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Dear Gavin,

**RE: 2025 IFORS Hall of Fame Nominations - Peter Checkland**

For more than half a century Peter Checkland has been shaping the development of operational research in the UK and has played a key role in the UK Operational Research Society.

Peter is a British management scientist and Emeritus Professor of Systems at Lancaster University. He is the developer of soft systems methodology (SSM); a methodology based on systems thinking systems practice. Systems practice is the uncovering of an optimal solution within complex environments, thus leading to a thorough understanding of the system and analysing and adapting to change in the environment. His work preceded data science and change management disciplines.

In 1954, Peter received a M.A. degree in chemistry at St John's College, Oxford, where he graduated as Casberd Scholar and with 1st class honours. After graduating he joined ICI, then the UK's largest industrial company, and spent 15 years there working in Research and Development. When he left the company, he was manager of a 100 strong group engaged in process and product development.

He joined the new university at Lancaster in 1969, appointed second Professor in the postgraduate Department of Systems Engineering, started by the statistician Professor Gwilym Jenkins. Jenkins asked Peter to establish a research programme for the Department. They both believed strongly in practical 'action research' in real world situations, and Peter subsequently led the research programme that ran for 30 years at Lancaster. Since the 1990s he has been Professor Emeritus of Systems at Lancaster University Management School.

The research programme sought a new way of tackling the kind of problem situations that managers of all kinds, at all levels, face from day to day in their professional lives. These 'wicked problems' are never static and are subject to multiple interpretations. The outcome was the approach known as 'Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)', a systemic process of inquiry

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into problematical situations in order to define and take 'action to improve'. SSM is now taught and used around the world and is the source of the paradigm shift from 'hard' to 'soft' systems thinking. In the latter it is the process of inquiry that is created as a learning system. The human situation addressed is not assumed to be 'a system'. The inquiry is structured by questioning the situation using models of purposeful activity built according to declared relevant world views.

Peter Checkland's work developing SSM is described in many papers and in five books, all of which have been reprinted on average every 18 months since the first one, the classic 'Systems Thinking, Systems Practice' was published in 1981.

Peter has served on the editorial board of a range of journals including the European Journal of Information Systems, the International Journal of Information Management, the International Journal of General Systems, the Systems Practice journal, and the Systems Research journal.

His body of work has attracted many external honours. In 1986 Peter Checkland was President of the Society for General Systems Research, now the International Society for the Systems Sciences. In May 1996 he was awarded an honorary degree from the Open University as Doctor of the University. In 2004 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Economics, Prague. He also holds honorary doctorates from City University and the Erasmus University in the Netherlands.

In 2006, he was awarded the Beale Medal by the OR Society, in recognition of his sustained and significant contribution to the philosophy, theory and practice of operational research. In 2008 he received the Pioneer Award of the International Committee on Systems Engineering (INCOSE). He was also awarded the Gold Medal of the UK Systems Society. Peter is one of the first four Fellows appointed by the Omega Alpha Society, so named to advocate thinking about the end before thinking about the beginning.

In summary, Professor Peter Checkland is an internationally recognised scholar and the founder of SSM, one of the key fields of operational research. His leadership of the research programme at Lancaster demonstrated significant impact in both the academic and practitioner spheres. He is an excellent candidate for admission into the IFORS Hall of Fame.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Sanja Petrovic**  
President