

Guidelines for the Assignment of Conditional Status

Higher Degree by Research Supervisors

These guidelines should be considered in conjunction with Rule 10: Degree of Doctor by Research and Rule 11: Degree of Master by Research. These documents are available on the Curtin Compliance, Legislation and Policy website at http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes_rules.cfm.

What is 'Conditional' status?

The assignment of 'Conditional' status to a HDR student is an instrument for HDR supervisors to formally communicate that the student's continuation in their course is dependant on demonstrated progress. The student is provided conditions set in collaboration with the supervisor. Where the assigned conditions are met, and the student is still within the prescribed timeframe to submit these thesis for examination (4.0 EFTSL for Doctoral or 2.0 EFTSL for Master by Research), the student is returned to 'Good Standing'. Where the student fails to meet assigned academic conditions, a recommendation for 'Termination' may follow.

When should a student be assigned 'Conditional' status?

*"Candidates whose progress raises concerns as to their ability to complete the research program as prescribed, should be accorded **Conditional** status". [Extract from Statute 12: Rule No. 10 and Rule No. 11 Section 9 (c)]*

Most commonly, HDR students are placed on 'Conditional' status during the Annual Progress Report round each year, with the support and endorsement of the Enrolling Area's HDR Review Board.

However, HDR students may also be placed on 'Conditional' status at any time during their period of candidature, where the supervisor has concerns regarding their progress.

The most common reasons for the assignment of 'Conditional' status include;

- *General lack of progress*
- *Failure to submit the thesis for examination with the prescribed timeframe*
- *Failure to respond to communications (e.g. emails, phonecalls)*
- *Failure to attend scheduled meetings*
- *Failure to submit requested pieces of work for assessment*
- *Failure to meet agreed milestones*
- *Failure to meet laboratory standards/requirements*

Students should also be placed on Conditional status at times when **key dates** are not being met (e.g. failure to obtain candidacy within the prescribed timeframe). The Graduate Research School (GRS) recommends that students who are more than two months overdue for candidacy approval be assigned 'Conditional' status and provided a **specific timeline to submit for candidacy**.

Students who are unable to submit their thesis for examination within the prescribed timeframe (4.0 EFTSL for Doctoral or 2.0 EFTSL for Master by Research) will **automatically** be classified as 'Overtime' and placed on 'Conditional' status by the GRS. The Thesis Committee and the relevant authorised officer from the enrolling area will be included in the formal notification to the student.

What are appropriate conditions?

It is important that the conditions are well defined and measurable. The below criteria will assist in the construction of appropriate conditions.

<u>Specific:</u>	<i>clear, easy to understand and defined;</i>
<u>Measurable:</u>	<i>can be easily assessed as 'achieved' or 'not achieved';</i>
<u>Achievable:</u>	<i>are within the scope of what should reasonably be expected from a student studying at the doctoral or master by research level;</i>
<u>Relevant:</u>	<i>the conditions to be achieved are reasonable/realistic;</i>
<u>Time-bound:</u>	<i>the timeline for the conditions to be achieved is explicitly stated.</i>

For example, a condition such as **“Student should meet with supervisor more regularly”** leaves itself open to some interpretation. It is therefore preferable to state; **“Student should meet with the supervisor weekly”** (or fortnightly or monthly) so that there is no ambiguity about what constitutes “regularly”.

When requesting a piece of written work be delivered within a specific timeframe, it is again important that the student is absolutely clear about what is required. Stipulating the submission of **“... a draft chapter by the end of the month”** may seem like a reasonable condition but becomes much clearer for the student when worded like this; **“Submit to your supervisor a full draft of Chapter 2: Literature Review. Ensure the chapter is of thesis standard and is presented on or before November 30 2017”**.

Interim smaller tasks in writing activities can be set at more regular intervals. For example, if the Literature Review has 10 sub-headings, then each could be a specific condition using the SMART goals framework.

Who advises and monitors the student?

In order that the student clearly understands what is expected of them, the GRS also recommends the thesis committee set up a meeting with the student to discuss the implications of being assigned ‘Conditional’ status and to ensure the student clearly understands the requirements and deadlines that have been put in place.

It is also important that the supervisor monitors the student’s progress throughout their ‘Conditional’ period and meets with the student at each stipulated deadline to discuss progress and review their status .

Students with an academic status of ‘Conditional’ should also be encouraged to make use of the support services available at Curtin to students having difficulty with their studies or experiencing personal circumstances that have affected their academic performance. For example, the *Student Transition and Retention Team (START)* offer specific support and web resources for students who are on ‘Conditional’ status. Support can also be provided by the *University Counselling Service* and the *Student Guild’s Student Assist Officers*.

What is the role of the Graduate Research School?

Students should be advised of the change to ‘Conditional’ status and their assigned conditions in writing and the notification should be sent via the *Official Communications Channel*. The GRS will send the Official Communication (OC) on behalf of the Enrolling Area and will also change the student’s academic status on the student database so that it clearly appears on the student’s enrolment records.

What are the expected outcomes?

The GRS should be notified of the outcomes when the timeline provided to the student comes to an end.

Outcomes at this point should be one of the following;

- *The student’s progress has improved significantly and they can be returned to ‘Good Standing’.*
- *The student’s progress has improved to some degree but not as much as expected or required. They should therefore be maintained on ‘Conditional’ status and a new set of conditions and timeline dates be put in place.*
- *The student’s progress has not improved and their ability to successfully “complete the research program as prescribed” is in serious doubt. The Enrolling Area may choose to commence the process to recommend enrolment ‘Termination’ and should refer to the “Guidelines for the Process of Termination of Enrolment of Higher Degree by Research Students” available from the GRS website at <http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate/research-staff/>*

In all cases the student should, once again, be formally notified through the GRS and the staff there will be happy to guide you if you have any queries or concerns about the process.

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