

Higher Degree by Research Academic Progress Policy

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| Approval | University Research Committee meeting: 25/11/10 Academic Board Meeting No. 11/1 – 07/02/11 |
| Documents replaced by this policy | Gold Book Part 6: Sections 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 |
| Procedures and/or guidelines supporting this policy | Procedures are contained within the policy |

A. Introduction

Purpose

1. The University has a responsibility to support higher degree by research (HDR) candidates throughout their candidature and monitor progress to identify candidates who are at risk of not making satisfactory progress in their course.
2. This document outlines the University of Canberra's policy and procedures to support the academic progress of HDR candidates and comply with relevant sections of the [National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007](#) (the *National Code 2007*) established under the [Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) (the *ESOS Act 2000*).
3. The *National Code 2007* sets out specific principles for registered providers to follow when supporting and monitoring course progress of international students on student visas.

Scope

4. This policy applies to all staff and to enrolled HDR candidates.
5. This policy complements the *Higher Degree by Research Enrolment and Changes to Candidature Policy* (2010, pending) and the *Higher Degree by Research Milestones Policy* (2010, pending).

Legislation

6. This policy is governed by the [Academic Progress Statute 1995](#) and the [Academic Progress Rules 2009](#).

B. Principles

7. HDR candidates have a responsibility to maintain progress of their research, including the presentation of written material as agreed in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage. It is also the responsibility of the candidate to inform the Chair of the Supervisory Panel of problems affecting progress if and as they arise.
8. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Supervisory Panel to monitor the progression of candidature towards a timely and successful completion, and to ensure that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the candidate's attention.

9. Host Faculties and University Research Centres (URC) formally review the progress of all HDR candidates bi-annually via a report to ensure early identification of candidates who are at risk of failing to meet course progress requirements.
10. The host Faculty or URC must make documented attempts to address or rectify progress that is below the standard generally expected, before unsatisfactory progress procedures can be activated. Possible courses of action may involve a prescribed program of work, referral to University support services, or changes to candidature.
11. The University provides academic and personal support services to help candidates achieve their research and skills development goals and make satisfactory progress towards the completion of the thesis. The University also assists international HDR candidates to adjust to study and life in Australia.
12. Feedback to candidates on their progress should be given as early as possible in candidature, and at least within the first six months after commencement.
13. Candidates and supervisors should note that, in the event of a dispute, written reports will be of prime importance; and therefore these reports must be frank appraisals by both the Chair and the candidate of the candidate's progress.

C. Progress

Monitoring progress in HDR courses

14. A candidate's progression through a higher degree by research course, from initial enrolment to thesis submission and examination, involves the achievement of a number of milestones. These academic requirements for candidates are outlined in the *Higher Degree by Research Milestones Policy* (2011, pending).
15. Candidates enrolled in a higher degree by research course submit a report on the progress of the research project bi-annually to the Chair of their Supervisory Panel, and subsequently to the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC. These reports are available for candidates to view after the Chair of the Supervisory Panel and the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) or Director have added their comments.
16. The Progress Update Report is completed in the first half of each calendar year. The Annual Progress Report is completed in the second half of each calendar year. See *Schedule One (S1): Progress Report Procedures* for procedural information on the Progress Update Report and the Annual Progress Report.
17. Re-enrolment in a HDR course is conditional on maintenance of satisfactory progress. Candidates are re-enrolled in their course on the basis of a satisfactory Annual Progress Report.
18. Beyond the University's formal reporting procedures for the monitoring of candidature, a supervisor may, at any time, draw the attention of the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) in the Faculty or Director of the URC to problems with progress of a candidate. The Chair of the Supervisory Panel is required to report immediately to the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) or Director any failure by a candidate to make satisfactory progress or to abide by other requirements in the regulations governing the course and the degree.
19. If a dispute is raised in the Progress Update Report or the Annual Progress Report, it is normally the responsibility of the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) or Dean of the Faculty or Director of the URC to investigate and provide a resolution to the matter.

