

Higher Degree Research Student - Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines

The Confirmation of Candidature is a compulsory requirement for all research higher degree candidates.

Time frame

Candidates must successfully complete a formal Confirmation of Candidature within 3 to 12 months of commencement of candidature. Full-time candidates will normally complete the Confirmation of Candidature within six months. Part-time range is 3 to 18 months.

Candidates should discuss the specific timing with their principal supervisor.

Progression

The Confirmation of Candidature must be successfully achieved for you to enrol in the second year. If the proposal is not approved, you must request an extension from the College Research and Higher Degree Committee.

Purpose

The Confirmation of Candidature is a formal and comprehensive process that reviews the progress and plan of the candidature from commencement to completion. It is an endorsement of work already accomplished and of the candidate's plans for successful completion of the degree. The process may identify improvements that can be made and it is an opportunity to receive positive feedback on progress.

The Confirmation of Candidature tests the proposal, research theme or question to be explored; intellectual context; research objectives and research procedures within the framework of the expectations of the degree and the available time frame.

The process of candidature confirmation is:

- Submission of a written document between a minimum of 2,000 and maximum of 10,000 words. Most confirmation documents are 3,000 to 5,000 words. Length is determined in part by the focus of the work and the discipline area. Students should discuss a suitable length for their candidature document with their Principal Supervisor.
- A verbal presentation to an expert academic panel which will include members of the supervisory panel.
- Assessment, feedback and any required follow-up or other action recommended by the panel or College Research and Higher Degree Committee.

Confirmation of Candidature must be completed successfully before students are able to seek approval for research activities involving human participants. The Supervisory Panel will provide advice about the timing of any ethics or Biosafety and radiation safety review.

Content of the Document

There is capacity for individual initiative and variations in research style, however, the following elements must be included:

1 Thesis Title

This should be clear, informative and unambiguous.

2 Research Theme or Research Question

This section will demonstrate that the student understands the research theme or question and is able to define the theme/ question in terms that indicate that the research will provide insights into its resolution.

The Research Theme/Question should include an outline of:

- A description of the project as a whole,
- A thesis statement, comprising the proposition(s) that the thesis will demonstrate.
- A description of the main focus of the thesis
- A description of how the various themes/questions are interrelated.
- A demonstration of the worthiness of the proposed research with respect to gaps or conflicts in present knowledge or understanding.

3 Intellectual Context

This section should contain:

- A detailed discussion of the conceptual and empirical aspects of the research.
- A comprehensive and critical literature review related to the problem situation
- An explanation of how the thesis is related to the literature or other research in the discipline.
- Accounts should be given of all theory that will be considered and the method(s) that will be employed in selecting, organising and analysing the material that will make-up the main body of the thesis.
- Likely sources of information, archival resources, field work, survey and other empirical data.
- A topic outline and the general content by areas or by chapter, with a description and the relationship of each to the others may be included.
- The expected contribution of the thesis to the advancement of knowledge in the relevant field of study.

4 Research Outcomes

This section should clearly demonstrate that the student has identified a potentially solvable or resolvable research proposal and has a plan of action to achieve the aims within the time frame of the degree. It may be in the form of a general statement and/or a list of more specific aims that will lead to accomplishing the general objective.

5 Research Method

This section should set out the logical steps to be followed in meeting the research objective(s).

- The method should be set out, including comment on why it is important to the particular research field and how the method will generate and verify the conclusions to be reached in the thesis.
- A time plan of expected progress and milestones to be achieved at various points should be included.

6 Length of Confirmation Document

Confirmation documents vary in length according to the requirements of the topic. Most are from 3,000 to 5,000 words with a minimum of 2,000 and maximum of 10,000.

Approval Process

The student submits a complete, paginated manuscript to his/her Principal Supervisor for review and approval by the CoC Advisory Panel.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the Confirmation document is provided to the principal supervisor in sufficient time for circulation to the panel.

An Advisory Panel is established as described below. The panel is responsible for establishing whether or not the student has mastered the relevant literature, that the major research questions have been defined, and that the research strategy is sound. The confirmation presentation offers the student an opportunity to crystallise his/her ideas and to receive feedback from several experienced researchers at an early stage of the work.

The Panel Chair – the ADR or their nominee - has approval responsibility delegated via the College Research and Higher Degree Committee for the Panel report on the Confirmation of Candidature document and presentation.

Principal Supervisor's Responsibilities

The Principal Supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Confirmation Document is suitable for submission to the Advisory Panel;
- Establishing an Advisory Panel (with up to 5 members) comprising: College Associate Dean, Research or nominee, Supervisor and/or Associate Supervisor
- 1 or 2 other persons with relevant expertise either from within the College or from outside it. The committee should comply with university policy on gender representation.
- Arranging for each Panel member to receive a copy of the Confirmation Document seven days prior to the meeting date;
- Arranging a meeting room and formally advising the student and all members of the Panel in writing of the meeting date and time. The meeting should not be held in a staff office.
- Administrative follow-up after the meeting which will include ensuring that the student and the Associate Dean, Research are given copies of the report.
- Collating the main points discussed at the meeting and preparing a draft report for consideration by all members of the Panel.
- Preparation of the final report (the Panel Chair – the ADR or their nominee, has approval responsibility for the Panel report).

Chair Administrative Responsibilities

A copy of the finalised Confirmation Document and cover sheet is to be lodged with the College.

A copy of the written report to the student with the signed cover sheet attached must be lodged with the Office of Research Services.

The Meeting

- Only members of the Advisory Panel and the student will attend.
- The meeting will be chaired by the College Associate Dean, Research or their nominee
- Duration will be 60 – 90 minutes.
- The structure of the proceedings will be at the discretion of the Chair but normally the student will give an oral overview of the Confirmation Document for approximately 15 minutes followed by a question and answer session where both the student and the Panel may ask questions. It is often a good idea to ask the student to leave the room for a few minutes for the panel to confer and to gather their thoughts before the discussion with the student.
- The candidate has the right to meet with the Associate Dean Research, if they so wish in the absence of their supervisory panel during the Confirmation of Candidature Process.

Feedback

- Preliminary feedback will be provided directly to the student at the meeting.
- The Advisory Panel will complete a report to be signed by the panel chair and Principal Supervisor which will reflect the agreement of the Panel on the main points to be included. The draft report will be prepared by the Principal Supervisor
- One of four outcomes of the Confirmation process will be approved

Confirmation of Candidature outcomes

- A. That the Thesis Proposal is approved and candidature confirmed.
- B. That the Thesis Proposal be approved and Candidature confirmed, subject to **minor** amendments/ rewriting identified by the Confirmation of Candidature Panel. The amendments are to be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor and Associate Dean, Research.
- C. That the Thesis Proposal be approved and Candidature confirmed, subject to **major** amendments/ rewriting identified by the Confirmation of Candidature Panel. The amendments will be circulated electronically to the Confirmation of Candidature Panel electronically (the candidate will not be required to make a second presentation).
- D. That the Candidature not be confirmed on the basis of the submitted Thesis Proposal. The student be asked to resubmit a new proposal and a second presentation will be required.