

MPS Progression review policy

This policy complements the relevant university regulations (regulation 23) and handbooks, all published online.

Functions of the progression review

- (1) Provide an element of progress assessment independent of the supervision team
- (2) Support reflection on work and provide constructive and independent feedback
- (3) Discuss career options and additional training opportunities
- (4) Enable doctoral researchers to feed back and raise issues around their well-being, supervision, working arrangements, professional services, training, and facilities

The remainder concerns item (1). Guidance on other aspects will be given elsewhere.

Arrangements for progression review

1. Timings are with regard to net study time and (where applicable) funding duration. Each doctoral researcher receives a review timetable at the start of their studies, a copy of which is kept on the student file and adjusted as necessary (eg upon returning from intermission).
 - a. Reviews can exceptionally be taken earlier, but not later.
2. Every doctoral researcher is assigned two reviewers at the beginning of their studies (their 'reviewer panel'). Both reviewers will be present at year-1 interviews and at least one of them at any later interviews. Reviewers must be independent of the supervision team but will be chosen with subject expertise in mind. They will be legitimate internal examiners.
3. Starter review: by 3 months net study time (before Christmas for September starters)
 - a. Doctoral researcher to submit a brief research outline
 - b. 30-minute meeting involving the student and both supervisors (and optionally the reviewers) during which a web form is filled including assessment on oral and written English.
 - c. Approval of research outline by the reviewer panel, who may require revisions.
4. Year-1 review (7-9 months), year-2 review (19-21 months), year-3 review (31-33 months)
 - a. Doctoral researcher to submit a research report
 - b. Supervisor and student to submit questionnaires
 - c. Assessment of progress and recommendation on registration status by reviewer panel including an interview
 - d. Decision on registration status by DDS and sub-director(s)/research convenor(s)

If a previous review has already ascertained results sufficient for a thesis, a doctoral researcher may ask for a paper-based review, but is entitled to a full review.
5. Thesis readiness review: Can be requested by a doctoral researcher at any time, but must happen at the latest 2 months before funding end date or 5 months before maximum registration date, whichever is earlier. If successful, pre-empts further reviews. The earliest submission date is 2 years after first registration (as per university regulations).
 - a. Student to submit thesis draft, timeline to submission, statement from supervisor on research completeness (pre-submission form), intention to submit form including thesis outline, examiner appointment form for consideration by the reviewer panel
 - b. Reviewer recommendation and feedback
 - c. Decision on whether to switch to pre-submission status
6. A doctoral researcher or supervisor may request an interim progression review at any time, subject to director's approval (as per the university regulations). Maximum 1 per year.

Note 1: With the adoption of this policy by SRDC, applications for pre-submission will no longer be accepted and a candidate will be advised to seek a thesis readiness review instead. The pre-submission policy will be amended accordingly.

Note 2: Research students include MPhil students. MPS do not normally admit onto MPhil and arrangements for progression review would be made on a case-by-case basis.

Definitions and expectations

Research outline: 2pp max. The doctoral researcher should set out, in their own words, the motivation and initial scope for their research and describe a plan for at least up to the end of their first year (net study time). This should be written in adequate English and should include concrete aims and not just list activities.

Research report: A report on work so far, including any original results obtained, as well as aims and plans for the remainder of the PhD. A set of goals and milestones and a timeline up to planned submission should be provided. Further guidance on length and content is provided in published department/programme/research-group-specific material.

Assessment of progress: At every review, supervisor, panelists, and DDS/sub-director(s)/research convenor(s) assess:

- (i) Whether the candidate's work is of PhD calibre. This is a requirement for progression beyond 12 months of registration.
- (ii) The amount of original results which have been obtained (with reference to the requirements for a PhD). In some cases the PhD threshold may have been met at the year-2 review and in all cases we expect this by the year-3 review.
- (iii) Whether a credible plan through to completion has been presented. The key criterion is whether sufficient original results will be credibly obtained and written up by the time of submission. As long as this is met, future plans can be flexible.

In addition, the reviewers will assess published departmental/programme/research-group-specific expectations (eg, whether suitable experimental skills have been obtained) and conditions on re-registration may result.

At thesis readiness reviews, reviewers assess whether the conditions for pre-submission status have been met: Sufficient research results for a PhD, a substantial first thesis draft, a timeline to submission, a declaration to submit and a suitable nomination of examiners.

Recommendation/decision on registration status: Following each review, a decision on the subsequent registration status will be made: (i) Registered (ii) Provisional, (iii) Pre-submission, (iv) Withdraw. (ii) is appropriate where progress or plans are not at the level expected at the stage, or where it appears particularly beneficial to the doctoral researcher's progress. Conditions will be specified and an interim progression review may be scheduled. Particular attention to timing and speedy decisions will be paid at year-1 reviews and thesis readiness reviews.

Effect of decisions

Changes of registration status will be communicated to RSAO as soon as a review has been completed by director and/or sub-director/research convenor as appropriate.

Re-registration for the new university academic year in September will be automatic with unchanged registration status. (Should a candidate not meet the university requirement of a review in the

preceding 12 months, for example as a result of an intermission, special arrangements will be made in consultation with the DDS.)

This Policy AGREED by the MPS School Research Degrees Committee, 28 April 2020 and 10 May 2021.