

Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress

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New from academic year 2020-2021

The Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress will be reviewed annually.

Changes may be made throughout the year, so please refer to the [Graduate School website](#) for the latest version of this document.

This Procedure is owned and updated by the Manchester Metropolitan University Graduate School on behalf of Academic Board. Queries should be directed to the Graduate School (gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk).

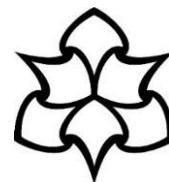
Introduction

Manchester Metropolitan University produces a suite of documents that outline the formal regulations and procedures for postgraduate research degrees.

The **Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress** provides guidance for students and supervisors on what happens when a PGR student is identified as needing additional support to help maintain sufficient progress with their studies.

This document should be read alongside the other documents available on the [Graduate School webpages](#).

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Amendments since approval	Details of Revision	Date of Revision	Revisions approved by:
2.2 Instigating the procedure following a milestone outcome	Clarification on options available to the Head of Faculty Research Degrees after a milestone.	21/01/2021	Research Degrees Committee



1. Purpose of the Procedure

1.1 Progress and Engagement

The Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress outlines to students and staff, the procedure to support situations where PGR students have been identified as not making satisfactory progress or are not satisfactorily engaging, as set out in the [Guidelines for PGR Supervision](#).

The procedure may be instigated at the request of the supervisory team, the Head of Faculty Research Degree or the Graduate School.

The procedure aims to seek a resolution, within an appropriate timescale, which enables the student to make good progress with their research. Should this not occur, it may lead to the withdrawal of the student's registration by the university Research Degrees Committee. The student has a right of appeal regarding any progression recommendation via the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

1.2 Expectations of PGR students

Students are expected to meet the expectations of PGR study, as set out in the [Research Degrees Handbook](#).

As part of the supervisory process, a postgraduate research student can expect their supervisory team to draw to their attention to any problems with their academic progress, when they arise. Where this occurs, the supervisory team should record concerns in writing and records should be kept as part of the supervision meetings. Academic progress also forms a part of the formal assessment at the progression milestones throughout the student's registration.

It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to provide support and guidance to assist the student in making satisfactory progress.

If a student's progress has been identified as unsatisfactory, the supervisory have responsibility to manage and monitor the student's progress, ensure that records of supervision are maintained by the student and to highlight to the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and the Graduate School when all informal interventions to support the student's progress have been exhausted, so that the next stage of the procedure can be instigated.

2. Identifying unsatisfactory academic progress

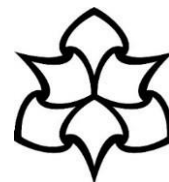
Unsatisfactory academic progress is usually identified when a student has not met the requirements set out in the [Research Degrees Handbook](#)

2.1 Examples of unsatisfactory academic progress

Examples of what is regarded as unsatisfactory academic progress include:

- Failure to provide evidence of satisfactory progress on research
- Failure to present written work to an adequate standard
- Failure to present work to an agreed timescale
- Failure to maintain regular contact with the supervisory team, e.g. by not attending formal supervisory meetings, whether in person or via electronic means
- Failure to complete or late completion (without prior approval) of formal PGR milestones.

In considering student progression and engagement, the supervisory team may also consider whether it may be more appropriate to address concerns via the [Fitness to Study Procedure](#).



2.2 Instigating the procedure following a milestone outcome

Where concern has been identified with a PGR student's progress, the stages of the procedure outlined in section 4 will be instigated. Where the Head of Faculty Research Degrees deems it appropriate, the procedure may be started at Stage 2.

3. Progress meetings

It is expected that a student will attend the formal progress meeting(s) on the date and at the time proposed. Normally this will be a face-to-face meeting however, by agreement of all attendees, this meeting can take place via video-conference.

Where the student is unable to attend for a genuine reason, they must advise the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and the Graduate School immediately and provide an explanation (with documentary evidence, where appropriate). If it is agreed to postpone the meeting, a new date for the meeting will be given. The new date should be within ten working days of the original meeting date.

