The Academic Board, as delegate of the Senate of the University of Sydney, adopts the following policy.

Dated: 2 December 2015

Last amended:

Signature:

Position: Chair, Academic Board

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PART 1 PRELIMINARY

1 Name of policy

This is the Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2015.

2 Commencement

This policy commences on 1 January 2016.

3 Policy is binding

Except to the extent that a contrary intention is expressed, this policy binds the University, staff, students and affiliates.

4 Statement of Intent

(1) The University aspires for all higher degree by research students to have a quality research training experience and to produce research of the highest calibre. This includes the development of skills and knowledge necessary to be a successful researcher in the chosen discipline and the timely completion and successful examination of their research projects and theses.

(2) The University will partner with students to plan their progression throughout their candidature and set clear expectations of satisfactory progress. The University will provide appropriate institutional support and resources, regular reviewing, including a written submission and meeting, and support students to maintain research integrity and quality.

(3) This policy details the elements of the higher degree by research progress planning and review process. It should be read in conjunction with the University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (‘the Rule’), the Delegations of Authority – Academic Functions, and the Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Procedures 2015 (‘the Procedures’).

5 Application

(1) Except to the extent that a contrary intention is expressed, this policy applies to higher degree by research students, staff and affiliates.

Note 1: See clause 20 for transitional provisions.

(2) It is a condition of each student’s admission to candidature that the student complies with his or her obligations under this policy.
6 Definitions

(1) In this policy:

activity means a specific requirement in a student’s candidature that contributes to the completion of a milestone.

Associate Dean means the Associate Dean responsible for overseeing higher degrees by research in the relevant faculty.

Dean means the Dean of the relevant faculty.

coordinating supervisor means the supervisor in a supervisory team who has designated academic delegations and responsibility for administrative requirements.

degree means the relevant higher degree by research.

department means the academic unit responsible for a student’s higher degree by research candidature. It may be called a department, discipline or school within the University.

faculty means a faculty or a board of studies as established by Senate in each case by its constitution, and refers to the student’s faculty of enrolment.

head of department means the head of the relevant department.

Note: Functions performed by the head of department may be performed by the Head of School, Dean or Associate Dean, in accordance with paragraph 1.4(4) of the Rule, particularly in faculties that are not organised into departments or disciplines.

higher degree by research means a doctorate by research or master’s by research, as defined in the Rule.

milestone means a significant event in a student’s candidature that is useful in monitoring and guiding the student’s progress to successful completion. Milestones may comprise a number of activities.

postgraduate coordinator means the postgraduate coordinator for the relevant department.

progress means the student’s progress against the requirements specified in subclause 13(1).

progress plan means a progress plan developed in accordance with Part 2.

progress review means a progress review conducted in accordance with Part 3.

research period means a research period set by the University and published on its website.

Note: Research periods are published at: http://sydney.edu.au/study/study-dates.html
Review Panel means a panel established to conduct a progress review in accordance with clause 11.

Rule means the *University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011.*

student means a person who is currently admitted to candidature in a higher degree by research award course of the University.

supervisor means a person appointed to discharge the responsibilities set out in the *Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013,* including research supervisors, coordinating supervisors and auxiliary supervisors.

supplementary progress review means a progress review conducted in accordance with clause 17.

### PART 2 PROGRESS PLANNING

**7 Progress plans**

(1) Students and supervisors must begin progress planning at an early stage in each student’s higher degree by research candidature.

(2) All students must have a progress plan within three months from the date of commencement of candidature, or within six months for part-time students.

**Note 2:** See clause 20. This subclause does not apply to students enrolled as at 31 December 2015 with a latest completion date later than 30 June 2016.

(3) The purpose of a progress plan is to align and manage student, University and faculty expectations about what is required to achieve the award of the degree.

(4) A student’s progress plan must include all activities and milestones required to achieve the award of the degree, including:

   (a) formulation and approval of research proposal;
   (b) formulation and approval of research projects;
   (c) thesis development and examination;
   (d) research training activities;
   (e) coursework requirements;
   (f) compliance and risk management activities.

**Note 3:** See Part 4 for information on activities and milestones.

**8 Creating progress plans**

(1) Students are responsible for creating their progress plan, based on current University templates, with the participation and support of their coordinating supervisor.

(2) Progress plans must be:

   (a) endorsed by the student’s coordinating supervisor; and
(b) approved by the head of department or postgraduate coordinator.

**Note 4**: Progress plan templates are available on the University’s website at: myuni.sydney.edu.au.

9 Maintaining and varying progress plans

(1) Students are responsible for maintaining their progress plan, and for identifying any variations required, with the participation and support of their coordinating supervisor.

(2) Students must review their progress plan, in consultation with their coordinating supervisor, at least twice per year, with at least one review being conducted as part of the student’s preparation for a progress review.

