



# **Postgraduate Research Code of Practice**

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Policy and Procedures on the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students**

## **Glossary of terms**

### Annual progress monitoring (APM)

Annual Progress Monitoring is the overarching process that reviews and monitors a student's progress. There are two individual components to APM which are aligned but distinct: the Independent Progress Assessment Panel and the Annual Progress Report. All students registered on research degrees are subject to a formal APM process.

### Annual progress report (APR)

The Annual Progress Report is the tool by which the University records the progress a student has made and manages their progression into the next academic year. It is an online form accessed via the student portal and incorporates comments from the student, their Supervisor and Director of PGR on their studies over the current academic session. In the APR the Supervisor and Director of PGR, taking account of completion of mandatory skills training and comments of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP), will choose a recommendation on the student's progression.

On successful completion of the APR, Student Life will re-register the student for the next academic year.

### Development Needs Analysis (DNA)

A Development Needs Analysis (DNA) is a process of regular (at least annual) discussion that allows research students and their Supervisors to review and enhance the student's skills and competencies, and to plan both for their immediate research training needs and their future needs. By helping research students and their supervisory teams to map out future needs and progress, the DNA helps ensure that students are well-prepared for likely eventualities in the research environment, and are well-equipped for later professional and career challenges. It is facilitated by the Development Needs Analysis (DNA) form which can be found on the [PGR Intranet](#).

### Faculty PGR Progress Committee

Appeals submitted by PGR students against a decision to transfer to MPhil, a decision of the Faculty to deem them withdrawn, or terminate their studies are heard by the Faculty PGR Progress Committee.

### Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP)

The IPAP is a meeting between the student and two members of UoL academic staff who are nominated to act as independent assessors. The purpose of the IPAP is to independently assess the progress of the student and determine whether or not adequate progress has been made. Prior to the IPAP the student will be asked to produce a written report (in a format defined by their School or Institute). They may also be asked to provide an oral presentation of their progress which will form part of the assessment. The student's Supervisor is not directly involved in the IPAP but may be invited to attend for part of the meeting to submit relevant and appropriate information to the Panel. In addition, an IPAP may need to meet more frequently to monitor students whose academic progress gives cause for concern (refer to section 4.3 below).

### PGR Portfolio of Activity

The PGR Portfolio of Activity is an online tool accessed through the student portal. PGR students can use the system to record their progress and development, including attendance at training and events.

### Record of Supervisory Meetings

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### Policy and Procedures on the Academic Progress of PGR Students

The Record of Supervisory Meetings is an online system in the student portal, where PGR students record details of the meetings that they have had with their supervisory team. The purpose of the Record of Supervisory Meetings system is to ensure that there is a continuous record of supervisory meetings throughout the period of registration including any modification or re-submission periods whereby targets are agreed, reviewed and signed off. A record of these meetings is recorded at the end of each academic year in the APR.

#### School/Institute PGR Progress Panel (PGRPP)

In cases of continued unsatisfactory academic progress, the student will be invited to a meeting of a School/Institute PGR Progress Panel. The purpose of the meeting is to explore with the student the reasons for the lack of satisfactory progress and to determine the academic standing of the student. The PGR School/Institute PGR Progress Panel may opt to allow the student a final opportunity to improve their progress or, to terminate their studies.

#### 'Submission Pending' Status

A PGR student may be eligible to transfer their registration to 'submission pending' when they have completed the 'active research'<sup>1</sup> element of their project and are focusing on preparation of their thesis for submission. Transfer to submission pending status provides formal recognition that a student has reached an advanced stage in their research degree studies and requires minimal access to University resources in order to finalise their thesis.

Students registered as submission pending are eligible for a reduced tuition fee rate, however, submission pending status is only granted at the discretion of the supervisor and School/ Institute Director of PGR. There is no automatic entitlement to transfer to submission pending.

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<sup>1</sup> Normally, PGR students who are engaged in one or more of the following activities are considered to be undertaking 'active research': experimental work, laboratory work, field work, archival work, or data collection.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Policy forms part of the University's Postgraduate Research (PGR) Code of Practice. In addition to the PGR Code of Practice and its other Appendices, other University of Liverpool (UoL) policies, procedures and documents which may be relevant to this Policy are as follows:
- Ordinances governing Postgraduate Research degrees listed in 1.2 below
  - PGR Handbook
  - Student Complaints Policy and Procedure
- 1.2 This Policy covers the following research programmes:
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
  - Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD)
  - Campus-based Professional Doctorates (the research element)
- 1.3 Online Professional Doctorate programmes are governed by the appropriate [Online Professional Doctorate Framework](#).
- 1.4 Where, under a joint or dual award arrangement, progress procedures differ from those set out in this Policy, this will be specified in the relevant joint or dual award agreement.
- 1.5 The value of a UoL research degree award is underpinned by the quality of the research experience provided to candidates studying on the respective degree programme. UoL is responsible for the academic quality and standards of all study within its research degree programmes, including those offered under a collaborative agreement with an institutional partner.
- 1.6 This Policy provides the framework within which postgraduate research (PGR) students (i.e. students studying for any of the research degrees listed in section 1.2 above) embark on their research programme and by which their academic progress is monitored and assessed. It also provides procedures for dealing with circumstances where students are not demonstrating satisfactory academic progress or where their engagement with their programme is not in accordance with UoL requirements. The Policy and Procedures for handling PGR student academic progress are underpinned by the University's Ordinances relating to Admission, Studies and Conduct and the Policies and Procedures made thereunder.
- 1.7 Where concerns are raised which suggest that a student's ability to meet generic fitness standards in-year as a result of ill health, consideration should be given to following the [Fitness to Study and Engage in Student Experience Policy](#) rather than these Progress Procedures.
- 1.8 Where a student is studying on a clinical programme subject to the University's Fitness to Practise Procedures, unsatisfactory progress which relates solely or primarily to professionalism or health concerns rather than academic failure or poor engagement should be considered under the [Fitness to Practise Procedures](#) rather than the Progress Procedures.
- 1.9 Students are more likely to succeed in their research programme if they engage fully with their supervisory team, supplement research with appropriate training, attend supervisory meetings as required and plan their work carefully to meet deadlines. Students are expected to take appropriate ownership and responsibility for their research project and the interactions they have with their Supervisors. Failure of students to engage appropriately could lead to termination of studies and, for international students, this will affect their right to be resident in the UK.

