

Candidate Milestones

For higher degree research candidates

Instructions for each stage of formal review

The following outlines the purpose, process and possible outcomes for the three formal stages of candidate review for Higher Degrees by Research: Confirmation of Candidature; Mid-candidature review; and Final year review. It should be read in conjunction with section 10 of the [Higher Degree Research Regulations](#).

PURPOSE

Each formal review assesses the ongoing thesis development. The candidate's presentations are to be of draft material directly relevant to the thesis, not a separate report *about* the thesis. The work presented at each review is not expected to be a final product. The assessment of the quality, feasibility and progress of the research is in order to monitor progress toward a timely completion of the candidature.

The confirmation of candidature review will assess the candidate's rate of progress since beginning their higher degree by research. It will assess the quality of the work undertaken to that point, and of the proposed work, and the feasibility of the study (in terms of the scope and timeframe of the work). Where appropriate, the panel will provide advice to further the development of the thesis.

The mid-candidature review will assess the quality and the rate of ongoing thesis development that has been undertaken since the confirmation of candidature, as well as reviewing the feasibility of the timeline. The panel may advise on the development of the conceptualization of the work and offer other support as relevant. Where appropriate, the panel will also provide advice to further the development of the thesis.

The final year review will assess the rate of progress of the research and the quality of the work that has been undertaken since the mid-candidature review. The panel may advise on the development and/or refinement of the conceptualization of the work and offer other support as relevant. The feasibility of the work, with a particular focus on timely completion, will also be assessed.

PROCESS

For each formal review the candidate will provide evidence of the work undertaken since the previous review. Each stage will involve the following components: a sample of writing (one or more draft chapters – see section 10 of the Higher Degree Regulations); a progress report (including an annotated timeline since previous milestone review/candidature commencement as appropriate plus a timeline to completion); and, an oral presentation (normally 20 minutes), followed by Q&A (normally 20 minutes).

The sample of writing to be submitted must be relevant to the discipline (and format) in which the thesis is being undertaken (e.g. in the humanities this may be a draft chapter; in the sciences this may be a report on data collection and/or data analysis).

The material submitted for consideration by the panel is work-in-progress that is part of the actual thesis (i.e. draft material). The length and nature of the chapter(s) submitted for review will be discipline specific and depend on the stage of the candidature. It will also vary according to the format by which the thesis is being undertaken (e.g. traditional, by project, by publication). The candidate is required to submit work of sufficient length and substance that allows informed comment by the panel regarding the quality of the work, the feasibility of the thesis and the rate of progress.

Each review requires the submission of different and separate work from that presented in any of the previous reviews.

The specific assessment criteria and outcomes for each stage of candidature are described in this document.

OUTCOME

At each formal review the panel will assess the scope and nature of the work that the candidate has undertaken since the previous formal review. The panel can make a number of different recommendations regarding the candidature. For details regarding the different recommendations available to the panel see section 10 of the [Higher Degree Research Regulations](#).

Milestone 1: Confirmation of candidature

The sample of writing (one draft chapter) submitted at Confirmation of Candidature, the progress report (including annotated timeline) and the oral presentation must provide appropriate evidence of the beginnings of conceptualisation of the topic, as appropriate for the level of degree being undertaken. This will include one or more of the following:

- identifying the issue/question to be investigated [what is being examined];
- outlining the state of the question in scholarship and possible sources of information [why it is being examined];
- the means of analysis and/or approach to be employed in the investigation [how it is being examined].

At the confirmation of candidature stage the panel will use the sample of writing, the timeline and the oral presentation to assess the following three elements:

Quality

This will be evidenced by one or more of the following:

- the sample of writing and the oral presentation addressing one or more of the following: the issue/question to be investigated; outlining the state of the question in scholarship and possible sources of information; the means of analysis and/or approach to be employed in the investigation

Feasibility

This will be evidenced by:

- whether the topic is of sufficient scope to be undertaken for a study at the appropriate level (recommendations for refining and/or expanding the topic may be offered by the panel)
- a proposed timeline

Progress since commencement

This will be evidenced by one or more of the following:

- the sample of writing and the oral presentation

At the confirmation of candidature review the panel may also discuss and advise on the following:

- thesis format - particularly if the candidate's proposed study differs from a standard thesis format
 - plans regarding fieldwork associated with the research
 - any necessary ethics application
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Milestone 2: Mid-candidature review

The Mid-candidature review is a detailed update of the candidate's work since the confirmation of candidature.

The sample of writing (two draft chapters) submitted at the mid-candidature review, the progress report (including an annotated timeline) and the oral presentation must provide appropriate evidence of the development of the conceptualisation of the topic and evidence of the research that has been undertaken in order to investigate the topic, as appropriate for the level of degree being undertaken.

The sample of writing (two draft chapters) will be separate to the chapter presented at confirmation of candidature. The format of the sample will be discipline specific and it will vary according to the format of thesis (e.g. a report on data collection and/or initial data analysis; a detailed review of the relevant source material; the draft of an article if submitting by publication).

At the mid-candidature review stage the panel will assess the following three elements:

Progress since confirmation of candidature

This will be evidenced by:

- The progress of the work as measured against the approved timeline

Quality

This will be evidenced by:

- the sample of writing and the oral presentation

Feasibility

This will be evidenced by:

- a detailed timeline to completion

The panel will have access to material from the confirmation of Candidature, and will be able to make comparisons in order to assess the development of the work.

Milestone 3: Final year review

The Final year review is a detailed update of the candidate's work undertaken since the mid-candidature review.

It will consider issues relevant to the progress of the candidature toward a timely completion.

The sample of writing (two draft chapters), the progress report (including an annotated timeline) and the oral presentation must provide appropriate evidence of the development of the conceptualisation of the topic and evidence of the research that has been undertaken in order to investigate the topic, as appropriate for the level of degree being undertaken.

The sample of writing (two draft chapters) will be separate to the chapters presented at confirmation of candidature and mid-candidature review. The format of the sample will be discipline specific and it will vary according to the format of thesis.

At the Final year review stage the panel will assess the following three elements:

Progress

This will be evidenced by:

- the work undertaken as measured against the approved timeline
- the sample of writing and oral presentation

Quality

This will be evidenced by:

- the sample of writing and oral presentation

Feasibility

As well as the above factors this will be evidenced by:

- an updated timeline that tracks through to completion

The panel will have access to material from the two previous reviews, and will be able to make comparisons in order to assess the development of the work.
