

Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine (WIPM) PhD Procedures

Introduction

The new Student Information System (SIS) is now being used by the College for all PhD and MD students who enrol as from September 2010. Students who started their PhD prior to this are also listed on the new system. One of the most important new areas is the Student Progression 9th month assessment which is a completely new area. Student data is held on this system and students can update their own details.

This document does not overwrite any policies or procedures that are set out by the Graduate Office, but hopes to clarify each stage of a PhD for staff that are intending to supervise or are currently supervising students and to give some guidance to both staff and students on day to day working as a PhD student in the Wolfson Institute.

Applying for a PhD and Registering

All students **MUST** register online. This applies also to Wolfson Institute staff who wish to apply for a PhD.

For details go to www.qmul.ac.uk/postgraduate/applyresearchdegrees

Applying for a PhD

(a) Ad hoc online at any time of the year – see link above. If a student applies online the administrator of SIS is notified by email that an application is online and needs to be processed. The administrator forwards this to the Senior Postgraduate Tutor for guidance on obtaining suitable supervisors if none are listed, to check whether funding is available or how the student proposes to obtain funding and to assess whether the proposed PhD application is actually feasible and of sufficient quality. Students may already have had an appointment with a prospective supervisor and in this case the application **MUST** be sent to the supervisor to make sure they are happy to take on this student and supervise the PhD. While we will do our best to identify a suitable supervisor if the student requests it, we cannot guarantee to do so.

(b) Answering an advert placed externally - students will apply directly to the advert and are then interviewed by a relevant panel. Once a successful applicant has been chosen and accepted verbally they **MUST** be told to go online to register. Following online registration the system will send an email to the WIPM Postgraduate Administrator for processing. The administrator and Senior Postgraduate Tutor **MUST** be informed by email that WIPM are advertising and be given full details about the:

- successful candidate
- the offer made
- whether accepted
- funding
- any conditions to the offer.

Once it then comes through SIS it will be approved for a formal offer to be made.

(c) Printed application form - it is still possible at present to download a printed application form from the website, but it is **NOT** recommended. If this does happen, and an offer has been made the paperwork **MUST** be sent to Jacqui Frith immediately for her to give to Admissions for registering on the system as otherwise no official offer (i.e letter) or payment of stipend can be given.

Registering

Once the paperwork for the successful applicant, however they have applied, has been put online by Admissions and the WIPM Postgraduate Administration has agreed this on the SIS system, it is then forwarded to the College Graduate Studies Administrator who then sends out the offer letter with conditions if applicable. The student accepts in writing and they are then provisionally enrolled at QM on the Student Information System (SIS).

Final registration takes place the first day the student starts as they **MUST** go to the Graduate Office, Mile End to be enrolled fully in order to get their stipend, college student ID, etc.

Student progression at 9 months (18 months if part-time)

The SMD Graduate School has introduced a 9 month formal progression point for all full-time research students. Part time students will have this formal progression review at 18 months. With the introduction of the new SIS and the decision to abolish the MPhil/PhD upgrade, QM has agreed to use the 9 month assessment as the key progression point for all research degree students and has introduced a requirement for the student's progress to be reviewed by a panel.

There will be additional monitoring points as currently, and the Graduate Research Studies Committee has agreed to retain the report and viva, that currently comprises the 18 month upgrade (36 months for part-time), as a monitoring point. Part time students will have the formal progression review at 18 months and a monitoring point at 36 months.

The following describes what is required for progression at 9 months followed by how to do this on SIS.

1 In order to satisfy the requirements for progression after 9 months of full time registration (18 months part time) the student must write a report and undergo an oral examination by an independent panel. They must satisfy the panel that they have established a good understanding of their project, the methods to be used and the research process, and furthermore, that they have plans for completion of the work which are realistic and achievable in the time frame allowed. They must also satisfy the panel that they have engaged with the transferable skills training requirements of 70 hours appropriate training per year. **The interview process must be completed by the end of the 9th month of registration. Failure to do this will result in the generation of a 'referred' recommendation. If a student does not engage with this process it is the equivalent of failing to attend an examination.**

Specifically, *the student is required to:*

Write a report of approximately 2000 words including:

- Brief introduction
- Aims of the research project
- How these aims will be addressed (consideration of the methods to be used)
- A critical review of one piece of methodology
- Plan of future work

There is no expectation that the student will include original data in this report but any method validation that has been carried out would be useful. In addition the student is required to write a report detailing the training they have received on each of the key points in the Research Training plan. They should also indicate what training they intend to undertake in the future.