- 1.10 The responsibility for managing student engagement falls to the School/Institute, in consultation with the student's supervisory team.
- 1.11 Whilst what is considered to be 'satisfactory academic progress' may vary between programmes and the nature of the individual research project, nevertheless satisfactory progress will be judged taking into account specific criteria that all students are required to meet as defined within each Faculty. Students should familiarise themselves with the specific requirements as set out by their School/Institute. Due to the individual nature of progress, individual targets/ goals will normally also be agreed between the student and supervisory team and satisfactory progress will be reviewed taking these into account.

Academic judgement will be exercised by the supervisory team and the academic staff on the Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP) when considering whether a student's academic progress is deemed satisfactory. These judgements will be subject to confirmation by the School/Institute Director of PGR Studies (SDPR/IDPR).

## **2. Registration and Induction**

- 2.1 All students are required to register formally when they first arrive at the University and again at the start of each new academic session thereafter (via the Annual Progress Report (APR) – see glossary and section 4.2), including during any re-submission periods, until their final thesis has been submitted. Formal registration ensures that they are fully insured to carry out research on the University's premises or at the premises of any agreed off-site location, and provides the student with full access to research supervision and appropriate research facilities, UoL's library and computing facilities, including a University email account and to UoL's Student Support Services. As part of the registration process, students are expected to provide and update their contact details and they are subsequently expected to use their University email address. The University will only communicate with students using the addresses recorded in the student portal and/or their UoL email address.
- 2.2 Registration runs from the first day of the month and students are expected to register as soon as they arrive. Where a student arrives after the fourteenth day of the month, they may be required to wait until the following month to register<sup>2</sup>. Re-registration at the beginning of each new academic year is dependent on satisfactory academic progress confirmed at the end of the previous academic year through the APR. It is also dependent on payment of all outstanding fees.
- 2.3 At the point of registration and re-registration fees will be raised. Failure to pay fees within the required timescale may result in the student being financially suspended.
- 2.4 Schools/Institutes, and/or Departments as appropriate, provide induction programmes and when PGR students embark on their research programme they are required to attend these and any other introductory meetings provided by the University.
- 2.5 Normally no more than three months after initial registration, and in consultation with their Supervisors, all students (full and part-time) must prepare a project plan that defines the scope of the research project and outlines the objectives to be achieved in the first year. A Development Needs Analysis (DNA – see glossary above) will also be undertaken by the student. The three month plan, including the results of the DNA, should be signed and dated by the Supervisors and the student to confirm that the project aims are clear to all parties. The document should provide a brief description of how the supervision will be

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<sup>2</sup>It is to the student's advantage that they commence registration from the first day of the month in terms of their consequent required thesis submission date and also, when appropriate, for their UKVI status.

conducted including the frequency of meetings, timing of feedback on drafts and the expectations of both the Supervisors and the student. The documents should be submitted to the SDPR/IDPR. The DNA is subject to annual review as part of the APM Process. The DNA form must be updated on an ongoing basis and signed off annually.

### **3. Meetings of students and supervisors**

- 3.1 As part of the admissions process and immediately after the initial registration and induction processes, students will have discussed the definition of the research topic in detail with their Supervisor(s) (see section 2.5 above).
- 3.2 Supervision of PGR students will be in accordance with the Policy on Research Student Supervision (Appendix 2 of the PGR Code of Practice). All full-time and part-time research students are required to meet with their Liverpool-based Supervisors regularly in accordance with the Policy on Research Student Supervision sections 5(g) and 6(d). Formal meetings should be recorded in the Record of Supervisory Meetings (see glossary) section of the PGR Toolbox or its approved alternative system.
- 3.3 The purpose of the Record of Supervisory Meetings system is to ensure that there is a continuous record of the supervisory meetings throughout the period of registration and any re-submission period at which targets are agreed, reviewed and signed off. A record of these meetings is included at the end of each academic year in the APRs (see section 4.2 below). Students who fail to record supervisory meetings or skills training undertaken, on an ongoing basis, using the PGR Toolbox, or its approved alternative system, may not have their Annual Progress Report (APR - see glossary above) approved at the end of the year. This would prevent them from re-registering for the following academic year. This could lead to a termination of studies on the grounds of unsatisfactory progress.
- 3.4 All students, including those who are registered as 're-submission pending', are required to continue to use the PGR Toolbox, or its approved alternative system, to record their formal meetings during their period of registration until the award of the degree has been recommended by the Examiners. However, they are not required to submit their PGR Portfolio of Activity (see glossary) after their thesis has been submitted.
- 3.5 Students from outside the UK and Ireland studying at UoL in Liverpool under the Student visa route of the points-based immigration system are advised that, under UK immigration law, UoL acts as their immigration sponsor, and, as such, has a statutory responsibility to monitor their engagement with their research programme, which includes interactions with their Supervisor. Should any Student visa holder cease to engage continuously with their supervisory team and be subsequently deemed withdrawn, UoL would be required to report their termination of studies to the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI). Under such circumstances, the student would be required to leave the UK. Completion of the Record of Supervisory Meetings within the PGR Toolbox by international students is one of the means by which a student's engagement with their programme is monitored for immigration purposes and evidenced for UKVI Compliance Audit purposes. UoL will consider failure to engage with the Record of Supervisory Meetings as evidence that a student is not engaging appropriately with their programme and could lead to UoL's withdrawal of immigration sponsorship of the student and to termination of studies.
- 3.6 Students should raise any concerns they have about their supervision during the formal Annual Progress Monitoring Process and ensure that their concerns are recorded on the appropriate section of the APR form – see section 8 of the Policy on Research Student Supervision (Appendix 2 of the PGR Code of Practice) for further information regarding raising concerns about supervision at any other time.