Indicators

20. Potential indicators that a candidate may be at risk of not making satisfactory progress in his or her course include, but are not limited to:
- a) overdue milestones, including overdue Confirmation Seminar and confirmation of candidature;
 - b) failure to meet the conditions of confirmation of candidature;
 - c) persistent failure to meet deadlines (e.g. submission of drafts) agreed by the Chair of the Supervisory Panel and the candidate;
 - d) persistent failure to keep appointments with the Supervisory Panel or to maintain an agreed level of email contact;
 - e) repeated requests to change topics;
 - f) inadequate English language skills in relation to the level required to complete the research project; and
 - g) ongoing impact of personal situation on progress of candidature (sickness, work commitments, family commitments).
21. Candidates who do not maintain an agreed and regular level of contact with the Chair of Supervisory Panel are at risk of not making satisfactory progress. The Chair will advise the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC if a candidate fails to make contact without prior notice for two months or more.

Intervention Strategy Procedures

Activating the Early Intervention Strategy

22. The purpose of the intervention strategy is to assist HDR candidates who have been identified as at risk of not making satisfactory progress.
23. The intervention strategy can be formally activated through the Progress Update Report and Annual Progress Report process. The host Faculty or Centre will activate the intervention strategy if a candidate's progress is assessed for the first time in his or her candidature as marginally satisfactory (overall assessment of 2 on the scale of 1 to 5) or unsatisfactory (overall assessment of 1 on the scale of 1 to 5).
24. The intervention strategy may also be used for candidates recognised through other means as at risk of not making satisfactory progress, e.g. overdue milestone, failure to submit drafts as arranged, or self-identification by a student seeking assistance.
25. The Chair of the Supervisory Panel is responsible for liaising with the candidate in order to inform the candidate that they are at risk and to determine the course of action to take as part of an early intervention strategy. The Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC is responsible for ensuring the early intervention strategy is activated. See *Schedule Two: Early Intervention Strategy Workflow* for responsibilities and procedures for activating and monitoring early intervention.
26. In the formal progress reporting process, candidates for whom the early intervention strategy has been activated will be notified of this action in the report in which they received the assessment. Prior to this notification, the Chair will organise a meeting between the candidate and Supervisory Panel to discuss issues raised with regard to progress. Following this initial notification, the Chair of the Supervisory panel will advise the Research Students' Office and the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC of the recommended course of action. Upon the Associate

Dean Research's (or delegate's) or Director's approval, the Research Students' Office will then email the candidate with written notification of this action. This notification will:

- specify the course of action that the Chair recommends the candidate to take;
- advise the candidate of the procedures that will accompany this course of action, including the submission of a Special Progress Report;
- explain that for international candidates, unsatisfactory progress may affect their student visa conditions, one of which is that they must complete their studies within the time specified on their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE);
- refer the candidate to the University's HDR Academic Progress Policy; and
- include a copy of the Special Progress Report template with a deadline for when this report must be submitted.

27. If an early intervention strategy is activated outside the Annual Progress Reporting process, the Chair of the Supervisory Panel will initially discuss with the candidate and the Supervisory Panel the course of action to be taken before advising the Research Students' Office and Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC of this course of action. Upon the Associate Dean Research's (or delegate's) or Director's approval, the Research Students' Office will email the candidate with written notification (as per Paragraph 26).

Early Intervention: Courses of Action

28. In the first instance, the Chair is responsible for addressing indicators that a student is at risk of not making satisfactory progress. If initial meetings between the Chair and the candidate fail to rectify problems or to provide a clear course of action, the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) within the Faculty or the Director within the URC will normally convene a meeting between the stakeholders to provide a clear course of action for improving progress towards completion.

