

Research Degrees: Guidance notes series

6. Annual Monitoring

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MONITORING

1. The progress of students is formally reviewed twice a year. An independent review is conducted in the autumn term by an independent assessor, an experienced supervisor who is not part of the supervisory team. A progression review is conducted in the spring term by the Director of Studies.
2. Students must take part in both reviews. Failing to do so may jeopardise their registration.

General principles

3. The main reason for monitoring progress in these two ways is to ensure that all students receive accurate, timely and constructive feedback about their progress at regular intervals. Southampton Solent University's processes are designed to ensure that there are regular opportunities for precise, detailed and informative feedback and these opportunities are systematically embedded into the University's routines and procedures.
4. The Director of Studies must regularly monitor the work carried out by their research degree students and provide feedback on the quality of the work. In addition, they formally monitor progression annually in the spring during the progression review meeting. The aim of the progression review is to confirm whether students are actively engaging with their programme of training and research. The progression review forms the basis of a student's progression to the next year of their research studies, which is discussed at RDC in June.
5. The independent review allows an experienced researcher, who is not part of the supervisory team, to give an independent opinion on the research progress. Furthermore, the use of a face-to-face meeting between the student and the independent assessor will encourage discussion and feedback, thus offering the student a further opportunity for developmental learning. Issues arising from the independent reviews are escalated to the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator and raised at RDC where appropriate.
6. These reviews are mandatory and each meeting should produce a joint report agreed by the student and their supervisor or independent assessor. These reports will then be scrutinised by the relevant Hub Scrutiny Panel.

Overall processes

7. The annual monitoring is conducted through the following two processes:

Independent review

- a. In **October**, each student is assigned an independent assessor by the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator.
- b. Graduate Studies email students with the Independent Review form and details of their independent assessor.
- c. Students arrange a meeting with their independent assessor to discuss the review.
- d. Students and independent assessors meet to discuss the student's progress and complete the review form.
- e. Students return the completed forms, signed by all parties, to Graduate Studies by the given deadline.
- f. The forms are reviewed by the Hub Scrutiny Panel. Areas for concern raised through the forms are discussed at the **January** RDC meeting.

Progression review

- a. In **February/March**, Graduate Studies email students and Director of Studies with the progression review form.
- b. Students complete Part A of the form.
- c. Students set up a meeting with their Director of Studies to discuss progression.
- d. Students and Director of Studies meet and discuss their progression. The Director of Studies, in consultation with the student, completes Part B of the form and whether progression is recommended to the next academic year.
- e. Students return the completed forms, signed by all parties, to Graduate Studies by the given deadline.
- f. If concerns are raised over progress, the Director of Studies may not recommend progression. In this case the Director of Studies will recommend to the Hub Scrutiny Panel that the student should be put on a three month probationary period, and agree a programme of remedial action with the student to follow over the next three months.
- g. Completed forms, duly signed are returned to Graduate Studies.
- h. The forms are reviewed by the Hub Scrutiny Panel and a recommendation is made to RDC as to whether the student should be progressed to the next academic year.

- i. Where concerns have been raised over progression, the Hub Scrutiny Panel will discuss the three month probationary period and remedial plan of action, and make a recommendation to RDC.
- j. Progression of each student is discussed at the **June** RDC meeting.
- k. The progression of students on an agreed three month probationary period are discussed and determined at the **September** RDC meeting.

The independent review

- 8. The independent review must be completed by all students with the exception of the following; new (commenced registration in October), withdrawn, suspended, submitted their thesis (pending viva within the period of the review), completed their viva or awarded.
- 9. The independent review form should be completed jointly by the student and independent assessor at the independent review meeting, and any additional concerns highlighted, discussed and recorded on the form.
- 10. The form should then be returned to Graduate Studies.
- 11. The independent review forms are collated by Graduate Studies and distributed to the Hub Scrutiny Panel. The panel receives and discusses all the forms. Any areas of concerns raised are discussed at the January RDC meeting.

The progression review

- 12. The progression review form must be completed by all students with the exception of the following; suspended, withdrawn, submitted their thesis, completed their viva or awarded.
- 13. The student should complete Part A of the form, providing full answers to all questions. This form should be sent to the Director of Studies in advance of the meeting to allow time to review the contents prior to the discussion.
- 14. The Director of Studies, in consultation with the student at the meeting, should complete Part B of the form. The student should sign at the end of Part A and Part B. The Director of Studies should sign at the end of Part B.
- 15. The form should then be returned to Graduate Studies.
- 16. Progression review forms are collated by Graduate Studies and distributed to the Hub Scrutiny Panel. The panel receives and discusses all of the forms, and prepares a list of recommendations for RDC. Part C of the annual monitoring form asks the panel collectively to:
 - a) Recommend renewal of registration for the forthcoming academic year, OR
 - b) Recommend that registration not be renewed, but that the student be put on probation for a period of three months. The student must complete the agreed programme of work/action plan. Recommendation for progression will then be made to RDC in September.
- 17. RDC formally endorses the Hub scrutiny recommendations where they are clear and unambiguous. No student can be put on probation without full discussion at RDC.

Recommendation not to renew registration

- 18. A recommendation not to renew a student's registration and to put a student on probation should be made where there are serious concerns about progress and where there is, in the opinion of the review panel, a significant probability that the student will not be able to complete successfully within the time allowed.
- 19. If RDC accepts this recommendation, the student should be informed in writing that RDC shares the panel's concerns about their progress. The student must be offered the opportunity to address these concerns by completing a clearly defined programme of work, designed to remedy deficiencies in his or her own progress. They must also be informed informally and also in writing, that failure to complete such a programme successfully may lead to termination of their registration as a research student.
- 20. The remedial programme should be agreed between the student, the Director of Studies and the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator. The Director of Studies will notify the student in writing of the agreed programme of work. The student must be given three months from the date of the written notification in which to complete the programme, and should be required to meet at least once a month with their supervisory team throughout this period, to receive guidance and constructive feedback.

21. If, at the end of this period, the student has successfully completed the programme of work, the review panel should recommend to RDC that the student's registration should be renewed. If, in their opinion, the student has failed to remedy the specified concerns, the panel should recommend either that registration be terminated, or that the student be re-registered for MPhil, whichever is most appropriate.
22. Where RDC is minded to accept a recommendation to terminate registration or to re-register the student for MPhil, the student may make a formal appeal to the Head of Student Achievement, in Academic Services to request reconsideration of the decision via the appropriate appeals procedure which can be found in the University's Academic Handbook (Policy 2R).