Changes to PGR Training and Regulations 2016-17

James Vickers
Doctoral College
Changes to Regulations and CoP

- Not More changes?
Changes to Regulations and CoP

• Not More changes?
• Why do we need them!
The External Environment

Research Councils

- RCUK takes serious notice of the “Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training”

- Already found that funding will depend upon demonstrating that we provide a suitable training and professional development.

- RCUK is again focussing on completion rates. Many bids require data on completion rates for all students. Vital that these are good across the whole University.
The External Environment

QAA (and successor bodies UKRI & Office for Students)

Following the HER we were required to make changes to our procedures for annual review to bring them fully in line with the quality code covering Research Degrees.

“A significant progress review is undertaken at specific points in a research student's programme, for example when completing probationary periods of training. The research student usually provides, as a minimum a written submission which is considered by a panel independent of the research student and the supervisory team.”
University of Southampton

• **Initial registration now for PhD (rather than MPhil/PhD)**
  - Brings us in to line with most Russell group Universities.
  - More attractive to both home and international students
  - Preferred by RCUK, QAA and UKVI

• **Harmonisation of procedures across the University**
  - Clearer to staff and students
  - Variations caused problems with student appeals
  - Fewer workflows in PGR Tracker
Key Changes to PGR regulations (For students starting from August 2016)

• Admission is now to PhD
Key Changes to PGR regulations
(For students starting from August 2016)

• Admission is now to PhD

• Serious annual monitoring of progress during fixed time window
Key Changes to PGR regulations (For students starting from August 2016)

- Admission is now to PhD
- Serious annual monitoring of progress during fixed time window
- Two possible attempts at each annual progression review
Key Changes to PGR regulations (For students starting from August 2016)

- Admission is now to PhD
- Serious annual monitoring of progress during fixed time window
- Two possible attempts at each annual progression review
- Upgrade/Transfer replaced by Confirmation at fixed time
Key Changes to PGR regulations
(For students starting from August 2016)

• Admission is now to PhD

• Serious annual monitoring of progress during fixed time window

• Two possible attempts at each annual progression review

• Upgrade/Transfer replaced by Confirmation at fixed time

• PGRs complete quarterly activity reports
Summary of PGR regulation changes from 2016/17 – Section V of the Calendar

- Change to Programme of admission
- Change to Review of Academic Needs Analysis
- Changes to Special Considerations, Suspension, and Extensions
- Changes to Progression Monitoring including changes to upgrade/transfer
- Changes to Procedures for circumstances that may lead to withdrawal or termination (in the Quality Handbook)
- Changes to Examination
- New definition of Staff candidature
Admission to PhD

• Since 1\textsuperscript{st} August 2016, students are admitted onto the programme they wish to submit for, not MPhil/PhD:
  - PhD
  - or in rare cases MPhil

• Students registered for a PhD will undergo \textbf{confirmation}, not upgrade/transfer

• Visa implications for students who fail confirmation

• Need to ensure that any potential problems are spotted early on: implications for 1\textsuperscript{st} year review process.
Academic Needs Analysis

• Should be completed by the end of the third month of the research phase of the student’s candidature.

• PGR should take the lead on this aspect – direct to resources provided by doctoral college and faculty.

• Not just at 3 months: Will be reviewed at each formal progression stage and any new actions required noted by the assessors in their report.
Doctoral College Professional Development

- A central programme (alongside the discipline-based provision in your academic unit/Faculty)
- Opportunities to meet and network with researchers from other disciplines – courses, activities & events
- Gradbook: an on-line training directory and course booking system
- Website and other on-line resources

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/doctoral-college/professional-development-programme/index.page
Support throughout your candidature

Being successful as a researcher requires you to think carefully and strategically about your skills, your objectives, and the areas in which you need to develop - including the personal/transferable skills which are an increasingly important aspect of research training.

Throughout your research candidature, you will have access to a range of opportunities for training and development, offered both at discipline level and centrally via the Doctoral College. By taking advantage of appropriate workshops and courses, as well as getting involved in activities and events, you will:

- develop both your personal and professional skills and aptitudes
- learn how to communicate the nature and results of your research and the significance of your work
- develop and refine your career plan and enhance your employment prospects

These webpages will support you in finding information, booking training, and planning and reviewing your development and career progression.

If you have any questions or need help with training or professional development, please email doctoral-college@southampton.ac.uk.
Progression Reviews:

Key Change:

- Look at snapshot of progress at **fixed times**, rather than wait for a certain stage before considering a milestone.