#### **4. Monitoring Academic Progress**

##### *4.1 Annual Progress Monitoring (APM)*

4.1(a) All students registered on research degrees are subject to a formal APM process which includes an independent assessment of their academic progress. The purpose of the first APM is to establish whether or not a student's initial registration onto the doctoral award should be confirmed, or, if applicable, transferred to another qualification aim<sup>3</sup>. It is expected that any decision to transfer a doctoral student's registration to master's level would normally only be made following completion of the first APM process. However, exceptionally, such a decision may be made prior to that point. All registered students, including those who are 're-submission or submission pending' must undertake APM.

4.1(b) The IPAP shall comprise:

- i. Production of a written report (in the format defined by the relevant School/Institute) submitted by the student to the Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP – see glossary). The student may also be expected at their meeting with the IPAP (see ii below) to provide an oral presentation of their progress, which will form part of the assessment.
- ii. A meeting of an IPAP with the student to determine whether or not adequate progress has been made and to make an appropriate decision or recommendation. The IPAP may request a copy of the student's current Development Needs Analysis and use it to help evaluate development.

4.1(c) The IPAP should normally comprise at least two members of UoL academic staff who are not members of the student's supervisory team. No external assessor should be present. The student's Supervisors should be given the opportunity to submit any relevant information, if they wish to do so, to the IPAP prior to the meeting. If they do so, they might be invited to attend part of the meeting to speak to this item only.

4.1(d) The student should use the opportunity of the APM IPAP meeting to highlight any personal, financial, family or health-related issues which they believe have impacted on their ability to undertake research and make good progress.

4.1(e) The IPAP may make the following decision/ recommendations:

Recommendations:

- i. **That the student has made satisfactory progress and is permitted to re-register for the next academic session.**
- ii. **That the student's initial registration is transferred to MPhil<sup>4</sup> and they are permitted to re-register for the next academic session under the revised qualification aim. A [Transfer of Registration form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life). If the student is on a Student visa, they should seek advice on compliance with current regulations from [International Advice and Guidance](#).**
- iii. **That the student has not made sufficient satisfactory academic progress but is permitted a further period of time under review and their academic progress will be assessed further by the Progress Assessment Panel.**

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<sup>3</sup> This option is not available on programmes that do not include an MPhil exit award.

<sup>4</sup> This recommendation is not available on programmes that do not include an MPhil exit award.



- iv. **That the student has not made satisfactory academic progress, and that their studies be terminated<sup>5</sup>.**

Decision:

- v. **That, following an independent investigation, the student has been found guilty of serious academic malpractice (in accordance with the PGR Academic Integrity Policy – Appendix 4 of the PGR CoP). In such circumstances the IPAP may decide, depending on the gravity of the offence, to issue a formal warning, a suspension of studies or termination of studies.**

IPAPs for 're-submission pending' candidates will focus on progress made in relation to the thesis revisions requested by the Examiners, and on this basis may only select outcomes i, iii, iv or v above.

- 4.1(f) The IPAP should provide feedback on the independent assessment in the form of a jointly written report in the format specified by the SDPR/IDPR, within two weeks of the date of the assessment, to inform the decision taken by the SDPR/IDPR in the APR (see below). The report should be sent to the SDPR/IDPR who will ensure it is provided to the student and **not** normally to the Primary Supervisor. The SDPR/IDPR has the discretion to provide appropriate extracts from the report to the Supervisors. A copy of the report should be retained in the student's file by the School/Institute or Department. Final decisions of an SDPR/ IDPR to terminate studies should be confirmed in writing to the student by their Faculty and should include information regarding their right of appeal.
- 4.1(g) Students must engage with the APM process in every year of their studies. This includes undertaking the APM process on return after an interruption or suspension of studies, if the previous year's APM was missed as a result of the interruption or suspension, as well as completing the APM process for the year in which the return to studies takes place.

#### 4.2 *Annual Progress Reports (APR)*

- 4.2(a) Students are required to complete an APR (see glossary) for each year of their registration, including the final year, during any period of re-submission and during preparation of modifications, using the online system which opens for this purpose in June each year. Students whose studies are suspended or interrupted for a full year or part of a year are required to complete an APR for that year and also attend an IPAP as part of the re-registration process. The APM process has to be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> September at the latest to allow for re-registration for the next academic year. The purpose of APR is for a student's academic progress to be confirmed on an annual basis and it provides an opportunity for students to record the progress they have made. Students are encouraged to use the Portfolio of Activity in order to record their developmental progress. The APR also provides the opportunity for Supervisors to confirm any areas where the student's progress is satisfactory and highlight any areas in which the student needs to improve. The APR confirms the discussions and outcomes of the IPAP meeting and completion of the APR is a pre-requisite for students to re-register for the next academic session. Completion of the formal Record of Supervisory Meetings is a pre-requisite for a student to be able to go through the APM process. Failure to complete the APM process will prohibit re-registration for the next academic session and could lead to termination of studies under the Deemed Withdrawn Procedures (see section 4.4).
- 4.2(b) The APR will be reviewed by the student's supervisory team and signed off by the SDPR/IDPR or their nominee<sup>6</sup> in consultation with the Research Degree Administration

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<sup>5</sup> If the programme includes a formally taught and assessed pre-thesis stage (e.g Professional Doctorate) the student will also be considered by the appropriate Board of Examiners to determine their eligibility for an exit award based on their work in the pre-thesis stage.

