

# Guidelines for Confirmation of Candidature

## 1. Preamble

- 1.1 This document clarifies the principles of, and minimum expectations for, the confirmation of candidature process. It is expected that each Faculty will build on these principles and guidelines in ways that are appropriate, with regard to the disciplines it encompasses, its size, the student cohort and best practice for quality research training. As such, it is the student's responsibility to consult any additional faculty specific guidelines relating to confirmation.
- 1.2 These guidelines encompass students enrolled in all research higher degree masters and doctoral programs.
- 1.3 The confirmation process ensures, as far as possible, a research higher degree student's steady progress toward the successful and timely completion of their degree. It also provides academic development of the student, and an opportunity to review resources for the host Faculty, and to ensure parity across the university.
- 1.4 Oversight and guidance of the confirmation process is the responsibility of the student's supervisory team. However, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that he/she prepares sufficiently and completes all requirements within the allocated timelines. The student is also responsible to advise both their Faculty Research Office and the Office of Research and Higher Degrees of any circumstances that may affect their ability to meet this milestone within the allocated timeline.

## 2. Provisional Candidature

- 2.1 Students are admitted to a research higher degree as a provisional candidate. Students transferring from another higher education institution will be admitted as a provisional candidate unless they provide evidence at the time of admission of having successfully completed a confirmation process at the same program level at their previous institution. The Director, Office of Research and Higher Degrees will determine approval on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.2 Students who have been approved to transfer credit from an incomplete masters level program to a doctoral level program will be expected to complete the confirmation of candidature requirement at the doctoral level within six-months of admission to the new program. This would apply to both current USQ and new-to-USQ students.

## 3. Timing

- 3.1 Doctor of Philosophy students are expected to complete the confirmation process no later than:
  - One (1) year full-time enrolment, or
  - Two (2) years part-time enrolment

To be calculated from the date of commencement in the program.

3.2 All other doctoral students (i.e. Doctor of Education, Doctor of Business Administration Research, and Engineering Doctorate) are expected to complete the confirmation process no later than:

- One and one quarter (1.25) years full-time enrolment, or
- Two and a half (2.5) years part-time enrolment

To be calculated from the date of commencement in the program.

3.3 All masters students are expected to complete the confirmation process no later than:

- Six (6) months full-time enrolment, or
- One (1) year part-time enrolment

To be calculated from the date of commencement in the program.

#### **4 The Confirmation Process**

4.1 The confirmation of candidature process shall consist of two components:

- A written document of a size and scope appropriate to their level of research studies
- An oral presentation to peer review

leading to a recommendation on candidature from the relevant Faculty to the Office of Research and Higher Degrees.

#### **5 Minimum requirements for written component**

5.1 The following areas would normally be addressed in the written component of the confirmation process:

- 5.1.1 Aims and objectives of the research
- 5.1.2 Review of the relevant literature in the student's area of research
- 5.1.3 Student's proposed contribution to their field of research
- 5.1.4 A fully formulated research proposal
- 5.1.5 Methodological approach
- 5.1.6 Milestones and timelines
- 5.1.7 Resources a student requires to complete their research

For details of the format and other requirements, refer to the Guidelines for the preparation of a RHD Confirmation Proposal

([http://www.usq.edu.au/~media/USQ/Research/Students/RHD\\_confirmation\\_proposal\\_guidelines.ashx](http://www.usq.edu.au/~media/USQ/Research/Students/RHD_confirmation_proposal_guidelines.ashx)). Students are also directed to their respective Faculty guidelines for confirmation of candidature.

5.2 The student is expected to seek feedback on, and endorsement of, their written confirmation proposal by their supervisory team prior to submitting to the confirmation review panel.

- 5.3 The supervisory team is expected to have provided appropriate advice on the confirmation document and engaged in discussions about resources and other requirements with the student.
- 5.4 The supervisory team, and in particular the Principal Supervisor, is expected to have provided feedback on written drafts of the confirmation document prior to its submission to the confirmation review panel.
- 5.5 The student is expected to provide their proposal documentation to the Faculty at least two to four weeks (depending on Faculty practices) prior to the due date for the oral component. Where these processes are embedded within the coursework structure of a program, these timelines may not apply and timelines as stipulated by the particular program should be adhered to.
- 5.6 Following feedback from the panel, the student should return their revised written proposal to the Faculty for endorsement according to the relevant faculty approval process within:
- Two (2) weeks (Minor revisions)
  - Four (4) weeks (Major revisions)
- 5.7 The Chair of the confirmation panel will be responsible for ensuring requested revisions have been attended to by the student, and for providing a recommendation through the respective Faculty to the Office of Research and Higher Degrees within two weeks of return of the revisions. In the case where major revisions were requested, the Chair may wish to re-convene the confirmation review panel to review requested revisions have been attended to by the student.
- 5.8 If a student has not attended to required revisions to the satisfaction of the panel, a recommendation may be made that the student not be confirmed as a full candidate. If further minor revisions are required, the Chair may provide a further two week time limit for the student to undertake the requested revision. Students will not be provided with further opportunity to meet these requirements.

