

# Milestone One: Confirmation of Candidature

## **Overview**

Research training at The University of Queensland is research 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.

Supervision and coursework programs are 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.

## **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 that there are resources available to complete the program within the recommended timeframes; and
- the composition of advisory team is appropriate. By confirmation, students should have a principal and one or more associate advisors.

In addition, all compliance requirements (e.g. induction for international students, research integrity training, and completion of the research integrity module) 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 PGSC.

All components of the milestone, including the interview, should be completed by the 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 via a formal application through the Candidature Management Portal (Portal) to the Graduate School. 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 Postgraduate Administration Officer 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 School's Postgraduate Administration Officer 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). The seminar will be scheduled one week prior to the submission of the confirmation document and three to four weeks prior to the confirmation interview. The specific program for each Confirmation seminar session will be emailed to everyone approximately one week prior to the presentations. Seminar feedback may be incorporated into the written confirmation document.

## 2. Written work

Within one week following the confirmation seminar the candidate must submit a written confirmation document to the School's Postgraduate Administration Officer. This document should be in Word format.

The confirmation document must include:

- an introduction which discusses the importance and relevance of the topic;
- a literature review which 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/question(s) – this should emphasise the contribution the candidate intends to make to what is already published;
- an outline of proposed methodology and methods – 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 which might slow progress; and
- an indication of the feasibility of the research, including details about the financial and other resources, and professional development training required.
- a demonstrated and clear understanding of the ethical issues involved and a plan to have ethics in place as soon as Confirmation is reached.

The document word limit is strictly limited to 5,000 words (excluding bibliography). ***Documents exceeding 5,000 words will be returned to the candidate for revision.***

The confirmation document should be submitted to the Postgraduate Administration Officer at [pgsocialscience@uq.edu.au](mailto:pgsocialscience@uq.edu.au) electronically within one week of the confirmation seminar. The document will then be circulated to the Postgraduate Studies Committee and an independent reviewer. The independent reviewer is selected, and invited to undertake the review, by the advisory team. It is the responsibility of the advisory team to provide the Postgraduate Administration Officer with the contact details of the reviewer at least two weeks before the confirmation document is sent out for review.

The reviewer will prepare a written review of the document to assist the Postgraduate Studies Committee to determine the progress and quality of the candidate's research. The reviewer can address and make comment on any or all of the required elements of the document.

### 3. Interview

The interview with the Postgraduate Studies 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 (Research and Training) and attended by all members of the Postgraduate Studies Committee. The reviewer of the confirmation document may also be present at the interview. At the candidate's request, the student representative on the Postgraduate Studies 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 Postgraduate Studies Committee and advisors will discuss feedback with the candidate. The interview may include time for the candidate to talk with the PGSC without their advisory team present, as well as time for the PGSC to meet with the advisory team without the candidate.

At the completion of the interview the School Director (Research and Training) may recommend:

- that the milestone has been achieved;
- that an extension of the due date (usually of up to three months FTE) be granted for achieving the milestone, in which case the candidate can revise the written work which will then be reviewed and another interview conducted (only one extension of the due date will be granted per milestone);
- or 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 uploaded by the student via the Portal. This will be forwarded by the Graduate School to the Advisory team and the Director (Research and Training) 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 Portal. This request will then be forwarded to the Principal Advisor and the Director (Research and Training) for their approval and sign-off.

**The set dates for confirmation in 2017 are as follows:**

<b>Confirmation Seminars</b>	<b>Confirmation Interviews</b>
13 March	03 April
05 June	10 July
04 September	09 October
04 December	08 January 2018

Confirmations outside of these set dates are not permitted. Students are required to be physically present for their confirmation presentations, although interviews can be conducted by Skype if students and/or advisors are away.

## Milestone Extensions

PhD candidates may apply for:

- up to 3 x 3 month (FTE) extensions during their candidature, including submission.

MPhil candidates who attained confirmation after 1 January 2013 may apply for:

- up to a maximum of 4.5 months (FTE) during their candidature, including submission, with no request exceeding 3 months in duration.

No more than two extensions may be used per milestone. The timing and use of the extensions is at the discretion of the candidate and their advisory team to allow for flexibility as required. Further extensions will only be approved on a case-by-case basis where the candidate experiences events which have direct impact on the progress of research. For example, this may include:

- partial or total destruction of research samples or data due to natural disasters leading to the research being unable to be recreated within the maximum extension period;
- failure of essential equipment leading to research being unable to be recreated within the maximum extension period.

Where an extension is being sought, the request via the Portal must be submitted to the Graduate School at least 2 weeks prior to the milestone due date.

Candidates who are unable to achieve milestones due to a change in personal circumstances (e.g. illness, work commitments) should discuss taking temporary leave from candidature with their advisory team.

Students granted an extension are required to revise their written documents and resubmit them for review approximately one month prior to the milestone due date. They will then be required to attend interview with the Chair of the Postgraduate Studies Committee and members of their advisory team. It is not necessary for students to repeat their presentation.

Candidates who do not achieve a milestone after the following periods of FTE candidature will be liable for a review of candidature:

	<b>PhD</b>	<b>MPhil</b>
Confirmation	18 months	9 months
Mid-Candidature Review	30 months	15 months
Thesis Review	42 months	21 months
Submission	48 months	24 months