<sup>6</sup>The nominee could be a Level 1 PGR Director

Team (Student Life). Any concerns identified in the APR should be dealt with in accordance with section 4.3 of these Procedures. Completion of the APR by the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) will result in re-registration of the student for the next academic year.

- 4.2(c) If further in-year assessment has been undertaken in accordance with Subsection 4.1(e)(iii) above, and it has been determined that the recommendation should be that the student has not made sufficient satisfactory progress and their registration should be transferred to MPhil<sup>7</sup>, it is the responsibility of the SDPR/IDPR to inform the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life). A [Transfer of Registration form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life). If the student is on a Student visa, they should seek advice on compliance with current regulations from [International Advice and Guidance](#). Re-submission pending candidates have already commenced the examination process, and therefore may not be transferred to an alternative qualification aim at this stage.

#### 4.3 *Procedure for Handling Unsatisfactory Academic Progress*

- 4.3(a) If a student, independently of their IPAP, is deemed not to be making satisfactory academic progress at any point during the academic year, the student should be formally warned of the situation, in writing, by the SDPR/IDPR. The supervisory team should not wait until the next IPAP meeting before raising the subject of a student's unsatisfactory academic progress with the SDPR/IDPR.
- 4.3(b) The written warning should set out the reasons for concern and should provide clear targets for improving performance. A realistic timescale for achieving the improvements must be set, which should not be less than two months for a full-time student. It should also identify who will be evaluating the student's efforts in achieving the improvements and how the evaluation will be undertaken. Normally, this would be through the IPAP, which may need to meet more frequently to monitor students whose academic progress gives cause for concern. The student should be informed that the letter constitutes a formal warning and that the consequences of either not responding or not meeting the required targets may lead to termination of studies.
- 4.3(c) Where a student responds and demonstrates improvement within the required timescales, the Chair of the relevant IPAP will ensure that this is confirmed in writing to the student, either by letter, in the report following a meeting of the IPAP or via the APR. Under these circumstances, any further concerns about a student's academic progress would be re-commenced at 4.3(a).
- 4.3(d) Where a student does not respond to the written warning or does not satisfactorily meet the targets set or otherwise gives continued cause for concern, the student will be invited to a meeting of a School/Institute PGR Progress Panel (PGRPP - see glossary). The membership of this School/Institute PGRPP will include the SDPR/IDPR or their representative, who will act as Chair, and two other members of the academic staff of the School/Institute who are not members of the student's supervisory team. The PGRPP should have a minimum membership of three. The student's Primary Supervisor will also be asked to attend the meeting, but they will not be a member of the Panel.
- 4.3(e) Where a School/Institute PGRPP has been convened to interview a student under 4.3(d) of these procedures, the School/Institute Manager should provide a member of Professional Services staff to act as Secretary to the Panel. The Secretary is responsible for setting up the meeting, drafting correspondence with all parties, ensuring that all parties are provided with all relevant documentation in good time and producing minutes of the meeting.

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<sup>7</sup> This option is not available on programmes that do not include an MPhil exit award.

4.3(f) The student should be provided with at least ten working days' notice of the meeting (sent to their University email address and to their home and study addresses recorded on the student record system) and is entitled to be accompanied by a friend/supporter/Guild representative. This could be another student, a member of academic staff or a representative from the Guild. Students cannot be legally represented at a hearing, but may choose to seek legal advice in making their submission. All relevant documentation should be made available by the Secretary to all relevant parties at least two working days prior to the meeting. Under normal circumstances, it is not permitted for papers to be tabled at the meeting. Relevant documentation would include any previous warning letters, copies of APRs and reports from previous IPAP meetings. The student should be invited to make a written statement setting out the reasons for continued unsatisfactory progress or failure to respond to the previous warning(s) and this should be sent to the Secretary at least two working days before the meeting.

4.3(g) The purpose of the meeting is to explore with the student the reasons for the lack of satisfactory progress and to determine the academic standing of the student. Consideration should be given to any reason provided by the student for the lack of satisfactory progress. Students are advised that they should provide any information about circumstances which they feel may have impacted on their ability to make satisfactory academic progress or engage adequately with University procedures. Any claim for these circumstances to be considered must be supported by independent documentary evidence e.g. medical certification. Students should be made aware that a claim cannot be delayed, nor can evidence relating to it be delayed, on the grounds of sensitive personal, family or cultural reasons.

Students should be aware that if they do not attend the meeting then a decision will be made in their absence. Students should also be aware that if they interrupted or suspended studies before a PGRPP is held then they will be required to attend a meeting of the PGRPP on their return to study.

4.3(h) The possible outcomes of this meeting are:

- (i) That the student is permitted to continue on the research programme with a final opportunity to improve their performance.**
- (ii) That the student should be deemed not to have made satisfactory academic progress and their studies be terminated with immediate effect.**

In the case of the decision set out in 4.3(h)(i) above, the School/Institute PGRPP, in consultation with the supervisory team, will provide a set of agreed targets and revised timescales and is responsible for monitoring the student's performance against these targets. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to the PGRPP to confirm the decision in writing to the student, to include any warnings issued by the PGRPP and to warn them that the consequences of not meeting the targets set within the timescales may be termination of studies. This communication shall normally be sent to the student's University email address and to their home and study addresses recorded on the student record system.

