided from the GSO forms website. The online applications will replace paper-based [Graduate \(GSO\) forms](#) and will use a new digitised approval / workflow process.

2. Why are on-course applications being introduced?

The new process will be more user-friendly and students will be able to submit their applications and check on progress via Student Self Service, from any location with internet access. It will also provide a more secure way for academic staff to record decisions and for administrative staff to track the progress of all on-course applications relevant to them, because all applications will be stored in one place.

These changes should mean that fewer applications will need to be referred back to the student because the system will:

- Pre-populate some data (e.g. student name, number and college)
- Validate data entered by the student, where possible
- Ensure that information is added to mandatory fields before the application is submitted

3. Who will use the new on-course applications?

- **Student** begins the application
- **Supervisor** reviews the application (except the of GSO.29 Notification of Withdrawal) and if applicable the student's other supervisors will have read access to their application. In certain Divisions, where a student is co-supervised, a Lead Supervisor will be identified by the student's department to review the application, in others, the student will select the relevant supervisor from a dropdown list
- **College team** reviews the application, except for GSO.3 / GSO.27, Appointment of Examiners (the college will be alerted when the student submits this application so any medical information can be communicated to the examiners via the Proctors and a notification will be sent when a decision is reached on the application) and GSO.3c, Dispensation from Consultation of Thesis
- **A Departmental Reviewer** reviews the application, and makes a decision based on all feedback
- **Graduate Administrators** can action applications as authorised by the Departmental Reviewer and reassign applications for review (e.g. when a supervisor is on leave)
- **Super Users [GSAs]** have the same access as the Graduate Administrator but also in addition will:

- Manage items that require Education Committee or Proctors approval (a process that will continue to take place outside of eVision)
- Update eVision with the decision where relevant
- Send emails advising the student of the outcome
- In the case of Medical Sciences, assign applications to a Divisional Board member for review
- **A small number of academic staff in Medical Sciences only** will have access to a Board Approval tab

Details of the features that each role will have access to within eVision or Student Self Service can be found on the on-course applications overview of access webpage.

4. When will the first set of ten on-course applications be launched?

The first on-course applications will be launched by the end of Michaelmas term.

5. Which applications will be included at launch?

A number of applications will be available at launch, which are below:

- GSO.2b: Defer Transfer of Status
- GSO.3: Appointment of examiners
- GSO.3c: Dispensation from consultation of the thesis
- GSO.4: Change of mode of study
- GSO.6: Change of title
- GSO.8: Dispensation from residence
- GSO.14b: Defer Confirmation of Status
- GSO.15: Extension of time
- GSO.27: Appointment of examiners - Law
- GSO.29: Withdrawal

Why aren't all applications being launched at the same time?

These applications provide an opportunity to trial the online process to ensure that it works well and meets the needs of end-users, whilst also providing useful insight into what can be improved and enhanced. Feedback will be sought from students and staff before plans are finalised and additional forms moved online. A number of policy changes are planned, and once approved by the Education Committee, more informed decisions can be made. Also further funding will need to be sought so the remaining forms can be moved across to on-course applications.

6. How will I access on-course applications?

Students, academics and administrative staff will access on-course applications using an updated web link on the [Graduate \(GSO\) forms](#) webpage, or in the My Student Record section of Student Self Service for students, or in the Student Record section of eVision for staff.

7. How will I know what to do and when?

The relevant academic and administrative staff will be updated by email in advance of the changes, and students will also receive information. Automated email notifications and reminders will point students and staff to Student Self Service / eVision.

8. Who has been involved in this project from departments, divisions, and colleges?

Details of the Project Board and Working Group membership are available on the project [governance](#) webpage, and numerous user groups - involving representatives from departments, divisions and colleges have taken place.

Students, academic and administrative staff will be invited to take part in User Acceptance Testing (UAT), a key part of the development which serves to confirm that the solution meets requirements. If you are interested in taking part, please email spp@it.ox.ac.uk.

Information for colleges

9. What are the main changes for colleges?

Apart from accessing your students' on-course applications via eVision, some changes to policy have been agreed over the last couple of years, and are summarised here:

- **GSO.3 / GSO.27 Appointment of Examiners no longer requires review by colleges:**

The Graduate Committee of Conference of Colleges agreed that colleges would not be involved in the review process for this application, because it was extremely unlikely that a college would not support such an application. Instead, the college team will receive notifications when the application is submitted so that any medical information can be communicated to the examiners via the Proctors, and when application is complete and a decision is reached.

This change was also agreed by the Research Degrees Panel of the Education Committee in Trinity Term 2018, and takes effect from the beginning of Michaelmas term 2019.

- **GSO.2b Deferral of Transfer of Status and GSO.14b Deferral of Confirmation of Status will require review by colleges**

The Graduate Committee of Conference of Colleges agreed that college involvement in the review process for these applications should be formalised and added to the *Examination Regulations*.

