

School of Communication and Arts

Milestone 1: Confirmation of Candidature

Postgraduate students are admitted to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidature on a provisional basis, progressing to confirmed candidature by 6 months for MPhils and by 12 months for PhDs. The purpose of the confirmation milestone is to determine that:

- The candidate has sufficient training, ability, and commitment and that there are resources available to complete the program within the recommended timeframe;
- The candidate has received informed advice about their research project's feasibility and scope and about the acquisition or further development of appropriate skills;
- The advisory team provides suitable mentoring and intellectual leadership.

For the confirmation milestone, the candidate must:

- Complete Advanced Research Methods (and Creative Writing coursework, if applicable);
- Complete the [Research Integrity Module](#)
- Apply for a ORCID identifier [ORCID ID](#)
- Submit confirmation documents: Academic CV and HDR Portfolio (containing a progress report and a timetable for completion), Thesis Prospectus, and (for PhD candidates only) a Thesis Chapter or Creative Writing sample of up to 10,000 words;
- Deliver an oral presentation of their research;
- Attend a meeting with the milestone committee.

The milestone committee is chaired by the HDR Director or Deputy HDR Director and includes the candidate's principal and associate advisors and two expert readers. It is the role of the milestone committee to:

- Assess whether the candidate's research project is likely to lead to an examinable thesis in the period of time allotted for the funding of the degree.
- Recommend that a candidate progresses from provisional to confirmed status OR requires further time to revise and develop the research OR withdraws.

Confirmation Documents

One month prior to confirmation and after having received and incorporated written feedback on an advanced draft from the advisory team, MPhil and PhD candidates must email the confirmation meeting chair their confirmation documents. The chair will have been made known to you.

The **Thesis Prospectus** is a research planning document that includes:

- A succinct, informative statement of the research question and argument;

- Well-defined key concepts and a critical review of the relevant academic literature;
- A rationale for the thesis, its significance, and its contribution to the field;
- A research approach or methodology;
- Chapter outlines (1 paragraph each) or an overview of the thesis components;
- An assessment of the resources and skills required to complete the project;
- A statement of fulfilment of ethical clearance requirements;
- Possible avenues for publication;
- A bibliography.

For MPhil students the prospectus should be 2,500–3,000 words and for PhD students its length should be no more than 3,500–4,000 words, excluding the bibliography.

Creative Writing candidates should outline both the critical and creative components of their projects in the prospectus ensuring that it contains a detailed chapter outline for the critical essay.

Candidates for the PhD in Art History by Exhibition should include an exhibition plan of approximately 4,000 words which includes an exhibition rationale, installation and display rationale, list of artworks, artist biographies, draft introductory wall didactic, sample wall label, exhibition catalogue essay synopsis, and venue and budget support documentation.

The **Academic CV and HDR Portfolio** records HDR candidates' research and teaching activities at UQ. At each milestone, students will provide an updated version of their Academic CV and Portfolio, including a realistic schedule for the conduct of research.

Doctoral candidates must also submit a **thesis chapter**, ideally one of the first chapters of the thesis. Chapter lengths vary so there is no set word count but approximately 10,000 words is customary.

PhD in Creative Writing candidates should provide one of the following (in addition to the prospectus with detailed chapter outlines for the critical essay):

- Fiction/Non Fiction: 8,000-10,000 word creative sample OR up to 10,000 words combined creative/critical
- Poetry: 20-30 manuscript pages of poetry OR 15 manuscript pages and 4000 words critical essay
- Film and/or Play Scripts: 20-30 manuscript pages of script OR 15 manuscript pages and 4000 words critical essay

Candidates for the PhD in Art History by Exhibition are required to submit a sample chapter of 6,000 words minimum.

For candidates in fields such as Communication where extensive fieldwork is required but has not yet been undertaken, the sample chapter may be a polished literature review and/or methodology chapter of 6000 words minimum. The writing sample should not duplicate material from the thesis prospectus such as the literature review or the key terms but in fields such as Creative Writing and Communication these can be the basis of a more developed and polished piece of critical writing.

The written documents should be free from grammatical and typographical errors and should demonstrate:

- A viable research plan with a focused research topic, an appropriate methodological framework, and a sound argument;
- Writing skills and research at a level of sophistication, scholarly depth, and originality appropriate to this stage of higher degree research in the discipline.

Peer Review

Two expert readers assess the confirmation documents. The advisors nominate the expert readers in consultation with the HDR Director. The readers are given **two weeks** to write a report on the quality of the written submission, the significance of the research problem, engagement with literature, and appropriateness of the research method with reference to the scholarly norms of the relevant field. The readers provide written feedback to the HDR Director or Deputy Director for distribution to the candidate and advisors at least **one week** prior to the milestone presentation and meeting. If the readers identify issues with the written document that need to be addressed before the project can be confirmed, the HDR Director may convene a meeting between the readers, candidate, and advisors to discuss the project and/or recommend submitting an extension of milestone request so that the candidate has time to revise and resubmit the confirmation documents in light of the feedback provided.

Oral Presentation

The oral presentation provides the candidate with an opportunity to deliver a well-rehearsed, high-quality presentation, supported by carefully prepared and informative audio-visual aids and/or notes. The oral presentation is a formal seminar open to the school that is scheduled to occur approximately one month after the written submission is made and immediately prior to the confirmation meeting. It takes the form of a 20-minute oral presentation by the candidate that outlines the research project and 10 minutes for audience members to ask questions of the candidate and make suggestions. The chair of the milestone committee facilitates this session.

The presentation should provide a clear, concise, and logical account of the research project, progress to date, and future research objectives. The seminar should be well timed, engaging, clearly expressed for a non-specialist peer audience, and delivered with effective communication skills. Following the presentation the candidate should be responsive and articulate when dealing with questions. The candidate must demonstrate that they have the ability to engage in a considered discussion about their research project that:

- Explains the topic, rationale, and position in the field;
- Outlines key concepts and theoretical issues;
- Demonstrates knowledge of relevant research methods and literature, and
- Gives an overview of the planned chapters or thesis structure.

Confirmation Meeting

The confirmation meeting with the milestone committee lasts one hour and is normally held immediately after the presentation. The candidate is interviewed separately and together with the advisory team. During the meeting the advisors exit and the candidate has the opportunity to have a confidential discussion about supervision, to review their student support plan (if applicable), or to raise other concerns. Subsequently the candidate exits while the committee discusses the supervision and the student's progress in confidence.

The committee must:

- Assess the candidate's progress in their field of research;
- Assess the candidate's ability to respond to questions and feedback;
- Review the composition, weighting and roles of the advisory team including the frequency and effectiveness of contact between the candidate and advisors;
- Assess the resources needed for timely completion of the project;
- Ensure that the timetable is realistic and set goals for the next milestone.

Assessment Process

The committee can make the following decisions:

- Recommend that the Graduate School confirm the candidate; OR
- Recommend that the Graduate School extend the milestone due date by three months (full time equivalent) and ask the candidate to revise and resubmit their confirmation documents by a set date. If the candidate has not attained Milestone 1, the committee must provide written instructions regarding remedial actions to be undertaken by the candidate. After the revised confirmation documents are sent to the readers, the committee reconvenes and interviews the candidate again. If satisfied with the revisions, the committee can recommend confirmation; OR
- Request that the Graduate School conducts a review of candidature because candidate has not attained the milestone after more than one attempt.

The chair of the milestone committee produces a written report that outlines the committee's decision and sets out any conditions the candidate must meet.

The chair send this report to the HLO hdr.commart@enquire.uq.edu.au who will relay it to the candidate with instructions on how to complete the milestone attainment request.