Doctoral Supervision Handbook

Academic year 2016/17
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Introduction

Supervising doctoral students is one of the most rewarding aspects of an academic career. It is an immense pleasure to support the development of a budding new research student into a professional researcher and, as a supervisor myself, I cannot help but feel a strong sense of pride when my doctoral students move on to successful and exciting careers in academia and industry.

Whilst the majority of supervision experiences are very positive, many of us need some support and guidance from time-to-time. This document has been developed to provide just that: an easily-accessible overview of the hard requirements of supervision along with some tips and suggestions as to how you can develop your own supervisory practices. This document should be used in conjunction with the excellent supervisor training provided by the Researcher Development Programme as well as the regulations and Codes of Practice for research degrees.

I hope that you find this guidance helpful in supporting your research students through to timely and successful completion of their degrees.

Professor Chris France
Director of the Doctoral College
# Key Contacts

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1. Quick guide: How to supervise a PhD/MD student

The summary below gives a quick reminder of the various steps that you need to go through and when they need to be done. The maximum period of study for PhD and MD students is 48 months full-time and 96 months part-time. For MPhil students the maximum period of registration is 36 and 72 months for full- and part-time respectively.

One of your main objectives as a supervisor is to ensure that your students submit within the maximum period. This is important both for the student and the University. Students will normally only have access to sufficient funding to cover a defined period (often 3 years). If they go over this period the doctorate will likely become a part-time activity and they will struggle to make sufficient progress to complete within the maximum time; some will find it impossible to complete. It is important that you use your expertise and experience to help them to set tasks that are of the correct depth and rigour to achieve the test of a ‘contribution to knowledge’ whilst ensuring that the overall work programme is achievable within the time and resources available. Your supervisory time is valuable and is best deployed during the registration period. Although it is inevitable that sometimes it will take a little longer than planned, students who are in ‘continuing’ are essentially unfunded. A further incentive is that Research Councils UK requires that 80% of our doctoral students submit within the 48 month deadline. If we fail to meet this benchmark then the University would be barred from applying to certain funding opportunities e.g. Doctoral Training Partnerships.

Doctoral College
2016/17 is the inaugural year of the Doctoral College. Its aims are to ensure that PGRs, in whatever discipline, receive solid training, robust monitoring of progress, and support in order to be able to submit their thesis on time and to be well positioned for the next stage in their career. Supervisors are an integral part of the Doctoral College and over the coming year we will be developing lots of events and new online tools to help you to support and manage your PGRs more effectively.

You will be able to see the registration details and progress histories of your students plus the dates of supervisor training on the Doctoral College webpages.

The PGR Lifecycle

All the timeframes given below are for full-time students; for part-time students these should be doubled.

Admissions:
If you are sent an application please deal with it rapidly, using the paperless system, and tell the administrator whether you are pursuing it or not. Good students will attract a number of offers and slow processes will make it less likely that they end up at Surrey.

All prospective applicants must be interviewed (n.b. remote interviewing by Skype is allowed) by two trained members of staff. The prospective Principal Supervisor should always be on the interview panel. If you have not been trained in doctoral student admissions then you CANNOT interview applicants. The training is incorporated into Supervisor Training Day 1.
After the interview fill in the relevant form and return it to the administrator for processing and generation of an offer letter. N.B. Start dates may only be prospective.

**New students:**
All new students, regardless of start date, will be invited to a set of University-run and Faculty-run induction events.

All new students must attend the course ‘Welcome to your Doctorate’, run by the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) team. During this course they will complete Action Planner which will identify their training needs. It is best practice for you as a supervisor to discuss these training needs with your student and help them plan a training programme tailored to their individual needs.

**Supervision:**
Each student should have at least two supervisors, one of whom must have successfully supervised a PGR student through to completion.

At your first formal meeting it is good practice to include the following:

- Discuss the supervisory arrangements and the responsibilities of each of the supervisors and the student
- Discuss the “Guidance on the authorship of publications and other outputs originating from doctoral research” document and make sure it is signed
- Discuss the training needs of your student, using the outcomes of Action Planner as a guide
- Set clear targets, including training, covering at least the next six months

All subsequent supervisory meetings should take place at least once a month. Ask your student to write a brief summary of the meeting using the monthly meeting form – this will enable you to check that they have understood what was discussed.

These meetings must also be recorded in SITS – if you do not know how to do this please refer to the Doctoral Supervision Handbook. This is used by the University to check if meetings are regularly taking place.

If the student is not on campus then meetings can take place remotely via Skype or telephone.

You should also ensure that the student is given the opportunity to present their research formally at least once a year, for example at a Departmental or Research group seminar, and/or the University or local PGR Conference.

**Regular reviews:**
Formal reviews of the student’s progress against targets must take place at six monthly intervals (for both full- and part-time students) during the interim and end of year review periods. The Research Degrees Office will contact you when reviews are due and advise of you where to find the form for these reviews.

Note that completion of these reviews is monitored by the Admission Progression and Examination Subcommittee. Students who do not complete a review may be put on ‘unsatisfactory academic progress’ procedures, which can lead to termination of registration. It is important that you ensure you review your students every six months by the deadline communicated by the Research Degrees Office.

**Confirmation**
The Confirmation process is a formal hurdle which the student must pass 12-15 months after starting the PhD or MD.
The student must attend the ‘Confirmation process’ workshop organised by RDP as training for this process.

The student writes a report and undergoes a viva voce examination with two independent examiners, who need to be approved before the examination – there is a form for this.

The outcome of the examination is recorded on a form by the examiners which should be returned to the Research Degrees Office.

**Registration changes**

If the student needs to withdraw temporarily, or needs an extension to registration then a case should be made against the grounds given on the forms. Evidence should be presented along with the form. Cases will be examined at the next regular meeting of the full APESC Committee which meets every month. It is important to note that retrospective requests will not be entertained unless there is good cause for the delay.

