The University of Manchester

Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Researchers

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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 This document sets out the minimum requirements in relation to progress, review, and attendance monitoring of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) at The University of Manchester.

1.2 It forms part of the University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

1.3 Attendance requirements for PGRs are formally set out in the University's Policy on Recording and Monitoring of Attendance.

2. Scope and definitions

2.1 This policy is intended for academic staff, professional service staff and PGRs.

2.2 For the purposes of this policy, the term *PGR* refers to researchers registered on doctoral degrees, MPhil, MSc by Research and Doctor of Medicine programmes. PGRs on professional doctorate programmes may follow different timeframes for review and may be required to pass additional structured taught, clinical or practice-based components.

2.3 Formal and informal review meetings enable both the PGR and the University to meet their respective responsibilities, ensure awareness of progress against programme objectives, and identify any emerging needs or difficulties at an early stage.

2.4 Local practice may vary by discipline, and additional guidance may be issued by Faculties, Schools, / Divisions or Departments.

2.5 Two types of progress review meetings are recognised in this document:

a. **Supervisory meetings** between the PGR and supervisor(s) to discuss matters relating to the PGRs research.
b. **Formal review meetings** involving individuals independent of the PGR and the supervisory team, assessing the progress of the PGR.

2.6 Some programmes may include a taught component. In such cases, continuation will depend on attainment of credit-bearing units.

2.7 PGRs on CDT/DTC/DTP programmes must follow this policy once they commence the doctoral degree element of their programme.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

This section should be read alongside the Supervision Policy and focuses on additional responsibilities that apply specifically in relation to progress monitoring, formal review meetings and progression decisions under this policy.

3.1 Supervisors:

In addition to their responsibilities set out in the Supervision Policy, supervisors are responsible for:

- Supporting the PGR to engage effectively with formal progress review processes, including preparing for review meetings and understanding the possible outcomes of those reviews.
- Ensuring that required documentation and reports for formal review meetings are completed and submitted in accordance with local and University timelines.
- Contributing appropriately to formal review meetings and panels, including providing relevant academic context and commentary on the PGR's progress where requested.
- Acting promptly on the outcomes of formal review meetings, including supporting the PGR to address conditions, recommendations or action plans arising from the review.
- Raising concerns in a timely manner where a PGR's progress or engagement gives cause for concern, and engaging with escalation processes as set out in this policy.

3.2 Internal co-supervisors and external supervisors

In addition to the responsibilities set out in the Supervision Policy, co-supervisors and external supervisors are expected, where required, to:

- Engage with formal progress review processes as appropriate to their role within the supervisory team.
- Contribute to preparation for formal review meetings, including providing input on the PGR's progress within their area of expertise.
- Attend formal review meetings where required and contribute to discussions regarding the PGR's progression.
- Support the implementation of review outcomes and agreed actions in collaboration with the main supervisor and the PGR

3.3 Postgraduate Researchers:

In addition to the responsibilities set out in the Supervision Policy, PGRs are responsible for:

- Engaging fully with the University's progress monitoring and formal review processes in accordance with this policy.

- Preparing and submitting required materials for formal review meetings by agreed deadlines.
- Attending formal review meetings and engaging constructively with feedback, recommendations and required actions arising from those meetings.
- Informing supervisors and relevant University contacts promptly of any circumstances that may affect progression or engagement with the review process.

3.4 Independent Assessors and formal review meeting panels

Independent assessors and formal review meeting panels are responsible for:

- Ensuring that formal review meetings are conducted in a manner that is fair, robust, independent and consistent with university regulations and this policy.
- Assessing the PGR's progress against relevant programme and progression criteria and making a clear recommendation regarding continuation or other outcomes (see section 10).
- Providing constructive feedback intended to support the PGR's academic development and progression.
- Ensuring that review outcomes and reports are recorded accurately within the University's progression monitoring system.

