Procedure for the Annual Monitoring of Postgraduate Research Degrees

October 2019

Research Degrees and Researcher Development

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1   Introduction

This procedure should be used for the annual monitoring of all postgraduate research degrees at the University of Manchester. All collaborative arrangements such as split-site PhDs, Joint awards and Dual awards should be included in the process along with distance learning and part-time. This procedure also covers any taught or structured elements of a postgraduate research degree, for example within Professional Doctorates and programmes under the Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs).

For the annual review process for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, separate guidance is provided by the Teaching and Learning Support Office at:
https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/monitoring-review

2   Annual Monitoring Objectives

Annual monitoring is a process of reflection on the previous academic year and action planning for the coming academic year.

The objective of the annual monitoring process is to maintain and improve the quality of postgraduate research provision across the University.

Annual monitoring should focus responsibility for action and promote discussion and the sharing of good practice across postgraduate research areas across the institution.

The annual monitoring process should direct support and development to areas which require improvement or further development to enhance the quality of the PGR student experience, focussing on the quality of research at the University.

The unit of review for annual monitoring should normally be at School/CDT level but in some cases it may be necessary to organise the process by groups of research degrees within the School.

3   Content / Focus of the Review

As part of the annual monitoring procedure, Schools/CDTs and then Faculties are asked to reflect on the effectiveness of provision as delivered during the year.

Work area themes are used to capture detail in the review to aid the structure of the review process so all aspects of the Universities policies, procedures and structures are reviewed annually.

The following is a list of areas and evidence that should normally be considered as part of this process.[1] Schools, CDTs and Faculties may wish to expand, adapt and develop this list according to local practice:

- Areas of achievement, good practice/innovation
- Key issues
- Applications, recruitment and admissions

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[1] If data needs to be considered in these areas this will be provided by the Research Degrees and Researcher Development Team.

- Supervision arrangements
- Student feedback and representation
- Researcher development
- Taught elements of research degrees
- Student support
- Progress and review
- Assessment and examination
- Submission and completion
- Research outputs
- The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- PGR Outputs
- A summary of relevant PGR appeals cases
- First destinations
- Other relevant information such as external reports from professional bodies, funders etc.

4   Annual Monitoring Report Format

The School/CDT report will normally be in the form of detailed minutes of the relevant School/CDT committee meeting or a summary of key points from different meetings across the year (Appendix A provides a template for structuring School/CDT annual report meetings).

The minutes/report should provide a list of all attendees and must include a clear action plan showing what actions need to be taken, by whom, and in what timescale and should be accompanied by an electronic copy of the key evidence that was used to inform the process.

This report is then submitted to the relevant Faculty.

5   University Process

The University uses an annual extended meeting of the Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Committee (MDCSG) as a mechanism to provide oversight of the annual review process. This special meeting will consider the individual Faculty reports, facilitate discussion on common areas of improvement and confirm action plans for each Faculty.

Following this meeting, a report summarising the discussion is produced, which records examples of innovative practice, and sets agreed actions for the coming year.

The implementation of the actions will be monitored by MDCSG at key points throughout the following year to allow for evaluation and reflection on the objectives agreed by the group.

6   Suggested Timetable for Annual Monitoring

The PGR annual monitoring review will normally operate between August and December.

October	• University management information on standard PGR reports provided to

	Faculty for checking and confirmation. • School/CDT meetings to consider annual monitoring and review evidence/data on PGR provision
November	• Faculty committees meet to consider the extracts from the minutes of the School/CDT-level committees and prepare annual monitoring summary
November/ December	• Associate Vice President for Postgraduate Research and Head of Graduate Education to attend Faculty PGR committees to discuss annual monitoring outcomes
January / February	• Extended meeting of MDCSG considers Faculty Annual Monitoring reports.
February / March	• University level reports and action plans used to inform operational plan for implementation for the following year.
June	• MDCSG reviews interim report on annual monitoring action plan
July	• MDCSG annual monitoring report submitting to the University APR
September	• MDCSG reviews interim report on annual monitoring action plan

7   Definitions of Annual Performance Review (APR), Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review

7.1   Annual Performance Review (APR)

APR is an annual review which assesses the health of the Institution as a whole. Each Faculty and central administrative areas are required to provide a record of their performance and a justification for under-performance which is considered before a panel chaired by the President. This evaluation provides an overview of a range of institutional activities including financial health, results of the management survey, Risk and Compliance, staff development and Equality and Diversity compliance, as well as research and Teaching and Learning activities. The meeting of the panel to review the submissions and key performance indicators take place in October of each year, reviewing the previous year's activities and setting goals for the following year. The key role of the review is to benchmark the institutions progress against the goals within 'Manchester 2020'. Schools are required to report quarterly to the Faculty who are then required to submit the APR documentation for September, each year.

