

Confirmation of Candidature Procedures

Section 1 - Overview

(1) The University of New England is committed to maintaining its strong research culture, underpinned by high research training standards. The Confirmation of Candidature procedures are refined to provide the rigorous processes that are essential for the maintenance of academic quality and integrity in the University's operations, and that reflect the University's values of providing a formative, respectful, inclusive, flexible and innovative environment for the delivery of high quality research training for its students.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) These procedures apply to all Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students who are required by their respective degree rules to complete a confirmation of candidature process. These procedures follow rules within the UNE Higher Degree Research AQF levels 9 and 10 Rules.

Section 3 - Procedures

(3) These procedures provide for the completion of the probationary phase of a higher degree by research student's candidature

(4) This confirmation of candidature process assesses formally the extent to which student's candidature can be confirmed.

(5) Accordingly, these procedures form part of the University's quality assurance processes.

(6) The specific aims of these procedures are:

- a. To identify early in a student's candidature any support, intervention and/or guidance necessary for his/her proceeding successfully to the next major stage of research;
- b. To assess a student's progress and the student's academic preparedness to complete the degree;
- c. To provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate academic skills appropriate to a higher degree by research;
- d. To ensure that the scope, size, structure and complexity of the research program is appropriate to the level of the higher degree by research; and
- e. To help ensure timely and successful degree completions.

Induction briefing

(7) Principal Supervisors are responsible for providing HDR students with an induction early (typically not later than one month after commencement) regarding confirmation of candidature procedures, and the criteria for successful completion of the confirmation process. As a minimum, this induction must include:

- a. The sources of support and guidance and their location;

- b. The timeframe when the confirmation process will be held (ideally an estimated date);
- c. The composition of the Confirmation Panel (by role - not necessarily by name);
- d. How the Panel will conduct the process;
- e. The criteria that are required successfully complete Confirmation
- f. The importance of Confirmation as a major milestone in candidature
- g. The consequences of not passing Confirmation; and
- h. The Principal Supervisor will provide a record of the induction, including the Research Degree Supervision Agreement, to the student and Research Services.

Completion timeline

(8) Confirmation of candidature must be completed not earlier than 6 months and not later than 12 months after start of candidature.

Criteria for passing Confirmation

(9) These criteria may be adapted by Schools to an individual student's circumstances and to those for the research programme. All adaptations must be included in the induction record.

- a. Submission of an acceptable research proposal for formal approval before the Confirmation process has started; and
- b. Submission of an annotated bibliography or literature review if not already included in the research proposal; and
- c. Where appropriate, submission of an acceptable research design; and
- d. Where appropriate, application, or received consent (as appropriate and set down in the induction briefing) of ethics approval for the research methodology; and
- e. Successful completion of any prescribed safety or training courses as detailed in the induction briefing; and
- f. Successful completion of all required coursework units as detailed in the induction briefing; and
- g. Completion of all other required developmental activities (for example, studies in statistics, academic writing, intellectual property and electronic literacy including use of electronic databases); and
- h. Completion of an acceptable oral presentation (on progress within the research program) to the Confirmation Committee.

(10) Non-English Speaking Background students may also receive advice at this point on any concerns regarding their demonstrated ability levels in oral and written English.

Panel Membership

(11) Panel membership will be:

- a. The Head of School or nominee or the School Higher Degree Research Coordinator (Chair);
- b. The Principal Supervisor;
- c. The Co-Supervisor(s) (if available, but the Principal Supervisor is the minimum requirement);
- d. A representative (who may be internal or external to the University) of the student's disciplinary area nominated by the Principal Supervisor or Head of School; and
- e. Optionally, a person invited by the student as an aide.
- f. The Panel may co-opt additional expertise as required.

Conduct of the Panel meeting

(12) The student must have formal notice not later than 20 working days prior to the Panel meeting. This notice shall include the day, time, location and membership of the Panel.