In the case of the decision set out in 4.3(h)(ii), the Secretary will inform the Faculty Heads of Education and Student Experience (or nominee) of the decision, who will write to the student to confirm the decision of the PGRPP and provide information on their right of appeal. The student will be notified of the decision by the Faculty within ten working days of the decision having been made.

4.3(i) Where a student fails to meet the targets set by the School/Institute PGRPP within the timescales, a further meeting of the School/Institute PGRPP should be convened in accordance with the provisions of 4.3(d) above.

4.4 *Termination of Studies on the grounds of non-engagement (Deemed Withdrawn)*

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- 4.4(a) The University will deem a postgraduate research student to have withdrawn from studies under certain circumstances and when the appropriate procedures have been followed. ***This means that the student's studies have been terminated.*** The procedures below are designed to resolve the registration status of students who fall into the following situations:
- (i) Failure to return to studies as expected following a period of interruption or suspension of studies;
  - (ii) Failure to attend as expected or failure to be in contact with the University (via Supervisor or other staff as appropriate) for a period of one month or more;
  - (iii) Non-submission of their APR by the annual published deadline, i.e. 30<sup>th</sup> September in any year;
  - (iv) Failure to engage with and/or attend their IPAP;
  - (v) Non-submission and non-resubmission of thesis by the last permitted submission date (as recorded on the student record system);
  - (vi) Non-completion of modifications required by Examiners following the *viva* examination within the specified period of time;
  - (vii) Failure to complete all mandatory skills training within the deadlines communicated by the University.
- 4.4(b) Where there has been insufficient engagement by a student as outlined in subsections 4.4(a) (i), 4.4(a) (iii) or 4.4(a) (v) above, the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) will determine whether the candidate is to be deemed withdrawn. The Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) will consult the supervisory team, PGR Administrators and the S/IDPGR. Where the candidate is to be deemed withdrawn, the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) will write to the student informing them that their studies are terminated. The letter should include the reasons for the decision to terminate their studies. This communication shall normally be sent to all of the email addresses that the University has listed for the student and a copy of this letter should be sent to the Supervisors, PGR Administrators and the S/IDPGR. The letter will also inform the candidate that they may request reinstatement of their registration status (see section 5 below).
- 4.4(c) Where there has been no engagement by a student as outlined in subsections 4.4(a) (ii), 4.4(a) (iv), 4.4(a) (vi) or 4.4(a) (vii) above, in the first instance Professional Services staff in the School/ Institute, following consultation with the supervisor, should try to contact the student using all of the email addresses that the University has listed for the student and their term-time and home addresses recorded in the student record system. This communication should indicate to the student that they are required to contact UoL and/or complete their outstanding mandatory training (if applicable) within ten working days and should provide the contact details of the person with whom contact should be made. If there is reason to believe the student is not able to respond within this timescale with good reason, then this may be extended to twenty working days.
- 4.4(d) If the student does not respond within the timescale set out in subsection 4.4(c), a formal letter should be issued by the SDPR/IDPR (with support of School/Institute Professional Services staff) indicating that this is the final attempt at making contact, that the student is required to respond and, if applicable, complete their outstanding mandatory training within ten working days and that, if no response is received, the decision will be taken by the SDPR/IDPR to deem the student withdrawn. A copy of this warning letter should be sent to the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) and to the Faculty Support Office.
- 4.4(e) Should there be no contact or action from the student in accordance with subsection 4.4(d) or if any reasons presented by the student for the previous failure to engage are not deemed to be satisfactory by the SDPR/IDPR, they will ask the nominated staff in the Faculty to write to the student informing them that the decision of the SDPR/IDPR is that their studies are terminated. The letter should include the reasons for the decision and the

circumstances leading up to the termination. This communication shall normally be sent to the student's University email address and to their home and study addresses recorded on the student record system. The letter will also include information about the student's right to appeal. Specific contact details in the Faculty for students who wish to exercise their right of appeal should be provided.

- 4.4(f) For students registered on off-site or split site research degrees, the off-site Supervisor is responsible for monitoring students' expected engagement. Where a student does not engage as required, the off-site Supervisor should, in the first instance, try to make contact with the student. Should there be no response, they should contact the appropriate Professional Services staff in the School/ Institute at Liverpool, who will take steps as outlined in 4.4(c) to 4.4(e) above.
- 4.4(g) For students registered on a joint or dual research degree offered in partnership with one or more of UoL's collaborative partner institutions, and when resident at Liverpool, the responsibility for monitoring and contacting the student should they not engage as required will be in accordance with subsections 4.4(b) to 4.4(e). It is the responsibility of the partner institution, when the student is resident at their institution, to monitor engagement and, where there is cause for concern, staff of equivalent role and function as UoL's SDPR/IDPR should carry out the responsibilities in accordance with the procedures set out in subsection 4.4(f) above. The member of staff at the partner institution should also keep the UoL SDPR/IDPR informed.

## **5. Reinstatement Procedures**

Requests for reinstatement, following actions outlined in this policy in sections 4.4(a)(i), 4.4(a)(iii) and 4.4(a)(v), will be considered on a case by case basis by the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET). If re-instated, candidates will not be eligible to receive additional time for any time lost due to non-engagement.

## **6. Appeal Procedures**

Where a student is eligible submit an appeal to the Faculty PGR Progress Committee (see glossary) but chooses not to do so, the University will consider that the student has accepted the outcome of the decisions taken in accordance with section 4 above and that the matter is closed. Students who are deemed withdrawn by the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) as outlined in sections 4.4(a) (i), 4.4(a) (iii) or 4.4(a) (v) of this policy are **not** eligible to appeal the University's decision to deem them withdrawn (see section 5 above).

