



Faculty of Health Sciences

**Handbook on Annual Progress Monitoring for Postgraduate
Research Students**

Introduction

This handbook provides you with information on how your progress towards a research degree will be monitored during your study with the Faculty of Health Sciences. Studying for a research degree is likely to be significantly different to your previous undergraduate or taught Masters programme. You will have named researchers supervising your work and providing guidance and may be working as part of a research group. A lot of the work will be self-directed and you will be expected to work in a very independent manner. We want to ensure you make good progress throughout your period of study and provide you with any necessary help and support. This requires you to reflect on your progress and to receive feedback from others to help you to reach the standard required within your specified period of study. Each Faculty at the University of Bristol may monitor the progress of their research students slightly differently. This is not something to worry about and is often due to discipline specific requirements and expectations. This handbook provides an overview of how the process works and explains what you need to do. There is also a detailed step by step guide, together with screen shots, explaining how to use the online review system (STaR). We recommend you read this handbook in conjunction with this guide, which is called 'Quick STaR User Guide' (<https://www.bris.ac.uk/doctors-college/star-docs/fohs-apr-quick-guide-v3.pdf>). You may also wish to refer to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees that explains the University's Rules and Regulations on progress monitoring of research students (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/cop-research-degrees.html>).

The 6-month Review

In order to ensure you have settled into life as a research student we ask you to undergo a brief review 6 months into your period of study. Three months prior to the 6-month anniversary of your registration date the Faculty and School administration team will set up your online review system (STaR) and this will send an automated email to your University email account telling you that this review is due. For this you are not required to write a report but we do ask that you log into STaR and complete the review form that will have been deployed for you. We also ask you to upload a completed copy of your School's induction checklist, which should have been completed with you when you started your studies. Once you have completed this you should click the 'SAVE AND SUBMIT' button. Please note this button will ONLY appear when you have written something in every required box on the STaR form. Clicking this button passes your review forms onto your supervisor and they are asked to provide a view on your progress and raise any concerns they may have. You will then be prompted to revisit STaR to review the comments your supervisor has made and respond. Once this is completed the form will be sent to the School and Faculty for review.

The Process of Annual Progress Review

- a) **Start of Process:** Your progress as a research student will be monitored each year, usually before or near the anniversary of your start date. This process is summarised in a flow chart in figure 1. Three months prior to this point the Faculty and School administration team will set up your online review system (STaR) and this will send an automated email to your University email account telling you that your review is due. You should discuss this with your supervisor in terms of:
 - i. Which other academics should be your independent reviewers? The normal recommendation is for there to be two reviewers and ideally they will be the same people throughout the duration of your study. It is recommended that they are

members of University of Bristol staff. It is important to note that usually, due to their input into your project, it is likely that individuals who are your annual progress reviewers cannot be an examiner for your final viva. If your research project is multi-disciplinary it is advisable to select reviewers that represent the range of disciplines in which you are working. Once you have agreed this with your supervisor(s) you should approach the proposed reviewers to confirm their willingness to perform this role and to set a date for your progress meeting. It is your responsibility to ensure this meeting date is set and entered into your STaR forms. It is expected that the STaR review forms and report are written and your progress meeting has occurred **before** the anniversary of your registration date. Once this is agreed you should inform your School Postgraduate Administrator who your independent reviewers will be.

- ii. What type of report is it most appropriate for you to write based on your stage of study and the type of research you are undertaking?

b) **Completing the paperwork:** There are a number of items you need to do as part of your progress review. You should:

1. Complete the online tabs within the STaR form which are called 'Introduction', 'Looking Back' and 'Planning Ahead'.
2. Upload additional written reports and documentation to the STaR system. This may take a variety of formats depending upon your particular type of research and stage of study. It is essential that you discuss the most appropriate format with your supervisor. The expected formats are shown below:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Report format is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 page (maximum) report summarising your previous year's research. This should be written with minimal input from your supervisor (ie they can read and provide one round of broad level comments) <p>PLUS optional submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papers that are under review or published. <p>For 1+3 students ONLY the format should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of mini-reports for each project you have completed. An outline of your PhD proposal <p>PLUS optional submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papers that are under review or published. 	<p>Report format is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 page (maximum) report summarising your previous year's research. This should be written with minimal input from your supervisor (ie they can read and provide one round of broad level comments) <p>PLUS optional submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papers that are under review or published. 	<p>Report format is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 page (maximum) report summarising your previous year's research. This should be written with minimal input from your supervisor (ie they can read and provide one round of broad level comments) <p>OR optional submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papers that are under review or published.
A plan of thesis showing progress within each section is required.	A plan of thesis showing progress within each section is required together with a Gantt chart showing how completion will occur.	A plan of thesis showing progress within each section is required together with a Gantt chart showing how completion will occur.

