

Procedures for circumstances that may lead to termination of postgraduate research degree candidature

Note: the term ‘Student visa’ refers to both the Tier 4 (General) visa and the new Student visa which replaced the Tier 4 (General) visa on 5 October 2020.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All postgraduate research degrees at the University of Southampton are governed by the [General Academic Regulations for Research Students](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#) (referred to from here on as “the Code of Practice”). The procedure here supplements the information from these sources, but the [General Academic Regulations for Research Students](#) and the [Code of Practice](#) must be consulted where clarification is required.
- 1.2 These procedures cover the following circumstances:
- termination of candidature is proposed as a result of a recommendation from a Progression Review¹;
 - termination of candidature is proposed as a result of failure to undertake the expected responsibilities of a student;
 - termination of candidature is proposed due to lack of contact or failure to return from a period of approved pause in study period;
 - termination of candidature is proposed as a result of failure to submit material for a second attempt at a progression review by the required deadline or as a result of failure to submit a thesis for examination by the end of the maximum period of candidature².

¹ Failure to successfully complete an Interim Progression Review cannot lead directly to termination of candidature and the procedures for an Exceptional Progression Review will instead be invoked.

² Failure to submit material by the specified deadline for the second attempt at an Interim Progression Review cannot lead directly to termination of candidature and the procedures for an Exceptional Progression Review will instead be invoked.

- 1.3 These procedures do not cover termination of candidature where due to a student's failure to pay their tuition fees as specified in the [Fees, Charges and Expenses Regulations](#), nor do they cover the circumstances specified in the [Change of Programme, Pause in Study, Withdrawal and Termination of Study Regulations](#). Specialist guidance and support regarding circumstances not specified here should be sought from the Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team (email gsa@soton.ac.uk).
- 1.4 Irrespective of the circumstances presented, all recommendations proposing the termination of a student's research degree candidature must be reviewed and endorsed by the Faculty Director of the Graduate School (FDoGS) prior to the recommendation being submitted to the Faculty Education and Student Experience Subcommittee (FESESC) for its consideration. In accordance with the delegated powers of Senate, FESESC has authority to approve or reject recommendations to terminate candidature. In undertaking its duties, FESESC may request that the FDoGS submits further information to aid its decision making.
- 1.5 Provided they have grounds, a student may appeal against any academic decision made by the University (with the exception of the exclusions set down in the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals by Students](#)).
- 1.6 Appendix 1 contains a series of flowcharts outlining the main steps in each of the circumstances specified in sections 2 to 5 of these procedures.
- 2. Termination of candidature as a result of a recommendation from a Progression Review**
- 2.1 Two attempts at each Progression Review are permitted. A student who fails to meet the criteria required for a successful Progression Review at their second attempt and where the Assessment Panel does not (or, as in the case of MPhil candidates, may not) recommend transfer to MPhil candidature will be withdrawn from their degree and their candidature will be terminated.
- 2.2 Note that failure to successfully complete an Interim Progression Review **cannot** lead directly to termination of candidature and the procedures for an Exceptional Progression Review will instead be invoked.

- 2.3 The Assessment Panel's report should clearly explain how the student has failed to meet the requirements for progression.
- 2.4 In consultation with the Doctoral Programme Director (DPD), the FDoGS should establish whether there are any matters (e.g. significant supervisory concerns; a lack of facilities or equipment; disputes relating to line management; or budgetary issues) which may have prevented the student from demonstrating their ability to meet the criteria for progression to the satisfaction of the Assessment Panel.
- 2.5 Appropriate action should be taken to remedy any identified concerns that are considered to have caused detriment to the student.
- 2.6 At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to reject or defer the Assessment Panel's recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 2.7 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been considered and that there should be no change to the Assessment Panel's recommendation that candidature should be terminated, the FDoGS should endorse the recommendation and submit it (and the accompanying reasoning) to FESESC for its consideration (as referenced in paragraph 1.4 of these procedures).
- 2.8 Following FESEC's approval, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should notify the student of the decision to terminate their candidature within 10 working days. This notification must clearly advise the student of the reason for the decision and also inform them about the University's academic appeals process.

3. Termination of candidature as a result of failure to undertake the expected responsibilities of a student

- 3.1 Students are ultimately responsible for their research, the content, quality and submission of their thesis and for the completion of their research degree. Students' responsibilities include the requirements specified in the [Code of Practice](#). Students who fail to engage with these responsibilities may have their candidature terminated in accordance with these procedures.
- 3.2 Where concerns are identified, the Co-ordinating Supervisor is expected to make a referral to the FDoGS to investigate the matters raised.

- 3.3 In consultation with the DPD, the FDoGS should establish whether there are any matters (e.g. significant supervisory concerns; a lack of facilities or equipment; disputes relating to line management; or budgetary issues) which may have prevented the student from meeting their expected responsibilities.
- 3.4 Appropriate action should be taken to remedy any identified concerns that are considered to have caused detriment to the student.
- 3.5 At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease or defer the recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 3.6 Once any internal actions have been completed and having reached the point where, despite every best effort, the situation is still unresolved, the FDoGS will instruct the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team to notify the student of the following:
- the concerns that have been identified and how these concerns correspond to the student's failure to meet their expected responsibilities;
 - an action plan and timescale setting out what the student is expected to do to remedy the situation;
 - the consequences should the student fail to address the concerns to the satisfaction of the FDoGS.
- 3.7 The notification should be sent to the student's University of Southampton email address and also to any other personal email address that is held on record in the University's student records system (Banner). A copy of the notification should also be sent to the student's supervisory team who are responsible for providing appropriate supervisory input to support the student in completing the set actions within the required timescale.
- 3.8 The Co-ordinating Supervisor is subsequently required to submit a report detailing the student's progress against the actions required to remedy the situation to the FDoGS who will determine whether the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease the recommendation for termination of candidature and the student notified accordingly.
- 3.9 If, however, the FDoGS determines that the student has failed to satisfactorily address the concerns and where no mitigating information

have been presented, they should submit a rationale for recommending the termination of the student's candidature to FESESC for its consideration (as referenced in paragraph 1.4 of these procedures).