29. Possible courses of action may include:

a) A prescribed program of work including:

- the submission of a revised research plan or methodology for assessment;
- the setting of specific goals, schedule of meetings and timelines/milestones, including the submission of written work;
- provision of specific training or support for aspects of the project.

b) Referral to University support services, including:

- University facilities and resources to support all students, including HDR candidates:
 - the Student Centre, for enquiries relating to student cards, fees, timetable issues, graduation and transcripts;
 - HDR Co-ordinators/Convenors in Faculties or URCs;
 - a general University orientation program offered at the beginning of each teaching period ; and
 - services and programs provided through the Student Equity and Support Unit (SEASU) including through the following sub-units: the Health and Counselling Service, UC AccessAbility Office, Student Equity and Access Office and the Office of the Dean of Students (see the [SEASU home page](#) on the University website).

- services specifically to support HDR academic progress, including:
 - a HDR orientation program provided twice a year through the [Research Education Program](#);
 - specific skills training provided through the [Research Education Program](#), including the Inter-University Workshops;
 - the Academic Skills Program;
 - the information and research skills training sessions provided by the Library; and
 - learning resource centres including the International Learning and Teaching Centre
 - other services listed on the University website (see also [Learning and Academic Success Network](#))
 - measures to assist international HDR candidates to adapt to study and life in Australia, including:
 - the provision of International Student Advisors as part of the International Student Support Service (ISSS) within the Student Equity and Support Unit (SEASU);
 - a University-wide orientation program accessible to all overseas students including late arrivals and students who begin at different entry points;
 - the international student writing workshops provided through the Research Education Program and the Academic Skills Program; and
 - facilities and services available to all HDR candidates as set out above.
- c) Changes to candidature (only taken as a course of action after consultation between the candidate and the supervisory panel and following the procedures set out in the *Higher Degree by Research Enrolment and Changes to Candidature Policy* (2011, pending) including:
- modification of supervisory arrangements; or
 - changes to the enrolment pattern (e.g. a period of intermission or transfer to part-time/full-time enrolment)
30. The early intervention strategy will be monitored in each case via the candidate's submission of a Special Progress Report. This is to be prepared by the candidate and the Chair of the Supervisory Panel and may incorporate in its requirements any of the courses of action listed in Paragraph 29. This report must be completed within 6 months after the candidate has received notification of the early intervention strategy. The Associate Dean Research must provide a recommendation on progress following the submission of the Special Progress Report. If a period of intermission is approved following the recommendation that the candidate completes a special progress report, then the report must be completed within eight weeks of the candidate's subsequent re-enrolment date.

Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures

Activating Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures

31. Unsatisfactory progress procedures will be activated only after the Faculty or URC has already initiated an early intervention strategy during candidature. See *Schedule Three*:

Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures Workflow – PROBATION for responsibilities and procedures for activating and monitoring a period of probation.

32. The host Faculty or URC can formally activate unsatisfactory progress procedures through the Progress Update Report and Annual Progress Report. Unsatisfactory progress procedures will be activated in the case where a candidate's progress is assessed as unsatisfactory (overall assessment of 1 or 2 on the scale of 1 to 5) following an earlier assessment of unsatisfactory or marginally satisfactory progress.
33. The host Faculty or URC may also activate unsatisfactory progress procedures in the following situations:
 - (1) a candidate's failure to comply with conditions or complete a program of work as required as part of an early intervention strategy; and
 - (2) a candidate's failure to meet the conditions required for confirmation of candidature following a second attempt at the Confirmation Seminar.
34. If the Faculty or URC identifies a candidate's progress as unsatisfactory the University will:
 - (1) place the candidate on academic probation with conditions imposed by the Faculty or URC;
 - (2) if the candidate has failed to meet the conditions required for confirmation of candidature following a second attempt at the Confirmation Seminar and the candidate is enrolled in a PhD or Professional Doctorate, counsel the candidate to transfer the candidature to an appropriate masters course or terminate candidature; or
 - (3) if the candidate has failed to meet the conditions required for confirmation of candidature following a second attempt at the Confirmation Seminar, and the candidate is enrolled in a Masters by Research, terminate candidature.