3.6 PGR Directors, PG Tutors and Faculty Doctoral Academies

PGR Directors, PG Tutors (or their delegates) are responsible for:

- Approving the composition of formal progress review panels and ensuring compliance with this policy.
- Considering and resolving cases where progression outcomes cannot be agreed at panel level, in line with this policy.

Faculty Doctoral Academies are responsible for:

- Overseeing the consistent implementation of progress review processes within their area of responsibility.
- Ensuring that appropriate records of decisions and outcomes are maintained and communicated to PGRs in a timely manner.

4. Supervisory Meetings

4.1 The academic progress of all PGRs must be monitored regularly to ensure that the required standards of work, including in written and verbal presentation, are achieved. Further details can be found in the Policy on Supervision for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

4.2 During their first meeting, the PGR and supervisor(s) should establish a tentative timetable for supervisory meetings and agree on how deadlines and targets will be set and met.

4.3 Supervisory meetings should primarily focus on discussing the PGR's research, including establishing goals and deadlines for completing various stages required by the research degree, the University, and, where

relevant, external sponsors or collaborators. Both the PGR and supervisor(s) should use these meetings to plan and get ready for formal review sessions by setting appropriate targets and timelines.

4.4 A minimum expectation is that supervisory meetings take place monthly for all PGRs, unless an alternative schedule is formally agreed and recorded.

4.5 Meetings are normally held face-to-face. At the request of the PGR, supervisory meetings can be conducted by video-conferencing.[1]

4.6 All significant supervisory discussions must be appropriately documented. It is expected that the agreed record of discussion and outcomes is completed and confirmed by both the PGR and supervisor(s) using the Additional Meeting form within the University's progression monitoring system.

4.7 For split-site PGRs the same minimum expectations apply, recognising the need for remote contact. Further information can be found in the University's Policy for Split-Site Arrangements.

4.8 Distance learning PGRs and those on fieldwork must maintain regular remote contact. Where industrial/external supervisors are involved, arrangement should be tailored according to PGR needs.

5. Formal Review Meetings

5.1 Formal review meetings assess a PGR's progress and confirm their ability to continue on the programme. The 'annual progression review meeting' or 'continuation/transfer review' are examples of a formal review meeting.

5.2 All PGRs (full-time and part-time) must undergo a formal review meeting towards the end of the first year and at any point where the PGR is completing probationary training or moving to a new programme of study.

5.3 The format and frequency of reviews after year one are set by the Schools, Divisions or Departments with Faculty approval.

5.4 Timing of reviews must consider registration points and maintenance payments.

5.5 Formal progress review meetings should normally be conducted face to face. Such meetings may be conducted remotely where the PGR is absent from the University for research-related reasons, such as fieldwork or placement, or where remote participation has been recommended by the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) as a reasonable adjustment.

5.6 Formal review meetings must be conducted in English.

5.7 PGRs may raise concerns or issues at the review meeting.

6. The Formal Review Meeting Panel

6.1 The formal review meeting panel reviews the PGR's progress and assesses their ability to continue on the programme. The panel must recommend an outcome.

[1] Consideration must be given to UKVI attendance monitoring requirements for PGRs on a student route / tier 4 visa (monthly supervisor meetings at least six of which must be in-person in any 12-month cycle).

6.2 In addition to the PGR the formal review meeting panel will include:

- Academic staff member(s) independent of the PGR and the supervisory team (Independent Assessor)
- The main supervisor and/or co-supervisors.
- Advisor (where appropriate).

6.3 The PGR may request a formal review meeting without supervisors present. Requests must be submitted to the relevant Faculty Doctoral Academy with clear reasons. The relevant PGR Director/PG Tutor (or their delegate) will decide.

6.4 Where the main supervisor does not attend the meeting, they must brief the panel beforehand and contribute to discussions following the review.

