

Postgraduate Research PGR Annual Review 2023/24

Guidance Notes

The PGR Annual Review asks Schools and Colleges to evaluate the effectiveness of their postgraduate research programmes and support for PGRs, and outline their strategy for the coming year, by completing a PGR Plan.

The objectives of the PGR Annual Review are:

- To enable staff to reflect, in consultation with PGR representatives, on the effectiveness of postgraduate research programmes and PGR support within their remit.
- To provide an effective mechanism for identifying and minimising areas of risk and to capitalise on opportunities for innovation and enhancement in relation to postgraduate research.
- To provide an efficient system for reporting review outcomes and monitoring accountability for academic provision, thus demonstrating the University's commitment to improving academic quality.
- To provide information for the Graduate Research Board, University Quality Assurance Committee and UEB on implementation of PGR-related Codes of Practice and the diversity of PGR practice in place across the University.

Template forms containing relevant data for each School are uploaded the Teams PGR Annual Review site, with a separate channel for each College. School PGR leads, School Heads of QA or equivalent, College PGR leads, and College Directors of QA will all be added to the site. School PGR leads will be emailed the teams link to their template, copying in School Heads of QA or equivalent, College PGR leads and College Directors of QA. The school PGR leads should cascade the information and complete the Review in liaison with all relevant contacts in Schools including PGR representatives. The template forms can be completed on Teams to allow for easier collaboration and version control, or they could be completed offline, and then a completed template uploaded to the teams site when finished.

PGR Involvement in the PGR Annual Review

Schools should ensure that the PGR Plan takes into account feedback from PGRs and should invite PGR representatives to meetings during the process. Once the process has been completed at School level, the School must ensure that a summary of the outcomes is shared with PGRs through an appropriate forum or method (e.g., Staff Student Committees with PGR Reps tasked with wider dissemination to their cohort, or via Canvas).

Note on scope

The PGR Annual Review should cover all postgraduate research programmes (MRes, MPhil, PhD, Professional Doctorates, etc.) including postgraduate research degrees with taught elements.

When completing the PGR Plan, Schools should note that the focus should be on identifying key issues and any significant trends.

Any queries regarding the PGR Plan should be directed to: Lucy Batten, Data Officer, University Graduate School (l.j.batten@bham.ac.uk) or Tara Wittin, Head of University Graduate School t.wittin@bham.ac.uk. Queries can also be discussed with your College Academic Policy Partner.

Timeline for PGR Annual Review of 2023/24 academic year

Date	Action
14th June 2024	PGR Annual Review templates with embedded data are issued to School PGR leads (and copied to School Heads of QA or equivalent and College PGR leads and Directors of QA for information).
14th June 2024 – 9th August 2024	<p>Schools complete PGR Annual Review forms</p> <p>School PGR leads complete PGR Annual Review, considering embedded data and referring to other documents.</p> <p>Meeting/s of Annual Review Team, chaired by School PGR lead and including the School Head of Research & Knowledge Transfer, School Head of QA or equivalent, PGR representatives and Programme Directors (if appropriate) to consider draft Annual Review Form. School PGR lead and School Head of QA or equivalent sign off form.</p>
9th August 2024	Deadline by which School PGR Annual Review form should be uploaded to the relevant folder on Teams.
August/September 2024	Outcomes of the Annual Review process disseminated to PGRs (Postgraduate Researcher).
9th August 2024 – 18th October 2024	<p>Meeting of College PGR Boards to consider Annual Review forms from all Schools (Note – keep College committee with responsibility for QA matters informed).</p> <p>Following the College PGR Board meeting, the College PGR lead and College Director with responsibility for QA should prepare a College summary report on the Annual Review process for consideration by the Graduate Research Board and University QAC. Colleges should also check dissemination of outcomes to PGRs is achieved in all Schools.</p>
18h October 2024	Deadline by which College Summary forms should be uploaded to the College PGR Plan folder on Teams.
20 th November 2024	Meeting of Graduate Research Board to consider College Annual Review.
TBC	Summary report issued to UQAC (University Quality Assurance Committee) and Research Committee.

Guidance on the PGR Plan process

1. School PGR Plan Forms

The School PGR Plan form should be completed by the School PGR lead between 14th June 2024 and 9th August 2024, with exceptions agreed by College PGR leads. Please refer to the Annual Review of the previous academic year and report on changes or developments since. The reports should not be overly detailed or unnecessarily long. It is not necessary to repeat all the information or analysis which has been reported in the past.

