

Faculty of Humanities
REPORT FOLLOWING THE AUDIT OF ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESSES
Version 2

The project team (in alphabetical order):

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Notes from the meetings with PGR Directors and copies of overviews of the process

Appendix 3: Spreadsheet summarising the annual review processes in each school using the annual review themes identified in the terms of reference

Appendix 4: Timeline for completion

Scope of the audit

Formal review meetings which review and record a student's progress and formally commend a student's ability to continue on the programme will normally take place at least once a year. The 'annual review meeting' is an example of a formal review meeting.

To carry out a detailed audit of the annual review processes within schools, simplifying and streamlining processes, identifying best practice and ensuring internal and external policy compliance. We are using the mandate from SLT regarding changes to the completion rate as an opportunity to ensure that there is a robust process for the year 1 annual review and to share good practice to incorporate into a consistent Faculty annual review form. The audit has looked at all PGR programmes in the Faculty except MEnt and Validated Programmes. Faculty is keen to ensure that necessary variations are kept in place but where diversity is not warranted consistency can be applied to help standardise a robust process. Standardising the process means that we can ensure compliance with QAA and University Code of Practice, to support student experience in ensuring a fair, rigorous and justified process.

The Project Team has collected information on and around the following annual review themes:

- Timings of panels
- Roles and responsibilities, including the PGR Director
- Terminology of panels and membership
- Documentation required for panel
- Process for addressing unsatisfactory progress
- Structure of the annual review meeting
- Attendance at the annual review meeting
- Consideration of taught unit results
- Reports and presentations
- Process for resubmissions
- Consideration of records of supervisory meetings
- Consideration of the panel's recommendation
- Authorisations on eProg annual review forms

The Project Team endeavour to ensure that any changes to current processes are in-line with QAA and the University's Code of Practice, including those covered in the [Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students](#) and the [Faculty of Humanities Guiding Principles for the Submission Pending Period](#). The audit was based on evaluation of the schools information regarding the annual review process for their students and discussions with PGR Directors. This report will be shared with the Manchester Doctoral Centre who are also conducting an audit of annual review processes, primarily focusing on the year 1 annual review. The project team will ensure that a copy of this report is sent to the Head of Graduate Education, PGR Directors and the Heads of Schools.

The term PGR in this report refers to PhD, MPhil, DBA and Professional Doctorate students.

Principles

The flowcharts demonstrating the robust process to be used from academic year 2014/15 are on pages 8 and 9. It is expected that all Faculty of Humanities postgraduate research students also have an annual mid-year review to discuss any issues to date and plan for the upcoming annual review.

In order to ensure a robust annual review process across the Faculty of Humanities the following key principles need to be observed:

1. Panel membership

An annual review meeting must take place in all years of registration, regardless of whether the student is full time or part time. In attendance must be the student and either the supervisory team and at least 1 independent reviewer or the student and at least 2 independent reviewers. If the supervisor does not attend the meeting with the student and the 2 or more independent reviewers, they must be fully consulted in relation to the student's progress and the standard of the progress report before the meeting and involved in discussions after the review regarding the final recommendation. The format must be robust for every annual review and should, where possible, be consistent across every year of study. The panel make a recommendation, the final outcome is ratified by the school or discipline level PGR Director.

When appointing members of the formal review panel, consideration should be given to any future assessment of the student's work. For example, where a member of staff has been appointed a member of a formal review panel more than once, they must not be allowed to be appointed as the internal examiner or independent chair for the final thesis. However, as per the [Nomination of Examiners and Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examination Policy](#) *"In exceptional circumstances, a supervisor may apply to the relevant Faculty/School PGR committee to request approval to appoint an internal examiner where they have been involved with a candidate's end of year assessments, more than once during their programme."*

2. Review meeting attendance and presentations

Students must be in attendance for their annual review and the review should not be held via skype or email as per the QAA Quality Code Proforma item 13.4 unless the student has a justified argument as to why they cannot be on campus for the annual review. DBA students are exempt from being on campus.

For those students with a recognised disability, the PGR Office should consult with the Disability Advisory and Support Service and adjust the process accordingly for those students.

The [Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students](#) states that students may be required to present their findings orally to other staff and students at various stages in their research degree. This is good practice for the student in preparation for their viva's. There should be opportunities for students to present their work annually and receive critical feedback on this from both their peers and from key academic staff. This may or may not be a part of the formal Annual Review process.

3. Work to be submitted

A written piece of work must be submitted for consideration, as a minimum, for every annual review. As per the [Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students](#) the students must be assessed for satisfactory progress against criteria which should typically include a clearly identified and accepted research topic and a thorough review of relevant literature which demonstrates a good understanding of the research context. The student should also be able to demonstrate they have developed, in consultation with the supervisory team, a suitable research plan and approach for carrying out the research, and that they have attained the skills and

experience necessary to achieve the research plan. Good practice would be for the student to submit a recognised piece of work, as to be agreed, that contextualises how this fits into the thesis - for example a chapter.