## **6 Oral Component**

- 6.1 The oral component of the confirmation process provides students with an opportunity to present their proposed research to peer review. This would normally include the confirmation panel, peers from the relevant discipline and the wider University community.
- 6.2 The oral presentation would normally be followed by question time from attendees to provide the student with an opportunity to experience academic discussion and presentation of research work.
- 6.3 It is expected that expert and/or constructive advice from those in attendance at the oral presentation will be provided on the student's proposed research to the panel chair for inclusion in the feedback to the student.
- 6.4 It is the student's responsibility to liaise with the Faculty to schedule their presentation so that they will be in a position to attend to any feedback from the panel, and meet their confirmation of candidature due date.

## **7 Other components**

7.1 It is expected that students will have completed the following components at the time of confirmation:

- 7.1.1 Preparation of ethical clearance documentation (if required). Due to discipline specific research practices students may gain ethics clearance before confirmation. If ethics approval has not been obtained by confirmation then it should occur immediately after. Please refer to Faculty specific guidelines and the University's research website for further information on the ethics approval processes.
- 7.1.2 Disbursement of intellectual property. Please refer to Intellectual Property policy.
- 7.1.3. Completion of any faculty-specific requirements; and
- 7.1.4 Any other requirements that are specified by the University or the student's faculty at least two (2) months prior to the confirmation of candidature due date.

## **8 Notification to students**

- 8.1 The Office of Research and Higher Degrees will confirm the confirmation of candidature due dates with students via email to their UConnect email account. The notification shall include a link to the University confirmation of candidature guidelines. Students should be aware that there may also be faculty specific guidelines relating to candidature due dates.
- 8.2 Each Faculty will provide clear written advice to students about the specific procedures to be followed. This would normally occur at the commencement of the program. The advice should include the timing, format, expectations, scope, quality and amount of work to be presented for confirmation.

## **9 Confirmation of Candidature Review Panel**

- 9.1 The confirmation review panel shall consist of the Chair, normally the Associate Dean (Research) or nominee, and at least two (2) other members who have appropriate expertise. One of these members may be external to the University.
- 9.2 None of the panel members can currently be, or have been, a member of the student's supervisory panel, or involved with their research project.
- 9.3 The confirmation panel shall review the written and oral components of the student's confirmation and provide a recommendation (refer 10. Recommendations below), using the specified form, through the respective Faculty, Associate Dean Research, to the Office of Research and Higher Degrees by the candidature due date.

## **10 Recommendations**

- 10.1 The confirmation review panel shall make one (1) of the following recommendations by the candidature due date:
  - 10.1.1 Candidature be confirmed
  - 10.1.2 Candidature continue for up to three (3) months with conditions; or
  - 10.1.2 Candidature be terminated

- 10.2 A student who has received a recommendation of 'candidature continue with conditions' would be expected to undertake further work or revisions as directed. The additional work or directions would normally be completed within three (3) months, unless an alternative date is approved by the Director, Office of Research and Higher Degrees.
- 10.3 A recommendation for termination from the confirmation review panel shall be considered by the Director, Office of Research and Higher Degrees. If the Director approves such a recommendation, the Office of Research and Higher Degrees will send a show cause letter to the student.

## **11 Written Feedback**

- 11.1 The confirmation review panel would normally be expected to provide written feedback to the student within two (2) weeks of the oral presentation. This may take the form of a report, summarising the strengths, achievements and developmental needs of the student's confirmation documentation. It is the responsibility of the Faculty to provide the panel's report to a student in a prompt and timely manner.
- 11.2 If the panel is recommending that a student not be confirmed, it is the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to meet with the student and the supervisory team to discuss the recommendation and the reasons behind it. Once the Chair has apprised the student of the outcome of their confirmation, appropriate notification should be forwarded to the Office of Research and Higher Degrees for actioning.

## **12 Show cause and termination**

- 12.1 Students whose candidature is recommended for termination will receive a show cause asking them to indicate why their candidature should not be terminated.
- 12.2 Students who fail to respond to a show cause letter within the specified timeframe, or are found not to have provided reasonable grounds for the continuation of their program, will have their candidature terminated.
- 12.3 The Director, Office of Research and Higher Degrees, will be responsible for reviewing responses to show cause, in liaison with the relevant Faculty Associate Dean (Research) (or nominee). The supervisory team of the student may provide a written response to the Director, Office of Research and Higher Degrees, for consideration with the student's response.

## **13 Appeals**

- 13.1 Students who have reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with any formal decision regarding their confirmation may appeal in writing. Appeals should follow the process and time lines outlined in the USQ Appeals Policy (<http://policy.usq.edu.au/portal/custom/detail/appeals/>) and directed to the relevant Faculty.