Annual Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Progression

Research Review Panel

Code of Practice

1. Introduction:

Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Progression is set out in Chapter 5 Section 6 of the handbook of academic regulations and procedures. This code of practice, which pertains to PGR students only, provides additional guidance and information in relation to the requirements for the annual Research Review Panels. Please note: this code of practice pertains to PGR Students only.

2. Overview:

The aims of the annual Research Review Panels are:

- To formalise monitoring and management of student progression.
- To facilitate the academic support of PGR students.
- To provide an opportunity to reflect on how the supervision process is progressing.
- To promote research excellence and to promote postgraduate research more generally.
- To help to ensure successful and timely completion of the research degree.
- To confirm that research students have successfully completed any associated taught components.

Arising from the aforementioned aims, the annual PGR student progression process assesses if the student has:

- Acquired the appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to the stage of their research programme.
- Completed their research to a satisfactory standard to warrant continuation on their postgraduate research programme, using research methods and methodology that are appropriate and practical to the academic discipline.
- Forecast a realistic and time-limited plan for progression and eventual completion of their research.

3. Research Review Panel:

As per academic regulations Ch.5 Sec.6, Research Review Panels will be formed in each department or school on an annual basis during autumn semester to review the progress of all research candidates within the department or school. Please note that as per Ch.5 Sec 6.3 of the academic regulations and procedures:

> *The annual review process does not need to be undertaken by research students who have submitted a copy of their thesis for examination by the internal and external examiner. All other research students must undergo a review.*

While Research Review Panels are convened within individual departments and schools on an annual basis, a panel may also be convened outside of the normal assessment period at the request of either the research student or the supervisor(s) (academic regulations Ch.5, Sec. 6.7.1).

Where relevant, the research review panel should have access to previous years' progression review reports and recommendations. In addition to reviewing the student's research, the panel should ensure that students required to complete coursework, such as in the case of Structured PhD programmes, are not carrying a deficient grade.

3.1. Timeline for Annual Progression:

- All PGR students registered on a postgraduate research degree must be reviewed annually by their relevant department/school in research review panels organised during Autumn Semester (normally October onwards);

- PGR Students should be advised in writing about the progression process (normally four to six weeks before the panels) by the Departmental/School contact point and provided with a prospective timeline for the research review panel;

- The department/school should inform their PGR students in relation to the format and supporting documentation of the annual research review panel;

- The relevant staff within each department/school will administer and agree timelines, dates and venues for the research review panels to take place;

- PGR Students should discuss their annual progress with their supervisory team and work towards completing any necessary supporting documentation (e.g. a written progress report) which must be submitted to the departmental contact point prior (normally two weeks) to the annual research review panel meeting.

4. Research Review Panel Membership:

The panel will have the following membership (as per Academic Regulations, Ch.5 Sec.6.7.2):

- Chairperson: Head of Department/School or nominee.
- At least one independent panel member who is either a:
    - Member of the Department who satisfies the criteria of appointment of supervisor (Nominated by Hof Department/School) (see Academic Regulations Ch.5, Sec.5.3, as quoted below).
    - An experienced academic member from outside the Department who satisfies the criteria of appointment of supervisor (Nominated by Head of Department/School).
- Supervisor(s) should not lead the review. They may provide clarification to the other panel members in relation to the academic progress.

As per academic regulations Ch.5 Sec.5.3: *For PhD degrees, the primary supervisor shall be one or more of the following: (i) a professor; (ii) the holder of a PhD degree; (iii) an academic staff member who has already supervised a doctoral degree to completion.*

4.1 Role of Research Review Panel Members:

4.1.1. Chairperson:

The Chairperson will manage the research review panel (annual progression process) in line with the normal practice within their department or school, ensuring that the communication with the PGR student is clear and transparent throughout the process, including the notification in relation to the outcome of the review.

The Chairperson must ensure that the PGR student is treated fairly and that the process is consistent with Academic Regulations. The Chairperson should not engage in the assessment of the student's progress. The Chairperson will ensure that all documentation, including the written feedback via the PGR -9 Form returned to the PGR student, is completed and that this information is forwarded to the Head of Department. They will also communicate the outcome of the panel to all relevant parties.

4.1.2. Independent panel members:

The role of the independent panel member(s) is to ensure that the candidate has demonstrated satisfactory progress in relation to the stage of their Master's by Research or PhD programme.

4.1.3. Supervisor:

The supervisor(s) should not take the lead role in the research review panel but, if necessary, may provide clarification for the other panel members.

5. Supporting Documentation:

Please note: some faculties, departments/schools may have specific guidelines for the panels which should be adhered to.

Students in Yr.1 of their PhD studies may be required to submit a 1-2page progress report (plan) outlining activities and progress during the progression period.

