



Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next full review
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	9 October 2017	9 October 2017	October 2020
Guideline Statement				
Purpose	To provide clear guidelines on the Show Cause procedure.			
Scope	This guideline should be used by research candidates, and academic and professional staff managing research students.			
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, however Local Documents must be consistent with this University-wide Document			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Guideline				

1. Introduction

A request to Show Cause is recognition that a higher degree research (HDR) candidate has reached a point where the University considers, after completing the required research progress reviews, they will not complete their degree.

The show cause request provides a final opportunity for the candidate to report any extenuating circumstances that may have impacted on research progress. It is also an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate to the University that they have a detailed, feasible and supported proposal to complete their research degree.

Candidates are requested to Show Cause in a letter from the Dean of Graduate Research. The candidate is asked to provide a formal written response which is assessed by the relevant Faculty Higher Degree Committee (or equivalent), hereafter referred to as the Committee. The Committee makes a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research as to whether the candidature should be terminated immediately, or whether the candidate should be given an opportunity to complete their candidature under strict conditions.

The Dean of Graduate Research makes the final decision regarding the outcome of the case.

2. Show Cause Request Process (see Appendix A)

The three pathways that result in a candidate being asked to Show Cause, as outlined in the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure*, arise as a consequence of unsatisfactory progress, lapsed candidature, or non-attendance at a research progress review. In each situation, the Committee considers the case to determine whether to make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research that the candidate be formally asked to Show Cause.

2.1. Postgraduate Coordinator Recommendation

Once it has been determined that a candidate should be asked to Show Cause, the Postgraduate Coordinator (PGC) submits to the Committee a Show Cause recommendation with all documentation relating to the research progress within the candidature.

As a minimum, this should include documentation of prior research progress reviews and related actions clearly outlining the:

- a) Remedial actions required, milestones set and a clear statement of the dates by which the candidate was expected to achieve these;
- b) Candidate's progress against the remedial milestones set in prior reviews;
- c) Candidate's awareness of the reasons and actions as outlined above in (a) and (b) and
- d) Panel's reasons for recommending show cause.

Where the candidate has documented that they have experienced issues affecting their candidature as part of the Progress Review process, it is important that the School demonstrates how they have addressed these issues with the candidate.

2.2. Higher Degree Committee Recommendation

After considering all documentation, the Committee will either:

- a) support the Show Cause recommendation, and refer the recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research (see Section 2.3).
- b) not support the recommendation, in which case they must propose to the Dean of Graduate Research the conditions that will be placed on the candidature. This should include an additional review against new milestones or completion of the thesis by a specific date. The candidate will be informed of these conditions in writing.

The basis for the Committee's recommendation is primarily assessment of academic progress of the candidate however it may also include consideration of whether the School has been procedurally fair to the candidate in their assessment of progress,

2.3. Request to Show Cause from the Dean of Graduate Research

The Dean of Graduate Research will determine if the process leading to the Show Cause recommendation has been procedurally fair.

If the recommendation of the Committee is accepted, the Dean of Graduate Research will notify the candidate in writing that they are required to Show Cause why their candidature should not be terminated. The letter will include the reasons noted by the Committee.

The show cause letter will be sent via email to the candidate's UNSW email address. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that this email address is regularly checked.

The letter presents two options for the candidate to consider, which are either to respond to the Show Cause request within 20 days, or to withdraw without prejudice from the research degree.

If the Dean of Graduate Research does not support the recommendation, or concludes that the School and Faculty have not been procedurally fair to the candidate in their assessment of progress, new conditions will be placed on the candidature including, but not limited to, an additional review against new milestones or completion of the thesis by a specific date. The candidate will be informed of these conditions in writing.

3. Matters the candidate should consider in preparing their response to Show Cause

It is critical that a candidate who receives a Show Cause letter consider the serious nature of the request and the potential for their candidature to be terminated. Termination of candidature results in exclusion of the candidate from the university and precludes readmission.

Candidates are strongly advised to seek independent advice on their response and proposed course of action. The Arc student representative organisation provides advocacy services that can advise on the preparation of the formal response.

The Show Cause process can be stressful for candidates and where support is required, candidates should contact the University Counselling and Psychological Services.

3.1. Withdrawal from candidature without prejudice

If a candidate has personal issues that have impacted on their progress that have not been raised in progress reviews, including financial, medical or other issues, then they may consider that withdrawing could be a sensible course of action.

Candidates who choose to withdraw from their program are permitted to re-apply for admission at a later date.