**Final submission and examination:**

The student should attend the ‘The Viva Examination’ workshops organised by RDP as training for this examination.

The supervisor must submit the ‘Exam Entry’ form to the administrator at least two months before the intended submission date so that the proposed examiners can be approved and invited. All Entry Forms are approved by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee (APESC).

In addition to examining the candidate, the internal examiner needs to make sure that the viva is run in accordance with the regulations, that the completed signed form is promptly returned to the Research Degrees Office and that the student is informed in writing of any required corrections or revisions, or of the requirements for a resubmission (i.e. ‘Chair’ the proceedings). Under certain conditions (defined in the regulations) an independent Chairperson will also be appointed.

**Forms and guidance documents**

All the forms needed for PGR students are available on the current PGR student pages.

You should ensure that you are familiar with the Regulations and Code of practice for research degrees.
2. The PGR Journey

The typical PGR journey, from a student perspective, is summarised in the diagram below.
3. The Doctoral College: Supporting you and your CPD

This year marks the inauguration of the Doctoral College which has been established to support excellence and employability across the postgraduate and early career stages of the research journey. The Doctoral College aims are to ensure that PGRs, in whatever discipline, receive solid training, robust monitoring of progress and support in order to be able to submit their thesis on time and to be well positioned for the next stage of their career.

The Doctoral College recognises that first-class supervision is a fundamental part of any PGR’s success and that it is also an essential aspect of an academic’s career development. To these ends, the Doctoral College has made a firm commitment to ensuring that supervisors are well-prepared and supported in their role.

You will be able to use the Doctoral College webpages to view registration details and progress histories of your students plus the dates of supervisor training. The sections that follow provide some more detail about the support available to you.

Preparing and supporting supervisors

All supervisors who are new to supervision are required to attend the supervisor training workshops provided by the Researcher Development Programme. The training is divided into two days. Supervisors must attend the Day 1 workshop within 3 months of appointment and Day 2 within 9 months of appointment. More information about what is covered in the workshops can be found on the Researcher Development Programme webpages.

Where to go for help

The University Regulations require that all supervisory teams contain at least one member who has experience of supervising a doctoral student through to successful completion. The experienced member acts as a mentor to new supervisors and can provide support and guidance if any issues arise.

There are also plenty of places where supervisors can seek help and guidance outside of the supervisory team. Your local PGR Director and Faculty Associate Deans Doctoral College are very experienced and knowledgeable individuals in supporting PGR students and would be more than happy to help you. The Director of the Doctoral College, Prof Chris France, and the Doctoral College Manager, Shane Dowle, can also provide help and guidance with any difficulties you may be experiencing. If you do flag a concern with any of these members of staff it will always be treated in confidence.

Feedback

As the Doctoral College develops over the coming year we are keen to ensure that the portfolio of events and activities speaks to your needs as supervisors. If you have any ideas about what you would like the Doctoral College to do for supervisors then please discuss these with Chris or Shane or email the Doctoral College at doctoralcollege@surrey.ac.uk

All comments are welcomed.
4. Admissions
The minimum requirements for entry to a research degree are set out in the Regulations. In many cases, the entry requirements are higher than the regulatory minimum. Up-to-date information about the entry requirements for doctoral degrees in your area can be found here.

Initial application
You will be sent sufficient information for you to decide about whether or not you wish to engage further with an application. This is normally an application form and a research proposal. On considering this initial documentation some questions to ask yourself might include:

- Do the applicant’s qualifications and evidence of skills suggest a good match for doctoral research?
- Does the proposed topic match my expertise?
- Are the aims and objectives clear?
- Do we have the resources to support the research?
- Is it likely that such work could be completed within the normal period of registration?
- Do I have sufficient time to be able to supervise the project?

Interview
If you would like to pursue an application, the applicant should be invited to attend an interview. Face-to-face interviewing is the preferred method, but other options such as Skype are permitted. Applicants must be interviewed by two members of trained staff. Untrained members of staff CANNOT interview. The prospective Principal Supervisor should always be on the interview panel.

Interview preparation
Taking on a research student is a significant commitment. It is important, therefore, that you make adequate preparations for the interview to test the applicant. In preparing the questions for the interview, you may find the following helpful:

- What must the candidate be able to demonstrate knowledge of and do at the point of entry to the degree? This might include knowledge of the relevant literature and knowledge of the relevant methods.
- What do you already know about the candidate (from the application form, proposal, and references) and is there anything you wish to explore further in the interview?
- If the applicant has a weakness in a certain area (for example knowledge of methods, previous experience) can this be compensated for by their strengths? Also, can training be provided in house to address these weaknesses or are they so great that the student is unlikely to complete on time?
- How might you assess their reasons for doing the doctorate? How might you assess their level of interest in and passion for the topic?
- How can you test the amount of preparation they have done for the interview? Do they know what a research degree entails?
- Why do they want to do the degree at Surrey?

When interviewing you should formulate questions to test whether or not the student has some or all of the following attributes:

- Enthusiasm for the topic
- Creative approaches
- Confidence to pursue the topic
• Tenacity to deal with setbacks
• Motivation to sustain the applicant through the ups and downs of the research journey
• Likelihood of establishing a good working relationship

This will enable you to come up with criteria about what are you looking for in the applicant which should be used to guide the interview.

**Interview structure**

Good practice suggests that interviews should be structured in the following way:

• Try to establish a rapport with the candidate. Start by asking some straightforward questions such as why they want to do the doctorate. You can also explore some of the factual information contained in the application form at the start of the interview.
• Next you should ask questions to allow applicants to demonstrate the knowledge and skills you expect them to possess in relation to the research project.
• Personal attributes are important: some example of these are listed above. It is possible to ask candidates to provide examples from their life experiences in other contexts that illustrate these qualities or invent a scenario requiring particular qualities for a successful outcome that could reasonably happen during the course of a research project and ask the candidate how they would deal with it.
• Next you can explore some practical issues. How will the candidate fund the degree? How will it be balanced with other life commitments? How will things be managed if they live away from campus?
• To conclude the interview, the applicant should be given an opportunity to ask any questions. Please ensure that you get back to the applicant by email if you are unable to answer a question during the interview.