- 6.1 Students have a right to appeal against the following decisions made by the School/Institute PGRPP or by the SDPR/IDPR:
- (i) To transfer their registration to MPhil<sup>8</sup>,
  - (ii) To terminate studies on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic performance,
  - (iii) To deem them withdrawn (termination of studies) on the grounds that they have failed to engage adequately with University procedures (see sections 4.4(a) (ii), 4.4(a) (iv), 4.4 (a) (vi) and 4.4(a) (vii) of this policy). Students who are deemed withdrawn by the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) as outlined in sections 4.4(a) (i),

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<sup>8</sup> Students enrolled on programmes that do not include an MPhil exit award are ineligible to be transferred to this qualification aim and are therefore unable appeal on these grounds.



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4.4(a) (iii) or 4.4(a) (v) of this policy are **not** eligible to appeal the University's decision to deem them withdrawn (see section 5 above).

For details of the grounds of appeal see section 6.2 below. Appeals regarding decisions of academic malpractice should be made in accordance with the Research Degree Appeals Procedure (Appendix 10 of the PGR CoP).

- 6.2 The grounds on which a student may submit an appeal are:
- (i) That the student's case has not been considered fairly as a result of some material procedural irregularity;
  - (ii) That performance/engagement was adversely affected by illness or other significant factors which, for valid reasons, the student was unable to divulge before the decision by the School/Institute PGRPP or SDPR/IDPR was taken. In this instance, 'good reason' does not include the previous withholding of information for any sensitive, personal, family or cultural reasons.
- 6.3 Students may **not** appeal on any grounds which have already been considered by a School/Institute PGRPP or SDPR/IDPR, or which challenge academic judgement, or which have been considered and not upheld under any other procedure (e.g. the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure).
- 6.4 Students may not appeal on the grounds of inadequate or poor supervision. Complaints about supervision should be raised using the [Student Complaints Policy and Procedure](#).
- 6.5 Appeals submitted against the decisions listed above in section 6.1 will be considered by the Faculty PGR Progress Committee.
- 6.5(a) The membership of the Committee shall include the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor (or their nominee who shall normally be the Faculty PGR Director) and no more than three other members of the academic staff who should include at least one SDPR/IDPR from a different School/Institute. Where appropriate or necessary, these members of staff may be drawn from outside of the Faculty concerned. Neither the SDPR/IDPR whose decision is being appealed, nor any member of the School/Institute PGRPP may be a member of the Faculty PGR Progress Committee.
- 6.5(b) A Faculty PGR Progress Committee cannot take a course of action which is not permitted by the University's Ordinances and Regulations. It may, in exceptional circumstances, recommend such a course of action for consideration and approval by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact or their nominee, on behalf of Senate, notwithstanding the Ordinances and Regulations or the PGR Code of Practice.
- 6.6 Misconduct on the part of a student is not a matter for a Faculty PGR Progress Committee to consider. Instances of alleged misconduct must be handled in accordance with UoL's [Student Conduct Policy](#), a copy of which is obtainable from Student Life.
- 6.7 The Faculty PGR Progress Committee does not have the authority to require a student to interrupt studies for health or other personal reasons. Advice on any such exceptional cases should be sought from the Head of Student Services or the Director of Student Life.
- 6.8 The Secretary to the Faculty PGR Progress Committee will normally be a member of the Faculty.
- 6.9 The relevant SDPR/IDPR will be invited to attend the Faculty Progress Committee hearing in order to provide information on the background to the student's case, details of the decisions taken by the School/Institute PGRPP and the reasons for the decisions taken.

- 6.10 Students must submit any appeal within ten working days of receiving the formal outcome letter of the decision to terminate studies or transfer to another degree. In the first instance, the student shall submit a pro-forma which clearly indicates the grounds on which they wish to appeal. The student is required to provide with this pro-forma any documentation or evidence in support of their appeal. Exceptionally, where evidence cannot be provided with the pro-forma but the student expects to be able to provide such evidence in due course, the student can indicate what evidence is to follow and the expected deadline by which it can be provided (this will normally be within one calendar month, except where explicit approval is given by the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee for later submission). Where the student indicates that evidence is to follow, consideration of the case for the appeal to be heard will be deferred until it is received. Where the evidence is not provided by the student by the agreed deadline, consideration of the case for the appeal to be heard will then proceed in the absence of the additional evidence and the student will not normally be permitted any further opportunity to submit additional evidence in support of the appeal or any escalation to later stages of the appeal procedure.
- 6.11 Upon receipt of a pro-forma, the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee will acknowledge it normally within two working days and, where the student has indicated that further evidence is to follow, this acknowledgement will include a deadline by which the further submission must be made. Where a student is permitted to make such a further submission, the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee will acknowledge its submission, normally within two working days.
- 6.12 Following receipt of a pro-forma and any exceptionally permitted later evidence, the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee, in consultation with an academic member of the approved membership of the Faculty Progress Committee, shall make any enquiries into the circumstances of the appeal, as required. These enquiries may include consulting documentation from the processes leading the decision to terminate or transfer studies and may include (but are not limited to) the Ordinance and Regulations for the student's programme, information provided to students about relevant procedures (e.g. Extenuating Circumstances Procedure), any previous warnings or guidance issued to the student and notes or minutes from interviews with the student, progress review meetings or Progress Panels. Such enquiries shall be restricted to establishing matters of fact only, in order to establish whether there is a case for the appeal to be considered further. This initial stage of review shall normally be completed within five working days.
- 6.13 The Secretary and member of the Faculty Progress Committee are entitled to conclude:
- (i) that there is no valid case for the appeal to be considered further (see 6.14 below);
  - (ii) that there is a clear case of some material irregularity or administrative error which should be referred to the Chair of the Faculty Progress Committee (see 6.15 below);
  - (iii) that consideration of any case for the appeal to be considered further should be deferred pending referral to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure;
  - (iv) that there is a case for the appeal to be heard by the Faculty Progress Committee (see 6.16 below).
- 6.14 The Secretary and member of the Faculty Progress Committee may conclude that there is no valid case for the appeal to be considered further where:
- (i) the student has failed to submit their appeal under one or more of the valid grounds for appeal, including failure to cite any of the grounds or citing issues which are not accepted as grounds for appeal (see 6.2 and 6.3 above);