Should the student confirm that they are unable to attend the meeting within five working days of the agreed meeting date, they will be asked to provide a reasonable explanation with evidence to the Graduate School. This explanation will be reviewed by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees. Should the Head of Faculty Research Degrees deem the grounds and/or supporting evidence not be reasonable, the student will be advised that the meeting will go ahead in their absence.

Failure to attend the formal progress meeting will not prevent the investigation or conclusion of the procedure to support progress.

In instances where a meeting takes place in the student's absence, a record of the meeting should be sent to the student within five working days by the Graduate School.

4. The Stages of the Procedure

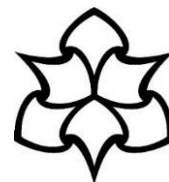
4.1 Stage 1: Informal Interventions to address student progress.

If the supervisory team has concerns about academic progress, the supervisory team must verbally raise their concerns about academic progress with the student, supported by written feedback (in the supervisory meeting records in SkillsForge, signed by both the student and the supervisory team). This should detail:

1. the grounds for raising concerns
2. The discussion with the student, identifying any issues they have raised or mitigation
3. the steps which need to be taken to address the unsatisfactory progress
4. The timescale for addressing the concerns.

Once progress has been raised with the student, Supervisors should inform the Graduate School and on receipt of the notification, the Graduate School will issue an Initial Warning to the student about progress.

The student must be given the opportunity to raise with the supervisory team and/or the Graduate School Team any circumstances or mitigation that may have affected their ability to progress satisfactorily. Where the student has exceptional factors that have prevented submission to a formal milestone or where the student has not passed a milestone, the student should follow the [Policy for Exceptional factors](#).



If there is no improvement within the required timescale after the Initial Warning, and, no satisfactory explanation is provided by the student regarding their progress or engagement, the supervisory team should notify the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and the Graduate School Team by email.

Supervisors should inform their students that their progress has not improved and that they are recommending further action in line with this policy.

Clear and accurate records should be kept in the Records of Supervisory meetings to be made available for review by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees.

The Head of Faculty Research Degrees will review the written information and decide whether the concerns raised by the supervisory team are sufficient serious to warrant proceeding to Stage 2 of the procedure or whether stage 1 is extended and a further Initial Warning issued.

Where progression issues are raised within 12 months of a previous Stage 1 or Stage 2 process, the procedure can move directly to Stage 2.

Should a student have any concerns about the application of this procedure, they should notify the Graduate School within 10 working days of the receipt of the Initial Warning.

4.2 Stage 2: Formal Progress Review

Should the Stage 1 of the procedure not lead to the student demonstrating sufficient progress, stage 2 will be instigated.

The student will be invited to attend a formal meeting by email to discuss their progress. It is expected that a meeting will usually take place within 10 working days after the issue of the letter.

Students may wish to contact the Students' Union for advice prior to the meeting.

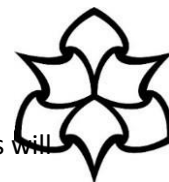
4.2.1 Stage 2 Progress Meeting

The attendees of the meeting will be agreed by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and will normally include:

- The Student
- The Principal Supervisor
- The Head of Faculty Research Degrees
- A member of the Graduate School Team

The purpose of the Stage 2 progress meeting is to:

- Advise the student that their academic progress is deemed unsatisfactory and detail the reasons for concern
- Reassure the student that the purpose of the meeting is to identify ways to address the concerns raised and to support their progress
- Provide the student with the opportunity to raise any circumstances that have prevented them from making satisfactory progress. It is important that any relevant circumstances are raised at the meeting, as they may not be considered later.
- Discuss and agree clear, realistic and measurable targets for improving performance, which will allow the student to demonstrate satisfactory progress



- Identify a timescale to meet the targets, who will assess the targets and how the targets will be assessed.
- Explain who will assess whether the set targets have been completed satisfactorily, how this will be done
- Identify any training needs and support mechanisms to support progress this may include referral to specific university support teams, recommendations to attend specific training and/or review the membership of the supervisory team
- Confirm that continued unsatisfactory progress may lead to a recommendation for withdrawal (or in some cases transfer to a lower qualification), and that the student has a right to appeal under these circumstances via the Academic Appeals Procedure
- Set a date for the final formal review of the students' progress in line with this policy. For a full-time student this will normally be two months from the first Stage 2 meeting. For a part-time student this will normally be four months from the date of this meeting. The exact timing may differ depending upon the background of the case and what is agreed at the meeting
- Advise the student that should they continue not to make progress, stage 3 will be instigated.

