Primary Supervisors – What you need to know when approving

research proposals

Primary supervisors have responsibility for the first level of checking and approving applications. You reach the Primary Supervisor online approval step after:

> A Client Services Administrator has entered the proposal assessment details into eVision, and you have been sent an email with a link to Primary supervisor approval.

On the Primary Supervisor approval screen, you will see a list of checkboxes and a Comments field. This document goes through each item in turn, explaining:

- <u>what</u> you are approving
- what you need to <u>check</u>
- <u>where to look</u> for the information.

Student has appropriate academic and research preparation to undertake a thesis

> **What you are approving**. You must be satisfied that the applicant has the necessary background to undertake the proposed research. This judgement is made after considering their documents - academic transcripts, CV, and reference letters. In the PhD context an interview is strongly recommended (unless you already have worked with candidate in a research capacity), and a critique of a couple of journal articles is also recommended. For non PhD students, make sure you adhere to any department procedures or criteria.
>
> **Check:**
>
> - that the applicant is likely to meet eligibility requirements for the programme – most programmes require B+ average for the qualifying degree - check their academic transcript and see further detail below regarding eligibility for the PhD programme
> - CV for past academic study, publications, timeline of education and employment etc.
> - reference letters, taking heed of any 'red flags'
>
> **Where to look**. Click on the *Supporting information* tab and expand the *Documents* section – you'll find academic transcripts, CV, reference letters, and other relevant documents here.

Suitability of research proposal

> **What you are approving**. The applicant's written research (thesis) proposal.
>
> **Check:**
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> - that the thesis proposal meets the Department's requirements
>
> Requirements will vary by department; some require a full proposal with literature and research methods, while others may only need a page outlining research interests, or why the candidate is interested in a particular project. Be mindful that some applicants cannot access literature when not enrolled in a programme. If the candidate is developing their own topic, a full proposal would normally be completed early in candidature.
>
> **Where to look**. Click on the *Supporting information* tab and expand the *Documents* section – you'll find the research proposal here.

Compliance check information

What you are approving. That the necessary external funding administration, ethics, and other consents have been identified -*it is not necessary that they are all addressed for approval to be granted*.

Where to look. Click on the Supporting information tab and expand the Compliance section.

All required documents have been uploaded and reviewed

What you are approving. That all documentation has been supplied and meets requirements

Check:

- that all documents on the Document Checklist are there (if some are missing, either contact the applicant directly to get these, or ask your Client Service Administrator to do this)
- that you have reviewed all the documents
- that they meet requirements (see the Document Guide if you are unsure)

Where to look. Click on the *Supporting information* tab and expand the *Documents* section.

Scholarship application assessment completed if applicable

What you are approving. That if the student has applied for a scholarship, the Departmental scholarship assessment has been completed.

Check:

- that the Department assessment has a green tick, indicating it has been completed. A cross indicates this is not complete.

Where to look. Click on the *Supporting information* tab and expand the *Scholarships* section (note this section will only display for scholarship applicants).

Recommendation notes are correct

What you are approving.
1. That the Recommendation notes on the Approval page are correct. –
2. For PhD applicants, that the PhD specific information (Candidate eligibility, Additional papers, English language waiver) is correct.

Check (for all applicants):

- For any factual inaccuracies in the Recommendation notes.

Where to look. On the Approval tab, Recommendation notes are listed third item down.

Check (for PhD applicants only):
- **Candidate eligibility** – i.e. that the correct qualifying degree pathway has been entered.

- o If an Otago degree then you must be sure that the candidate meets has a B+ for postgraduate study as well as a B+ for their research component
  - o If via a *non-Otago degree equivalent to an Otago first/upper second Hons/PGDip/Master's*, then you must be sure that the candidate meets the Otago equivalent of B+ for postgraduate study as well as a B+ for their research component (email transcript to scholarship.gpa@otago.ac.nz for a check if unsure). Note that the *Supporting information* tab > *International assessment* section may give a GPA, but this is not currently a GPA that has been converted to the Otago system. The research component should be at least ¼ of a year's work – either evident on the transcript or by an assurance from you that any project write-up is at least equivalent to an Otago honour's dissertation.
  - o *Appropriate research experience* can be a pathway if applicants do not have a postgraduate degree with a research component – but there needs to be evidence of designing, conducting and communicating research under supervision e.g. in a research lab, or workplace.
- **Additional papers**. Although PhD applicants can technically take up to 60 points of additional papers, these are taken relatively infrequently – so check that the papers indicated here seem appropriate and that reasonable justification is given. Additional papers typically include research methods or statistics papers or language papers, required by the Department to give an applicant a grounding in a particular area. If entered, Student Administration will request more detail via a Change of Research Details form
- **English language waiver**. If this is requested, there must be good reasons given – www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/prospective-students/otago718304.html details what the Graduate Research Committee need to see.

Where to look. Click on the *Supporting information* tab and expand the *PhD* section, to show Candidate eligibility, Additional papers and English language waiver.

Agreement to supervise student

What you are approving. That you have the required expertise and available time to supervise this applicant

Check:

- that you, in combination with the rest of the supervisory team, provide the expertise that will be needed to successfully supervise to completion, the research outlined in the applicant's Research proposal?
- that, considering your other teaching and research commitments, including current postgraduate student supervisions, you have the available time to supervise this applicant.

Comments

If you are unsure about any aspect of the application or wish to signal a concern, make a comment here for future approvers to check!

Help Resources

eVision Online Approval Training Modules

- Research Proposal Approval – Primary Supervisor:
  https://smssupportdesk.otago.ac.nz/ESD/UltimateEditorInclude/UserFiles/evision/graduate_research/proposal_approval/

- Research Proposal Approval - My Department Dashboard:
  https://smssupportdesk.otago.ac.nz/ESD/UltimateEditorInclude/UserFiles/evision/graduate_research/my_department_students_dashboard/

FAQs on Online Approval:

https://otago.custhelp.com/app/answers/list/kw/Research%20Proposal%20Approval/

July 2020 – Guides available at: https://www.otago.ac.nz/graduate-research/staff/otago634373.html