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## UNSW PROCEDURE FOR CONFIRMATION AND REVIEW OF PROGRESS OF A PHD CANDIDATURE

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### 1. PRINCIPLES

- (i) The Faculty Research Committee or Higher Degree Committee (hereafter called the Committee) has the delegated responsibility to make academic decisions regarding higher degree candidatures of the Faculty. While many candidature issues are approved by the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator, the Committee is responsible for monitoring the progression of each candidate throughout the candidature and making determinations in relation to the candidature.
- (ii) It is a requirement of continued enrolment that all full-time and part-time postgraduate research students take part in a formal review of their progress in each year of their candidature. Progress reviews provide an opportunity for students, their supervisor and co-supervisor or joint supervisor, and Schools to review how the research has progressed over the past year against the research plan, review all aspects of a student's candidature, develop a plan of action for the next year, and identify and respond to any impediments to progress towards a timely completion.
- (iii) There is some flexibility for how reviews are conducted as the discipline, size of the School, and attendance mode of the student vary widely across the University. Some Schools require a formal seminar presentation that all staff may attend followed by a separate panel review meeting. Other Schools require a seminar presentation as part of the closed panel review meeting or adopt a less formal panel review meeting structure. Faculty/School annual review procedures should be clearly documented and provided to students upon Faculty/School induction.
- (iv) Regardless of other requirements:
  - (a) All candidates are expected to attend a panel review meeting in each year of candidature.
  - (b) Where a candidate is unable to attend a panel review meeting (e.g. part-time or external student away from campus at the time of the review), the meeting should be undertaken by other mechanisms (e.g. video conference, tele-conference, email). If the supervisor is unavailable (e.g. overseas) and needs to be consulted, then arrangements for input via a video or tele-link should be arranged.
  - (c) In addition to a progress review, the first annual panel review meeting includes consideration of the confirmation of the candidature. (See (5) Confirmation of Candidature for required procedure.)
- (v) Unless otherwise noted, all steps in this procedure apply to the annual progress review and any additional reviews required in accordance with section 4 of the *Conditions for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*.

### 2. COMPOSITION OF THE REVIEW PANEL

- (i) Each candidate will have a review panel (hereafter called the Panel) appointed by the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator to attend the progress review.
- (ii) The Panel should consist of at least two members who hold an appointment equivalent to at least UNSW Academic level B.
- (iii) The Panel must be able to provide an independent and objective review of the student's progress. While the supervisor and co-supervisor or joint supervisor may not be included as panel members, they should be available to attend part of the meeting to discuss academic

progress and/or facilitate resolution of specific issues. In the case of a recommendation by the Panel of either marginal or unsatisfactory, the supervisor or joint supervisor must be present for part of the review.

- (iv) The Panel should be chaired by the Postgraduate Coordinator or a senior member of academic staff who holds a continuing appointment at UNSW and has experience in supervision of research students to completion.
- (v) No more than one panel member should be an early career researcher.
- (vi) No more than one panel member should be external to UNSW.
- (vii) As far as possible, the same Panel should review the progress of the candidate throughout the candidature.

### **3. PRIOR TO THE PANEL REVIEW MEETING**

- (i) The candidate and supervisor and co-supervisor or joint supervisor should complete the progress review form. The supervisor is responsible for obtaining input from the co-supervisor or joint supervisor.
- (ii) In addition to any Faculty/School specific requirements, the candidate should provide, in writing:
  - (a) An outline of achievements for the past 12 months against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones, and
  - (b) An outline of key objectives/criteria and milestones for the next 12 months, and
  - (c) A timeline and milestones for completion of the thesis, and
  - (d) Where appropriate, a table of contents for the thesis together with the completion status of each section.
- (iii) The candidate and supervisor should be requested to name, along with reasons:
  - (a) Persons who should be excluded from the Panel. Prior determination of a marginal review is not of itself sufficient reason for exclusion of a person from the Panel.
  - (b) Persons who should be considered for inclusion on the Panel. Nomination is not of itself sufficient reason for inclusion of a person on the Panel.

