

Guidelines on how to manage the external review process of HDR milestone materials

Context

In each of the three main candidature milestones (i.e., Confirmation, Mid-Candidature Review, and Final Thesis Review), a sample of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students' work is assessed by an expert, external reader. As per Graduate School's requirements, this is a School-led process. This means that our Higher Degree by Research Liaison Officer (HLO) plays no role into it. Instead, it is the responsibility of the advisory team in conjunction with the HDR student to liaise with an appropriate external reader. The following step-by-step guidelines are designed to clarify the expectations around this process.

Step 1 – Approximately 12 weeks before the milestone interview

Students should always remain aware of the date of their next milestone, which is clearly indicated in their [student portal](#). In the case of Confirmation milestones, a pre-set date—or set of dates—will be arranged for the presentations and interviews of all students commencing in a given Research Quarter (RQ). For Mid-Candidature Review and Final Thesis Review milestones, the HDR student and the HLO would identify a tentative date for the interview to be conducted—subject to the availability of the people involved in the interview. This includes the HDR student, the advisory team, and the Director of Higher Degree Research (DHDR) (or a designated member of the HDR Committee). Note that the external reader is not required to attend the milestone interview. These conversations are expected to take place approximately 12 to 8 weeks before the milestone.

Step 2 – Approximately 6 weeks before the milestone interview

Approximately 6 weeks before the milestone interview date, the HDR student and advisory team agree on an external reader that is suitably qualified to assess the HDR student's work. The prospective external reader should be someone with expertise in the HDR student's area of work, or in a cognate area. The external reader could be based at the School of Social Science or in some other organizational unit at UQ, but can also be external to UQ. The advisory team would then approach the external reader and confirm that they are happy to assess the HDR student's work within the stipulated time frame (details in the steps below).

Step 3 – Approximately 4 weeks before the milestone interview

The student provides the advisory team with appropriate materials to fulfil their specific milestone requirements (e.g., a Confirmation document, a sample chapter, a progress report, etc.). Please refer to the milestone guidelines [here](#) for more information on which materials are necessary for each milestone. The advisory team then sends these materials to the external reader via email, outlining the expectations around the review (as per the milestone guidelines). It is helpful for the advisory team to communicate to the external reader that their review is to be returned directly to them—not the HDR student, HLO or DHDR, and that this should be done ideally within 2 to 3 weeks. Note that there are optional template emails available to advisors to communicate with the external reader for each milestone. To obtain these, please ask the HLO or DHDR.

Step 4 – Approximately 1 to 2 weeks before the milestone interview

The external reader sends their review of the HDR student's materials back to the advisory team. The advisory team thank the reviewer via email and circulate the review to the student (for consideration prior to the interview) and to the School's HLO at hdr.socialscience@enquire.uq.edu.au (for filing). The School's HLO places the review materials in the HDR Committee folder. They then communicate to the DHDR and/or the HDR Committee Member(s) that will participate in the milestone that the documents are available for their perusal.

Step 5 – On the day of the milestone interview

The milestone Chair, the advisory team, and the HDR student discuss the contents of the review during the milestone interview, as part of a wider process aimed at assessing how the student is progressing over their candidature. During confirmation milestones, the entire HDR Committee will be present, in addition to the DHDR. The external reader is not required to participate in the milestone interviews, but may be approached by the Chair to seek clarification or further advice, should it be needed.

A schematic of this process is presented in the figure below.

Timeline	~12 weeks before	~6 weeks before	~4 weeks before	~1-2 weeks before	On the day
Student	Confirms interview date with HLO	Selects a reader with advisors	Provides document to advisors		Discusses review
Advisors		Select a reader with student	Send document to reader	(b) Circulate review to student & HLO	Discuss review
Reader				(a) Submits review to advisors	
HLO	Confirms interview date with student			(c) Circulates review to DHDR *	
DHDR *					Discusses review

* And/or designated HDR Committee members