Following the interview, make sure you complete the interview form and return it to the relevant administrator so that a decision can be formally reported to the applicant. Unsuccessful applicants often ask for feedback so it is good practice to keep notes of the meeting.

**Collaborative students**

It is not uncommon for research degrees to be carried out in collaboration with another organisation. The University allows three types of collaboration at PGR level, namely collaborative co-supervision, split-site supervision and off-site supervision. If you wish to recruit a PGR student who will be carrying out their research in collaboration with another organisation then please refer to the [Code of practice on collaborative provision](#) which gives guidance on how to carry out due diligence and put an agreement in place. No collaboration will be allowed to proceed without an agreement in place.
5. Induction
All PGR students receive an induction to their degree programme (regardless of start date). The induction programme is divided between University and Faculty events as follows:

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<th>Induction item</th>
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<td>1. Central</td>
<td>Broad overview of the University</td>
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<td>Interactive discussion on doing a doctorate at Surrey</td>
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<td>Library services for PGR</td>
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<td>Researcher Development Programme</td>
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<td>Academic writing support</td>
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<td>Teacher training</td>
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<td>Promoting research</td>
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<td>Postgraduate Society</td>
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<td>Students’ Union (President)</td>
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<td>Student support</td>
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<td>Centre for wellbeing</td>
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<td>GGA</td>
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<td>Regulations and Codes of practice</td>
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<td>2. Faculty</td>
<td>Programme structure (reviews, confirmation, examination)</td>
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<td>Health and safety policies</td>
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<td>Student-supervisor relationship</td>
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<td>Intellectual Property</td>
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<td>Liaison Librarian</td>
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<td>Handbooks</td>
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<td>3. Departmental/School</td>
<td>Introduction to key staff</td>
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<td>Research groups and expertise</td>
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<td>Local training provision and training requirements</td>
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<td>Applying to demonstrate/teach</td>
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<td>Desk space and use</td>
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<td>Local resources (e.g. toilets, coffee, photocopying/printing etc, equipment)</td>
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**Health and safety**
You should be aware that staff in a supervisory position, including supervisors of doctoral students, are accountable for the health and safety of the people, activities, and projects that they supervise. You must, therefore, be aware of the health and safety issues and control measures relevant to your student’s activities and projects. You must also comply with the University’s health and safety policy and any other relevant arrangements within your area or activity.
6. Regular supervisory sessions
Regular supervisory sessions are the primary mechanism for monitoring your student’s progress and addressing any issues or concerns. The Code of Practice requires that, as a minimum, you meet your students once a month. You are encouraged to meet your student more frequently if it is beneficial to do so.

The first supervisory meeting
The first supervisory meeting is a crucial one as it lays the foundation for the student-supervisor relationship and is important for clarifying expectations.

Supervisors should ensure that the following items are covered in the first supervisory meeting:

- Discuss the supervisory arrangements, for example, frequency (ensuring that it is no less than the prescribed minimum), timing and length, the type of guidance to be expected
- Discuss the responsibilities of each of the supervisors in the team and the student (these are listed in the Code of practice). You should all be clear on what to expect from each other
- Discuss the feedback that you will give them on their progress and written work. Ensure they understand that critical comments are a normal part of academic discourse and that they are meant constructively in order to improve the standard of the student’s work
- Discuss the practical arrangements for meetings: who will arrange them? What is the protocol to follow if one has to be cancelled? How will the agenda be set?
- Discuss the “Guidance on the authorship of publications and other outputs originating from doctoral research” document and make sure it is signed
- Discuss the training needs of your student and identify workshops they can attend. You should use the results of action planner for this
- Set clear targets, including training, covering at least the first six months

If the student is not on campus then meetings can take place remotely via Skype or telephone.

Regular supervisory meetings
You should use regular supervisory meetings as a means of monitoring your student’s progress against targets and to give them continuous feedback and support. It is useful to bear in mind the following points:

- Make sure you book dates in advance in your diaries. Even if a student does not have work to submit it is still very useful to hold the meeting to check on progress, identify if there are any issues, or just to get to know your student better – this helps to cement the relationship
- Make sure you leave time to discuss any non-academic, pastoral issues that might be affecting your student’s engagement with their studies. Direct them to where they can find help to manage these. Information on support services can be found here.
- Try to encourage your student to write down their ideas from the start and, as much as is practicable, ask them to submit written work for each meeting. Written work might take the form of a brief report, annotated bibliography, diary of what has been done, or a draft chapter of the thesis. The work does not have to be the finished article but it will be helpful for you to see the ideas your student has about their research and to give positive as well as negative constructive feedback
- Make sure there is enough time for intellectual discussion. Challenge your student’s ideas so that they get used to defending their point of view and approaches
- Make sure that you balance positive feedback and constructive criticism
- Set clear, time-bound targets before the next meeting
- Record the meetings in Surrey Self-Serve (see below)
In addition to the above, you should ensure that your student is given the opportunity to present their research formally at least once a year, for example at a Departmental or Research group seminar, and/or the University or local PGR Conference.

**Written record of meetings**
You should ask your student to write a brief summary of the meeting using the monthly meeting form available [here](#). This will enable you to check that they have understood what was discussed.

These meetings must also be recorded in SITS – if you do not know how to do this please refer to the guidance in Appendix 1 of this report. This is used by the University to check if meetings are regularly taking place.
7. Supervisory styles

Supervisors have different styles and approaches to supervising doctoral students. However, you may need to think about adapting your style depending on how receptive students are to your normal style.

