

Procedures for circumstances that may lead to termination of postgraduate research 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 [Regulations for Research Degrees and Higher Doctorates](#) (referred to from here on as "the Regulations") and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#) (referred to from here on as "the Code"). The procedure here supplements the information from these sources, but the [Regulations](#) and the [Code](#) must be consulted where clarification is required.
- 1.2 The following procedures cover circumstances where:
 - 1.2.1 termination of candidature is proposed as a result of a recommendation from a Progression Review;
 - 1.2.2 termination of candidature is proposed as a result of failure to undertake the expected responsibilities of a research student;
 - 1.2.3 termination of candidature is proposed due to lack of contact or failure to return from a period of approved suspension of candidature;
 - 1.2.4 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 candidature.
- 1.3 Specialist guidance and support regarding any other circumstances should be sought from the Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team (email gsa@soton.ac.uk).
- 1.4 Irrespective of the circumstances presented, any recommendation which proposes the termination of a research student's candidature must be made by the Faculty Director of the Graduate School (FDoGS) to the Faculty Education Committee (FEC). In accordance with the delegated powers of Senate, FEC has authority to approve any such recommendation but may reject the recommendation or request that the FDoGS provides further information before making its decision.
- 1.5 Provided they have grounds, a student may appeal against any academic decision made by the University (with the exception of the exclusions specified in the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals by Students](#)).
- 1.6 In accordance with the Code, the University is required to monitor research degree provision against internal and external indicators and targets. The Faculty Graduate School Committee will submit regular reports on approved candidature terminations and the reasons for such to FEC.
- 1.7 Where concerns are raised by the Faculty Graduate School directorate, the Faculty Graduate School Committee should monitor any identifiable clusters of proposed terminations as to the cause and, where necessary, take appropriate action to ensure problems are not systemic.
- 1.8 Appendix 1 contains a series of flowcharts outlining the main steps in each of the following procedures:

2. Termination of candidature as a result of a recommendation from a Progression Review

- 2.1 Should a student's failure at a Progression Review result in a recommendation that their candidature be terminated, the Assessment Panel's report to the Faculty should clearly explain how the student has failed to meet the requirements for progression. The report should be submitted to the Faculty Graduate School Office within 10 working days of the date of the Progression Review.
- 2.2 At this point, and 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. Appropriate action should be taken to remedy any identified concerns that are considered to have caused detriment to the student. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease or defer the recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 2.3 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been considered and that there should be no change to the Assessment Panel's proposal, the FDoGS should submit the rationale for their recommendation to terminate the student's candidature to FEC. The FGSO must notify the student of the decision to terminate candidature within 10 working days of FEC's approval. The correspondence must clearly advise the student of the rationale for the decision and must provide information on the University's appeals process.

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

- 3.1 A research student's responsibilities are set out in the [Code](#). Students who fail to engage with these responsibilities may have their candidature terminated. The Co-ordinating Supervisor should refer concerns to the FDoGS for investigation.
- 3.2 At this point, and 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. Appropriate action should be taken to remedy any identified concerns that are considered to have caused detriment to the student. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease or defer the recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 3.3 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 Faculty Graduate School Office to send correspondence to the research student, to include the following information:
 - 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.
- 3.4 The 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 the University's student records system (Banner). A copy of the correspondence should also be sent to the student's supervisory team, which is responsible for providing appropriate supervisory input to support the student in completing the set actions within the required timescale.
- 3.5 The FDoGS will review the Co-ordinating Supervisor's report to determine whether the set actions have been satisfactorily completed. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease the recommendation for termination of candidature.

- 3.6 Should the research student fail to satisfactorily complete the required actions and should no mitigating information have been presented, the FDoGS should submit their rationale for the recommendation to terminate the student's candidature to FEC.
- 3.7 The FGSO must notify the student of the decision to terminate candidature within 10 working days of FEC's approval. The correspondence must clearly advise the student of the rationale for the decision and must provide information on the University's appeals process.

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

- 4.1 The [Transfer, Suspension, Withdrawal and Termination 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 period of suspension without notice, the Faculty shall take all reasonable steps to contact the student to confirm his/her intentions. Should the student fail to respond to such contact from the Faculty, the Faculty 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.*"
- 4.2 Non-engagement has additional significance in the case of international research students with Student visas and the VISAS Team (email visa@soton.ac.uk) should be contacted for guidance.
- 4.3 The following section sets out the process to be followed in the circumstances set out in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 below:
 - 4.3.1 The research 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 suspension of candidature has been approved by the Faculty). All concerns regarding a student's failure to make contact with their supervisory team must be notified to the Faculty Graduate School Office 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 research student has failed to return from a period of approved suspension of candidature and has not submitted a request for their suspension to be extended. The Faculty Graduate School Office should have appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor suspension and return to candidature.
- 4.4 Where the circumstances outlined in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 apply, the Faculty Graduate School Office will send correspondence to the student, seeking to make contact. This 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 a period of (or extension to) suspension of candidature
 - signposting to the University's support services.
 - the consequences should the student fail to satisfactorily respond within the set timescale;
- 4.5 If the student fails to respond to the first communication by the stated deadline, the Faculty Graduate School Office should send a second communication to 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 communication within the defined timescale, the Faculty Graduate School Office 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.

- 4.7 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been resolved, the FDoGS should submit the rationale for their recommendation to terminate the student’s candidature to FEC.
- 4.8 The FGSO must notify the student of the decision to terminate candidature within 10 working days of FEC’s approval. This communication must clearly advise the rationale for the decision and must provide information on the University’s 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 As set out in the [Code](#): *“A research student who does not submit material but 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 Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research Students, will be deemed to have failed the second attempt and candidature will be terminated in accordance with the Procedures for circumstances that may lead to termination of postgraduate research degree candidature.”*
- 5.2 The [Regulations](#) advise that *“A research 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 and candidature will be terminated.”*
- 5.3 The following section sets out the process to be followed in the circumstances set out in 5.1 and 5.2 above:
- 5.4 The Faculty Graduate School Office should have appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor candidature and thesis submission. Should a student fail to submit material for a second attempt at a Progression Review or fail to submit their thesis for examination by the end of the maximum period of candidature, the Faculty Graduate School Office should notify the FDoGS.
- 5.5 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. At this point, the FDoGS may decide that it is appropriate to cease or defer the recommendation for termination of candidature.
- 5.6 Once satisfied that all internal matters have been resolved, the FDoGS should submit the rationale for their recommendation to terminate the student’s candidature to FEC.
- 5.7 The FGSO must notify the student of the decision to terminate candidature within 10 working days of FEC’s approval. The correspondence must clearly advise the student of the rationale for the decision and must provide information on the University’s appeals process

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Appendix 1: flowcharts outlining the main steps of each procedure