- Upload the Turnitin report from your written report to the STaR upload area. You obtain this by submitting your written report, in whatever format you have chosen, to Turnitin via the **practice submission points** within Blackboard. All research students in the Faculty are automatically enrolled into the Blackboard course which is called '*Your school's name* Postgraduate E-Submission'. You can access this via the MyBristol portal (<https://mybristol.bris.ac.uk>). You should discuss this Turnitin report with your supervisor and also upload it to STaR so that your reviewers are able to comment on it should they wish to.

Once you have completed the forms and uploaded all the documents expected, click the 'SAVE AND SUBMIT' button. Please note this button will ONLY appear when you have written something in every required box on the STaR form. Clicking this button passes your review forms onto your supervisor and they are asked to provide a view on your progress and raise any concerns they may

have. The comments written by your supervisor(s) will be viewable to the individuals carrying out your progress review.

At this point you should email your written report(s) to your independent reviewer(s) so that they have sufficient time to review (at least 10 working days is recommended as a minimum) it prior to your review meeting.

- c) **Meeting with Progress Reviewers:** These meetings normally last approximately an hour and you should prepare a short presentation (5-7mins) summarising the key points of your previous year's research. This presentation will form the starting point of your meeting. The reviewer(s) will then discuss your presentation and written report with you and ask you questions regarding your research and progress. Supervisors are not required to attend, but the reviewers may invite the supervisor to attend as an observer with the permission of the student.
- d) **Reviewers Feedback:** Following your review meeting the reviewer(s) will complete a box on your review form with feedback on your progress. They are asked to specifically comment on whether they have any concerns over your progress.
- e) **Completion of STaR Form:** Once the reviewer(s) has added feedback and comments you will be prompted, again by means of an automated email through the STaR system, to log in and review the comments from the review. You will be given an opportunity to comment on their feedback. Once you have done this and submitted the form it will be passed to the Graduate teams within your School and then onto the Faculty for completion.

