POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

Chapter 21 Annex 1: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous PGR Awards: Guidance for Examiners

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This document has been produced to guide and advise examiners with regards to the consideration of a posthumous or aegrotat awards. If there are any additional questions or areas of clarification needed following reading this guidance, please contact the Doctoral College Quality Development Manager for support in the first instance.

1.2 The TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21, Annex 2, Aegrotat and Posthumous PGR Awards: Guidance for Supervisors will give further details about the aegrotat and posthumous examination procedure. The information below is a crib sheet designed to give supervisors some additional guidance under these difficult circumstances.

1.3 This document should be used alongside the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards .

2. Academic Judgement

2.1 In making an award, the examiners must agree that the evidence presented for consideration meets the academic standards required for that award, accepting the

limitations implicit in the circumstances of the examination. Where the length of the work is shorter than expected for the award in question, alternative awards, such as MPhil or MByRes can be considered instead.

2.2 This is considered an academic judgement. On this basis, the decision not to proceed to examination or that an award cannot be made does not constitute grounds for an academic appeal.

2.3 Examiners must maintain academic standards in relation to the criteria for awards as set out in the Calendar. There can be some flexibility in the consideration of the scope and volume of the work produced for examinations under aegrotat and posthumous circumstances, but only where this does not impact on its quality or on the thresholds for the award.

2.4 The programmes eligible for consideration under this award is confirmed in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards .

3. Initial consideration

3.1 In the event that a Department is advised of a candidate's circumstances that may fall under the remit of this policy, consideration should be given to whether the candidate has completed a significant enough body of work to demonstrate that they would have met the appropriate standard for their registered award. For those registered for a Doctorate, the award of MPhil or Masters by Research may also be considered. For those in the research phase of a Professional Doctorate, an exit award for their taught work may also be considered. For examination of theses prior to submission, please refer to Section 6 below.

3.2 In order to maintain research integrity and the expectations of academic awards of the University, when compiling any evidence for the consideration of an award under this policy, supervisors must not develop the research on behalf of the candidate. For example, they should not conduct or finalise analysis of the candidate's findings, nor draft or update written work.

3.3 If an award is to be considered, the Head of PGR Support (or delegated nominee) will liaise with the candidate, or their next of kin where necessary. It will be the responsibility of the Head of PGR Support (or delegated nominee) to explain the process and the possible outcomes, and to share the outcome once known. In instances in which a candidate is being considered for a posthumous award, staff should be mindful of the expectations and responsibilities listed in the Student Death Protocol.

3.4 The Head of PGR Support (or delegated nominee) should be clear when communicating with the candidate/candidate's next of kin that any decision under this procedure is an academic judgement based on the material submitted for consideration, not a judgment of the candidate's likely outcome had the circumstances not occurred. The examiners must agree that the evidence presented for consideration meets the academic standards required for that award, accepting the limitations implicit in the circumstances of the examination (see Section 2 in this document for full details of academic judgement). This is particularly important where a decision not to award a degree is determined.

3.5 Upon request of the student's next of kin, the Head of PGR Support (or delegated nominee) should request written approval from the Registrar to approve that IT services may move the data in the student's account to a secure SharePoint where the next of kin and supervisors may access it. Where the student's work is stored on personal devices, and the candidate is unable to provide access, the point of contact should liaise with the next of kin/candidate's representative to seek any relevant material.

4. Arrangements for examination

4.1 Once agreement has been reached that there is sufficient work to proceed with examination, the Head of PGR Support (or delegated nominee) will request a submission folder to be created for the candidate for examination, by the PGR Administration Team as per usual procedures.

4.2 The PGR Administration Team will create the submission folder and will share with the candidate or the candidate's supervisor (depending on the candidate's circumstances).

4.3 The candidate/candidate's supervisor will submit the thesis for examination.

4.4 The PGR Administration Team will share the thesis, examination guidance, and the appropriate preliminary reports and examiners' report with the examiners, as per the standard examination procedure for PGRs. In addition, they will share a link to the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards and this guidance for examiners, due to the exceptional nature of this kind of examination.

4.5 The internal examiner will contact the external examiner to make arrangements to examine the thesis, as per the expectations set out in the TQA, PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes.

4.6 It is expected that the examiners will meet to discuss the thesis in order to examine it and come to a consensus on the outcome and complete the examiners' report.

