

**UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS OR
ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND
PROCEDURE
(RESEARCH STUDENTS)**

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UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS OR ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE (RESEARCH STUDENTS)

Policy

- 1.1 This policy and procedure applies to students registered for the following programmes: PhD (except for PhD by Published Works), MD, EngD, Professional Doctorates and MPhil, with the following provisos:
- .1 reference to 'downgrade' does not apply to MPhil or those Professional Doctorates that have no subsidiary award;
 - .2 in the case of Professional Doctorates that are exempt in whole or part from the Research Student Progress Monitoring Procedure, concerns about engagement or progress will be identified by a supervisor or programme director, rather than a Review Panel.
- 1.2 As a research student, you are expected to engage with the requirements of your research degree programme in accordance with the Policy on Research Student Responsibilities and for maintaining an adequate rate of progress and standard of work in accordance with the Policy and Procedure on the Monitoring of Research Students.
- 1.3 Concern about your engagement with your programme may be raised by your supervisor(s) or your Director of Postgraduate Research if, *for example*:
- you take an unauthorised absence from your research study;
 - you do not attend supervision meetings or other meetings required by your School;
 - you do not respond to meeting requests or other communications;
 - you do not attend or complete a compulsory training activity;
 - you do not adhere to your schedule of deadlines required by the Research Student Progress Monitoring Procedure;
 - you do not submit work for review as part of a Warning of Exclusion/Downgrade;
 - you do not submit your thesis for examination within the permitted time limit;
 - you do not complete amendments to your thesis required by your examiners within the permitted time limit.
- 1.4 Concern about your progress may be raised by your supervisor(s) (at a monitoring event or at any time), or by your Review Panel if:

- .1 you do not produce work for your supervisor(s) in keeping with an agreed schedule;
 - .2 you are unable to keep to the expected rate of progress documented in your Research/Thesis Completion Plan; or
 - .3 the quality of your practical or written work is considered to be of a standard that is less than satisfactory.
- 1.5 If you have extenuating circumstances that are impeding your progress and/or your level of engagement, you should report them through the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (Research Students).
- 1.6 You are also required to complete all stages of registration and enrolment each year. If you do not do so, the University will respond in accordance with the Student Study and Engagement Regulations.
- 1.7 If a School has growing concerns about any student's medical, psychological or emotional health, the Head of School may initiate the Student Support Intervention Policy and Procedure.
- 1.8 If your Director of Postgraduate Research is also your supervisor, they will nominate an alternative member of staff to act in the capacity of Director when implementing the procedure below.
- 1.9 If you are invited to a meeting to discuss your progress or engagement, you may request to attend in person or online.
- 1.10 You may invite a member of the Students' Union Student Advice or professional union representative to attend a meeting with you for support. You will be asked and expected to respond to questions yourself, but your representative can help you to summarise your response and any mitigating factors.

Procedure

2. Unauthorised Absence from your Programme

- 2.1 If you take unauthorised leave of absence from your research studies and fail to respond to communications from your supervisors(s) or Director of Postgraduate Research, you will be considered to have absented yourself from your programme.
- 2.2 Your Director of Postgraduate Research will invite you to a meeting to discuss your circumstances. Your supervisor(s) will also be invited to attend. You will be given at least **7 days'** notice of the meeting.
- 2.3 At your request, you can also meet with your Director of Postgraduate Research separately, prior to or after the meeting which includes your supervisor(s).

- 2.4 Following the meeting, your Director of Postgraduate Research will take one of the following actions:
- .1 record that concerns have been identified and discussed with you, but that no further action need be taken at this time;
 - .2 place you under a Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade from your research studies for a specified period, during which time you will be required to demonstrate an adequate level of engagement (see 7 below);
 - .3 implement the Student Support Intervention Policy and Procedure;
 - .4 recommend to the Head of School that you have absented yourself from your programme and should be excluded.
- 2.5 Where appropriate, your Director of Postgraduate Research may also discuss with you the options for interrupting your studies or transferring to part-time study.
- 2.6 If you do not respond to the request for a meeting to discuss your circumstances, or you fail to attend without good reason, your Director Postgraduate Research will recommend to the Head of School that you have absented yourself from your programme and should be excluded.