In considering the best approach to take with each of your students, a good starting point is to think about the different types of student, their background, motivations for doing a doctorate and how these will impact on their receptiveness to different supervisory styles.

You may find it helpful to think about how you should adapt your approach for different types of student such as:

- International students
- Part-time students with work commitments
- Students with dependents
- Students with considerable work experience
- Full-time younger students

Some tips for getting the supervisory style right include:

- Be open and honest with your students and encourage them to do the same: what type of style do they prefer (hands-on or laid back)?
- Be prepared to review your style over time. Is the approach you are taking getting the results you need? Is your student making adequate progress?
- Consider the extent to which you should push your views on students as opposed to giving them freedom to learn from their mistakes?
- Seek help from more experienced colleagues if you have any concerns
- Do the supervisor training which includes helpful tips and guidance on supervisory styles

International students

The University has a strong international reputation and attracts a high number of international students. If you are supervising an international student, it is worth bearing in mind the following and adapting your style as needed:

- Ensure that new international students fully understand their role and that of the supervisors
- Be clear about what level of support they can expect
- Be wary of students being overly deferential and encourage healthy scepticism of suggestions/ideas that you propose. Appreciate that this may be difficult for students coming from certain cultures and they may need more support and encouragement to develop these skills
- Encourage them to seek help if problems should arise
- Try to be sensitive to cultural differences and be aware of your own implicit assumptions about these
- Show an interest in their general welfare
- Appreciate that:
  - Some may have different concepts of time and may not share, for example, your views on the importance of punctuality
  - Some may have different interpersonal space norms
Some may have different religious beliefs and practices, and you need to make allowances for these.

Some can have language difficulties, and particular difficulty with writing for academic purposes.

Academic writing support is often critical to the success of international students. RDP offers a range of workshops as well as eight hours of one-to-one tutorials a year per student.

**Part-time students**

Part-time students are a very diverse group with a wide age range and different types of backgrounds and experiences. Many of them live away from the University and have full- or part-time work commitments and families. It is likely that part-time students will experience some of the following during their doctorate:

- Significant time constraints through balancing the competing demands of work, study and family
- Feeling out-of-touch and isolated
- Varying motivation

When supervising part-time students you should consider the following:

- Can regular supervisory sessions be held by Skype or by a mix of face-to-face and Skype?
- Try not to rearrange or cancel meetings at short notice as this will likely cause more inconvenience to part-time students
- Schedule meetings for lunchtimes or early evening, as far as is practicable
- Use technology such as Skype and conferencing facilities to enable part-time students to attend training and research seminars virtually
- Set a number of interim, achievable targets for part-time students to break up what is a long period of registration and reinforce a sense of progress
- RDP ensure that part-time and distance students have access to the workshop programme, offering one-to-one appointments face-to-face or via Skype to these students. Furthermore, evening and weekend workshops are also available.

**Strategies for managing emotional problems**

The doctorate can be a very stressful time for many students and this may manifest itself in emotional problems. There are some things that supervisors can do to help alleviate such problems as follows:

- Encourage students to interact with their peers and share experiences
- Encourage them to participate in a mentoring programme, either within the department/faculty or through RDP
- Encourage students to come to the University so that they do not feel isolated, for example, there is study space on the fifth floor of the Library exclusively for researchers
- Construct a timetable with lots of achievable milestones, and provide positive reinforcement when they achieve each milestone
- Encourage students to participate in social activities
- Encourage them to take proper breaks from their work and use their annual leave

If these strategies do not work you should direct them to the University’s support services, such as the Centre for Wellbeing which offers one-to-one counselling for students.
8. Providing feedback
The Code of practice requires that you return any written work submitted to you by your students within a maximum of four weeks with constructive and effective feedback. Whereas four weeks is the maximum, it is good practice to endeavour to return it sooner.

PGR students are often apprehensive about submitting written work to their supervisors and are often very sensitive to any criticism. You should bear in mind the following when giving feedback:

- Make it clear to your student that the purpose of the feedback is to ensure adequate progress is made and that the work is of the standard expected at doctoral level
- Always state the positive aspects first
- Present criticism impersonally and make sure that it is couched in a language so that it is received constructively
- Present feedback clearly to reduce ambiguity, for example, ‘not critical enough’ is not constructive to a student who does not understand what ‘critical writing’ means
- Check that your student understands the feedback at supervisory meetings
- Discuss how to address any negative aspects so that there is an agreed way forward
9. Training
The future success of your students as professional researchers will require them to think strategically about their abilities, expertise and how these need to develop. Research degrees at the University combine research and professional training to equip students with the skills they need to succeed.

Training at the University is delivered at two levels:

- Locally: this covers discipline specific training such as workshops, Master’s modules, journal clubs, research seminars etc. The student handbook contains a list of discipline-specific training in your area.
- Centrally: Much of the training provision offered by the University is delivered by the Researcher Development Programme. They offer a comprehensive suite of face-to-face training workshops, online resources, supporting information and one-to-one sessions. More information about the programme of workshops and training opportunities they offer for postgraduate research students can be found on the RDP webpages.

The University recognises that our postgraduate research student population is diverse and that many of them come to a doctoral degree from different professional and educational backgrounds with different levels of experience. The training that we offer is, therefore, tailored to meet their individual needs as a professional researcher so that they can dedicate their time to developing the skills they need for a successful career.

Nevertheless, in order to ensure that they are well supported throughout the research journey, the following workshops are compulsory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>When (full-time)?</th>
<th>When (part-time)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to your Doctorate</td>
<td>As early as possible and certainly within 6 months of registration</td>
<td>As early as possible and certainly within 6 months of registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Confirmation Process¹</td>
<td>7 – 12 months</td>
<td>20 – 24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Viva Examination</td>
<td>33 – 48 months</td>
<td>48 – 96 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a part of the Welcome to your Doctorate workshop students use the web-based Action Planner. This tool asks them questions about their background and experience in order to determine their skills development needs. It will also recommend workshops they should attend in order to bring these skills up to the expected standard for a research student.

