

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER HIGHER DEGREE REGULATIONS 2022 - 2023

Appendix 4: Research Degree Candidature: Procedures for Circumstances that may lead to Withdrawal or Termination

Concerns about unsatisfactory progress would normally be raised by the supervisory team. However, concerns may also be raised by the Research Degree Coordinator, the Head of Department/Institute or the Research Office on the basis of, for example, documentation relating to student progress.

The general principle is that issues relating to unsatisfactory progress are resolved at the local level usually with the involvement of the relevant Research Degree Coordinator and without recourse to the formal process. Nevertheless, if progress is unsatisfactory and if, after due warning, there is insufficient improvement, the Research Degrees Group (RDG) may recommend termination of candidature.

It is the responsibility of the student to inform the Research Office of any circumstances (personal or otherwise) that would prevent them from meeting any deadlines or any compulsory processes at the earliest possible opportunity (i.e. as soon as they are known) and therefore avoid recourse to retrospectively applying for intermissions or extensions).

Recommendations for termination may be made at formal progress reviews (annual, upgrade/ transfer etc.) or at any time during a student's candidature.

The following procedures cover recommendations for:

- 1 Termination due to significant academic concerns (outside of Research Approval, Annual Review, and Major Review)
- 2 Termination as a result of failure to complete a Formal Progression Point or Administrative Milestone in a timely manner
- 3 Termination (deemed withdrawn) due to lack of contact
- 4 Termination as a result of failure to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature or by the deadline set by examiners

These are not meant to be exhaustive. Guidance in other circumstances may be sought from the Research Office.

1 Termination due to significant academic concerns (outside of Research Approval, Annual Review, and Major Review)

- 1.1 It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to inform the doctoral student of unsatisfactory progress as soon as this becomes apparent (see [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#)).
- 1.2 The procedure followed should be as outlined by the steps shown in the flow chart (see Figure 1 below).
- 1.3 The procedures outlined in this section refer to situations where the student's progress gives significant cause for concern, to the extent that there are well-founded and demonstrable reasons

to doubt the eventual submission of the doctoral thesis within the maximum period of candidature remaining.

- 1.4 More minor concerns are not part of this procedure and should be handled as part of the normal supervision process.
- 1.5 If discussion between the doctoral student and appropriate members of the supervisory team fails to resolve the concerns, the matter should be referred to the area Research Degree Coordinator. If the relevant Research Degree Coordinator agrees that there is a significant concern, they should bring this to the attention of the Chair of RDG who will nominate a Research Degree Coordinator from an unrelated research area to be the *independent assessor*.
- 1.6 *The independent assessor* should then verify that there has indeed been a significant lack of progress (see [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#)). If so, *the independent assessor* should establish, as far as possible at this early stage, whether any of the following has significantly affected the student's progress:
 - lack of (or lack of reasonable access to) appropriate facilities or equipment to carry out the research project;
 - circumstances not previously taken into account (including, but not exclusively, illness);
 - a poor or problematic supervisory relationship with one or more members of the supervisory team.

To ascertain if any (or potentially all) of the above has/have led to a significant lack of progress, *the independent assessor* should seek separate evidence from:

- the student;
 - the supervisory team.
- 1.7 The evidence may also take the form of existing written supervisory records on file, as well as new evidence submitted. If there have been difficult personal circumstances or illness not yet documented, it is the responsibility of the student to provide this written evidence (for example, a medical certificate). Failure to provide new written evidence at this stage to *the independent assessor* may be taken into account at any later appeal.
 - 1.8 The evaluation of this evidence by *the independent assessor* should be completed within 10 working days following receipt of the evidence.
 - 1.9 If significant concerns about supervision arise as part of the evidence collection the *independent assessor* must in the first instance discuss these with the relevant Head of Academic Department.
 - 1.10 If the perception is that progress has been significantly hampered by a lack of (or lack of reasonable access to) facilities and/or equipment, then the independent assessor must discuss this with the relevant Head of Academic Department/Institute Director, the relevant budget holder and the supervisory team. These discussions should refer to agreements and requirements described in the original Form 1 (Application to Register for a Research Degree) and 'Additional Information' form and consideration as to whether or not the existing facilities and/or equipment continue to meet those requirements or whether enhancements to equipment and/or facilities might reasonably be made.
 - 1.11 As a result of reviewing the information and evidence at his/her disposal, the *independent assessor* may consider that the issues identified in connection with progress are not of sufficient seriousness to invoke the full termination procedures. For example, *the independent assessor* may consider that attendance at suitable training and/or a change to the supervisory team may help the student