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- (ii) there is insufficient evidence provided by the student to support their grounds for appeal (including failure to submit additional evidence by any permitted extended deadline);
  - (iii) the evidence submitted is not relevant to the grounds for appeal (e.g. does not cover the time period concerned) or there are valid reasons to consider that the evidence provided has been falsified;
  - (iv) there is no good reason why the student could not have submitted an Extenuating Circumstances claim prior to a decision by an IPAP or School/Institute PGRPP.
- 6.15 The Secretary and member of the Faculty Progress Committee may conclude that there is a clear case of some material irregularity or administrative error which should be referred to the Chair of the Faculty Progress Committee if they consider that there is strong evidence to suggest that a Faculty Progress Committee would uphold the appeal. The Chair of the Faculty Progress Committee shall then decide whether to take Chair's Action (with or without consultation with other members of the Faculty Progress Committee) to uphold the appeal without the need for a hearing or to convene a hearing of the Faculty Progress Committee to which the student shall be invited.
- 6.16 The Secretary and member of the Faculty Progress Committee may conclude that the student has cited in their appeal submission an issue or concern which cannot be addressed directly by the Faculty Progress Committee but which falls either under Section 1 of the Research Degree Appeals Procedure (PGR Code of Practice Appendix 10) or which requires investigation as a complaint under the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure. In such cases, the Secretary and member of the Faculty Progress Committee may conclude that the progress appeal should be put on hold pending completion of the other procedure. Should an assessment appeal or a complaint be partially or fully upheld, appropriate redress should be taken under those procedures and only if these do not include a reversal of the decision to terminate or transfer a student's studies should consideration of the progress appeal then proceed.
- 6.17 Where a valid case for hearing an appeal has been established, a meeting of the Faculty PGR Progress Committee will be convened as soon as possible and normally no longer than thirty working days after receipt of the student's appeal, unless there are exceptional reasons for a longer period, in which case the student should be informed.
- 6.18 Students will be invited to the meeting of the Faculty PGR Progress Committee and will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend/supporter/Guild representative. The student may also wish to consult with a pastoral member of staff. Students are **not** permitted to bring legal representation to the meeting. However, students are entitled to seek legal advice at their own expense and their statements can be compiled on their behalf by persons legally qualified.
- 6.19 The student must be provided with a minimum of ten working days' notice of the date of the meeting. This communication shall normally be sent to the student's University email address and to their home and study addresses recorded on the student record system.
- 6.20 All members of the Committee, the School/Institute representative and the student should receive all papers presented at least two working days before the appeal hearing. Tabled papers will not be accepted under normal circumstances.
- 6.21 The Faculty PGR Progress Committee will determine whether or not the student has grounds for appeal and, if grounds are found, whether or not the circumstances had a material effect on the decision made by the School/Institute. Students should be aware that if they do not attend the meeting then a decision will be made in their absence. The possible outcomes of the meeting of the Faculty PGR Progress Committee are:

6.21(a) Where the appeal is heard under section 6.1 (i) above<sup>9</sup>:

- (i) **To reject the appeal, in which case the decision of the School/Institute PGRPP or SDPR/IDPR stands.**
- (ii) **To uphold the appeal, in which case any conditions for the student to remain on the programme will be determined by the Faculty PGR Progress Committee.**

6.21(b) Where the appeal is heard under section 6.1 (ii) and (iii) above:

- (i) **To reject the appeal, in which case the decision of the School/Institute PGRPP or SDPR/IDPR stands.**
- (ii) **To uphold the appeal, in which case any conditions for the student to continue on their studies will be determined by the Faculty PGR Progress Committee, with any appropriate follow up actions and monitoring at Departmental/School/Institute level.<sup>10</sup>**

6.22 The decision of the Faculty PGR Progress Committee will be formally communicated to the student in writing by the Secretary within ten working days after the meeting. This communication should also include information about the student's further right of appeal and shall normally be sent to the student's University email address and to their home and study addresses recorded on the student record system.

6.23 Where a decision to allow a student to continue their studies can only be made subject to exceptional approval on behalf of the Senate of special arrangements outside of the normal Ordinance for the programme or the PGR Code of Practice (e.g. if the student would require an extension to the normal maximum period of registration for the programme), the student should be informed that any decision by the Faculty Progress Committee is provisional on such approval being given and that this is not guaranteed.

6.24 In the event that the student's appeal is upheld and the student has submitted evidence of ill health, disability or other personal circumstances not previously disclosed to their School/Institute, then, unless the student explicitly requests otherwise, after the hearing that evidence will normally be provided by the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee to the relevant School/Institute in confidence, to be held on the student's file. Where the student is studying on a programme covered by the University's Fitness to Practise Procedures such evidence will need to be provided to the student's School regardless of whether or not the student gives permission. Where the student has disclosed a condition which may constitute a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and has not previously discussed this with the University's Disability Advice and Guidance Team, the Secretary, in informing the student of the decision of the Faculty Progress Committee, shall remind the student that they should contact the Disability Advice and Guidance Team if they consider that they require additional support or reasonable adjustments to be made to their programme in order to be able to progress successfully.