Students MUST share the recommendations of Action Planner with you and these MUST be discussed at supervisory sessions during which a timetable of skills development workshops will be drawn up and agreed.

Please bear in mind the following when planning your students’ training needs:

- Adopt a positive attitude towards training
- Encourage students to participate in the University-wide PGR conference
- Ask about participation in wider training events during supervisory meetings

¹ Note: This workshop is not necessary for MPhil students
• In addition to more formal training events, encourage attendance at departmental seminars, academic conferences, summer schools, etc.

• Remember that their training needs will develop over time and so you should advise students to use the action planner tool on a regular basis.
10. Progress Monitoring
You must formally monitor student progress every six months. This is done through the ‘interim review’ and ‘end of year review’ procedures. The ‘interim review’ will normally take place in March of each year and the ‘end of year review’ in October.

The 30 month review for full-time postgraduate research students and the 60 month review for part-time postgraduate research students have a special significance as the focus of the review will be on preparing them to finish their research project and submit their thesis for examination.

You and your students will be contacted by the Research Degrees Office with details about the review process and the deadlines for submission of the completed forms. The most up-to-date forms are available for download from the PGR webpages.

The review will involve a face-to-face meeting (Skype is acceptable) and the purpose is to:

• provide your students with feedback on their progress
• ensure that they are on course to complete by their deadline
• keep under review their training and development needs and to ensure that they have attended the recommended workshops
• address any weaknesses in their research
• discuss any concerns you may have

Outcomes of reviews
At the end of each review you will be asked to rate students’ progress as:

• Good – likely to submit within a total of 36 months of registration (FT) or 72 months of registration (PT) given the current rate of progress
• Satisfactory – likely to submit within a total of 48 months of registration (FT) or 96 months of registration (PT) given the current rate of progress
• Satisfactory with reservations – giving cause for concern about the likelihood of submission with the maximum timeframe given the current rate of progress
• Unsatisfactory – unlikely to submit within the maximum timeframe given the current rate of progress

It seems obvious but it is important that supervisors rate the outcome of reviews honestly. If you are dissatisfied with the progress your student is making then you must inform them of this to ensure that timely action is taken. Matters rarely improve if unsatisfactory progress is allowed to persist without intervention.

All reviews are moderated by the PGR Director. They will contact you if they have any queries about the outcome of the review.

Unsatisfactory academic progress
If your student’s progress is deemed to be ‘unsatisfactory’, or if their review is not completed in the required timescale, then the Regulations for research degrees (A2) require that they are placed on unsatisfactory academic progress procedures.

In this situation, you must give your student 3 months to meet specified SMART targets. Their progress would then be reviewed at the end of the three months in a review meeting chaired by the Associate Dean Doctoral College and would include an academic outside of the supervisory team. If the targets have not been met to the required standard then it is a regulatory requirement that
registration for the degree is terminated. Unsatisfactory academic progress procedures can be invoked at any time during registration and do not need to wait until the formal reviews. More information on this process and the relevant pro-formas are provided in Appendix 2.

Admission Progression and Examination Subcommittee
Reviews are moderated and signed off by the PGR Director. They are then reported to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee. Students who have not been reviewed will be placed on unsatisfactory academic progress procedures unless they have valid extenuating circumstances.
11. Confirmation

What is confirmation?
Confirmation is the formal examination for which students have to write a Confirmation of Status Report and undergo a viva voce exam. All PhD and MD students are required to go through the Confirmation of Status process to ‘confirm’ their registration. This will normally take place by 12 months, but no later than 15 months, of full-time registration, or by 24 months, but no later than 30 months, of part-time registration. In the case of PhD programmes that contain a structured taught element, the confirmation must take place no later than 24 months for full-time students and no later than 48 months for part-time students.

There is training for the confirmation process that students are required to attend. ‘Confirmation Process’ training is best taken at the point when the student is beginning to write the confirmation report, as the workshop includes information about what is expected in the report as well as how to prepare for the viva.

The principal aims of the Confirmation procedure as laid out in the Code of practice for research degrees are as follows:

- to evaluate the candidate’s approach to the research problem in terms of the theory and proposed or adopted research methods, in order to establish that the future objectives and methods are feasible, appropriate and likely to form a suitable and sufficient programme for doctoral candidature;
- to ensure that the candidate has maintained the motivation to complete a thesis/portfolio and within a reasonable timescale;
- to consider evidence that modules/courses designated specifically for research students or identified and agreed with individual students as a requirement necessary to support their research studies have been completed satisfactorily;
- to provide the candidate with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the research and its presentation;
- to consider arrangements for supervision and facilities for the work and ensure that both are appropriate for the efficient completion of the project.

Who are the Assessors?
You should discuss with your student who would be appropriate assessors for their Confirmation. There needs to be two assessors, normally both members of University staff but one could be external if, for example, the student is a member of staff. One of the assessors will be designated to chair the viva voce examination. You must fill in the form naming the assessors and submit it in advance to the Research Degrees Office for approval by the PGR Director.

Confirmation of Status Viva and Outcome(s)
During the confirmation your student will be questioned about the Confirmation of Status Report and also about the background to and context of their research. The examiners will make one of the permitted recommendations and give your student feedback accordingly.

Your student may pass first time or be told to revise the Report and resubmit after three months, with or without another viva.
If your student does not pass the Confirmation of Status at the second attempt, the assessors may recommend that they change from PhD or MD to MPhil registration, or they may recommend termination of the registration.
12. Examination

All doctoral degrees and MPhils are examined by thesis and an oral examination commonly known as the viva voce examination.

Entry Form for Examination

The Entry Forms for Examination for each type of doctoral degree and MPhil can be found on the PGR webpages. The student has to complete Section A of the form and you must complete Section B. The completed form must be submitted no earlier than 6 months and no later than 2 months before your student intends to submit their thesis. Failure to submit the form in time will delay the viva voce examination.