All other students (Year 2 onwards) may be required to submit documentation as required by the relevant faculty. This may include:

- A written progression report to include action plan and bibliography (one thousand words); the PGR student and supervisor should consult faculty and/or school/department requirements and discuss whether or not a written report should be submitted;

- PGR Students on Structured Programmes should provide evidence of their successful completion of core and elective taught modules using the official UL transcript and include a plan for completion of the modules in their time plan as appropriate. Where students have a deficient grade, this must be discussed with the panel.

- Students following the traditional PhD or Master's by research route should detail training and related activities undertaken in relation to their research programme.

- All PGR students should provide evidence that research integrity and plagiarism training (Turnitin) has been undertaken.

6. Format of the Research Review Panel:

As per Academic Regulation 5.6.7.1: *These panels will review each student's submission and a progress report of the student's work in a format to be agreed by each department. The format agreed by the department may require the research student to: (a) present a transcript of their results in the taught element of the programme, if applicable; and/or (b) make a written presentation of their research; and/or (c) present their research to the Research Review Panel.*

Following the discussion, the student may be requested to withdraw to allow the panel time for discussion. The panel discussion will include input from the supervisor(s). Following this, the student will be informed verbally of the panel's recommendation by the Chair. Additionally, if required, the PGR student should have an opportunity to raise any matters without their supervisor(s) being present.

It is normally be expected that all PGR students will attend their progression panel meeting inperson. However, provision can be made for remote panels where necessary. In the case of remote panels, the format will be similar to the aforementioned.

Please note: some faculties, departments/schools may have specific areas of discussion that must be addressed. The PGR student is likely to be asked to:

- Clearly define the research project.
- Propose a work plan that provides a sufficient foundation for Master's by Research or PhD-level research.
- Indicate the plan to achieve the proposed results within a realistic timeline and with the available resources.
- Show evidence of understanding the research question and its implications, the limitations of the methodology and methods to be employed, and the significance of their work within the broader literature.
- Provide a realistic plan how best to disseminate the results of the PhD project (publications, conferences, patents, etc.).
- Provide a transcript of completed taught modules as well as confirmation that research integrity and plagiarism training (Turnitin) have been undertaken.
- Indicate a sufficient understanding of potential ethical issues associated with the research project.

6.1. Academic Assessment of Progress:

The academic assessment of the progress will be based on the following:

- The oral and/or written presentation of the academic progress, with the format being determined by the department/school.
- The PGR student's responses to the questions from the panel members.
- The PGR student's progress, as presented to the panel and in line with the relevant stage of their research.
- The PGR student's transcript of taught modules, where relevant.

7. Outcomes of Research Review Panel:

As per the Handbook of Academic Regulations (Section 5.6.7.5), the recommendations made to the Academic Council Grading Committee following the panel review will be as follows:

The Research Review Panel will assess the candidate's performance to date and determine the appropriate recommendation. The Panel's recommendation shall be one of the following:

a) The student's research progress is of a sufficiently high standard to warrant continuation on the masters or PhD register as applicable. (G) or

b) The student's progress is not satisfactory, and the student is required to undertake the Research Confirmation Process. (NG)

- These recommendations will be made at the research review panel meeting. Students will be verbally informed of the overall recommendation immediately, and written reports will be provided by the panel to students and their supervisors within 2 weeks of the panel meeting.

- Written reports should provide clear feedback on both the strengths and weaknesses of the PGR student's research.

- Where a Head of Department/school is not a panel Chair, the Chair must also provide reports and decisions to the Head of dept/school within two weeks of the meeting.

- Where the PGR student is unable to attend the Research Review Panel and does not provide documented evidence confirming the reason for their absence, the PGR student should be referred to the Research Confirmation Panel.

Where the Research Review Panel is not satisfied that the student is making satisfactory progress, and refers the student to the Research Confirmation Panel, the student will be required to present and defend their work. Students have the right to appeal the decision of the Research Confirmation Panel to the Research Progression Appeal Panel.

The appeal must be made within two weeks of the receiving formal notification of the outcome of the Research Confirmation Panel. Specific details in relation to both the Research Confirmation Panel and the Research Progression Appeal Panel are available here. Additionally, appendix 1 below provides a summary of the process

8. Completion of the Progression (PGR-9) Forms:

- Progression forms and Research Review Panel reports must be completed at the end of each Research Review Panel meeting and signed by the panel members.
- All forms should be held on file in the Department/School, in accordance with the University of Limerick Records Management and Data Retention Policy, available here. A copy should also be sent to the student and supervisor(s).
- Heads of Department must ensure that all the records of annual progression reviews are stored and made available for subsequent panels; these records shall be held in accordance with University of Limerick Records Management and Data Retention Policy, available here

8.1 Progression Decisions Research Review Panel: Online Grading Process:

When the research review panel(s) have been completed, the grading outcomes arising from the annual research student progression for all the postgraduate research students for a department/school must be entered via the online module grade entry which is available via Academic Registry.

The Research Review Panel(s) and grade submission must be completed by January of the relevant academic year. The timeline and the link for entering the grades in accordance with the grading deadline (January) for the autumn semester examinations will be issued by Academic Registry.

Appendix 1: Annual Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Progression Process