Notes must be kept of the meeting and recorded in the student file.

4.2.2 Action following the Stage 2 progress meeting(s)

Following the Stage 2 progress meeting, the Graduate School will send the student a record of the meeting and agreed actions, as well as the date for the next meeting.

The supervisory team should continue to support the student in their progress and maintain records of supervisory meetings. These will be referred to in future meetings to evidence whether the student has met their targets and outline any further interventions to support their progress.

Should the student be deemed to have demonstrated sufficient progress, an email confirmation that the process has concluded will be sent to the student within ten working days of the meeting.

4.3 Stage 3: Final review meeting

Should the student not evidence sufficient progress as assessed by the targets set at Stage 2, the student will be invited to attend a final review meeting by email. It is expected that a meeting will usually take place within 10 working days following the issue of the letter.

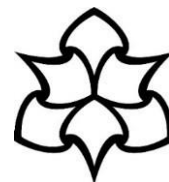
As the outcome of the meeting may lead to the student's withdrawal from the programme or transfer to a lower award, students are encouraged to contact the Students' Union for advice prior to the meeting.

4.3.1 Stage 3 Progress Meeting

The attendees of the meeting will be agreed by the Head of Faculty Research Degrees and should include:

- The Student
- The Principal Supervisor
- The Head of Faculty Research Degrees
- A member of the Graduate School Team

The following may also attend:



- A Students' Union or Student Support representative (nominated by the student)

4.3.2 Outcomes of the Stage 3 Progress Meeting(s)

There are four possible outcomes to the meeting:

- Agree that the student has made satisfactory progress against the agreed action plan and targets and that no further action will be taken under the 'Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress'.
- Agree that the student will be given an extension to complete an action plan with target deadlines. The actions agreed upon should normally be completed within three months for full-time students and six months for part-time students.

NB: If this outcome is confirmed, a further final review meeting will be scheduled. Outcomes i, ii and iv- will be the only available outcome.

- Agree that the student has not made satisfactory progress with the agreed action plan and targets. In the case of students registered for PhD and other doctoral degrees (and where the remaining period of study allows*), the Head of Faculty Research Degrees can approve that the student be transferred to registration for a lower qualification if the student is likely to be able to meet the conditions for the lower award within the standard period of supervised study remaining for the lower award.

NB: This outcome will only be available to students during their period of supervised study.

- Agree that the student has not made satisfactory progress with the agreed action plan and targets and that the HFRD approves the instigation of the withdrawal of registration procedure.

* When consideration is given to a recommendation to transfer to registration for the degree of Master's by Research or MPhil, consideration should be given to the period of study remaining on the candidature.

Registration for the degree of Masters by Research is 12 months full-time/24 months part-time follow by up to 3-months writing up period.

Registration for the degree of MPhil is 24 months full-time/48 months part-time followed by up to 6-months writing up period.

4.3.3 Action following the final formal review meeting

Immediately following the formal review meeting, the Graduate School will write to the student on behalf of the Head of Faculty Research Degrees to inform them of the outcome.

The student has a right to appeal any decision in this policy via the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

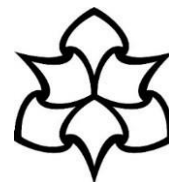
5. Advice and support for students

Students wishing further advice or support should contact the following teams

[Student Union Advice Centre](#)

s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk

+44 (0)161 247 6533



Disability Support

disability.service@mmu.ac.uk

+44 (0)161 247 3491

The Student Hub

studenthub@mmu.ac.uk

+44 (0)161 247 2000

International Office,

international@mmu.ac.uk

(students should provide their MMU Student ID number in any correspondence),

Phone: +44 (0)161 247 2000