Academic Probation

35. *Academic probation* is defined as the imposing on a candidate conditions of continuation in a course when a review has found the academic progress of the candidate not to be of an acceptable standard. Appropriate conditions will be determined by the Chair of the Supervisory Panel and approved by the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC. Conditions will not normally be set for longer than six months and review will involve the candidate and Chair completing a Special Progress Report.
36. The Faculty or URC will inform the Research Students' Office of the conditions of probation in the form of a notice to the candidate. This notice will:
 - (1) explain why the candidate's progress is considered unsatisfactory;
 - (2) specify the conditions of probation and the consequences of not meeting them;
 - (3) indicate support services available to the candidate (see Point 29 (b));
 - (4) specify a level of contact between the candidate and the supervisory panel during the time conditions are imposed;
 - (5) provide a reasonable deadline (21 days) for the candidate to respond/request reconsideration of the decision if he/she wishes, and
 - (6) provide information on means of appeal including the *Student Grievance Resolution Policy*.

The Research Students' Office will forward this notice to the candidate.

37. Before the deadline provided on the notice of academic probation, a candidate may request that the Faculty or URC reconsider the imposition of academic probation if he/she believes the circumstances on which the notice is based are incorrect.

Exclusion

38. If the conditions of academic probation are not met to the satisfaction of the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC, a meeting will be called with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), chaired by the relevant Associate Dean Research or Director and attended by the Supervisory Panel. See *Schedule Four: Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures Workflow – EXCLUSION* for responsibilities and procedures.

39. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) may authorise the following:

- (a) that the candidate be excluded from the HDR course;
- (b) as appropriate in the case of a PhD or Professional Doctorate candidate, that the candidate be counselled to transfer to a Masters by Research course; or
- (c) that the candidate be permitted to continue in the course.

No extension to probation will be granted unless the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the candidate.

40. Upon discontinuation from candidature for unsatisfactory progress, the period that a candidate is excluded from the course will normally be one year. Once the period of exclusion from a course has elapsed a candidate may seek readmission to that course using the standard application procedures. During the period of exclusion a candidate may seek admission to a different course of study, except in the case where a candidate has already been on a prior exclusion. In this case, the candidate is excluded from all courses of the University for a period of one year.
41. A candidate readmitted to the University or admitted to a new course may be placed on conditions as appropriate.

Review and Appeals

42. Exceptional circumstances which may have impacted on a candidate's ability to achieve satisfactory progress will be considered.
43. A student who has failed to meet the conditions of continuation and who is advised that they are to be excluded from the course will be given an opportunity to provide a Statement of Reasons as to why they should be permitted to continue with their course of study.
44. A candidate who does not provide a Statement of Reasons by the required date (within 20 working days of written notification of exclusion, unless otherwise specified by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)) will be automatically excluded from the course.
45. The Statement of Reasons will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) for a decision on whether to allow the candidate to continue in the course.
46. A candidate who provides a Statement of Reasons will be notified of the final decision in relation to their academic standing.
47. Any subsequent appeals must be made in accordance with the *Student Grievance Resolution Policy*.
48. A candidate who is excluded from their course of study will be provided with information about the University's appeal procedures (*Student Grievance Resolution Policy*). International candidates must be advised in writing that they have 20 working days in

which to submit an appeal before the University is obliged under the National Code to report their excluded status.

49. Where an international candidate has chosen not to access the appeals process within the twenty working day period, withdraws from the process or the appeal process is completed and confirms the decision to exclude, the University as soon as practicable will notify the Secretary of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through PRISMS (Provider Registration and International Students Management System) of the candidate's status.
50. In accordance with the relevant Statutes and Rules, Academic Board may review any decision made by the Faculty Board or other appropriate review authority (this provision is normally not an avenue for an individual candidate's appeal).

