

Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines the process for formal Unsatisfactory Progress.

Section 2 - Accountability

Accountable/Responsible Officer	Role
Accountable Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Responsible Officer	Dean, Graduate Research

Section 3 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to domestic and international candidates and University employees.

Section 4 - Definitions

(3) Lapsed status - Failure to re-enrol by a census date.

(4) Maximum duration - Represents the amount of time for which Commonwealth funding is provided for candidates undertaking a HDR program at a particular level.

(5) Elapsed candidature time - The total amount of time a candidate has been enrolled in their research degree. This is expressed in full-time enrolment (EFT).

Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(6) See [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#).

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
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Office for Researcher Training, Quality & Integrity (ORTQI)	Provide administrative support for unsatisfactory progress proceedings.
Flagship Research Institute/Centres	Determine if a candidate is to have unsatisfactory progress proceedings invoked. Attend unsatisfactory progress hearings.
VU International (VUI)	Distribute and process the bi-annual progress reports for international candidates.

Part B - Progress Reports - International Candidates Only

Submission and Timing of Progress Reports

(7) International candidates are required in accordance with the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#) to submit a bi-annual Progress Report and will be advised at what time of year these reports are required by VUI.

(8) The Progress Report will specify a final due date. If a candidate requires an extension to the due date to submit the Progress Report they must apply for an official extension at least one week prior to the due date to VUI.

(9) The candidate will be advised in writing by VUI of the decision regarding the official extension and the new submission date if appropriate.

(10) Evidence of submission of the Progress Report by the candidate to the Principal Supervisor will be considered to constitute submission of the report in cases where difficulty is being experienced in gaining Principal Supervisor sign off.

Part C - Unsatisfactory Progress

Grounds for Unsatisfactory Progress

(11) Unsatisfactory Progress is when a candidate is failing to make satisfactory progress towards their research degree. This is defined to include:

- a. failure to complete the required coursework component in a candidate's higher degree by research with an average of 70 per cent;
- b. failure to achieve 70 per cent in the Year One Thesis of the PhD (Integrated);
- c. failure to achieve candidature at the second attempt within set timeframes, as stipulated by [Confirmation of Candidature](#) procedures;
- d. repeated failure to meet with supervisor/s;
- e. repeated failure to meet agreed timelines set in conjunction with the supervisor/s;
- f. failure to adhere to any determination of VU Research;
- g. failure to present for [Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission](#) within set timeframes;
- h. failure to achieve [Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission](#) within agreed timeframes as agreed by the Deputy Director, Flagship Research Institute/Centres;
- i. failure to submit all the required components for the designated thesis format by the due date;
- j. exceeding maximum candidature duration;
- k. failure to resubmit the thesis for re-examination within agreed timelines;
- l. inability (or apparent inability as deemed by the Flagship Research Institute/Centres) to complete a thesis of

appropriate quality within the required timeframe.

(12) Where a candidate is experiencing difficulties with progress it is occasionally deemed appropriate for candidates to convert enrolment from a doctoral to a Masters by Research degree, or from one type of doctorate to another. Failure to accept such a direction from Flagship Institute would trigger Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings

(13) Where the Deputy Director, Flagship Research Institute/Centres (or nominee) supports the commencement of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings against a candidate, they must inform ORTQI and provide in writing:

- a. a summary of the basis of the Unsatisfactory Progress recommendation (see Clause [11] above);
- b. evidence (e.g. copies of transcripts, milestone outcomes, email/letter correspondence); and
- c. confirmation that the candidate's Principal Supervisor supports the instigation of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

(14) When ORTQI receives notification in writing, the case will be reviewed by the Dean, Graduate Research who may seek further clarification from the candidate and/or supervisor prior to instigating Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

(15) If it is determined that Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings proceed, ORTQI will send a written notice to a candidate who is the subject of an active Unsatisfactory Progress Proceeding. This notice will be sent by registered mail to the current address of the candidate as recorded in the University student system, as well as to the VU @live email account.

Unsatisfactory Progress Hearings

(16) If the candidate wishes the claim of Unsatisfactory Progress to be assessed and determined on its merits, a Request for Hearing form must be lodged within three weeks from the date of the written notice sent by the ORTQI (regardless of the exact date of acknowledgement by the candidate).

(17) If the candidate does not request a Hearing within the three-week period, VU Research will confirm that the candidate will be deemed to be making Unsatisfactory Progress. ORTQI, with authorisation from the Dean, Graduate Research, will advise the candidate that their enrolment will be discontinued. This will take effect after 20 University business days (from the conclusion of the three week period).

(18) Upon receipt of a request for a Hearing, a Panel will be appointed and a Hearing will be scheduled, normally within two weeks from the date of notification from the candidate. The candidate will be provided with notice of the time and date of the Hearing.

(19) The Panel for a Hearing shall be comprised of:

- a. the Dean, Graduate Research or their nominated representative to act as the Chair of the Panel;
- b. the Deputy Director, Flagship Research Institute/Centres (or nominee) from the candidate's Flagship Research Institute/Centres.

(20) The Panel will be supported by the ORTQI to take minutes and provide other necessary support.