to resume satisfactory progress. The *independent assessor* will subsequently make an appropriate recommendation to the Head of Academic Department or line manager. In these circumstances, and if it is appropriate for the student to continue, an action plan (with targets and timescales) should be agreed in order to support the student in moving forward. The action plan should be regularly reviewed by the supervisory team and *the independent assessor*, with actions taken and amendments made to the plan as required. To ensure transparency the Research Degrees Group shall receive notification of the outcome of any *independent assessor* review.

- 1.12 Where *the independent assessor* establishes that the lack of progression is sufficiently serious to instigate the termination process after having given due consideration to any reasonable circumstance not previously taken into account that had significantly hampered the progression, a review panel will be formed by the Chair of RDG (see 1.14 to 1.22).
- 1.13 Disputes relating to line management or budgetary issues that cannot be resolved by *the independent assessor* may be referred to the Head of Academic Department or line manager of the Head of Academic Department if the Head of Academic Department is a member of the supervisory team. If it is still not possible to resolve such matters then they will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor.
- 1.14 Membership of the review panel meeting with the student is set out below:
- the supervisory team
 - a member nominated by the Chair of the RDG i.e. either the Head of Academic Department/ Institute Director or an alternate academic representative who is not a member of the supervisory team who has supervised at least two postgraduate research students to successful completion as appropriate
 - a Research Degree Coordinator from an unrelated Research Area (to chair the panel) (this person should not have acted as the independent assessor)
 - a clerk, agreed by the Panel Chair, who will minute the meeting.

In choosing the non-supervisory member for the review panel, the Chair of RDG should avoid any potential conflicting line-management issues. The student may be accompanied if s/he so wishes by a friend, who may offer moral support and/or ensure that the procedures are followed properly. A 'friend' may include a representative from the Students' Union, other personal friend or family member, but excludes any form of legal representation.

- 1.15 The review panel will agree a written action plan, together with guidance to the student appropriate to the stage of their candidature, including targets and the deadline for improvement. The deadline for achievement of those targets should normally be 3 months for a full time student and 6 months for a part time student from the date of the notification of this action plan.
- 1.16 This information will be sent to the student in writing with a requirement to satisfy the targets set out in the action plan – normally this will involve some type of written work although may include laboratory work, creative practice or performance as appropriate to the subject. The student may undergo a viva as required by the review panel or at the request of the student. The student must also be informed in writing at this stage that failure to satisfy the review panel may result in a recommendation for termination. Failure to respond to the requirements to satisfy targets set out in the action plan may lead to termination as a result of a failure to complete a formal progression point in a timely manner as set out in Section 2 below. All correspondence will also be sent to the Research Office so that it may be held with the student's records.

The second review

- 1.17 After the final deadline, the review panel will assess the progress of the student against the targets of the action plan. The panel may recommend progression, or they may recommend termination to the RDG. RDG should ensure there is an independent note-taker to document this second review.
- 1.18 The review panel must document the reasons for their decision and submit these to the Research Office within 5 working days of their decision, the Chair of the Research Degrees Group will then convene a meeting of RDG (see 1.21).
- 1.19 The recommendation should also explicitly indicate whether or not the student submitted any further mitigating circumstances, the evidence for these circumstances, and how the review panel took them into consideration. Failure to submit any new evidence of mitigating circumstances at this stage may be taken into account in any appeal.
- 1.20 If the decision is to allow progression, the review panel may also provide written guidance to the student to help to guide their future work. A copy must be retained on the student's file.
- 1.21 The Research Degrees Group will review, at its next available meeting, or if the period between meetings is too great (more than a month), at an exceptional or virtual meeting, the recommendation and either approve or reject the request for the termination of candidature. The usual principles of quoracy for the Research Degrees Group shall apply.
- 1.22 The decision must be notified to the student in writing within 5 working days of the RDG meeting. The student must also be informed of their usual right to appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Group as indicated in the [University Academic Regulations](#).

