Plymouth University

Regulatory Framework for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Sections 7-8: Monitoring Progress (Including Failure to Progress) (PGR) (changes since 2014-15 in **bold and underlined**)

Section 7: Monitoring of Progress

7.1 It is the responsibility of the Research Degree Management Unit to monitor progress of research students towards their award aim. Assessment of progress will be identified in the **Doctoral Training Centre (DTC)** procedures and will normally include:

   a. student led research seminars during which oral presentations of work are made to other research students and staff,
   b. written reports,
   c. interviews, in some cases, may be a part of the monitoring process,
   d. an annual written report of progress, and
   e. a completed annual monitoring form.

7.2.1 It is recognised good practice that a third party (independent from the supervisory team) will review a student’s progress, normally following an interview.

7.3. The monitoring process will:

   a. give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate progression,
   b. where appropriate, deal with matters in a **sensitive** manner,
   c. provide the opportunity for candidates and supervisors to report separately on progress, and
   d. where necessary assist the candidate and supervision team to bring the programme back on schedule at the earliest opportunity.

7.4. The **PGReLog** shall assist in this process.

Section 8: Failure to Progress

Lack of academic progress

8.1. Concerns about progress should be identified as early as possible in order that corrective measures can be taken. Concerns about progress will normally include failure to meet deadlines, failure to produce work or provide work of a suitable standard or failure to attend supervisory meetings.

8.2. A research student will initially receive a verbal warning from the Director of Studies if there is concern on progress. A written warning will follow a verbal warning if progress continues to give cause for concern.

8.3. A research degree candidate may not be required to withdraw from the University without having first received a formal written warning about their academic progress.
8.4 A Director of Studies or Supervisor who has concerns about the progress of a research degree candidate should:

a. make those concerns known to the candidate,

b. give the candidate the opportunity to discuss any difficulties they may have encountered in their research or outside the project environment which may be affecting performance and progress,

c. agree with the candidate a written plan for improvement of progress with appropriate milestones, targets and review dates, copies of which should be retained by the Director of Studies and candidate,

d. ensure that the second Supervisor(s), the Research Degree Coordinator and Management Unit are kept informed and if necessary become involved, and

e. formally review progress as identified in the plan. Annual monitoring is one opportunity for consideration of progress; however review is not limited to these occasions.

8.5 Supervisors may not be able to help with all the problems that a candidate may encounter. The Research Degree Coordinator, DTC Director, the Graduate School, and other staff, set out in section 13, are also available to provide support and advice for candidates as required.

8.6 If, following review, academic performance has not improved to an appropriate level:

a. the Director of Studies, together with the rest of the supervisory team, should inform the candidate in writing of their concerns, the agreed course of action to address those concerns and the period identified for improvement; and

b. the Research Degree Coordinator and Management Group and the DTC Director should be kept informed and if necessary become involved.

8.7 If, after the period identified, the Director of Studies, the rest of the supervisory team and Research Degree Coordinator, in consultation with the Research Degree Management Unit and DTC Director, remain concerned at the academic progress of the candidate, they are advised to consult the Graduate School.

8.8 The University reserves the right to terminate the registration of a research student in the case of persistent unacceptable progress.

Loss of contact with a candidate

8.9 The principles set out above will also apply if a candidate fails to keep in contact with their supervisory team and to submit tangible evidence of progress with the research project.

8.10 The supervisory team, Research Degree Coordinator, DTC Director and Management Group should make every effort to:

a. contact the candidate,
b. identify any obstacles to progress,
c. agree a plan for improvement, and
d. continue to monitor and review the plan.

8.11 Following failure to re-establish contact the candidate should be issued with a formal written warning that registration will be terminated unless the candidate re-establishes contact with his/her Director of Studies and the other supervisors within an appropriate period. If the candidate fails to respond, the termination procedure should follow.

Termination of registration

8.12 The candidate will receive a formal letter from the University, normally from the Graduate School, requiring him/her to withdraw if it is agreed that the University has:

a. discharged all its responsibilities towards the candidate, and
b. the candidate has received adequate and formal warning of inadequate progress, and

c. has not improved and shows no likelihood of improvement.

8.13 If a candidate fails to enrol for the current academic year without a formal agreed suspension, they will have their registration automatically terminated.