7.2   Annual Monitoring

Annual monitoring is an ongoing process of reflection and action planning. It should be driven by the staff delivering a programme or group of cognate programmes. Programme

teams are asked to reflect on the effectiveness of programmes as delivered during the year, identifying: particular achievements; any issues beyond their control that have affected their work; aspects that need to be addressed in the short term and recorded in an action plan; and current or possible future developments within the academic or professional community and the market environment. Annual monitoring complements the periodic review procedure.

7.3   Periodic Review

Periodic review is an annual review at the department/discipline or School level to assess the continued validity and relevance of programme aims, intended learning outcomes and the quality of the student experience. Periodic review is developmental and based on a dialogue between peers, normally including at least one external subject specialist. Periodic review is organised by the Faculty who choose a department/discipline or School to review annually and produce a report for consideration by the MDC Strategy Group the School, Faculty and Vice-President.

APPENDIX A: Annual Monitoring reports

Checklist of headings for annual monitoring minutes/report.[2]

1. **School/Faculty/CDT/DTP/MDCSG**

2. **Date of meeting**

3. **Attendees at meeting**

4. **Degrees included in the annual monitoring exercise**

5. **Update on action plan from previous year**

6. **Summary of any major changes to degrees throughout the year**

7. **Selection and admissions including student information**

   Are there any issues about applications being converted into offers and admissions? Are recruitment strategies clear and well executed? Are target places being filled? Are there any significant trends in postgraduate student numbers? What are the characteristics of the intake population (i.e. gender balance, home/overseas), are these significant? Is the student information provided appropriate, coordinated and timely?

8. **Supervision arrangements and feedback**

   Are supervision arrangements working satisfactorily? Have any significant issues been raised by students or other stakeholders in this area? If so how have these been addressed? Are there any issues relating to supervisor/student ratios? Are supervisor awareness sessions offered and are these considered useful by supervisors and other key staff? Do supervisors receive a handbook or other key information on their role? How are supervisors engaging with eProg?

9. **Progress and review**

   Are progress and review processes operating satisfactorily? How effectively has the introduction of eProg been managed and is it useful for managing student progression? What are the key trends emerging from the analysis of special permissions data and how effective is the University's special permissions policy?

10. **Student feedback and representation**

    How does student representation work? What methods are used to gather student feedback? What key issues have been raised and how have they been addressed? How will the University's new PGR specific student representation policy be implemented during 20010-11 or is it already being delivered?

11. **Transferable skills training**

    Any particular issues or best practice on the quality or relevance of skills training provision raised by students, supervisors or external stakeholders or by data on attendance on courses? Any issues and concerns about the impact of future changes to Roberts funding?

12. **Taught elements of research degrees**

    Any particular issues about the taught component of the degree.

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[2] It is not necessary for all minutes to cover all headings and points extensively and additional areas can be added as required. These headings are provided as a guide and series of prompts to aid discussion. Some headings may not be appropriate and should therefore not be included.

13. **Student support**

    What is the quality of support available to research students within the school/CDT, including an evaluation of the capacity to support the type and range of students and their diverse needs including part-time, overseas and split-site or distance learning students. Has there been any feedback from key stakeholders about how support is working and areas for improvement? Are there any funding support issues?

14. **Assessment and the examinations processes**

    How has the implementation of the PGR examinations policy worked? Are there any trends emerging from the analysis of the breakdown of examination award classifications?

15. **Submission and completion**

    Any issues highlighted through the analysis of the submission and completion data and associated processes?

16. **Careers and first destination**

    Any issues highlighted in the data or other feedback mechanisms?

17. **Feedback from key stakeholders**

    Are any major changes to provision required as a result of stakeholder feedback How does staff feedback correlate with student feedback and discussions at the staff/student liaison committee (or equivalent). Feedback from examiners from the previous year.

18. **Collaboration (where appropriate)**

    For research degree programmes that involve some form of collaboration e.g. CDT programmes, split-site PhD, CASE awards etc what are the particular challenges for these awards? Are there any issues emerging from students or other stakeholders relating specifically to the collaborative elements of the provision?

19. **Appeals and complaints**

    Any particular issues or best practice identified from appeals and complaints during the previous academic year.

20. **Innovations and best practice**

    Provide examples that have emerged through the annual monitoring process

21. **Support needs**

    Any support needs identified, e.g. IT, learning or space resource.

22. **Time away from the University**

    Do students spend some of their time away from the University e.g. on placements, outreach activity, fieldwork etc? How is this time managed? And are there any issues or concerns that need addressing?

Version amendment history		
Version	Date	Reason for change
1	2006	
2	Feb 2011	
3	Oct 2019	Streamlining of process. Change to Faculty Periodic review requirements.

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