(3) A variation to a progress plan may be required for many reasons, including:

(a) where a student:
   (i) changes attendance mode;
   (ii) requests a leave of absence or suspension of candidature;
   (iii) transfers to another course or program;
   (iv) achieves a milestone;
   (v) fails to achieve or is delayed in achieving a milestone;
   (vi) submits a request for an extension of candidature;
   (vii) has encountered unanticipated barriers to progress; or

(b) where it becomes clear that the student’s research project needs improvement or is not viable.

(4) Variations to progress plans may be material or non-material.

(5) Material variations are variations that:

(a) extend the date for achievement of a University, faculty or department milestone by more than three months from the original date;

(b) require a change to the thesis submission date to:
   (i) a new research period; or
   (ii) a date that is beyond the latest date for submission, as defined in clause 2.20 of the Rule;

(c) substantially change the nature of the research.

**Note 5**: Clause 2.20 of the Rule authorises a Dean or Associate Dean to permit a student to submit his or her thesis after a period of time greater than the maximum periods specified in that clause.

(6) Material variations to progress plans must be:

(a) endorsed by the student’s coordinating supervisor; and

(b) approved by the head of department or postgraduate coordinator.

(7) Students should discuss non-material variations to progress plans with their coordinating supervisor.
PART 3 PROGRESS REVIEW

10 Progress reviews

(1) Progress reviews (including supplementary progress reviews) must be conducted in accordance with this policy and the procedures.

(2) The purpose of a progress review is to:
   (a) assess whether the student has adequate support and resources to complete his or her research project and thesis in accordance with the progress plan;
   (b) assess whether the current supervisory arrangements are satisfactory;
   (c) assess the feasibility of the progress plan; and
   (d) assess and rate the student’s progress.

(3) A copy of the student’s progress plan will be provided to all parties involved in the progress review.

(4) A progress review must be conducted for each student as required by the head of department or postgraduate coordinator and at least once per year.

(5) Students re-enrolling for a period of more than six months as a result of a requirement to revise and resubmit in a previous thesis examination, must participate in a progress review between three and six months from the date of re-enrolment.

(6) Progress reviews should be supported by continuous evaluation of progress and regular meetings between students and supervisors.

11 Review Panel

(1) The head of department or postgraduate coordinator must appoint two or more academic staff members to form a review panel for each student’s review, and nominate one of the panel members to act as chair.

(2) Each Review Panel member must have one or more of:
   (a) relevant disciplinary expertise;
   (b) experience in supervising and managing higher degree by research candidatures; or
   (c) other relevant specialist knowledge.

(3) In appointing members of a Review Panel, the head of department or postgraduate coordinator:
   (a) may appoint from outside the department or faculty;
   (b) must not appoint any of a student’s supervisors; and
   (c) must consider and manage any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interests.

Note 6: For information on evaluating and managing conflicts of interest, see the External Interests Policy 2010.
12 Progress review meetings

(1) Students must participate in a progress review meeting as required by the head of department or postgraduate coordinator and at least once per year.

(2) Students may be accompanied at the progress review meeting by a support person, such as a colleague, friend, family member or student representative.

(3) Progress review meetings will be conducted by the Review Panel.

(4) The Review Panel:
   (a) may invite any or all of the student’s supervisors to attend part of the progress review meeting;
   (b) must discuss the progress plan, and any required variations to the progress plan, with the student and (when in attendance) his or her supervisors; and
   (c) must provide the student with an opportunity to speak to the Review Panel without any of the student’s supervisors present.

13 Progress review outcomes

(1) The student’s progress will be measured against:
   (a) University, faculty, department and student milestones and activities that are within the student’s control;
   (b) action items identified in the student’s previous progress reviews; and
   (c) compliance with student responsibilities set out in relevant University policies and procedures.

(2) Students must meet the requirements specified in subclause 13(1) to the required standard or quality.

(3) The progress review ratings are:
   (a) meets or exceeds objectives;
   (b) marginal progress;
   (c) unsatisfactory progress.

(4) The Review Panel must prepare a written report for the head of department or postgraduate coordinator:
   (a) giving its assessment of the feasibility of the progress plan;
   (b) setting out any required variations to the progress plan;
   (c) identifying any actions to be taken as a result of the progress review, and who will be responsible for them;
   (d) recommending whether a supplementary progress review is required;
   (e) indicating, where relevant, whether the student’s scholarship is at risk, and the time frame for any potential termination of scholarship; and
   (f) recommending a progress review rating based upon its assessment of the student’s progress.

(5) The Review Panel may prepare a report and recommend a progress review rating in the student’s absence, if:
(a) the student fails to attend the progress review meeting without notice or good cause; or
(b) the student is unable to attend and the Review Panel forms the reasonable view that the progress review meeting can properly be conducted in the student's absence.

