

Higher Degrees by Research Milestones, Reporting and Confirmation of Candidature Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Support, monitor and manage higher degree by research students' progress.

(2) Confirmation of continuation of scholarship and candidature depends on a higher research degree student's reporting to his/her Research Progress Panel (RPP) and demonstrating adequate quality of work and progress, particularly through completion of agreed milestones.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to:

- a. All campuses
- b. All staff, including honoraries
- c. All higher degrees by research
- d. All students enrolled in a higher degree by research

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) The Board of Graduate Research will determine common milestones for higher degrees by research to assist candidates to manage their research and report their progress.

(5) Full-time higher degree by research students will provide a Progress Report to their Research Progress Panel (RPP) at least twice a year. They will meet with their RPP at least once a year. For part-time students reporting may be reduced to once a year. Part-time students meet with their RPP at least once a year.

(6) Higher degree by research students (except those enrolled in professional doctorate programmes or programmes with substantial coursework requirements) will obtain confirmation of candidature before one third of the time allowed for the degree has elapsed.

(7) For professional doctorate students a progress report may not be required in the first year of study when coursework is completed.

(8) Having received the candidate's progress report the RPP meeting will decide whether or not to recommend continuation of candidature.

Section 4 - Procedure

Milestones and Timeframes

(9) The standard milestones of higher degrees by research are:

- a. Confirmation of Supervisors
- b. Appointment of the Research Progress Panel
- c. Agreement on Timeframes
- d. Confirmation of Candidature
- e. Progress Reports
- f. Significant Work Presentations
- g. Ethics approval (human or animal)
- h. Draft Dissertation Outline
- i. Notification of Intention to Submit
- j. Authorisation to submit

(10) All higher degree by research students will prepare a timeframe for their research project. The timeframe will address all standard milestones, present reasons for any variations of those milestones and timeframes, and add other milestones as required for the particular project and as agreed with the Research Progress Panel (RPP).

(11) A separate timeframe and set of conditions may be laid out to take account of the special circumstances of a student, which may include part-time candidature, or the special nature of the research. In the case of part-time study progress reviews will be yearly.

(12) The RPP will consider and agree the milestones and timeframes with the student.

(13) The RPP will decide if candidature will be confirmed (fourth milestone above) on its evaluation of a research proposal as required by this Policy. Confirmation will normally require (a) assessment of a written research project proposal, (b) a presentation of the research project proposal before an academic seminar, (c) defence of the project before the Research Progress Panel and (d) an assessment by the Research Progress Panel of the feasibility of the project. This condition does not apply to professional doctorates and programmes that include substantial coursework requirements.

Progress Reports

(14) Each full-time higher research degree student will write two Progress Reports and part-time higher research degree students will write one Progress Report per year. Progress reports will include reviews of the milestones and timeframes. Students will discuss each report with their principal supervisor and complete a Progress Report for Higher Degrees by Research Form.

(15) The principal supervisor will provide written feedback and comments, and complete the supervisor's section of the Progress Report for Higher Degrees by Research Form.

(16) Students may comment in confidence on aspects of their research or supervision to the chair of their RPP.

RPP Meeting and Decisions

(17) The RPP will consider the student's and supervisor's reports, any work provided for inspection (including any papers or conference presentations made by the student), any additional comments by the student about supervision and School, Program or Department support for their project.

(18) The RPP may make recommendations on any aspect of the student's candidature.

(19) RPP meeting decisions will be consensual and oriented to the student's needs and supporting his or her completion of the degree.

(20) The RPP will agree with the student the amendments, if any, to milestones and timeframes.

(21) The RPP will record its decision (or that it was unable to reach agreement on a recommendation) and attach any documentation that is required.

(22) The report of the RPP will recommend whether or not candidature should continue.

(23) If an RPP agrees not to recommend continuation of candidature the student will normally complete the withdrawal from candidature procedure.

(24) If the student decides to challenge the recommendation to discontinue candidature the Graduate Research Coordinator or Head of School will inform the Board of Graduate Research and the student will be formally requested to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Board why his or her candidature should not be terminated.

Timing of Meetings and Reports

(25) Reporting dates will be agreed as milestones between each student and RPP.

(26) Professional doctorate students' reporting and RPP meetings may be delayed until the student has completed the course work requirements of their degrees (usually in the first year).

(27) With the student's agreement, an RPP may meet at any other time to assist or advise the student on any matter relevant to his or her candidature.

(28) When requested by the student the chair may hold a separate meeting with the student and the non-supervisory members of the RPP.

(29) When requested by a supervisor the chair may hold a separate meeting with the requesting supervisor and the non-supervisory members of the RPP.