(13) Although a formal notice is provided to the student, it is assumed the date will have been negotiated well in advance (and forewarned by the Principal Supervisor). If, however, a student cannot attend the Panel meeting, the Panel may elect to offer an alternate date and/or an alternate method for attendance (such as video-conferencing). The Panel's decision on alternate arrangements is final.

(14) Typically, the Panel will conduct an oral examination of the student's submissions for Confirmation and of his/her research programme to date.

(15) The student's aide may be present to offer any personal or moral support but shall not have any speaking rights except at the Chair's discretion, which is final.

(16) A student may request the rescheduling of the panel of for any reason the Principal Supervisor is not able to attend.

Decisions of the Panel

(17) The decisions available to the Panel are:

- a. Candidature is confirmed without conditions.
- b. Candidature is not confirmed until certain conditions are met, within a specified timeline.
- c. Candidate is asked to redo confirmation
- d. Candidature is not confirmed and a recommendation is made by the School to the Committee that candidature be terminated.

(18) Decisions under 17 (b) may not require a second meeting. However, the Chair of the Panel is responsible for consulting all Panel members regarding whether or not the student has met the conditions for confirmation.

(19) Decisions under 17 (c) shall require reconvening the original Panel, which must be held not later than two months after the first meeting. Only under exceptional circumstances and by agreement of the Head of School (illness of the student or a Panel member, for example) will the Panel be allowed to defer again the decision or have original Panel members substituted.

(20) Decisions under 17 (c) shall only be made when there is a reasonable prospect that the student can meet the Confirmation criteria if granted extra time. Deferment when there is no realistic expectation of success is unfair to the student and any sponsor.

(21) Only when a student has met all the Confirmation criteria is candidature confirmed. Students under 17 (b) and 17 (c) remain probationary students. Supervision and research work must continue as normal until the confirmation of candidature is resolved.

(22) Where the Panel cannot reach a satisfactory decision, the matter may be referred to the Head of School for determination.

(23) Students who decline (including without acceptable explanation, failing to attend an induction or the Panel meeting) to engage with the Confirmation process at any time shall be deemed to have not met the Confirmation criteria and will be recommended for termination of candidature under 17 (d).

Communicating the Outcome

(24) Whatever the decision of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel, the School will communicate the outcome to the student within ten (10) working days of the final decision being made. The student and supervisor will be provided with a copy of the Confirmation of Candidature Report, signed by all parties.

Signing the Confirmation of Candidature Report

(25) Where a student elects not to sign the Confirmation of Candidature Report, this should be noted on the report by the Chair of the Panel.

Non-confirmation

(26) Where a the Panel has taken the decision not to confirm a student's candidature, and once the student has been notified of this outcome by the School, the completed Confirmation of Candidature Report will be forwarded to Research Services. Within five (5) working days of receipt of the School's recommendation to terminate candidature, Research Services will write to the HDR student, with a copy to the HDR Coordinator and Principal Supervisor, advising the student of their rights of appeal under the Assessment Appeals Policy and Section 8 of the Assessment Appeals Procedures, and the requirement that any appeal be lodged within twenty working days. Research Services will include a copy of the completed Confirmation of Candidature Report, a summary of the reasons why this decision has been reached, and information about where to get advice and support.

- a. Students who then wish to appeal the decision of the Graduate Research Sub-Committee may do so under the process outlined in section 8 of the Academic Assessment Appeals Procedures.

(27) International students must not have their candidature terminated until all avenues of appeal are exhausted.

(28) All students in the process of appeal will continue to work and be supervised as normal until the outcome of the final appeal is known

(29) Once the final appeal has been processed, and where the student appeal is unsuccessful, Research Services will terminate the student's candidature in the relevant student administrative systems. Research Services will notify the student, principal supervisor and HDR Coordinator in writing and, in the case of International students, notify the International Office.

Section 4 - Definitions

(30) AQF means the Australian Qualifications Framework

(31) The Committee means the Academic Board Higher Degree Research Committee

(32) The University means the University of New England

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