

Milestone Policy for HDR students

Overview

The University of Queensland milestone policy provides a sequence of events that help to monitor the progress and development of higher degree by research (HDR) candidates. The requirements of the policy reflect important attributes and capabilities that HDR candidates will acquire during their research training.

Timing of milestones

The milestones must be attained within the following timeframes.

Milestone	Timing for MPhil/PhD candidates in full-time enrolment
Confirmation	6/12 months for MPhil/PhD candidates after commencement
Mid-candidature Review	6/12 months for MPhil/PhD candidates after confirmation
Final Thesis Review	6/12 months for MPhil/PhD candidates after mid-candidature review and no later than 3 months prior to submission

Milestone assessment requirements

Attainment of each milestone is based on evidence provided through the activities outlined below. The specific requirements for each milestone are listed in the appropriate sections.

- Written work completed by the candidate
- An oral presentation by the candidate to the research community
- An interview with the candidate

Attainment or non-attainment of Milestones

On the basis of the evidence provided by the written work, oral presentation and interview, the Milestone panel will make a recommendation about the attainment of the milestone and one of the following recommendations will be made:

- Attainment of milestone
- An extension of the due date (usually up to 3 months FTE) to achieve the milestone; or
- That the candidate has not achieved the milestone after more than one attempt and is liable for termination of candidature

If the milestone panel does not believe that the milestone requirements have been fulfilled, the candidate will receive written feedback about what they must improve to attain the milestone. The candidate then has up to three months to revise written work and another interview will be conducted.

Confirmation of Candidature

At the first milestone:

- the candidate receives formative advice about the direction, scope, planning, and feasibility of the project; and about the acquisition or further development of appropriate research and professional skills;
- the Institute reviews the human, physical, and financial resources needed to sustain the candidature, in compliance with relevant university, disciplinary, and external regulatory protocols;
- the University is assured by the Institute's review that continuation of the candidature is likely to lead to an assessable thesis within the Universities expected timeframe

Following is a summary of the requirements for the confirmation process.

Written work	
Format & criteria	HDR Student Academic portfolio Confirmation document that contains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear statement of the research problem • Critical literature review that demonstrates understanding of key theoretical and/or methodological issues • Clear statement of research aims & questions, theoretical framework & contribution of research • Detailed outline of appropriate methods to be used for the research • Timeline & outline of goals to be achieved before the next milestone • Discussion of feasibility in terms of resources required & ethical and/or safety issues that may arise • Written in clear academic style
Word limit	For PhD: Between 7000 & 10,000 words For MPhil: Between 4000 & 6000 words
Timing & assessment	Two weeks prior to the oral presentation & assessed by the Milestone panel
Oral presentation	
Format & criteria	Clear overview of main elements of confirmation document demonstrating understanding of the research problem, appropriateness of the methodological approach and ability to respond to questions about the research
Forum	Formal academic seminar presentation; open invitation to ISSR staff and guests
Duration	25 - 30 minutes including questions & discussion appropriate to the forum
Timing	At least two weeks after the submission of the confirmation document

Interview	
Format & criteria	Constructive discussion with the candidate about the proposed research and its feasibility. Candidate should be able to respond competently to questions and comments.
Participants	Candidate, and thesis panel (including advisory team)
Timing	After written and oral components are presented; where possible directly following the seminar. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.
Assessment & feedback	
Format	Written summary of issues and feedback from the confirmation process. Recommendation of attainment on the basis of evaluation by the thesis panel. Explicit feedback on actions needed if milestone is not attained. Provided within two weeks of the interview.
Panel	Chair (Postgraduate Coordinator or delegate), principal and associate supervisors, one independent academic reader

Mid-Candidature Review

The Mid-candidature review takes place 12 months following confirmation for PhD candidates (or 6 months for MPhil). After completing the majority of their research, candidates should be in a position to undergo mid-candidature review. At this stage candidates will receive comment on their progress, their research, and the development of other professional skills. They will also discuss what is needed to progress to the Thesis review milestone.

Following is a summary of the requirements for the Mid-candidature process.

Written work	
Format & criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed thesis chapter (empirical chapter not literature review) or substantial academic work such as a manuscript submitted for publication or full conference paper. The written work must demonstrate significant progress on the PhD, appropriate methods to address the research question, and appropriate interpretation of research findings. • A one-page report outlining progress in achieving the goals set out in the confirmation document, any challenges faced, and goals to be achieved prior to the Final Review milestone • RHD Student Academic Portfolio
Timing & assessment	Provide to milestone panel two weeks prior to the interview
Oral presentation	
Format & criteria	Academic presentation of research completed since confirmation to a scholarly audience. Should demonstrate clear communication of the research aims, method and findings and an ability to respond to questions. Could include presentation at domestic or international conference or ISSR or university seminar
Duration	25 - 30 minutes including questions & discussion appropriate to the forum

