

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE GUIDELINES (PHD, MASTERS BY THESIS and PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE)

PhD candidates are expected to complete their Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) milestone no sooner than 6 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment, and no later than 10 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment.

Masters by Thesis candidates are expected to complete this milestone within 6 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment.

Professional Doctorate candidates are expected to complete this milestone within 6 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment into the thesis unit.

Extensions will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

CoC Requirements:

- Prior to completing the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) presentation, candidates **MUST** complete the online Research Integrity Training module. To find out more about the requirements of the training, please refer to the [Research Integrity Training Guidelines](#). The Candidate needs to have successfully completed the Research Integrity training module prior to CoC and include their certificate with their CoC documents. It is expected that all supervisors will also have completed the Research Integrity training module. Failure to comply with either of the above requirements will mean the cancellation of the Confirmation of Candidature presentation. This will mean the presentation has to be rescheduled, and, in some instances, this may lead to the termination of candidature.
- The interim Supervisor Candidate Agreement needs to be reviewed at the Confirmation of Candidature by all parties. If there are any changes to be made, then a new Supervisor Candidate Agreement must be submitted to the Graduate School along with the other CoC documentation for assessment.
- The Candidate is expected to provide all of the CoC documents to the panel at least 2 weeks in advance. It is expected that the Candidate will be receiving regular feedback from the supervisors while preparing the documentation.
- The Confirmation of Candidature proposal must be submitted through the University's text-matching software Turnitin via the Graduate School Blackboard site prior to being sent to the Confirmation panel.
- The Turnitin report must be sent to the Confirmation panel members together with the research proposal.



Graduate School

The Confirmation of Candidature process requires the Candidate to fulfil the following elements to a requisite standard.

1) Confirmation of Candidature requires a written research proposal (at least 7,000 words but no more than 10,000 words), a seminar presentation and, as applicable, the fulfilment of any special conditions required by the Dean, Graduate School.

I. The written research proposal must contain the following:

- Cover page;
- Table of contents;
- A 200 word abstract of the proposed project;
- A critical literature review identifying gaps in the knowledge and areas for further study;
- A brief philosophical and/or theoretical framework;
- Hypotheses and/or study aims and objectives, proposed methodology;
- Detailed research plan with a timeline;
- If ethics approvals and other research permits are required (including any specialized WH&S requirements), then an indication of the proposed process and timelines for securing these will need to be provided;
- Any special conditions required by the Dean, Graduate School to ensure the Candidate attains the requisite HDR standard must also be satisfied.

II. The seminar presentation must:

- Be 20-30 minutes in duration;
- Allow a further 20-30 minutes for questions;
- Be open to other members of staff and other HDR Candidates;
- Where applicable, contain arrangements to enable online candidates who cannot attend on-campus to present online through the relevant University online forum.

During question time, the Candidate must address all questions made by the panel independently. Following question time, the open component of the CoC is closed, and the Confirmation panel meets privately to discuss the written and oral research proposal. The Chair of the CoC panel and external panel member then formulate their recommendation on the outcome of the CoC and complete the report for consideration by the Dean, Graduate School. The Chair of the panel is responsible for oversight of the completion of the report and submission to the Graduate School.

Following the conclusion of the oral presentation of the CoC, the Director Higher Degree Research Training (HDRT), will ensure that all documents are completed, prepared and submitted to the Graduate School for consideration. This will include:

- Confirmation of Candidature document – i.e. the written research proposal submitted to the panel; and
- Abstract; and
- Copy of presentation slides; and
- Confirmation of Candidature report; and



Graduate School

- The confidential report; and
- The revised SCA or confirmation that the original SCA still applies.

The Candidate will not be informed of the outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature until such time as the Dean, Graduate School has reviewed and considered the Confirmation of Candidature documentation and the panel's recommendation. This will be no more than two weeks after the presentation.

Once the Dean, Graduate School considers the documentation the Graduate School will advise the Chair of the panel (Director, HDRT) and supervisors of the outcome. It is the responsibility of the supervisors to then advise the Candidate of the outcome of their Confirmation of Candidature.

