Guidance for Covid-19 impacted Annual Progress Reviews (APR) in FMS

We, in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, encourage APRs to continue where possible to provide you with support during these troubling times. We fully appreciate that your usual work rate will have been, and is still likely being, impacted by the current situation. This is why we are very keen on APRs taking place – we foresee these being an opportunity for you, your supervisors, and your panel to talk about the impact of this time on your project plans. It may be necessary to rethink specific aspects of your project plan and timelines. To reiterate, this is about supporting you in your studies and not about monitoring productivity.

We recognise that for some postgraduate research students one or both panel members may not be available for various reasons, and in these circumstances would suggest that you seek advice through your institutes as detailed below. If you have any other questions about your next scheduled APR or concerns related to your specific circumstances, please do contact the Graduate School via your institute-based Graduate School mailbox for advice. Their email addresses are:
NUBlpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk;
PHSlpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk;
TCRlpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk.

Many APRs have already taken place across the Faculty since we started working remotely, and Zoom is a very reliable technology to facilitate and allow full participation of the student and Panel. This technology also works extremely well for students to give their PowerPoint presentations. Further details on setting up the meeting via Zoom can be found by following these links
https://www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/remoteworking and
http://videoconferencing.ncl.ac.uk/softwaresolutions/zoom/

We are mindful of the breadth of research that is undertaken in FMS. For example, the development of a research methodology in a patient-based project is likely to differ from that required for a molecular biology project; it is likely that the processes for progression of students working in these two areas will also need to be a little different. For this reason only the recommendations below are just that – recommendations!

We recognise that some of you may have already uploaded your progress reports or are currently in the process of writing them and that is fine. Whilst FMS has clear guidelines for the format of each APR report we now are taking into consideration the lockdown and have adopted a more flexible approach to support you.

1st year APR report

- Table of contents
- A detailed literature review, sufficient to provide the context and rationale for the proposed research
- A clear statement of the aims/hypotheses of your project
- A summary of the methods to be used
- Any data collated

There will now be less focus on primary data and instead you should include a plan for how to go forward in the period before we can return to normal working. This may include (but is not limited

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to): analysing preliminary datasets, writing a review, questionnaire or methodology manuscript, consider integrating computational/bioinformatics approaches.

We recommend you try and stick to the word limit 7500 words, excluding references and figures. For part-time PhD/MD and FT MPhil students the word limit is 5000 words and your report should contain a brief literature review which will expanded at the 2nd year APR, together with a summary of methods to be used.

2nd Year APR
At the end of your second year

The purpose of this review is to monitor and keep up-to-date with the progress that you will be making, and to present and discuss any results that you have obtained to date and the future directions of your work. We recommend you also include an overview of experimental work or other data collection that you were unable to start or finish due to the lockdown together with a plan for how to go forward in the period before we can return to normal working. We recommend the following structure for your report, which shouldn’t exceed 15 pages.

- Expanded literature review (for part-time students)
- A summary of any results obtained to date
- Detailed analysis of a complete portion of your data
- A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of your work to date
- An appendix containing any abstracts, manuscripts or papers you have written or presented

3rd Year APR
At the end of your third year (FT students)

This review is about helping you to keep on track and about identifying any factors which may lead to a delay in the submission of your thesis. We recommend you also include an overview of experimental work or other primary data collection that you were unable to finish due to the lockdown together with a plan for how to go forward in the period before we can return to normal working. It’s not necessary to provide a lengthy written report, but we do recommend that you include the following:

- A detailed breakdown of the structure for your thesis (The contents pages - chapter headings and subsection headings)
- Highlight data completed and any experimental work ongoing.
- A list indicating what you will need to achieve in order to complete your work
- An appendix containing any abstracts, manuscripts or papers you have written or presented

4th year APR for ‘pending submission’ students (FT students)

This informal APR is about helping you identify whether the current lockdown has impacted on your write-up and has or may delay the submission of your thesis. We recommend you and your supervisors consider whether an extension might be required.
For all our Postgraduate Research Students:

When we return to ‘normal’ working practice we will arrange a ‘Post Covid19 Impact Review’ for all postgraduate research students. This is designed so that you and your supervisors, along with your APR panel, can discuss the impact this period of lockdown has had on your studies, and develop a plan/new timeline for your research.