### **4. CONDUCTING THE PANEL REVIEW MEETING**

- (i) While the forms of the review and issues discussed for each student will vary, key issues that should be covered include:
  - (a) Intellectual property, OHS, ethics – both the candidate and supervisor should understand these requirements as they relate to the research project.
  - (b) Infrastructure and resources – are they adequate and appropriate for the research?
  - (c) The role of the supervisor and co-supervisor or joint supervisor – the Panel should be satisfied that expectations are clear, that supervisors are fulfilling their obligations at the appropriate level, and that appropriate communication exists between all parties.
  - (d) Progress of the research in the previous 12 months against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones.
  - (e) Any problems (personal, technical or academic) identified by either the candidate or the supervisor or co-supervisor or joint supervisor – the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator and Associate Dean (Research) may need to be consulted particularly if appointment of a new supervisor is proposed.
  - (f) An assessment of whether progress has been at the level expected for the stage of enrolment in candidature.

- (g) Key research objectives/criteria and milestones for the next 12 months.
  - (h) Anticipated thesis submission date – this date should take into account the census dates (31 March and 31 August).
  - (i) Skills development – assessment of whether additional skills and training are required and a development plan.
  - (j) Such other issues as the Panel considers relevant to the discipline or research area.
  - (k) Date of the next review.
- (ii) All key findings and outcomes of the Panel review meeting must be documented on the Progress Review Form.

## 5. CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE

- (i) In addition to the procedures for the annual progress review, the confirmation review should require the candidate to:
- (a) Provide a written research proposal in accordance with Faculty/School guidelines including:
    - the key objectives/criteria and milestones of the research, and
    - a literature review, and
    - a justification of the research, and
    - an assessment of the resources required to support the research, and
    - a statement of how the research will be conducted in accordance with the UNSW policies for intellectual property, OHS and ethics.
  - (b) Make an oral presentation at which all Panel members are present in accordance with Faculty/School guidelines.
- (ii) The Panel will assess whether progress has been at the level expected for confirmation of the PhD candidature. The Panel will pay particular attention to:
- the research proposal, including a comprehensive literature review, that has established a research plan that will likely lead to a PhD
  - the level of progress made on the research since enrolment including evidence that the candidate has shown research skills at the level appropriate for the discipline
- (iii) Where progress has not been achieved at the expected level, the Panel must provide a recommendation in accordance with section 4 of the *Conditions for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*.

## 6. OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRESS REVIEW

- (i) As a result of a panel review meeting the Panel will recommend to the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator that the progress since the last review or enrolment in the degree is one of the following:
- (a) satisfactory and key objectives/criteria and milestones have been agreed for the next 12 months. Note: for a confirmation review, a recommendation of satisfactory is required for confirmation of candidature.
  - (b) marginal and:
    - i. for a confirmation review, the confirmation period is to be extended for a specified period (not exceeding 15 months in total in accordance with section 4 (2c) of the *UNSW Conditions for the Award of the Phd*). Progress will be

reassessed against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones, the date and assessment criteria having been provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing; or

- ii. for any reviews other than confirmation, progress will be reassessed against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones within the next one to six months, the date and assessment criteria having been provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing.

Note: A recommendation of marginal would generally be used when first identifying issues that may be hindering the student's progress.

- (c) unsatisfactory and will be reassessed against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones within the next one to three months, the date and assessment criteria having been provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing. This recommendation indicates more significant concerns and would generally follow recommendation of 6 (i) (b).
  - (d) unsatisfactory and the candidate should be requested by the HDC to show cause why the candidature should not be terminated for the reasons that have been outlined to the candidate and supervisor in writing. A request to show cause is a serious recommendation and would generally follow as a result of a prior review recommendation of 6 (i) (c).
- (ii) If the result of more than two consecutive progress reviews is marginal, the continuation of the candidature must be referred to the Committee.
- (iii) In accordance with section 4 of the *Conditions for the Award of the PhD*, as a result of a review process, including the confirmation review and subsequent reviews, the Committee will determine to:
- (a) confirm the candidature and approve re-enrolment (following confirmation of candidature), or
  - (b) continue the candidature and approve re-enrolment (following subsequent reviews), or
  - (c) approve re-enrolment for the purpose of re-assessment of the candidature within a specified timeframe and according to prescribed conditions and/or criteria that will be provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing, or
  - (d) transfer the candidature to a Masters Degree (Research), or
  - (e) request that the candidate show cause, in accordance with the *Procedure for Show Cause and Termination of a PhD Candidature*, why the candidature should not be terminated, or
  - (f) take such other action regarding the candidature as it considers appropriate.

