

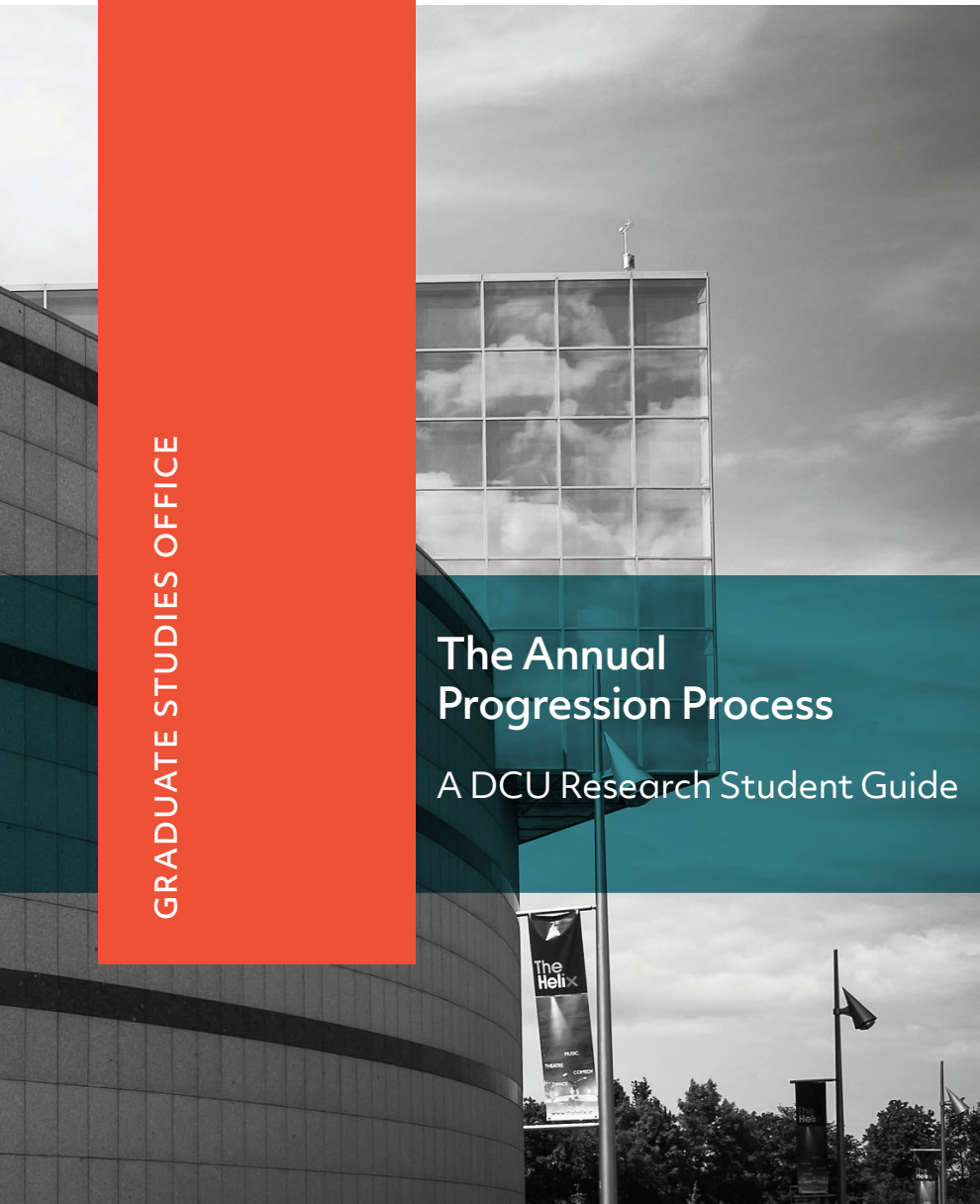


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GRADUATE STUDIES OFFICE

The Annual Progression Process

A DCU Research Student Guide





The Annual Progression Process



The purpose of this guide is to assist research students and their supervisory panel in completing the annual review process.

The guide has been developed by the Graduate Studies Office in keeping with DCU's *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*. While following this guide, students and their supervisors should also consult with their School to determine discipline specific practices.

While every effort has been made to ensure information is correct at the time of publication, the guide is intended as an information resource only. DCU regulations, policies and procedures take precedence at all times and in all cases.

What is the Annual Review Process?

As outlined in DCU's *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, the progress of each research student is formally evaluated on an annual basis through the completion of an Annual Progress Report (to be submitted by end of June each year). This online report is made available by Registry each year (from around April time), and students will not be allowed to progress to the next year of study until such time as a positive report is received by Registry.

The purpose of the progress review is to support both student and supervisor(s) by giving an opportunity to reflect and report on progress and achievements in the year concerned, and initiate plans for the subsequent year. The progress review is also an opportunity to provide the research student with advice, support and pastoral care.

The annual progress review will be carried out at school level, with the relevant e-form (PGR2) completed by the student, the Principal Supervisor(s), approved, where relevant, by any other supervisors and Independent Panel Member and endorsed by the Head of School or nominee. The report should be submitted electronically to Registry each year on or before the date published in the Academic Calendar. The student should retain a copy of the final electronic form.