6.5 When appointing panel members, consideration must be given to potential future assessment roles in relation to the same PGR. A staff member who has served on formal review panels for that PGR more than once cannot be appointed as the internal examiner or independent chair for the final thesis examination.. Further information on the nomination of examiners for research PGRs can be found in the Nomination of Examiners and Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations Policy.

6.6 Academic staff invited to attend but who do not contribute to the final recommendation are not part of the formal review panel.

6.7 Panel appointments must be approved by the PGR Director/PG Tutor (or their delegate). In making appointments, the PGR Director/PG Tutor (or their delegate) may consult the supervisors on the proposed membership of the formal review panel.

7. Independent Assessor - Appointment Criteria

Independent assessors should:

- Be academic members of staff at the University of Manchester.
- Have supervised or co-supervised a PGR to completion OR examined a UK Doctoral Degree OR completed at least one previous UK postgraduate research progression review..
- Be independent of the PGR, project, and supervisory team, while possessing sufficient subject knowledge.
- Have proven relevant experience appropriate to the registered PGR's programme, including non-standard programmes such as PhD by Enterprise or PhD by Practice, where applicable.

8. Formal Review Assessment

8.1 PGRs will be assessed against programme-specific criteria, which may include literature review, research design, methodology, research plan, demonstration of skills, and draft outputs

8.2 Where research degrees include taught components, supervisors must ensure that the PGR has demonstrated satisfactory attendance and examination performance according to the expected attainment level in the taught degree regulations.

8.3 PhD by Enterprise reviews must assess both the research and enterprise components.

8.4 PGRs may be required to provide professional reports meeting programme or sponsor requirements.

8.5 Review meetings must adhere to Faculty timelines and allow sufficient time for decisions before re-registration deadlines. If the university is at fault and a formal review isn't completed before the PGR's next registration, the PGR may re-register before the review outcome.

8.6 I Where a PGR's progress review falls after their re-registration due date (for example, following an interruption), they must re-register before completing the progress review. The outcome of the formal progress review meeting will inform the continuation of registration at the University of Manchester. In this case, PGRs and administrators should refer to the registration guidance.

8.7 Successful completion of a formal progress review meeting is required for registration continuation.

8.8 Panels must submit a written report through the progression monitoring system. PGRs have access to the report within the system before it is submitted for review and approval by the appropriate Faculty, School, Division, or Department postgraduate research committee.

9. PGR Progress Reports

9.1 Progress reports or other materials must be substantial enough to allow assessment of the PGR's ability to continue on the programme.[2]

9.2 The format of the report will vary across disciplines according to the nature of the research. It should, however, be of sufficient length and detail to demonstrate the PGR's understanding of the subject and ability to pursue the appropriate level of research for the degree.

9.2 Requirements for written submission may differ by discipline or year of study.

9.3 Reports must be submitted by the PGR via the University's progression monitoring system before the agreed deadline and must be agreed with the PGR's supervisor before being considered.

10. Formal Review Outcomes

10.1 Formal review meeting panels must select an outcome appropriate to the PGR's degree type:

10.2 Doctoral degrees:

[2] PGRs should consult their programme handbook for details of any discipline-specific requirements.

a. CONTINUATION - The PGR has met the required doctoral standards and the recommendation is made for the PGR to continue registration on the doctoral degree.
b. RESUBMIT – the PGR has almost met the required doctoral standards but further work must be done to continue registration. Following the first attempt at a formal review, PGRs will normally be given one opportunity to resubmit work for a further review and will normally be given up to 10 weeks after the first panel meeting to complete the remedial work and submit it to the panel for consideration. The resubmission and review of the submitted work should, where possible, take place before the end of the PGR's current year of study. Following the review of the remedial work the outcome 'RESUBMIT' must not be recommended. The outcome must be either, 'Continuation', 'Transfer' or 'Withdrawal'.
c. TRANSFER - The PGR has not met the required doctoral standards and a recommendation is made for the PGR to be transferred from the doctoral degree to MPhil or PG Dip.
d. TERMINATION OF REGISTRATION – The PGR has not met the required standard for doctoral degrees or MPhil and the recommendation is made for the PGR's registration to be terminated.

