

Appendix 4: The 'Proceed with Caution' Procedure

The 'Proceed with Caution' procedure is intended to give early warning that a research degree programme is at risk of either not achieving the learning outcomes or such delays as to make timely completion unlikely. It may be instigated at any point if it can be demonstrated that a student has not achieved agreed targets or is not in regular contact with the supervisory team.

A student is identified as 'Proceed with Caution' if there is evidence that:

- a) they are making insufficient academic progress for their mode of study; or
- b) they lack a commitment to the research project, as demonstrated by repeated failure to meet deadlines or quality thresholds, respond to formal communications, attend supervisory sessions and/or to attend a prescribed programme of related studies.

As soon as the Director of Studies identifies a student as 'Proceed with Caution' for any of the reasons given above, they should immediately:

- a) notify the Chair of the Research Student Board, and
- b) write to the student detailing the reasons for concern, and
- c) invite the student to attend an emergency session to discuss the situation and to devise an action plan where appropriate.

The emergency session should normally be scheduled within two working weeks of the date that the Director of Studies wrote to the student and should be attended by a representative of the RSB who has not been associated previously with the project. The student may be accompanied by a friend or student representative.

A summary of the emergency session, including any action plan or revisions to the research programme, should be agreed by the Director of Studies and the student, and kept by the Director of Studies as part of the record of supervision. The RSB should be notified of the outcome of the emergency session and may instigate any further monitoring procedures it deems necessary.

If a student fails to respond to the letter, fails to attend the emergency session, or is unable to address satisfactorily the concerns of the Director of Studies so that an action plan can be agreed, the Director of Studies may, with the agreement of the other members of the supervisory team, recommend to the RSB that the student be withdrawn. Students have a right of appeal against any such decision.

Where a student continues to meet the 'Proceed with Caution' criteria for two or more months, the issue will be reported to the University Research Awards Sub-committee and as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.

Where the 'Proceed with Caution' procedure does not result in an improvement in the student's ability to progress, the Research Awards Sub-committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board, will recommend that the withdrawal procedure be initiated.