



Graduate Board
Programmes and Quality Group
Annual Progress Reviews
Guidance for Directors of PGR Studies and Graduate Schools

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Introduction and Background

1. The Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures sets out the following:

A PGR's progress will be monitored formally at regular intervals during the candidature. As a minimum there must be a report by the supervisor at the mid-point of the first year of the candidature (see note 12) and at the transfer stage. Annually, thereafter, there must be a meeting to review progress and a report of the meeting submitted. There are two models for the annual review meeting. Model A which involves a meeting between the PGR, supervisor and an individual independent of the supervisory team and Model B which involves a meeting between the PGR and their supervisor with independent oversight of the report arising from the meeting by a committee or equivalent body. Whichever model is adopted by the Faculty a summary of annual review reports must be considered by the Faculty Graduate School Committee.

Where progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory the [Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure](#) should be instigated. Under the procedure the PGR will be interviewed, normally by the Director of PGR Studies and the supervisor, and specific instructions and objectives given. The PGR must be advised that failure to meet those requirements may lead to a recommendation for the termination of the candidature.

2. With effect from session 2015/16 all Faculties are required to conduct Annual Progress Reviews (APRs) for the following Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs):
 - Full-time and Part-time doctoral candidates (post-transfer)
 - Full-time and Part-time MPhil candidates (from end of year 1)
 - Part-time Mastership by Research candidates (from end of year 1)
3. APRs should take place each year on or before the anniversary of the commencement of study, until submission of the thesis. For PGRs studying for doctoral awards APRs should start after the transfer stage.
4. APRs are designed to put in place arrangements for reviewing a PGR's progress involving individuals independent of the supervisory team and the PGR. They are intended to be developmental and supportive enabling a reflection on progress to date and forward planning for completion of the thesis. The process should not be so onerous that it distracts the PGR from progressing their research and thesis writing.
5. Benefits include:
 - Maximising the likelihood of PGRs completing successfully and on time
 - Parity of experience for PGRs
 - Ensures concerns are raised and addressed
6. Result: Improved submission and completion rates, improved standard and quality of support and feedback for PGRs and compliance with [QAA Quality Code for Research Degrees](#).

Annual Progress Review Models - Overview

Models for APR

7. Graduate Board has agreed two possible APR models and faculties were invited to adopt one of the following:

Model A – an APR meeting between the supervisor(s), PGR and an individual independent of the supervisory team¹

OR

Model B –an APR meeting between the supervisor(s) and the PGR – with oversight of the report emerging from that review by a Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body)

8. Faculties have indicated that Models will be adopted as follows:

Model A	Model B
PGR, supervisor(s) + independent individual = Progression Panel	PGR + supervisor(s) with oversight by Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biological Sciences• EPS• Medicine and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts, Humanities and Cultures• Business• Environment• ESSL• Leeds Trinity University

¹ It is not necessary for the individual, independent of the supervisory team, to be an academic expert in the field of study. It is acceptable for the supervisor to evaluate the academic work and the independent assessor (non-expert) to review the academic progress.

Model A: Independent Assessor

Definition and Faculties

9. Model A includes an APR meeting between the supervisor(s), PGR and an individual independent of the supervisory team² has been adopted by the following Faculties:

Model A

PGR, supervisor(s) + independent individual = Progression Panel

- Biological Sciences
- EPS
- Medicine and Health

Independent Assessor / Internal Examiner

10. The same individual may act as the independent assessor at the “transfer” stage and as the Internal Examiner. However, if an assessor is to act subsequently as an Internal Examiner it is considered that direct involvement in the academic assessment, monitoring and provision of feedback on the PGR’s work is not appropriate subsequent to the transfer review (for example reading and commenting on academic work submitted by the PGR at the end of years 2 and 3) and prior to the final examination.

11. An individual, therefore, who has been involved in an Annual Review (Post-Transfer) progression meeting (under Model A) will not be eligible to act as the Internal Examiner for the final examination³. Involvement in the monitoring and oversight of progress (Post-Transfer), as part of a Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body) (under Model B), will not normally preclude an individual from acting as the Internal Examiner. The table below applies to Model A (only)

Milestone	Scenario A Individual acts as a member of	Scenario B	Scenario C	Scenario D	Scenario E
The Transfer Panel	✓	x	✓	x	x
End of Year 2 APR	✓	✓	x	✓	x
End of Year 3 APR	✓	✓	x	x	✓
Internal Examiner for the Viva	x	x	✓	x	x

² It is not necessary for the individual, independent of the supervisory team, to be an academic expert in the field of study. It is acceptable for the supervisor to evaluate the academic work and the independent assessor (non-expert) to review the academic progress.