10.3 MPhil / MSc by Research:

a. TRANSFER TO DOCTORAL DEGREE - The PGR has met the required doctoral standards and a recommendation is made for the PGR to be transferred from MPhil or MSc by Research to the relevant doctoral degree.
b. RESUBMIT FOR REVIEW – The PGR has not yet met the required standard for transfer to a doctoral degree but has demonstrated sufficient potential to do so. The panel will specify the required remedial work and a resubmission deadline.
    - PGRs will normally be given one opportunity to resubmit following the first formal review.
    - The resubmission will normally take place within 10 weeks of the initial panel decision.
    - Following consideration of the resubmitted work, a further outcome of 'Resubmit' must not be recommended.
c. SUBMIT FOR MPhil / MSc by RESEARCH – The PGR has not met the threshold for transfer to a doctoral degree but has met, or is likely to meet, the required standard for the MPhil or MSc by Research. The PGR will remain registered for the original award and be supported to prepare for submission for examination.
d. TERMINATION OF REGISTRATION - The PGR has not met the required standard either to transfer to a doctoral degree or to remain registered for the original award, and termination of registration is therefore recommended.

10.4 The final recommendation will be reported to the relevant Faculty or School or Division/Department postgraduate research committee for approval (or by chair's action).

10.5 If the panel cannot agree on a recommended outcome and the PGR Director or PG Tutor is also unable to resolve the issues after discussing them with the PGR and panel members, the final decision about progression will be sent to the appropriate Faculty Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research.

10.5 PGRs must be informed of outcomes within a 5 working days of the final outcome of the formal progress review.

10.6 Where the outcome of the formal review meeting is a decision to terminate the PGR's registration, the registration will be ended.

10.7 If the PGR is on a student visa the Student Immigration Team will inform the relevant external authorities.

10.8. The decision of the Faculty or School or Division/Department postgraduate research committee is final. Appeals are allowed under Regulation XIX.

11. Attendance / Engagement Monitoring

11.1. Supervisors must record satisfactory / unsatisfactory attendance and engagement in the University's progression monitoring system.

11.2 Attendance normally requires a monthly in-person supervisory meeting. For PGRs studying away from the University, or an official leave of absence, video-based contact may be deemed sufficient.

11.3 Unexplained absences or a lack of engagement must be logged in the University's progression monitoring system and actioned appropriately. If the concern is significant, or likely to persist for more than one month the supervisor(s) should discuss the issue with the PGR Director/PG Tutor (or their delegate) and inform the appropriate Faculty Doctoral Academy.

11.4 Where PGRs on a student visa have attendance issues, the Student Immigration Team must be contacted.

11.5 Further information is available in the Policy on Recording and Monitoring Attendance.

12. Unsatisfactory Progress

12.1 Cases of unsatisfactory progress must follow local Faculty, School, /or Division/Department guidance.

12.2 Where a PGR's progress is unsatisfactory, supervisors must record, monitor and reassess progress at regular intervals.

12.3 Formal review meetings may be initiated at any point when issues arise.

12.4 If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, the matter must be referred to the PGR Director/PG Tutor (or their delegate) and an action plan agreed. Subsequent unsatisfactory progress should be referred to the appropriate formal review panel or committee.

12.5 PGRs must be informed promptly of any meeting concerning their unsatisfactory progress.

12.6 PGRs must be provided with information about the review process and possible outcomes. Once the supervisory team have agreed an action plan the PGR should be formally notified in writing about the stages of the review process, who will be involved with the review and any possible outcomes.

12.7 If a PGR and supervisor agree to transfer the PGR from a doctorate to an MPhil, the request must be approved or denied by the relevant PGR Director, PG Tutor, or delegate.

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