4.7 As much as possible, the final examination process should be followed as detailed the TQA, PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes but the timing of the thesis submission will necessitate slightly different examinations, as per the sections below:

5. Awards after thesis submission and/or final examination

After viva examination

5.1 As much as possible, the final examination process should be followed as detailed in the TQA, PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes:

a. **Candidate has passed (without amendments) or has been previously examined and minor/major amendments have been submitted and approved:** The decision of the

Examiners, that the student has passed and is to be awarded the degree, will stand and this award is not made on a posthumous or aegrotat basis.

b. **Candidate has passed subject to minor amendments or major amendments were required (candidate submitted but examiners have not reviewed/approved):** To be reviewed by the examiner(s) agreed at the time of examination. If the amendments are approved, the candidate will be awarded the degree, which will not made on a posthumous or aegrotat basis. Where appropriate, the thesis should be submitted on the candidate's behalf to the repository, noting any relevant additions necessary to the frontispiece and publication limitations. If these are not considered completed in full see point c below .

c. **Candidate has passed subject to minor amendments or major amendments were required (candidate has not submitted amendments):** Examiners are requested to review their reports to agree whether they are content that the award is granted based on the work available, without the amendments being made.

   i. Where the examiners agree to award a posthumous or aegrotat degree then the candidate is recorded to have passed and where appropriate, the thesis should be submitted on the candidate's behalf to the repository, noting any relevant additions necessary to the frontispiece and publication limitations.

   ii. Where the examiners consider that the extent of the amendments required are such that the work does not currently meet the standard, examiners should consider if an alternative posthumous or aegrotat, such as an MPhil or MbyRes, can be awarded. If the MPhil or MByRes is awarded, then where appropriate, the thesis should be submitted on the candidate's behalf to the repository, noting any relevant additions necessary to the frontispiece and publication limitations.

   iii. If the decision of the examiners is that neither i or ii apply, the outcome will be recorded as no award.

After thesis submission but prior to examination (including instances of resubmission)

5.2 The examiners will convene to consider the merits of the work as presented, and not a judgement of the candidate's likely outcome had the circumstances not occurred.

5.3 The examiners are permitted to request additional information and/or ask questions of the supervisory team in relation to the work presented for award.

5.4 As stated in the policy, examiners may make one of the following recommendations:

a. There is sufficient evidence that the relevant posthumous or aegrotat award should be granted.

b. There is insufficient evidence to award the relevant posthumous or aegrotat degree; however, there is sufficient evidence to award an alternative research degree, either an MPhil or an MbyRes.

c. There is insufficient evidence to make an award; the outcome will be no award.

5.5 Where the examiners would ordinarily suggest that a student completes minor or major amendments, they should consider whether the extent of the amendments required are such that the work would meet the criteria for the award in question. For example, where amendments may reflect matters of presentation/engagement with literature that would under standard processes be easily resolvable, examiners should consider whether the work would meet the standard to achieve outcome 5.4a above. Alternatively, where amendments would require additional experimentation or revision of flaws in the project design where under standard processes the outcome would be less certain, examiners should consider whether the evidence is insufficient to award to the programme registered for and an alternative award would be more appropriate. The examiners' assessment will be considered academic judgement, in line with Section 2 above, and will be considered final.

5.6 Examiners must confirm their recommendation on the Examiners' Report Form provided and submit the completed form alongside a joint examiners' report on the thesis to the PGR Administration Team for processing. Examiners who are unable to agree on a recommendation must submit separate reports, as per the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards (Section 10). These reports must clearly articulate the reasoning for their recommendation. For further action see Section 7, below.

6. Awards before thesis submission

6.1 Where a thesis has not yet been submitted for examination the supervisor/s must consider whether there is sufficient quantity and quality of material to represent the thesis. The stage that the student is at in their period of study may be taken into consideration, for example, work completed by a student who is/was in continuation status or in their final year is more likely to have a successful outcome under this procedure than a student in the early stages of their research. This may include:

a. a substantive draft of the thesis.
b. draft thesis chapters.
c. published work such as conference posters/presentations or journal articles.
d. analysis of datasets from research conducted.
e. work submitted for publication, or publications nearly ready to submit.
f. Bibliographic any related documentation which was to have been incorporated into the thesis; any other supporting information e.g., progress reports.

6.2 The supervisor/s must be satisfied that there is enough material to permit an academic judgement to be made.

Approval for examination for awards before submission

6.3 If the supervisor considers that there may be sufficient material for an award to be considered, an initial assessment should be completed by an independent panel to consider whether there is sufficient quantity of material to represent the thesis. The supervisor will provide the panel with a written statement of support for the award, providing any relevant details as to why, in their opinion, the material that will be provided fulfils the expectations of award as outlined in the University Regulations.