Section B of the form asks for details of the nominated examiners (normally one internal examiner and one external examiner. Members of staff will normally require 2 external examiners). You will be asked to confirm that the examiners meet the regulatory criteria for appointment and you must provide a written justification for the selection of the examiners and why they are well-suited to examine your student’s project. You should also consider if it would be sensible for junior academics (who meet the regulatory criteria and have been trained in examinations) to undertake the role of internal examiner in order to build up the experience base within your Faculty.

Some points to remember when completing the form:

- Make sure you are using the most up-to-date version of the form available on the PGR webpages
- Make sure all of the relevant sections are complete before you submit the form – including the case in support of the examiners
- Try to recommend an external examiner who is not likely to be strongly opposed to the candidate’s methodological or philosophical approach

Once you have signed the Entry Form please send it to the Research Degrees Office.

The PGR Director will review the information on the form to check the suitability of the examination panel and, if satisfied, will sign the form. The Entry Form will then be forwarded to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee for consideration.

The Research Degrees Office will be informed of the Subcommittee’s decision and you will be contacted if there is a problem.

Following submission of the Entry Form the viva will be arranged. In most cases, the examination arrangements are carried out by administrative staff.

Your student is required to attend The Viva Examination training to help them prepare for the viva. In addition, there are things that you can do to support your student in the lead up to the viva including:

- Explain to students how the viva is likely to be structured and what they should expect. They need to appreciate that the examiners’ role is to challenge and contest the student’s case to see if it can withstand criticism
- Get students accustomed to articulating their arguments and responding to constructive feedback
- Get students to think of the worst questions they might be asked and work with them to develop answers
- Consider a mock viva, with questions such as:
  - Why did you choose this topic/method/sample?
- What would you do differently if you were starting this work now?
- What are your main/most important findings?
- What is original about your work?
- What are its limitations?
- What problems did you face and how did you overcome them?
- What future research can be carried out on this topic?

The viva
The viva voce examination will be conducted in accordance with Section A2 of the regulations. Further information on the conduct of viva voce examinations can be found here. Note that supervisors are not normally allowed to attend the viva, except the section at the end when the verdict is given.

Submission of the final thesis
The version of record of thesis (i.e. the approved version following any corrections) will be uploaded to and made available on the University’s open access repository, unless you or your student has requested a restriction to their thesis because of, inter alia, a confidentiality clause in a contract, or a potentially patentable discovery has been made.

Detailed information on how students can deposit their thesis electronically is available on Library webpage. Please take the time to familiarise yourself with this procedure.
13. Changes to registration

Temporary withdrawal
If you notice, or if your student reports, that they are suffering from an illness or other personal difficulties that are interfering with their doctorate and preventing them from progressing with their research, then you should advise them to apply for a period of temporary withdrawal. **Periods of temporary withdrawal must be agreed in advance and retrospective applications will not normally be considered.** Students will not normally be granted more than 12 month temporary withdrawal in aggregate over the duration of their doctorate.

Your student is required to complete a ‘**Request for Temporary Withdrawal**’ form with supporting documentary evidence. The **Regulations for research degrees (A2)** outline the sorts of circumstances under which a period of temporary withdrawal would be agreed.

The form will need to be counter-signed by you and your PGR Director. The request will then be considered by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee which makes a decision as to whether the request should be approved or rejected.

No supervision can be received or facilities accessed during a period of withdrawal.

Extension to registration
An extension is when a student’s registration period is extended beyond the original deadline as set out in the **Regulations for research degrees (A2)**. Any request for an extension to the maximum period of registration must be made well in advance of the deadline. Retrospective extensions will not normally be granted. Extensions to registration will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the criteria set out in the **Regulations for research degrees (A2)**. For example, poor planning or lack of academic progress would not be accepted. Applications from students who are approaching or who have exceeded their original submission deadline and where there is no strong reason, for example, where the delay is due to a lack of organisation, planning or progress, will normally have their registration terminated.

Your student will need to complete a ‘**Request for Extension**’ form with supporting documentary evidence.

The form will need to be counter-signed by you and submitted to the Research Degrees Office so that it can be considered by your PGR Director. The request will then be considered by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee which makes a decision as to whether the request should be approved or rejected.

Students researching on tier 4 or other student visas
Temporary withdrawals and extensions can have implications for students on tier 4 or other visas. Please contact the **Visa Compliance Manager** or **International Student Support** for guidance. It is strongly recommended that you do not attempt to give advice regarding the implication of registration changes to a student’s visa.

Other changes to registration
Other less common requests for changes to registration include changes to mode of attendance (for example from full-time registration to part-time registration) and permanent withdrawal. All the forms for registration changes can be found on the **PGR webpages** and will require the approval of the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee.
Appendix 1: How to log monthly supervisory session on Surrey Self-Service

Monthly meetings with research students should be recorded in Surrey Self-Service. To do this, follow the instructions below.

Login to Surrey Self-Service (https://sits.surrey.ac.uk) using your University username and password.

Select option ‘Student Engagement’ from the menu on the left hand side of the screen.

Adding a new monthly meeting record

• To add a new monthly meeting, select ‘Add Research Students Supervision Meeting’. You can retrieve the relevant student by entering their student code or their surname and/or forename. You can also search for students by department or route (programme of study) code.

• Once selected, a summary of the student’s activity will be shown on screen.

• You can edit existing records and add new records.

• When adding a new record ensure that the correct review outcome and student attendance values are selected. Notes can be also be entered here.
• Save the record by pressing the ‘Store New Meeting’ button.

Reporting on monthly meetings

• From the Student Engagement menu, select ‘Research Supervision meeting report’.

• Enter an individual student’s code, or select a department from the list.