The Confirmation panel will consist of:

- Director Higher Degree Research Training (as Chair) - noting only the Chair and external panel member can vote on the Confirmation of Candidature outcome and the ADR if they are on the panel;
- External panel member^{1, 2}
- Principal Supervisor;
- Co-supervisor(s);
- As applicable, any other person recommended by the Dean, Graduate School.

Note: if the DHDRT is a supervisor, the Deputy DHDRT / Associate Dean (Research) or Delegate must act as the Chair of the Confirmation panel.

¹ *An independent panel member can be someone who is (obviously) independent of the Candidate and supervisors and can add value to the CoC presentation. This person can be from Academia (from SCU or another University). If from SCU, they must be a current academic or Adjunct. They can also be from industry. If from industry, they must be well placed in that industry to be able to provide the critical feedback required to assist the Candidate in progressing with their candidature. They must also hold an equivalent or higher qualification than the Candidate is undertaking the presentation for. The independent panel member, must review the submitted work prior to the presentation and contribute feedback and input to the assessment of the Candidate's work. They have the same voting and input rights as the Director/Chair of the panel.*

² *Please refer to the Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Confirmation of Candidature panel Members.*

For noting:

- The supervisors will attend the Confirmation of Candidature to provide additional context and information to the Chair and external panel member/s in order to reach a recommendation. The supervisors do not have a vote on the outcome of the CoC;
- In order to address perceived imbalances of power when the supervisor of a candidate is an Executive Dean, the Associate Dean Research (ADR) also sits on the Confirmation panel. If the ADR is also one of the supervisors, then the Dean, Graduate School will sit on the panel as a non-voting observer;
- The Chair of the panel is the Director HDRT or delegate. They are responsible for preparing the Report and circulating to the panel for sign off;



Graduate School

- The external panel member provides an objective and critical overview of the Candidate and project. They preferably ought to be research active and drawn from outside of the University, with no close links to the Candidate, project or supervisors;
- The choice of external panel member needs to be endorsed by the Faculty HDRT Director and approved by the Dean, Graduate School;
- Only the Chair and external panel member can vote on the Confirmation of Candidature outcome and the ADR if they are on the panel.
- The Chair and external panel member will also have a private discussion with the Candidate to assess if the supervisors are both suitable and engaged. This assessment will be documented in a separate confidential report submitted to the Graduate from the Chair of the panel and will not be shared with the supervisors. This should be made clear to the Candidate.

The seminar presentation provides additional context for answering the above questions and is not assessed in its own right.

Candidates will be made aware of these questions in their orientation booklet. They will be expected to prepare the CoC documentation and presentation with these in mind.

The responsibility and role of the Principal Supervisor in the CoC process:

The Principal Supervisor is the academic and administrative leader in the supervisory team. It is very important that the Principal Supervisor along with all co-supervisors are involved in determining (with the Candidate), whether or not the Candidate is ready for Confirmation. When a candidate is ready for CoC, the Principal Supervisor should advise the Director Higher Degree Research Training accordingly.

The Principal Supervisor's responsibilities are then:

- I. To identify a potential **external expert to sit on the Confirmation panel**, and obtain agreement from this person to participate in the Confirmation of Candidature;
- II. To advise the Director HDRT of the identity of the proposed external member and co-supervisors for the Candidate;
- III. To provide the Director with the CV of the nominated external member, and a statement that there is no conflict of interest (please refer to conflict of interest guidelines). The Principal Supervisor will also be required to provide a brief outline of the expertise/experience of the external panel member. The DHDRT will assess the suitability of the proposed external panel member and advise the Principal Supervisor of any concerns with the suitability of the proposed panel member;
- IV. To inform the Director HDRT of possible dates for Confirmation (wherein the Candidate, the supervisory team and the external member are available) and confirm the mode that the external examiner will be attending (e.g. in person, by Skype/zoom or video conference, etc).