2 Termination as a result of failure to successfully complete a formal academic progression point including and not limited to Research Approval, Annual Review and Major Review

- 2.1 If a student fails to meet the requirements for a formal academic progression point a recommendation for termination will be considered at the Research Degrees Group. The student will be notified by the Research Office in writing, by email to the student's email address and by post to the postal address of the student registered with the University. The student must also be informed of their usual right to appeal against the decision of the Research Degrees Group as indicated in the [University Academic Regulations](#).

3 Termination as a result of failure to complete a formal administrative milestone in a timely manner¹

- 3.1 After failure to complete a formal administrative milestone, a series of formal letters will then be set in train to ensure compliance. This will normally consist of two letters sent by the Research Office at fortnightly intervals to the student's university email account and by registered post to the postal address of the student registered with the University. If no response is received within one month of the sending of the second letter, a third letter will be sent informing the student that they have been deemed to have withdrawn. The student must also be informed of their right to appeal as indicated in the [University Academic Regulations](#). This decision will be noted at the Research Degrees Group.

4 Termination (deemed withdrawn) due to lack of contact with the supervisory team

¹ Formal administrative milestones include submission of required documentation for Research Approval or Annual Review or Major Review, annual student re-registration, re-registration after a period of suspension of candidature or failure to submit required work in accordance with an action plan set by a review panel as described in section 1 above.