Timing	Anytime between confirmation and Mid-Candidature review. Evidence of participation to be provided to panel in the one-page progress document.
Interview	
Format	Assess progress of the candidate against their timeline and goals, ask clarification questions, and provide feedback and advice about issues that might hinder progress, discuss feasibility of future timeline.
Participants	Candidate and panel
Timing	After written and oral components are presented; where possible directly following the seminar. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.
Assessment & feedback	
Format	Written summary of issues and feedback from the milestone process. Recommendation of attainment on the basis of evaluation by the thesis panel. Provided within two weeks of the interview.
Panel	Chair (Postgraduate Coordinator or delegate), principal and associate supervisors, one independent academic reader

Final Thesis Review

The Final Thesis Review takes place three months prior to thesis submission for PhD and MPhil candidates. The main aim of the milestone is to:

- assess whether the work should be ready for completion by the expected date
- assures the candidate and advisory team of the scope, originality and quality of the Thesis
- identify any major concerns that need attention before submission
- provides a forum to discuss the disciplinary areas required among thesis assessors to review the breadth of work contained in the thesis and to express any reservations about specific individuals as assessors

Following is a summary of the requirements for the Final Thesis Review process.

Written work	
Format & criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A two-page progress report that outlines progress since mid-candidature generally and against goals set at mid-candidature review and list of thesis chapters, synopsis of their content & % completed for each chapter A timeline for completion of thesis A completed thesis chapter from late in the thesis (i.e., empirical chapter or discussion chapter) or manuscript submitted for publication RHD Student Academic Portfolio
Timing & assessment	Provide to milestone panel two weeks prior to interview.
Oral presentation	
Format & criteria	Academic presentation of research completed since mid-candidature review to a scholarly audience. Should demonstrate clear communication of the research aims, method and findings and an ability to respond to questions. Could include presentation at domestic or international conference or ISSR or university seminar.
Duration	25 - 30 minutes including questions & discussion appropriate to the forum
Timing	Anytime between mid-candidature and final thesis review. Evidence of participation to be provided to panel in the two-age progress report.
Interview	
Format	Discuss progress of thesis, feasibility of timeline for completion, confirm a realistic submission timeline; identify any issues that may delay completion and provide advice for how to address these issues.
Participants	Candidate and panel
Timing	After written and oral components are presented; where possible directly following the seminar. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.
Assessment & feedback	
Format	Written summary of issues and feedback from the milestone process. Recommendation of attainment on the basis of evaluation by the thesis panel. Provided within two weeks of the interview.
Panel	Chair (Postgraduate Coordinator or delegate), principal and associate supervisors, one independent academic reader

Milestone panel and interview format

The Final Thesis Review takes place three months prior to thesis submission for PhD and MPhil candidates. The main aim of the milestone is to:

Milestone panel composition

The milestone panel is composed of a chair (usually the postgraduate coordinator or a delegate) and the advisory team. At each milestone an independent academic reader will also form part of the panel and provide written feedback to the Postgraduate Coordinator on the candidate's written work. Reader must be approved by the Postgraduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior.

Interview formats

Confirmation milestone interview: The interview will usually follow the oral presentation and will last around 30 - 40 minutes. In the interview the panel has the opportunity to discuss the presentation, confirmation document and the RHD student academic portfolio in more depth with the candidate. The interview will then proceed in the following suggested order:

- The candidate is excused and the panel discusses progress and supervision issues
- The advisory team (and independent reader) is excused and the chair discusses progress & supervision issues with the candidate
- The candidate and panel come together again to discuss the outcome and provide any further feedback to the candidate

Discussions with the candidate and advisory panel should cover whether there has been regular contact between the candidate and advisory team and allow the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns.

Mid-Candidature Review milestone interview: This interview lasts around 30 - 40 minutes and provides an opportunity for the candidate to update the milestone panel on progress on the thesis and any challenges that have been faced as outlined in the one page progress report. The candidates also discuss their responses to the feedback received at confirmation and the interview provides an opportunity for the panel to offer feedback and advice on the RHD student's academic portfolio. The format is the same as the Confirmation Milestone interview.

Final Thesis Review milestone interview: This interview will last around 30 - 40 minutes and allows discussion of the progress on the thesis and the feasibility of the timeline for completion as well as identifying any issues that may delay completion and discuss ways to address these issues. The interview also provides an opportunity to discuss potential examiners and advice on the RHD student academic portfolio. The format is the same as for the Confirmation Milestone interview.

ISSR HDR Student Academic Portfolio: In addition to the confirmation document, the RHD student academic portfolio forms a component of the written requirements of the milestone process. The aim of the academic portfolio is to provide a summary of progress across a number of important domains relevant to RHD candidate skills development and training. The document is intended to highlight areas of progress and where further development or focus may be considered to achieve a candidate's goals. The candidate must circulate this document along with their milestone documents to the Milestone Panel, cc-ing the HDR Liaison officer at hdr.issr@enquire.uq.edu.au, prior to their seminar.