2 *The report will be considered by a panel* comprising at least two independent researchers (**not the student's supervisors**). Panel members will be experienced in PhD student supervision and examination and will be based in a different research centre from the supervisor/student. They will usually be internal to QM and may not be involved in examining the final thesis. It is likely that they will be senior members of academic staff. Additional panel members may be academic staff members seeking to gain experience. The membership of the panel has to be approved by the WIPM Senior Postgraduate Tutor or the Director of Research. The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the electronic record system (SIS) is updated appropriately.

The panel will interview the student.

The interview will start with the student giving a short presentation summarising their project. The panel will then question the student looking for the following points:

- Understanding of the project
- Understanding of the methods to be used (including discussion of the critical review)
- Understanding of the research process (including ethics, statistics, experimental design etc)
- Feasibility of future research plans
- Likelihood of the student completing their studies successfully, submitting their thesis and being awarded their PhD well within the 4 year time frame allowed.

At the end of the interview the panel will recommend either that the student progresses or is referred. This recommendation **must be made by the end of the 10th month** of registration at the very latest. The panel will provide appropriate written feedback to the student. If the student is referred they have **ONE** opportunity to remedy and undergo re-assessment by the panel. The panel makes their final recommendation as to whether the student progresses, or is either transferred to an MPhil degree or de-registered. This recommendation must be made formally, through the electronic Student Information System (SIS), by 364 days of full-time registration. Transfer to MPhil or de-registration will result in the immediate cessation of any studentship payments. For MPhil transfer the student will be invoiced for fees if these cannot be recovered from the funding body. **It is anticipated that the 'default' in case of no recommendation being received, will be to de-register the student at 364 days.**

Convening a panel

The above progression assessment **MUST** be done on SIS and should be done by the supervisor for the student or by the Postgraduate Administrator if the supervisor has difficulty in doing so. All supervisors will have the necessary access to SIS. External panel members from outside QM may be used and added to SIS. Do **NOT** use external members if using them for the final PhD exam

1 The section for the 9th month progression assessment is shown under the heading of 'Research Student Data' on SIS. Enter this page to find a list of our current PhD students that show either that a panel has been completed or the need to create one. Dates are shown for

when the panel window starts so a panel can be created and a closed window panel for when it should be completed by.

2 If a student is deferred a 2nd panel is needed, which ideally should be the same panel members but if necessary (because of holidays, meetings, sickness etc) they can be changed on SIS. **The 2nd panel cannot be delayed due to time constraints.**

Paperwork

Paper records for students are no longer necessary as applications (provided they enrol online) and personal data is kept on SIS and is easy to access and print. Any other paperwork can be scanned and kept on a computer for future reference.

Supervisor Training

All supervisors should be aware of and read the Code of Practice for Research Degree programme. The link is below and the document can be downloaded as a pdf file.

www.smd.qmul.ac.uk/graduatestudies/currentstudents

All PhD supervisors must undergo a PhD training session and also have refresher training every 3 years. There are regular supervisor training workshops. For details contact Tom Lister (t.w.lister@qmul.ac.uk)

Other training events are run by The Learning Institute. Details can be found at www.learninginstitute.qmul.ac.uk

Student Training

Students are encouraged to develop a wide range of skills while undertaking their research project. The Graduate School requires all full-time research students to complete 70 hours of training per year (part-time students should complete a pro-rata rate of training as appropriate). 70 hours equals approximately two weeks' training per year.

It is up to the student and the supervisor to decide on the most appropriate type of training for the student, within the constraints of the SMD Policy on Supervision and the RCUK recommendations.