6.4 The panel will consist of:

a. Faculty Director of PGR.
b. Department Director of PGR.

6.5 Where there is or may be a perceived conflict of interests in the panel, for example a member of the panel is the candidate's supervisor or has had significant involvement with the candidate for other reasons, the Faculty DPGR will liaise with the Doctoral College to agree a suitable replacement. This may be another experienced member of the department, or another person deemed suitable. If necessary, a suitable member of staff from another department may be requested to join the panel.

6.6 Where possible, the candidate will provide the material for the panel, with support from their supervisor/supervisory team. Where this is not possible, the main supervisor will collate the material on their behalf.

6.7 It should be noted that the supervisor is not required and should not add to, enhance or in other way improve on the material that is available from the candidate's own research, writing or publications. In their written statement to the panel, the supervisor will be required to confirm that the material is the candidate's own.

6.8 The panel will decide on the basis of the material provided and in the light of the supervisor's statement whether to proceed to examination. If the panel do not agree to proceed, this completes consideration under this procedure. The candidate, or their representative as appropriate, will be advised that this is an academic judgement based on the material available for consideration, not a judgment of the candidate's likely outcome had the circumstances not occurred.

5.7 If agreed to proceed, then an internal and external examiner will be appointed in line with Section 4 in the TQA, PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research programmes. They will be advised of the circumstances of the examination by the PGR Administration Team and provided a copy of the policy and this guidance for posthumous and aegrotat awards, in addition to the normal notifications and documents.

Examination

6.9 The examiners will convene to consider the merits of the work as presented along with the supervisor's statement. The examiners are not making a judgment of the candidate's likely outcome had the circumstances not occurred. The examiners are permitted to request additional information and/or ask questions of the supervisor team in relation to the work presented for award.

6.10 As stated in the policy, examiners may make one of the following recommendations:

a. There is sufficient evidence that the relevant posthumous or aegrotat award should be granted.

b. There is insufficient evidence to award the relevant posthumous or aegrotat degree; however, there is sufficient evidence to award a lower research degree.

c. There is insufficient evidence to make an award; the outcome will be no award.

6.11 Where the examiners would ordinarily suggest that a student completes minor or major amendments, they should consider whether the extent of the amendments required are such that the work would meet the criteria for the award in question. For example, where amendments may reflect matters of presentation/engagement with literature that would under standard processes be easily resolvable, examiners should consider whether the work would meet the standard to achieve outcome 6.10.a above. Alternatively, where amendments would require additional experimentation or revision of flaws in the project design where under standard processes the outcome would be less certain, examiners should consider whether the evidence presented is insufficient to award to the programme registered for and an alternative award would be more appropriate. The examiners' assessment will be considered academic judgement, in line with Section 2 above, and will be considered final.

6.12 Examiners must confirm their recommendation on the Examiners' Report Form provided and submit the completed form alongside a joint examiners' report on the thesis to the PGR Administration Team for processing. These reports must clearly articulate the reasoning for their recommendation. Examiners who are unable to agree on a recommendation must submit separate reports, as per the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and

Posthumous Awards (Section 10). These reports must clearly articulate the reasoning for their recommendation. For further action see Section 7, below.

7. Review of outcomes if the examiners cannot agree on a final recommendation

7.1 If the examiners cannot agree an outcome following examination and receipt of any further material or responses from the supervisory team/candidate as appropriate, they should be directed to each complete a report form and provide an independent statement explaining their findings, recommendation, and rationale.

7.2 Their reports will be reviewed on behalf of the University alongside the material that was provided to the examiners by a further appointed external examiner. The additional examiner must not have been involved in the candidate's study or any earlier consideration of the case.

7.3 An overarching report, explaining the rationale for their decision, will be written by the additional examiner and will be held with the candidate's record.

7.4 The outcome of the review will be the final decision under this procedure. The possible outcomes will be:

a. There is sufficient evidence that the relevant posthumous or aegrotat award should be granted.

b. There is insufficient evidence to award the relevant posthumous or aegrotat degree; however, there is sufficient evidence to award a lower research degree.

c. There is insufficient evidence to make an award; the outcome will be no award.

7.5 The decision will be provided to the original examiners for reference, if requested, with a copy of the report including any comments as appropriate from the additional examiner.

8. After the examination

8.1 Once the reports have been completed, examiners should refer to the guidance in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards (Section 9).