

3H.1 ANNUAL REVIEWS AND UPGRADES

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

TIMING

- i. The main progress review for each PhD research student is called the Annual Review. (This review does not apply to the MA, MSc, and LLM by research.) However, student progress is routinely monitored by the supervisor throughout the degree programme.
- ii. The Research Officer is responsible for ensuring that an Annual Review is held at least once each year and that the decision following the review is communicated to the student and to the Registry Officer for report to the Research Committee.
- iii. For full-time students the review will be conducted at the end of the first year of study, and then in each subsequent year of study, at any time within the calendar year as appropriate to the student's needs and development. For part-time students the first three reviews follow this same pattern (i.e. yearly), but after the third-year review, assuming progress is good, the review may take place every 18 months.
- iv. The student is responsible for ensuring that he or she is available for a review in the term falling one year after the previous review and where for any reason this is not possible, making alternative arrangements with the Research Officer. Where five terms elapse without a review being held it will be presumed that the student has withdrawn.

PURPOSE

- v. The purpose of the Annual Review is to enable the Research Officer to be satisfied that the student is maintaining his/her progress and is performing at a sustained and acceptable level for the ultimate award of the degree. The review also serves the purpose of ensuring that appropriate plans have been made for the continuation of studies over the following year, including review of the work plan and timetable for those studies. In addition, it provides an opportunity for both the student and the supervisor to comment on matters concerning research support and supervision without the presence of the other, thus trying to identify and avoid difficulties before they become formal complaints.
- vi. Its purpose is:
 - a. to make a considered review of the progress of the research project in both intellectual and practical terms;
 - b. to ensure arrangements for supervision are satisfactory;
 - c. to receive feedback from the student via the completion of the 'Research Postgraduate Feedback Questionnaire', and, where appropriate, to take action in relation to that feedback;
 - d. to act, at the appropriate time, as the formal stage-review for the completion of the probationary PhD status and confirmation of upgrade to full PhD status;
 - e. to discuss and grant an extension of time of up to a year if this is required.

PROCESS

- i. The Research Officer in the area of study is responsible for convening and chairing the review (unless s/he is the supervisor, when another designated colleague will take this role), and will be responsible for sending a written report of the review to the Registry Officer and to the student. The panel for the review will normally comprise the Research Officer (or a designated colleague) as chair, the supervisor(s), and at least one other member of the academic staff. The discussion with the student should be a substantial one. At some point in the review the supervisor(s) should leave the room to allow the student the opportunity to discuss progress independently with the other panel members.
- vii. The student should be reminded that s/he should have been given an opportunity to raise any problems or concerns but that if this opportunity had not been provided the student was invited to write directly to the Chairman of the Research Committee.
- viii. The review will comprise a summary of progress by the student in the prescribed form; a written report on progress by the student's supervisor(s); and a viva voce examination. The first supervisor will check that the summary of progress does not contain plagiarized material.
- ix. In the case of a student registered for a PhD, consideration may be given at the Annual Review regarding the completion of the probationary period for the PhD registration and the upgrade to full PhD status; or the continuation of the probationary period and/or registration as an MPhil student. The completion of the probationary PhD period and the upgrade to full PhD status is not possible without a review. At that review the student must demonstrate by submission of draft written work or in some other appropriate way:
 - a) an understanding of any secondary literature;
 - b) an ability for detailed criticism and argument, and
 - c) an ability to collect and organise new information from original sources.

OUTCOME

- ii. Following the preparation of a report on the Annual Review, the Research Officer must decide what action is necessary. The Research Officer may approve the continuation of the student's studies; impose conditions on the continuation of study; or terminate the student's studies. The student has the right of appeal against such a decision. In cases where the student has been allowed to waive the residence requirement, the viva voce examination component of the annual review shall involve the student's supervisor and, if possible and appropriate, the additional supervisor where applicable, and, if possible, and in cases where the student is affiliated to, or conducting research at, another academic institution, a member of the academic staff from that institution. The supervisor shall prepare a full report of the viva voce examination for the Research Officer at the University of Buckingham. The Research Officer shall prepare a brief report which shall be forwarded to the Registry Officer. The Registry Officer shall send a copy to the student concerned.
- iii. Confirmation of the completion of the probationary period and upgrade to full PhD status, must be reported to Registry and to the Finance Office, and the student's date of completion confirmed accordingly.
- iv. The Research Officer will be responsible for, or will oversee, the resulting formal report on the review, a copy of which must be given to the student, and another copy sent to the Registry Officer for inclusion in the student's central file.