The training does not all have to come from one source, to this end, students should be using a Personal Development Plan to record their training and skills development. For forms relating to training the link is below and the forms can be downloaded.

www.smd.qmul.ac.uk/graduatestudies/currentstudents/resstudentguide/#pdp

The 70 hours can be built up from:

- Mandatory 3 day Graduate School Taught Course for First Year Students (this covers 21 hours of the training)
- Journal clubs
- Training sessions from The Learning Institute
- Courses offered internally by Institutes
- Attending and presenting conferences
- Poster competitions

- Centre/Institute events (seminars)
- Graduate School Careers Day
- Networking events

Certificates of Attendance should be obtained if a student wishes to count external activities towards their training. Students attending journal clubs should ensure that attendance is taken for the record. Students may wish to undertake more training in their first two years – as long as the full 210 hours (based on 3 years full-time) is completed by the time of submission, the actual amount can vary per year.

This "skills analysis" or "Training Needs Analysis" can be carried out using the skills audit form. Ideally students will use this form every six months or so and discuss it with the supervisor.

The other forms are to help students keep a record of their activities.

Records and Documentation is where information about the student's supervisor is kept, together with their project, milestones in the degree and supervisory meetings.

The Personal Log records training activities that they have taken part in, along with presentations, publications, teaching experience etc.

The PDP Proforma records training plans for the next few months - what skills they are going to work on, why, how, and how they will know when they have been successful.

All these forms can be modified to suit however you wish to use them.

Since the record of the training and development activities forms an important part of the upgrade procedure, these should be kept.

Induction Programme

There is a new QM induction programme for all new research students which all new PhD students are **required** to attend. A message will be sent to all enrolling students but the WIPM postgraduate administrator should also inform them. Students will need to register on <http://www.learninginstitute.qmul.ac.uk>

Wolfson Institute

Whilst not all students are based at the main WIPM site it is important that all students **must** attend to meet the Senior Postgraduate Tutor and WIPM postgraduate administrator. Students should be aware of essential information about the Wolfson Institute and if not based at Charterhouse Square they need to find out about their own offices for the following items listed below. They should contact the Postgraduate Administrator about the Wolfson Institute building and if elsewhere speak to their administrator or supervisor.

- Fire procedures
- First Aid locations and boxes
- Security for where they work

- Health and Safety – The College runs 1-hour Health & Safety courses throughout the year and it is advisable that all attend. Cheryl Mason is the Institute’s Health and Safety Adviser.
- Room bookings at the Wolfson – all staff can book Seminar rooms 129, 130, Study room 002 in the Wolfson building please contact Linda Goodchild at l.k.goodchild@qmul.ac.uk
- QM staff contact information is at www.dir.qmul.ac.uk. Note that internal and logged-in users see more data than in the external version.
- There are various websites giving useful college information:
 Wolfson Institute - www.wolfson.qmul.ac.uk
 QM home - www.qmul.ac.uk
 QM intranet – www.connect.qmul.ac.uk
 QM personnel - www.admin.qmul.ac.uk/humanresources
 QM graduate office www.smd.qmul.ac.uk/graduatestudies

General Information

Confidentiality form – all students are required to complete a confidentiality form whilst studying at the Wolfson Institute. This will be done when they meet the Postgraduate Administrator at the start of their PhD.

Students must agree their holiday periods, between a minimum of four weeks and up to a maximum of eight weeks per year inclusive of public holidays and Queen Mary closure dates, with their supervisor. Excessive absences must be reported to the Senior Postgraduate Tutor for the Institute and the Dean for Research.

Absence due to ill health should be reported as soon as possible to the supervisor, and if necessary after 1 week supported by appropriate medical certification. The studentship will be suspended if the total period of absence during any calendar year exceeds 13 weeks. The overall period of the studentship will not normally be extended as a result of a student’s absence through illness, although if a long period of absence is expected, the student may ask for interruption of study. If medical certificates are **NOT** supplied, the College reserves the right to suspend the studentship.

Students should primarily work at the office but there are times when working from home would be suitable. If this is necessary students must ask their supervisor if this is acceptable and inform them in advance when they are not going to be in the office.

Yearly Postgraduate Seminar day

A seminar day for PhD students is organised each year. Students are expected to give a short presentation about their work. This is for all PhD students and supervisors and all Institute staff are welcome to attend.