(21) The candidate is encouraged to submit a written statement (no more than three pages) addressed to the Chair of the Panel at least five working days prior to the Unsatisfactory Progress Hearing. The statement should describe any special needs or extenuating circumstances (including whether the candidate has registered for disability support) and include supporting documentation.

(22) The candidate's Principal Supervisor must attend and participate in the Hearing (either in person, via phone or

skype) unless on extended leave whereby the acting Principal Supervisor would attend. Associate Supervisors are invited, but it is not mandatory that they attend.

(23) After requesting a Hearing, the candidate may bring a support person or advocate to the Hearing. Such a person will be an observer only and will not form part of the Panel. Support is available from [Student Advocacy](#).

(24) All persons attending a Hearing will be subject to the orders and direction of the Chair of the Panel.

(25) In the event that any person required to attend a Hearing is unable to attend in person, because of illness, absence abroad/interstate or other compelling reasons, they may participate by teleconference or Skype. Candidates may nominate a representative to attend the Hearing on their behalf. Support is available from [Student Advocacy](#).

(26) The Panel will make a decision about the candidate's progress and ongoing candidature, taking into account only relevant factors. These factors include previous candidature progress history, overall elapsed candidature time and the documented circumstances that have led to the Unsatisfactory Progress nomination. The Panel may make one of the four following recommendations:

- a. Discontinuation of enrolment. The candidate will be encouraged to voluntarily discontinue and reapply if and when their circumstances change. Candidates who do not voluntarily discontinue within the specified time period will be notified that the University has discontinued their enrolment which will take effect after 20 University business days.
- b. Conditional Continuation of Candidature. This recommendation confirms that the candidate's progress is unsatisfactory. The Panel through the Chair will advise the candidate of the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to be permitted to continue their enrolment towards the degree. Conditions may include strict timetables for submission of work or submission of work to a suitable academic standard.
- c. Continuation of Candidature. This decision is available to the Panel if it judges, taking circumstances into account, that progress is either marginal or satisfactory.
- d. Course Transfer (for example from a doctoral to a Masters by Research degree), where a transfer may be subject to ongoing conditions or monitoring requirements.

Outcomes of Recommendations

Discontinuation of Enrolment

(27) If the Panel makes a decision for discontinuation of enrolment and the candidate does not voluntarily discontinue, the ORTQI will notify the candidate that their enrolment will be discontinued and will take effect after 20 University business days. The ORTQI will also advise the candidate of their appeal rights.

(28) A candidate who lodges an appeal must do so prior to the expiration of the 20 University business days. The candidate must remain enrolled until an outcome regarding the appeal is determined. Failure to maintain continuous enrolment will result in the candidature lapsing and the appeal becoming inactive.

(29) Candidates in receipt of a scholarship will be informed that their stipend payments will cease effective from the date of their discontinuation.

Conditional Continuation of Candidature

(30) If the Panel makes a decision for Conditional Continuation of enrolment the candidate will be advised in writing of the condition(s) to be fulfilled to avoid their enrolment being discontinued. The Panel may also make recommendations to aid in meeting the condition(s) which will be monitored by the Principal Supervisor who will provide a report on progress to the Chair of the Panel advising if any conditions have not been met. The candidate will be asked to sign an undertaking that they agree to the decision and will abide by any conditions or requirements placed on them by the Panel.

(31) If the candidate fails to sign and return the agreement within 10 University business days, the ORTQI will notify the candidate that their candidature will be discontinued by the ORTQI and will be effective after 20 University business days.

(32) ORTQI will advise the candidate in writing 10 University working days prior to the end of the agreed period. At the end of the agreed period the Panel will reconvene (either electronically or in person) to make a determination about whether the conditions have been met. The candidate will have an opportunity to make a written submission to the Panel before it reaches its decision.

(33) If the Panel determines that any condition has not been fulfilled, then the Panel have authority to discontinue the enrolment. ORTQI will advise the candidate that their enrolment will be discontinued, and will take effect after 20 University business days.

(34) If the Panel determines that all of the conditions have been met, they will agree and approve that the status be changed to Continuation of Candidature.

Notification and Records

(35) The candidate will be advised of the outcome of any Unsatisfactory Progress meeting or hearing at its conclusion and by formal letter within five University business days. International candidates must also be informed that the University will advise relevant government departments and agencies of any unsatisfactory performance.

(36) A record of each individual hearing and outcomes will be retained on the candidate's official file maintained by the ORTQI. For international candidates, a copy must also be included on the candidate's file at VU International.

(37) A report of all hearings and outcomes in each calendar year will be prepared by the ORTQI for the Dean, Graduate Research for presentation and discussion at the March meeting of the following year of the Research and Research Training Committee of the Academic Board.

(38) The ORTQI is responsible for all notifications and ensuring that any discontinuation event is recorded on all University systems.

(39) A Panel's decision in relation to Unsatisfactory Progress can only be appealed in accordance with the University's [Student Appeals Regulations 2019](#).

Section 7 - Guidelines

(40) [VU Graduate Research Training and Supervision Quality and Standards Framework](#)

Status and Details

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Effective Date	30th August 2018
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