A timeline for completion should also be completed, see appendix 4. The purpose of the timeline is two-fold. One to act as a guide to students in terms of planning for completion and so that they can readily see how far they have already progressed in terms of work completed [but also visualise what remains to be done]. Second it provides a clear illustration to those assessing the student's progress what has actually been achieved, when the majority of the review might be focussed mainly on a current project/piece of research. Though students complete a similar question in the current annual review form, a table / more illustrative approach is useful in highlighting actual progress.

A minimum and maximum word count or length should be stipulated and a clear deadline provided. The students should submit their work to their supervisor before the review and be given feedback and support to revise the work accordingly before it is submitted for consideration. Supervisors should ensure that the standard of work expected is explained and discussed.

4. Responsibilities

Student: to attend the annual review meeting; to submit the work required on time; to engage with the process; to complete their sections of the annual review form before the annual review meeting in a timely manner allowing the panel enough time to consider all inputs on the form. Students should also ensure they are available following the annual review meeting to discuss the outcome with either supervisors or school level PGR Director and/or discipline level PGR Directors.

Main Supervisor: must complete the annual review form in conjunction with the co supervisor. The supervisor must ensure that their student is aware of the purpose and frequency of all types of progress review meetings and the possible outcomes of these meetings as set out in the [Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students](#). Either attend the annual review meeting with the student and independent reviewer or meet with the student after the meeting to discuss the final report. Supervisors should be providing feedback on the work submitted before the review and give feedback and support to the student to revise the work accordingly before it is submitted for consideration. Supervisors should ensure that the standard of work expected is explained and discussed with the student. The supervisors should also ensure that they meet with the student following the annual review meeting to discuss the outcome.

Co Supervisor: complete the annual review form in conjunction with the main supervisor; either attend the annual review meeting with the student and independent reviewer or meet with the student after the meeting to discuss the final report; if required provide feedback on the work submitted before the review and give feedback and support to the student to revise the work accordingly before it is submitted for consideration. The supervisors should also ensure that they meet with the student following the annual review meeting to discuss the outcome.

Independent Reviewer/s: to read the work submitted; to write the report following the annual review meeting giving constructive comments on the work submitted and the performance in the annual review meeting; to provide the report to the supervisors.

School or discipline level PGR Director: must allocate the independent reviewer/s. All school or discipline level PGR Directors consider the recommendation and will confirm the final outcome by authorising the annual review form. The School level PGR Director must consider all recommendations for withdrawal or downgrading and be prepared to meet with the student if the outcome is not a positive one.

5. Consistent process for all years of study

Historically schools have conducted much more formal reviews where continuation on the programme hinged on the outcome at the annual review year 1 stage. Subsequent reviews thereafter have been more about supporting progression rather than identifying if a student can in fact achieve the degree. Whilst it is recognised that it is in the first year of study that a student's aptitude for the programme can really be determined as early as possible, a student's progress can stumble in any year of study. A student can be downgraded or withdrawn in any year of study. Our recommendation is that there is consistent process for annual reviews for all years of study and annual reviews in all years should be treated as an examination.

6. Timings of reviews

All unnecessary layers in the process should be removed. For example if a student has a meeting with supervisors and an independent reviewer or just the independent reviewers earlier in the year they should not then be expected to have another meeting in the summer because the first meeting was too early to recommend re registration. The annual review for both full time and part time students should not take place any earlier or later than month 9 of the year of study.

If a resubmission is required and a further review, a student will normally be given 1 opportunity to resubmit for a further review. Resubmissions should normally be submitted within 10 weeks of the first annual review meeting.

It should be decided at the final year annual review if the student is permitted to apply for submission pending registration. The Faculty of Humanities Application for approval to register for the Submission Pending Period form in the [Faculty of Humanities Guiding Principles for the Submission Pending Period](#) must be then completed by the student and supervisors and considered by the PGR Director.

Normally, if a student provides notice to submit before the final year annual review is due the review should still take place unless the student submits the thesis before the review.

7. Communications to students

The purpose, requirements and frequency for the review are made clear from the outset so that all parties involved can plan adequately, prepare relevant documents and consult where appropriate. Support is given to help students who have unsatisfactory progress make improvements and that it is made clear to students at the beginning of the programme the implications of the possible outcomes of the annual review (please see main supervisors responsibilities on page 4) .

8. Taught units and researcher development

Completion of prescribed taught assessment, where compulsory, is considered a condition of progression and this must be communicated to the student at the start of the degree and thereafter. All results must be fully considered as part of the annual review process. Successful completion of agreed researcher development training will also be fully considered as part of the annual review process.

9. Unsatisfactory progress

Where a student's progress is unsatisfactory they may be required to have their progress assessed more than twice a year. This must be clearly communicated to students at the start of their degree and thereafter. Exit awards are not applicable for PGR students except in the 2+2 Economics programme where students are awarded an MRes after year 2 if they meet the requirements.