These changes were also agreed by the Research Degrees Panel of the Education Committee in Trinity Term 2018, and take effect from the beginning of Michaelmas term 2019.

10. Is there a limit to how many people can be in college teams?

This is a single role that academics and administrative staff in colleges will have access to, so a local agreement will need to be put in place as to how you manage this, but there is no limit on team size.

Information for students

11. If a student moves department, will their records and previous applications be available to the new department?

Yes. Records are University records not departmental records.

12. How do students make applications if they no longer have access to SITS?

They will have to make a paper-based application. A paper-based version of the relevant form will remain available on the GSO forms website, for example, form GSO3c Dispensation from consultation of the thesis, for leavers who no longer have single sign-on access.

13. Is the student's number in this system?

Yes and it will be pre-populated in all applications.

Sensitive information

14. Will colleges be able to upload medical information to applications?

No, only students will be able to upload information in support of their application. Any other materials will be managed outside of the system.

Supervisors

15. What happens if a lead supervisor is on leave and cannot action an application?

The graduate administrator/super user can override the lead supervisor (if specified) and the student dashboard also shows contact details for those people the student can contact for help.

16. Can a co-supervisor be added to the review process?

Only one supervisor can formally review an application, but co-supervisors will have read-only access and should discuss applications with the supervisory team offline.

17. When can supervisors with 'read only' access see applications?

A supervisor with read-only access to an application is not part of the review process but they will be able to view the application when submitted. They'll receive an automated notification containing a link to eVision. If a read-only supervisor has something to contribute to the application, they should contact the supervisory team outside the system.

18. Can a college refer an application back to a supervisor as well as a student?

Yes, along with a Departmental Reviewer or Super User.

19. If medical evidence is required to support a deferral application, can this be uploaded to the system and who will have access to this (ensuring data protection compliance is in place)?

Yes, additional information can be uploaded by the student, and those with access will be:

- a) Each of the student's current supervisors

- b) College reviewers (typically the Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates and college administrators)
- c) Department reviewers (typically the DGS or equivalent)
- d) Graduate Administrators
- e) For Medical Sciences only, appropriate Board members
- f) If applicable, Education Policy Support or the Proctors' Office

Mistakes, referring back, withdrawals and audit history applications

20. If I spot a mistake on a submitted application, what should I do?

Anyone reviewing the application can refer the application back to the student, who can then edit and update the application.

21. If an application is referred back to me, how will I know what to do?

The application will appear in the 'To action' tab (for students, this will be called the Additional Action Required tab), and an automated email notification will alert the user to this change.

22. Can a student withdraw an application?

Yes, at any point until it is completed. The application will then be removed from the dashboards of everyone in the review process. The student would then work on a new application.

23. Will a student know the review process that applications follow?

A summary will be added to the students' guidance notes.

24. What is the audit history?

Supervisor, College, Departmental Reviewer, and Graduate Administrator and Super Users can click on the 'i' for information icon (which can be found alongside the application within the dashboard, usually on the right-hand side) which reveals an 'audit history' table, showing who actioned an application, the action performed and when it occurred.

25. If someone in the review process changes, does the audit history still show who took an action?

Yes, the audit function shows the name and system role of the person who carried out each action in the system at that time.

Deferral applications

26. Can deferral applications be applied for retrospectively?

It will be possible to submit the application in the term following the relevant milestone deadline. If a later application is required the student should contact their graduate administrator in the first instance.

Dashboards

27. What is the role column shown in the staff dashboard?

The role column indicates the role allocated to you as you review applications. For example, you may have both the role of Departmental Reviewer and Supervisor (though not for the same student). You may choose to filter the applications in your dashboard to show only the students you are supervising.

28. How long are applications available in eVision?

Applications will be available in eVision for six years after the student completes their studies, in line with data protection.

29. If someone in the college team actions an application, is it then removed from the 'To Action' tab for everyone in the college team?

Yes, and it will show in the Completed Applications tab for one month.

30. What happens after a month, when applications disappear from the To Action tab?

You will be able to search and view the application. Tabs in the dashboard are there to help you manage large quantities of notifications.

Miscellaneous

31. Why does an application that isn't supported by the supervisor or college continue on through the workflow to the Department Reviewer?

The Department Reviewer – as the final approver - makes the final decision, and will need to consider input from various people in the review process as the application continues through the whole review process.

- For requests falling outside the regulations – and so needing dispensation (see the [regulations](#) for details) - the arbiter is the Education Committee
 - For restriction of access at viva, the arbiter is the Proctors, though this is a sub-application of the main Appointment of Examiners application
- For MSD, in all other cases, the arbiter is the MSD Board.
- For the other divisions, in all other cases, the arbiter is the Department Reviewer.

32. Can I print an application during the review process?

Yes, a printable PDF will be available which includes actions taken within the workflow to that point.