Timings on following slides mostly for full-time students. CoP (and next slide) has timings for part-time students. Some programmes (e.g. Mayflower Scholars) have special timings. For details see:

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/quality/pgr/research_degree_candidature/pgrprogression.page

http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionV/code-practice.html
### Progression Reviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Full time</strong></th>
<th><strong>Part Time</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>First attempt</strong></td>
<td><strong>Second attempt</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Progression Review</strong></td>
<td>Months 8-10</td>
<td>Before the end of month 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Progression Review (Confirmation)</strong></td>
<td>Months 18-21</td>
<td>Before the end of month 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Progression Review</strong></td>
<td>Months 30-33</td>
<td>Before the end of month 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Can ask PGRs to *submit in advance* of the start of the time window (PGR Tracker allows submission 1 month before time window starts)
- Student *submission deadline* is 1 month before end of time window (to allow time for meeting and decision)
- **Decisions** need to be made by the end of each time window
First Progression Review:

- is undertaking a viable research project
- has made satisfactory progress to date
- has developed an adequately detailed plan of work to enable the research degree to be completed within the registration period
- has defined the preliminary scope of the project adequately
- has made an appropriate survey of the relevant literature and demonstrated an ability to make critical evaluation of published work
- has acquired an appropriate knowledge and understanding of applicable research methods
- has begun discussing the ethical implications of their research with their supervisory team and can articulate how these are incorporated into their research plan
First Progression Review (8-10 Months):

• **Submission:** The format of assessment to be determined by the Faculty and advertised in Student Handbooks. As a minimum, the student should submit a written report which:

  - defines the aims and objectives of the research project;
  - describes how the proposed research relates to other work in the area;
  - presents the work that has been carried out to date;
  - presents a plan for progression to Confirmation

• **Panel:**
  - Internal independent assessor & a supervisor
  - Other members of the supervisory team/external supervisor by invitation
  - *Report* is only by independent assessor
  - External assessor only allowed in special circumstances

• **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:** Progress or Reassess. If recommendation is to reassess:
  - The student should receive written feedback from the panel
  - The DFGS should be notified within ten working days
  - The DFGS should establish whether there are any supervisory concerns, or mitigating circumstances.
First Progression Review: *Second attempt if decision is to reassess* (by end of month 12)

- **Submission:**
  - The same format as the first attempt

- **Panel:**
  - Usually the same panel as the first attempt. The DFGS may appoint an additional assessor. An independent chair will be appointed for the re-viva.

- **Viva:**
  - The second attempt at a Progression Review will involve a re-viva, unless the assessors deem that the resubmission is sufficient to progress.

- **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:**
  - Progress or terminate candidature.

- On a recommendation to terminate candidature:
  - Made to the DFGS *within ten working days* of the review meeting.
  - Notified to the student (subject to FPC approval) *within ten working days*.
  - The DFGS should establish if there are any mitigating circumstances.
Second Progression Review
“Confirmation of PhD Candidature” (18-21 Months)

Criteria in CoP:

- That the student has demonstrated the ability to:
  - manage the research project
  - become proficient in the special field of research involved
  - achieve success at PhD level given adequate motivation and perseverance

- The panel must also satisfy themselves that:
  - the project being undertaken is of sufficient scope, originality and theoretical interest to constitute a genuine contribution to the subject in the form of the understanding of a problem, the advancement of knowledge or the generation of new ideas
Second Progression Review
“Confirmation” (18-21 Months):

- **Submission**: From the CoP
  - an overview of the research problem and rationale for the project;
  - a substantial literature review;
  - well-developed plans for fieldwork and data analysis (if applicable)

- **Panel**:
  - Two independent assessors (at least one must be internal)
  - Supervisor only present as observer

- **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS**: Progress; or Reassess.
  If recommendation is to reassess:
  - The student should receive written feedback from the panel
  - The DFGS should be notified within ten working days
  - The DFGS should establish whether there are any supervisory concerns, or mitigating circumstances.
Second Progression Review “Confirmation” - *Second attempt* if decision is to reassess (by end of month 24)

- **Submission:**
  - The same format as the first attempt

- **Panel:**
  - Usually the same panel as the first attempt. The DFGS may appoint an additional assessor. An independent chair will be appointed for the re-viva.

- **Viva:**
  - The second attempt at a Progression Review will involve a re-viva, unless the assessors deem that the written resubmission is sufficient to progress.

- **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:**
  - Progress; or
  - Terminate candidature; or
  - Transfer to MPhil

- On a recommendation to terminate candidature:
  - Made to the DFGS **within ten working days** of the review meeting.
  - Notified to the student (subject to FPC approval) **within ten working days**.
  - The DFGS should establish if there are any mitigating circumstances.
Third Progression Review (30-33 months)

- **Criteria:** has developed an adequately detailed plan of work and is on track to enable the research degree to be completed within the allowable registration period (see also criteria in CoP for Nominal Registration)

- **Submission:** The format of assessment to be determined by the Faculty and advertised in Student Handbooks. As a minimum, the student should submit a written report which:
  - presents the work that has been carried out to date
  - presents a plan for the remainder of the PhD
  - outlines a plan for submission of the thesis
  - Outlines the thesis structure

- **Panel:** All members of supervisory team

- **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:** Progress or Reassess.