• The report will show all supervisor meetings for that individual or department. The results can be exported to excel for further analysis.

Research Student Supervision Meetings
This lists supervision meetings for research students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCQ Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Course Group</th>
<th>Student Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Biochemical sciences PhD</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>November Supervision</td>
<td>29/Nov/2013</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>October Supervision</td>
<td>18/Oct/2013</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>First official meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>January Supervision</td>
<td>25/Jan/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>February Supervision</td>
<td>13/Feb/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>March Supervision</td>
<td>17/Mar/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>April Supervision</td>
<td>01/Apr/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>May Supervision</td>
<td>09/May/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>June Supervision</td>
<td>23/Jul/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>all supervisors present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>July Supervision</td>
<td>04/Jul/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6-month review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>August Supervision</td>
<td>09/Aug/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>all supervisors present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>September Supervision</td>
<td>02/Sept/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>September Supervision</td>
<td>23/Sept/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>January Supervision</td>
<td>05/Jan/2015</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>test test test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>December Supervision</td>
<td>19/Dec/2014</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>test test test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Guidance for PGR Directors and Administrators on the Termination of PGR Student Registration
**Introduction**

This guidance has been written for use by PGR Directors, administrators and supervisors. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the reasons for which a postgraduate research student’s registration may be terminated and the associated process to be followed.

It is important that the guidance contained within this documentation is adhered to in order to ensure that the actions the University are fair to the student and aligned with our regulations. If this guidance is not followed it greatly increases the chances of a procedural irregularity which may constitute grounds for a successful appeal by the student.

**Grounds for Termination**

The most common grounds for termination of a postgraduate research student’s registration are:

- Unsatisfactory academic progress
- Unsatisfactory reviews
- Loss of contact
- Lapsed registration
- Non-payment of fees
- Failed confirmation
- Academic misconduct
- Fitness to Practice
- Fitness to Study

The majority of the above reasons for termination are covered in [Section A2 of the regulations](#). It is recommended that this guidance is read in conjunction with the relevant regulations.
**Unsatisfactory Academic Progress**  
(ref: paras 56 – 58 of Section A2)

**When should this be used?**  
The procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory academic progress should be invoked when the supervisors have concerns that a student is not making sufficient progress with their research and this is jeopardising the chances of completing the project within the regulatory timescale. As a part of the process, students are provided with the opportunity to address unsatisfactory progress and make improvements before a recommendation for termination can be made.

**What is the procedure?**  
There are four key stages:

**Stage 1 – Identifying and Agreeing Unsatisfactory Academic Progress**  
If the Principal Supervisor judges a student’s progress to be unsatisfactory they are required to consult the Associate Dean Doctoral College (if the Associate Dean Doctoral College is the supervisor, then the Associate Dean (Research) should be consulted). The purpose of seeking the opinion of the Associate Dean Doctoral College is to ensure that the student is treated fairly by involving an individual outside of the supervisory team and to ensure there is consistency being applied across the board where unsatisfactory academic progress procedures are invoked.

The details of this consultation must be documented and both parties must be in agreement that the student’s progress is unsatisfactory. If there is a disagreement between the parties then the case should be referred to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee.

A pro-forma for recording the details of this meeting is contained in Appendix 1. A copy of this document must be kept securely in the student’s file.

**Stage 2 – Informing the Student**  
Where the student’s progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory at Stage 1, the student will be sent written notification of this (by recorded delivery to the home address provided to the University and by email). The written notification will specify clear targets to be met and the student will be given **no less than 3 months** to meet these. It must also be clearly stated that the penalty for failing to meet the targets to the required standard is termination of registration.

A template letter is contained in Appendix 2. This letter will be sent by the Associate Dean Doctoral College.

**Stage 3 – Post-3 month period**  
Following the three month period, the student’s case will be reviewed by:

- the Principal Supervisor,
- the Associate Dean Doctoral College (if the Associate Dean Doctoral College is the supervisor, then the Associate Dean (Research) should be consulted)
- one other academic not previously involved in the case but with knowledge of postgraduate research.

This meeting needs to be documented. A pro-forma for recording the details of the meeting is included in Appendix 3.

If all parties agree that the student has met the targets to the required standard then normal registration will resume. The student must be advised of this in writing.
If all parties agree that the student has failed to meet the targets to the required standard then a recommendation for programme termination will be made to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee. The student should also be notified of this intention in writing by Research Degrees Office.

If there is a disagreement between the parties then the case will be referred to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee for a decision.

A case for consideration by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee will be compiled. This will contain the following:

- A cover sheet outlining the salient points and dates
- A copy of the Stage 1 consultation minutes between the Principal Supervisor and the Associate Dean Doctoral College.
- A copy of the letter sent to the student informing them of unsatisfactory academic progress
- A copy of the Stage 3 minutes between the Principal Supervisor, Associate Dean Doctoral College and independent academic.

**Stage 4 – Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee**

The Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee will review the case. If the recommendation for programme termination is approved, the student will be written to and advised that their registration has been terminated. They will also be informed of the appeals process should they wish to contest the decision.

**Extenuating Circumstances**

Where a student makes a request for the recognition of extenuating circumstances during or after the three month period (Stage 2), this will be considered in accordance with the mechanisms described in [Regulations for extenuating circumstances](#). Where extenuating circumstances are found to be valid, the deadline to meet specified targets will normally be extended by up to three months subject to the approval of the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee.
Unsatisfactory Progress Reviews
(ref: paras 48, 57 -58 of Section A2)

When should this be used?
Postgraduate research students are required to have a review every six months. There are four possible outcomes of these reviews: good, satisfactory, satisfactory with reservations, and unsatisfactory.

Where the outcome of a student’s review is unsatisfactory, action must be taken to address any issues and give the student the opportunity to make improvements. This is in the student’s best interests as it facilitates the timely resolution of issues.