1.1 Data to be included

Schools should use the primary inputs below and supplement this with secondary inputs and any other information available internally. See Appendix 1 for further guidance on how to interpret the data.

Primary Inputs (compulsory information to be commented on)

a) Previous Annual Review actions

Please state how actions from the previous year's Annual Review were addressed.

b) Enrolment data (shown in review template data appendix)

Data on enrolled PGRs for the past five years has been included in the data appendix.

c) Performance data (shown in review template data appendix)

Submission and completion rate Data has been included to help you focus on relevant areas for action, the tables show an extract of details for the cohorts of PGRs who started from 2013/14 to allow trends to be recognised over the longer period these PGRs take to complete doctoral programmes. VRS and programmes not compliant with standard UoB regulations are not included, and data for programmes no longer recruiting are not shown in the tables. Rates will vary for small cohorts, but trends of interest may be discerned for larger cohorts. Where the majority of PGRs have completed their studies, submission or completion rate is shown; for the period where PGRs are still in progress, maximum potential submission or completion rate is more relevant.

The most recent data to comment on is the submission rate for the cohort who started in 2019 and the completion rate for the cohort who started in 2018. Some who started in 2018 may have not yet completed as they perhaps await examination or are undertaking corrections following examination, or if they are studying part time.

Examination results Where more than a third of the results were major corrections or worse outcomes, comment is requested as this falls outside the usual range.

Where **referrals have been made to the Research Progress and Awards sub-panel** for additional extensions for more than 10% of the School PGR population, data is shown in the data appendix and comment is requested as this exceeds the normal range.

d) Feedback from PGRs

Information gathered from Staff Student Committees (including the annual SSC report) and surveys such as PRES should be included and evaluated.

e) External feedback

Any feedback from the External Examiners' reports on the PGR examination process should be included and evaluated (relevant comments are forwarded to Colleges by the University Graduate School for discussion with Schools throughout the year). Any other external feedback (e.g., reports from accrediting or other external bodies) should also be included.

Secondary Inputs (additional information which could be referred to)

This should include staff feedback (e.g., through committee meetings or other forums in the School); material available to PGRs (e.g., handbooks or website information); programme specifications and internal procedures and documentation.

Although it is the responsibility of the School PGR Lead to complete the plan, they should arrange a meeting to discuss it and to agree the final content of the reports. The meeting should be chaired by the School PGR Lead and include the School Head of QA or equivalent, School Head of Research and Knowledge Transfer, PGR representatives, and the School Head of Education and PGR programme leads if required. A list of actions should be completed indicating who is responsible for overseeing the action and an indicative deadline for completion of the action.

The School PGR Plan must be uploaded to the [PGR Annual Review Teams site](#) by 9th August 2024, with any exceptions agreed by College PGR leads.

2. College Summary Form

School PGR Plan forms should be discussed at College PGR Board. Items to consider include:

- Identification of issues to investigate in more detail
- Requests for supporting evidence for areas of concern or good practice
- Whether to challenge any assumptions or conclusions
- Requests for revision of any elements of a School report or action plan

Following the College PGR Board meeting and discussions with the College committee with responsibility for QA matters, the College PGR lead and College Director with responsibility for QA (with support from School PGR and QA leads, as well as guidance from the College Academic Policy Partner) should prepare a summary report on outcomes from the process, for consideration by the Graduate Research Board and University Quality Assurance Committee. A list of College actions should be compiled, indicating who is responsible for overseeing the action and an indicative deadline for completion of the action.

The College summary, together with copies of the School PGR plans, must be uploaded to the [PGR Annual Review Teams site](#) by 18th October 2024.

Appendix 1 – Guidance on interpretation of embedded data

Please consider the following when commenting on the data provided:

- (1) **Trend (longitudinal) analysis** – assess the direction of any trends (e.g., are rates improving or worsening over time). Positive trends could indicate existing policies and processes are functioning effectively, while negative trends might indicate the need for a review and development of an action plan.

- (2) **Exception reporting** – exceptions to general trends (e.g., a leap in the number of theses with no corrections being awarded or spike in leavers from a particular programme) should be identified and investigated. Possible reasons for the exception should be considered, along with any steps which might prevent recurrence or encourage continuation as appropriate.

- (3) **Comparative analysis** – School data should be compared to College and University level data to identify any differences and required improvements. Submission and completion rates for full time PGRs at University and College level are shown below for the most relevant recent cohort start year, i.e., the most recent cohort for which the majority of FT doctoral PGRs are expected to have submitted/completed. The overall rates including data for part time PGRs are lower than those shown below, and it should be noted that the University’s overall submission and completion rates influence some external decisions such as grant awards. As a result, the University is keen to improve these figures.