#### *Further Appeal Procedures*

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<sup>9</sup> Students enrolled on programmes that do not include an MPhil exit award are ineligible to be transferred to this qualification aim and are therefore unable appeal on these grounds.

<sup>10</sup>Following an upheld appeal at the Faculty PGR Committee, where a student does not subsequently meet the requirements of the follow-up actions, an IPAP may recommend to the Faculty PGR Director (or in cases of conflict of interest the Postgraduate Research Experience Team) that their studies be terminated on the grounds of unsatisfactory progress. In such cases the student will have a right of appeal against any such decision to the Faculty PGR Committee in accordance with section 5 of this Policy.

- 6.25 Where a decision has been taken under 6.14 above that the student has not established a valid case for an appeal to be heard by the Faculty Progress Committee, the student may request a review of this decision within ten working days of the date of the letter giving the written decision and shall be informed of this right in that letter. Any such appeal must be submitted in writing to the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team (email [appeals@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liverpool.ac.uk)) and must include a clear statement of the reasons why the student considers that the decision is unreasonable. A member of the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team will consider the student's request and respond normally within ten working days of its receipt. New evidence will not normally be accepted in support of the appeal except where it is established that there is good reason why the student could not have provided this evidence with their original appeal submission or by any extended deadline which was given to them by the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee. Where a member of the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team determines that there is a valid case for the appeal to be heard, this will be referred back to the Secretary to the Faculty Progress Committee who will then proceed in accordance with 6.15 or 6.16 above as appropriate. Where a member of the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team determines that there is no valid case for the appeal to be heard, the student shall be informed of this decision in writing and a Completion of Procedures letter shall be provided by the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team.
- 6.26 Where the Faculty PGR Progress Committee considers and subsequently rejects an appeal, the student may submit an appeal to the Senate Progress Committee against that decision (or against a decision taken by Chair's Action on behalf of the Faculty Progress Committee). In normal circumstances such an appeal will only be accepted for consideration if evidence is submitted that, at the Faculty PGR Progress Committee, the student concerned did not have a fair hearing as a consequence of some procedural irregularity or that the decision taken by the Faculty Progress Committee (or Chair) was unreasonable.
- 6.27 Where a student does not submit a further appeal to the Secretary to the Senate Progress Committee, the University will consider that the student has accepted the outcome of the appeal to the Faculty PGR Progress Committee and that the appeal is closed.
- 6.28 Any appeal to the Senate Progress Committee should be received by the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team (email [appeals@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liverpool.ac.uk)), within ten working days of the receipt of the written decision of a Faculty Progress Committee. On receipt of any appeal, the Secretary of the Senate Progress Committee will decide, in consultation with the Director of Student Life, whether or not the student has provided a valid case for the appeal to be heard by the Senate Progress Committee, including whether or not the student has provided good reason why it could not have been submitted at the original hearing. The outcome of this initial consideration will be communicated to the student in writing by the Secretary of the Senate Progress Committee normally within fifteen working days of receipt of the appeal. This consideration, the decision reached and reasons should be formally noted. In circumstances where the student has presented new information as part of their appeal to the Senate Progress Committee, which could not for good reason have been presented to the Faculty Progress Committee previously, the Secretary, in consultation with the Director of Student Life, may refer the matter to the Chair of the relevant Faculty Progress Committee, as a request for a re-hearing by the Faculty Progress Committee. If it is decided that there is valid evidence of a material procedural irregularity or unreasonableness in the way the student's appeal was handled by the Faculty Progress Committee, a meeting of the Senate Progress Committee will be convened unless the Chair of the Senate Progress Committee chooses to take Chair's Action to uphold the appeal without the need for a hearing. Where a decision is taken that there are no valid grounds for the appeal to be heard or for it to be handled by Chair's Action, the student will be deemed to have completed the internal procedures of the University in relation to their

progress appeal and will be issued, within ten working days, with a Completion of Procedures letter by the Secretary to the Senate Progress Committee.

- 6.29 If it is decided that there is valid evidence of a material procedural irregularity or unreasonableness in the way the student's appeal was handled by the Faculty Progress Committee, a meeting of the Senate Progress Committee will be convened unless the Chair of the Senate Progress Committee chooses to take Chair's Action to uphold the appeal without the need for a hearing. Where a decision is taken that there are no valid grounds for the appeal to be heard or that it should be handled by Chair's Action, there is no further right of appeal available to the student and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued.

## **7 Completion of Procedures**

- 7.1 This Guide sets out the University's internal procedures for handling a progress appeal. A student who completes the procedure (which must include completion of any permitted right of appeal or further review) will automatically be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter setting out their right to request a review of their case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of this internal procedure.
- 7.2 A Completion of Procedures letter will not be automatically issued where an appeal is upheld or where a student does not exercise any permitted right of appeal or further review, but the student is entitled to request one from the Secretary to the appropriate Progress Committee.

## **8 Retention of Records**

All records of cases considered by a Faculty Progress Committee or the Senate Progress Committee shall be retained for a period of six years and shall be held in accordance with the [University's Data Protection Policy](#).

### **Contact details**

Telephone 0151 795 5651; Email [appeals@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liverpool.ac.uk)

## **9 Sources of information**

- [The PGR Code of Practice](#)
- [Research Degree Administration Team \(Student Life\)](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Guild of Students Advice Service](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Study and Engage in Student Experience Policy](#)