

Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

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

Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(2) HESF: Standard 1.3 Orientation and Progression; 4.2 Research Training; 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students.

(3) ESOS Act: Part 3 Division 2; Part 5 Division 2. National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 – Standard 8 and Standard 9.

Section 3 - Scope

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

Section 4 - Definitions

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

(6) Timely duration - The normal period of time, deemed by the Commonwealth, for the degree level to be completed (subject to degree type).

(7) 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

(8) [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#)

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Provide relevant administrative support for unsatisfactory progress proceedings.

Roles	Responsibilities
Research Institutes	Provide relevant administrative support for unsatisfactory progress proceedings. Attend unsatisfactory progress hearings.
VU Global (VUG)	Distribute and process the bi-annual progress reports for international candidates.

Part B - Bi-annual Progress Reports - International Candidates Only

Submission and Timing of Bi-annual Progress Reports

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

(10) The Bi-annual Progress Report will specify a final submission date for Bi-annual Progress Report based upon the sponsor's requirement. If a candidate requires an extension to the due date to submit the Bi-annual Progress Report they must apply for an official extension to VUG at least one week prior to the due date.

(11) The candidate will be advised in writing by VUG of the decision regarding the official extension and the new submission date of the Bi-annual Progress Report(s) required by their sponsor, if applicable.

(12) Evidence of submission of the Bi-annual 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

(13) Unsatisfactory Progress is when a candidate is not making satisfactory progress in their research degree. Grounds for Unsatisfactory Progress to be initiated by the Research Institutes are:

- a. Not achieving an average of 70 per cent in the required coursework component in a higher degree by research;
- b. Not achieving 70 per cent in the Year One Thesis of the PhD (Integrated) and not taking the offer of an alternative exit degree or withdrawing from the degree;
- c. Not presenting for a Candidature Milestone Review within the set timeframes (refer to [Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure](#)) for:
 - i. Confirmation of Candidature;
 - ii. Mid-Candidature Review; or,
 - iii. Towards Submission.
- d. Not achieving a Candidature Milestone Review;
- e. Not responding to or attending invitations to scheduled meetings with supervisor/s;
- f. Repeatedly not meeting agreed timelines set in conjunction with supervisor/s;
- g. Not submitting thesis for examination or re-examination in a timely manner or by an otherwise approved deadline;
- h. Inability, as deemed by the Research Institute, to complete a thesis of appropriate quality within the required timeframe.

Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings

(14) Where the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee supports the commencement of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings, they must inform GRS and provide in writing:

- a. the basis of the Unsatisfactory Progress recommendation (see clause 13); and
- b. confirmation that the candidate's Principal Supervisor supports the commencing of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings;
- c. if the candidate's Principal Supervisor does not support the commencement of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings, however the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee supports this, justification must be provided in writing to GRS.

(15) When GRS receives notification in writing, GRS will collate evidence (e.g. copies of transcripts, candidature milestone outcomes, email/letter correspondence) and prepare the documentation for review by the Dean, Graduate Research who may seek further clarification/documentation from the candidate and/or supervisor prior to formalising Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

Unsatisfactory Progress Hearings

(16) If it is determined that Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings proceed, GRS 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.

(17) The written notification will include the Request for an Unsatisfactory Progress Panel Hearing form, the time and date of the Hearing, which will be scheduled no less than 15 University business days from the date of notification.

(18) If the candidate wishes to attend the Hearing, they must lodge the Request for an Unsatisfactory Progress Panel Hearing form within 5 University business days from the date of notification.

(19) If the candidate does not submit the Request for an Unsatisfactory Progress Panel Hearing or does not respond to the notice within five University business days from the date of notification, VU will determine the candidate is deemed to be making Unsatisfactory Progress. GRS, with the authorisation from the Dean, Graduate Research, will advise the candidate that their enrolment will be discontinued within 20 University business days from the date of authorisation.

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

- a. the Dean, Graduate Research or nominee to act as the Chair of the Panel;
- b. the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee from the candidate's Research Institute.

(21) The Panel will be supported by the GRS to take minutes and provide other necessary administrative support.

(22) 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.

(23) The candidate's Principal Supervisor must attend and participate in the Hearing unless on extended leave whereby the Acting Principal Supervisor would attend. Associate Supervisors are invited to attend, but it is not mandatory that they attend.

(24) The candidate may bring a support person or advocate to the Hearing. Such a person will be an observer only and will not participate in discussions. Support is available from [Student Advocacy](#).

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

(26) 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 via telephone or teleconference and/or nominate a representative to attend the Hearing on their behalf. Support is available from [Student Advocacy](#).

(27) Whether a candidate requested a Hearing or not, or attends or does not attend the Hearing, the Panel will make a decision regarding the candidate's progress and ongoing candidature. The Panel will take into account previous candidature progress history, overall elapsed candidature time and information provided by the Principal or Acting Supervisor, that have led to the Unsatisfactory Progress nomination.

(28) With reference to clause (27), the Panel may make one of the four following recommendations to the Candidate:

a. Discontinuation of Enrolment

- i. If after receiving formal notification of the Panel's decision for discontinuation of enrolment and the candidate has not voluntarily discontinued their enrolment within 10 University business days, GRS will notify the candidate that the University will discontinue their enrolment after 20 University business days.
- ii. If after receiving formal notification of the Panel's decision for discontinuation of enrolment but the candidate wishes to lodge an Appeal (see [Student Appeals Procedure](#)), they must do so within 20 University business days. The candidate will remain enrolled until an outcome regarding their appeal is determined. Failure to maintain continuous enrolment will result in the candidature lapsing and the appeal becoming inactive.
- iii. Candidates in receipt of a scholarship will additionally be informed that their stipend payments will cease to be effective from the date of their discontinuation.

b. Conditional Continuation of Candidature

- i. 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.
- ii. No less than 10 days prior to the cessation of their period of Conditional Continuation of enrolment, the candidate is required to make a written submission to the Chair of the Panel, via GRS, documenting the progress that has been made in meeting the conditions of their enrolment. The Panel will reconvene (either electronically or in person) to make a determination about whether the conditions have been met.
- iii. If the candidate fails to submit the required documentation as per clause 28(b)ii, GRS will notify the Chair of the Panel and candidate may have their candidature discontinued and this will take effect after 20 University business days.
- iv. If the Panel determines that any condition has not been fulfilled, then the Panel has the authority to recommend discontinuation the enrolment. GRS will advise the candidate that their enrolment will be discontinued, and will take effect after 20 University business days.
- v. If the Panel determines that all of the conditions have been met, the candidate's enrolment will be changed to Continuation of Candidature.

c. Continuation of Candidature

- i. The Panel deems that progress is either marginal or satisfactory.

d. Course Transfer

- i. Where a transfer may be subject to ongoing conditions or monitoring requirements. Refer to Conversions between course type – [Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure](#).

Notification and Records

(29) The candidate will be advised of the outcome of any Unsatisfactory Progress meeting or Hearing at its conclusion in writing 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.

(30) A record of each individual Hearing and outcomes will be retained on the candidate's official file maintained by GRS. For international candidates, a copy must also be included on the candidate's file at VUG.

(31) A report of all Hearings and outcomes in each calendar year will be prepared by GRS for the Dean, Graduate Research for presentation in the following year of the Research and Research Training Committee of the Academic Board.

(32) GRS is responsible for all notifications and ensuring that any discontinuation event is recorded on all University systems.

(33) A Panel's decision in relation to Unsatisfactory Progress can only be appealed in accordance with the University's [Student Appeals Regulations 2019](#) Clause (5).

Status and Details

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