- If recommendation is to reassess:
  - The student should receive written feedback from the panel
  - The DFGS should be notified within ten working days
  - The DFGS should establish whether there are any supervisory concerns, or mitigating circumstances
  - Follows procedure of second attempt at “1st Progression Review”
Progression Reviews: Summary

- Students registered before 1 August 2016 will follow the progression timings and procedures set by the Faculty at their time of admission.
- A summary of upgrade/confirmation timings provided in the Code of Practice. All such panels must consist of at least two independent assessors regardless of year of entry.
- Graduate School Offices should produce summary table of progression timings.
- **Students registered from 1st August 2016:**
  - Will undergo **three progression reviews** (timings shown in Code of Practice), the second of which will be the **confirmation review**.
  - **Two attempts** at each review are permitted; failure to meet the progression criteria will lead to the termination of candidature in line with the *Procedures for Circumstances that may lead to Withdrawal or Termination* in the Quality Handbook (or transfer to MPhil).
  - Format and criteria of assessment determined by Faculty and advertised in advance. Submission to be made at least four working weeks in advance of the decision deadline.
  - Faculties must determine and publish in their handbook the format and criteria of progression assessment.
  - **Exceptional progression reviews** - can be scheduled by the DFGS if there are significant academic concerns about a student.
  - **Interim progression reviews** – for part-time students who have not undergone a progression review in the last 12 months.
  - Graduate School Offices will need to manually monitor the requirement for interim Progression Reviews for part-time students.
Progression Reviews: Summary

Second attempts

- **Submission:**
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} review - The same format as the first attempt
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} review - The same format as the first attempt
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} review – Determined by the Faculty

- **Panel:**
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} review - Usually the same panel as the first attempt. The DFGS may appoint an additional assessor. An independent chair will be appointed for the re-viva.
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} review - Usually the same panel as the first attempt. The DFGS may appoint an additional assessor. An independent chair will be appointed for the re-viva.
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} review – A member of the supervisory team and an internal independent assessor. The DFGS may appoint an additional assessor. An independent chair will be appointed for the viva.

- **Viva:** The second attempt at a Progression Review will involve a re-viva, unless the assessors deem that the written resubmission is sufficient to progress.

- **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:** Progress; or terminate candidature; or in the case of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} reviews, transfer to MPhil candidature.

- On a recommendation to terminate candidature:
  - Made to the DFGS within ten working days of the review meeting.
  - Notified to the student (subject to FPC approval) within ten working days.
  - The DFGS should establish if there are any mitigating circumstances.

- On DFGS acceptance of a recommendation to terminate candidature:
  - This must be approved by Chair of FPC, then formally reported to next meeting.
  - Subsequently reported to Senate.
  - Notified to the student within ten working days of the receipt of the second progression review documentation, and informed of the appeal procedures.
Procedures for circumstances that may lead to withdrawal or termination of candidature

1) Termination as a result of a Review:
   - Must always involve a panel including an individual who is independent of the supervisory team.

2) Termination outside of a Review
   - The DFGS may determine if there are any mitigating circumstances (e.g. problematic supervisory relationship or a lack of equipment). If so, a student is then given an action plan with targets leading up to the next Progression Review.
   - Where there are no mitigating circumstances, an Exceptional Progression Review will occur.

3) Termination as a result of failure to undertake the responsibilities of a PGR student
   - Timeline for remedial action may now take place over a period of longer than one month – this is determined by the DFGS.

4) Termination (deemed withdrawn) due to lack of contact

5) Termination as a result of failure to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature (deemed withdrawn)
Progression Reviews
Exceptional Progression Reviews

- Set of forms available in Quality Handbook
- Scheduled on the direction of the DFGS
- **Student informed in writing that failure to satisfy the panel may result in a recommendation for termination.**
  - **Panel:** Will follow the procedure for 2\(^{nd}\) progression review, and there will be an Independent Chair
  - **Viva:** Will involve a viva
  - **Outcome of initial meeting:** A written action plan, targets and deadlines for improvement, which will be due for review after no more than 3 months from receipt of the action plan. This will be sent to the student in writing within ten working days of the panel.
  - The panel will meet with the student after the original action plan deadline and assess the progress against the targets of the action plan
  - **Outcome recommendations to the DFGS:** Continue in candidature; or terminate candidature.
  - The recommendation:
    - Made to the DFGS within ten working days of the review meeting.
    - Notified to the student (subject to approval) within ten working days.
    - If the recommendation is continuation of candidature, the student should be given written guidance on future work.
  - On DFGS acceptance of a recommendation to terminate candidature:
    - This must be approved by Chair of FPC, then formally reported to next meeting.
    - Subsequently reported to Senate.
    - Notified to the student within ten working days of the second progression review attempt, and informed of the appeal procedures.
Progression Reviews
Interim Progression Reviews (for part-time students)

