

Alliance Manchester Business School

Postgraduate Research Programmes

Guidance for Staff

Completion support

The AMBS Completion Support process takes the form of meetings between PGR Divisional Representatives (acting as Completion Supporters) and PGR students whose completion is a source of concern.

The primary aim of the meeting is to discuss goals for work up to completion but may also address any barriers to timely completion.

Identifying PGRs in Need of Completion Support

Two mechanisms automatically trigger AMBS Completion Support:

- a) *PG Researcher self-referral* – PG Researchers who are concerned about their progress at any point during Year Two or Year Three of their full-time studies (or equivalent for part-time studies) may self-enrol by contacting their Divisional Coordinator.
- b) *Supervisor referral* - supervisors who are concerned about a PG Researcher's progress at any point during Year Two or Year Three of their full-time studies (or equivalent for part-time studies) may self-enrol by contacting their Divisional Coordinator.

Three further mechanisms trigger an invitation for the PG Researcher to be offered completion support:

- c) The PGR Researcher's progress is considered unsatisfactory at any review (regardless of subsequent outcome).
- d) The PG Researcher has periods of interruption that exceed three months in total.
- e) The PG Researcher submits an extension request.

To facilitate this, all main supervisors will be contacted by Divisional Coordinators annually to ask whether their supervisees' completion dates are likely to be met and, if not, whether they would benefit from completion support. Similarly, relevant PGRs will be contacted by Divisional Coordinators annually to ask whether they feel the need to engage in completion support.

Completion Support Meetings

Completion Support Meetings will normally be between Divisional Coordinators and PGRs, normally face-to-face and within one month of support being triggered. It is anticipated that on occasions it may be appropriate for Divisional Coordinators to liaise with both Divisional Research Directors, supervisory teams, or other subject or method expert faculty members who may be included in meetings or asked to comment). Meetings will vary considerably in length but should involve the PGR identifying barriers to their completion, setting achievable targets and formally outlining deadlines for relevant output (much of which can be undertaken by the PGR prior to the face-to-face meeting). In some cases, completion support will require multiple meetings while, in others, follow up contacts via email may suffice. It is anticipated that where completion support is triggered by c), d), or e) (see above), contact will frequently be either remotely or via email (although such matter will be at the discretion of the Divisional Coordinators).

After the meeting, Divisional Coordinators will produce a note of the meeting and will

send this to the PGR as an agreed record of the meeting before circulating it to your supervisors. In exceptional circumstances, the note could be treated as confidential between you and your completion supporter or two versions produced, a confidential one and one for circulation to the supervisors.

Questions for PGRs triggering Completion Support:

Why am I attending completion support?

You have identified yourself or have been identified as at risk of late or non-completion by either by yourself, your supervisor, through the review process or because you have submitted an extension or interruption request. Experience has shown us that some students need additional support as part of their PhD trajectory in order that they can successfully complete in a reasonable time frame.

Note that there are many famous academics who struggled to get their PhD finished off! The point of this process is not to judge you but to support you.

How is completion support different from a review?

- The completion support process will not deal with issues of quality or content of your research. It is solely concerned with supporting the **process** of your PhD to completion.
- Reviews happen throughout your PhD, completion support happens when it is needed.
- There is no fixed pattern of meetings for completion support. Meetings will occur at a frequency agreed between you and your completion supporter.

What do I have to do?

- Before each completion support meeting, send your current workplan to your completion supporter.
- Attend the meeting at the time agreed with your completion supporter.
- Read and agree that the write-up of the meeting produced by your completion supporter is an accurate representation of the meeting or edit it if you feel it is not. Consent (or not) to the meeting note being shared with your supervisors.
- Carry out any actions you agree to at the meeting.

Am I being evaluated?

Yes and no. To provide you with support, it will be necessary to carry out an assessment of where you are. This will happen in your initial meeting. This will be in quite broad terms, i.e. how close are you to completion; what is stopping you progressing? However, this is not a test! We fully recognise that PhDs have a variety of trajectories in terms of progress to completion and it is about monitoring your trajectory to ensure that you complete on time.

How often will I have to attend completion support meetings?

There is no fixed number of meetings. The number and frequency of meetings will be determined by your needs and will be agreed between you and your completion supporter. There is no right number of meetings to be having; this is an individual process, and a host of factors will determine how much completion support a student needs.

What will happen at the meeting?

Again there is no rule about this. The goal of the meeting will usually be to set targets for completion and review progress against previous goals. However, to do this effectively, it might be necessary to discuss supervision arrangements, training needs, non-PhD work, working arrangements, life circumstances, health, career goals and anything else that might have an impact on your ability to complete in good time. The content, quality and topic of

your thesis will not be discussed, except insofar as these impact on your progress to completion.

What will happen after my completion support meeting?

Your completion supporter will produce a note of the meeting and will send this to you for your approval as an agreed record of the meeting before circulating it to your supervisors. In exceptional circumstances, the note could be treated as confidential between you and your completion supporter or two versions produced, a confidential one and one for circulation to the supervisors.

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