Administration of Reporting

(30) The Graduate Research School will supply a list of students of each School to the Graduate Research Coordinator(s) or Head of School. The Graduate

(31) Research Coordinator will notify the Graduate Research School of any student who does not present a progress report and the reason why.

(32) After a regular meeting of an RPP, the chair of the Panel will complete the appropriate sections of the Progress Report for Higher Degrees Form.

(33) The Progress Report for Higher Degrees Form including the student's and supervisor(s)' reports will be sent to the Graduate Research School and copied to the student, supervisors, postgraduate coordinator and College Research Committee if required by that committee.

(34) A student may append a note, to draw attention to an issue or point of disagreement or concern, to a Progress Report for Higher Degrees, and may at any other time request that a note be placed on file.

(35) Confirmation of Candidature will be granted if the completed Progress Report for Higher Degrees form includes a recommendation by the RPP for confirmation.

Reviews

(36) Reporting possible problems with an RPP meeting, action, or decision (including not reaching adequate agreement) will involve one of the following processes:

- a. a written report by the HDR student to the Graduate Research Co-ordinator, or relevant Head of School, regarding the matter considered by the student to be unsatisfactory;
- b. a written report by the HDR student, the Graduate Research Co-ordinator or relevant Head of School, to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, or Chair of the Board of Graduate Research, regarding the matter considered by the student to be unsatisfactory and not resolved after review within the School; or
- c. an independent assessment by the Graduate Research Co-ordinator, Head of School, and/or Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Research indicating that an RPP meeting, action, or decision in regard to a specific HDR student is unsatisfactory.

Actions Following Reports of Unsatisfactory RPP

(37) The relevant Head of School or Graduate Research Co-ordinator should address any problems raised about an RPP meeting, action, or decision with the principal supervisor and Panel chair and initiate further action if required. It may only be necessary to draw the problems to the RPP's attention.

(38) However, the Head of School, Graduate Research Coordinator, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, or Chair of the Board of Graduate Research may consider that further action is necessary with respect to problems raised about an RPP meeting, action or decision. In such cases, the College's Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Research will convene a Supervision Assessment Committee (SAC).

(39) Following its investigation of alleged unsatisfactory RPP meeting, action, or decision, the SAC may take the following actions:

- a. dismiss a report of possible problems with an RPP meeting, action, or decision as being unfounded and initiate support processes for the complainant(s) to resolve the problems that prompted the complaint in the first place.
- b. conclude that the problem can be managed readily, and provide the RPP with advice aimed to improve its practices.
- c. require that a member, or some members, resign from the RPP and be replaced.

Failure to Meet

(40) A Graduate Research Coordinator or Head of School may formally request a student to attend an RPP meeting. If the student fails to respond appropriately to the formal request to attend an RPP, the Graduate Research Coordinator or Head of School will advise the College Research Committee and the Board of Graduate Research, and copy the advice to the RPP members, Graduate Research Coordinator and Head of School (as appropriate), detailing the attempts made to contact the student, the reason for calling the meeting, any response from the student, any other relevant information about the student or his/her circumstances.

(41) On the advice of the Graduate Research Coordinator the Board of Graduate Research may then direct the student to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Committee why his or her candidature should not be terminated.

(42) In the case where a student presents for an RPP meeting as informed, but the RPP fails to meet or conclude its proper responsibilities, the Graduate Research Coordinator or Head of School must ensure that the student is not penalised and his/her progress is adequately supported.

Section 5 - Definitions

(43) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Higher Degree by Research: Doctors of Philosophy (PhD), professional doctorates by research; and masters by research
- b. Notification of Intention to Submit: notice for the Graduate Research School of the intention to submit the dissertation in at least three months' time.
- c. Significant Work Presentation: may take the form of a paper prepared for publication, a School/Departmental Seminar (for masters students this may be a post-graduate seminar) or a presentation at a national or international conference. Early in the candidature a significant work presentation may be a literature review, a plan of research, or ideas for specific chapters or one or more pieces of work (totalling a minimum 5,000 words). In the last year of candidature it may be a presentation of some of the research outcomes, some problems encountered in the research, an outline of the dissertation, a creative work (where appropriate) or other detailed work based on the research project.
- d. Research Progress Panel (RPP): a panel established under the [Research Progress Panels Policy](#), consisting of the principal supervisor, co-supervisor and at least one other person for the purposes of supporting higher degrees by research students and their supervisors.
- e. Progress Report: provides the student's and supervisor's assessment of the research project's progress, and up-to-date milestones and timeframe for completion and submission of the dissertation. It will cover the period from the student's last report.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Dean of Graduate Studies.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Board of Graduate Research.

Status and Details

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