- Part-time students who have not undergone a Progression Review in the last twelve months should have an Interim Progression Review.
- If a Progression Review is due in the next month, the DFGS may waive the Interim Review.
- **Submission:** The format of assessment to be determined by the Faculty and advertised in Student Handbooks. Minimum requirements are detailed in the Code of Practice.
- **Panel** – all members of the supervisory team
- **Outcome:** There is no standard outcome, but as a minimum students will be given written feedback, and guidance on any actions to be taken to support progress.
- An unsatisfactory interim review may lead to an exceptional progression review.
Special Considerations, Suspensions, and Extensions

- **Application:**
  - Extension to candidature
  - Suspension from candidature
  - Extension to Progression Review Report submission deadline
  - Special Considerations to be applied to work to be assessed
  - Applications will be made to the Graduate School Office

- **Faculty Special Considerations Board:**
  - **Chair** – nominee of the Dean, but not a member of the Faculty Graduate School Directorate
  - **Two additional academic members**
  - **FAR Academic Registrar or nominee**
  - **Co-opted members** as deemed necessary by the Chair
  - **Graduate School Administrator, in an advisory capacity and Board Secretary**
  - The request for Special Considerations will be presented to the Board by a member of the Faculty Graduate School Directorate, but not the DFGS.
  - The Board will make provision to deal with a time critical request – one member of the Board may make this recommendation

- **Outcome:**
  - The Board will make a recommendation to the DFGS
  - The DFGS will consider recommendations and communicate their decision to the Graduate School Office, who will communicate the outcome to the student and supervisory team
  - This decision should be communicated within 15 working days of submission. Time critical decisions should be communicated within ten working days
Final Examination
Nomination of examiners and viva arrangements

- Clarification on the appointment and role of the Independent Chair
- Addition of the requirement for examiners to be familiar with examination practice and standards in the UK
- Addition of the requirement for iSolutions to be consulted when a viva takes place videoconference
- Change in approver for nomination of examiners
Final Examination
Outcomes

• Extension of timescales for minor and modest amendments

• **Should see a reduction in extension requests**

• Clarification on scheduling and timing of further vivas

• Clarification of the timescale for return of Joint Reports to the Graduate School Office (one working week)

• Clarification that timing for submission of amendments begins when the student receives the written report from the Graduate School Office

• **Clearer calculation of resubmission date**
Final Examination: Forms

• New doctoral exam forms will be available in the Quality Handbook from 1st August 2016

• Independent Examiner’s Report form updated to provide clarification on content, process, and timing of submission

• Doctoral Examiner’s Joint Report and Recommendation form updated to make recommendation options clearer to examiners; to reflect changes in timings for amendments; and to change the approval signatories

• The Chair’s Report Form has been introduced to allow the Chair to comment on the conduct of the viva and confirm that the examination took place according to the University regulations.
Staff Candidature

• New **definition** of staff candidate for PGR:

  “Normally having been employed for 12 months by the University of Southampton, with a further 12 months of unexpired contract. In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of the Faculty/Chair of ERDC may waive one or more of these requirements”

Verification of staff status to be included in procedures

• Change to **examination requirements**:

  “Staff candidates will be examined by two external examiners, and an internal examiner”
PGR tracker
What is PGR Tracker?

A workflow management tool designed to track the progress and record training of PGR students

Promotes expedient communication between students, supervisors and faculty administrators

Email alerts are sent out automatically, informing users of new tasks assigned to them

PGR Tracker holds additional information that cannot currently be stored in Banner such as:

- Documents uploaded by students
- Lists of training courses attended, automatically uploaded from Gradbook
- Lists of training manually added students
- Full details of faculty specific review and sign off stages
https://pgrtracker.soton.ac.uk/Account/LogOn

Sign into PGR Tracker using your University username and password
PGR tracker:

- New harmonized workflows designed to support new CoP

- Smaller number of workflows has improved robustness of system & support from iSolutions

- Important that we have accurate records of student progress – supported by documentation in PGR tracker

- University audited by HEFCE – potential fine of over £500k for non-compliance

- AQSC (and Senate) have agreed that it is a **requirement** that staff comply with requirements to record PGR student progress in a timely manner.