## 7. MANAGING UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS

- (i) Where the Panel has recommended unsatisfactory progress as outlined in 6 (i) (d):
  - (a) The Panel review meeting should identify and document any factors contributing to a lack of progress. These factors may lie with the topic, the supervisor, the candidate, or in other areas including infrastructure support, access to resources, the research culture within the School, or a combination of these.
  - (b) The Panel should outline remedial strategies to address these issues. In some instances it may be more appropriate for the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator or Associate Dean (Research) to make these recommendations. Objectives/criteria and milestones based on these strategies should be provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing by the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator.
  - (c) The School should institute appropriate supportive remedial action to maximise the chances of the research program getting 'back on track'. Any anticipated delays in

completion relating to unsatisfactory progress, for whatever reason, should be acknowledged.

- (d) If the remedial action has not resulted in satisfactory progress after a three month period, the continuation of candidature must be referred to the Committee in accordance with the *Procedure for Show Cause and Termination of a PhD Candidature*.

## 8. ADDITIONAL REVIEW

- (i) In accordance with the Student Complaints Policy, an additional review outside the annual review or confirmation process may be arranged at the request of the student or supervisor to raise unresolved issues.
- (ii) Prior to requesting an additional review, the candidate and supervisor must discuss any concerns. The candidate/supervisor should also discuss any concerns with the Chair of review panel or Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator as appropriate.
- (iii) The reasons for this request must be submitted in writing by the student/supervisor to the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator.
- (iv) A request for an additional review by the candidate because the outcome of an annual or confirmation review was either marginal or unsatisfactory will not be considered unless:
  - (a) the candidate provides documentation showing that the panel review was not conducted in accordance with the procedures; and/or
  - (b) additional pertinent information becomes available
- (v) If the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator considers an additional review is unnecessary, the reasons for this decision will be provided to the student/supervisor in writing.
- (vi) The Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator may request that the Associate Dean (Research) be co-opted for the review as an additional independent panel member. The Associate Dean (Research) should not be a member of the school of enrolment and where this is the case an alternative nominee should be appointed.

## 9. FORMS

- (i) The outcomes of all panel review meetings must be recorded on a Progress Review Form.
- (ii) The Graduate Research School will produce a Cover Sheet and individual Progress Review Form for each student and send them to the School. This form allows for electronic input of information and emailing of the document to students and supervisors. The Cover Sheet will be populated using information from the student's official records.
- (iii) Forms will be distributed to Schools twice a year to allow reviews to be held in either Semester 1 or Semester 2 for all candidates, depending on their commencement date.
- (iv) Copies of the completed form should be kept by the supervisor and student and the original sent to the Graduate Research School (for Kensington and COFA campus students) or UNSW@ADFA Research and Research Training Office.

## 10. UPDATES TO THIS PROCEDURE

- (i) This procedure may be updated by the Dean of Graduate Research.
- (ii) An enrolled candidate may be given up to 12 months to comply with changes in the procedure where the changes would have a significant impact on the assessment of the progress of the candidature.
- (iii) In accordance with section 4 (4) (e) of the *Conditions for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*, the Committee may vary this procedure.

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## UNSW PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW OF PROGRESS OF A MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY / MASTERS BY RESEARCH CANDIDATURE

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All procedures outlined in the UNSW Procedure for Confirmation and Review of Progress of a PhD Candidature apply to the review of progress of a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) / Masters by Research (MRes) candidature, with the exception of Sections 1, 5 and 6. Variations to procedures in sections 1, 5 and 6 are outlined below.

