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| **SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND ARTS** |



**Milestone 1: Confirmation of Candidature**

Postgraduate students are admitted to Research Higher Degree (RHD) candidature on a provisional basis, progressing to confirmed candidature by 6 months for MPhils and by 9–12 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 and Integrity Module](http://www.uq.edu.au/grad-school/content/current-students/ethics/Research-integrity-module-instructions.pdf);
* Submit confirmation documents: Academic CV and RHD Portfolio (containing a progress report and a timetable for completion), Thesis Prospectus, and (for PhD candidates only) a Thesis Chapter;
* Deliver an oral presentation of their research;
* Attend a meeting with the milestone committee.

The milestone committee is chaired by the RHD Director or Deputy RHD 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 RHD Administrator <rhdcommarts@uq.edu.au> their confirmation documents.

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;
* 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. Candidates for the PhD in Art History by Thesis and Exhibition Catalogue should include an exhibition plan and a brief rationale for the exhibition hang along with venue and budget support documentation.

The **RHD Portfolio and Academic CV** records RHD candidates’ research and teaching activities at UQ. At each milestone, students will provide an updated version of their Portfolio and Academic CV, 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. For Creative Writing candidates, this includes a sample of creative work and a piece of scholarly writing of about equal length from the critical project. For candidates in fields such as Communication where fieldwork has not yet been undertaken, the sample chapter may be a polished literature review and/or methodology chapter. 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 RHD Director nominates the expert readers in consultation with the advisors. 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 RHD 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 RHD 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 provides written feedback to the candidate that outlines the committee’s decision and sets out any conditions the candidate must meet.