	UoB	CAL	EPS	LES	MDS	CoSS
Current submission rate for FT cohort who started in 2019	55.3%	55.0%	47.1%	63.8%	65.8%	45.6%
Current completion rate for FT cohort who started in 2018	60.7%	47.6%	61.1%	72.4%	70.3%	50.0%

*Figures correct as at 23/05/2024. Data is subject to change as remaining outstanding PGRs submit/complete. These figures are the combined result for all programme aims (i.e., research masters, PhD, Professional doctorates, etc).

- (4) **Review of previous actions** – assess the impact of specific actions previously undertaken, e.g., if a previous Review suggested action to reduce numbers of leavers or late submissions, does the data show an improvement in this area and, if so, can this be reasonably attributed to the action taken?

Interpretation of Submission and Completion rate data

The submission and completion rate data embedded in the School forms is taken from reports within the BOXI data warehouse. This data can also be produced as influenced by other factors which may be relevant to your PGR population e.g., disability or residence. Researchers with the status ‘never arrived’, visiting researchers not studying for a qualification and some programmes not compliant with standard University Regulations are excluded.

NB1: The data warehouse calculates the maximum period of study/expected submission date for each PGR. This takes into account permitted amendments to standard programme duration such as leaves of absence, programme transfers, or changes to study mode (FT/PT). Extensions to maximum period of study will result in late submissions. High numbers of late submissions have a negative impact.

Completion rates are calculated from those who complete their programme aim. High numbers of leavers have a negative impact and outstanding vivas/corrections will reduce the rate until those PGRs finish.

NB2: There are two known limitations with the calculation of submission and completion rates. Firstly, non-consecutive leaves of absence within one academic year are not picked up which may lead to incorrect calculation of expected dates. Also, all part time researchers are assumed to be on 50% attendance for calculation of their expected dates so those who study to other percentages (e.g., 75% of full time) will be incorrect. For Schools where this applies to a large number of researchers, comment should be made to explain why the figures presented are incorrect. More accurate figures from the School's own calculations should be included where available.

NB3: Programmes which do not comply with regulations are excluded from both rates and researchers who leave in their first year are included in the completion rates but not submission rates.

The completion data provided is for cohort start years from the academic year 2018. Because of the duration of doctoral programmes and numbers of part time researchers, only data up to the cohort who started in 2018 is near to being final. For admissions from 2015 to 2018, submission rates for full time researchers will now be close to final (leaves of absence etc. means there are a small number of researchers who are outstanding but still within permitted time for these years). As completion rates include those who complete late, they may still be in flux for earlier years. Those with outstanding corrections following examination appear as 'still to complete late', which is why completion rates for the full-time cohort starting in 2018 are yet to be finalised.

Either submission rate or maximum potential submission rate is shown depending on whether most of the cohort who started that year are expected to have submitted. Maximum potential completion rate is shown alongside the current completion rate for years in which a number of PGRs have yet to complete 'late' to give an indication of what the rate may yet rise to.

A member of staff in each School should have access to the data warehouse within BOXI to produce these reports (If not, contact the IT service desk). This can be done to investigate the data further.

1. Log in to BOXI <https://boxi.bham.ac.uk/BOE/BI/>. In the document list, navigate to Public Folders - Data Warehouse documents - Student Reports - Advanced Reporting. The relevant reports to use are 'Submission Rate Report – PGR annual review' or 'Completion Rate Report – PGR annual review'. Double click on the title to open the report.
2. You **must** refresh the report to retrieve the latest data and can also apply filters to retrieve data of relevance to you. We advise amending the end cohort year to last year and excluding the current status code of 'IS' i.e., 'never arrived'. Click on 'run' to refresh the data.
3. Once the report has updated (check the 'refresh date' in the bottom right-hand corner), use the tabs along the bottom of the screen to move between summary, residency, gender, etc. The data shown will initially default to University level but clicking on the underlined organisation level name allows you to drill down to College, School and Department. Use the navigation arrows or drop-down boxes near the top of the report to find relevant data.
4. You can download the data for manipulation in Excel, or to copy into the annual review forms, by clicking on the Export icon in the tool bar.
5. The final line of percentages in downloaded reports is irrelevant and only those cohort (start) years for which the majority of PGRs have completed their research will show useful data.