D: Relevant Information

Other related documents

51. Documents related to this policy are:

- *Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*
- *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007*
- *International Education Policy*
- *Transnational programs procedures*
- *Progress in Higher Degree by Research Courses Policy (2010, pending)*
- *Student Support and Early Intervention Policy*
- *Academic Progress for Undergraduate Courses and Coursework Postgraduate Programs – Procedures*
- *Critical Student Incident Management Policy*
- *Student Grievance Resolution Policy*

Schedule One (S1): Progress Report Procedures

S1.1 Introduction

The Annual Progress Report (APR) and the Progress Update Report (PUR) are important and tools for the University and the Faculties/Research Centres to monitor and evaluate each HDR candidate's progress. Participating in this bi-annual reporting process and completion of these reports are mandatory. A candidate's continuing enrolment in the HDR course is contingent on complete and satisfactory reports. If the reporting processes are not completed, candidates may face discontinuation from the course of study.

The APR process provides an opportunity for the candidate and supervisor to critically reflect on the progress of the research work during the current year and on the intended directions in the year ahead so as to ensure a quality thesis and timely completion to the degree. Reporting must be taken seriously by candidates and their supervisors. When requests for extensions to candidature or scholarships are made, progress reports are consulted to determine whether delays were noted and discussed at the time, and what action was taken.

S1.2 Annual Progress Report (APR)

The Annual Progress Report (APR) form is made available online in September each year by the Research Students' Office to all eligible candidates. The form will include the previous Progress Update Report as well as a section to complete for the Annual Progress Report.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to complete the appropriate section of the APR form and submit the form via the online system to the Chair of the Supervisory Panel by the due date. The Supervisory Panel and the candidate should meet to discuss progress and the completion of the candidate's and Chair's sections before submission. In the event that the candidate feels concerned about this procedure, then the candidate should consult with the Dean or Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or the Director of the URC.

As well as detailed feedback, the Chair will provide the candidate with an overall progress assessment grade of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating exemplary progress and 1 indicating unsatisfactory progress).

After the candidate and Chair complete their sections of the form, the candidate is able to review and respond to the Chair's comments before submitting the form via the online system to the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) or Director who reviews the report and makes a recommendation concerning the candidate's progress. Once this process is complete, the report is forwarded to the Research Students' Office for processing and the candidate is informed that the process is complete via an email.

S1.3 Progress Update Report (PUR)

The Progress Update Report (PUR) form is made available online in April each year by the Research Students' Office to all eligible candidates.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to complete the appropriate section of the PUR and submit the form via the online system to the Chair of the Supervisory Panel by the due date. The Supervisory Panel and the candidate should meet to discuss progress and the completion of the candidate's and Chair's sections before submission. In the event that the candidate feels concerned about this procedure, then the candidate should consult with the Dean or Associate Dean Research (or delegate) of the Faculty or the Director of the URC.

As well as detailed feedback, the Chair will provide the candidate with an overall progress assessment grade of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating exemplary progress and 1 indicating unsatisfactory progress).

After the candidate and Chair complete their sections of the form, the candidate is able to review and respond to the Chair's comments before submitting the form via the online system to the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) or Director who reviews the report and makes a recommendation concerning the candidate's progress. At this stage, PUR are not processed by the Research Students' Office, unless the candidate's progress has been assessed as marginally satisfactory (2) or unsatisfactory (1).

