

End of year progression points for CDT students

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Overview

The CDT students go through progression procedures near the end of years 1, 2, and 3. At the end of each of these years, the student will produce a short report describing the research aims and summarising the progress, and a plan for the subsequent years. At month 10 of year 1 and month 9 of year 2, students will have a “Research Progress Review”, which involves the student giving a 15-20 minute technical presentation about the research given to the supervisor and an independent assessor followed by questions and discussions. At the end of year 2 a long technical report is produced describing the research up to that point. More details on these reports are given in the next section.

In years 2 and 3, students go through an end of year interview with the supervisors and two independent assessors. This lasts for about 40 minutes, and starts with a brief (10 minutes) oral presentation by the student, followed by questions from the examiners.

Although for most students, these activities are an opportunity to take stock and get feedback, it is an exam. Possible outcomes are: progress into the next year, progress but with some remedial action required, or do not progress. In which case of non-progression, the possibility of submission for a lesser degree may be offered.

1 Year 1

Expectations: By the Research Review, the student should have a research topic, and be able to argue its importance and put it into context. The student *may* have identified the approach they are going to take, and *may* have made some progress on it.

Short report: During the first six-months of research, the student is clarifying the problem they are going to work on for the remaining three years. This document should describe the outcome of that process. In particular, it should address,

1. What is the research problem?

2. Why is the problem important? What would the wider impact be from a solution to this problem.
3. To what extent is the problem unsolved? What attempts have been in the past to solve this problem; what are their successes and deficiencies?
4. What is your approach to addressing this problem and why will this have a chance of contributing to the solution to the problem*.
5. What work have you done towards this so far*.

(It is possible that the questions marked with * have not yet been answered.) Thus, this report should be like a research proposal, in which there is a clear statement of the problem, there is a survey of the possible impacts that solutions of this problem could have, and a convincing review of what has already been done on this problem and why more needs to be done. The length of the report should typically be around 30 pages, but the strength of the arguments are more important than the quantity of words.

Deadline: End of month 9 of year 1 (e.g end of June).

Research Performance Review: The review comprises the supervisor(s), an independent assessor (to become the second reader in year 2), and the student. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and the student to organise it. The student will give a presentation, technical in nature, describing what the goal of the research is, what they have achieved, what they expect to achieve in the next few months, and their plan to complete the work within the next two years.

The outcome will be twofold. First, feedback to the student, including whatever remedial action is deemed necessary to bring the research or progress up to an appropriate standard, but also whatever feedback will help the student at any level, including advice for writing the end of year report. Second, a report on eProg describing the joint evaluation of the student's research and progress, and any remedial action which has been assigned. The assessors can decide that the student should face an end of year panel at the end of year 1. This happens if there is concern about the level of the student's progress or engagement.

The Research Progress Review cannot make a decision to pass or fail a student; that decision can only be made by an end of year panel. The goal of this new process is to give earlier information to the student if something is going wrong and allow corrective measures to be taken, and also provide better information to the end of year panel, if one takes place.

Deadline: End of month 10 of year 1.

End of Year examination: This takes place if issues and concerns about the student's progress or engagement were raised in the Research Progress Review. The student will give an approximately 10 minute presentation;

after which the examiners will ask questions of the student. The goal of this is to ascertain whether the student has made a good start to the research and is on track to succeed. The panel will use the presentation, the Summary report, the marks of the 3 MSc courses and Scientific Methods courses, and the evaluation of the Background report.

Possible outcomes of an End of Year examination: After the interview, the panel, supervisor, and adviser will consider all the evidence to decide whether to recommend that the student be allowed to proceed to year 2. If not, the recommendation may be if eligible leave with a diploma or a certificate, as described in the handbook (<http://www.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgr/handbook/>), or to withdraw.

2 Year 2

Research Progress Review: This is just as in year 1, except everything is pushed forward one month. The short report is due by the end of month 8, and the Research Progress Review must take place by the end of month 9.

Long report: A long report will be produced and read by a second reader. As the student has been working for 18 months, this should be a substantial document at the level of an MPhil thesis or a journal paper (but not a conference paper) with no page limit and ample space for literature review and technical details. The latter is particularly appropriate if an alternative format thesis is planned.

Deadline End of month 10 of year 2.

More on the short report: At this stage of the research, the short report should summarise clearly the goals and achievements for the independent assessors who may not be specialists in the student's research area or may not know the specific motivation of the research. In addition to the summary, the report should include:

1. a list of publications, published or submitted,
2. a research plan for the next year, concerning how the research should be carried out,
3. A plan as to how this will lead to a thesis, (e.g. proposed structure of a thesis at the level of chapter and section headings).
4. a plan for other activities, including any visits, internships, targeted conferences or journal publications, and public engagement activities.

Deadline End of month 8 of year 2.

End of Year examination: All students will undergo this. The format of this is: 10 minute oral presentation by the student followed by questioning by the examiners.

Possible outcomes: The student may progress into year 3 or fail to progress.

In cases of non-progression, students may be offered the opportunity to submit for MPhil, but only if they have done enough research to be appropriate (the equivalent of one year of research).

3 End of Year 3

The end of year process for the end of year 3 is similar to the end of year 2, except no long report is required. A short report is required summarising the progress and achievements of the past year, and plans for producing a thesis over the next year. This must be submitted 6 weeks prior to the scheduled interview.

4 Six months into Year 4

Student should submit a draft of the thesis to the supervisor. Student should submit to the CDT Manager a Table of Contents indicating which sections are written with a plan for producing the remaining sections.