What is the procedure?
If the outcome of the annual review is unsatisfactory then Stages 2 – 4 of the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress procedures (see above) will be followed.
Loss of contact
(ref: para 59 of Section A2)

When should this be used?
A case for termination on the grounds of loss of contact should only be made where all attempts have been made to salvage the situation and where the lack of effort is clearly on the part of the student and not the University.

A Postgraduate research student is deemed to have lost contact with the University where there is documentary evidence showing that no formal contact has been made by the student for a period of three months or more.

What is the procedure?
Evidence will need to be provided that all reasonable attempts have been made to contact the student (including telephone, email, and post).

Where the student fails to respond to attempts by the Faculty to make contact, the Faculty should proceed to send by recorded delivery and email a final letter stating that unless satisfactory arrangements for a return to study are made within at most 10 working days, it will be assumed that the student wishes to permanently withdraw from the programme of study. See the appendix for a template letter which will be sent by the Associate Dean Doctoral College.

A case for consideration by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee will need to be prepared consisting of the following:

- a brief summary of all attempts made to contact the student within the last 3 months;
- copies of the above attempts;
- a copy of the final letter sent to the student.
**Lapsed Registration**  
(ref: para 26 of Section A)

*When should this be used?*  
A student’s registration is considered to have lapsed when the student has reached the end of their maximum period of registration and the student has not applied for an extension or an extension has not been granted.

*What is the procedure?*  
Students should not take longer than the maximum period of registration to submit their thesis for examination.

To terminate the student’s registration on the grounds that it has lapsed a case needs to be made to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee including:

- A cover sheet summarising key events in the student’s registration (review dates and outcomes, date of confirmation, any periods of absence, any changes/issues with supervision), when/if the extension request was received, the reasons for the extension and why it was rejected
- Any other correspondence pertinent to the case
Non-payment of fees
(ref: para 9 of Section A2)

When should this be used?
This procedure is managed by the University’s finance department. When PGR students fail to pay their fees by the University deadlines, it will result in the termination of their registration.

What is the procedure?
Students who have failed to pay their fees will be contacted by the Finance Department and given opportunities to settle their debt. Should these not be settled then the Finance Department will terminate the registration.
Failed confirmation
(ref paras 61-72 of Section A2)

When should this be used?
Students registered for a PhD or MD are required to have their registration confirmed. If the examiners do not confirm a student’s registration at the initial confirmation they are entitled to a second attempt. At the second attempt, there are three outcomes permitted by the regulations:

1. that the student be permitted to continue registration on the PhD or MD; or
2. that the student should be registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy; or
3. that the student’s registration be terminated

What is the procedure?
The Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee will be sent paperwork following a second confirmation if the outcome is to terminate the student’s registration.
Academic Misconduct, Fitness to Study or Practise
More information about these procedures can be found in the following Regulations:

Regulations for fitness to study

Regulations for fitness to practise

Code of practice for handling allegations of research misconduct
Appendices
Stage 1: Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

Name of student

Section 1: Please use the space below to provide evidence of the PGR student’s unsatisfactory academic progress

Section 2: The Associate Dean Doctoral College (or the Associate Dean (Research) if the ADDC is also the student’s Principal Supervisor) is invited to make any additional comments using the space below.

Having considered the evidence presented and discussed the PGR student’s case, we are in agreement that progress is unsatisfactory and unsatisfactory academic progress procedures should be initiated.

Name (Principal Supervisor)

Signed (Principal Supervisor)

Name (Associate Dean Doctoral College)

Signed (Associate Dean Doctoral College)
Stage 2: Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

Date

Dear

Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

I am writing to you out of concern for the progress you have hitherto made on your doctoral programme in (INSERT PROGRAMME).

Your supervisor has consulted me and on reviewing your case, we are in agreement that your progress is currently unsatisfactory.

In order to address this and to give you an opportunity to get back on track with your studies we are initiating unsatisfactory academic progress procedures in accordance with paragraphs 56 - 58 of Section A2 of the regulations.

I am now formally notifying you that you have three months from the date of this letter (SPECIFY THE EXACT DATE) in which to complete the following targets to the required standard:

Insert targets + dates for completion
Insert targets + dates for completion
Insert targets + dates for completion
Insert targets + dates for completion........

I must inform you that failure to complete the above targets to a satisfactory standard within the specified timeframe will result in a recommendation for the termination of your registration being made to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee.

If your unsatisfactory progress is due to extenuating circumstances, you are advised to declare these so that they can be taken into account. More information about extenuating circumstances can be found in B1 regulations for extenuating circumstances.

Please remember that your supervisory team, and myself, are willing to offer any reasonable support you may need in order to achieve these targets.

I wish you all the best in making the required progress with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Dean Doctoral College
Stage 3: Unsatisfactory academic progress

Name of student…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

This form should be used to record the outcome of the review of the student’s work submitted under unsatisfactory academic progress procedures. The review panel will be comprised of the Principal Supervisor, the Associate Dean Doctoral College (unless the Associate Dean Doctoral College is also the Principal Supervisor, in which case the Associate Dean (Research) will be involved) and an independent academic not involved with the project.

Please use the space below to record the points considered in the review

Following the three month period, we deem the student’s progress to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>UNSATISFACTORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name (Principal Supervisor)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Signed (Principal Supervisor)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Name (Associate Dean Doctoral College)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Signed (Associate Dean Doctoral College)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Name (Independent)……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Signed (Independent)……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Loss of contact letter

Date

Dear

RE: Loss of Contact

Our records indicate that you have not made any attempt to contact the University for at least three months. We have attempted to get in touch with you previously but we have not received a response.

In accordance with paragraph 59 of Section A2 of the regulations, I am writing to advise you that unless you contact me within 10 working days of the date of this letter (SPECIFY DATE), I will have no option but to recommend to the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee that your registration is terminated on the grounds of loss of contact.

Yours faithfully,

Associate Dean Doctoral College