³ It is the responsibility of the Faculty/School to ensure that a nominated internal examiner has not acted as an independent assessor as part of an Annual Review (Post-Transfer) under Model A. DCO will NOT undertake such checks as a matter of routine on receipt of the examination entry form and, therefore, for Faculties adopting Model A the Faculty/School must do this before forwarding the examination entry form to DCO.

Model B: Supervisor

Definition and Faculties

12. Model B includes an APR meeting between the supervisor(s) and the PGR – with oversight of the report emerging from that review by a Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body). This has been adopted by the following:

Model B PGR + supervisor(s) with oversight by Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts, Humanities and Cultures• Business• Environment• ESSL• Leeds Trinity University

Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body)⁴ (Model B)

13. It is expected that the Research Degrees Committee (or equivalent body) will:

- a) Maintain oversight of the Annual Review process within the Faculty/School
- b) Consider the content of each Annual Review report to ensure that it is clear and unambiguous and addresses the points required by the University/Faculty. Where appropriate reports will be referred back to the supervisor(s) for clarification
- c) Monitor the progress of individual PGRs
- d) Ensure parity of experience for PGRs
- e) Where progress is not satisfactory or significant issues have been raised to ensure that appropriate remedial action has been/will be taken promptly
- f) Identify any general themes emerging from the reports and to refer these to the relevant University/Faculty/School body

⁴ For example a sub-group of the FGSC or a School PGR Committee

Timelines for APR

14. Annual Progress Review interviews (meetings) should take place each year on or before the anniversary of the commencement of study, until submission of the thesis. For doctoral candidates these should commence after the transfer stage. For example:

Full-time Provisional PhD candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
31 March 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 6 months)
30 September 2021	Transfer assessment
30 September 2022	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 2)
30 September 2023	APR (End of Year 3 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

Part-time Provisional PhD candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
30 June 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 9 months)
30 September 2022	Transfer assessment
30 September 2023	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 3)
30 September 2024	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 4)
30 September 2025	APR (End of Year 5 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

Full-time M Phil candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
31 March 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 6 months)
30 September 2021	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 1)
30 September 2022	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 2)
30 September 2023	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 3 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

Part-time M Phil candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
30 June 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 9 months)
30 September 2024	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 3)
30 September 2025	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 4 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

Full-time Mastership by Research candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
30 March 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 6 months)
30 September 2020	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 1 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

Part-time Mastership by Research candidate commencing study on 01 October 2020

Date (by no later than)	Milestone
01 October 2020	Commencement of studies
31 December 2020	Training plan agreed
30 June 2021	First Formal Progress Report (by end of 9 month)
30 September 2020	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 1)
30 September 2021	Annual Progress Review (End of Year 2 – if thesis not ready for submission and annually thereafter until submission or out of time)

15. For Integrated PhD and Master, the end of the 2nd year sees completion of the Masters and Transfer Process. The Annual Progress Review meeting takes place at the end of Year 3 of full-time study (and annually thereafter until completion of the thesis).

Suspensions of Study

16. For PGRs who are on suspensions of study, at the point the APR is due, the APR should be postponed. It should then take place one or two months after their return to study. The requirements for submission of work for the APR should be adjusted accordingly to take account of any study time lost during the suspension. It is important that the APR takes place as close to the anniversary of the date of commencement as possible, when the PGR has returned to study, to ensure regular progress reports are recorded. It is understood that when a PGR has been suspended for a substantial period of time the progress review will reflect limited progress but will provide an opportunity to plan for further study and explore any issues which may be affecting progress going forward.

Extensions of Study

17. In those cases where a PGR has already been granted a short extension to the deadline for the submission of their thesis an APR is not normally required in the final year if the supervisor(s) is confident that the PGR is on track to submit their thesis by the revised maximum time limit. If, however, a further extension of study is anticipated, then an APR should be held on the anniversary of the date of commencement to discuss progression and the plan for completion.

18. For PGRs who are not in Leeds at the point the review meeting is due (e.g. on placement, fieldwork) consideration can be given to arranging the meeting to be held by video streaming or delay for a month or two and organise on the PGR's return. If this is not possible case to be made to P&Q.

Submission and Report

Information to be submitted by the PGR

19. In advance of the Annual Progress Review meeting the PGR will be required to submit the following through GRAD:

- Report on progress (including an opportunity to identify any issues affecting progress)
- Plan for completion of the research and thesis (eg Gantt chart)
- Written work as required by the Faculty/supervisor(s) for the annual review
- Thesis plan (optional – only if required by the Faculty/supervisor(s))

APR Report

20. After the APR meeting, the Independent Assessor (Model A) or Supervisor (Model B) is required to complete a report in GRAD. The questions they will be asked to report on are set out in Annex A.

21. For Model A, the process is complete when the report is submitted by the Independent Assessor. For Model B, the Graduate School must arrange for the report to be considered by the Research Degrees Committee, as set out above.