(6) The student will have an opportunity to respond to the Review Panel's report.

(7) The head of department or postgraduate coordinator must:
(a) determine a progress review rating, taking into account:
   (i) the recommendation of the Review Panel;
   (ii) the student's response; and
   (iii) any exceptional circumstances related to the candidature and beyond the reasonable control of the student;
(b) specify any actions to be taken as a result of the progress review, including who will be responsible for them and timeframes for their completion;
(c) state whether the proposed supervision arrangements are satisfactory;
(d) determine whether a supplementary progress review is required; and
(e) monitor the implementation of any action items for the department, faculty or University identified by the Review Panel. Such items should be completed within three months of the date of the progress review.

14 'Meets or exceeds objectives'

(1) A rating of 'meets or exceeds objectives' means that the student's progress since the last progress review, or since commencement of candidature, has been satisfactory or exceeded expectations.

(2) To achieve a rating of 'meets or exceeds expectations' the student must:
(a) have satisfactorily met all requirements (as specified in subclause 13(1)) since the last progress review; and
(a) be expected to submit the thesis for examination on time, or in a timely fashion, allowing for any previous delays.

15 'Marginal progress'

(1) A rating of 'marginal progress' indicates that:
(a) the student has not satisfactorily met all requirements (as specified in subclause 13(1)) since the last progress review; or
(b) there is some risk that the student's thesis will not be submitted for examination on time, or in a timely fashion, allowing for any previous delays.

(2) If a student receives a rating of 'marginal progress', the head of department or postgraduate coordinator:
(a) must specify a set of required actions and due dates; and
(b) must set a date for a supplementary progress review; and
(c) may:
   (i) refer the Review Panel’s report to the postgraduate coordinator or Associate Dean; and
   (ii) take such other action as the head of department or postgraduate coordinator considers appropriate, consistent with the Rule and this policy.

(3) A rating of ‘marginal progress’ will be considered satisfactory for the purposes of a student’s scholarship, where the terms and conditions of the scholarship are under the University’s control.

(4) A rating of ‘marginal progress’ cannot be used as a trigger for the requirement for a student to show good cause why he or she should be permitted to continue the candidature.

(5) If a student is required to meet a required set of actions and due dates, the coordinating supervisor is responsible for overseeing their completion.

16 ‘Unsatisfactory progress’

(1) A rating of ‘unsatisfactory progress’ indicates that:
   (a) the student has not satisfactorily met all requirements (as specified in subclause 13(1)) since the last progress review; or
   (b) there is a significant risk that the thesis:
      (i) will not be submitted for examination on time, or in a timely fashion, allowing for any previous delays; or
      (ii) will not be completed at all.

(2) If a student receives a rating of ‘unsatisfactory progress’, the head of department or postgraduate coordinator:
   (a) must, except where the student is asked to show good cause:
      (i) specify a set of required actions and due dates;
      (ii) set a date for a supplementary progress review;
      (iii) refer the Review Panel’s report to the postgraduate coordinator or Associate Dean; and
      (iv) take such other action as the head of department or postgraduate coordinator considers appropriate, consistent with the Rule and this policy.
   (b) may:
      (i) where relevant, recommend to the University that the student’s research scholarship be terminated;
      (ii) recommend to the Associate Dean that the student be asked to show good cause why he or she should be permitted to continue the candidature.

(3) In determining what action to take in accordance with subclause (2), the head of department or postgraduate coordinator will take into account:
   (a) any injury, illness or misadventure experienced by the student that has had an impact on progress since the last progress review;
   (b) any difficulties caused by, or fault on the part of, the University; and
(c) any exceptional circumstances related to the candidature and beyond the reasonable control of the student.

(4) If a student receives a rating of ‘unsatisfactory progress’ at two consecutive progress reviews, the head of department or postgraduate coordinator must recommend to the Associate Dean that the student be asked to show good cause why he or she should be permitted to continue the candidature.

(5) If a student must meet a required set of actions and due dates, the coordinating supervisor is responsible for overseeing their completion.

17 Supplementary progress reviews

(1) If the head of department or postgraduate coordinator requires a student to undertake a supplementary progress review, that supplementary progress review:
   (a) should take place in one of the scheduled review cycles;
   (b) must take place no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the previous review; and
   (c) must be conducted in accordance with this policy.

(2) Subject to sub-clause (3), if a student receives a rating of ‘marginal progress’ at a supplementary progress review, clause 15 of this policy will apply.

(3) If after two consecutive supplementary progress reviews the student fails to achieve a rating of ‘meets or exceeds expectations’, the student must receive a rating of ‘unsatisfactory progress’ for the second supplementary progress review, and clause 16 of this policy will apply.