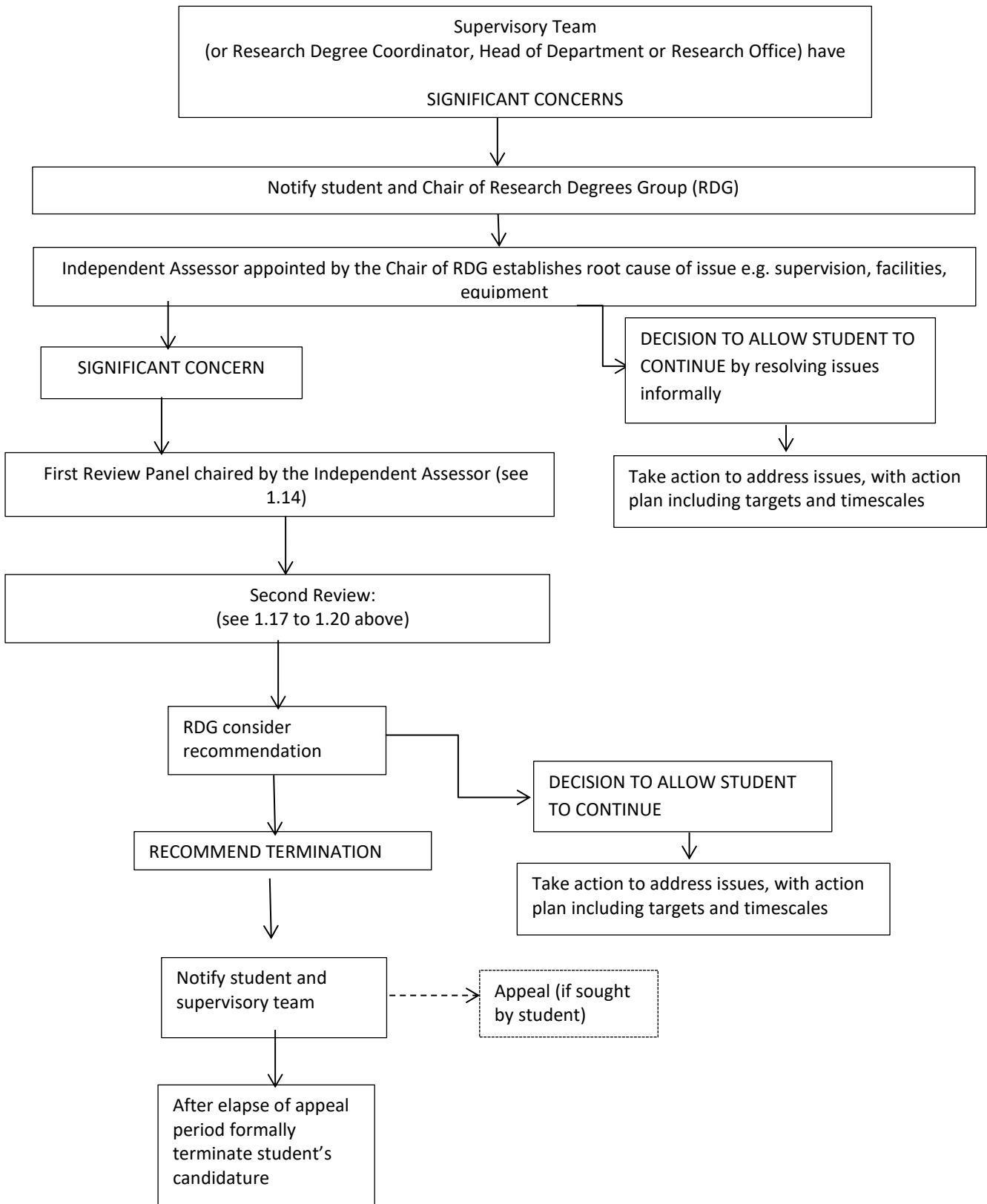
- 4.1 Where a student has not been in communication with his/her supervisory team for a period of time that exceeds two months (FT) and four months (PT) (excluding periods of external internships or suspensions formally approved by RDG) the supervisory team must notify the Research Office. The notification should include a list of ways in which the supervisory team has sought to communicate with the student. A series of formal letters from the Research Office will then be set in train seeking contact with the student and encouraging a response. This will normally consist of two letters sent at fortnightly intervals to the student's university email account and by registered post to the postal address of the student registered with the University. If no response is received within one month of the sending of the second letter, a third letter will be sent informing the student that they have been deemed to have withdrawn. This will be noted at the Research Degrees Group.
- 4.2 The University is a sponsor for international students holding Tier 4 visas and is obliged to monitor attendance as part of its licence. Tier 4 visa students also have certain responsibilities regarding attendance and engagement to enable them to comply with UKVI regulations. Supervisors should ensure that they understand the University's attendance policy in relation to Tier 4 visa holders and raise any queries or concerns with the Chair of the Research Degrees Group at the earliest opportunity.
- 5 Termination as a result of failure to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature or by the deadline set by examiners**

Students should be aware of their responsibility to inform the Research Office of any circumstances (personal or otherwise) that would prevent them from meeting any deadlines or any compulsory processes at the earliest possible opportunity (i.e. as soon as they are known) to avoid recourse to retrospectively applying for extensions). The consequence of failing to meet deadlines relating to candidature and the outcomes of examinations are indicated in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 below.

- 5.1 In line with the Regulations for the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, a research student who fails to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies.
- 5.2 Students failing to re-submit for examination or to submit corrections within the deadline set by examiners will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies. This will be noted at the Research Degrees Group.
- 5.3 In certain circumstances, students may apply for an extension of candidature beyond the maximum period for the submission of the thesis or any corrections requested by examiners. As stated in the Regulations for the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, extensions will be granted only where there is good cause and where the case is supported by the supervisory team. An application for extension must be made at least two weeks prior to the deadline before candidature is due to expire. It should be noted that the maximum period of candidature is increased if an extension is granted. The student's revised submission date will therefore be correspondingly later than the original submission date. Failure to submit by the revised submission date will result in the student being deemed withdrawn unless a further (exceptional) period of extension is applied for and granted.
- 5.4 In extenuating circumstances, students may apply for a period of suspension from their studies please refer to the [Regulations for the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy](#).

Figure 1 – Flowchart follows on page 6

Figure 1 - Termination due to significant academic concerns procedures flowchart



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