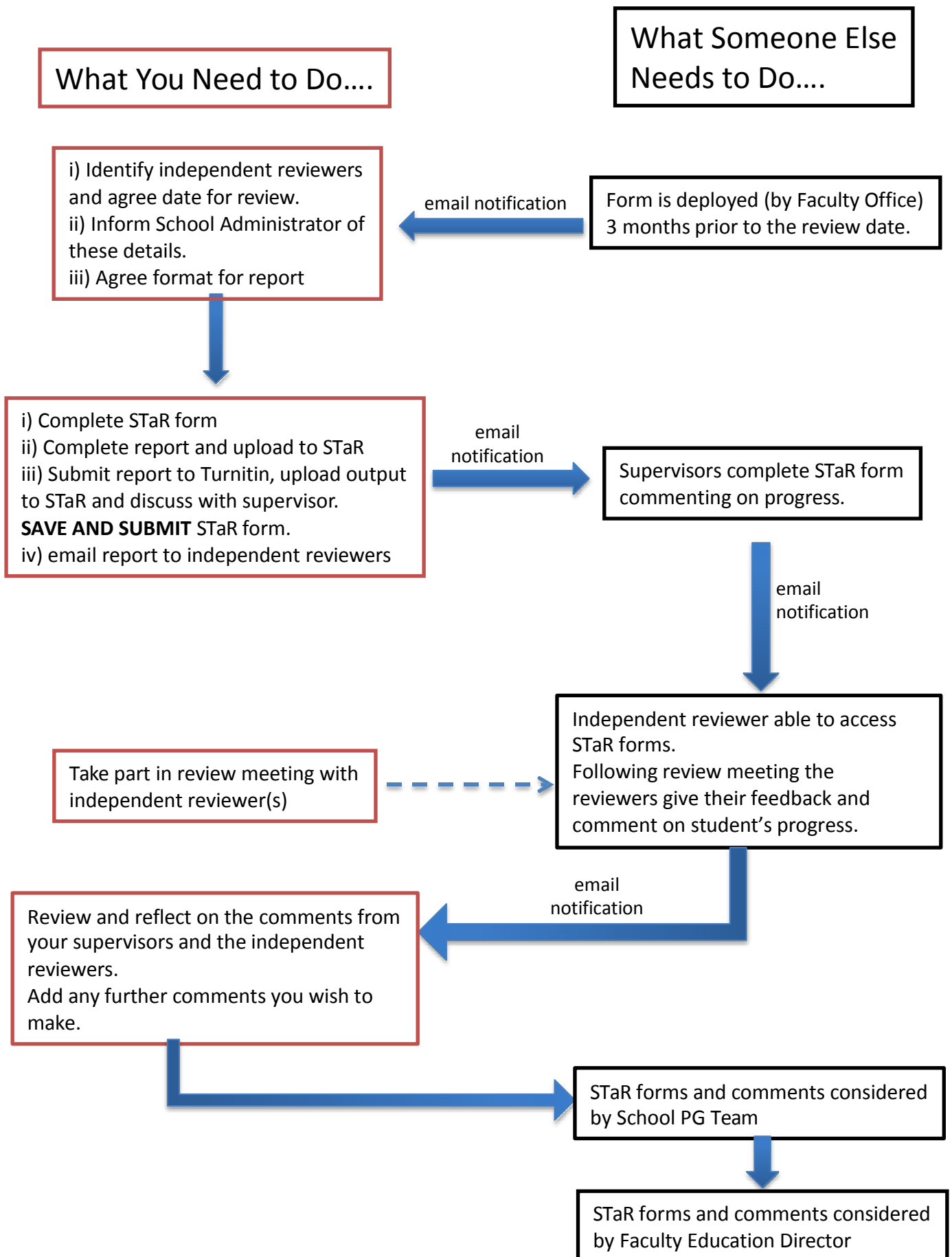


Figure 1: Flow Chart illustrating the process of annual progress monitoring.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to partake in progress monitoring?

Yes. It is essential that you take the opportunity to present and discuss your work with other academics who can provide an independent assessment of your work and progress. This will give you valuable practice at discussing your work and defending the research decisions you have taken - things you will need to be able to do for your viva. The feedback the independent reviewers provide should help you to consider your project and whether any changes are needed to strengthen and improve your work. In addition it is a University of Bristol requirement that continued registration on a research degree is conditional upon making satisfactory progress.

How often will my progress be monitored?

Annually, usually just before the anniversary of your original start/registration date. If you are a part time student and are studying at 50% you will undertake full annual progress monitoring on a pro rata basis, i.e every other year. However, an interim progress review will occur in the year in between formal monitoring. Interim reviews involve the completion of the online forms within STaR but no written report or meeting with independent reviewers is needed. If you are a part time student who is studying at more than 50% you will have your full annual progress monitoring done on a pro rata basis. In addition the Faculty Office will ensure that interim reports are set up for you in academic years where full progress monitoring is not occurring.

I've heard people talking about STaR in relation to annual progress monitoring. What is it?

STaR is an online system that the University uses to help administer the annual progress monitoring of research students. However, STaR is not just about annual progress monitoring. It brings together all aspects of your time here at Bristol including development and training. You can find out more about STaR and log into the system via the Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) at the link <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/star/>

I don't like the online system, can I do my progress monitoring on paper instead?

No. The Faculty of Health Sciences uses STaR to complete annual progress monitoring and we will not accept alternative formats. If you are unsure how to use the system please speak to your School's Postgraduate Team or look at the information and user guides on the BDC website (<https://www.bris.ac.uk/doctoral-college/current/star-pgr/?ticket=ST-3957803-4sNdjC5bX3NdHliugQl9-nAC1004092095>) .

What am I expected to do for an interim review?

The Faculty require a full progress review, including report submission and a meeting with independent reviewers at 1, 2 and 3 years which are calculated pro rata for a part time student. However, in order to ensure you are receiving appropriate support we ask all part time students to have an interim review every year of study. For example if you are registered as a part time 50% student you will have an interim review in years 1, 3 and 5 and a full progress review in years 2, 4 and 6.

I'm a member of staff AND a research student. Do I need to complete both an annual staff review and an annual review of my research degree progress via STaR?

Yes. Whilst some of the information may be the same the two processes have different purposes and requirements.

What happens if there are concerns about my progress?

If your supervisor(s), the independent reviewers, the School's Postgraduate Team or the Faculty's Graduate Education Director is concerned about your progress then steps will be put in place to provide additional support. All are asked if progress is satisfactory or not as part of the annual review process. If the situation is such that it is felt that your academic progress is unsatisfactory then a specific process may be initiated which is detailed in Annex 3 of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.