PART 4 MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

18 Milestones and activities

(1) There are three types of milestones and activities:
   (a) University;
   (b) faculty and department;
   (c) student.

(2) University milestones and activities are:
   (a) set out in Schedule 1 of this policy;
   (b) mandatory (including the items listed in bullet-points); and
   (c) common for all candidates.

(3) Faculty and department milestones and activities:
   (a) are additional to University milestones and activities;
   (b) are mandatory specialist requirements specific to the faculty or department;
   (c) are common for all candidates in the faculty or department;
   (d) may include department specific activities required to achieve University milestones; and
(e) must be approved by the SEG Research Training Committee.

(4) Student milestones and activities are:
(a) specific to the student’s candidature;
(b) set in consultation with the student, and endorsed by the coordinating supervisor.

(5) Progress plans must include at least one faculty or department milestone between the University milestones ‘Confirmation’ and ‘Intent to Submit’.

19 Rescissions and replacements

This document replaces the *Progress Review of Higher Degree by Research Students Guidelines*, which commenced on 21 August 2014, which is rescinded as from the date of commencement of this document.

20 Transitional provisions

(1) For students enrolled as at 31 December 2015 with a latest completion date earlier than 1 July 2016:
(a) Part 2 does not apply; and
(b) Part 3 applies, but is amended to exclude requirements for, and reference to, progress plans.

(2) For students enrolled as at 31 December 2015 with a latest completion date later than 30 June 2016, the following provision applies in place of subclause 7(2):
(a) All students must have a progress plan by the earlier of:
   (i) 30 June 2016; or
   (ii) one month prior to the date of their next scheduled progress review.
## SCHEDULE 1: UNIVERSITY MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Research Project &amp; Thesis</th>
<th>Research Training</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Outcome Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary appraisal</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>• Review research idea.</td>
<td>• Complete training needs analysis.</td>
<td>• Complete Responsible Research Practice module.</td>
<td>• Have all relevant action items been identified and included in the progress plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draft research plan.</td>
<td>• Schedule relevant training activities.</td>
<td>• Complete induction(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draft data management plan.</td>
<td>• Review communication skills (especially writing).</td>
<td>• Identify any need for ethics approval.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify subsequent actions in progress plan.</td>
<td>• Conduct intellectual property review, and consider need for IP agreements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Conduct autonomous sanctions check.</td>
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<td>• Consider potential for restricted information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHS [Activity, within Preliminary Proposal Milestone]</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete WHS training</td>
<td>• WHS training completed.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>• Finalise research proposal/plan.</td>
<td>• Ensure student has adequate written English to write thesis, or that measures are in place to assist the student to meet this requirement within a specified timeframe.</td>
<td>• Confirm ethics plan and commence ethics application process (where relevant).</td>
<td>• Is the research project feasible? If not, consider next steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Finalise data management plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct resources review, including information technology, hardware, software, space, funding, supervision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone</td>
<td>Time frame</td>
<td>Research Project &amp; Thesis</td>
<td>Research Training</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Outcome Checklist</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalise Research Proposal</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>• Agree a final research proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is the research proposal feasible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>  (Activity, within Confirmation Milestone)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is the research proposal agreed by all parties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to submit</td>
<td>3 months from projected submission</td>
<td>• Check thesis draft.</td>
<td>• Ensure all training activities from training needs analysis are complete.</td>
<td>• Check compliance with ethics approvals, data management plan, IP agreements.</td>
<td>• Will the thesis be ready for examination?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit for examination</td>
<td>Submission date</td>
<td>• Coordinating supervisor confirms thesis is in a form suitable for examination.</td>
<td>• Faculty decides to proceed with examination.</td>
<td>• Consider whether the thesis contains restricted information.</td>
<td>• Is the thesis examinable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Complete within 4 months of submission</td>
<td>• Determine outcome of examination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If yes, have examiners been appointed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award</td>
<td>Within 4 months of award notification</td>
<td>• Complete requirements for award, including emendations.</td>
<td>• Comply with data management plan.</td>
<td>• Does the thesis satisfy the requirements for award?</td>
<td>• If yes, are there any conditions that must be satisfied?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lodge final version of thesis.</td>
<td>• Comply with any ethics approval and protocol.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• If no, can the student revise and resubmit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confer degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can the degree be conferred?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES

Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2016

Date adopted:  2 December 2015
Date registered:  11 December 2015
Date commenced:  1 January 2016
Administrator:   Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Review date:   1 January 2021

Rescinded documents:

Progress Review of Higher Degree by Research Students Guidelines

Related documents:

University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011
Essential Resources for Postgraduate Research Students Policy 2012
Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013
Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Policy 2015
Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Procedures 2015

AMENDMENT HISTORY

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