3. Non-completion of your Programme

- 3.1 If you do not submit/resubmit your thesis for examination or complete any amendments required by your examiners within the permitted time limit, you will have absented yourself from your programme.
- 3.2 Your Director of Postgraduate Research will invite you to a meeting to discuss your circumstances. Your supervisor(s) will also be invited to attend. You will be given at least **7 days'** notice of the meeting.
- 3.3 At your request, you can also meet with your Director of Postgraduate Research separately, prior to or after the meeting which includes your supervisor(s).
- 3.4 Following the meeting, your Director of Postgraduate Research will take one of the following actions:
- .1 refer you to the Extenuating Circumstances Policy (Research Students) or the Policy on Late Submission of Research Degree Theses;
 - .2 implement the Student Support Intervention Policy and Procedure;

- .3 recommend to the Head of School that you have absented yourself from your programme and should be excluded.
- 3.5 If you do not respond to the request for a meeting to discuss your circumstances, or you fail to attend without good reason, your Director Postgraduate Research will recommend to the Head of School that you have absented yourself from your programme and should be excluded.
- 4. Concerns Raised by your Supervisor(s) or Director of Postgraduate Research**
 - 4.1 A supervisor or your Director of Postgraduate Research may raise concerns about your level of engagement with your programme, or raise concerns about your academic progress outside of a 9-month or Annual Review.
 - 4.2 If such concerns are raised, you will be requested to attend a meeting with your Director of Postgraduate Research and your supervisor(s) to explore those concerns. You will be given at least **7 days'** notice of the meeting, which will include a written account of those concerns.
 - 4.3 At your request, you can also meet with your Director of Postgraduate Research separately, without your supervisor(s) being present.
 - 4.4 If you do not respond to the request to attend the meeting with your Director of Postgraduate Research and your supervisor(s) to explore the concerns that have been raised, or you fail to attend without good reason, the meeting will go ahead in your absence.
 - 4.5 Following the meeting, the Director of Postgraduate Research will take one of the following actions:
 - .1 record that concerns have been identified and discussed with you, but that no further action need be taken at this time;
 - .2 place you under a Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade from your research studies for a specified period, during which time you will be required to demonstrate an improvement in engagement and/or progress (see 7 below);
 - .3 initiate the University's Student Support Intervention Policy and Procedure;
 - .4 recommend to the Head of School that you have absented yourself from your programme and should be excluded.
 - 4.6 Where appropriate, your Director of Postgraduate Research may also discuss with you the options for interrupting your studies or transferring to part-time study.

5. Recommendation for Exclusion

- 5.1 If there is a recommendation to exclude you, you will be given written notification of the recommendation and be advised that you have **7 days** in which you may respond to that recommendation.
- 5.2 If, within 7 days, you request to re-engage with your programme, you will be re-invited to meet with your Director of Postgraduate Research and your supervisor(s) to allow you one further opportunity to discuss your circumstances.
- 5.3 If you do not request to re-engage with your programme, and/or the recommendation to exclude is confirmed after a further meeting, your Director of Postgraduate Research will instruct Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations) to exclude you from your programme.

6. Unsatisfactory Progress Identified by Your Review Panel

- 6.1 If your 9-month or Annual Review (as part of the Research Student Progress Monitoring Procedure) determines that your progress is not satisfactory you will be invited to attend a meeting with your Director of Postgraduate Research to discuss your circumstances. Your Director of Postgraduate Research will explain why your progress is not satisfactory and the Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade procedure. If there are no mitigating circumstances, the Director of Postgraduate Research will confirm the decision of the progress review panel.
- 6.2 You cannot be placed under a Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade due to unsatisfactory progress where there are less than 9 months of your candidature remaining. If unsatisfactory progress is identified at this late stage, you can still expect to receive an honest assessment of your work and constructive feedback appropriate to the period of time remaining. Your School may refer you to the Extenuating Circumstances Policy (Research Students) or the Policy on Late Submission of Research Degree Theses, as appropriate.

7. Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade

- 7.1 If the Director of Postgraduate Research places you under a Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade, you will be given written notification, which will include the reasons for the warning and the objectives you are required to meet for the warning to be lifted. The objectives will be agreed by your supervisors(s) and Director of Postgraduate Research, who may also choose to consult with an independent reviewer.
- 7.2 The written notification will specify one or more of the possible outcomes following the warning period if the recommendation is not to lift or extend the warning:

- .1 a recommendation to downgrade you to MPhil (or other subsidiary award specified for the programme) and exclusion is not being considered in this case;
 - .2 a recommendation to exclude you from your studies and a downgrade to MPhil (or other subsidiary award specified for the programme) would not be appropriate in this case;
 - .3 a recommendation to either downgrade you to MPhil (or other subsidiary award specified for the programme) or exclude you from the programme, where partial fulfilment of the stipulated objectives mean that a transfer to MPhil (or similar) would be appropriate in this case.
- 7.3 A copy of the notification will be sent to Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations).
- 7.4 A Warning of Exclusion or Downgrade gives you the opportunity to demonstrate that you can improve your performance and/or engagement against a set of objectives sufficiently well to remain registered on your research degree programme. You should arrange to meet with your supervisor(s) to discuss the objectives at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.5 The warning will allow at least **2 months** for you to demonstrate improvement against the objectives you have been given. If you are studying part-time or you are in your 'thesis-completion' period, you will have at least **3 months** to demonstrate improvement.
- 7.6 If you have extenuating circumstances during a warning period, you should report them through the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (Research Students).
- 7.7 At the end of the warning period, your progress will be assessed by your supervisor(s) and an independent reviewer, typically a member of your progress review panel. On the basis of their reports, the Director of Postgraduate Research will make one of the following recommendations to the Head of School:
- .1 that the warning should be removed;
 - .2 that the warning should be extended for a further period;
 - .3 that if available, you should be downgraded to an MPhil candidature (or comparable subsidiary programme);
 - .4 that you should be excluded from research study.
- 7.8 No full-time student should be placed on a Warning of Exclusion/Downgrade for more than **6 consecutive months** and no part-time student for more

than **9 consecutive months**, unless there is an approved adjustment for extenuating circumstances.

- 7.9 The Director of Postgraduate Research will inform you of the recommendation made to the Head of School.
- 7.10 Where the recommendation to the Head of School is to exclude you from your research study or to downgrade you to an MPhil (or comparable subsidiary programme) candidature and you are not in agreement with that recommendation, the Head of School will appoint a School Panel to consider the exclusion or downgrade. The Panel members will be:
- .1 two experienced supervisors: at least 1 will be from your School; the second may be from your School or from another School; and
 - .2 a senior member of academic staff from your School who will chair the meeting.
- 7.11 None of the panel members will be one of your supervisors, progress reviewers, or Director of Postgraduate Research.
- 7.12 You will be notified of the date, time and venue at least **14 days** in advance of the Panel meeting.
- 7.13 You will be informed that you may make your case against exclusion/downgrade in person and/or by submitting written evidence to the Panel.
- 7.14 If you wish to submit written evidence to the Panel you should do so at least **7 days** in advance of the Panel meeting. A request to attend the meeting by video conference should also be made at least **7 days** in advance.
- 7.15 If you fail to respond to the meeting invitation, or if you fail to attend, the Panel may proceed in your absence.
- 7.16 The Panel will consider the recommendation to exclude/downgrade you, the documentation on which that recommendation is based and any representation you wish to make.
- 7.17 The School Panel will decide if the recommendation to exclude you from your research study or to downgrade you to an MPhil programme should be confirmed. They will determine one of the following:
- .1 that the warning should be removed;
 - .2 that the warning should be extended for a further period;
 - .3 that if available, you should be downgraded to an MPhil programme (or comparable subsidiary programme);

.4 that you should be excluded from research study.

7.18 You will be informed of the outcome of the School Panel in writing within **7 days** of the decision being made.

8. Appeals

8.1 You may request a review of a decision taken under this Procedure in accordance with the University Review Procedure. A request for review must be made on one or more of the grounds set out in the Procedure and must be received by Student Cases within 14 days of the notification being sent.

Appendix: Alignment with the Expectations and Core Practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

This policy and procedure aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core Practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	Core practices for quality
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
Common practices for standards	Common practices for quality

<p>The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p>The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>
	<p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>