S1.4 Report Outcomes

S1.4.1 Satisfactory

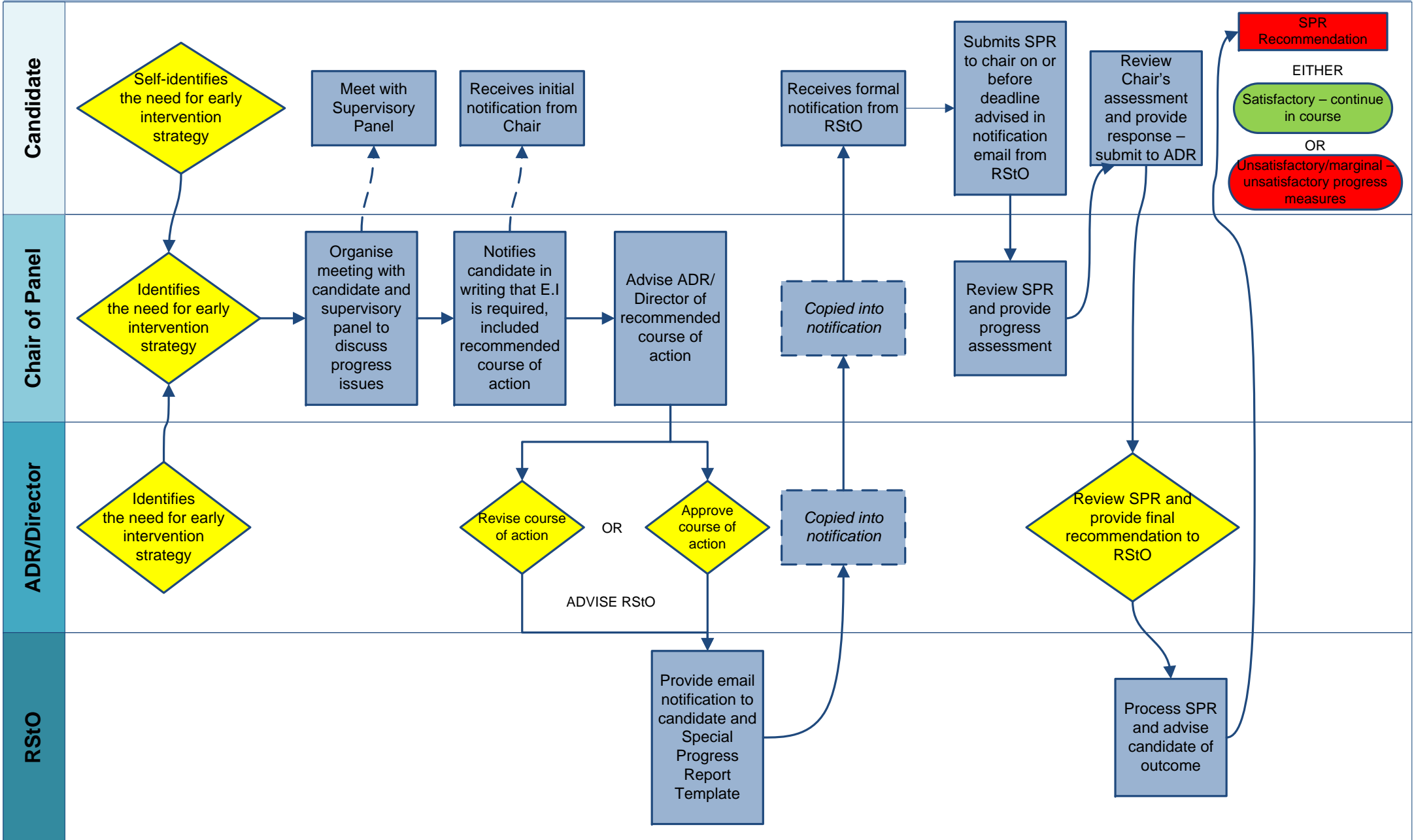
If the outcome of the report is a '5', '4' or '3', and the candidate is approved to progress, the Research Students' Office will assume that progress has been satisfactory and that any problems have been identified and dealt with. This outcome indicates that the candidate will complete within the permitted timeframe (maximum duration of the course). The report will be processed and filed. No further action will be taken by the Research Students' Office.