- 3.10 Following FESESC's approval, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should notify the student of the decision to terminate their candidature within 10 working days. This notification must clearly advise the student of the reason for the decision and also inform them about the University's academic appeals process.

4. Termination of candidature due to lack of contact or failure to return from an approved pause in study period

- 4.1 The [Change of Programme, Pause in Study, Withdrawal and Termination of Study Regulations](#) advise "*Where a student ceases without notice to attend the University or participate in scheduled learning and teaching activities, or fails to return from an approved pause in study period without notice, the School shall take all reasonable steps to contact the student to confirm their intentions. Should the student fail to respond to such contact, the School may, with reasonable notice, deem the student to have withdrawn from the University. A person deemed to have withdrawn ceases to be a student of the University.*" Furthermore, "*Senate reserves the right to terminate at any time the programme of a student whose academic work proves unsatisfactory or whose level of attendance does not meet the expectations of the* [Attendance and Completion of Programme Requirements](#)*.*"
- 4.2 Non-engagement has additional significance in the case of international students with Student visas and the VISAS Team (email visa@soton.ac.uk) should be contacted for guidance.
- 4.3 This section of the Procedures sets out the process which will be invoked in the following circumstances:
- 4.3.1 The student has failed to communicate with their supervisory team for a period of time that exceeds two months (excluding where an external internship, placement or pause in study has been previously approved). All concerns regarding a student's failure to make contact with their supervisory team must be

notified to the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team by the Main/Co-ordinating Supervisor immediately the concerns become apparent. This notification should include information about how the supervisory team has sought to maintain contact with the student during the previous two months.

4.3.2 The student has failed to return from an approved pause in study period and has not submitted a request to extend their pause in study. The Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should have appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor pause in study and return to candidature.

4.4 Where the circumstances outlined in paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 apply, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team will seek to make contact with the student. Such correspondence should be sent to the student's University of Southampton email address and also to any other personal email address that is held on record in Banner. A copy should also be sent to the student's supervisory team. The following information should be included:

- the concerns that have been identified;
- a request that the student makes contact, setting out a two-week timescale for their response;
- information on what the student should do should they wish to request (or extend) a pause in study;
- signposting to the University's support services;
- the consequences should the student fail to satisfactorily respond within the set timescale.

4.5 Should the student fail to respond to the first attempt to make contact by the stated deadline, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should make a second attempt to make contact with the student, reminding them of the action they should take and giving them a further two weeks to respond.

4.6 Should the student fail to respond to the second attempt to make contact by the stated deadline, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should escalate the matter to the FDoGS. At this point, and in consultation with the DPD, the FDoGS should establish whether there are any internal matters that require further investigation, assigning any identified concerns for action within a defined timescale.

- 4.7 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been resolved, the FDoGS should submit the reasoning for their recommendation to terminate the student's candidature to FESESC.
- 4.8 Following FESESC's approval, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should notify the student of the decision to terminate candidature within 10 working days. This notification must clearly advise the student of the reason for the decision and also inform them about the University's academic appeals process.
5. **Termination of candidature as a result of failure to submit material for a second attempt at a Progression Review by the required deadline or as a result of failure to submit a thesis for examination by the end of the maximum period of candidature**
- 5.1 This section of the Procedures sets out the process which will be invoked in the following circumstances:
- 5.1.1 Two attempts at each Progression Review are permitted. A student who does not submit material by the specified deadline for their second attempt at a Progression Review by the specified deadline for their second attempt at a Progression Review (and where no request has been submitted and approved under the [Regulations Governing Special Consideration and Pause in Study for Postgraduate Research Students](#)) will be deemed to have failed their second attempt and candidature will be terminated. Note that failure to submit material by the specified deadline for the second attempt at an Interim Progression Review **cannot** lead directly to termination of candidature and the procedures for an Exceptional Progression Review will instead be invoked.
- 5.1.2 A student who fails to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the degree.
- 5.2 The Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should have appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor candidature and thesis submission and It should notify the FDoGS of any student who fails to submit material for a second

attempt at a Progression Review (and where no request has been submitted and approved under the [Regulations Governing Special Consideration and Pause in Study for Postgraduate Research Students](#)) and of any student who fails to submit their thesis for examination by the end of the maximum period of candidature.

- 5.3 In consultation with the DPD, the FDoGS should establish whether there are any internal matters that require further investigation, assigning any identified concerns for action within a defined timescale. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease or defer the recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 5.4 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been resolved, the FDoGS should submit a rationale for recommending the termination of the student's candidature to FESESC for its consideration (as referenced in paragraph 1.4 of these procedures).
- 5.5 Following FESESC's approval, the Doctoral College (Faculty) Team should notify the student of the decision to terminate their candidature within 10 working days. This notification must clearly advise the student of the reason for the decision, and must also provide information to the student on the academic appeals process.

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Appendix 1: flowcharts outlining the main steps of each procedure