### 1. PRINCIPLES

The principles for the review of progress of an MPhil / MRes candidature are as per the Principles in the UNSW Procedure for Confirmation and Review of Progress of a PhD Candidature other than the following variations:

- (i) Section 1 (iv) (c) does not apply. Confirmation of candidature is only required for an MPhil / MRes candidature where there is a request or recommendation that the candidature be converted to enrolment in a PhD. In this instance, the Panel must determine in the annual or additional review that the student meets the criteria for confirmation of a PhD candidature.
- (ii) Section 1 (v) is to be replaced with:

Unless otherwise noted, all steps in this procedure apply to the annual progress review and any additional reviews required in accordance with the *Conditions for the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy* and the relevant Faculty *Conditions for the Award of the Degree of Masters by Research*.

### 5. CONFIRMATION OF MPHIL / MRES CANDIDATURE

- (i) The first annual panel review for an MPhil / MRes candidature does not include a formal confirmation of candidature where the student is completing an MPhil / MRes degree. Progress is assessed on the candidate's performance and ability to complete the degree within the maximum time of 2 years for an MRes or 1.5 years for an MPhil.
- (ii) Conversion of enrolment in either an MPhil or MRes to enrolment in a PhD degree requires that the candidature is confirmed as part of the annual review. Alternatively, if the request or recommendation for conversion to a PhD degree occurs at a time which does not coincide with the annual review schedule, an additional review may be arranged for the sole purpose of consideration of confirmation of candidature. The Review Panel must determine at the review that the candidate satisfies the criteria specified for confirmation of a PhD candidature in Section 5 of the *UNSW Procedure for Confirmation and Review of Progress of a PhD Candidature*. In making a recommendation to convert to either a MPhil or MRes to a PhD, the Review Panel must be satisfied that appropriate supervision is available for the full duration of the PhD.

### 6. OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRESS REVIEW

- (i) As a result of a panel review meeting, the Panel will recommend to the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator that the progress since the last review or enrolment in the degree is one of the following:

- (a) satisfactory and
    - i. key objectives/criteria and milestones have been agreed for the next 12 months in the case of a Masters by Research, or the next 6 or 12 months in the case of a Master of Philosophy, or
    - ii. the candidate has satisfied the conditions for confirmation of a PhD candidature and the Panel will recommend to the HDC that the candidature is converted to a PhD.
  - (b) marginal and progress of the MPhil / MRes will be reassessed against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones within the next one to six months, the date and assessment criteria having been provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing. A recommendation of marginal would generally be used when first identifying issues that may be hindering the student's progress.
  - (c) unsatisfactory and progress of the MPhil / MRes will be reassessed against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones within the next one to three months, the date and assessment criteria having been provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing. This recommendation indicates more significant concerns and would generally follow recommendation of 6 (i) (b).
  - (d) unsatisfactory and the MPhil / MRes candidate should be requested by the HDC to show cause why the candidature should not be terminated for the reasons that have been outlined to the candidate and supervisor in writing. A request to show cause is a serious recommendation and would generally follow as a result of a prior review recommendation of 6 (i) (c).
- (ii) If the result of more than two consecutive progress reviews is marginal, the continuation of the MPhil / MRes candidature must be referred to the Committee.
- (iii) As a result of a review process, the Committee will determine to:
- (a) continue the candidature and:
    - i. approve re-enrolment, or
    - ii. convert enrolment to a PhD degree, with credit awarded towards the degree of PhD from the work completed in the MPhil or MRes degree
  - (b) approve re-enrolment in the MPhil / MRes for the purpose of re-assessment of the candidature within a specified timeframe and according to prescribed conditions and/or criteria that will be provided to the candidate and supervisor in writing, or
  - (c) request that the MPhil / MRes candidate show cause, in accordance with the *Procedure for Show Cause and Termination of a Higher Degree Candidature*, why the candidature should not be terminated, or
  - (d) take such other action regarding the candidature as it considers appropriate.