

**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**  
**OFFICE FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – PROGRESS REPORTS**

**1. WHY DO I NEED TO COMPLETE A PROGRESS REPORT?**

The Progress Report is designed to provide a structure for planning and reflection on your progress. It gives you and your supervisor an opportunity to review and plan your work. Students find the process of completing the Progress Report very useful for keeping them on track with their schedule.

A second, very important function of the Progress Report is to give you an opportunity to document any issues or problems you are having with your research so that your supervisor(s) and the University are alerted to issues and can take action on these. This is especially important if you have a scholarship, and there are circumstances outside your control (e.g. an equipment failure). In the event that you need to apply for an extension, the Progress Report will be invaluable as it will provide you with documented evidence of problems at the time they occurred, as evidence of difficulties which were not of your making.

Finally, the Progress Report is intended to demonstrate that you are active and making progress as a research student. Without evidence of progress, the University is unable to assess its research students as a whole on areas such as supervision, research environment, facilities, resources, research skills, processes, procedures and overall satisfaction. As submitting a Progress Report is a University requirement, failure to comply will mean that your standing as a candidate will be reviewed. If progress is unsatisfactory your candidature may be discontinued.

**2. WHAT IF I DON'T COMPLETE AND SUBMIT A PROGRESS REPORT?**

With the government regime for funding of research students, pressure for students to complete their studies in minimum time has increased substantially. There is also greater competition for admission to research degrees. The University has to ensure that places are not being held by students who are not making genuine progress towards completing their work.

Non-submission of a Progress Report will result in your progress being deemed unsatisfactory and your enrolment could be discontinued.

**3. WHAT IF MY PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR IS UNAVAILABLE TO COMPLETE THE REPORT (E.G. OVERSEAS, OSP)?**

If your Principal Supervisor is unavailable for a substantial period of time, you should have completed a "Change in Supervision" form to appoint someone to act in this capacity until your Principal Supervisor returns. If this has not been done, contact your Associate Supervisor who should take on this responsibility. If you have any problems getting your Progress Report completed by a Supervisor, either contact your Postgraduate Coordinator or Head of School/Centre/Institute. Further advice can be obtained from your Faculty Student Advice Officer or the Office for Postgraduate Research.

**4. WHAT IF I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING IN MY PROGRESS REPORT, WHICH MY PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR MAY NOT LIKE?**

Students are sometimes wary of making negative statements about how their work is going, or about their Supervisors, or Faculty. This is understandable, as your Supervisor and Faculty get to see the Progress Report. Nonetheless, if there is something you're concerned about you should take action. You have several options. You could contact your Associate Supervisor, the Director of Graduate Research at the Office for Postgraduate Research and/or the Victoria University Student Association.

**5. WHAT IF THE PRE-PRINTED DETAILS ON MY PROGRESS REPORT ARE INCORRECT?**

If there are errors, or out-of-date information pre-printed on the front page of your Progress Report, you should clearly make the amendments in pen. These amendments will be assessed once the Progress Report has been returned to your Faculty Student Advice Officer. If further information is required regarding your amendments, you will be contacted.

Please note that if you have more than one Associate Supervisors only one of their names will appear on the front page of your Progress Report. Please write the name of the additional Associate Supervisor and the Faculty Student Advice Officer will check your student records to ensure that these details are recorded.

**6. WHO VIEWS MY PROGRESS REPORT ONCE IT HAS BEEN FORMALLY SUBMITTED?**

The Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee reviews every Progress Report. Common themes for discussion/improvement are discussed at the end of year Student Forum.

## 7. WHAT IS A CANDIDATE'S STANDARD DURATION?

If your initial enrolment was prior to 1 September 2000 then the following applies:

### Doctoral Candidate

- 36 months standard duration equivalent full time (EFT);
- You may apply for four, six month extensions (EFT);
- Maximum duration is 60 months (EFT).

### Masters By Research Candidate

- 24 months standard duration equivalent full time (EFT);
- You may apply for two, six month extensions (EFT);
- Maximum duration is 36 months (EFT).

If your initial enrolment was following 1 September 2000 then the following applies:

### Doctoral Candidate

- 36 months standard duration equivalent full time (EFT);
- You may apply for two, six month extensions (EFT);
- Maximum duration is 48 months (EFT).

### Masters By Research Candidate

- 24 months standard duration equivalent full time (EFT);
- Maximum duration is 24 months (EFT);
- No extensions are possible.

## 8. WHEN SHOULD I APPLY FOR AN EXTENSION TO CANDIDATURE AND WHAT FORM DO I NEED TO COMPLETE?

The first step is to determine whether you are eligible to apply for an extension of candidature. You can determine this by calculating your current candidature duration and ascertaining which scheme you fall under (refer to Question 7 above). If you require further assistance regarding your entitlements, please contact your Faculty Student Advice Officer or the Admissions and Scholarships Coordinator in the Office for Postgraduate Research on (03) 9919 4659.

