University of Essex

School of Life Sciences

Faculty of Science and Health

PhD Students

Postgraduate Research milestones are used to ensure students are making sufficient progress during their studies, and to provide a supportive framework to guide students through the various stages of their research. The Milestones should also help to keep students on track to submit within the appropriate period. PGR supervisors should talk through the relevant milestones during supervisory meetings and they should be referred to on a regular basis.

Supervisory Panels and Research Students' Progress Boards will use the milestones to reflect on the level of progress being made, ahead of making a recommendation. Whilst the milestones are specific for each department and type of course, it is recognised that every research journey is different, and that whilst the milestones provide an overarching framework of expectations, a degree of flexibility should be given, based on the trajectory and scope of research.

Students and supervisors are encouraged to supplement these milestones with individual research plans which take into account the specifics of an individual research project and the individual circumstances of the PGR student.

Contents

Year 1 (Full time), Year 1 and 2 (Part time)

Ahead of the first Supervisory Panel

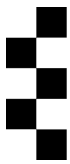| Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M1.1	Assess Health and Safety and ethics • Consider Health and Safety and ethics of project	1	2
M1.2	Clarify research topic and demonstrate an understanding of topic and relevant to wider research Research Project Proposal, including (dependent on subject area): • A brief description of the research topic • Present the aims and hypotheses of your research project, together with an explanation of your approach	1	2
M1.3	Assess training needs and knowledge required to undertake research project and complete the thesis. • Training needs to be completed.	1	2

Ahead of the second Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M1.4	Knowledge and understanding of the Literature • Prepare a DRAFT 5000 to 10000-word Literature Review / Introduction to Thesis	2	4
M1.5	Demonstration of effective project management through the setting of research goals, prioritisation of activities. • Create a detailed, realistic research plan and timetable for Year 2. • Produce a supervisory panel report written in a clear scientific paper format and demonstrating critical reasoning. • Prepare an updated 5000 to 10000-word Literature Review / Introduction to Thesis (updated from your second- term submission) • Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate. • 10 minute power point presentation	3	6
M1.6	Subject-specific milestones • Graduate Forum poster presentation	3	6

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will make a recommendation to the Research Students' Progress Board, ahead of the next academic year. Further information regarding Supervisory Panels and Research

Students' Progress Boards can be found here: https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/postgraduate-research/pgr-progress

Year 2 (Full time), Year 3 and 4 (Part time)

Ahead of the third Supervisory Panel (Confirmation Board)

Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M2.1	Demonstrate understanding of chosen topic within the context of the field. 5000 to 10000-word Literature Review / Introduction to Thesis (updated from your First-year Panel)	4	8
M2.2	Demonstrate the ability to produce work of the quality and quantity in order to complete within the three year period. Evidence that academic writing is of standard and ability expected at PhD level, including adequate referencing and language skills. • Concise statement of how the recommendations from the previous Supervisory Panel have been addressed (1 page max) • Draft Thesis Chapter or Paper (developed from First-year Report)	4	8
M2.3	Subject-specific milestones • 10 minute power-point presentation • Timetable/outline plan of work for next year	4	8

Ahead of the fourth Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M2.4	Review training needs and knowledge required to continue with research project and complete the thesis. • Training Needs Analysis to be reviewed. • Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate.	6	12
M2.5	Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected at the end of Year 2 • Complete Thesis Chapter / Paper or two Draft Thesis Chapters / Papers (complying with the length / formatting as in your Confirmation Board; and with a brief narrative indicating the advance since last Panel; or, a third results Chapter (draft or complete).	6	12
M2.6	Review significance and impact of research and articulate output. For example: • Present research to students and staff at seminars/conferences	6	12
M2.7	Demonstration of effective project management through the setting of research goals and prioritization of activities. • Create a detailed realistic plan of work/timetable for Year 3 which demonstrates the ability to submit within the three-year standard PhD period (six years for part-time students) • Chapter-by-chapter thesis outline, highlighting sections that are complete, nearly complete, ongoing, and planned	6	12
M2.8	Subject-specific milestones	6	12
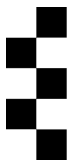
	• Graduate Forum oral presentation		

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will make a recommendation to the Research Student Progress Board, ahead of the next academic year. Further information regarding Supervisory Panels and Research Student Progress Boards can be found here: https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/postgraduate-research/pgr-progress

Year 3 (Full time), Year 5 and 6 (Part time)

Ahead of the fifth Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M3.1	Ability to reflect on skills and knowledge development and its application to the research project • Training Needs Analysis to be reviewed. • Attend Proficio courses and plan for further courses to attend, as appropriate.	8	16
M3.2	Demonstrate work of the quality and quantity expected when nearing submission • Either two complete Chapters or two Papers that are in draft (e.g. advances of those presented at your End-of- Second-Year Panel), in which case you should additionally provide a brief (~10-line) narrative indicating the advance since your last Panel; or, a third results Chapter (draft or complete).	8	16
M3.3a	Clear evidence of progress towards submission • Updated Chapter-by-chapter thesis outline, highlighting sections that are complete, nearly complete, ongoing, and planned	8	16
M3.3b	Clear evidence of progress towards submission • Updated plan until the submission of your thesis	8	16
M3.3c	Clear evidence of progress towards submission • One new (or heavily updated / improved) results Chapter / Paper draft	9	18

Ahead of the sixth Supervisory Panel

Milestone	Requirement	Full Time term	Part Time term
M3.4	Subject Specific Milestones • Organize Graduate Forum	9	18

Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research will be using human participants, and if so, has sought and received formal university ethics approval.
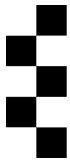
Has the student and supervisory team considered whether the research uses security-sensitive material, and if so, has sought and received formal university registration of this material.

The Supervisory Panel will either confirm to the Research Student Progress Board that the student is ready to submit their thesis, or recommend that a period of completion is required (see below).

Completion Period

If, at the 6th supervisory Panel, a student isn't on track to submit their thesis by the end of year 3 (year 6 for Part time students), a recommendation for a period of completion can be requested from the RSPB, for approval by the Faculty Dean (Postgraduate)

Milestone	Requirement	Term to undertake work *(To be used as a guide only)*
C1.1	Clear plan to submission • Completed final draft for submission • Timetable of work needing to take place before submission • Submission date agreed	Timeline agreed by Supervisory Panel.