Concerns Recorded by the PGR and/or Supervisor

22. When concerns are raised in the APR (by either the PGR and/or supervisor) this triggers an email alert to the Director of PGR Studies and the Graduate School. This ensures that any concerns raised are flagged with the Director of PGR Studies and can, where necessary, be addressed as soon as possible.

23. The Director of PGR Studies should review the report made by the PGR or supervisor to view the concerns raised. Any action required will depend on the individual circumstances. In some cases this may involve meeting with the PGR and/or their supervisor, or possibly instigation of the UAPP process. There is the option for the Director of PGR Studies or Graduate School to add a follow on note to the APR to record any action taken. The follow on note is visible to all including the PGR and their supervisors:

Other information

[Using GRAD to support Annual Progress Reviews](#)

24. GRAD must be used to support the APR process. Full details of how GRAD can support the APR are available in a separate operational guide for Graduate Schools.

[Unsatisfactory Academic Progress](#)

25. There is no requirement for a PGR to “pass” an Annual Progress Monitoring review in order to proceed to the next year of study. The [University's Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure](#) (UAPP) should be initiated in those exceptional cases where lack of progress is causing significant concern.

[Re-Registration](#)

26. Re-registration for the next year of study is not dependent on this process taking place. PGRs should proceed with registration on the anniversary of their start date as required and without waiting for the completion of the annual review.

[Attendance Monitoring/Formal Supervision Meetings](#)

27. Attendance at an annual review meeting is regarded as a contact point for attendance monitoring. An annual review meeting may also count as one of the required number of formal supervision meetings.

[Further Questions](#)

28. Further questions about the process can be directed to the Progression and Examination team in Doctoral College Operations (pgrprogress@leeds.ac.uk)

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(Updated July 2020 with new dates and titles)

Questions in the APR Report

Mandatory APR Questions

Within GRAD is an on-line University-wide form to support the APR process. There are a series of mandatory questions for completion as follows:

For PGRs to complete:

- (a) Please provide a review of your progress, including details of any completed research and/or writing up of your thesis to date. Please concentrate on the progress made since the transfer stage or last annual progress review
- (b) Are there issues that have adversely affected your progress and need to be taken into consideration? This might include academic, personal or support issues
- (c) Compulsory upload of documentation for APR (dependent on individual Faculty requirements)

For the Independent Assessor (Model A) or Supervisor(s) (Model B) to complete:

- (a) Summary of progress made to date including the quality of submitted written work (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, Insufficient) and a text box to provide a summary of progress
- (b) Comment on the PGR's understanding of the project and literature (for example the aims and objectives of the research, background literature and current/future direction in their research field) (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, Insufficient) and a text box for comments
- (c) Do you consider the plan for completion/future research to be achievable by the PGR within the standard period of study? Yes/No and text box to provide reasons for choice
- (d) Please provide details on the status of ethical review.
- (e) Is the University's policy for 'Safeguarding Data - Storage, Backup and Encryption' being appropriately addressed?
- (f) Is progress with the agreed training plan satisfactory? YES/No. If no, please indicate the steps the PGR has been asked to take.
- (g) Are there any other comments or concerns with the PGR's progress which need to be brought to the attention of the PGRT?
- (h) Optional upload facility for any additional information

Faculty Optional Questions

Within GRAD there is a set of optional questions which can be switched 'on' or 'off' for individual Faculties.

Switching an optional question “ON” will make that question appear on the web-based form in GRAD visible for all PGRs within the Faculty and as such will be a compulsory question for completion within that Faculty.

Faculties may decide to require completion of the mandatory University level questions only. Completion of the mandatory questions is considered sufficient to complete the Annual Progress Review.

Set out below is a list of the additional questions currently available in GRAD which can be selected by Faculties on an optional basis. An indication of which optional questions have been selected by individual Faculties is given:

A	Are the PGR’s English language written and communication skills satisfactory?	Arts*, Environment, EPS, M & H
B	Is the PGR’s attendance satisfactory? This will include at supervision meetings, training events, seminars.	Arts*, Environment, EPS, M & H
C	Is written work presented to an agreed timescale?	Arts,* M & H
D	Potential Publications	FBS, Environment, EPS, M & H
E	Has the Postgraduate Researcher gained 20 points (days) of training? YES/NO. If no please indicate what plans have been put in place to meet the minimum of 20 points.	FBS
F	Please rate and comment on the PGR’s understanding of the project and literature (for example the aims and objectives of the research, background literature and current/future direction in their research field) (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, Insufficient)	FBS, M & H
G	Are all health and safety issues or risk assessments adequately covered?	EPS, M & H
H	Future Employment Plans: Has the PGR formed ideas about their career? Has the PGR taken steps, or do they intend to take steps, toward their career goal? Does the PGR need advice on fellowships etc?	FBS, Environment, EPS, M & H