

GRS Supervisor Professional Development Program Confirmation of Candidature Seminar



Graduate Research School
July 2017

Confirmation of Candidature

Candidature management tools used to ↑ completion rates ↓ completion times



‘Stacked milestones’ approach to candidature management used by many universities globally and by Go8 universities

Rigorous selection procedures prior to admission help reduce risk of students failing early in candidature – but large cohorts invariably include students who are, for various reasons, **unlikely to complete their doctoral study** – confirmation of candidature is aimed at **early identification and management** of these students

Formal assessment of student’s progress in early stages of candidature to confirm they are likely to complete their course within a reasonable timeframe

Seminar overview

1. Purpose of confirmation of candidature
2. Process
3. Pathways
4. Exit options
5. Early warning signs
6. Confirmation issues
7. Sponsored students

Confirmation of Candidature Milestone



Purpose of confirmation of candidature:

To ensure that students progressing to the second year of their doctoral studies are on track to complete in time

Introduced at UWA in 2006 for doctoral students

Doctoral candidates are enrolled provisionally for the first year

Ongoing candidature is confirmed if the agreed designated confirmation of candidature tasks and other milestones are completed

Positive Aspects of Confirmation



- Promotes discussion of expectations of candidature very early in candidature
- Provides structure to first year of candidature
- Provides explicit description of tasks that progress will be assessed against
- Opportunity to mark & celebrate successful completion of first year of candidature

Confirmation of Candidature Process



1. Nomination of designated tasks at research proposal stage

- GRS has mandatory tasks
- school / project tasks should be added

Designated Task (for the first 12 months of candidature ONLY)	Proposed date of completion
COMPULSORY: AACE4000 Essentials Unit. Details can be found at http://www.ace.uwa.edu.au/	
COMPULSORY: Substantial piece of writing at the appropriate conceptual level in addition to the research proposal. Please provide details. <i>If this has not been completed, please be aware that it is unlikely your Candidature can be confirmed.</i>	
COMPULSORY: UWA ethics approvals are required if your project involves the use of animals or humans that would require ethics clearance. If you require such an approval, when do you anticipate the approval process will be completed?	

Tasks completed prior to research proposal submission can be included

Confirmation of Candidature Process



2. Submission of confirmation of candidature form with first annual report
 - Supervisory team provide recommendation regarding confirmation

Recommendations (Please clearly indicate your recommendation by marking the box alongside your preference)

- The Candidate is working at the required level and rate to complete the thesis in the allotted time, and we recommend that the Candidate's Doctoral candidature be confirmed.
- We recommend that the Candidate's probation be extended to the following date: ____ / ____ / ____
(NB: the maximum possible extension is 3 months after due date):
- We recommend that the Doctoral Candidature not be Confirmed.

Confirmation of Candidature Process



3. GRS assessment

- GRS Candidature team checks paperwork complete and correct
- GRS reviews annual report and confirmation paperwork
- GRS makes decision on candidature on behalf of the BGRS

4. Notification

- Notification that candidature has been confirmed
- OR GRS contacts supervisors for discussion

Confirmation Pathways



On track to complete in time – recommend **confirmation**



Some **concerns** with progress – request **extension** of no more than 3mo - include set of clear additional tasks that can be completed in extension period and are sufficiently rigorous to determine if candidature should be confirmed



At risk of non-completion – **do not recommend confirmation**

- will trigger negotiation between supervisors, GRS, GRC, student
- GRS can manage student after recommendation of non-confirmation

For doctoral students whose candidature is not confirmed within 15 months (full time) exit strategies will be explored.



If a research candidate is not likely to complete their course, it is very important to give that feedback as soon as possible and develop an exit strategy

1. **Downgrade** to Masters
 - requires supervisors to be willing to continue
 - possible to upgrade back into a PhD
2. **Transfer** to another university
3. **Withdraw** voluntarily
4. **Terminate** candidature

Early Warning Signs

WARNING

Early warning signs:

- Changing topic
- Non-completion of agreed research tasks
- Failure to submit written work at agreed times
- Isolation
- Delayed submission of research proposal



Possible early management strategies:

- Change in project
- Change in supervision

Confirmation Candidature Issues

Lack of meaningful tasks to assess capacity to complete & rate of progress

- conceptual understanding
- indication of ability to undertake research
- quality of written work

Designated Task (for the first 12 months of candidature ONLY)	Proposed date of completion
COMPULSORY: AACE4000 Essentials Unit.	Jan 2017
COMPULSORY: Substantial piece of writing at the appropriate conceptual level Substantial first draft of literature review	Jun 2017
COMPULSORY: UWA ethics approvals : Submission and approval of human ethics application	May 2017
SCIE5500 Advanced Modelling (enrol & pass unit)	Oct 2017
SCIE3367 Decision tools for Natural Resource Management (audit unit)	Oct 2017
Oral presentation of research proposal to ARE panel	Nov 2017

Confirmation Candidature Issues

Mismatch between

- proposed task list submitted with research proposal
- designated task list submitted with CC paperwork

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CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE DESIGNATED TASKS TABLE

COMPULSORY: AACE4000 Essentials Unit.	FEB 2017
COMPULSORY: Substantial piece of writing at the appropriate conceptual level Substantial first draft of literature review	MAR 2017
COMPULSORY: UWA ethics approvals Submission and approval of human ethics application	MAY 2017
SCIE5500 Advanced Modelling (enrol & pass unit)	OCT 2017
SCIE3367 Decision tools for Natural Resource Management (audit unit)	OCT 2017



Management of Sponsored Students

Non-completion can be catastrophic

Sponsors may require fees to be repaid plus additional costs

Student may lose position with employer

Shame

Many already have Masters degrees and will not be supported by sponsor to downgrade

Transfers have been negotiated with other universities – managed by student and sponsor but supported by GRS

Extremely problematic when documentation of concerns with progress is lacking

Graduate Research School Support



GRS staff list

<http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/contact/staff>

UWA Rules for confirmation of doctoral candidature (rules 20.1 – 20.13)

<http://handbooks.uwa.edu.au/rules?code=00810,00860,00870,01820,01830,01840,01850>

Research proposal coversheet

http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/22452/Research-Proposal-Coversheet-form_June-2017.pdf

Confirmation of candidature form

http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/22547/Confirmation-of-Candidature-form-June-2017.pdf

Staff advice for extracting a list of research students using staffConnect

<http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/staff/schools/student-lists>

Student advice for checking milestones using studentConnect

http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1351126/How_to_check_your_Milestones_in_Student_Connect.pdf

Upcoming Supervisor Development

2. GRS supervision workshops

> [Academic Writing Support](#)

For new or experienced supervisors of research students who want information about English language requirements at UWA, StudySmarter support, GRS development and training, and the use of editorial assistance policy.

Register for SEP 22

> [Research Students and Mental Health](#)

For new or experienced supervisors of research students at UWA who want information, advice and strategies on how to best deal with mental health issues that may arise in students.

Register for NOV 10

3. GRS supervision seminars

> [Confirmation of Candidature for Doctoral Students](#)

Describes the function of candidature confirmation and how the GRS processes and assesses the paperwork

Register for JUL 26

> [Thesis Examination and Examiner Reports](#)

Provides an overview of the examination process at UWA, including recent changes to the submission process, nomination of examiners and conflicts of interest, examination and examiners views of problematic theses, and how to respond to examiner reports

Register for NOV 7

www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/staff/supervisors/workshops