Explanations to the Procedure of Doctoral Students’ Progress Review in the Faculty of Arts And Humanities at the University of Tartu

The new Procedure of Doctoral Students’ Progress Review in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Tartu takes into consideration the changes in the Study Regulations (henceforth SR), which will be effective as of 3 September 2018, and Procedure for Applying for, Granting and Payment of Stipends and Study Allowances, which will be effective as of 3 September 2018. The new Procedure of Doctoral Students’ Progress Review is effective as of 3 September 2018.

Faculty work groups were involved in the process of changing the Procedure of Doctoral Students’ Progress Review: representatives of curricula of the Faculty made proposals at discussions arranged by the Dean’s Office, and programme directors gave feedback to changes in the Procedure before the final draft was confirmed.

Clauses 1 and 2. Pursuant to Clause 114 of SR, “Progress review is the assessment of the doctoral student’s academic progress in studies and scientific research of his/her curriculum by the review committee. During the progress review the fulfilment of the doctoral student’s individual study plan is assessed.” The main aim of the progress review is to assess the doctoral student’s progress in research and studies in the previous academic year in comparison with the doctoral student’s individual plan. Pursuant to clause 123 of SR, “the review committee gives the doctoral student recommendations for fulfilling and improving the individual study plan” for completion of the curriculum with high standards and timely graduation. If necessary, the doctoral student makes changes in the individual plan so that his/her further plan of action and time schedule would be in correspondence.

Clause 3. Pursuant to clause 116 of SR, clause 3.5 of the Procedure of Doctoral Students’ Progress Review explains the priorities of assessment criteria. Clause 16 of the Procedure for Awarding Doctorates specifies the requirements for research publications that qualify for the defence of the doctoral thesis. The Estonian Research Information System classifications that meet these requirements are 1.1., 1.2., 3.1 and, by the decision of the council awarding the doctorates (and previous confirmation by the progress review committee), also 3.2.
Clause 4.1. The main aim of the progress review at the end of the first semester of the first academic year is to support and advise the doctoral student at the beginning of his/her doctoral studies, allowing the doctoral student to redraft the individual plan if necessary. The review committee assesses the doctoral student’s activities during the first semester, the further plan of action, time schedule, cooperation with the supervisor and the need for a co-supervisor.

Explanations to changes in SR of 19 April 2018: “Successful beginning of doctoral studies is of essential importance for the doctoral student to reach graduation. The aim of the progress review after the first semester is to facilitate focus on doctoral studies and to assess, in addition to completion of courses, the progress of the doctoral thesis (project).”

Clause 4.2. The priority of this clause is advancement of writing on the research topic in the first academic year. The manuscript need not meet the requirements necessary for the defence of the doctoral thesis (see clause 3 of the current Explanations). The article need not be officially accepted for publication by the editorial office.

‘The material for a monograph’ means here that research material in a verifiable form can also be submitted.

The text of a presentation does not meet the requirements of this clause.

Clause 5. The aim of this clause is to ensure realistic planning of writing and publishing of research and, thus, timely graduation. Depending on the publication practises and opportunities of the discipline, the review committee has the right to give recommendations to doctoral students for planning their activities and assess the quality of doctoral students’ publications and their eligibility for defence (see also clause 3 of the Explanations).

If an article is written in co-authorship, the progress report has to describe different authors’ contribution to the article. See also Procedure for Awarding Doctorates, clause 15.1.: “If a publication [...] has multiple authors, the specific contribution of the applicant for a doctorate in the completion thereof must be indicated.”

In the case of manuscripts, the review committee assesses their quality, considering whether it is possible to publish them in the submitted form.

Clause 6. Clause III. 3 of the Good Practice of Doctoral Studies provides the advisory code of conduct for the review committee.

Clause 6.5. The secretary of the review committee takes minutes of the committee’s decisions and fills the necessary documents in advance so that the committee can check and confirm them at the end of the review meeting.

Clause 6.6. In case of curricula with a large number of doctoral students, the working time of committee members can be limited to ensure the high standard of
Clause 7. The review committee is assigned to monitor the fulfilment of the PhD Study Agreement (see also clause 2 of the Procedure), meaning if the cooperation between the supervisor and the supervisee is working.

The cooperation between the supervisor and the doctoral student is recorded in the summaries of supervision appointments (i.e. supervision diary). Individual supervision appointments must take place at least twice a semester. If the doctoral student or the supervisor reside in different countries for prolonged periods, the appointments can be arranged by Skype.

The summary of the supervision appointment is filled by the doctoral student:
1) before the supervision appointment the doctoral student describes his/her activities since the previous appointment with the supervisor and specifies the topics that he/she would like to discuss at the appointment. The doctoral student sends the prefilled form to the supervisor three working days before the appointment;
2) during the appointment or immediately after it, the topics discussed at the appointment must be described and a summary of the progress of the doctoral thesis be written (this part is filled together with the supervisor), the following tasks of the doctoral student and the time of the next appointment must be fixed;
3) the doctoral student signs the summary of the supervision appointment within seven days after the appointment. The signature can be either on paper or digital. The supervisor confirms the summary with his/her signature or a written comment.

If the doctoral student meets an external supervisor, the summary of the supervision appointment must be coordinated with his/her main supervisor.

Summaries of supervision appointments (the supervision diary) are a part of the progress report and must be added to the report in the Study Information System. They give the supervisor, the review committee and the programme director a more detailed overview of the doctoral student’s progress and action plan, as well as the cooperation with the supervisor.

Clause 8.1. Pursuant to clause 120 of SR, “the progress review takes place at a public meeting of the review committee”, which enables the interested parties to be engaged in the progress review.

Clauses 8.2.–8.3. The review committee must enable the doctoral student to give feedback on the cooperation with the supervisor without the presence of the supervisor. The same is valid vice versa. This enables the committee to get feedback on the division of work assignments related to curriculum’s doctoral
studies and/or help the doctoral student find contact persons whom he/she could consult in addition to the supervisor if necessary.

Clause 8.4. If the supervisors cannot be given feedback during the progress review, this should be done within two weeks after the review. It is advisable to arrange a group discussion for both supervisors and doctoral students once a year together with a neutral confidant.

Clause 9. The performance stipend is allocated pursuant to the Regulation of the Senate of 25 May 2018.