S1.4.2 Marginally Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory

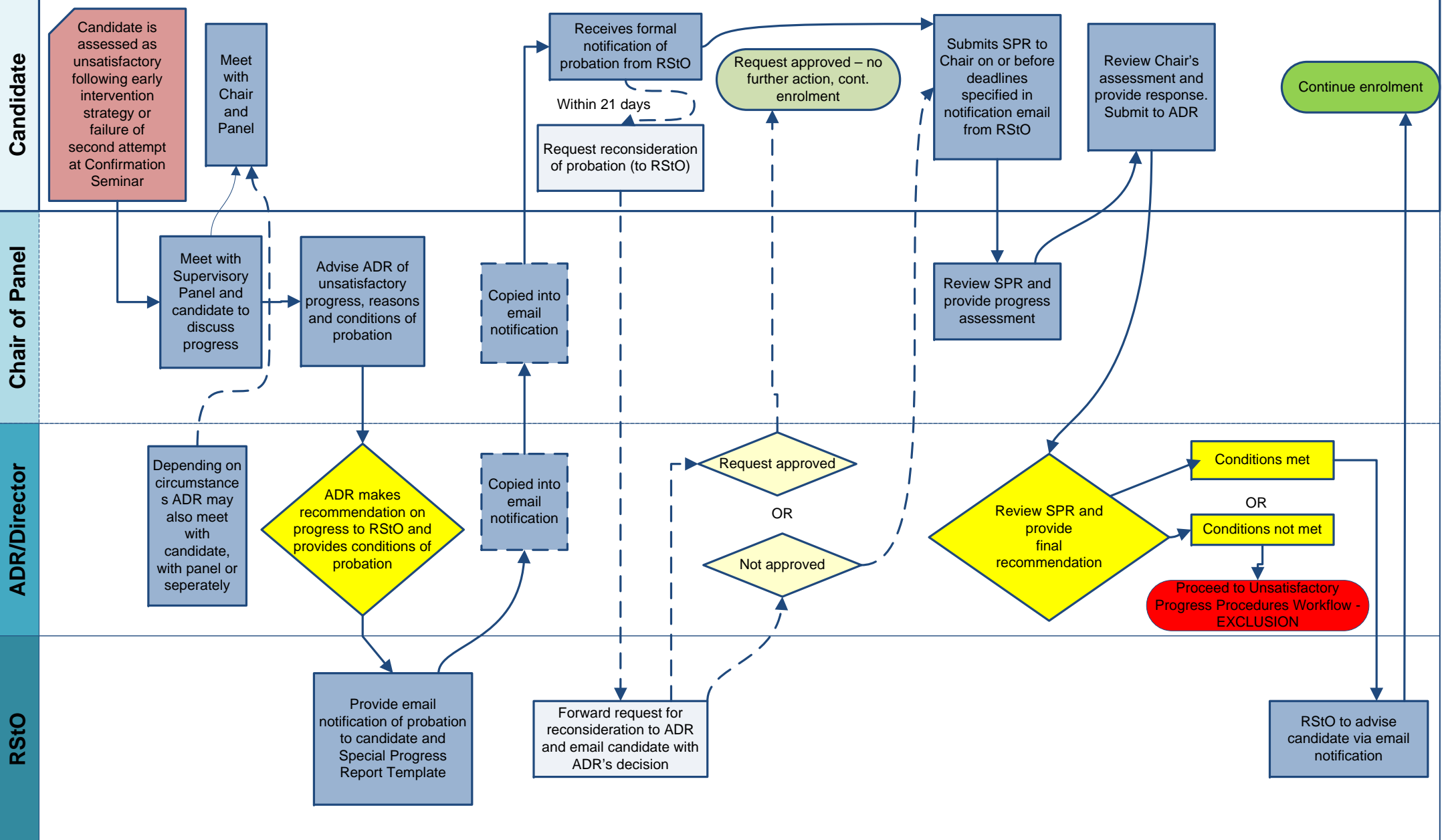
Where the result of a review of progress is an assessment of '2' (marginally satisfactory) or '1' (unsatisfactory) for the first time in candidature, the host Faculty or URC must specify the problems in the progress of candidature and activate an early intervention strategy. See Paragraph 28 to 29 of the policy proper for procedures for implementing a course of action as part of an early intervention strategy.

Where a candidate's progress has been reviewed as marginally satisfactory or unsatisfactory for a second time during the period of candidature, the host Faculty or URC should impose a period of probation with conditions attached. See Paragraph 35 to 37 of the policy proper for the process for the imposition of a period of probation.

Early Intervention Strategy Workflow



Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures Workflow – PROBATION



Unsatisfactory Progress Procedures Workflow - EXCLUSION

