

## Progress Report Requirements and Guidelines

### **Part I - Overview**

- (1) All courses completed and grades. Indicate which courses satisfy degree requirements.

*List courses completed across all years in the program.*

- (2) Comprehensive Exam Status

*Indicate whether the comprehensive exam has been completed. If it has not been completed, provide a date by which you expect it to be completed.*

- (3) Teaching Assistantships completed

*List teaching assistantships completed across all years in the program.*

- (4) Scholarships

*List scholarships awarded across all years in the program*

- (5) Publications

- i. Published or in press

*List all of your published or in press papers here*

- ii. Submitted

*List all of your submitted papers here (do not include papers that are in preparation)*

- (6) Conference presentations

*List all conference presentation here*

- (7) Other relevant activities

*List any other contributions to research, teaching, administration, or outreach not covered in any of the above items (e.g, committee work, community outreach, media interviews, mentorship of students, etc.)*

## **Part II – Sample of Writing (see tips for 1st year students beginning on page 3)**

Append a selected sample of your writing that relates to research completed in the past year. You should consult with your supervisory committee (and in particular your supervisor) beforehand to reach an agreement on an appropriate sample of writing. A suggested length for the sample of writing is anywhere from 5 to 30 pages double-spaced. Exceptions to this length guideline should be cleared with your supervisory committee. The sample of writing should be part of ongoing research, rather than an extra piece of writing that serves no purpose other than to satisfy the progress report requirement. With this in mind, some suitable samples of writing include:

- A manuscript that you are currently writing, a paper that you have submitted, or a paper that you have published, within the past year
- Part of a manuscript that you intend to submit in the future (e.g., the introduction section of a manuscript)
- Part of your thesis (e.g., the introduction to your thesis, or a sub-section of the introduction to your thesis)
- A literature review that your committee sees as integral to your research progress (and that might ultimately find its way, in one form or other, into your thesis!)
- An outline of a series of experiments that you intend to complete (keeping in mind that this outline ought to prove useful when writing up a manuscript at some later point in time)

This is not an exhaustive list of possible writing samples. If you have something else in mind that you think would be appropriate, please consult with your committee. The one guideline that your committees will follow consistently is that the sample of writing should be part of your ongoing research program, and NOT some additional piece of writing that serves only to satisfy the requirements of the progress report.

## **Part III – Research Plan (optional – please consult with your supervisor)**

A brief description (maximum two pages double-spaced) of the research you plan to conduct in the coming year. Please consult with your supervisor to find out whether they'd like you to submit this research plan.

## **Progress report tips for 1st year students**

The objective of this document is to provide a brief set of guidelines to assist first year students in preparation of their progress reports. It contains a description of the purpose of progress reports, and the role of the progress reports in student evaluation, followed by suggestions on how the progress report may be structured.

### **Purpose**

Progress reports serve a variety of important functions, two of which are described here. First, the practice of research often requires attention to detail, occasionally to the extent that details begin to obscure the broader goal of a research program. A progress report provides an opportunity to step back from the details of day to day research activity, and to describe the conceptual framework into which that research fits. This exercise often helps to clarify the motivation for a program of research, and can be a catalyst for new research ideas. Second, a critical component of scientific research is the communication of that research to others. One form of communication that will play an important role in your progress as a scientist is that of writing. The progress report provides an opportunity for you to practice writing, to receive critical feedback on writing, and therefore to improve writing skills.

Although the subject matter of both of these objectives is past research, an important function of the progress report is to chart the course of future research. As such, a progress report should describe the progress made to date in such a way that the supervisory committee can understand the motivation for the research that you plan to carry out in the near future.

### **Evaluation**

The progress report provides an opportunity for committee members to evaluate, and to contribute to, the research progress made by students. Progress reports are marked by each member of the student's supervisory committee as being 'satisfactory', 'borderline', or 'unsatisfactory', in each of three areas: (1) content, (2) presentation, and (3) progress toward the Ph.D. Promotion to the Ph.D. program is based on progress reports, performance on courses, and other aspects of academic development that your supervisory committee deems relevant.

### **Structure of the Progress Report**

The structure of progress reports may vary from one to another for several reasons. Students who have been in the program for several years may write a progress report aimed at addressing a prior concern of the supervisory committee, or they may use the progress report to get feedback on a particularly important aspect of their thesis. For upper year students, the most important guide to the structure of the progress report is provided by suggestions, and sometimes directives, of committee members. As such, students should seek information from committee members if it is not entirely clear what is expected.

If your committee does not have specific instructions regarding the structure or content of the progress report, which may be the case for first year students, then the following

guidelines may be used. A first-year progress report should aim to achieve the following objectives.

- 1) to provide the background information required to set your research in an appropriate context.
- 2) to provide a precise description of the research issue being addressed.
- 3) to describe the research activities undertaken since beginning the program in September
- 4) to evaluate the progress made during the year toward the goal of the research project.
- 5) to describe the direction that research will take in the coming year

There are a variety of ways of meeting these objectives, and some students have noted that a research article satisfies some of the same objectives. For example, some of the background information you provide, as well as the description of your particular research question, may also be appropriate for the Introduction in a manuscript. Further, a description of your research activities undertaken during the year could contain a Method section that would also be appropriate in a manuscript.

At the same time, the progress report should not be treated as if it were precisely the same as a manuscript. To appreciate the distinction between a progress report and a manuscript, consider that a manuscript focuses on the rationale for research that has already been conducted, while the progress report should also indicate the general aims and direction of a research program. With this in mind, if you include parts of a manuscript in your progress report, it is suggested that you note explicitly how that section satisfies one of the objectives listed above.

The maximum length of a progress report is 30 double-spaced pages. This page limit includes figures, tables and appendices. Of course, your progress report does not have to be 30 pages in length. If you can report your progress effectively in fewer pages, then we encourage you to do so. If you firmly believe that your progress report cannot be completed in fewer than 30 pages, please discuss this issue with your committee. If there is a conflict between the guidelines presented here and the advice of your committee, then please follow the advice of your committee.

This document is intended for use by those who are unsure of what is required in a progress report, and does not contain a set of criteria that must be met by all students.