Responding to the Show Cause letter is the final opportunity for candidates to make a case as to why they should be allowed to continue their research. It is important to consider that once a candidate responds to a Show Cause letter, they are no longer permitted to withdraw from the degree without prejudice.

Candidates should be aware that if there is:

- a) No new information provided to the Committee in their formal response, or

- b) No evidence of a breach in appropriate procedure by the School, and
- c) Not a clear plan for how they will be able to achieve progress in their work

then it is most likely that the candidature will be terminated. In these situations, withdrawal from the program prior to submission of the formal response is recommended.

4. Candidate's Response to a Show Cause Request

If the candidate decides to respond to the Show Cause request, they must do so in writing to the Dean of Graduate Research within 20 working days of receipt of the letter. If the candidate fails to respond by the due date, the candidature will be terminated and the candidate will be advised in writing by the Graduate Research School.

- a) A candidate must consider the following key questions when preparing their response to a Show Cause request:
 - Have all issues that have impeded progress been declared as part of the Progress Review process? If they have not, they should be disclosed and an explanation for why the issues have impeded progress should be provided
 - Is there a genuine reason to believe that previous barriers to progress are no longer valid?
 - Have all issues raised in the progress reviews been dealt with appropriately by the School or Faculty to mitigate these circumstances?
 - Is there a reasonable plan to get the candidature on track and allow the candidate to make satisfactory progress?

The formal response must:

- a) Systematically address the points raised in the Show Cause letter
- b) Provide any documentation requested (such as evidence of progress since the last review)
- c) Provide documentation and supporting evidence for their case, which may relate to personal, technical, academic or other matters.
- d) Detail how the barriers to satisfactory progress that they may have been experiencing have been overcome, and
- e) Demonstrate their capacity to complete their research degree in a timely fashion by presenting a clear and compelling plan with timelines

The candidate may raise any additional issues which they believe have not been adequately covered within the Progress Review process.

The candidate's response will be referred to the Committee for their consideration.

5. Consideration of the Response to Show Cause by the Higher Degree Committee

The Committee will consider the candidate's response to the Show Cause letter, along with any supporting documentation provided. The PGC will also be asked to provide a recommendation for consideration by the Committee. The Committee will assess whether the:

- a) Candidate has satisfactorily addressed all of the concerns raised in the show cause letter by addressing the issues and providing a clear, compelling plan for completion, and/or
- b) Candidate's response raises sufficient new mitigating information that would justify their lack of progress, and/or
- c) Points raised by the candidate have been considered and appropriately addressed in the Progress Review process, in which case the matters cannot be considered new information and will not be considered.

Based on the outcomes from these considerations, there are two possible recommendations from the Committee:

Satisfactory Response. If the Committee is satisfied with the material presented by the student in response to a show cause request, the candidature will be permitted to continue under clear, agreed conditions. These will include clear milestones that will be agreed in collaboration with the candidate and supervisors. The timeframe for achievement of these milestones will typically be three months (full-time equivalent).

The candidate will be advised by the Dean of Graduate Research in writing of the decision and the conditions that must be met. At the end of the time period a Progress Review will be held. If the milestones are achieved, the candidature will be allowed to continue.

If the candidate fails to meet the agreed milestones then the Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research as to whether the candidature should be terminated.

Unsatisfactory Response. If the Committee is not satisfied with the material presented by the candidate in response to the show cause request, then they will make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research that the candidature be terminated.

6. Meeting with the Dean of Graduate Research

Following the recommendation to terminate candidature, the candidate will be invited to attend a meeting with the Dean of Graduate Research (or delegate) to discuss the outcome, and ongoing consequences of the decision. This is also a final opportunity for the candidate to discuss any outstanding matters they feel have not been addressed.

The Dean of Graduate Research will make the final decision as to whether to terminate the candidature, and the candidate will be advised in writing of this decision.

7. Appeals

Candidates have the opportunity to appeal the outcome, and this process is outlined in the *Student Complaint Procedure*.

Accountabilities				
Responsible Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research)			
Contact Officer	Director, Graduate Research School			
Supporting Information				
Legislative Compliance	This Guideline supports the University's compliance with the following legislation: Nil			
Parent Document (Policy and Procedure)	Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidature Procedure			
Supporting Documents	Nil			
Related Documents	Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy Variation of Candidature Procedure Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure Student Complaint Procedure			
Superseded Documents	Nil.			
File Number	2017/22802			
Definitions and Acronyms				
HDR	Higher degree research			
Revision History				
Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	9 October 2017	9 October 2017	This is a new Guideline

Appendix A: Show Cause Process