Whilst it is always good practice to record all supervisory meetings, where progress is unsatisfactory or there has been an issue identified before the annual review it is especially important that discussions in supervisory meetings are recorded.

Where a downgrade to MPhil is recommended it should be considered at the earliest meeting of the School Postgraduate Research Committee.

10. Consideration by the relevant Faculty or School review committee

School or discipline level PGR Directors should be ratifying the panel's recommendation and authorising the annual review forms to confirm progression/transfer/withdrawal or eligibility to apply for registration for submission pending (if applicable).

11. Extension to programme

Where there has been an extension to programme the annual review process should continue.

12. Resubmission and re-registration

All resubmissions must be considered and an outcome agreed and communicated before the deadline for re registration. Where resubmission work is recommended and a 'second attempt' annual year review is required, a PGR student will be permitted an extra 4 weeks to complete the registration process and will not be charged a late registration fee during this 4 week period. The school PGR administrator should liaise with the fees team to confirm that the student has been assigned remedial work and to notify them when the remedial work has been completed in order to assess whether a late registration fee is due. This is from the 'End of year examination & registration' which is a draft extract from the Student Services Centre for inclusion in the fees policy.

If the student is placed on interruption and returned within a year they keep the same registration period, (session). They will register for a period equal to the length of their interruption at the end of their programme for which they will pay a pro-rata fee. In cases where the student misses their registration period, (session) because they are on interruption the student registers on their return and this month becomes their new session.

13. Terminology

We will adopt the following terminology:

Annual review and annual review meeting

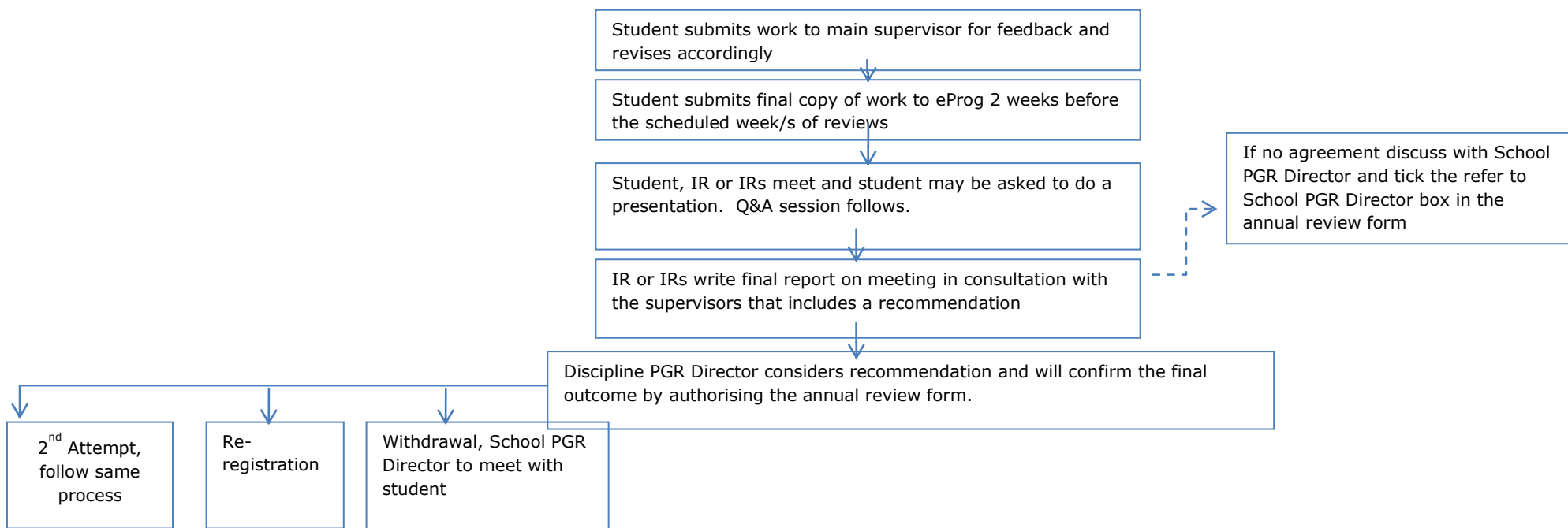
Independent reviewer (IR) – the panel member/s independent of the supervisory team

Panel – comprises of the independent reviewer /s and supervisory team
Discipline Level PGR Director
School Level PGR Director

14. Changes to the annual review forms

The annual review forms should be changed, where applicable, to follow the principles above.

Flowchart of process to be followed from academic year 2014/15 onwards in all years of study except the final year. Review should be held by the end of month 9 of the academic year



**Flowchart of process to be followed from academic year 2014/15 onwards in the final year.
Review should be held by the end of month 9 of the academic year**

