

MAKING THE MOST OF THE ANNUAL REVIEW: A FEW TIPS FOR STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

Adapted from original prepared by Professor Sally Smith & Dr Rob Murray

The Annual Review of Progress should be viewed as a positive process, during which you review the past year (or past 6 months for remote students) and plan for the future. You can also discuss problems, some of which can surely be overcome if they are identified. If no one admits there is a problem then nothing can be done to fix it!

Take advantage of the formal procedure to be honest about progress as well as difficulties and problems. Remember that the Postgraduate Coordinator is there to help both students and supervisors achieve the best outcomes. Both students and supervisors can make an appointment to see the Postgraduate Coordinator at any time (not just the Annual Review) to discuss problems *in confidence*.

If the Postgraduate Coordinator is your supervisor, then see the Head of School/Discipline or other person identified by the School/Discipline to take the role of independent advisor. Read the Research Student Handbook (Annual Review of Progress section) for more information.

If you do not want to see an academic staff member about a problem or question in the first instance then consider talking to the Postgraduate Representative on your School/Discipline Committee. He/she could be helpful in advising you whom to see or what to do, from a student perspective.

The Form:

Question 1. This refers to the most recent formal review milestone in your candidature so you just need to identify what this was.

For many students it will just be the Annual Review itself; for some, the completion of the Core Component of the Structured Program; or if you are new, enrolment itself.

Question 2. In responding you should highlight your achievements since enrolment or since your last review

Many students underestimate their progress. They focus on the research and forget the 'professional' aspects of what they are doing because these may seem very obvious. Examples of professional development include:

- learning about intellectual property issues (see section on form);
- regular attendance at seminars;
- regular participation in research group meetings (state how frequently);
- attendance/presentation at conferences (name them);
- contribution to seminar programs;
- attendance at courses such as statistics, software use etc ;
- visits to other research groups;
- learning publication and other communication skills;
- International students could also highlight any progress they feel they have made in integrating themselves in the local research culture and overcoming problems of communication in a foreign language.

On the research side, do not forget to highlight such activities as:

- completion of milestones within the Structured Program;
- 'pilot experiments' or other investigations which may not have yielded useable data, but which were necessary to plan ahead. They may later be included in 'Methods' sections of your thesis if appropriate;
- planning a thesis outline (a good idea in mid candidature);
- writing drafts of chapters or reports of experiments;
- any publications in preparation, submitted or accepted.

Supervisors: it is up to you to help your students identify their achievements and you can do this as part of your comments in Section C.

Question 3. Students should identify for themselves and their supervisors the goals set for the next stage of the project. A Gantt Chart or a Completion Plan should be attached

- these should link with achievements, so that you can demonstrate continuity in your program;
- if there have been research problems, then it is a good idea to show how the goals for the next period will help overcome these problems;
- goals can include all those activities mentioned above as well as the core research.
- Examples of the Gantt Chart and Completion Plan are available at Appendix A and B.
- Students in first or second year should include a detailed plan of research for the next twelve months including milestones for the remainder of candidature
- Students beyond third year should include an audit of tasks completed and remaining, an outline of milestone dates and the expected date for submission of the thesis.

Question 5. Gives you a chance to reflect on how much each supervisor has contributed to your supervision and to focus on the frequency and usefulness of meetings with your supervisors.

Spend some time thinking about how much each supervisor has contributed to your supervision. Is this reflected by the "percentage responsibility for supervision" you originally nominated on your enrolment form, or, where applicable in the last "[Change of Supervisor Details](#)" form you completed? If not, you should complete a Change of Supervisor Details form and lodge it with the Graduate Centre:
http://www.adelaide.edu.au/graduatecentre/forms/supervisor_details.pdf

How effective have your supervisory meetings been? Do not be afraid to say if you would find a change in the pattern, type and frequency of the meetings helpful. This way you and your supervisors can work towards a pattern of discussions that will help you make progress. Different patterns and types of meetings may be needed at different stages of candidature.

Question 6b. Do not panic!

If you are in the first year or 18 months of candidature it would be very reasonable to state 'too early to say'.

Question 6c. Identify any personal problems that may have influenced your progress or may do so in future.

Your supervisors and/or the Postgraduate Coordinator need to know about these so that they can help you manage them. Problems are common (normal) for international students who are working very hard to settle into a new research project as well as a new culture.

- are you worried about an overseas scholarship, your visa, how your family is settling in Adelaide or coping at home?
- are you sick or is any of your immediate family sick?

The first step is to talk about it or write it down. *If you would prefer to keep the matter confidential see the Postgraduate Coordinator.*

Question 7. Problems should be identified by both student and supervisor as early as possible.

- identifying a problem is the first step to overcoming it;
- if a scholarship extension is needed at the end of the candidature it is unlikely to be granted if no problems have been identified on any review form;

**** SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ****

Please be aware that when documenting 'days lost' in regards to delays to your research, that this is to be based on a 7-day week rather than a 5-day week. This will be used to assess any application for scholarship extension you may lodge in the future. For example, if you have lost 150 days research time (for academic reasons only), should this be mentioned in your scholarship extension application, you will only be granted an extension of 150 days.

- discussions of confirmation (or not) of candidature need to take into account any problems that have been encountered, so they must be recorded.

Problems could be:

- problems in accessing material;
- loss of time or materials;

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- problems with facilities or failure of equipment which led to loss of time;
- you have no office and no access to computing facilities;
- real conceptual difficulties with your project;
- problems with English;
- your supervisor takes weeks or months to return drafts of your work with comments;
- absence of supervisor(s);
- disagreements and grievances with supervisors or School/Discipline. In this case the Postgraduate Coordinator or the Head of School/Discipline should be able to help you and your problems can be kept confidential.
- If you have experienced any disagreements/problems or grievances which have not been resolved to your satisfaction you may contact the Dean of Graduate Studies for a confidential review of your concerns. You should do so before you meet with your supervisor.