You should apply for an extension prior to your candidature due date. If this corresponds with the submission of your Progress Report, then you can apply for an extension under Part B, Question 3. Otherwise, you can complete an Application for Extension to Candidature form and submit it to your Faculty Student Advice Officer. This form is available from the Office for Postgraduate Research web page –

<http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-students/forms-for-research-students>

**Please note:** International students applying to extend their candidature and electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE) should familiarise themselves with the National Code of Practice 2007 <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/ESOS/NationalCodeOfPractice2007/default.htm> (Standard 9). Once the Postgraduate Research Committee has approved an extension to candidature, international students must then apply to VU International for an extension to eCoE using the "Request for an Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment" form. For further information contact VUI Compliance ([vucompliance@vu.edu.au](mailto:vucompliance@vu.edu.au))

## 9. WHAT ARE THE UNIVERSITY'S AREAS OF STRATEGIC RESEARCH FOCUS?

Please view <http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-strengths> for an up to date listing of the areas of strategic research focus. Please check with your Principal Supervisor or Head of School/Centre/Institute to ascertain whether your research is linked to one of these areas.

## 10. WHAT ARE THE TRAINING AND PROCEDURES I SHOULD FOLLOW WHILE CONDUCTING MY RESEARCH?

### **Occupational Health and Safety**

Students with their supervisors are responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted in a safe environment and in accord with government health and safety legislation and procedures. Occupational health and safety includes ergonomics, working safely with hazardous materials (e.g. blood, chemicals), plant and machinery, electrical and other equipment, working at height, alone or in the field.

Please confirm that you have identified hazards and risks associated with the conduct of your research, and have participated in required induction and ongoing training for laboratories and all equipment that you are using. Also, please comment on any concerns you have about health and safety in your research and/or identify additional training and support needs you have to support you with the safe conduct of your research. Further information is available on the OH&S intranet site: <http://intranet.vu.edu.au/hr/OHS/Default.asp>

### **Human Research Ethics**

Victoria University requires researchers to obtain a clearance for any research in which humans are involved. Ethics approval must be granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee before the research can proceed.

Please indicate whether your research project involves humans, and if so, indicate the current status of ethics approval for your project (eg. application 1) under preparation, 2) submitted and under consideration by the committee, 3) approval granted, 4) approval granted and data collection currently taking place, 5) approval granted and data collection completed), and comment on any issues being experienced with data

collection and/or identify training/skill development needs associated with the ethical conduct of the research. Further information is available through the following link: <http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-development/ethics-and-biosafety/human-research-ethics>

### Animal Research Ethics

Any person at Victoria University who wishes to use animals in research must first obtain approval from the University Animal Ethics Committee. Please indicate whether your research project involves animals, and if so, indicate the current status of ethics approval for your project (eg. is your application 1) under preparation, 2) submitted and under consideration by the committee, 3) approval granted, 4) approval granted and research currently taking place, 5) approval granted and research with animals completed), and comment on any issues being experienced with the research with animals and/or identify training/skill development needs associated with the ethical conduct of the research. Further information is available through the following link: <http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-development/ethics-and-biosafety/animal-ethics>

### Institutional Biosafety -

All research conducted by Victoria University staff and students involving genetic manipulation experimentation requires clearance from the Institutional Biosafety Committee. Please indicate if your research project involves such experimentation, and, if it does, indicate the status of your clearance and comment on any issues being experienced with the safe conduct of the research and/or identify training/skill development needs associated with the safe conduct of the research. Further information is available through the following link:

<http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-development/ethics-and-biosafety/biosafety>

## 11. WHAT ARE THE CLUSTERS?

As part of implementing *MakingVU – A New School of Thought*, all university courses have been organised into industry and community focussed clusters (see below). The Office for Research has allocated you to a cluster based on the information we have about your research degree. Please speak to your Supervisor if you believe you have been allocated to the wrong cluster and indicate in pen on your Progress Report the cluster that you should be assigned to.

### University Clusters:

Arts	Emergency Health Services
Creative Arts	Food Science & Nutrition
International Studies	Nursing
Music	Government
Music Industry	Human Services
Education	Personal Services
Preparatory & Transition	Psychology
Building & Construction	Computational
Civil & Architectural Engineering	Information, Communication Technology
Electrical & Electronic Engineering	Management Information Systems
Environment	Science
Mechanical Engineering	Justice & Legal Practice
Metals & Engineering	Law
Accounting	Marketing
Banking & Finance	Retail & Property Services
Economics	Exercise & Sports Science
Management & General Business	Recreation Management
Allied Health Services	Tourism & Hospitality
Bio Science	Logistics

## 12: WHAT ARE THE FIELDS OF RESEARCH (FOR) AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE (SEO) CODES?

The 'Fields of Research' (FOR) codes refer to a system used to classify all Australian research activity. It is an important statistical tool for both inside and outside the University. We have automatically converted RFCD codes held in the HDR database to FOR codes wherever possible however sometimes this has not been possible and input from you and your supervisors may be required. The Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) code system has also been updated and the codes listed may need to be reviewed. Even if FOR and SEO codes have been listed for your research project please take a moment to check that the listed codes are appropriate. Please view [http://research.vu.edu.au/ordsite/management/ANZSRC\\_Mar\\_2008.pdf](http://research.vu.edu.au/ordsite/management/ANZSRC_Mar_2008.pdf) for an up to date listing of the codes.

Updated September 2011