

# PhD/MPhil Milestone One

## Confirmation Milestone Requirements

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### Overview

Research training at The University of Queensland is research and professional development. It is more than a thesis. It is 'training in research' plus 'training by research'. It is expected that Higher Degree Research candidates will acquire and develop the following attributes:

- knowledge and skills in the field of study;
- effective communication skills;
- critical judgment and research skills;
- independence and creativity; and
- ethical and social understanding.

The HDR program is intended to develop these attributes. Graduates are required to demonstrate attainment of these attributes through a variety of means, including successful attainment of three academic milestones.

### Milestone One: Confirmation of Candidature

The purpose of this milestone is to ensure that:

- the candidate receives appropriate feedback in relation to the viability and progress of the research project;
- the candidate has sufficient training and there are resources available to complete the program within the recommended timeframes; and
- the composition of the advisory team is appropriate. Students **must have** a principal **and** one or more associate advisors.

In addition, all compliance requirements (e.g., induction for international students, completion of the research integrity training module, registration of an ORCID with UQ) should be undertaken prior to the Confirmation milestone.

### Timing and Components

Confirmation of candidature will take place 12 months FTE (PhD) or 6 months FTE (MPhil) after commencement. The components of the milestone are:

- a presentation/seminar;
- written work; and
- an interview with the HDR Committee.

All components of the milestone, including the interview, should be completed by the milestone due date. The exact due date for each student is set by the Graduate School and is noted on my SI-Net. If the student is unable to meet the requirements of Confirmation by this date, an extension should be requested to the Graduate School via a formal application through the Candidature Management Portal.

Students should consult with their advisory team before submitting a request for an extension and familiarise themselves with Graduate School policies on extension requests. Please contact the School's Higher Degrees by Research Liaison Officer (HLO) if you have any questions.

### 1. Presentation / seminar

The candidate will give a formal presentation within the regularly scheduled Confirmation seminars conducted within the School. Candidates wishing to undertake Confirmation must contact the HLO to book a place in the Seminar series.

The duration of the presentation will be 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of feedback, comments and questions from members of the audience. The expectation of the presentation is that the oral and visual components will provide a clear overview of those elements contained in the Confirmation document (as detailed below).

Scheduled Confirmation presentation days are run in two parts. In the morning, Confirmation presentations are scheduled. In the afternoon, Confirmation interviews will be scheduled with the HDR Committee. During times where we have high numbers of students seeking Confirmation, seminars and interviews may be run over two days.

The specific program for each Confirmation seminar session will be emailed to everyone approximately one week prior to the presentations

## **2. Written work**

The Confirmation document should be in Word format and must include:

- an introduction that discusses the importance and relevance of the topic;
- a literature review that discusses what is already published about the chosen topic and demonstrates a sound understanding of the theoretical issues relevant to the research through the formulation of a conceptual framework;
- a clear statement of the research aims/questions – this should emphasise the contribution the candidate intends to make to what is already published;
- an outline of proposed methodology – this should include all relevant details regarding methodology and, depending on the methods used, should include detail regarding the intended research participants and the field of study, sampling, measurement and consideration of the strengths and limitations of the methodology;
- an estimated timeline for phases of research relative to each milestone, and consideration of any factors that might slow progress;
- an indication of the feasibility of the research, including details about the financial and other resources and professional development training required;
- a budget documenting the expected costs of undertaking the research; and
- a demonstrated and clear understanding of the ethical issues involved and a plan to have an ethics application submitted if it has not already been approved.<sup>1</sup>

The document word limit is 5,000 words +/- 10% (excluding bibliography). Documents exceeding this limit will be returned to the candidate for revision.

### ***External review of the Confirmation document***

The Confirmation document will be reviewed by an independent reviewer, who will submit a report prior to the interview to assist the HDR Committee to determine the progress (quality and quantity) of the candidate's research. The reviewer can address and make comment on any or all of the required elements of the document, as outlined above.

The student and the advisors are jointly responsible for identifying a suitable external reviewer and submitting the student's written work to the reviewer approximately 4 weeks prior to the scheduled interview day. This should allow sufficient time for the reviewer to read and return comments in time for discussion during the Confirmation interview. It is the joint responsibility of the student and the advisory team to ensure that the document is provided to and returned by the reviewer prior to the Confirmation interview.

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<sup>1</sup> In line with UQ Policy and Procedures Library 4.60.05 Higher Degree by Research Candidature Progression *"Enrolling AOU's must ensure that all compliance requirements (e.g. induction for candidates, ethics approvals, research integrity training, and completion of the research integrity module) have been undertaken prior to the confirmation milestone."*

Further details on the process of managing the external review of milestone documents is available in a separate set of guidelines (see [here](#)). These include links to template emails for advisors to contact reviewers.

### 3. Interview

The interview with the HDR Committee will be scheduled for 40-45 minutes in duration. The candidate and advisory team will be in attendance at the interview which will be chaired by the Director of Higher Degree Research (DHDR) and attended by all members of the HDR Committee. The reviewer of the Confirmation document may also be present at the interview. At the candidate's request, the student representative on the HDR Committee may also be present.

The candidate should be able to address questions and/or comments from the Committee in detail. This process, while critical and analytical, is intended to be constructive for the candidate. The HDR Committee and advisors will discuss feedback with the candidate. The interview may include time for the candidate to talk with the HDR Committee members without their advisory team present, as well as time for the HDR Committee to meet with the advisory team without the candidate.

At the completion of the interview the DHDR (or their delegate) may recommend:

- That the milestone has been achieved.
- That the candidate revises and resubmits their document. The HDR Committee will decide if the revisions warrant an extension of the milestone. The document would be resubmitted to the HDR Committee for a final determination of the outcome of the milestone.
- That the candidate re-writes their document in part or in full, take as extension to the milestone due date and resits an interview with the HDR Committee at the end of the extension period.
- That the candidate has not achieved the milestone and is liable for review of candidature. Review of candidature can be initiated following either the first or second attempt at the milestone.

If the milestone is achieved, a Milestone Attainment request is initiated by the student via the Candidature Management Portal. This will be forwarded by the Graduate School to the Advisory team and the DHDR for their approval and sign-off.

If the student is not considered to have met the required standard for Confirmation, an extension of the due date is granted. The appropriate request is made by the candidate via the Candidature Management Portal. This request will then be forwarded to the Principal Advisor and the DHDR for their approval and sign-off.

#### ***Set Dates for Confirmation Milestones***

The set dates for Confirmation Presentations and Interviews in 2021 are as follows:

- **Round 1**            March 17th
- **Round 2**            June 16th
- **Round 3**            September 15th
- **Round 4**            December 15th

Please note that **confirmations outside of these set dates are not permitted.**

Students and advisors are required to be physically present for their Confirmation presentations, although interviews can be conducted by Skype/Zoom if students and/or advisors are away.