Steps and Indicative Timeline

The Process (Offline review activity to be completed prior to completing the e-form)

The System (online PGR2 form)

April	Student and supervisor should arrange date for annual review meeting with the full supervisory panel.
April	Student should begin to compile an (offline) annual report of their progress. The student should discuss the format and content of this report locally as different disciplines and schools have their own requirements. This report is a useful aid in directing the discussion at the annual review meeting.
May/early June	An annual progress review meeting should take place. The student and the full supervisory panel, including the independent panel member, attend this.
May/early June	Only after a review meeting has taken place should the student commence to complete section A of the online PGR2 form.
June	The Principal Supervisor completes section B of the online PGR2 form.
June	The student reads and acknowledges the supervisor's report.
June	All other panel members (secondary supervisors, independent panel member) must approve the recommendation for progression/non-progression.
June	The Head of School must endorse the recommendation.*

* Students on the Doctor of Education programme are registered with the Institute of Education and not a specific School within the Institute. For these students, the Head of School function is undertaken by the EdD Programme Chairperson

What does the Process Require from me as a Student?

The annual review is a process to ensure you are reaching the relevant milestones as you progress in your research. It is an opportunity for you to reflect on progress over the year, as well as set out your plans for the year ahead. The annual review meeting is important as it gives you time to meet with your full panel. This time is for you to discuss areas that are progressing well and seek advice on how to progress with areas of difficulty. Completing/updating your professional development plan is also part of this process and this is something you should consider in advance of meeting with your supervisory panel.

How to Prepare for the Review Meeting

Once you have agreed a date with your supervisory panel, you should agree the requirements for the meeting with your principal supervisor. Different schools have different practices so you should familiarise yourself with local practice and requirements. Typically, students will be asked to complete a progress report and possibly submit draft chapters, papers or other evidence of progress.

In your report you should try to address the following areas which will help direct the progress meeting:

1. Give an overview of your research question
2. Outline your progress to date or since your last review meeting (in the case this is your first review meeting, then reflect on your research proposal submitted during your application). Include research activity as well as research learning more broadly. You should also highlight areas of concern or obstacles and how you plan on tackling these.
3. Give an outline of your work plan for the next year and an anticipated submission timeline.
4. Include a professional development plan identifying skills to be developed or acquired, and how you will target these.

This report will be much more detailed than what you input into the online form, but it is a useful tool in tracking progress and identifying potential obstacles in your research. The more information you can provide will help your supervisory panel in directing and supporting your research.





The Review Meeting

This is your time to gain feedback and direction from your supervisory panel.

The meeting will be attended by your full supervisory panel including your independent panel member. Having an independent panel member can be useful in gaining impartial guidance and this person will be required to sign off on your progression to the next academic year. As this person is not involved in the daily supervision of your research it is useful to give them a detailed report on progress prior to the meeting (as detailed in the previous section).

During the review meeting the discussion will most likely centre around your report. You should feel comfortable discussing not only areas where progress has been made, but also issues that have arisen or areas where additional supports or guidance is required. This is your time to gain feedback and direction from your supervisory panel so we suggest you go well prepared and have a list of questions or areas you would like to discuss while you have this dedicated time.

There are no rules around how long this meeting should take or how it is structured so it is a good idea to plan in advance and discuss with your supervisor what is expected of you at the meeting.

Following the Meeting

Once the meeting has taken place, you may progress to completing the online (PGR2) form. An updated User Guide on how to access and complete the online form is circulated by Registry each year at the time of launch.

The Supervisor's Role



The annual progress meeting is an opportunity for supervisors* to assess, and give constructive feedback, on students' progress to date. It also creates a time for planning for the coming months. Prior to the meeting, the student should prepare by completing a progress report. They may also be asked to submit a draft chapter, a paper or other evidence of progress. There are no set requirements and many schools have their own local rules around the structure of the review meeting.

The progress meeting creates a space where students and supervisors can discuss how the research is going and agree upon a work plan for the coming months, to ensure momentum in the research is maintained. It is also a time where students should feel comfortable discussing areas of concern or obstacles that have arisen in their research. This way issues can be caught early and appropriate supports can be put in place for the student.

On occasion, a supervisor may have to deal with an issue of inadequate progress. Preparation for these meetings is particularly important, as it will help the panel to make an appropriate judgement on whether the student is to be allowed to progress to the next year or not. In such instances, the student may be tasked with submitting a piece of work by a specified deadline in order to demonstrate a willingness to progress. In cases where progress is not satisfactory, the panel may decide to suggest working towards exiting with a lower award, or a decision may be made to not allow progress to the next academic year.

In a case where there is difficulty in the student-supervisor relationship we recommend that you and your supervisor refer to the *Guidance for Research Students and Supervisors in Respect of Resolving Difficulties Informally* document which is available from the Graduate Studies Office.

* For more information on the remit of the Independent Panel Member, please refer to the Guidance on the Appointment and Remit of an Independent Panel Member which is available from the Graduate Studies Office.

Who is Exempt from the Process

The following students are not required to complete the annual progress report:

- Grace period students who registered as year one, on or after the 2nd of March of that year.
- Students who have formally deferred a full academic year (those who have deferred a part year will be required to complete the process).
- Professional Doctorate Students – who are registered in year 1 or 2 of their programme.

Appealing a Non-Progression Decision

In cases where a supervisory panel submits a PGR2 that recommends the non-progression of a student, the University will take the view that the student is unlikely to achieve the degree for which s/he is registered. In such cases a student has the right to submit an appeal in respect of this decision.

The appeals process is detailed further on the OVPAA webpage under the appeals section: dcu.ie/ovpaa/ac.shtml





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