Graduate School

The responsibilities and role of the Director HDRT in the Confirmation of Candidature process:

The Director of Higher Degree Research Training is responsible for providing the following advice and documentation to the Graduate School so they can book and advertise the Confirmation:

- The identity of the Candidate undertaking the Confirmation.
- The date and time they would like the Confirmation to be held.
- The panel members for the Confirmation so the Graduate School can copy the panel members into the confirmation invitation.
- Provide the 200-word abstract of the research proposal so that the Graduate School can advertise the Confirmation to all HDR supervisors and HDR Candidates.
- When booking a Confirmation of Candidature presentation, the DHDRT will supply a zoom code and password for the presentation to the Graduate School. This needs to be either added to the COC request form or an email invitation sent to hdrexamination@scu.edu.au (please do not send to hdersupport).
- The Director HDRT will collate and distribute the paperwork to the Confirmation panel ahead of the scheduled date.
- The Director must review the submitted work prior to the presentation and contribute feedback and input to the assessment of the Candidate's work. They have the same voting and input rights as the supervisors and the external panel member on the panel.
- The Director HDRT is the Chair and also provides an independent assessment. The Chair has the casting vote on any issues.
- The Director HDRT is responsible for the oversight of the completion of the confirmation report/form and notifying the Graduate School of the outcome.
- Where applicable, contain arrangements to enable online candidates who cannot attend on-campus to present online through the relevant University online

The Confirmation of candidature Presentation and Process:

1. The Candidate will present their 20 - 30 minutes oral presentation to the panel;
2. The panel will then ask the Candidate questions on the presentation (allow 20-30 minutes);
3. Once the questions are concluded, staff and students attending the CoC will be asked to leave;
4. The Candidate will be asked to leave;
5. The Chair of the panel will have a discussion with the external panel member and the supervisors regarding the CoC;
6. Following the panel discussion, the supervisors of the Candidate may or may not be asked to leave for the final discussion regarding the CoC outcome. This will be at the discretion of the Chair of the panel;
7. The Chair of panel and the external panel member will then ask the supervisors to leave and invite the Candidate in for a private discussion on supervision;
8. Following the private discussion on supervision, the Chair of the panel will provide the Candidate with feedback on their presentation and inform them of the next steps ie. The report will be prepared, the external panel member and Chair will sign it and then the is sent to the Dean, Graduate School for consideration along with the other supporting documentation;



Graduate School

9. Following the Dean's consideration of the confirmation of candidature documentation, the supervisors and Director HDR are informed of the outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature by the Graduate School, this notification will include a copy of the Confirmation of Candidature report;
10. The supervisors and Director, HDR then have the responsibility of informing the Candidate of the outcome.

The Confirmation of Candidature Report:

- I. As a guide, it is suggested the report includes whether or not the Candidate has demonstrated a capacity to fulfil the following requirements:
 - Did the Candidate articulate a clear and explicit research question (s) and is it the panel's assessment that the research question is appropriate?
 - Did the Candidate demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their proposed research area?
 - Was the literature review comprehensive and appropriate for the topic being pursued?
 - Did the Candidate clearly articulate the gaps in the knowledge that their research will address and the significance of investigating the gaps?
 - Did the Candidate demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the methodology to be used and were the methods and research design clear and appropriate for the topic being pursued?
 - Where an Ethics application will be required, are there any potential ethics issues and is the Candidate aware of them?
 - In answering the panel questions, did the Candidate demonstrate clear logical and independent thinking?
 - Was the action plan and timeline feasible and consistent with a timely completion?
- II. The Confirmation Report must be submitted to the Dean, Graduate School with a recommendation that candidature is:
 - Confirmed, with no further work required; or
 - Confirmed, with changes recommended by the committee to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor; or
 - Conditionally confirmed after major revisions to the literature review and research plan as recommended by the panel and made within 3 months to the satisfaction of the Confirmation panel (resubmission and final sign-off to be coordinated by the Chair of the Confirmation panel); or
 - Not confirmed, but the Candidate is required to revise and resubmit their paper and make another presentation within 6 months for Doctor of Philosophy Candidates, and within 4 months for Masters by Thesis and Professional Doctoral candidates; or
 - Remedial Action: Remedial action or recommended transfer to Masters by Research (if Confirmation is for PhD); or
 - Not Confirmed, and candidature is terminated.

Queries in relation to the confirmation of candidature process should be directed to the Director Higher Degree Research Training, the Principal Supervisor or the Graduate School.