

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

Annex 2: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards: Guidance for Supervisors

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been produced to guide and advise supervisors with regards to the consideration of 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 1, Aegrotat and Posthumous PGR Awards: Guidance for Examiners](#) 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](#).
- 1.4 If a supervisor is informed that a student has died or is unable to continue with their degree due to medical incapacitation (as per the definitions in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21: PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards](#)) please report the details to your Faculty PGR

Manager in the first instance, who will escalate as necessary. Should it be necessary, the Student Death Protocol will be followed.

- 1.5 **Supervisors are not required to liaise with the student's next of kin** – this will be managed by the Head of PGR Support (or nominated deputy). Supervisors will be informed when a student/student's next of kin has confirmed that they wish to pursue a degree under aegrotat/posthumous conditions, supervisors will be required to follow the guidance below.
- 1.6 An award under aegrotat/posthumous conditions will not be pursued unless it has been explicitly confirmed in writing by the candidate/candidate's next of kin.
- 1.7 Where a thesis has been submitted for examination and the next of kin wishes to proceed with an award, the PGR Administration Team will proceed with the examination in accordance with the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 21, Annex 1, Aegrotat and Posthumous PGR Awards: Guidance for Examiners](#).

2. Initial assessment of the candidate's work

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
 - a. Work presented for assessment may include:
 - b. a substantive draft of the thesis.
 - c. draft thesis chapters.
 - d. published work such as conference posters/presentations or journal articles.
 - e. analysis of datasets from research conducted.
 - f. work submitted for publication, or publications nearly ready to submit.

- g. bibliographic and any related documentation which was to have been incorporated into the thesis; any other supporting information e.g., progress reports.

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

3. Approval for examination

- 3.1 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 enough material to represent the thesis.

- 3.2 The supervisor(s) 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](#).

- 3.3 The independent panel will consist of:

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

- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 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. The Head of PGR Support will liaise with IT to get access to the candidate's data from their IT account. When this is available, the data will be shared with the supervisory team.

- 3.6 The supervisor is not required and should not add to, enhance or improve on the material 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.
- 3.7 The panel will decide based on the material provided and in consideration 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.

4. Appointment of Examiners

- 4.1 If the panel agree to proceed with examination, 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](#). It is the supervisor's responsibility to appoint examiners as they usually would. If MyPGR is not available, a manual form can be obtained from the [PGR Administration Team](#).
- 4.2 Supervisors may wish to inform the nominated examiners that this will be an award under aegrotat or posthumous conditions, however, they should not give details about the specific circumstances so as not to influence the examiners' independent judgement.
- 4.3 When the Board of Examiners have been appointed, they will be advised of the circumstances of the examination by the [PGR Administration Team](#) and provided a copy of the policy and the guidance for posthumous and aegrotat examinations, in addition to the normal notifications and documents.

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

- 5.1 If the Board of Examiners are unable to reach a decision about the outcome, a third, external examiner shall be appointed by the supervisory team. This additional examiner must be external and independent from the procedure. They can be informed that this is an examination under aegrotat/posthumous conditions, but no further details should be provided about the student's circumstances.
- 5.2 Once appointed, the [PGR Administration Team](#) will liaise with the third, external examiner regarding the remainder of the examination procedure.

6. Outcome

- 6.1 The [PGR Administration Team](#) will inform the candidate/candidate's next of kin of the outcome of the examination and will copy supervisors into the notification.
- 6.2 Supervisors are not expected to liaise with the next of kin to arrange graduation or certification – this will be handled by the [PGR Administration Team](#) and Head of PGR Support.

7. Thesis Embargo

- 7.1 Complete thesis: The lead supervisor is responsible for confirming with the PGR Administration team whether an embargo is needed for a complete thesis examined under this procedure.
- 7.2 Incomplete thesis: Where an award has been made to a document that is an incomplete thesis, the document will be placed under permanent embargo.

8. Final Thesis Submission

- 8.1 The [PGR Administration Team](#) will arrange for the examined version of the thesis/dissertation into ORE (Open Research Exeter).

- 8.2 When the deposit into ORE is successfully completed the [PGR Administration Team](#) will share the link to the thesis with the supervisory team and the nominated point of contact, who will liaise with the candidate or the candidate's next of kin as appropriate.

Further information

Supervisors should contact their [PGR Support Team](#) (prior to thesis submission) or the [PGR Administration Team](#) (after thesis submission) in the first instance if they have any questions about the above procedures.